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FOR

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Responses to Questions Taken As Notice

Questions by Members

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

**Structural deficit**

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

My question today is for the minister of finance. Minister, you and your party have spent a lot of time on the weekend trying to spin Islanders to believe that you actually knocked money off your deficit this year.

Minister, last year you were telling us that you spent an extra \$30 million for the Master Trust fund that was so badly mismanaged by you last year and that the structural deficit was only \$40 million range.

Minister, is your structural deficit this year not the same as it was last year?

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

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

As the hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir would be well aware, the entire global situation destructed last year under a very constant strain of the markets. Our Master Trust was no different. As you well remember, that's the numbers that I quoted last year where we were impacted by \$40 million, not by \$30 million.

What we have done this year, for the hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir, just for his information - how we have stopped the change and what we have said from the very beginning, the Premier and myself - is that during times of downturn we will be there for Islanders. That's what we've done in both our capital and operating accounts for the past two years and we are very proud and pleased as to how we were there so that we did not go into recession.

This year, we've turned it around completely. Things are starting to turn around on Prince Edward Island. We're in better shape because of what we did and therefore we were able to cap our expenditures at 1.9% this year, Madam Speaker, while our revenues will grow at 4.2.

We've turned the tide and we'll be there for Islanders now as we go forward as well.

Thank you very much.

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

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

The Premier actually stated in the House last fall, and this is his comment: "In relation to our entire economy, our deficit is well under control. About 35 or 40 million of that was part of a pension adjustment. Therefore, we're operating with around a 35 or \$40 million structural deficit that our government has been dealing with."

That was on November 17<sup>th</sup> that the Premier

stated that.

The Liberals are out claiming they managed to knock \$30 million off of their deficit. They won't have the 30 million knocked off if the minister - you wouldn't have had to -

**Speaker:** Do you have a question, hon. member?

**Mr. Bagnall:** Yeah, I'm getting right to it.

They wouldn't have had to knock off the 30 million if the minister hadn't mismanaged the pension fund. So a question to the minister: Since your real deficit is actually worse than last year, why don't you bring the spending under control?

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

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

There's a couple of points that the hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir needs to be corrected on. What happens is that it doesn't go away inside of one year. The actuaries come in and make a statement on where our Master Trust is, our pension funds, at the end of each fiscal year. In the June following they say to us what it's going to take for us to continue to put forward so that we will be able to have our pension in a position where we'll continue to provide for our wonderful public service.

What the Member from Montague-Kilmuir doesn't understand is that there's a further \$20 million this year that's inside our pension benefits that's there to ensure that. I

know it's difficult to grasp all in one piece, but if we would have taken the advice of the Leader of the Opposition and been in bonds, as they thought that was the case that should have been, we'd be in a much worse situation because the markets have rebounded and we're not 40 million behind as a result of it.

Thank you very much.

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

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

The minister has proven time and time again and over budget upon budget that he has no idea how to manage the finances of the province. The minister has been wasting money for the past three years on so many ridiculous spending projects like wine testers and beer testers, new offices for Brooke MacMillan, new office liquor store for Stratford.

Mr. Minister, why do you continue to spend when your budget continues to drip excessive Liberal red ink?

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

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

There's one point that the hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir needs to understand, and that's called return on investment. In order for us to continue to do great things for Islanders as we have for the past three years, we have to have items that

we invest in in order to get returns so that we can pay for the great things we do for Islanders. We'll continue to do that.

As this member knows, we had two balanced budgets when we first started, in 2007 and 2008. As the Premier has always said, we will be there for Islanders in times of downturn. When times turn around we will be there, tighten our belt as we have done in this Budget, and keep our expenditures to 1.9% where our expenditures are going up 4.2%, and we will make sure we put money away during times of good, unlike the previous administration that went through the 10 best years in the history of Canada, Madam Speaker, and mismanaged funds each and every one of those years.

