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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
OF  
PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS AND ORAL QUESTION PERIOD  
(PRELIMINARY PROCEEDINGS)

FOR

TUESDAY, 8 DECEMBER 2009

Responses to Questions Taken As Notice

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

**Coverage for living expenses for out-of-province transplant patients (further)**

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

A question was brought to me by the Leader of the Opposition regarding a request for financial assistance through my Department of Health. Unfortunately, I cannot discuss particular patient's situations due to confidentiality, but all requests for financial support are followed up by my department, and we have done that. Discussions are taking place regarding the specific individual that was brought up on the floor of the House on (Indistinct).

**Guidelines for social housing units (further)**

The other one is a question around accessibility guidelines from the Leader of the Opposition. The development and existence of standards is inconsistent across the country and we are working with the department of community and cultural affairs, and working with other provincial jurisdictions, to research where we are today and where we need to go. It's a little more information on those two questions that were asked.

Thank you.

Questions by Members

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**Witnesses at PAC meetings (further)**

**Leader of the Opposition:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

My first question today is for the Premier. Premier, you promised Islanders open, transparent and accountable government. You actually spoke about this before Public Accounts, saying at that time you were wanting and supporting witnesses.

My question to you: Will you support having witnesses being called to Public Accounts, Premier?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier Ghiz:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

I think the Leader of the Opposition has already asked this question in a previous session. Of course, that would be up to the members of the Public Accounts committee, and it would depend on the issue and the circumstances.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**Leader of the Opposition:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I remind the House that open and transparent and accountable government cannot be selective. My question to you, Mr. Premier: Do you support having witnesses at Public Accounts?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier Ghiz:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

I will repeat for the Leader of the Opposition, again, obviously that's up to the members of the Public Accounts committee. I'm sure that they take in all factors depending on what the circumstances of that particular subject happens to be.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**Leader of the Opposition:** Thank you.

To the Premier: Do you still support open, transparent and accountable government?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier Ghiz:** Absolutely.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**Leader of the Opposition:** Again, I'll ask the question directly: In the spirit, the demonstration of open, transparent and accountable government, do you support having witnesses at Public Accounts?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier Ghiz:** Again, Madam Speaker, that's up to the members of the Public Accounts committee, and it would depend on the circumstances of the issue that they're looking into.

If I sat on the Public Accounts Committee, it would depend what the issue was and with regards to the information that we were presented with. I trust all the members sitting on Public Accounts, that they're making decisions in the best possible interest of the province.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**Leader of the Opposition:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

It's surprising the Premier wants to be selective in accountable government.

#### **Auditor General and PAC**

My next question to the Premier. Premier, Public Accounts Committee, the Auditor General had information in his files, in his hands, that he wanted the public to see, yet the MLAs on the committee voted against that. My question to you: Are you supporting the Auditor General disclosing all the information he has available for the public?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier Ghiz:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

I think the Leader of the Opposition is mixing things up again. The Auditor General has the ability to investigate any government department, look into all different files. There's certain information that the Auditor General can't release because of privacy issues, such as we just heard from the minister of health. I trust that

the Auditor General has done a great job with regards to all the investigations that he's done, and I ask the Leader of the Opposition to please respect the Auditor General.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**Leader of the Opposition:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

We're speaking about open, accountable and transparent government. The Auditor General, inside Public Accounts, can disclose - there's no breaking of freedom of information - he can disclose the information. He's sitting with the file, with all the details, on actually all the wrongdoings, and he wants to present all the details in that. Do you support that, Premier?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier Ghiz:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Again, I respect the Auditor General. The Auditor General, if there was any issues with regards to fraud or anything like that, he would have made those known to the general public. He didn't do that.

It's unfortunate that we have a Leader of the Opposition in this province that thinks that wrongdoing was done. Fortunately, the Auditor General has gone through the report and made 20 recommendations, and our government's following through with all those recommendations.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**Leader of the Opposition:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Auditor General has two functions: one is to prove that there is a problem, which he's done, then he turns it over to you as the manager, the CEO of the civil service, to do your job of due diligence to check to the depth of the problem and to take action, as well as the recommendations to make sure it won't happen again.

