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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
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RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS AND ORAL QUESTION PERIOD
(PRELIMINARY PROCEEDINGS)

FOR

THURSDAY, 22 APRIL 2010

Responses to Questions Taken As Notice

Questions by Members

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Political patronage

Leader of the Opposition: Madam Speaker, opposition received copies of what appear to be private emails.

The majority of the content appeared to be of a personal nature and the source of the emails were unconfirmed until today. In the *Guardian* this morning, the *Guardian* reported that this Premier was offering jobs as tradeoffs for not letting MLAs into Cabinet.

Premier, it's disappointing to know that within days of the 2007 election you were knee-deep in patronage. Premier, why were you practising political patronage at its highest level? Why?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

The Leader of the Opposition is correct in the fact that she's saying she's quoting from personal emails that were delivered when someone was upset. I can assure the hon. Leader of the Opposition and everyone in the House that there's no truth to it.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

In the *Guardian* today it talks about the Premier's direct involvement, offering an MLA a special privilege, an extra patronage position. Premier, why within days of the election, when you promised that you were not going to be involved in patronage, why were you involved in this practice?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: I wasn't.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Premier, during the election you promised over and over you would not offer patronage jobs. Premier, why just last week you stood up at your own annual general meeting and told your party faithful, you bragged about how you were different. Premier, what do you say to those disappointed people today?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: I say, absolutely, we are different, Madam Speaker.

The fact of the matter is that when the Conservative government came to power in 1996 they fired 800 Islanders in the Province of Prince Edward Island that ended up costing the taxpayers of this province millions upon millions of dollars. When we came to power we did not fire 800 individuals. We respected the individuals working in the public service, unlike the former government did. I'm happy to say

that as of today, there have been no discriminations against our government proven.

So at the end of the day, what the Leader of the Opposition has to know is: No, we did not discriminate like the former government, and no, I did not offer anyone a job.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

To the Premier. Mr. Premier, you were in today's *Guardian*. It described how you offered and revealed in exchange for the current minister of tourism not going to Cabinet, he was offered a different reward. Can you explain the optics of that to Islanders, Mr. Premier?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: The optics of it are this, Madam Speaker, and they're actually quite sad.

The optics are that of course, in politics, we all have to realize that nothing is out of bounds now. We have a Leader of the Opposition in the province that is taking private emails sent between two sisters, neither of them elected officials, with one of the sisters under duress because she is upset over the fact that her husband did not get into Cabinet.

Just to put things into perspective, I'm sure

that the Leader of the Opposition of this province, if her husband was writing emails or sending letters, she would not want that private information made public. On this side of the House we would not do that, and I say shame on the Leader of the Opposition for exploiting someone's private and personal decency.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

This is about patronage. This is about a Premier that's promised no patronage. Seven days after he was elected, what did he do? He has a conversation with a couple of people. In today's *Guardian* it was revealed that in exchange for the current minister of tourism not going into Cabinet he was offered a different reward.

Premier, please explain to Islanders the optics of this.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Again, none of its true. We all know that behind closed doors there are conversations, and I can assure the Leader of the Opposition and all Islanders that what the Leader of the Opposition is accusing right now absolutely did not happen.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the

Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

To the Premier. Mr. Premier, can you tell us who on the fifth floor carried out your wishes?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: Again, Madam Speaker, it did not happen.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

This is far from the first blatant example of this Premier rewarding his friends. Your deputy minister in charge of the Provincial Nominee Program, he participated in the program, accessed lots of money for himself and his friends. What did the Premier do when he found out? Why, he even gave him another new job, CEO of the liquor commission. Was that another reward for patronage, Premier?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

The Leader of the Opposition, being a bureaucrat for 20 or 30 years, should understand that deputy ministers serve at the privilege of the Premier. I'm very happy to say that we've got a great group of deputy ministers. I brought some new ones in from

the outside. I also had the privilege to be able to appoint a lot from within the public service up to the deputy minister ranks.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

This is a Premier that promotes patronage at the highest level. The Member from Alberton-Roseville got PNP units for his businesses when hundreds of other businesses were turned down. Other businesses weren't even aware of the program. Was this another reward for not getting into Cabinet? Please explain, Premier.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition knows full well that that file was reviewed by the Auditor General, it was reviewed by the conflict commissioner, and everything was done aboveboard.