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

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

The minister has actually cut \$30 million off but he really hasn't done anything to control the spending. The Master Trust did all that for him because of the recovery in the stock market. He has continued over and over again to mismanage the handling of the pension fund and he's also continued to lead Islanders astray on his mismanagement of this fund.

So a question for the minister of finance again: Will you table your four-year plan to show how you hope to get out of the deficit this year?

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

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

If the hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir was watching the media or listening in the House on Friday, it was very clearly laid out as to how that was going to happen.

The problem with the Member from Montague-Kilmuir is that he does not delve into any of the details of a budget. It's nice to look at bottom line numbers and have someone point out that the pension liability has gone down, in effect. But what the Member from Montague-Kilmuir needs to look at is each and every year we have growth of about \$30 million within our public service that has to be overcome before we start. So we are behind an eight ball before that goes. That shows prudent planning to get to the point where we are.

As he must know, with the four-year plan that we have in place it does not cut to the quick, as his party has done in the past and what they're doing in Ottawa with the changes in the way they're handling things there. We were in such good position here because of the investments that we made over the past two years that we didn't have to make those drastic, draconian changes. All we have to do is control the way that we put our expenditures together, Madam Speaker, and allow the economy to grow through (Indistinct) revenues, and we'll be in great shape within three years.

Thank you very much.

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

**Mr. Bagnall:** Madam Speaker, the minister is going off and making predictions that the economy is going to be rosy and that the economy is coming back.

Most economists will tell you that we may be coming out of recession but right now it's still on shaky grounds.

Minister, how can you justify your projections in gross revenue? You claim you aren't raising taxes, at least not yet. Where is your growth in the provincial revenue going to come from?

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

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

If the Member from Montague-Kilmuir was following the news in the past two years, the Conference Board of Canada, which is an independent think-tank, pointed to Prince Edward Island, and what we did here with regard to warding off recessionary pressures here in the province is what has put us in a position that we were the only province in Canada last year that enjoyed growth of 0.5%. All other provinces could not sustain and had to drop into recessionary pressures.

We're in great shape going forward in a comparative method and all that is, we just have to control our expenditures to the 1.9% that we're talking about. The 4.2%, all the hon. member has to do is go back into the history books. We're not talking about anything rosy. We're talking about typical economic growth during very slow times. That's all we're talking about. Four point

two per cent, Madam Speaker, is a very - small c - conservative number.

Thank you very much.

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

**Mr. Bagnall:** Madam Speaker, that's what I thought.

He would have no idea in the world where the 4.5 growth figure was going to come from and he proved that when he answered.

We need a finance minister that just doesn't want to roll the dice with taxpayers' dollars and hope he's going to come out of a deficit. We want a minister that's going to see revenues go in areas. I notice that he's expecting that revenues are going to grow from alcohol and tobacco.

So minister, is that the only thing you've got planned to improve your growth in dollars is that you're hoping that people will drink more alcohol and smoke more cigarettes? Is that your only plan? Because that's all you've stated.

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

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

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

Again, the problem with this Member from Montague-Kilmuir is, that he goes to numbers that people may point to and say: Look, there's an arrow going upward on that

column. All he has to do is take a look at our sales tax, our corporate tax, our personal income tax, and they are all growing because of the investments we made in this Island over the past three years.

In the past two years, because of the monstrous capital influx that we put forward and our capital expenditures - which is more than double the average of what took place during the dirty Tory years, where the Island was sinking - we had to replace the aging infrastructure, and what a great time to do it. So we put forward a stimulus plan that put 1,050 brand-new Islanders to work along with putting the smallest plumbing companies together with the biggest road builders. That churned us into very positive grounds.

All of that, and because of our great immigration policies, have brought corporate income tax, personal income tax and sales tax to a leading edge in Canada. We have led the country in new housing starts and new car sales over the past two years per capita, Madam Speaker.

That's because of the things we did.

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

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

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

Islanders deserve not to be misled by this government anymore. You stated time and time again that these are budgets for difficult economic times, Mr. Minister. This is just spin, spin, spin.