My question to you: Do you support the Auditor General disclosing all the information that he's sitting with in Public Accounts to the general public? Do you support that?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier Ghiz:** Again, Madam Speaker, I support the Auditor General doing his job.

His job is to look at the files, report back if there's any wrongdoing, or how improvements can be made. The Auditor General has done that and we're following through with all the recommendations.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**Leader of the Opposition:** Madam Speaker, to the Premier.

If you support that, why do you continually allow your government members to vote down the Auditor General bringing forth this information at Public Accounts? Why?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier Ghiz:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

The Auditor General is bringing forth all the information. What the Leader of the Opposition is looking for are personal files. Unfortunately, you cannot disclose those things, it would be a breach. The Public Accounts Committee can ask for that information, but I trust that the Auditor General has done the proper due diligence and that's why he's made the recommendations as he's made. Unfortunately for the Leader of the Opposition, the Auditor General has not reported anything that the Leader of the Opposition thinks is there, like fraud or anything like that.

The Leader of the Opposition can continue to talk to her advisors like Rob MacEachern, but unfortunately, in this province we follow with what the Auditor General in the province says.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**Leader of the Opposition:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

It's actually the Premier that we're discussing here in terms of your role as manager, CEO of the civil service. It's your job to double check the depth of the problem, but we'll go to the next question.

**Mr. Bagnall:** But he never had a job in his

life.

### **Whistle-blower legislation**

**Leader of the Opposition:** Premier, the civil service in this province is deeply concerned about this administration unilaterally making decisions with respect to the civil service wages. To the Premier: Will you confirm to Islanders that your administration will treat civil servants in the province fairly and give them the protection they deserve?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier Ghiz:** Absolutely, Madam Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**Leader of the Opposition:** Madam Speaker, I'm glad to hear that.

The protection of civil servants in the province has to be a priority. Other provinces have put in place so called whistle-blower legislation to protect civil servants who come forward and identify wrongdoings in government. The question to the Premier: If whistle-blower legislation's brought before the House, will you support it?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier Ghiz:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

You want to know what? All people were interviewed by the Auditor General. We

have the Leader of the Opposition here who continues to think, because she's talking to Rob MacEachern all the time, that there was wrongdoing done here, done there. Why doesn't she respect the Auditor General that has looked into all these matters in depth? If the Auditor General had have found anything to do with fraud, or anything that was done illegally, he has an obligation to report that back to this Legislative Assembly and to the Public Accounts committee. He has not done that, so therefore nothing's been done wrong.

Why does the Leader of the Opposition continue to call into question the legitimacy of the Auditor General of this province?

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**Leader of the Opposition:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

It's interesting that the Premier again is selective. If you truly believe in open, accountable and transparent government, then you'd respect whistle-blower legislation. My question to the Premier: Will you support this legislation if it's brought before the House?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier Ghiz:** Obviously, Madam Speaker, I'd look at all legislation.

I'm not exactly sure what the Leader of the Opposition is talking about, but all of our bureaucrats, we actually show respect for them, unlike the Leader of the Opposition of this province that has been chastising

bureaucrats in this province since the day she became elected as Leader of the Opposition. So on this side of the House we respect our bureaucrats. I'd just ask that the Leader of the Opposition would do the same thing.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**Leader of the Opposition:** (Indistinct)  
Premier: Is that a yes, that you support whistle-blower legislation?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier Ghiz:** Madam Speaker, again, the Leader of the Opposition, she can bring in a bill, we'll take a look at it, and if it's a good bill for the people of Prince Edward Island, we will pass it.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**Leader of the Opposition:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Leader of the Opposition:** The Premier won't allow witnesses in front of Public Accounts, he won't deal with the mismanagement of the PNP. So, with this bill, if it's actually brought before the House this session, or in the spring session, will you actually support that bill?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier Ghiz:** Again, Madam Speaker, I've had the same question I don't know how many times, it gets a little tiresome after awhile.

But again, let's look at the facts of the matter here. First, the Leader of the Opposition thought that there was fraud and there were conspiracies, and she was listening to Rob MacEachern, and she was doing all those things.

The Auditor General looked into this file in depth, interviewed everyone that the Leader of the Opposition wanted the Auditor General to interview. He came back with a report: No instances of fraud, no instances of conspiracies or anything like that. There were 20 recommendations. Our government's following along with it.

