



Session: 3/63

Date: 8 April 2010

No: 16

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
OF  
PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS AND ORAL QUESTION PERIOD  
(PRELIMINARY PROCEEDINGS)

FOR

THURSDAY, 8 APRIL 2010



Responses to Questions Taken As Notice

Questions by Members

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

**Cornwall bypass land**

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

My first question is for the minister of transportation and public works. It's long been known that you have been holding out selling your land for the Cornwall bypass because you were waiting for a big price. Will you tell the House today if you have sold your land for the bypass?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

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

As the hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters knows, before he even asks that question, I'm handling the file on the Cornwall bypass. We know that the hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters not only once but twice filed conflict of interest complaints against the hon. minister of transportation and public works. Both times were denied.

Obviously we are continuing to progress with negotiations with the federal government for the Cornwall bypass, and we know that the Cornwall bypass initiative was started under the previous government. We know that there was a plebiscite in the community of Cornwall and we'll continue

to work diligently on this file.

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

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

If the Premier is in charge of this file now, can the Premier please tell me if you have negotiated an option to purchase the remaining pieces of property from the minister of transportation and public works?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

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

We obviously have not finalized anything as we're still working on negotiations with the federal government with regards to the Cornwall bypass. I know that there has been another route looked into as well that is perhaps a little less cost, but the community in Cornwall says, as of now, that they have some issues with that, and we'll continue to work on this file.

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

**Mr. M. Currie:** Madam Speaker, I'm a little surprised because if they're in Ottawa negotiating for funding for a project, you'd think they'd have the cost estimates all done.

So I'm just - you have done no negotiations for the final pieces of land with the minister of transportation? No option to purchase anything on this property?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

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

Again, this file has been worked on I believe since 2001. No, even prior to that, 1999 I think it goes back to when it is. We know that there is still some land to acquire. I'm not sure, we may have acquired it. I'll check into it for the hon. member. But again, we do not have the final dollars in place yet for the Cornwall bypass to continue. I encourage the hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters to lobby his Conservative colleagues in Ottawa for the importance of this. We hope that we'll have an announcement at some point, but as of now we do not.

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

**Mr. M. Currie:** Madam Speaker, a question to the Premier, then.

Since you're in charge of the file, can you please tell us from what account in the department of transportation you'll be accessing the money to pay for this land when you purchase?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier Ghiz:** The same pot as you would have used when you were in power.

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

**Mr. M. Currie:** Madam Speaker, it's my understanding that the minister of

transportation is the only one that can access this file.

So you have removed the minister from all access to this file?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier Ghiz:** Yes.

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

**Mr. M. Currie:** Could you please tell us, Premier, then, how many meetings you've had with your federal officials over funding for this project and who you met with?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

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

I've met with Gail Shea on it numerous times. I've also talked with Minister Ashfield on it. Numerous meetings. We know that from the official level it's something where there's been meetings numerous times on it.

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

**Mr. M. Currie:** Madam Speaker, I'm wondering if the Premier is going to reveal here today who is actually going to sit down with the minister and negotiate a price.

Can you tell us who in government is going to sit down and buy the final parcels of land to complete the Cornwall bypass?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier Ghiz:** Our department.

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

**Mr. M. Currie:** The Premier's office, is that what you mean? The Premier's office? Or are you going to buy the land from the minister, or are you going to have the department of transportation buy the land from the minister that he's the minister of?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

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

Obviously the government will be dealing with that. Everything - it would be placed in blind trust and the minister would have no knowledge of that information whatsoever, and the minister who is responsible for that file at the end of the day is myself.

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

**Mr. M. Currie:** So you'll be the one that will be sitting down with the minister to actually buy the land?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier Ghiz:** (Indistinct). I feel like saying, Madam Speaker, and I will say: What do you think?

Of course not. Obviously the minister will not be participating in that as he is a minister of the Crown. That is placed in

blind trust. We know that he is also not handling the file either. It would be no different than how when the former minister of transportation and public works would have handled files in terms of purchasing a property. At the end of the day, none of our politicians are sitting down with the people right across the table from them negotiating a price. We have assessments that go and do that, get fair market value, and we come back and we either approve it or we don't. That approval process will come back to myself, Madam Speaker.