Minister, what exactly in the operating budget is related to stimulus spending?

**Premier Ghiz:** That's the capital budget.

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

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

It's a pleasure to stand here and talk to what we have done inside our budgets over the past two years. When the member speaks of stimulus, we have done many things on both the operating and the capital stimulus side. When we talk about the things that we do and the operating side, it's many of the things that the opposition brings up time and time again.

Talking about return on investment. Instead of wasting our money on building golf courses, on destroying a whole industry like Polar Foods did, we're out there doing things that allows our economy to grow in a constant and very consistent basis and we'll continue to do that.

We're not saying that we're going to grow by 10% in any one year, but 4.2% growth in expenditures is a very slow year, Madam Speaker, and we fully expect to outpace that.

Thank you very much.

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

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

Minister, isn't your capital budget that

you've got all you stimulus funding in, not your operating budget?

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

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

There's a number of things on both sides of the docket, both in capital and on the operating side, that allow our economy to go forward. When we bring forward things like we have done in health care over the past two years that increase our health professionals on Prince Edward Island somewhere in the vicinity of 300 new professionals, not only do they buy new houses, buy new cars, but they buy their groceries here on PEI because they're living in our communities. When we move forward and invest in Islanders, Madam Speaker, that is stimulating the economy.

Thank you very much.

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

### **Provincial debt**

**Mr. Bagnall:** It's obvious he doesn't know the difference between a capital budget and operating budget so I'll move on, then.

The minister's capital budget added more millions of dollars to the overall debt of this province. But Islanders should be confused when they hear the minister talk about justifying massive deficits from his operating budget because of difficult economic times. On the other hand, he

claims PEI never went into a recession. He says because of his good management we never went into a recession. So I don't know why he's talking about fiscal management with a recession because he said with his magical figures we never went into a recession.

So, minister: Why don't you lay your figures out on the table in one document so that Islanders can just see how much money you've actually added to the provincial debt since you've been in power?

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

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

The document is laid out and that's what's great about transparent and open governments like ourselves.

I just want to remind the hon. member of one thing. What this government did in the very first term that they were here is that we put a fixed election date on the board. Let me tell you why that is pertinent here when we talk about budgets. Because now, with a fixed election date, we're going to eliminate any kind of fudgery that may take place with regard to a budget before the next general election. That just happens to be the budget that we tabled on Friday.

What has to happen with this budget, when we talk about what the outcomes will be, when the financial statements are put forward one full month before the next general election, Islanders will be able to take a look at the Auditor General's report

and they will be able to say: What do you think of what the Liberal government put forward last year in the form of a budget? Have they reached their financial statement capacity and are they there? Or are they \$25 million in a deficit like 2003, or is it \$125 million?

We'll be open and transparent. The auditor will make his comments in the fall of 2011 and we'll be in very good shape.

Thank you.

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

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

**Mr. Bagnall:** Yes, Madam Speaker, we know what this government done.

They've had a deficit budget of over 140 million in the last two years, that's what he has done. He's put us in debt by his continuing mismanagement.

A question to the minister of finance: Mr. Minister, you already know how this government treats lower wage earners in this province. You've introduced the two-tier minimum wage. But there are yet more ways this government is sticking it to Islanders.

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

**Personal income tax rate**

**Mr. Bagnall:** Mr. Minister, I'm sure you are aware that the basic personal income tax rate for Islanders is the lowest in the country.

**An Hon. Member:** Good.

**Mr. Bagnall:** Minister, the most valuable Islanders in our society are being gouged by your government, yet for years since you've been in government you've promised fairness to Islanders. What have you done to deliver on this?

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

**Premier Ghiz:** Good question. Let him know.

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

Let me just straighten out for the hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir a few very pertinent facts because the hon. member forgets that for 11 years they let our basic personal exemption drown in the toilet.

What we have done since we came in in 2007, we have made many changes in the personal income tax portion of how we handle Islanders here, and we have put \$28 million back into the pockets of Islanders where they were drowning under the previous administration.

