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RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS AND ORAL QUESTION PERIOD
(PRELIMINARY PROCEEDINGS)

FOR

THURSDAY, 3 DECEMBER 2009

Responses to Questions Taken As Notice

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment, Energy and Forestry.

C&D site in Hazelbrook (further)

Mr. Brown: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Yesterday I had a question from the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters requesting the information on the C&D site in Hazelbrook. I'll table that, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Brown: Thank you.

Questions by Members

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Gender- and diversity-based analysis

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Advisory Council on the Status of Women gives the province a B- in rating the government's commitment to applying gender- and diversity-based analysis, known as GBA, throughout government.

My first question's to the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women: Does this mean that you are the person responsible to make sure that men and women are being treated fairly in regards to government programming, and where government program money is used?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Tourism.

Ms. Docherty: Madam Speaker, I would have to say that actually it's a responsibility that all of us have in government to ensure that all employees are treated fairly.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you. To the same minister: Would you be the principal minister responsible for this?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Tourism.

Ms. Docherty: Madam Speaker, I certainly, as the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, would see that I play a very major role in all of this, but for the fact that we're trying to ensure equality happens across government, it probably could be co-shared maybe between myself and the minister responsible for the Public Service Commission.

But I don't have any issue with taking a lead role in this, which in actual fact I have done by having the creation of the GBA committee.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Payment of coaches

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

To the same minister, then. It's been brought to my attention that a sport group that receives provincial core funding treats its

coaches for male and female sports quite differently. Are you aware of this, Madam Minister?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Tourism.

Ms. Docherty: Madam Speaker, no, I'm not aware of this.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you. To the Minister of Communities, Cultural Affairs and Labour. It has been brought to my attention that some coaches in the Canada Games were compensated financially for their coaching roles. Is that true, Madam Minister?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Communities, Cultural Affairs and Labour.

Ms. Bertram: Madam Speaker, I'm very proud as minister of sport in this province of the coaching abilities of our coaches across Prince Edward Island with all the PSOs that exist in winter and summer sports.

We did a tremendous job at the Canada Games this summer, with great standings. I don't know what the Leader of the Opposition is trying to frame here.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Sure. To the same minister: Are you aware that some of the coaches for the Canada Games were

compensated financially for their coaching roles? Were you aware of that, Madam Minister? The Canada Games are over, we're all proud about that. By now you'd have the evaluations back of how the money was spent. Are you aware of that?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Communities, Cultural Affairs and Labour.

Ms. Bertram: Madam Speaker, we have provincial sporting organizations across this province - PSOs, hon. member - and the PSO is responsible for the payment to those coaches, hon. member.

I don't know what sport you're particularly speaking about, but it is up to the PSOs.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you.

Madam Speaker, to the same minister: If you were aware, for example, with the Canada Games soccer team for men and women, that the coaches for the men's teams were financially compensated but the women's were not, how do you respond to that?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Communities, Cultural Affairs and Labour.

Ms. Bertram: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I am aware, and I believe that the hon. member is speaking of Mr. Mike Redmond, perhaps. I don't know if that's who she is

speaking of, but this was an issue that was brought forward, but it's up to the PSOs.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you. To the minister of the status of women. I have a question. You said that you're responsible to help ensure people are treated in an equal basis. This sporting group receives provincial money. Are you happy with the fact that they compensate the coaches for the men's soccer and not for the women? Is that fair?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Tourism.

Ms. Docherty: Madam Speaker, I don't think anybody should be treated unfairly, regardless of what is happening - if it's payment methods, or it's promotions, or anything else - and I would suggest that if indeed there is an issue out there that maybe they contact my office and we'll certainly look into it.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: To the same minister. I know Mr. Redmond did raise this issue for a while now with the Minister of Communities, Cultural Affairs and Labour. It's offensive if the men's team is treated in a different way than the female team, and I'd appreciate it if you would give this your urgent attention. Will you do that? To the status of women minister.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Communities, Cultural Affairs and Labour.

