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OF

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS AND ORAL QUESTION PERIOD
(PRELIMINARY PROCEEDINGS)

FOR

TUESDAY, 4 MAY 2010

Responses to Questions Taken As Notice

Questions by Members

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

High-speed Internet

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

A question for the minister of innovation. It's about five months now passed when the deadline was made by Aliant when they made a commitment with government and yourself that all the installations were completed and everybody was hooked up. Certainly, we've been at some public meetings since then that clearly indicates that not everybody was hooked up.

Can you tell us today how many people are not hooked up to high-speed Internet on Prince Edward Island?

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

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

I believe when we started working - when Aliant started with the rural broadband project there were 23,000 homes that did not have high-speed Internet access here on Prince Edward Island. To my knowledge virtually most, if not all, of those homes, now have access to high-speed. There may be a few isolated areas that are still being hooked up.

Very good indication about the value of rural broadband this morning at an announcement in Bloomfield. I believe under the previous administration they opened a call centre in that area back in 2002 or 2003. What seemed to be one of the downfalls of that company was lack of access to high-speed Internet. Well, you know, now it's great that Bloomfield and every other part of Prince Edward Island now has access to high-speed Internet.

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

Mr. M. Currie: Question for the minister of innovation. Minister, in this one Island, one community that you guys promote all the time in regards to helping - everybody is the same and treated equally - can you tell me today why the people in rural PEI that have a turbo stick have to pay 49.95 and everybody else pays 29.95? Do you think that's fair?

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

Mr. Campbell: Thank you very much.

It's a good question from the hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters. I actually spoke with a constituent of mine who had a similar question just about a week ago. I did some checking on that. There are different prices and those prices are with respect to bundling of services. It's my understanding that the turbo stick price is comparable. Actually, as of January of this year the DSL cost at Aliant was raised, I believe, $2.00 while the turbo stick price remained the same. So actually, under a comparable

package, I believe the turbo stick is cheaper.

Thank you.

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

Mr. M. Currie: Madam Speaker, that's not the case.

People in rural PEI that are hooked up to the turbo stick have to pay 49.95 and those that are hooked up to the DSL pay 29.95. So minister, I'm asking: Do you think that is fair to rural PEI?

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

Mr. Campbell: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I guess if the service or the bundling package was identical - and that was indeed the case - I certainly wouldn't think it was fair. But it's my understanding that on a comparable package the turbo stick in rural PEI is actually cheaper than the DSL.

Thank you.

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

Mr. M. Currie: Madam Speaker, now that the turbo sticks have been installed in some homes they're starting to receive their invoices and some of the invoices now, instead of 49.95, they're $421.95.

On that bill - and we have copies here - some of them are showing almost $40.00 in provincial sales tax. So this is really causing a lot of concern out there, minister, in regards to the customers who are spending hours on the phones trying to straighten this out. They're getting calls from the credit companies indicating they want their credit card right away, when it was committed by your government and Aliant, 49.95.

Will you see to it that this is straightened out?

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

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

It has been brought to my attention that there has been some discrepancies with respect to billing. I know that Bell Aliant is acutely aware of that. I will make a commitment to the hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters that I will follow up with Aliant later this afternoon to make sure that those discrepancies are corrected.

Thank you.

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

Mr. M. Currie: Madam Speaker, we've been asking for quite awhile now for a copy of the development agreement, and I think Bruce Howatt from Aliant said that he does have one and there (Indistinct) a development agreement.

So I'm wondering, minister, in any way, shape or form, is your government subsidizing the difference between some of

these bills that are coming in and the 49.95? Are you guys writing that off for Aliant, the difference in these bills?

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

Mr. Campbell: Absolutely not, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. M. Currie: Madam Speaker, we have an untendered - an account for $8 million that was given to Aliant and we've seen a number of times that they've missed their deadline.

We have poor service, a lot of people in rural PEI have to pay a great deal more than anybody else, and now we have a recall on the turbo sticks. Are you aware of the recall yesterday?

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

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

I had a call from a business, actually in my constituency, last evening, with respect to a malfunction of the turbo stick. I've sent a request to Bell Aliant for some information regarding that and I'm still waiting on a response from Bell Aliant.

Thank you.

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

Mr. M. Currie: Apparently, Madam Speaker, this recall is in effect of the safety of customers in their homes.