I just ask the Leader of the Opposition, first of all, to get her facts straight, and second of all, please have respect for the Auditor General in this province.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**Leader of the Opposition:** Madam Speaker, it's interesting that the Premier is comfortable with Brooke MacMillan and Neil Stewart breaking rules, as well as MLAs participating in the program.

We're going to see just how serious the Premier and his government is about protecting civil servants when they have information to share. I'm submitting a motion to introduce the bill *Public Interest Disclosure Act*, otherwise known as whistleblower legislation.

### **Gar Andrew report**

My next question is to the minister of education. Mr. Minister, you've had a report

in your hands since December 2008, the Gar Andrew second report. When are you going to be tabling that report and making it available to the general public?

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

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

We've seen a recurring pattern here. It started probably last spring and then last fall and again this spring where we have the Leader of the Opposition continuing to attack the character of senior bureaucrats in this province. Whether that be the CEO of Innovation PEI, whether that be the CEO of the PEI Liquor Control Commission, whether it be the Auditor General, whether it be the conflict commissioner. Over and over and over again.

It really led to me questioning as to: Does the Leader of the Opposition really believe that there's been so much wrongdoing or does she have some form of a personal vendetta against these people here on Prince Edward Island?

Last Friday I received an e-mail from a CEO of PEI Business Development and I beg your indulgence, Madam Speaker, while I share that e-mail with you:

“In light of the continued attacks on my character by the leader of the opposition, I feel compelled to put in writing the following matter which we have previously discussed. This event occurred in fall 2008.

“-I received a call on my cell phone, some

time after 5:00. I was at the office.

“- the caller said hi this is [the Leader of the Opposition] and I want to come meet with you to speak about PNP. She said she had heard good things about me, that I was honest and a hard worker. I indicated I would be happy to contact my minister and her and I and the minister could sit down.

“- she indicated that I should meet with her alone as she had information that was going to the RCMP and that my name was involved and I should be concerned.

“- I agreed to meet, as her statement concerned me as I certainly would not be involved in anything illegal and I wanted to see what this obviously incorrect information was.

“- [The Leader of the Opposition] indicated she would be coming to Charlottetown later and could we meet then. I indicated yes, she could meet me at my office. She indicated she would call me when she was near my office and she would pick me up and we could go somewhere.

“- sometime later that evening she picked me up at my office and drove to Victoria Park. She again indicated she had heard good things about me and wanted to give me the chance to tell her about pnp before the ‘troubles’ begin.

“- I informed her that nothing illegal was going on. I explained the history of pnp and the rationale for the various changes as the program matured, and the background of why the Federal Government was changing the immigration regulations.

“- She inquired about Bill Dow. I informed her that he was IIDI’s lawyer, nothing more.

“- I then asked what [it] was that was being sent to the RCMP. She indicated something to the effect that she wasn’t sure, but there were rumours. She seemed bothered that I had not given her some great revelation of wrong doing.

“- I then had her take me back to the office.

“- I remain shocked that the leader of the opposition used scare tactics to try to get information from me. What she did was very inappropriate.

“- I also cannot understand why she continues to attack my character in the house and in the media. I can only surmise that she has a vendetta against me because I didn’t give her what she was looking for.”

This is an e-mail dated to me from the CEO of PEI Business Development last Friday.

**Some Hon. Members:** Shame, shame!

**Mr. Campbell:** I think we know now why the Leader of the Opposition is so worried about oath of confidentiality. Whistle-blower protection. Here’s a lady that picks up a senior bureaucrat in the province, takes him to Victoria Park at night looking for confidential information with threats of RCMP involvement.

**Some Hon. Members:** Shame, Shame!

**Mr. Campbell:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**Leader of the Opposition:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I'll redirect my question to the minister of education that I asked. Was the second Gar Andrew Report that you had in your hands since December of 2008, where is that report?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, and Attorney General.

**Mr. Greenan:** Madam Speaker, government has met its commitment to fully implement the existing Gar Andrew staffing model in September of 2008.