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

#### **Cornwall bypass potential route**

**Mr. M. Currie:** Seeing, Madam Speaker, that the Premier is in charge of this file, and he did announce a couple of weeks ago that you have changed to a new, cheaper route, could you please describe to Islanders what that new route looks like?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

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

The new route is a route that I guess engineers within the department of transportation and public works have been looking at as an option if the federal government does not step up to the plate with the amount of money that we need for the first option. As a government that does its due diligence, we're just making sure we cover off all angles.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from

Georgetown-St. Peters.

**Mr. M. Currie:** Madam Speaker, I'm going to have to ask the question again because what we want to hear is: Explain to us what the route is now that you've drawn out, and will you bring a map back?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Mr. M. Currie:** Describe, describe your route.

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

I'll come back with the map if we are able to disclose it in the Legislature.

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

**Mr. M. Currie:** Madam Speaker, it's my understanding that the new route will involve going through more land of the minister's.

Is that true?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier Ghiz:** I have no idea, Madam Speaker.

When we look at these routes - perhaps when the most political minister in the history of the province of transportation and public works who was responsible for firing 800 people -

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

**Premier Ghiz:** - was doing deals he would go through and look and see: Okay, who owns this parcel, who owns that parcel? I don't do that. I have no idea. For all I know, the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters would own the land, and quite frankly I wouldn't care if he did.

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

**Mr. M. Currie:** Madam Speaker, that was a fantastic answer for a guy that says he's in charge of the file, and he gets up and he says he has no idea what the new route is, and he was on t.v. explaining that there was a new route.

I just want to know if that new route that you've changed now to go through Cornwall is going to involve buying more land from the minister of transportation. You said you were in charge of the file. Get up and tell us.

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

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

Obviously -

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

**Premier Ghiz:** - the new route. I was not on t.v. explaining it, so the member's already mixed up there. What the issue is is how much money is going to be available through the Atlantic Gateway? If there's an amount of money that does not provide enough for the province to be able to build the Cornwall bypass to the specifics that the community of Cornwall is looking at, our

engineers and architects within the department of transportation and public works looked at an alternative route so that we would be able to help out the community of Cornwall. If the community of Cornwall is not interested at the end of the day, and we don't get the dollars we want, obviously that money will move towards another project.

I suggest that the hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters sit down with his Conservative federal counterparts, if he wants to, and lobby them so that we can get the amount of money that we need to do the Cornwall bypass.

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

**Mr. M. Currie:** Madam Speaker, it's clear, I guess, that the Premier is not in charge of this file because if he were he'd indicate to us at what time did you decide that you were going to change the route and cancel the bridge and then move and go through this other route.

When did you make that decision to do that?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier Ghiz:** We haven't made that decision.

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

**Mr. M. Currie:** Madam Speaker, the government of the day has already gone out to the town of Cornwall and has displayed to them a second, cheaper route.

So you're in charge of the file, you must have made that decision to do that. Is that true?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier Ghiz:** I allowed our bureaucrats to go out and look for any options necessary with the amount of dollars that we can receive from the federal government. We're hoping that we'll be able to come out with the option number one, Madam Speaker, if the federal government steps up to the plate with the amount of dollars that we need.

If they don't, I thought it was only courteous, as one of our larger and fastest growing municipalities in the province, to give them other options in case the federal government did not step up. But I hope that the hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters, whenever he's talking to his Conservative colleagues, that he lobbies on behalf of the Cornwall bypass.

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

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

### **Cornwall bypass and involvement of minister**

**Mr. M. Currie:** Madam Speaker, the Premier has been a big promoter of this project for the last three years, the minister of transportation has been a big promoter for the last three years.

It involves buying land in the minister's riding. It involves buying land from him. What I want to know from the Premier, if

you can stand up here today and tell us, with a straight face, that the minister is not involved in this project one iota.

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier Ghiz:** (Indistinct), Madam Speaker.

To point things out on how ridiculous and really down in the dirt or trash that the hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters really is here, it was he who designed, when he was in power, the original route.

So I'm not exactly sure where he's going here, but obviously he's not concerned with good policy discussions. He's concerned with dirt, Madam Speaker.

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

**Mr. M. Currie:** Madam Speaker, all the Premier ever indicated to Islanders was he was going to be open and transparent.

Everything wants to be done in behind closed doors and under the cover of darkness, but all I wanted was some proper answers.