So I'm wondering, minister, have you called the fire marshal regarding this potential hazard?

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

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

The call I received from the business owner in my constituency last evening didn't indicate it was a safety issue. He said simply that he wasn't able to access high-speed Internet. I did tell him that, of course, under this administration we now have high-speed Internet access, as opposed to the previous administration who in 1997, I believe it was, under the former premier, promised to make PEI Canada's smartest province and bring high-speed Internet access to everyone in the province. We have to flash ahead all the way to 2008 until we finally had a government that delivered on a promise.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

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

Maybe the minister would bring in a copy of the development agreement. Because at least then Islanders could see if there are any penalty clauses to Aliant for not providing a good service and overcharging his

customers. I'd also like to see if there was anything in there regarding subsidizing them when they're putting in bills like this to our Island customers.

So will you table the development agreement between the government of PEI and Aliant on high-speed Internet?

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

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

I believe there is a request that's been forwarded through the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* with respect to the development agreement. I'm not sure if the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters is part of that request or not. The request is in and I'm letting that process take place.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Personal Health Number (PHN) concerns

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Islanders are very concerned about the privacy of their health information, especially in the light of the transfer of authority from Health PEI from the department.

My first question is to the minister of health. Every Islander has a Personal Health Number or a PHN. The Auditor General noted that there could be as many as 10,000 more PHNs in the system than the population of PEI. My question to the minister: What process is in place to verify and ensure that ineligible people are not receiving service?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Ms. Bertram: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Auditor General in this year's Auditor General's report did look at our Clinical Information System and our health record system. There has been recommendations that have been made. There have been - and our department regards the auditor's comments as constructive and well received, and we are working with those recommendations, and we value this document as a template for where we go forward.

But I certainly want to reiterate to the Leader of the Opposition that safety of patient records is paramount in our system, and we work as hard as we can as a system to deliver safe records and the effectiveness of those records within our one Island health care system.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

In 2009 the Auditor General had identified

that there was 10,000 more PHNs than actually the number of people in the population of PEI. The question to the minister is: How did 10,000 more PHN numbers get issued?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Ms. Bertram: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Auditor General did bring up the issue around the medical cards, the PEI health cards, and we do note that there are extra cards within our system. Work is being done to make sure that we are effective in terms of the - versus our population. We have taken the recommendations of the Auditor General to heart and we're working on that, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

To the health minister again. We know that the Auditor General is really concerned with this issue and so are Islanders. The question is: How did it happen in the first place?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Ms. Bertram: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Systems change, and we are moving towards a new integrated information system within our health care provisions. If you look at the pharmacies right now within our system and the accessibility to patient records, obviously safety is paramount. But we are providing the best access to clinical information to health providers in our province.

But again, I'm not dismissing that the Auditor General made recommendations to the department. But we are acting on that and we are bringing in line the amount of cards that are out within our system to match the amount of population that is warranted to have those medical cards.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

To the same minister. Madam Minister, what checks and balances are in place to ensure that people - if they may pass away, if they leave out of the province - that their PHN is actually taken out of the system?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Ms. Bertram: Madam Speaker, I can bring back to the Legislature more information in that regard, but we do have vital statistics that is part of the department of health and Health PEI.

That information, obviously, is used when people either are born in our province or do pass away, that is all taken into the system.

But again, I'm saying that we are working on the recommendations that the Auditor

has presented, but any further information of clarity, I will bring back to the Legislature.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

This is a very serious issue, and my question is the fact the Auditor General raised it in 2009 - 10,000 is a huge number. It's not five, it's not 20. It's 10,000. The question is: Was the issue caused because people were just left in the system or was someone intentionally trying to duplicate these cards?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Ms. Bertram: Madam Speaker, I don't think there's anywhere within the auditor's report of 2009 that there was any means within the department that there was duplication trying to occur.

I believe we are working on the recommendations. I reiterate that. We are using statistics that are available to the department to ensure that those PEI health care cards that are out in the system match, again, those residents that are in the province who have a health card or should have a health card, and that we use statistics, whether they're vital statistics, of births or deaths, Madam Speaker, to ensure that we have the population that matches the amount of cards.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

To the health minister, would any of the PHN cards still be used perhaps if a person had lived on the Island two or three years and they've moved away from here for three or four years? Would they still be active and are they still billing the province?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Ms. Bertram: Madam Speaker, I think our front line and our department staff do an excellent job in terms of looking into our system, in terms of those people that have either left our system or are currently in our system that are billing the health care for costs.