We did receive a report. We had requested that this gentleman do a review of the existing model and that was indeed carried out. The timing for budget process - when we received the report, it was not there for the current school year and we will be looking at it in the near future.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**Leader of the Opposition:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

To the same minister. You had the same report since December, it's our understanding that this report supports the

instructional model that's now in place for teachers. Will you confirm that you're going to stick with that type of instructional model?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, and Attorney General.

**Mr. Greenan:** I can inform the House that we are currently at the instructional level of the current report and we will be sticking with the current report.

Thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**Leader of the Opposition:** Madam Speaker, to the education minister.

It's our understanding there is some concern from some of the educators that there may be some teaching positions being cut from the Eastern School District. Will you confirm then, if you're sticking to that instructional model, that those positions will not be cut for the next two or three years?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, and Attorney General.

**Mr. Greenan:** Madam Speaker, we as a government have certainly been in support of education here in this province.

We have done a number of significant things in support of education since we took power

in Prince Edward Island. We are moving kindergarten into the public school system, something that has been sought after by the teachers in the province, the people moving to this province wondering: Well, it's not part of the current education system, what's this about? So we're moving into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We're the last jurisdiction in the country to have kindergarten in the public education system.

We are doing all we can with what we have to provide the best services for educating our children here in this province.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**Leader of the Opposition:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

To the education minister: Does that include keeping all those teaching positions using the same instructional model in place so that there are no layoffs? Does that include that? To the same minister.

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, and Attorney General.

**Mr. Greenan:** Madam Speaker, we are in a situation where we have declining enrolments across the province and we have fewer students coming into the school system.

We have been able to maintain a very good

complement of teachers and support services for our education system. We as a government will continue to do the best we can for our students.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**Leader of the Opposition:** (Indistinct), Madam Speaker, it sounds like education will be cutting teaching positions then.

#### **AIDS PEI and needle exchange program**

To the minister of health, my question to the minister: Will AIDS PEI - when are they going to be asked to participate in implementation of the needle exchange program?

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

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

As I have rose in the House and acknowledged the work by AIDS PEI, by their executive director Mark Hanlon. I know that Dr. Heather Morrison and my staff have met with Mark Hanlon on a number of occasions. I know that we work very closely with them. We heard loud and clear when we took over the needle exchange program last spring that they had some concerns with the site in Ellis Bros.

We certainly listened to them and were pleased to announce last week that we'd be relocating the needle exchange program

downtown which is a little more conducive and a little less threatening for individuals who are acquiring the needle exchange program.

I certainly will go on record in the House that we want to continue to work with AIDS PEI and to dialogue with them. I know that there is some ongoing work, and I spoke to Dr. Morrison as early as yesterday and indicated that there was a wish by AIDS PEI to continue further discussion and dialogue. So I'll continue to monitor that and foster those discussions as we move forward.

Thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**Anonymous HIV testing**

**Leader of the Opposition:** Thank you.

To the same minister, they would really appreciate participating in the implementation, but their next question is: Will the department approve the policy for anonymous HIV testing?

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

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

I will take that question under advisement and bring it back to my staff and see where discussions have been to date with that and bring it back to the floor of the House.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**Leader of the Opposition:** Thank you. I'll look forward to seeing that back tomorrow, if that's possible.

**Charge for oxygen**

To the health minister. I had a call from a person on Friday. Her mother is in a nursing care facility. The mother's now being charged \$47.95 for oxygen when she leaves the facility to go to mass. Is that a new policy and is that going to be in place from here on in?

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

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

We do have an oxygen program that is funded through the Department of Social Services and Seniors. I can't speak specifically about this particular case because we do get a volume. I know that the department does subsidize the oxygen program, but there is a formal application process through their family physician. I'm sure if the family follows through with the application process - there are services and programs available - that they'll get the support that they need, Madam Speaker.

Thank you.

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

**Mileage for transferred education employees**

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

Question for the minister of education. In the process of transferring 100-plus employees for the department of education from Charlottetown to Summerside -

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. M. Currie:** - it's my understanding that they would receive mileage, somewhere around \$38 a day. Is that for a whole year, minister? Is that correct that they'd receive that mileage for a whole year?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, and Attorney General.

**Mr. Greenan:** Madam Speaker, the details of that agreement that would be as a contractual obligation that government would have with its employees, I don't have all the particulars, but I can get back to the member with the particulars.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

**Travel time deducted from work schedule**

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

That would amount to somewhere around \$20,000 a week, I guess, for that mileage.

