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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
OF  
PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS AND ORAL QUESTION PERIOD  
(PRELIMINARY PROCEEDINGS)

FOR

WEDNESDAY, 12 MAY 2010



Responses to Questions Taken As Notice

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

**Build PEI signs (further)**

**Mr. MacKinley:** Madam Speaker - even get a smile out of (Indistinct) when you drink a tea.

Yesterday the Member from Montague-Kilmuir was talking about signage. I got the information for him. Project signs are mandatory under federal-provincial agreements on infrastructure programs at every approved project. Not putting up signs at the project is not an option. It's a requirement, and a cost of doing business with our federal government in funding - getting the funding from our federal partners.

This has been the case for the last 25 years, in case you didn't know that. Taxpayers deserve to know where tax dollars go, exactly where the infrastructure funds get spent. We even invested in stimulus plans in this province and it has been work. It's very important to show transparency, accountability, and show where government priorities lie. I'm proud of the accomplishments we have made.

If you drove out to the 75 incorporated communities, you would see significant investment all over Prince Edward Island. Whether it be Tignish, Alberton, Souris, Montague, Abram-Village, Cornwall, you name it, they're there.

With the current build Canada program,

which we have - and it's a great program, I might add, and we're very thankful for our federal government to partner with us in this -

**Mr. Brown:** Lucky Paul Martin was (Indistinct).

**Mr. MacKinley:** - a program - the federal government - it's also mandatory to create separate signs for both levels of government.

It was the federal government who insisted that Canada has its own sign, and consequently PEI has to have a separate sign. A few years ago they used to share the signs. For some reason the feds decided they wanted to have their own. They're the ones that are giving us the money. They call the shots.

In terms of cost, in terms of agreement, they're very specialized. The cost signs are charged to each project as a project expense. So receipts of funds for projects pays the cost of the signs. And submit the bills - so receipts of the funds for the projects pays the costs of signs -

**Speaker:** Thank you.

**Mr. MacKinley:** - and you must submit your bills to reimburse to the proper authorities, or that's the federal-provincial committee.

**Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. Minister.

**Mr. MacKinley:** Is that enough? All right.

**An Hon. Member:** Are you okay with that, hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir? Are

you okay with that?

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

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

Questions by Members

**Mr. Sheridan:** Madam Speaker?

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

**Mr. Bagnall:** Thank you.

**Celebrities visiting province**

**Speaker:** Oh, I'm sorry, I'm sorry.

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

We have another minister tabling documents.

My first questions is to the minister of tourism. Minister, are you planning to pay to bring in any celebrities this summer to the province?

The hon. Minister of Finance and Municipal Affairs.

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Tourism and Culture.

**ITSS contract (further)**

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

**Mr. Vessey:** I'm not really sure what the hon. member's referring to. Could he elaborate a little more on his question, please?

Yesterday the hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters had asked a few questions with regard to the ITSS transformation. I have today the tabling of two of the schedules with regard to Jean Yves Poirier and the infrastructure contracts are there. As I said yesterday, the hon. member does have Allan MacDonald's first contract in his hands.

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

**Mr. Bagnall:** I'm just wondering, in your tourist promotions this summer, are you planning on paying to bring any celebrities into the province this summer?

All of the documentation that has to do with the time schedule of Allan MacDonald leaving and coming with us - leaving Accreon and coming with us - has a little bit of cranberry juice spilt all over it from the previous accident, and all of the reproductions are almost complete. I have all but one copy and I will have it to you. So we almost had that ruined too.

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Tourism and Culture.

**Mr. Vessey:** I guess as tourism minister we're always looking at alternatives, but at this time, no.

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

**Mr. Bagnall:** Minister, there have been rumours floating around that you are spending three quarters of a million dollars this summer to bring in Regis Philbin and Kelly Ripa to - this summer, from the Live! Regis and Kelly - to this province. Is that true, minister?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Tourism and Culture.

**Mr. Vessey:** As tourism, my department's always in negotiations trying to do great things for the province. At this time, I don't have anything to announce on that front, and if I ever do, then there'll be a time for that.