But we didn't stop there with personal income tax. We dropped 4.4 cents off the gasoline tax in 2007. Since that point we have saved Islanders over \$30 million in gas tax. The third thing we did for low-income Islanders is that we gave them a tax freeze on their homes for three consecutive years. This year we tied it to CPI and we're not even calling it a tax freeze any longer. It's set in law to follow CPI, and it will be zero

growth for their own homes for a fourth consecutive year.

We stand on our record of no tax increases and this year's budget proves it again: no tax increases for lower income Islanders.

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

**Mr. Bagnall:** Question to the same minister. Minister, have you brought in the cost of living indexing on the personal exemptions for our income tax? Have you done that? You promised in 2007 you were going to do that. Have you done it?

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

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

There is only so much you can do with limited dollars. But when you have cut overall taxes and savings for Islanders in their back pocket of over \$70 million in just over three years in office, it's pretty incredible.

From someone that enjoys tax policy - and I know how nerdy that sounds it to be - but there are different ways in which you can make changes for low income Islanders and we're there on many fronts. I'll tell you, we're there for seniors and we just have to look at this year's budget to confirm that. With the amount of money that we've put forward into drugs that will help with an expanding formulary, and for the first time since the Tories lowered - lowered - their co-pay when they had to add an additional

tax on to their co-pay, added 15% onto it, this year's budget we have dropped it by 25% which will be followed next year by a further 25%. We will take it to a 50% level co-pay, Madam Speaker.

There's no question in the world that this government stands for low-income Islanders, seniors at the top of our list.

Thank you very much.

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

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

Obviously the minister either can't hear or he doesn't know the answer. But maybe I'll ask him again. When do you plan on bringing in the cost of living indexing, minister, that you promised? You promised the people of PEI, in 2007, you were going to bring it in. It hasn't been brought in, so when are you going to do it?

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

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

The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir was not listening as closely as he possibly could be. There are better ways to do this than to index each and every Islander. Should a person that's making \$100,000 enjoy the same tax cut as someone that's making 20? I don't believe that in my heart. So we're looking at different ways that we can put tax dollars into Islanders pockets that really truly deserve and need it.

That's what we're doing here and that's why we have very directed tax cuts. That's why you'll see \$28 million savings in Islanders pockets with regard to personal income tax. It's going to those that need it the very most. They are being helped just as the seniors with their co-pay. Gas tax for everyone that has to get themselves to work and school. Anyone that has put their monies out there to buy themselves a home can only enjoy that wonderful savings that we did with property taxes being frozen so that they weren't escalating out through the roof as we saw under the previous administration - for no reason whatsoever, except to try to cover for all the mismanagement of their funds on things like Dunderave and Polar.

Thank you very much.

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

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

The question to the minister. Minister, you know you're gouging low income people on Prince Edward Island. You're gouging it and you're going to get more tax from them this year because you refuse to raise the personal income tax. You raised the minimum wage, that means they're going to be paying more taxes, but you won't raise the tax exemption. So you're gouging the low-income -

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

**Mr. Bagnall:** - earners in this province. You are gouging them. Minister, when are you going to -

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

**Mr. Bagnall:** - honour your word? When are you going to honour your word? And your word's pretty important, I would think - that you're going to this. Because you promised you were going to it in 2007. Is your word not any good, minister? Will you not honour your word?

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

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

It's very difficult when you talk about keeping your word. It's also very difficult to talk out of both sides of your mouth at the same time. It's very difficult to stand here and poke holes in raising the minimum wage for the very lowest income earners here on Prince Edward Island.

This side of the House, as a Liberal government, know, in our hearts, the very people that we need to help. Why we increase minimum wage is to help those very poorest of our society that are out there trying to make do for their families.

Anyone that is on minimum wage is covered off very well for our directed income tax exemptions, and they will be taken care of - no matter what - under a Liberal government.

Thank you very much.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Vernon River-Stratford.