Ms. Bertram: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Since the Leader of the Opposition is really speaking to me in that question, I will stand to respond. Hon. member, we did meet with Mr. Mike Redmond. My staff as well has met with him on numerous occasions. I myself did, too. I'm aware of that situation, but it is up to Sport PEI, it is up to the sport organization in the province, hon. member, and we have been dealing with that issue with the sport organization.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, but actually my question is for the status of women minister, whose responsibility is to ensure fair and equal equality to both men and women, and in this case we have a sporting body that receives provincial money.

Again, I'll go back to the Status of Women's report card that talks about government getting a B- for treating gender equally. This is an example that it hasn't. Are you going to address this as an urgent matter?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Tourism.

Ms. Docherty: Madam Speaker, the quality report card that was done, which - we applaud the Advisory Council on the Status of Women for doing such a report.

If nothing else, it certainly pointed out a number of areas in which government needs to work on. Is a B+ perfect? No, it's not. As a parent, actually it's quite a good mark, actually, for our children sometimes, but

from a government perspective, overall, it's not a bad mark. However, having said that, it's something that we're going to work hard towards changing it and I hope in the very near future we're going to see an A+ in that area.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I want to correct that it's not about the mark, it's about the issue. Here we have government money given to a sporting body, and the men's team gets financially compensation and the women's don't.

Coverage for living expenses for out-of-province transplant patients

But I'll move on. My next question is to the minister of health. Mr. Minister, Prince Edward Island is the only province that doesn't cover living expenses for out-of-province transplant patients. Will you be addressing this?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health, Social Services and Seniors.

Mr. D. Currie: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

I am aware of the policy for out-of-province service. Today our government has an out-of-province budget of around 35 million. Certainly we do get a number of requests on a regular basis for support for services

outside the province. We do have policies in place, and I'm committed as the minister to continue to evaluate that policy on an ongoing basis and to look at every individual situation as it comes across my desk.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

To the same minister: In the case of Melissa MacPhail, will you be making a financial contribution on behalf of government for out-of-province costs?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health, Social Services and Seniors.

Mr. D. Currie: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

As the minister responsible for health, as I alluded to, my department officials evaluate all requests. I don't have the information right now if there's been a formal request put in, but I'll follow up with the Leader of the Opposition to bring any information forward and update the House on if any request has come in. If not, we'll bring more information forward.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Leader of the Opposition: Madam Speaker, we'll go back to the hon. Minister of Health, Social Services and Seniors, but I believe in your first answer you said you evaluate them when they come across your desk.

The issue on the policy is that you're the only province that doesn't fund for people that need transplants. Because you're able to give, as a government, \$1 million to the Olympics, it'd be nice if there were dollars available for this particular lady who needs a double lung transplant. Will you look at that issue?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health, Social Services and Seniors.

Mr. D. Currie: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

As I alluded to, the Province of Prince Edward Island has an out-of-province budget of around \$35 million. I will commit to looking at this individual request and bring it back to my department for more discussions.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Disability and community coordinator

Leader of the Opposition: My next question is to the minister of social services and seniors. I go back to a news release your department did in May, actually May 8th, 2009, in regards to the Disability Services Review Committee.

My first question, minister. You indicated in

May that you were hiring a new disability and community development coordinator, and that you had advertized that position in the two or three months previous to that. So my question: Who's selected for that position? Who was selected?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health, Social Services and Seniors.

Mr. D. Currie: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Yes, the Disability Services Review was submitted and tabled in the spring sitting, and I was extremely pleased to have the report presented to me, and am very pleased that we have been moving some markers in respect to the recommendations and will be making an announcement in the House today regarding one of the more important announcements regarding the Disability Services Review.

In respect to the position, the disability services coordinator, a very important position as we move forward in enhancing the lives of individuals with disabilities, the competition has run twice. The first time I believe there were no applicants, the second time we had a successful candidate who declined the position. As of today we have a staff person that is carrying that responsibility as we move forward.

We are committed to stabilizing that position. Right now we are working with the Public Service Commission on Q and As to re-advertize and post that position.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

So, you are in the process of re-advertizing. Will that advertisement be out before our Christmas break?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health, Social Services and Seniors.