Why the Leader of the Opposition in this province chooses to go down personal, vindictive routes of attacking individuals - it's not the first time, she's chosen to do this since she's been elected. She chooses to attack the Member from West Royalty-Springvale who sits right next to her in the Legislature. Who is a colleague of hers. Why doesn't she look her colleagues in the eye and ask them those questions instead of making accusations that she knows are baseless and false?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

It's the Premier that's in the front page of today's *Guardian* with the topic of patronage. My question. The Member from Charlottetown-Sherwood got PNP units for his businesses when many businesses weren't even aware of the program, when many businesses were turned down. Another example of someone who didn't get into the Cabinet who was rewarded.

Premier, please explain this high level patronage.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Very easy to explain. That was reviewed by the Auditor General, by the conflict commissioner. There was absolutely nothing done there untoward, and it's a shame that the Leader of the Opposition still continues to question the Auditor General and the conflict commissioner in the Province of Prince Edward Island.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Back to the Premier. Today, again in the

Guardian, another example revealed in the exchange for the minister of tourism not getting into Cabinet. He was offered a different reward. Explain that optic.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

He wasn't offered any reward. In fact, I made him House leader, and if you ask all members of this caucus, and probably even the man sitting right next to you from Montague-Kilmuir, he was a very good House leader.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Madam Speaker, this is the Premier that again condones MLAs participating in a program of the PNP.

He condones deputy ministers getting promoted for wrongdoing. The Member from West Royalty-Springvale got PNP units for his businesses when hundreds of businesses were turned down and many businesses across the province weren't even aware of the program. Another example of a reward for not getting into Cabinet.

Premier, please explain to Islanders this high level of patronage you're practising.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: Madam Speaker, the

Auditor General and the conflict commissioner both reviewed that.

No patronage done whatsoever. Everything done aboveboard. We're not hiding anything. What is really quite unbelievable is that the Leader of the Opposition is a Member of the Legislative Assembly of Prince Edward Island. She sits next to these colleagues in the House. She's questioning their personal integrity. Yet she doesn't have the courage to turn to them while she's asking those questions about them.

I challenge the Leader of the Opposition, if she's willing to make all these personal attacks which we've seen in here before - ranging from pretty much every member of this Legislative Assembly - why does the Leader of the Opposition continue to personally attack every member of this Legislature?

In fact, she's not only willing to personally attack Members of the Legislative Assembly, she's now willing to go after their spouses, she's willing to go after bureaucrats, and she's willing to go after bureaucratic spouses as well. I really find it quite shameful that she has such a lack of respect for the Legislative Assembly of Prince Edward Island.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Order, please!

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

It's the Premier that's in the front page of the *Guardian*, it's the Premier's leadership integrity we're talking about. This is a Premier that promised to people he was not going to be involved in patronage, no way. Seven day after he's elected, what does he do? He starts offering plum patronage positions to different people.

Premier, the public knows of at least four rewards for MLAs who didn't get into Cabinet. What were the rewards you gave out for the rest of the backbenchers?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

All of our MLAs got the biggest reward ever on May 28th of 2007.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Premier Ghiz: They got the privilege of forming the Government of Prince Edward Island, a government that eliminated discrimination in this province for the first time ever in the history of the province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Premier Ghiz: Was able to make investments in health care that have been unprecedentedly seen in this province, had the courage to deliver kindergarten into our public education system -

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Premier Ghiz: - have increased and maintained teachers' positions while the former government cut them, Madam Speaker.

Our government is a government that delivers to the people of Prince Edward Island while the opposition is in the gutter.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Hon. Premier, I would ask you when you're choosing your words that they're temperate and worthy of this House.

Premier Ghiz: Sure.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Bagnall: (Indistinct) can we ask for an apologize? Because that was (Indistinct).

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Premier Ghiz: I'll apologize if you think that's improper.

Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

AG evaluation of PNP

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

We were talking about the Premier, the *Guardian* and his practice of patronage. But today also in the *Guardian*, we also see

where his Minister of Innovation and Advanced Learning - the Premier continues to condone a lot of his behaviour too. Constantly the lack of leadership from the Premier.

The Provincial Nominee Program was one of the most important programs to Prince Edward Island, bringing new people and an opportunity for Island companies. The government continues to mismanage the file. My question to the minister of innovation: Why did you refuse to allow recommendations of the provincial Auditor General to complete the evaluation on the PNP? Why?

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

Mr. Campbell: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I certainly didn't refuse to follow the recommendation.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Madam Speaker, to the same minister.

It's very clear you refused to follow the recommendations of the Auditor General. Why?

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

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

As I indicated, I certainly didn't refuse to follow the recommendations of the Auditor General. The Auditor General has made a series of recommendations and we're following up on each and every recommendation.

With respect to the comments of the Leader of the Opposition, I want to just share with her - I don't know if she's had the opportunity to read the federal-provincial agreement on immigration, but I want to share just an excerpt from one section.

Under section 8.2:

Canada and PEI will cooperate, to the extent possible, with respect to ensuring the integrity of their respective programs, including, but not limited to, such activities as: sharing information, conducting research and establishing mutual reporting arrangements: auditing, program evaluation, and investigating potential program use.

As I indicated yesterday, we were waiting for a framework because the federal government is also looking at its federal programs across the country, and I believe most jurisdictions across the country are waiting for the framework so that we can dovetail our provincial evaluation process, too, to avoid duplication and in all fairness to the taxpayers of this province.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Madam Speaker, to the same minister, that's about the third variety of the answer to that question.

But let's go back with the evaluation. The Auditor General asked you to do an evaluation on the provincial program. What is taking so long? Why are you not doing it, Mr. Minister?

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

Mr. Campbell: That's a very good question, Madam Speaker.

I'd also like to share something else that the Auditor General said. Let's look at what he said in sections 3.141 and 42. He indicated:

"The Immigrant Partner Category of the PNP has been in existence since 2001... We expected IIDI to have carried out an evaluation of the Program and an assessment of the extent of which the objectives of the Program have been achieved."

Madam Speaker, since the beginning of the nominee program in 2001, IIDI did not report the results of PNP in an annual report. For seven years the previous administration did not prepare an annual report on the PNP.

I'm very pleased to be a part of a government that has produced annual reports for 2008 and 2009 reporting the results of PNP in this province.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Madam Speaker, I'd like to ask the minister again.

The Auditor General asked you to do an evaluation on the program. Why did you choose not to do it, Mr. Minister?

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

Mr. Campbell: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I believe I've indicated a number of time now that I haven't refused to do an evaluation of PNP. We're working in collaboration with the federal government. We realize that review of the PNP in Prince Edward Island, the provincial program, is a provincial responsibility. However, with the federal government doing an evaluation of the federal program and providing a framework, we've made the decision to work under that framework to avoid duplication and be in fair response to the taxpayers of Prince Edward Island.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The federal government were very clear in today's *Guardian*. The federal government's not involved in the process since it was a request made by the PEI Auditor General to the PEI government at a program that was designed and administered by that government.

New program

My question to the minister is this. Minister, last spring, in 2009, you told the Legislature and the public, and I quote: At this point, we're the very preliminary stages of discussions with the federal government on a new program.

We found out a year later that wasn't true. Minister, explain that story.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

I'm glad they raised that. The unfortunate part is that if there's - and I apologize to any journalists. If there's journalists or the opposition who are talking with low-level bureaucrats in Ottawa, they're not privy to the conversations that are going on at the minister's level or at the deputy minister's level. That's really quite unfortunate.

You want to know what? There's plenty of times when there are bureaucrats in our province that are unaware of discussions that are going on at levels between the deputy minister's and the minister's level. I've spoke to the deputy minister, spoken to the minister. I know full well that those talks have been going on.

So unfortunately, the Leader of the Opposition's information is incorrect.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you. Madam Speaker, I'm going back to the innovation minister.