### **Money removed from capital budget**

A question then to the minister. Maybe the minister of transportation can answer this. It's my understanding that there's been \$3 million removed from the capital budget to buy land. Can you tell me if that decision has been made?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

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

I'm not exactly sure if money has been removed to buy land. If it's been removed to buy land, in relation to the Cornwall bypass, obviously that would fall under my jurisdiction, or if it's been removed to buy other land across the province I'll allow the minister of transportation and public works to answer that question.

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

### **Process behind purchase of land**

**Mr. M. Currie:** Madam Speaker, maybe the Premier then could - he's got no process in place here, it seems, to buy the land.

Maybe he's prepared to put a panel in place of two or three qualified individuals that buy land and be open and transparent and show what the price of the land is and get it bought. Instead of trying to this in behind closed doors, maybe you can come up with a process that will do that so all Islanders would feel comfortable, instead of doing it behind closed doors.

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier Ghiz:** I'm not sure, Madam Speaker.

First he was accusing me of sitting down and negotiating with landowners. Now he's saying that it's being done behind closed doors, but somebody should be doing it. It's the same process. We have -

**Mr. M. Currie:** (Indistinct) file.

**Premier Ghiz:** - assessment people within our department that go out - absolutely I'm in charge of the file, but I'm not going to go out and interfere when it comes to purchasing land.

We know that the hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters, when he was in power, that's what he did. We don't do that. We allow our bureaucrats to go through a fair assessment process, and they'll come to us with a number. If that number fits within our budget, we'll approve it.

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

**Mr. M. Currie:** A question to the Premier then: Premier, will you bring back to the House, then, an option to purchase this property from the minister and resolve it once and for all then, and we'll settle it. Why don't you do that?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier Ghiz:** The hon. member can come look at any files he wants. He used to work on this file himself. I'll table anything that I'm able to table in the Legislature, Madam Speaker.

Obviously I can't disclose private information. But everything is done above board. It's been the same process as when the minister was there. There's been no interference whatsoever, and I'm not really sure where his line of questioning is pointing to.

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

**Mr. M. Currie:** Madam Speaker, all we're wanting is that this process be open and transparent.

That's what the Premier always indicated he was going to do. All we're asking for, if there is a need to purchase this property, then do it in an open and transparent manner and provide Islanders, the taxpayers that are going to pay for it, with an option to purchase the property. That's all. Why don't you do that?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier Ghiz:** It will be done the same way we handle every other piece of property in the province, Madam Speaker.

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

### **Lobster prices**

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

My first question today will be to the minister of fisheries. Mr. Minister, as you are aware, the lobster industry on Prince Edward Island is extremely important to our economy, and the fishermen depend on fair prices in order to sustain their businesses. In the last number of years, Mr. Minister, we've seen prices paid for lobster off the province higher than what's being paid to our Island lobster fishers. Can you tell me Mr. Minister, what is your government doing to ensure our Island fishermen receive

fair prices?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Fisheries, Aquaculture and Rural Development.

**Mr. LeClair:** Madam Speaker, fair prices is a good statement to make as far as all the primary sectors are going.

We want all of our primary sectors to get a fair price for what they produce. The fishery is no different. Lobster, certainly we're looking at all the aspects and all the innuendos that are happening across the Maritimes and across the States and everywhere else, as far as price goes, and it's all over the place. With the dollar the way it is and the markets the way they are right now, the economy, prices are low.

We are working with the PEIFA and all the associations, the processors' association as well, to look at the best value for the product that comes ashore. We certainly are working towards getting the best value for it.

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

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

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

To the same minister. Mr. Minister, the fishing season's getting very close, only a few days away. Island fishermen still have no idea what the price is going to be, and they still have no idea, Mr. Minister, what your government is doing to help them.

Mr. Minister, what action will your government take this month to ensure that

Island fishermen receive fair pay for their catch?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Fisheries, Aquaculture and Rural Development.

**Mr. LeClair:** Madam Speaker, like I said, we were talking with industry and looking at prices across the board, right across from the States, Canada, in the world.

We've had marketing initiatives throughout China, across Canada. We've put a number of initiatives in in the past year. This spring is no different than other springs when usually the price is set when the lobster starts to come to shore.