Mr. D. Currie: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

I will follow up with that. I am not sure exactly when the position will be posted, but I know that in the interim I've had some discussions with my deputy minister and my senior officials that I needed a staff person in place to work collaboratively with the stakeholders and the NGOs and the community leadership that are advocating for individual disabilities across the province.

We have a very capable individual right now that's doing tremendous work, and we'll continue, I'll continue as the minister, to make sure - this was one of the recommendations of the Disability Services Review and I'm very passionate about the review. I've got an extensive background in working with individuals with disabilities in my educational career, and feel this is a pivotal position for our department as we move forward in implementing the recommendations of the review.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

At that press release I think the committee mentioned that there were at least 50 recommendations. I understand that you chose 11 of them, and one of them so far has been implemented.

Guidelines for social housing units

My next question to the same minister is one of the biggest concerns for Islanders with disabilities is the number is continuing to increase as our population ages, especially in the area of accessible and affordable housing. My question to the minister is: Back in May you said you were developing accessibility guidelines for contractors who build new social housing units for families and seniors. Do you have those guidelines available, and can you have them tabled in the House tomorrow?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health, Social Services and Seniors.

Mr. D. Currie: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Yes, the Leader of the Opposition is correct. There were 46 recommendations and my commitment as the minister is that we are moving forward on the recommendations. Part of the work that's been done to date is that my government department - one of the priority focuses of the Disability Services Review has been to approach the work in enhancing and implementing the

recommendations by working with NGOs, community stakeholders.

But as opposed to the department of social services having the single responsibility, the recommendation came out loud and clear, through the consultation process, that all government, a number of government departments, have to be engaged in that discussion. I will be bringing forward one of the recommendations and announcing it in committee this afternoon.

In respect to the housing, I've been very pleased as the minister over the past two and a half years. We've implemented an opened accessible housing units in this process. We implemented and opened the Scot Cor facility in Summerside. We've had a strong partnership and opened a facility in the community of O'Leary with Community Inclusions, and are working on - sorry, in Alberton - and are working on a second project. We have a building going up on Kensington Road which is partnered with the King's Square housing units and also doing some units on University Avenue. So we are making inroads.

We also have just recently opened a second facility at Queens County Residential Services on Maypoint Road. So we are making inroads and I will - we have put a request for proposals out. We do have a number of requests in and some of those requests have been approved, and I must add that was the first RFP process for housing in the province's history. So we look forward to working with these stakeholders that want to build facilities across Prince Edward Island. I'll bring that information tomorrow.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

In your 10 minute answer you forgot to mention: Are you going to be able to bring back the accessibility guidelines that your department said you were going to do in May and table them? Are they going to be tabled in the House on Friday, the guidelines?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health, Social Services and Seniors.

Mr. D. Currie: Absolutely. Yes.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Number of social housing units

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you.

To the hon. Minister of Transportation and Public Works.

In terms of all the money that's come into the province through the federal stimulus package, and through the provincial stimulus initiative, how many new social housing units have you in the plan for the next five years?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transport -

Mr. D. Currie: Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health, Social Services and Seniors.

Mr. D. Currie: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

As the minister responsible for housing in the Province of Prince Edward Island, we have inherited some tremendous challenges since coming into government. We are facing intense wait lists for housing for low-income families. We've got wait lists, particularly in the Charlottetown area, for affordable seniors housing, and we also have extensive demand and need for housing with individuals with disabilities.

As I alluded to, we've had some success in partnering, we are working - and I'm advocating strongly with the federal government to enhance the affordable housing money to continue to allow us to provide more housing opportunities for these different groups.

There's a commitment for 60 additional new affordable housing units for people with disabilities over the next two years. I alluded to - the RFP process has been implemented and we've got some positive uptake, and as I alluded to, I'll be bringing that information forward as we move forward.

It has been a challenge, and certainly it's unfortunate that I was left with such intense wait lists. I have been lobbying as a minister responsible for housing with other FPT ministers. We've been successful in extending the affordable housing agreement for at least two years with the federal government. So we're pleased.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

An Hon. Member: Good answer.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

You know, it's interesting, with all that stimulus spending, it was all on roads and none on housing.