But again, I am not dismissing that the recommendation's from the auditor - we're taking those in terms of the department across the board. But I think it's important to note that we do have a Clinical Information System in the province. We are moving towards more integrated health care records in the province. It's only going to dictate more in terms of credibility, our numbers, information that's available to the system, and can only ensure safety into the future for patient records.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

CERNER health information system

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

It's extremely important for checks and balances in this system, especially with the PHN card. But we'll move into the CERNER health information system.

Question to the health minister. Would it be possible for an individual patient to have their health file information mixed up with another person?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Ms. Bertram: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Right now we have, through the Clinical Information System, 23 of our 25 systems up and running. That is delivering better health care, better accessibility to patient records in the province. I have to certainly say, as minister of health, I'm very pleased at the progress that has been made on this front from this government.

When we came to government in 2007 this project was falling by the wayside. That is a very true statement, and the auditor has brought that forward, if you look at the timelines in the new auditor's report.

We addressed that. We had a specialist come in to look at where we stood in terms of our Clinical Information System with our electronic health records and very pleased with the - again, I'll use the words of the Leader of the Opposition - the checks and balances that were presented to government. Where we needed to go, where we had to invest.

It's interesting also to note that the previous administration - if you look at the history of this program - when they took away the IT services within departments, this led to this program falling by the wayside. So we had valuable people, resources, individuals working within departments on the information technology side that were taken out of the system back in 2005. That was one of the primary reasons this project went off the rails.

So our government took heed of that. We invested the resources and I'm pleased to say that we have seen improvement, we are demonstrating improvement and we have great work that has happened now and past.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Actually, being in government is about what you do for the people today. My question to the health minister is: In regards to the CERNER health system, the information system, would it be possible for an individual patient to have their personal health information mixed up with another patient? Would that be possible?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Ms. Bertram: Madam Speaker, that's a hypothetical question.

I'm hoping that we're ensuring the safety of patient records within this system, but I don't know what the Leader of the Opposition is trying to zero in on this particular case, if she's trying to discuss a

particular situation. But we value the safety of patient records and the confidentiality around all of that.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

To the health minister. Are mammogram bookings done inside the CERNER health information system?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Ms. Bertram: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I think it's important to see the value in this. When the H1N1 crisis happened in this province, if it hadn't been for us having an integrated and a Clinical Information System, our director of medical programs was unable on a daily basis to check in to see what admissions were to any of our acute care facilities. We were able to access that information just on statistics. That was very critical with that particular situation and crisis within our health care system.

You look at our pharmacies across the province. We're not seeing now, because of the information now available to our pharmacists, the over-prescriptions. But again, we have people that are in our system, those that are leading this, that can go in and have the checks and balances to ensure that there is not over-prescribing. Those are very critical things.

We also have other health professionals that are able to access, whether it be diagnostics that are being done at the hospital - those are all critical pieces of information and patients and their diagnoses.

So I value this system, our government values this system and it's where our country is moving - Canada - with the Canada Infoway money. So PEI is leading as a jurisdiction in clinical information systems, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

To the health minister. Are mammograms bookings done inside the CERNER health system?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Ms. Bertram: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I will have to bring back that information to the Leader of the Opposition. I believe right now that is being taken place outside of the system, but I will have to bring that back to the leader. I think it's important to note, though, that the mammogram and the booking system, we're doing a central booking system with our mammography timing and they're almost doubling the time that screening can take place. So we are making improvements, whether they are coming to the QEH or the PCH for mammography. We're decreasing the wait times for screening for women and that is very important, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

To the health minister. How would you explain the fact when one Islander went to have a mammogram done, it was discovered her health information was actually mixed up with a different person altogether? How would you explain that?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Ms. Bertram: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Again, I cannot discuss individual cases on the floor of this Legislature, but I value our professionals that are within the system, that are working with this technology, working with the new system.

Our new clinical information system will achieve better patient safety records. I don't know what the Leader of the Opposition - she's trying to talk, obviously, to a specific case. I cannot speak about specific cases in this Legislature.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

It's actually about people's - individual's - health privacy records. How would it happen, when a person goes to have a mammogram, that their record is not their record at all but somebody else's? Could the minister please explain how that would happen?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Ms. Bertram: Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition's case that she's discussing, again, I do not want to speak about individual cases on the floor of this Legislature.