We know the Premier's the same Premier who said he doesn't practice patronage, but yet we see seven days into his mandate what he does.

To the minister of innovation. In the spring of 2009 you told the Legislature here, and I quote: At this point, we're in the very preliminary stages of discussions with the federal government with a new program.

Remember how many times you told the media in January of this year the same kind of story? Only we found out from Ottawa you hadn't had one discussion. Explain, minister.

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

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

Again, I want to commend the senior officials at IIDI who are in contact with the senior bureaucrats at the department of Citizenship and Immigration Canada on a regular basis.

I'm pleased to report to the Leader of the Opposition and to this House that we have been to Executive Council on new

programs. That information has been shared. I've sent a letter off to Minister Kenney in Ottawa and I'm awaiting a response from Minister Kenney as to his thoughts about our new programs.

We're very excited, Madam Speaker, about rolling them out and continuing on this great program in Prince Edward Island.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The minister, I think, told the House this year that he wrote those letters to Minister Kenney this year but I guess the question was you had told the House last year you were in discussions. So please tell us what took a whole year? During that time frame, minister, you've told this House three different stories on whether or not there was any discussions. We find out from the feds there were none. Explain that.

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

Mr. Campbell: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

We've heard the Leader of the Opposition here in the House before talk about her 25 years of dedicated service to the public service. Perhaps she's not aware of the discussions at the senior bureaucrat level. I had a phone call with Minister Kenney and senior officials have been exchanging

information. Perhaps in her 25 years she didn't get to that level to have discussions with senior bureaucrats in Ottawa.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Madam Speaker, my next question's to the same minister.

After all, this is the minister - his own staff called the police on immigrant people and had them removed from offices.

Minister, you told the House and the public how many times you were working on and releasing a settlement strategy, too - story number two or three, I can't remember - for the province. Then we find out four weeks before the House started you actually hired a consultant. Explain this story, Mr. Minister.

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

Mr. Campbell: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I believe I have explained this a number of times with respect to settlement and retention of our new Islanders. It's an absolute priority of my department and IIDI and the Population Secretariat. I want to thank the great staff over there for their hard work they're doing.

We made a decision to look for some outside professional consultative advice with respect to a settlement strategy. This is

a key to the growth of the population and cultural diversity of our province. We want to make sure we take the time to do it right. We want to consult further with new Islanders to make sure that what we put out as a settlement strategy meets their needs and helps us grow our population here in PEI.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

This is the same minister that talked about doing the settlement strategy. A year ago it was a priority. They were making progress. It was going to be announced in the Throne Speech. Then, this year it was ready to go any day, and we find out then he has to hire someone four weeks before the House to start the process all over again. Some priority.

Evaluation of PNP

But the next question. This week the same minister told us that you were waiting for the feds to supply a framework for the PEI evaluation. We know that's not true. We know the Auditor General has told you to do an evaluation. Explain why you refuse to do an evaluation on this program.

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

Mr. Campbell: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Again I never indicated -

Mr. Bagnall: Fantasy number four.

Mr. Campbell: - I never indicated that IIDI refuse to do an evaluation of the program. I've explained it over and over again to the Leader of the Opposition.

I'd like to add that, again, we take the work of the Auditor General very seriously here in the province, this government does, contrary to what the Leader of the Opposition may think. We certainly take his work very seriously. He's made the recommendations and we're following up on each and every recommendation.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

This minister is selective with the Auditor General's recommendations: no evaluation, about three stories on different discussions never held for a year, the settlement strategy. But let's move on to the minister.

Stratford liquor store

Mr. Minister, last fall you said there'd be no taxpayer money involved in the new Stratford Liquor Store. Then it was revealed that there were thousands of taxpayer dollars involved. Explain this little variance in the stories.

Mr. Bagnall: That's fantasy number five.

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

The hon. Minister of Tourism and Culture.

Mr. Vessey: Could the hon. member repeat the question, please? I didn't hear it.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Madam Speaker, this question is actually for the Minister of Innovation and Advanced Learning.