The issues are a little different this year. We don't have the amount of popsicles in storage and things like that. The product, processors have been telling me, has moved very well. We don't have those issues. So I am looking forward to - I'm looking forward, and hopefully we'll have a better price when lobsters come ashore.

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

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

To the same minister. There are several government members working in government today. Have they brought this issue to you, Mr. Minister, with ideas of how to increase the price of lobster and recognize the importance that fishermen get a good price for their catch? Have they brought this issue to your attention?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Fisheries,

Aquaculture and Rural Development.

**Mr. LeClair:** Yes, Madam Speaker, they have brought the issue.

I talk to our MLAs in government on a regular basis, very regular. They certainly don't need to channel it through the opposition to tell me what's going on in the industry, and I certainly hear it across the Island from fishers themselves.

As you may not have noticed, when we came in government we dedicated a department to the fishery. We started that off, made a special department dedicated to fisheries. When you were in this department it was agriculture and fisheries. We have our own fisheries portfolio right now. The reason for that is so we could concentrate more on the fishery and more on the industry. It's very important to Prince Edward Island.

Some of the things that some of my MLAs have brought forward to us, since we made this department, like the Future Fisher Program we put in, the rationalization program that we have completed by the end of March -

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

**Mr. LeClair:** We have \$4 million into product development and marketing. We changed the peddlers' license, something that you couldn't do, and I don't know why. It was such a simple thing to do.

**Some Hon. Members:** (Indistinct).

**Mr. LeClair:** We changed the criteria for

buyers' licenses on the wharf. Basically, everything that the fishing industry asked for, we've accomplished.

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

**Mr. LeClair:** We have \$27 million into a low-interest loan program that was asked for for years.

**Mr. Bagnall:** Could you repeat that, hon. -

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

**Mr. LeClair:** Certainly I'll repeat that. Twenty-seven million dollars into a low-interest loan program for fishers to allow them to fish.

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

**Mr. LeClair:** All these initiatives have been brought forward by our MLAs and by the fishing industry, and with a dedicated department to the fishery we've accomplished them all.

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

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

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

I guess I would start off on that one, yes, when I was minister of agriculture and fisheries lobster fishermen on Prince Edward Island were getting 5.50 and \$4.50 or 4.75 a pound.

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

**Mr. Bagnall:** Under your leadership, under your capable leadership, they've gone from 5.50 to \$3.00 a pound. So you've done a great job, minister.

So minister, you can talk about all you've done in the past. What are you going to do for the lobster fishermen today that are suffering for price? What are you going to do to help these guys get a better price? Are you going to sit on your thumb and do nothing? Tell us what you're going to do.

You talk to the PEIFA. They're the fishermen themselves that are looking. They can't do nothing for price. They're a great lobby group, they're a great organization that works hard for the industry, but they don't buy the lobster. What have you done to increase the price for lobster fishing in this province?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Fisheries, Aquaculture and Rural Development.

**Mr. LeClair:** Madam Speaker, we've done numerous things, and I don't want to keep repeating them, but I can assure you one thing.

**Some Hon. Members:** (Indistinct).

**An Hon. Member:** Please do.

**Mr. LeClair:** The price that you had when you were fisheries minister, I assure you, that you had nothing to do with it.

**An Hon. Member:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. LeClair:** That wasn't a price that was set by you, I can assure you that.

All the initiatives we've done - and we've put a lot of money into marketing. We went across Canada in a marketing initiative and it was very well received and we are getting sale for our products and recognition across Canada, across the United States, into China last fall. All these initiatives we were doing to increase the price. We're not doing it for our benefit, but for the benefit of the fishery. It is working. All the programs I talked to you about a minute ago are all for the long term. This will be for a long-term viable industry.

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

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

**Mr. Bagnall:** Thank you.

This question to go to the Premier. Mr. Premier, some of your MLAs took a proposal to you that wanted to do a private member's bill and they asked if they could bring a private member's bill forward, and you said no. They were looking at trying to receive fair prices with everybody in the region.

Why did you turn down your private members and why did you go against the fishermen? Why wouldn't you support them and bring a bill in so they would get fair prices?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

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

Our MLAs come to me all the time with

ideas. They come to me and they say: The previous government would not introduce a low-interest loan program. Can you please introduce a low-interest loan program? I say: Absolutely. Let's put \$27 million into a low-interest loan program.