**Impaired driving**

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

My question is for hon. Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal. For many years impaired driving's been one of the biggest concerns in this province. Mothers Against Drunk Driving has been very critical of the province and how they've been dealing with this issue. I wonder if you could inform the House how you as minister have been dealing with this since you got the portfolio.

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal.

**Mr. MacKinley:** Quite obviously the member must belong to the MADD organization because their newsletter came out the other day and it's great news. The previous Tory government, they were 10<sup>th</sup> in Canada, or almost at the bottom of the list, when it came to reacting to impaired driving or trying to get impaired drivers off the road, compared to laws.

Our government now, after two-and-a-half-years, with the help of the Cabinet and the caucus, we are at third in Canada.

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

**Mr. MacKinley:** So we've moved up a full seven points in two-and-a-half- years.

If I could just elaborate on this - this is very important - because MADD's report is out, and I'm glad to see that a lot of people are reading it. Because Mrs. Miller from Nova Scotia is the president. They worked very hard on this.

Our students - I was in Souris yesterday, giving Students Against Drunk Driving - SADD, I believe it was - \$1,500 cheque to go to a conference in Saskatchewan. Our students that are here today are way ahead of the times when we were when we were that age. They know how serious this is. We know how increased traffic we have.

So thank you very much.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Vernon River-Stratford.

**Mr. McIsaac:** To the same minister.

No, I'm not actually a member of MADD, but I have been watching the stats. You didn't quite answer my question. I was wondering what you happened to do. I realize we've gone up in the rankings - and that's great - but just wondering what you as minister did to make this happen?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal.

**Mr. MacKinley:** Even hear that from the Tories over there, they did nothing.

In the Legislative Assembly here we brought mandatory interlock in. You've got to through the whole House and pass regulations in the act. That any impaired drivers with a second offence has to have mandatory interlock before they get their license back.

Another thing that we really moved up in the marks was - we put it through the House here last year, and I had the support of the House - and that was a bill where we

brought in that .05, if anybody is driving on the highway and they blow .05 - not .08 or .09, .05 - they automatically lose their license - I think it's 24 hours - and they have to find their own way home or someone to get them home. That's quite a message to go out there.

I think that's the one - we led the way here in the Province of Prince Edward Island by bringing in that legislation because the rest of Canada started following after us.

Thank you very much.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Alberton-Roseville.

### **Intensive French program**

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

My question is to the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development and Attorney General. Recently parents in western PEI voted to halt the expansion of the intensive French program into schools in the region. Parents are concerned about the extra time the program will take out of the other subjects their children are studying.

Could you please provide a brief explanation on the program and what the department's stand is on implementing intensive French in Island schools?

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

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

Our department is extremely proud of the number of students in this province participating in French Second Language programs. We want to make sure that we provide every opportunity for children in this province to acquire both official languages, both in English and French. The intensive French program is a program that is offered in grade 6. It's a program that is offered at the halfway point of the school year, which is an uninterrupted intense focus on French language education. Research indicates that to acquire the language, statistics show that an uninterrupted intense focus on the language is the best way to learn the language.

In respect to the situation in West Prince, I've had a number of discussions with the Western School Board. They have had an opportunity to listen to and to hear parents in schools in the west, and have respected parent concerns and have decided to pull back on the implementation.

The department will continue to look at - we do have five out of six programs that are implemented right now, that are working very well in schools across Prince Edward Island, and we'll continue to evaluate the programming and curriculum as we move forward with the school boards all across the province, Madam Speaker.

Thank you.

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

### **Canada Games projections**

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

Speaker.