This minister, last fall, he told us that there was going to be no taxpayer dollars involved in the new Stratford Liquor Store. Then, we found out there was actually thousands of taxpayers dollars involved. Another variance in the story. Please, Mr. Minister of innovation, explain these two stories.

Mr. Bagnall: Fantasy number five.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Tourism and Culture.

Mr. Vessey: Madam Speaker, the move to the Stratford Liquor Store was an investment to the liquor commission which generates a lot of general revenue for this province. Sometimes you have to invest money to make money.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you,

Madam Speaker.

Back to the minister of innovation. Mr. Minister, we're having discussion - trying to get clarification to the public, to the people of the House, on all your stories. The question to you is: You told the House, you told people, that there was no taxpayer dollars involved with this liquor store. There were. Explain your different stories, Mr. Minister.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Tourism and Culture.

Mr. Vessey: Again, Madam Speaker, due to the increase in demand in the liquor commission that generates so much revenue for the province, it was in the best interest to move to a new location.

Again, it took an investment. To make money sometimes, Madam Speaker, you have to invest it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River.

Postponement of tenders on school

Mr. McGeoghegan: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

My question today is for the hon. Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development and Attorney General. In regards to the Montague Intermediate School, can the minister update this House on the additions to the school, to add a new industrial arts section, and why the tenders

were postponed?

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

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

I, as the minister of education, am very fortunate, because we are going to be benefitting over the next five years in the tune of approximately \$7 million in modernizing the public school system here in the Province of Prince Edward Island.

With respect to the question, I was informed in March that the tenders were postponed for the new addition to the industrial arts piece to the Montague Intermediate School. But I do want to clarify for the House that with that tender being postponed, it's a priority by me, as the minister, to make sure that the programming curriculum is not interrupted.

We will be making sure that next year - presently the students walk across to the senior high school to take their industrial arts. We've made a commitment that that programming and curriculum will stay in place. We'll make sure the facility at the senior high school, while we open the new \$22 million facility in Montague, stays open to keep programming moving forward for students at Montague Intermediate, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D. Currie: I'd also like to remind the - when I ask questions to my department on the project, technically the projects wasn't

part of the capital plan. The expectation was that there was going to be slippage, that the senior high school was coming in under budget. But it is coming on budget.

I made it very clear to my department that the expectation will be that we monitor the capital budget this year, and if we do have the capital money we will be reopening the tenders. If we're not able to do that, the project will be a priority next year, in next year's capital budget.

Thank you very much.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River.

Mr. McGeoghegan: Supplementary, to the same -

Mr. Bagnall: (Indistinct).

Mr. McGeoghegan: To the same minister.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River.

Mr. McGeoghegan: What are the plans for programming at Montague Intermediate School for the students coming this fall?

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

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

As the minister of education in this province, curriculum investments in our children is a huge priority. Our mandate as a

government is to make sure that our children, from zero to twelve, get the same opportunity that other children get across this country.

As we monitor the slippage opportunities in the capital budget, we'll be making sure that programming will be in place for the grade seven, eight and nine students at Montague Intermediate to make sure there is no interruption in programming for next September. We're excited that we will be opening a state-of-the-art industrial arts technology wing at the new Montague Senior High School. The investments that we're making in education are going to be there for generations to come.

It's a priority by our government to make sure that there's no interruption, but it's my priority to make sure that project moves forward into the weeks and months ahead.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Tyne Valley-Linkletter.

Physician vacancy at Stewart Memorial Hospital

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

My question today is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. Over the last two-and-a-half years Stewart Memorial Hospital's had a vacancy in its physician complement. We've have numerous meetings, myself, with you and members of the community, and the former minister. Could the minister please update us on what is happening with your health department and the Office of

Recruitment and Retention to fill that vacancy?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Ms. Bertram: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you, hon. member, for your question.

This member has been a great advocate for her community and for the Stewart Memorial Hospital and Tyne Valley area. We're pleased to tell the House today that we are working hard to recruit for Tyne Valley. There are a few other positions that we're recruiting for. We've had three site visits for Tyne Valley in the last three weeks. Gone very positively. So we're working quite hard, hon. member, for your community to see these through. Staff are working hard. I had the pleasure of going up on Monday to meet with members of your community and with yourself.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Tyne Valley-Linkletter.