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

**Premier Ghiz:** They say: The previous government wouldn't let them have peddlers' licenses. Can you please introduce peddlers' licenses? I say: Absolutely, let's introduce peddlers' licenses.

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

**Premier Ghiz:** They say: The previous government enacted a 30-day moratorium for buyers. Will you please reduce that down to three days so we can get more buyers on the wharf? I said: Absolutely.

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

**Premier Ghiz:** Madam Speaker, they've been asking on the south side for a rationalization program for the last number of years.

The previous government said: No, we can't do it, we need the feds to do it. We took a leadership position and we initiated a rationalization program and now it is in place.

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

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

**Mr. Bagnall:** Thank you. The Premier is

very good at getting up and talking about everything but the question.

The question was asked that his private members came to him and wanted to bring in a private member's bill so that our Island, all Island, fishermen would get the same price that the processors were paying as in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, and he turned them down. Why would you turn that down, Premier? Why wouldn't you support the fishermen?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier Ghiz:** I do support the fishermen, Madam Speaker, and I don't turn down any members.

We work together. That's how we came up with the low-interest loan program, with the rationalization program, with the peddlers' license, with getting rid of the moratorium, with the Future Fishers Program, with a trade mission to China, with working with our other provinces, with them going to the Boston Seafood Show.

We work with the fishers of this province to make sure that we can get the best possible price. There is a world-wide recession going on. You can be like the previous government and say: No, I can't do that. Or you can be like our government and say: Yes, we can do it. That's exactly what we are doing, and that's what we will do into the future.

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Sherwood.

**Changes at raceways**

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

My question today is directed to the Minister of Finance and Municipal Affairs. Mr. Minister, recently changes were announced as to the restructuring of operations at both Charlottetown Driving Park and Summerside Raceway Red Shores locations.

Mr. Minister, in discussion with those in the industry, some are unclear about the necessity of these changes. So I'm wondering, Mr. Minister, can you please explain these organizational changes today and break them down a bit?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Finance and Municipal Affairs.

**Mr. Sheridan:** Sorry about that, Madam Speaker.

Be very pleased to explain to you the need for what we have done. Over the last number of years the former administration did bring forward harness racing in PEI that would try to address some of the issues in the harness racing business here on Prince Edward Island. It was a very strong attempt to do this, and they salvaged the industry as we watch what's happening in the sister provinces across the water. They are going by the wayside.

This industry needed another kick and that's exactly what we did after very thorough consultation with the industry. So the biggest accomplishment that we have done is that we have been able to hive off the

whole operation both at the Red Shores CDPEC and Red Shores at Summerside away from Atlantic Lotteries' entire corporation. They have formed a simple entity that is going to operate here on PEI which will be a cost centre which will allow us to maintain and make this a profitable entity unto itself.

The biggest thing that we have achieved with this is that we're going to have the people that are making the decision on racing right at the table making decisions around one single entity. So that on the three pillars of racing, dining and gaming, they'll all be around one table and working together.

Harness Racing PEI as itself was not broken, but the process was. They were operating inside of silos and knocking each other's heads as they were trying to go forward. We have now hired one marketing person for the entire entity. That's Lee Drake, who has extensive background in harness racing, and he will be taking their issues right to the table, as well will be the new manager of racing and the new operations director that will be hired, both of which we hope to be very strong Islanders that will bring this industry to what it can be to all Islanders.

Thank you very much.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Sherwood.

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

Minister, what, if any, will be the effect on those good folks in the industry as well as

those employed now at both these historic locations?

**An Hon. Member:** Good question.

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Finance and Municipal Affairs.

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

It is indeed a very good question. The biggest thing that we have to achieve at the track is we have to make it sustainable to have a horse and to actually be in this industry. That is a very tough job when we have declining numbers at the track, declining bets, and the dollars are just not there to make a return on investment when you are looking to get into the horse game. We're looking at the total revamping how this is taking place. Marketing initiatives, you'd be following them in the paper and on the news. Lee Drake is doing a tremendous job along with the rest of his marketing group over there to change the way we're trying to bring it to Islanders.

It's a great night of entertainment to bring a group of friends to go to the Top of the Park and enjoy the dining and racing and gaming component of this entire entity.

What we're looking at is we have a very different entertainment package that we can sell to the region. We're the only group left that can put this forward and that will achieve greater returns for our horsemen.