But it's my understanding also, minister, that you agreed that their travel time would also be deducted from their daily work schedule. Is that true?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, and Attorney General.

**Mr. Greenan:** Madam Speaker, since the announcement of the relocation of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, it has been well received by the citizens of Summerside and in Prince County. It's a very positive move on our government's part. Now the actual site location obviously has been decided. It is in the historic Holman building in downtown Summerside. It had caused a great deal of excitement in Summerside. We now have 25 people located there and the excitement is really alive in Summerside.

So the movement of this government department to Summerside is going over extremely well in Prince County and especially in downtown Summerside.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

**Mr. M. Currie:** Question for the same minister. It's also very expensive. I'll ask again: Is the travel time that these 100-plus employees use to travel from Charlottetown to Summerside now, is that deducted from their daily work schedule?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, and

Attorney General.

**Mr. Greenan:** Madam Speaker, I had, when I stood earlier, mentioned that there are 25 employees now working out of the Holman building in Summerside.

Those 25 people used to travel from as far west as Bloomfield to Charlottetown to work. They no longer do that. They now travel to Summerside and they, I'd like to inform the House, are very pleased with the move of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development to Summerside.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

#### **Travel package for teachers and admin staff**

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

I'm sure the minister also treats all his employees with the same respect. I'm just wondering now, minister, when you took great pride in closing eight schools in rural Prince Edward Island, did you offer the same package to those teachers that are now going to transfer to other schools, and administrative staff? Do they now also receive mileage because they were transferred to another school?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, and

Attorney General.

**Mr. Greenan:** Madam Speaker, it is my understanding that teachers - and I was a teacher for 32 years and -

**An Hon. Member:** (Indistinct).

**Mr. Greenan:** Thank you.

If you are reassigned in a contract then there is an obligation, and we can check that out with the PEI Teachers Federation, that that would be assigned and people would know that if they were reassigned then if it was outside a certain radius there would be financial remuneration for a certain period of time.

Thank you.

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

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

So what I understand, minister, is that all teachers and administrative staff will now receive mileage claims for their transfers.

#### **Transfer of phone service**

Question to the same minister. Minister, it's my understanding that you are also in negotiations now to transfer the phone service in this new department of education in Summerside from Aliant to EastLink. Is that true?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, and

Attorney General.

**Mr. Greenan:** Madam Speaker, I'm really amazed at the research that the hon. member from -

**An Hon. Member:** He was up in Summerside all weekend.

**Mr. Greenan:** Well, he should know if he was in Summerside all weekend that the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development moving to Summerside is a very positive move.

The hon. member - and I'll get him to repeat the question because I've forgotten it.

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

**An Hon. Member:** Do you remember?

**Mr. M. Currie:** The minister is right on the ball today, Madam Speaker.

My question for the minister. It's my understanding that you are in negotiations to transfer the phone service for the department of education that you've now transferred to Summerside, and you're asking that it be transferred from Aliant to EastLink. Will you confirm if that's correct?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, and Attorney General.

**Mr. Greenan:** Madam Speaker, in response to the member, I am not aware of any negotiations specifically.

I can get back to the hon. member with that information.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Evangeline-Miscouche.

### Update on Aging at Home strategy

**Mr. Gallant:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

My question is to the Minister of Health, Social Services and Seniors. Last February the minister introduced Aging at Home strategy in Summerside. Can the minister update the House on where we are with this strategy to date?

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

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

Coming in to government two and a half years ago we identified a high volume of seniors, an aging population. Very pleased to announce that we've made substantial investments in the Aging at Home Strategy and we have vision and direction. Obviously the investment in the manor replacement program - we announced just recently in the capital budget that we've expedited two manors in rural Prince Edward Island. Certainly very pleased.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. D. Currie:** Also very pleased, Madam Speaker, that we finally invested - we were the lowest funded home care program in

Canada.

We made substantial investments in working on pilots right now to make sure that seniors deserve the support they do need to keep them at home, and made investments in additional long-term care beds. The strategy is moving and we're pleased to provide the respect and dignity that seniors do deserve in our province.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Evangeline-Miscouche.