Recruitment process

Ms. Biggar: Madam Speaker, thank you.

For the same minister. Regarding the Office of Recruitment and Retention, some of the frustration in the community has been that sometimes we see other vacancies being filled. Could you fill in and update us on the protocol that's followed when a doctor does come, and the process that's involved in the recruitment?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Ms. Bertram: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

We have been very diligent in the last few months to ensure that we are advertising in the Canadian journal of medicine, American, British, trying to reach as many as we can with those rural medicine that exists in the province, whether it be Souris, Hunter River or Tyne Valley.

But there is a process that takes place. Right now the letters of reference are going out, then there's the package of licensure, and then the letter of offer. So there is a process, but things are moving forward and things look very positive for the community.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Tyne Valley-Linkletter.

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Will the Minister of Health and Wellness please make a commitment to keep the community updated through the recruitment and retention office on those developments?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Ms. Bertram: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Yes, indeed, we will continue to work with the community and communicate. Our staff has been doing a great job with that. It was nice to have the opportunity to go up on Monday and meet with them. The auxiliary was there and they had even a nice little reception for us too, so it was a great time to

have conversation and just chat about the community.

I look forward to meeting with them into the future and working for the communities across Prince Edward Island.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

My next question's back to the innovation minister. I guess he forgot the story about the Stratford Liquor Store, but we'll ask him this question.

Tabling of IIDI reports

Mr. Minister, over a year ago you told the House that you were going to be tabling the annual reports for IIDI. You actually mentioned them today. But a year ago you said they were going to be tabled any day. They weren't tabled until this winter, 2010. Can you explain the differences in those stories, Mr. Minister?

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

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

I believe I indicated earlier - and the Leader of the Opposition talks about a secrecy around the program. Perhaps maybe she might ask the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters to explain why there were no reports

on PNP from its inception in 2001 until 2007.

We certainly responded to the Auditor General's report, his recommendation to publish the results in the annual reports, and we're very pleased to be up-to-date with those annual reports, and we'll have another one following in 2010.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

To the same minister. It's under your great leadership -

Premier Ghiz: Yes.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Leader of the Opposition: - the second minister of this great portfolio that you had police escort immigrants out of offices, you've got deputy ministers involved in programs, you've got MLAs involved, even some of your own staff, but we'll ask you another question.

Examination of impact of immigrant partner program (further)

Mr. Minister, you're response to the Auditor General indicated that you were also going to use an outside party to examine the economic impacts of the immigrant partner program. Who's doing this work and was it tendered?

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

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

It's interesting that the hon. Leader of the Opposition continues to talk about stories and police, and police involvement. I think I've taken every opportunity to explain if there was any confusion around different things because of the timing of receiving and sending of information. I think I've been very clear about explaining that.

The only story that I really have no explanation for is the story that the Leader of the Opposition told a senior bureaucrat one dark night down in Victoria Park about police investigation.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

To the same minister of innovation. Mr. Minister, you responded to the Auditor General that you were completing, with an outside party, an examination of the economic impact of the immigrant partner program. Who is doing the work and was the work tendered?

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

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

I'll certainly take that question under advisement and have a discussion with staff at IIDI, and be pleased to bring that information forward.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Madam Speaker, this is inexcusable.

This program for PEI was worth over 400 - sometimes the former minister talked about \$500 million. There's no evaluation work done. There's no settlement work done. How many stories on different aspects? Now he has to go back to find out - it was only last week you told us that this work was being done. Who is doing the work and how much, and was it tendered?

Premier Ghiz: And you should spend 24 hours a day (Indistinct).

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

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

I'm glad the Leader of the Opposition has taken the time to highlight the investment that has been brought forward by this wonderful program.

As I indicated probably last week, RBC, in its financial evaluation, has looked at the performance of the economy here in Prince Edward Island and certainly has indicated that we are performing well above average

under difficult economic times.