If the Leader of the Opposition wishes to speak to that individual, I will follow through to ensure that the proper officials deal with the individual case, but I'm not going to discuss it on the floor of this Legislature for confidentiality purposes.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Again, we're speaking about people's private health information here. How would this happen, and is this one isolated case, or has it happened maybe 10, 20 times? Can the minister explain this?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Ms. Bertram: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Again, the Clinical Information System is going to ensure better safety for patient records. Also, it's going to ensure better delivery of service. If you look at referral forms today, where it's a paper form, it could be - in terms of writing - professionals

can't understand that other professional's handwriting, or perhaps it's the patient too. So it's going to be more effective in terms of the delivery of patient records and diagnoses.

The Leader of the Opposition, I will bring back any information I can, relative to statistics if she wishes, but I'm not going to discuss individual cases on the floor of the Legislature.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Madam Minister, I'll go back to you again. This is about people's heath information. It's really important that it's kept private.

Do you understand how serious this is? If a person goes in to have a test done and someone else's health information's there, what would happen if a doctor, instead of a mammogram, it was actually in the area of surgery? Do you understand how serious this problem is?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Ms. Bertram: Madam Speaker, as Minister of Health and Wellness, I am not dismissing the seriousness of the allegations or the line of questioning that the Leader of the Opposition is posing here today.

All I am saying to her is if there is an individual in question here that she contact that individual and that we will follow up.

Any statistics that I can bring back to the Legislature, I will. But as minister, I don't dismiss serious allegations in that respect, but I think it's important to know how the information system is changing. I was in Alberton hospital the other day, and it's just amazing how things are changing, how diagnostic testing is being done, and if that patient has to be transferred to the Prince County Hospital, that information is delivered within seconds to that patient going to the PCH.

We're working as an integrated health system, but again, the Leader of the Opposition, I don't dismiss what her question is - her allegations - but I certainly would urge her to contact that individual. We'll put her in line with our department and Health PEI, but I treat it as a serious nature.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

This particular individual, this happened well over a year ago. The patient had a mammogram appointment, discovered that her information wasn't accurate. She spent two hours at the QEH with staff to try and come up with a solution to the problem. Guess what? This year she goes back to have another test done and the health information is mixed up again.

Can the minister please tell us what's going on?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Ms. Bertram: Again, Madam Speaker, so it's an individual case.

I do not dismiss that this is serious, and again I implore the Leader of the Opposition to have that individual contact our department. She can call or he can call the department, our office. We will certainly put that individual in contact with the appropriate authorities that will look into this, because I do treat it as a serious nature, the level of this questioning.

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

Energy issues

Mr. Henderson: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

My question is for the Minister of Environment, Energy and Forestry. In the fall a 2009 legislative standing committee recommended a review of the *Electric Power Act* so power generators and distributors could implement time-of-day-billing, and encourage local sustainable energy generation that better reflects today's energy realities. Will the minister inform the House of the status of this recommendation within his department?

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

Mr. Brown: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

To inform the House, we are out negotiating with several provinces right now - Newfoundland and Quebec - in order to get a power purchase agreement for Prince Edward Island. We're hoping that if we get a power purchase agreement out of one of these provinces - or New Brunswick, now that the deal has gone by the wayside.

One of the options is time of day billing, and that's billing when you can do your laundry or certain things at night time at a cheaper rate. Ontario has a time of day billing. I think it's four cents at nighttime and it's around eight cents during the day. So there are economics there.

We're working towards that. We're waiting for some sort of a power purchase agreement out of one of our sister provinces - and work with our sister provinces in order to do this on a Maritime-wide basis. I think the savings can be there and the energy efficiency can be there also, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Henderson: Supplementary to the same minister.

When can we expect this act to be amended, and would amending this act provide options for lower electric rates?

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

Mr. Brown: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I want to inform the House there are several studies going on right now. I have to thank

the Member from Montague-Kilmuir's old buddy Stephen Harper - his birthday buddy - that certain monies have been made available through the ACOA project and through the natural resources. Two reports are being done. We're working with our sister provinces in terms of a smart grid, where we hook all the grids together. These grids would work on an integrated basis and the best energy would be drawn from the system and delivered to the customers at that time.