Provincial building code

But my next question is the hon. Minister of Communities, Cultural Affairs and Labour. There is concern that contractors are building outside of Charlottetown, which recently adopted the national building code, in order to avoid to have to build these standards for accessible housing for people out in the country. The question is: Is the government putting in place a provincial building code, and when is that going to be adopted?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Communities, Cultural Affairs and Labour.

Ms. Bertram: Madam Speaker, we've already announced that.

We are working with the Department of Social Services and Seniors in the area of accessibility to that, in terms if that's the - line of questioning that she's going towards in terms of accessibility for persons that have disabilities, that we are working with that in that perimeter.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Awareness of social isolation campaign

Back to the hon. Minister of Health, Social Services and Seniors. Mr. Minister, every province in Canada has developed a public education and awareness campaign to not only enhance Islanders awareness of issues such as social isolation, that can result - be very, you know huge for someone with a disability. You announced that you were going to be developing a public awareness campaign to start immediately back in May. Where is that campaign?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health, Social Services and Seniors.

Mr. D. Currie: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

One of the recommendations on the Disability Services Review - which I must say that I'm extremely interested in the review and been extremely pleased with the elaborate consultation with government and stakeholders and NGOs across the province - and one of the recommendations in the review is that we embark on a progressive social marketing campaign.

But before we can move forward with the social marketing campaign, one of the pillars of the report is that we put a committee together, and I'll have a ministerial statement today to announce that. One of the first priorities in the new year is

that we promote and we implement a progressive and aggressive social marketing campaign to educate Islanders in respect to enhance the awareness of the needs of individuals with disabilities all across the province.

When we talk about individuals with disabilities, it's not about government, it's about a community and it's about success as we work together to bring awareness and education to all Islanders to improve and enhance the lives of individuals with disabilities, Madam Speaker.

Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Timetable on disability issues

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

To the same minister. I know back in May, on the 8th, it made it sound like you were going to be doing this work right away. So now it's December, a number of months later. What was taking so long?

Mr. Bagnall: Forgot about it.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health, Social Services and Seniors.

Mr. D. Currie: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

As I did say, we are working. As I said, the

RFP process has gone out for the housing. We certainly have been working at - and I will be bringing a statement forward, to make a very important announcement today.

But I also want to remind the Leader of the Opposition that when we came into government two and a half years ago the issue in the Department of Social Services and Seniors with the government leading the way certainly, as far as I was concerned, didn't see it as a priority.

To date, if you look at the recommendations, I just want to share a few: we've increased social assistance food allowance by 10%; we've made a \$500,000 investment in the seniors' home repair program; we've eliminated income testing with the investment of over \$600,000 for individuals under the age of 18; we've exempted the Registered Disability Savings Program; we've increased community care spending by 30%; we certainly have made substantial investments in the provincial drug formulary of over 22%. So we are making some inroads.

I do remind all of the Members of the Legislative Assembly that these are investments. It's a start. I will continue to advocate for individuals living with disabilities in this province and make the needed decisions. I have tremendous support by the Cabinet and caucus that we will move the agenda forward very quickly into the future, Madam Speaker.

Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Madam Speaker, on May 8th it was a priority.

I hope the press release today is going to get the actions behind the words.

Exemption of disability savings plans

My question to the minister. Back in May, your release claimed that you were going to take immediate action to exempt registered disability saving plans from eligibility criteria for all income-tested social programs. Did that happen?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health, Social Services and Seniors.

Mr. D. Currie: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I can't speak specifically about that, but I will table that information. As a former educator I certainly have a strong appreciation for the needs of individuals with disabilities, and as an educator, saw the challenges in the public school system and sat in the kitchens of Islanders and students and families with families struggling.

I feel very fortunate that I am the minister responsible in leading a new vision for individuals with disabilities. I think in the short time that we've been in government we've made some positive inroads. I look forward to implementing the review and the recommendations.

My announcement this afternoon will be a

tremendous step forward as we engage government, engage the community, and the NGOs across this province, to implement the recommendations that are very valued and so important to our government, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Going back to the registered disability saving plan, I really wasn't sure why you had it in the press release in the first place, because Islanders with disabilities are the poorest of the poor in the province and they can't even afford to participate in the program.