We're very pleased that certainly our PNP has been a large contributing factor to that. We're leading the region in new home starts and auto sales and things like that, and we see the cultural diversity that's being brought to our school systems. A tremendous program with tremendous investment in PEI, and tremendous growth in our population. We're very proud of it, and we're working very hard all the time to release a new program as well.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

In terms of no witnesses at public accounts, no evaluation done, no settlement, police escorting immigrants, my question to the minister is: Your response to the Auditor General. In this year's 2010 response you tell them that you're using an outside party to examine the economic impacts of the immigrant partnership program.

Who is doing the work - you must have told the Auditor General - and was the work tendered?

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

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

As I indicated, I would take that question

under advisement and be pleased to take the information back for the Leader of the Opposition.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Madam Speaker, the Auditor General asked you for an update.

You included it in this year's report. Who is doing the work? Is there any relationship with this consultant group to any members of the government? You're very selective in terms of what information you want to give out. Who's doing this work and was the work tendered, Mr. Minister?

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

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

It seems the Leader of the Opposition has moved onto a new conspiracy theory here. As I indicated, I would take that question under advisement, and I will, and I will check with staff, and be pleased to report back to the House.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

ABCE and Institute of Chartered Accounts of PEI

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

This minister, this winter, when ABCE were doing work, an audit on IIDI, you stated that you thought that there was no conflict with ABCE doing the audit. However, we all know that the Institute of Chartered Accounts of Prince Edward Island are actually involved in an investigation. Can you explain this, Mr. Minister?

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

Mr. Campbell: Yes, Madam Speaker.

It's very simple to explain. I believe someone came forward with a concern with respect to what the Leader of the Opposition references, and I believe there's an overseeing body that has decided to conduct that investigation in response to the complaint.

It's great that we have processes like this. Do I think there's a conflict of interest here? Absolutely not. But there is a process underway and I'm very respectful of that process, and we eagerly await the completion of that process and the results of it.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

ABCE and economic impact study

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

To the same minister. Would it be ABCE that perhaps are doing the outside economic impact study?

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

Mr. Campbell: No, I don't believe so, but again, I will take that question under advisement and report back with the information as requested by the Leader of the Opposition.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Madam Speaker, the minister a few minutes ago said that he didn't know, he had no detail who actually was doing this work.

I asked him did ABCE do it, and he said: Well, no. Can you explain how you know who's not doing it but you do not know who is actually doing the work, Mr. Minister?

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

Mr. Campbell: Very simple, Madam Speaker.

I expect that at some point in time I probably asked the question if ABCE was involved in the financial evaluation of PNP and the answer to that question was no. Again, I'll take the question under advisement of who's doing the financial analysis and I'll be pleased to bring it back.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

To the same minister. The public continues to have so many issues -

Premier Ghiz: Yes.

Leader of the Opposition: - with this program.

Premier Ghiz: They're so happy with it.

Leader of the Opposition: There's so many times the program and the ministers -

Premier Ghiz: (Indistinct).

Examination of impact of immigrant partner program (further)

Leader of the Opposition: Conflict of interest issues keep arising. My question to the minister: How did you ensure open and transparent and accountable process when you chose whoever did this work of examining the impacts, the economic impacts? How did you ensure that that was an open, transparent process?

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

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

Again, I have the utmost respect and the utmost confidence in senior officials at IID. There's a number of firms out there that

could conduct this type of work, and I know that the staff work with different firms here in the province and outside the province as well. I trust their judgement in selecting firms that do a quality job and provide quality service and give quality value to the taxpayers of Prince Edward Island.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition, final question.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

To the Premier: Who did you pick for this? We know how you handle patronage with everything else. Who was the chosen recipient to do this contract work?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Like the Leader of the Opposition - or like the hon. Minister of Innovation and Advanced Learning indicated, he'll bring back that information. I'm sure whoever we chose was a credible firm to go out and conduct this information.

But it's weird that the Leader of the Opposition likes to talk about patronage after we got elected. There was only one group of appointments between May 28th and June 13th when we got sworn in, and that was after we won the election. That was done by the Member from Montague-

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Kilmuir and the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters who sat around the Cabinet table after they lost the election and made a series of political appointments, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Some Hon. Member: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Order, please!

[End of Question Period]