A question for the minister of health. As the minister that was championing the cause for the Canada Games, I'm just wondering, minister, can you tell me if the projections that were laid out for the Canada Games - did they live up to the needs or the projections, I guess, for all our hotels and motels? Were they filled last summer as projected?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

I'm certainly very pleased as minister responsible for sport in the province - as Minister of Health and Wellness, and minister responsible last summer for the Canada Games - to report to the House that there was \$81.5 million economic impact to the Province of Prince Edward Island -

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

**Ms. Bertram:** - and \$14 million in tax revenues to the Province of Prince Edward Island.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

**Mr. M. Currie:** Madam Speaker, a question for the same minister.

Was there any unforeseen expenditures for any of these hotels or motels that occurred last summer?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

**Ms. Bertram:** Madam Speaker, we were very pleased with the visitation rates.

I believe there were about 15,000 individuals that visited Prince Edward Island last summer for this. We had a success in the month of August. We were very pleased to see different - whether it was media staying at different locations, whether it was teams, officials, and it meant a lot to the accommodations across Prince Edward Island, because this was truly an entire province putting on a games. It wasn't just one community, it was all communities across PEI working together.

Thank you.

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

**Stanley Bridge resort**

**Mr. M. Currie:** A question for the same minister.

Minister, can you tell me - for example - did the Stanley Bridge Resort utilize their rooms for the referees, or officials, or the media? (Indistinct).

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

**Ms. Bertram:** Madam Speaker, I believe that they were one of the locations that were under contract with the host society, I believe, but I can bring back information to the hon. Member from Georgetown-St.

Peters.

That would obviously be information with the host society. If I'm able to bring that back I certainly will.

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

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

Maybe the minister could explain just what a contract is and what a booking is. Do you understand them?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

Again, this is more between the host society, this is not between government. This is between the host society and accommodations, and obviously there was - whether it was media, whether it was team officials, there were contracts, letters written, I believe, from the host society to various accommodations. Sort of a block of rooms across the province. I think, I believe, hon. member, I don't want to give false information here. But if I can bring that back from the host society, I will bring that back.

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

**Mr. M. Currie:** Madam Speaker, it's my understanding that when you make a booking you have a certain amount of time before you confirm your reservation, and if you before you make that confirmation, you

can release a certain block of rooms.

So I would like to know, minister, how many rooms did they book at the Stanley Bridge resort, Canada Games.

**Premier Ghiz:** You should know that off (Indistinct).

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

**Mr. M. Currie:** She should. It's her (Indistinct).

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

The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters, there was a situation with regards to correspondence written from the host society. Again, I will bring back any information I can. There was a letter. I believe there's dates round that, I believe, hon. member from Georgetown, but again, I'll bring back that information. Again, there were blocks of rooms across Prince Edward Island, and I believe Stanley Bridge was one of those listed.

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

**Mr. M. Currie:** Question for the same minister.

Minister, it's my understanding that there was a bit of a situation at the Stanley Bridge resort and that nobody did come and stay at the facility, and that you stepped in and asked for an invoice to be paid. Is that true?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health and

Wellness.

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

Certainly that did not happen. The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters, I've been very clear that I would bring back any information from the host society. I do believe - and I do not want to disclose information - that there was legal counsel on both sides taking part in this negotiation -

**An Hon. Member:** (Indistinct) so you are aware of it.

**Ms. Bertram:** - and I'm not privy to that information, but, again, I will go back to the host society and I will bring back anything that I can.

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

**Mr. M. Currie:** Madam Speaker, I'm starting to pry a little bit of information out of her.

But I think that someone, either yourself or your deputy, did issue an order for a \$30,000 invoice when nobody stayed there. So will you confirm if either you or your deputy instructed that bill to be paid at the Stanley Bridge resort in your riding?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

Certainly nothing was done, everything was above-board, and again -

**Mr. M. Currie:** Oh, so there was (Indistinct).

**Ms. Bertram:** - and again, I am not privy to all that information. Again, this is between the host society, it's between the president, Mr. Joe Spriet. It's between that business and operation. I am not at privilege to disclose that because it is a private operation, but anything that I can bring back to provide information to the hon. member from Georgetown, I will.

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

**Mr. M. Currie:** I guess, Madam Speaker, I'll try to be a little more specific.

Minister, are you indicating to the House today that you did not interfere? Now, we know you interfered with the torch relay. You made sure that none of that was in Kings County. But I'm asking you, did you interfere -

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

**Mr. M. Currie:** - with Stanley Bridge resort and instruct an invoice to be paid for \$30,000 when nobody stayed there?