Advice on disability support funding

The next question to the same minister. Mr. Minister, when that committee did the review, they also asked your department to look into a no-cap, needs-based approach to disability support funding. Will you be taking the committee's advice on that item?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health, Social Services and Seniors.

Mr. D. Currie: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

All of the recommendations that are in the report will be taken very seriously. As we embrace and engage in the report, which we have been doing, I want to compliment the

work by the leadership and the Department of Social Services and Seniors. I've been extremely pleased with the relationships and the partnering that has gone on with NGOs across this province. We're working very closely with the Auditor General to implement his recommendations but we will continue to work collaboratively.

As the Leader of the Opposition knows, we have to be respectful of budget cycles. The Department of Social Services has tremendous demands. We're seeing a slight increase in utilizations in SA programs. So we'll certainly continue to move the agenda. This is a report that I will guarantee will not be on the shelf. I look forward to moving forward and addressing the recommendations.

As I alluded to, I'll be making a formal announcement through a ministerial statement today with a very important first step as we move the disability service report forward to implement the recommendation. I'm very fortunate to be part of a government that has compassion and vision and has made the commitment to individuals.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Tracadie-Hillsborough Park.

Seniors and savings

Mr. Watts: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

My question today goes to the Minister of

Health, Social Services and Seniors. A number of seniors in my district have a concern. In fact, that same concern seems to be spread across PEI among seniors.

So the question to the minister is: Mr. Minister, if a senior has to enter a long-term care facility, does that senior - who has some money in a savings account which they have worked so hard over their life to accumulate - does that money stay with that senior?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health, Social Services and Seniors.

Mr. D. Currie: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

In 2007, the *Long-Term Care Subsidization Act*, which relates to the cost associated with living in long-term care nursing homes, was separated into two components. The government pays the basic health care component for all residents. Senior citizens living in licensed private nursing homes or government-run public manors are required to use their net annual incomes for the accommodation cost.

Their income does not cover the full cost. There are subsidies available. Their savings - and I will remind all the MLAs on this question which was brought to me - their savings are not touched and left with the seniors that are in the facilities, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Tracadie-Hillsborough Park.

Mr. Watts: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Supplementary question to the same minister. Mr. Minister, if a senior has to enter a long-term care facility, are they allowed to keep their home and their property?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health, Social Services and Seniors.

Mr. D. Currie: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Our government has demonstrated consistently in two and a half years that we will continue to respect seniors in our communities, the individuals who built and contributed to our communities all across Prince Edward Island, and we will not be touching their savings and homes and personal investments. Everything is based on net income on a monthly basis. But their life savings and their homes are their personal property and investments and are not touched.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Sherwood.

Literacy Action Plan

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

My question today is to the Minister of Innovation and Advanced Learning.

Mr. Minister, back in September I recall hearing about an Atlantic literacy action plan. Mr. Minister, would you please provide some information on what this plan

includes for adult Islanders who may have low-level literacy skills, please?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Innovation and Advanced Learning.

Mr. Campbell: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

The unfortunate reality is that in 2009 approximately 40% of Atlantic Canadians suffer from some level of literacy challenge. Those challenges can stretch from anything from reading the newspaper or a prescription label to being able to secure gainful employment and maintain that employment.

As the Member from Charlottetown-Sherwood indicated, myself and the hon. Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, and Attorney General were pleased to partner with our Atlantic colleagues at the Council of Atlantic Ministers of Education and Training in St. John's, Newfoundland, to launch the regional Literacy Action Plan.

I guess in response to the member's question, there are four pillars to the action plan: the first being an adult literacy awareness campaign; the second being the learner recruitment and retention; third being adult literacy practitioner development; and the fourth being quality standards and guidelines.

I think really it's a responsibility for all of us. Not only as government or private sector employers, but it's a societal responsibility to help break down some of the barriers and some of the stigmatism that have been

attached to literacy challenges over the years.

We have launched the adult literacy awareness campaign and that's geared toward doing just that, to take away those stigmatism and to make literacy accessible to people facing these serious challenges across the province.