**Mr. Gallant:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Supplementary question to the same minister. With this strategy in place, will the minister be adding additional investments in home care for Island seniors right across the province?

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

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

Our investment in the last fiscal year was \$1.5 million. We were pleased to add in two and a half years an additional 50 long-term care beds across the province as well as, from the Member from O'Leary-Inverness, 15 new long-term care beds. So we are moving our policy direction to address the needs for seniors and provide supports. Also, to mention the Seniors Emergency Home Repair Program. It's been a very popular program to keep seniors in their home.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from O'Leary-Inverness.

### **Internal trade agreement**

**Mr. Henderson:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

My question is to the Minister of Agriculture. During a legislative committee tour recently, it was brought to my attention that there is a fair amount of concern within the dairy industry, as well as other supply managed commodities. I've heard from both producers in O'Leary-Inverness and processors in regards to the wording of chapter 9 of the agreement of internal trade within Canada.

Can the minister tell us what the province is now doing and how close PEI is to signing this agreement?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Agriculture.

**Mr. Webster:** Madam Speaker, every number of years we do review our agreement on internal trade, which is how all the Canadian provinces trade with each other with respect to everything from steel to dry goods, clothing, labour and agricultural products.

This is a very complex issue to interpret the text that ends up getting on the table, if you like. We do respect our supply managed sectors here on PEI. They are profitable, they have worked with for agriculture for a number of years. That's a key priority to make sure this agreement does not erode or

damage that in any way in the short term and long term.

We have solicited the efforts of constitutional lawyers, trade lawyers and experts around this issue and we are trying to come to a conclusion as an industry and as a province to make sure that this AIT agreement is good for PEI on a go forward basis. At that point then, the document then will be going to Executive Council for approval.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** The hon. Member from O'Leary-Inverness.

**Effect of trade enhancement agreement**

**Mr. Henderson:** Supplementary, Madam Speaker, to the same minister.

Can the minister inform the Legislature what implications the trade enhancement agreement will have on the internal trade agreement as it pertains to agriculture in this province?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Agriculture.

**Mr. Webster:** Madam Speaker, in 2006 there was an interim trade enhanced agreement, which is called the T Agreement, which was signed by PEI.

That agreement was signed by all the provinces west of Ontario, which is Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, BC and the Yukon - sorry, Northwest Territories - in 2006. That agreement was signed by the Member from Montague-Kilmuir, when he

was sitting in as Minister of Agriculture.

Our staff, and myself, are challenged to try to understand why that agreement was signed. All those provinces -

**Some Hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Webster:** - want to tear down supply management in Canada. From Ontario east we all respect supply management. It's done well for us.

Anyway, this agreement does exist, and PEI was a signatory to that agreement, and we'll have to see how that unfolds as time goes on.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

**Loading sand from beaches**

**Mr. Bagnall:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

My first question is for the minister of environment today. Minister, as you know, farmers can take their tractor and trailer and drive down onto the shore and get a load of sand for private use. The problem is, Madam Minister, they have to hand shovel it on instead of being able to use their front-end loader of their tractor.

Will you (Indistinct) a bill to allow farmers - because a lot of them are older, and I don't want to see anybody having a heart attack shoveling on a load of sand - will you allow them to use a front-end loader of their tractor to do this? Because the tractor is

already on the beach with the trailer. Can you allow this to happen?

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

**Mr. Brown:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I want to thank the member for that question.

We have been receiving a lot of calls from farmers that have been doing this practice for a number of years. We have to balance the environmental issues with the farming community also. I agree that the farming community is a great community and they're showing stewardship every day. They go out into the fields, and out into the workplace, in the environment. Our farmers are very environmentally conscious in this Island, and I applaud them for the acceptance of every legislation that came forward to protect the environment. I want to state that first of all.

We are reviewing that request, Madam, Mr. Minister - Mr. Member -

**An Hon. Member:** He's not a minister.

**Mr. Brown:** Well, he called me "madam."

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Brown:** I don't - never mind.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Brown:** Strike that. Madam Speaker, no, we've had a lot of requests, we're reviewing the requests, and we'll have an answer for that in a couple of weeks.

Thank you very much.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

**Mr. Bagnall:** I want to thank the minister for that because we're not asking for high macks to come on there, we're not asking for big loaders, we're just - the tractors are there anyway, they think they can be used.