We're also working with our sister provinces right now, through another ACOA initiative, in order to see if we can get together on both the transmission system for Atlantic Canada into the Quebec province and into the US. These two initiatives are underway and we're awaiting those reports to come back and to see what we can do in terms of that.

I can't emphasize enough that we are too small of a province, we're too small of a utility, to do some of these big things. But if we cooperate together, and our sister provinces in Atlantic Canada, I think great things can happen. I'm out there encouraging cooperation between the three utilities, or four utilities, or five utilities. We've been basically put on notice from the US. There is a tremendous amount of energy purchases down there. The Americans have basically told us that: If you don't get your act together our cable will go out west. We're working in order for a Maritime-Quebec-Nalcor grid here. If we can do that, it's only going to mean lower rates for Islanders and lower rates for Canadians.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Tire recycling contract and Treasury Board procedures

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

My question today is for the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal. Minster, there is a contract that Dawson Tire Recycling has with Island Waste Management Corporation with respect to recycling tires. Can you tell the House whether proper Treasury Board procedure was followed when this contract was awarded?

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

Mr. MacKinley: Before I started, I was talking to some people up in Alberton the other day and there are six full-time jobs there and four part-time that didn't cost the province any money. We made money on the deal.

All right. Dawson's was the low bidder for the PEF, for the stockpile of tires. The only bidder from PEI for the whole amount of tires. But they were passed over because they could not meet the necessary schedule of getting - I'll just call it the Tory tires out of here - the loose tires. So when Dawson's was unsuccessful, their low bid on the stockpiles, they discussed taking this approach to the loose tire contract, which we had going at the same time.

It's hard to quite understand this, because we had hundreds of thousands of Tory tires

leaving - all muddy and dirty - that we had to dig up and we had to ship to Quebec. Then we also had on this side, the tires on a regular basis to be picked up at our service stations and that.

Solution A, they were still going to Quebec. Solution B, Quebec was getting the B, and it created no jobs here in the Province of Prince Edward Island.

In terms of following procedure, Treasury Board policy directs that departments or agencies consult with the secretary to Treasury Board for clarification or interpretation. In this case the secretary was consulted and the proper procedures were advised to take. He advised IWMC to prepare a memo to Treasury Board, to submit it to Treasury Board for approval, and this would constitute proper procedures.

I don't know how much clearer I have to be on this.

So, as it goes, as directed by the secretary, the CEO prepared that Treasury Board submissions, noting all the facts. Island Waste Watch board, which favoured this - made it a PEI solution, after considering TB approval, and awarded Dawson's tire with the contract that the tires are being processed here in the province. We're saving money compared to going to Quebec, and they were advertised. It was just no Island firm bid on it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Biggar: Supplementary, Madam Speaker, for the same minister.

Mr. Minister, how long is that contract for?

Mr. M. Currie: Six years.

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

Mr. MacKinley: So, I think - we just want to make sure - everybody understands - Treasury Board policy was followed. I can't get much clearer than that. The contract is for six years.

Mr. Brown: How'd you know, Mike?

Mr. MacKinley: The contract, because I gave him a copy of the contract the other day. The contract is for six years, and in the Alberton-Roseville area it created six jobs plus four part-time jobs.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. MacKinley: Mind you, we saved money when we did that.

Thank you very much

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Protection of health information

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

We're speaking about a very serious issue here in terms of health records. My question to the health minister - and don't forget, we already know that there's over 10,000 PHN cards in the system that shouldn't be there. My question is: Now that we know that these health records are being mixed up, would the minister please assure the public that their health information's actually being protected?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Ms. Bertram: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I have certainly value for our front line professionals delivering health care in this province, and I put utmost faith in our system in regards to patient safety, and the records of an electronic medical records and all medical records in the Province of Prince Edward Island.

But again, if there is something in question that the Leader of the Opposition would like our department or Health PEI to look into, we will. I implore the Leader of the Opposition to tell that individual to contact our department or Health PEI.

I certainly have faith in our system, I have faith in our front line professionals that are delivering service from day to day in our system. But I think if, just to talk about breast screening programs in the province, we are moving towards better service for women in this province in terms of mammography and screen. You look at the supports that our foundations have given and the government has given to the QEH and the PCH over the last couple of years. It's been very valuable. We're reducing the wait times.