As we move to address these literacy challenges it leads to a significant improvement in the standard of living and in people's abilities to secure and retain gainful employment, and better the lives for all Islanders.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Sherwood.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Supplementary question to the same minister: Mr. Minister, is there a contact person within your department that those with literacy issues or a family member may contact to get some more information in regards to this plan?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Innovation and Advanced Learning.

Mr. Campbell: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

I want to thank the Member from Charlottetown-Sherwood for that question. Yes, we have a wonderful lady working

within the department, Barbara Macnutt, who is the manager responsible for Literacy Initiatives Secretariat. Her office is in the third floor of the Sullivan Building and she can be reached at any time at 368-6286.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

C&D site in Hazelbrook (further)

Mr. M. Currie: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I want to first of all thank the minister of environment for providing a copy of some documents here.

Minister, I was of the understanding that you were going to table a tri-party agreement that was signed between the residents, the operator, and your department for a C&D site in Hazelbrook, but this is just a copy of a permit for the operator. Do you not have the tri-party agreement?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment, Energy and Forestry.

Mr. Brown: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

On March 31, 2006 there was an agreement between the operator, the government, and the community done by the previous administration and there was a confidentiality clause put in that agreement. Therefore I cannot disclose it because I respect the laws of Prince Edward Island.

Speaker: The hon. Member from

Georgetown-St. Peters.

Mr. M. Currie: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

To the minister of environment. In your last time that we discussed the Hazelbrook site, you also indicated that this permit that you issued is only for one year. Can you tell me, if this operator in one year's time is still in compliance, you indicated that you're going to shut this site down. Do you have that authority to shut this site down when he's still in compliance?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment, Energy and Forestry.

Mr. Brown: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

That's a good question from the member. Yes, I do. It is a one-year permit. I gave him an extra six months. He's allowed to receive C&D material up to one year and then he has six months to close it. These are yearly permits issued by the department and it is our understanding that we have the authority to grant a new permit or not grant a new permit.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Mr. M. Currie: Question to the same minister. What basis do you have to not grant one when a company is in compliance?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment, Energy and Forestry.

Mr. Brown: Madam Speaker, the member can go back - when that permit is over he can reapply for a permit, and one of our inputs are the community.

We may go back to the community, but as of right now, he has a one-year permit to take C&D material in and he has six months to clean it up and close it.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Mr. M. Currie: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I believe I'm right. I don't think the minister has the authority to close unless the individual is out of compliance.

IT evaluation (further)

A question for the minister of finance. You promised here last Friday that you were going to table a copy of the evaluation and study that was conducted by Acreon on the IT services. Do you have that study with you today?

Speaker: The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

Mr. Sheridan: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

It's sitting on my desk in my office. I apologize to the hon. member, and I will bring it tomorrow. Just a slip of the mind.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Mr. M. Currie: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

You also promised minister that you were going to bring back a copy of the contract for the individual that is now looking after the IT services. Will you bring that back also?

Speaker: The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

Mr. Sheridan: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

It's all in the same package and I have left it there two days in a row, and I apologize for that.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Study concerning new provincial museum (further)

Mr. M. Currie: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Question for the Minister of Communities, Cultural Affairs and Labour. I think, minister, a lot of people were extremely disappointed that you announced for the second time that you are now going to scuttle the plans for a new museum in Prince Edward Island. Why did you let this happen? Could you please tell Islanders why you're scuttling these plans again?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Communities, Cultural Affairs and Labour.

Ms. Bertram: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I rise today very happy to be the minister of culture and heritage here on Prince Edward Island. Our government has followed through with what we said we were going to do. The previous government never had a study on heritage in this province. We did that. That was one of the first steps that the Premier indicated to our department to get an independent group to do that. The Iris group won that tender and they conducted an extensive provincial study on heritage where many people came forward and presented at meetings across the province.

If you look to recommendation 11 on page 58 of the study, it recommended that our government identify the functional requirements for a new centrally located facility for the co-location of a museum and public archive records office.