As to the people that work at both entities, unless we continue to make these two places thrive they would be going home. But under

this new initiative we hope that we will only get bigger and better and to make it a viable industry into the future.

Thank you very much.

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

### Coroner services in West Prince

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

My question is to the hon. Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development and Attorney General. Over the past 30 years Dr. Roy Montgomery provided coroner services to the West Prince region. To my knowledge, since January 1<sup>st</sup>, there's only one person west of Charlottetown, and that person is based out of Summerside providing those services. This has been a very large inconvenience to the funeral arrangers in the West Prince region.

Will the department select someone that will replace Dr. Montgomery to provide these essential services in the West Prince region?

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

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

That is a good question by the hon. Member from O'Leary-Inverness. I have been just informed that Dr. Roy Montgomery has

resigned from his position as coroner in the western part of the province by our chief coroner Dr. Charlie Trainor. We were pleased to announce that we have just brought in Dr. Trevor Jain to supply coroner services in the Queens County area.

But I want to reassure the hon. Member from O'Leary-Inverness that we will be working closely with physicians. Under the *Coroners Act* the service has to be provided by a physician, so we'll be starting discussions with Dr. Charlie Trainor to look at other alternatives and other physicians who may be interested in providing the service in West Prince.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

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

Could another physician in the O'Leary region be selected to do this? Is it even possible to have someone other than a physician that might be on staff at Community Hospital to be able to provide those services?

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

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

As of now, under the *Coroners Act*, a physician is designated to provide those services across our province. My department

right now is looking at reviewing the act to look at what other jurisdictions are doing to provide that service. There are other models across Canada that we are reviewing, but immediately we'll be working very closely with Dr. Charlie Trainor to address the needs of the community of West Prince. I'll be more than willing to work with the MLAs in the west to make sure that happens as soon as possible.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

**Lobster prices (further)**

**Mr. Bagnall:** Thank you. My question is to the hon. Minister of Innovation and Advanced Learning.

Minister, you were a fisherman and you were the previous minister of fisheries. You were in Cabinet. Have you taken a bill to Cabinet asking government if they will make sure that our fishermen are paid the same price as other fishermen in other regions? Have you done that for the fishermen?

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

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

As the Minister of Fisheries, Aquaculture and Rural Development indicated, the price of lobsters is of great concern to this government. As he and the Premier have both indicated, we have gone to great

lengths to make investments in the fishery to try and improve the situation, not only in the short term but to make a long-term viable fishery here in this province.

This government has invested more in the fishery - and I know, as a former fisherman, I know what the previous government invested in the fishery - this government has invested more into the fishery in this province than any government in the history of Prince Edward Island, something we're very proud of.

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

**Mr. Campbell:** We're going to continue to work with the industry, Madam Speaker, to make sure that our fishery is sustainable not only in the short term, but that we have a vibrant, viable fishery into the future for our young fishermen who are coming along as well.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

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

**Mr. Bagnall:** Thank you. I take it from that non-answer that you didn't take the fishermen's ploy to the Premier and to Cabinet.

Premier, do you realize that the fishermen of today are right now contemplating and taking their catches off-province to sell - processing - because they can get more money? Do you realize what that's going to do to your economy? Will you stand up

today and say that you will bring in some regulations there to make sure that our Island fishermen get paid the proper price? Will you stand up to be accountable?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

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

We believe in the free market. I don't know why, when the Member from Montague-Kilmuir was minister, he didn't bring in legislation and bring in the price of \$10 a pound. If it was that easy, that's what he should have done, or perhaps he can bring it in now. We know that we have co-ops in the province that run great facilities like Royal Star. I'm not sure if they would really want legislative pricing.

We brought in measures in this province - peddler's licence - brought in new buyers' rules to allow them, brought in low-interest loan programs, brought in rationalization programs. We've done our part to make sure that we've been listening to the fishermen. Now we've gone out, we've partnered with them on trade missions to different regions to look for new markets, and we hope that we're going to see a higher price on the wharves come this spring.

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

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

**Mr. Bagnall:** So I take it, Mr. Premier, you will do nothing to help the fishermen this year to make sure that they get a better price. You will not stand up for them. You

are hiding behind anything that's happened in the past and talk about everything. We're talking about next month's - the price of lobster on Prince Edward Island. You have a chance. You're the leader. Don't try to pass the buck on opposition or anybody else. You're the leader. You're the head person in this province. You can stand up and support the fishing industry to make sure that they get a fair price. Will you do that?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier Ghiz:** That is exactly what we were doing, Madam Speaker.