**Premier Ghiz:** (Indistinct) this line of questioning (Indistinct).

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

Again, I'm not privileged to that information, and I will certainly - any

information to be brought back from our department, department officials, or from the host society, I will bring that back to the hon. member.

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

**Mr. M. Currie:** Madam Speaker, maybe the minister can bring back a complete list of all the officials or whatever that stayed at the Stanley Bridge resort for that period that was supposed to be booked. Will you bring that back?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

**Premier Ghiz:** (Indistinct) the host society (Indistinct).

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

Again, this is a private operation, and a very beautiful location on the North Shore. The hon. member, again, I say to him, that I will bring back any information I can disclose to the House and to the public. But this is a private operation, and again, this is a topic for the host society, between the host society and between - and this is a question he probably should be posing to the president of the host society.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

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

**Mr. M. Currie:** Madam Speaker, the host

society is a non-profit organization funded by the provincial and federal government and sponsors, but my understanding is that the minister interfered, and this was a constituent of yours that went to you and indicated because the confirmation date - they released the bookings for these rooms - that you went back and asked that they be reimbursed for \$30,000 for these rooms, and nobody actually sat there or stayed there.

I'm wondering if that is true. Is that what you did? You interfered in this process with Canada Games, a non-profit organization, and instructed an invoice to be paid for \$30,000.

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

I will make the statement here in this House to say that I did not make personal interference in this case. The Member from Georgetown-St. Peters should be contacting the host society for further information. But again, as minister responsible for the Canada Games, I will bring back any information that I can, but this is, again, between the host society and a private operator in the province of PEI.

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

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

A question for the minister, then. Are you aware, then, if you say you did not, did your deputy or anybody in your department

instruct the Canada Games to pay this invoice?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

I am aware that there was a -

**An Hon. Member:** A-ha!

**Ms. Bertram:** - I am - you know, it's very -

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

**Ms. Bertram:** There has to be a fairness here, and I will bring back anything that is possible to this House. But I am aware that the host society had a meeting with the business, but again, I am not privileged to release information today, and, Madam Speaker, I personally did not get involved in this situation.

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

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

Minister, you're indicating to the House today that now, after 10 minutes of questioning, you are aware of the situation and that you are going to bring back all of the information pertaining to this invoice?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

**Ms. Bertram:** Again, I tell the hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters that I

will bring back any information that I can, that there were meetings, but there is private information and privacy issues here, and the hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters should realize that, he was in private business himself.

Some of those things cannot be disclosed to the public, but again, I will bring back some of those facts, if I can, and contact the host society.

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

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

Question, then: Minister, will you then confirm that the amount is in the \$30,000 figure? That's how much the invoice is for.

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

**Ms. Bertram:** Madam Speaker, I have no idea on the total.

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

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

Question for the minister: Were there any other circumstances like this one that evolved over the course of the two weeks of Canada Games that extra money had to be paid out? Can you bring that information back also?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health and

Wellness.

**Ms. Bertram:** Madam Speaker, we met with the host society actually today, and there were -

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

**Ms. Bertram:** And this is all expenses, not paid from the Government of Prince Edward Island. These were dollars that were spent from the host society, so this has nothing to do with the government of PEI.

We were the major sponsor, one of the major funders for the Canada Games, however, there were expenses in the first week. We knew that we had a very warm week the first week of Canada Games. We had to source - the host society had to source air-conditioners from out of province. Those were extra expenses. There were other further expenses that were part of the two weeks of a wonderful two weeks to showcase our beautiful province.

Furthermore, to know what impact this played for our province, \$14 million in tax revenues for the Province of Prince Edward Island, and showcasing PEI as one of the best places to come to in Canada, in the world, Madam Speaker, to showcase such a wonderful sporting event.

Thank you.

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

[End of Question Period]