That's what we did as a next step to this study. We again followed what we were supposed to do and we tendered. Bergmark Guimond Hammarlund Jones, the architect firm from Charlottetown, and hon. member, that's where we are. We are following through with the steps and we are doing our homework before we get into this too far. Unlike the previous government that was just going to build a storage facility with no thought or plan into it, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Mr. M. Currie: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

A question for the hon. Minister of Communities, Cultural Affairs and Labour.

You indicated, and your government, that this was a priority. There already was one going to be built in the community of Murray River and you scuttled those plans. This was a promise of yours. Did you not have the support of your Cabinet colleagues to go forward with construction of a museum?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Communities, Cultural Affairs and Labour.

Ms. Bertram: Madam Speaker, I was proud that our Premier and our minister of treasury, it was in the Capital Budget speech, and we are continuing to be supportive of this endeavour of this project.

Again, we're doing our homework, hon. member. The previous government were going to put this facility in Murray River without any consultation with the heritage community on Prince Edward Island. We conducted the needs analysis, and the first step of that needs analysis is back, which is Bergmark Guimond Hammarlund Jones Architects conducted in consultation with Lundholm Architects. Michael Lundholm is the number one expert on museums across this country. Mr. Lundholm has presented, through the architect firm from Charlottetown, about a dozen different options that the Province of Prince Edward Island can consider, hon. member.

We are doing our homework and we are going to find the best option for Prince Edward Island, and our government is committed to heritage in this province, our government is committed to a provincial museum.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Mr. M. Currie: Madam Speaker, this minister has expressed a number of times over the years how passionate she was about yesterday's treasures and now they're in their third year, they've cancelled this project twice now.

I'm just wondering, minister, why did you break your promise?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Communities, Cultural Affairs and Labour.

Ms. Bertram: Madam Speaker, our government is being responsible to heritage in this province.

Mr. M. Currie: No you're not.

Ms. Bertram: We conducted the study, as I stated. We fixed up the storage facility in West Royalty, unlike the previous administration that let water come through the roof. We have 80,000 artifacts that are being stored in West Royalty.

But as I said, we are working with our consulting firm. We are coming up with the best option for Prince Edward Island. Like the hon. treasurer said in his speech, we are going to be working with the federal government and tying this in to our 150th celebration.

Hon. member, you should know your own history. The PEI Museum and Heritage Foundation was initiated in our centennial

year of 1973. What a wonderful event to do this in 2014, hon. member.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)!

Speaker: Order, please!

Mr. M. Currie: Minister, you have a community that came forward with an extended hand to work with your government to build a museum. Are you prepared to sit down with the community of Stratford and start negotiations for a new museum?

Ms. Dunsford: Good question.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Communities, Cultural Affairs and Labour.

Ms. Bertram: Now, hon. member, that's something that his administration would have done. Madam Speaker, we are not going to go and one side one community against another.

We are taking a recommendation of the study where it's telling us it's centrally located. Now our consultant firm is now going to draw up what we should consider as a government, where this location should be, and we are going to take those factors and then consider. Because it's very exciting. There are many communities which would be in the central communities of central Prince Edward Island that have written to the department who are

expressing their interest. Unlike your previous administration, we are going to take everybody at face value and then use the factors to determine the best location for this provincial museum.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters, final question.

Mr. M. Currie: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Minister, I think a lot of Islanders were extremely embarrassed to read a national paper where you were asking other provinces, you were begging with cap in hand, were begging for money to build a museum for Prince Edward Island, and now you have a community that's prepared to build a museum. Are you prepared to start negotiations with this vibrant and growing community to build a museum?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Communities, Cultural Affairs and Labour.

Mr. M. Currie: (Indistinct) they'll start negotiations tomorrow!

Ms. Bertram: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I don't know where the hon. member is using that, but I've never quoted that. We will be looking to our federal partners, our municipal partners as well, for this important building and the heritage in terms of our future for the Province of Prince Edward Island. We are going to be looking for the best solution, and let's look, though - hon. member, you shouldn't disqualify what

other provinces have done for Prince Edward Island. Look to the 1964 building that is in this wonderful capital city of the Confederation Centre of the Arts.

But we will be looking to our federal partners to initiate this and negotiate the best deal for Prince Edward Island for our provincial museum for Prince Edward Island.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[End of Question Period]