If the Member from Montague-Kilmuir, perhaps the future Leader of the Opposition, has any ideas on what he wants to do, he can feel free to bring forward legislation and we'll debate it here in the House.

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

### **Two-tier minimum wage**

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

My question now will be for the Minister of Community Services, Seniors and Labour. Madam Minister, you recall during the fall session that your government passed legislation endorsing two-tier minimum wage in this province, which you voted for, by the way.

I'm sure you've see and heard public, in the newspapers and in the media, the outcry over bringing in two-tier wage. Minister, will you take it upon yourself to repeal that section of the act immediately without

waiting for whatever? Will you do that now?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Community Services, Seniors and Labour.

**Ms. Sherry:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

In the last session of the Legislature the *Employment Standards Act* was on the floor of the House. At that time there was a recommendation came forward saying that they were going to review the enabling legislation at committee. We are going to wait until the report comes back to the House from the committee and we will have further discussion on that at that time.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

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

**Mr. Bagnall:** Madam Minister, as you know this is an important issue for Islanders across the province.

You're a new minister. You should show some leadership. The previous minister ducked and hid and put it to a committee so she wouldn't have to make a decision. What I'm asking you today is show some leadership. Show some leadership here and say that you will take that out. You've heard from Islanders across the province. We know what Islanders want. They want it taken out. We don't want you ducking and hiding like the previous minister. Stand up and be accountable. Will you stand up today and say that you will repeal that section immediately?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Community Services, Seniors and Labour.

**Ms. Sherry:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I certainly do respect the process of this government, and I certainly do respect the opinions and positions of all Islanders. I respect the process. I do believe that this issue went before a committee of the Legislature. They will be bringing the recommendations to the floor of this House and at that time there will be a response to the people of Prince Edward Island.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

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

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

As you know, we're getting into processing season, we're getting into the tourism season, and we have restaurant operators that are going to be opening for seasonal business. Minister, will you stand up and tell them today that you're going to look after that problem on two-tier minimum wage, that you know it's wrong and you can't support it? Will you stand up and tell them you will take that out of the act and for them not to worry because you're going to treat them like equals, not like the previous minister? That you're going to treat them equally and you will repeal that section? Will you stand up and do that today?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Community Services, Seniors and Labour.

**Ms. Sherry:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Like I've mentioned on a couple of occasions already this afternoon, there is a process in place. The committee has had a process for the general public to come forward. I understand that there was quite a large turnout for the hearings and I certainly am waiting for what the results of that committee's report will be. The people of Prince Edward Island are first and foremost, as the minister responsible for labour. I respect the process, and again I will say, I will wait until that report comes back to this House.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

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

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

One more question. You're saying that you're waiting for the report of the committees before you make your decision. Will you take the committee's response, whatever it might be? Will you follow that report? If they tell you that no, you got to keep minimum wage, will you keep it? If they tell you you can't, will you take it out? Will you enact the report? As a minister, will you stand up and say that you will follow the direction of the committee?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Community Services, Seniors and Labour.

**Some Hon. Members:** (Indistinct).

**Speaker:** Order, please!

**Ms. Sherry:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Again, I will say, we will take into consideration the report from the legislative committee and we will review what those recommendations may be, and then a decision will come forward. We certainly will take the consideration of the people of Prince Edward Island.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

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

**Mr. Bagnall:** Madam Minister, I'm disappointed. I thought you would come in and you would take some leadership. We know the previous minister wouldn't. We know the previous minister tried to hide it through, tried to push it through, finally put it to committee. When it was brought as an issue she tried to hide away by putting it out to committee.

I'm asking you: Will you stand up and be accountable today? Will you stand up and say: I don't believe in two-tier minimum wage, I will not let that take place in this province?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Community Services, Seniors and Labour.

**Ms. Sherry:** Madam Speaker, I don't know whether there's an issue here of not being able to hear the response, but I will say it again clearly on the floor of this House, that

I will take into consideration the views of the people of Prince Edward Island and we will make our decisions based on what those recommendations will be from the committee.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

[End of Question Period]