As I've already said to the Leader of the Opposition, we have implemented a central system for bookings for mammography in the province, and this has greatly improved the reduction in wait times for women across the province getting mammography services.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

To the health minister. Would there be perhaps a major flaw in the system?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Ms. Bertram: Madam Speaker, I am - again, my faith is in the system, and in the protection of medical records in the province whether they be in electronic version, which some of them are, and some of them are paper versions.

We protect patients' records. Again, I implore the Leader of the Opposition, if there's an individual case that she bring - or tell that individual to come forward to our authorities within our department.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the

Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

To the health minister: Wouldn't you be concerned when there's 10,000 extra PHN cards? This is one example of health information being mixed up. Wouldn't you want to go back and check in your department just how many times this happens, Madam Minister?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Ms. Bertram: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I don't think I've denied that all along in this line of questioning. I've said that I will take back any statistics that I can give in regards to the health care cards of Islanders. Also, in regards to this particular case that she is talking about, I again ask her to speak with that individual and come forward to the authorities. Because I am standing here today as the minister of health in this province to ensure, and reassure, Islanders that we are protecting the records of Islanders, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Integrated Claims Service system

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Auditor General raised the issue of the 10,000 PHN cards in 2009.

The next question to the health minister. Besides the issues identified in CERNER, the Auditor General raised concerns over the Integrated Claims Services system, or ICS. To the minister, for any employee who has ICS access on their computer, when they log in to their health system, it automatically goes here. There's no separate login for this confidential system. My question to the minister: What have you done to fix this problem?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Ms. Bertram: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

If the Leader of the Opposition is speaking about the drug system, in terms of the accessibility, again, I reiterate, like I said at the very beginning of this line of questioning, that we treat the auditor's reports as constructive to our department. We are working with them with those recommendations to ensure better efficiencies with our system, and that statistics are used to better ensure and have timeliness in terms of service delivery in the province.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Madam Speaker, unfortunately, that's not what Integrated Claims System is.

The Integrated Claims System is payment information and addresses and personal information to physicians, as well as personal health information of PEI residents. Do you understand where the problem is?

Madam Minister, can you explain why you didn't even know that that system, what it's function is?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Ms. Bertram: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Again, I bring back to the drug health system. There were certain - and I'm going to speak to that because in the auditor's report Mr. Younker did have recommendations around the drug system, and protection in terms of passwords and things like that.

But in terms of the claimants and the claims that come forward through the department, hon. member, we certainly are working with the recommendations brought forward from the auditor, and we are trying to even better our - the efficiencies within the health care system on PEI.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Madam Minister, to the health minister, any employee who has working in health that has access, when they log on, they'll automatically go to the ICS system, the Integrated Claims System.

My question to you is: The Auditor General clearly states that this is a major issue because of people's confidentiality. What are you doing to fix it?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Ms. Bertram: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Again, I think it's important to note that the department has contracted the Hay Group and that we are looking at all claims that are coming through the province and services with physicians. We are looking to ensure that there isn't over-billing happening in the province, to ensure that we have efficiencies and that health care is operated in the most efficient manner possible.

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

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

This is really about people's personal privacy and health information. The Auditor General, and I quote from the 2009 report, 4.73: "For each user who has ICS on his or her computer, when login to the Health Network is completed, access is automatic to the ICS." Simply, when the person signs in it poses a "greater risk for compromise of confidential information."

Madam Minister, this information is highly sensitive. Why are you ignoring the Auditor General's recommendation for you to fix it?

An Hon. Member: We're not. We're not ignoring it.

Mr. Bagnall: (Indistinct) didn't even know what it was about.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Ms. Bertram: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

We are certainly not ignoring the auditor's recommendations to the province, to the department. Again, I reiterate that patient records are critically important to remain safe in the hands of our health care professionals.

But it's important to note our electronic medical records, our electronic health records, where we're moving with the Clinical Information System in this province, is only going to prove and serve Islanders better, serve our medical professionals better, in timeliness, in appropriate diagnosis, with valuable information at their fingertips. Our government, I'm pleased to tell today, we've invested - since 2007 we came into government - to see that the Clinical Information System, that the Canada Health Infoway money was better accessed, and that we are fulfilling our obligation as a jurisdiction within Canada to ensure that patient safety and that health records become electronic form before 2016.

We have that obligation as a jurisdiction within our country, and we are working hard to deliver on that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[End of Question Period]