### **Future of beef plant**

My next question is to the Minister of Agriculture. Minister, in the past two years we've seen a decline of beef cows in the province by 32.5%. The national rate is running about 10.1%. Minister, I know we're in tough times in the beef industry, and in this province. Can you tell us, at that rate of decline, how long are we going to be able to keep our beef plant in operation with a 16% decline a year?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Agriculture.

**Mr. Webster:** Madam Speaker, we're certainly concerned about the well-being of our red meat sector on Prince Edward Island.

There's been some major challenges there right across Canada. Beef in Alberta is selling very cheaply these days and those prices we have to match. We've had some major challenges as well at the beef plant, and those were there two and a half years ago. We are making major improvements there. We were able to get the \$2 million from each province of Atlantic Canada, which is New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and PEI.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Webster:** We've got a new board of directors in place right at the moment. We are reducing the losses substantially and there is fairly good progress been made. We have our beef enhancement program in place right now where we're helping farmers with genetics. We are putting a significant amount of money in agriculture in the red meat sector, both beef and pork, to go forward, and we are there for the industry, and doing the best we can as a small government.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

**Mr. Bagnall:** That's good, and I understand that the beef plant is getting some support, which is good. I applaud you for that. No problem with that.

### Help for beef producers

But what are you doing to put some money in the beef growers' pockets? Because if they don't get some support they're not going to be there. The reports are showing that in Atlantic Canada they've been living on their assets for the last three years, and they're running out. They can't afford to be there unless they get some support from government. What are you going to do to help the beef producers in this province?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Agriculture.

**Mr. Webster:** Madam Speaker, by assisting the beef plant to make sure there is a market

out there is very important to us.

We are flowing some dollars into different programs within the beef industry, which we believe is helping. We're encouraging cow-calf operations to continue. One major challenge that we did have was the fact that feed costs are higher on Prince Edward Island, and that is a major challenge for us. But we hope at the end of the day we will have a solid beef industry once the market turns around. But the market nationally and internationally has to turn around sooner or later.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

**Mr. Bagnall:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Obviously he's not putting anything into the beef farmers' pockets to help them because he would have said if he were.

### Beef plant freezer breakdown

The next question - and I applaud the minister, he was saying that the new manager at the plant is doing a great job, and bringing forward a really good - cutting down the losses. Mr. Minister, can you tell the House - there was a freezer breakdown at the Albany beef plant this past summer. Can you tell us how good a job your management team did of causing a major problem, dealing with that major problem?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Agriculture.

**Mr. Webster:** Madam Speaker, I toured the

plant on a couple of occasions, and the plant is a well-built plant.

The technology in there is up to standards. It has to be because it is a federally inspected beef plant, which allows beef to ship inter-provincially within Canada, and the USA. So it is a state-of-the-art plant, if you like. There can be malfunctions from time to time, or equipment failure, and our staff up there would get on that issue as soon as possible. Any mechanical device can fail from time to time, and the issue is to get it repaired as soon as possible and keep losses as low as possible.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

**Mr. Bagnall:** Thank you. Your management committee couldn't have been doing too well when you lost 125 carcasses of meat in one week because of a malfunction in your freezers. Why would not staff not pick up that your freezers are broken down before you would lose 125 carcasses of beef?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Agriculture.

**Mr. Webster:** Madam Speaker, our new team is very strong, the high quality staff within the plant, and the plant is moving along very well.

From time to time there will be issues, and this apparently did cause a problem. I can't verify if we had business interruption insurance or not. I will verify that when I get back to the office, Madam Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

**Mr. Bagnall:** Minister, can you tell us who was responsible for taking out the 125 carcasses of beef that were lost because of the poor management?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Agriculture.

**Mr. Webster:** Madam Speaker, I don't think any individual can predict a mechanical failure within a system, so I don't believe it's poor quality workmanship, as the hon. member indicates, it was apparently an incident that happened, and we're working our way through that.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir, final question.

**Mr. Bagnall:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The question was: Who hauled the carcasses out of there? Who was given that contract?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Agriculture.

**Mr. Webster:** Madam Speaker, I'll take that under advisement and find the name of the person who removed the so-called product.

Thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

[End of Question Period]