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

**Mr. Bagnall:** Thank you, minister. So are you telling me that you don't know anything about this? That it's not going to happen and it's not a fact? Or are you saying you're just avoiding the question?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Tourism and Culture.

**Mr. Vessey:** Madam Speaker, again, our department is always in negotiations and discussions trying to promote our province, and we'll continue to do so.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Bagnall:** Obviously, minister, you're going to bringing them in, because you would have said no if you weren't.

So, that's finally getting something out of you here. So minister - to the same minister, Madam Speaker - why are you paying three quarters of a million dollars to bring them in here?

Regis is to fill a new show with you.

**An Hon. Member:** What?

**Mr. Bagnall:** You know, is he going to be filling a new show which states: Who wants taxpayers to pay a million dollars to a millionaire? Is that what he's going to be doing here this summer?

**An Hon. Member:** Good job.

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Tourism and Culture.

**Mr. Vessey:** Madam Speaker, again, my department is always in negotiations trying to promote our province.

I have no idea where the hon. member's getting his information. I don't know where he's going, but if there's anything to announce from my department there'll be a time and place for that.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

**Mr. Bagnall:** Minister, I've also heard that you're going to be setting them up at Crowbush for the time that they're here. That's a nice place to put them up, a nice new resort there and nice golf course handy for them and everything. Is that true,

minister? Is that where you're going to be putting them up?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Tourism and Culture.

**Mr. Vessey:** Madam Speaker, I'm - no, I don't, that's not - I don't know the answer to that question.

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

**Mr. Bagnall:** So maybe you're taking them to Mill River then, are you? Okay, but anyway - minister, the reason why I ask why you're bringing in celebrities is because the Premier - I'm sorry he's not here today, but -

**Speaker:** Hon. member -

**Mr. Bagnall:** - I guess I'm not allowed to say that.

**Speaker:** Hon. member.

**Mr. Bagnall:** He's out of the province working, I know that, Madam Speaker.

He was very plain that he didn't want any celebrities coming to this province. He didn't want the Legends of Golf tournament when Jack Nicklaus and Tom Watson were here. He was so against bringing any celebrities into this province that - you know, why has he done - minister, why have you and the Premier done a 180% degree turn on this thing. Another flip-flop.

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Tourism and Culture.

**Mr. Vessey:** Madam Speaker, I -

**Speaker:** Order, please!

**Mr. Vessey:** Madam Speaker, I can't speak for the Premier, but our department is always trying to develop new ideas and promote our province.

I think the hon. member had some celebrities in in his time as well. When people come to our province - if they stay at Crowbush, Mill River, wherever they stay - I'm sure they'll have a wonderful stay because we have a wonderful province.

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

**Mr. Bagnall:** Madam Speaker, to the same minister again.

I'm going to quote you what the Premier said. This was on April 12<sup>th</sup>, 2007: It is also important to make sure that we protect taxpayers' dollars. Wasting it on ventures that don't do any good. We want to make sure everything is accountable to taxpayer dollars and the taxpayer dollars are being protected. We should be using the taxpayers' dollars on health care, education and social programs, not bringing in celebrities and paying them three quarters of a million dollars.

So minister, are you bringing them in and paying three quarters of a million dollars? Are you going to tell us the truth now?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Tourism and Culture.

**Mr. Vessey:** Madam Speaker, as minister responsible for the department of tourism, it's my mandate to promote PEI as a vacation destination.

I'm proud to collaborate with industry, with combined efforts from our government working together, doing good things. I have no announcement for what the hon. member there is referring to. Whatever he's up to today. I guess he's got a leak somewhere, or he thinks he does. So if there's an announcement to be made on that it'll be made when the time is to be made.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

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

I was just wondering, Mr. Minister, that you're bringing in celebrities and paying them three quarters of a million dollars to come here. I wondered: Are they going to pay for their golf rounds at Crowbush when they golf with you and the Premier? Who's going to be paying for those rounds of golf?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Tourism and Culture.

**Mr. Vessey:** Madam Speaker, the hon. member, I don't know where he's getting his information from, but we're negotiating all the time with people to come to the province, and if I have anything to announce I'll be more than glad to do so.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

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

I was just wondering, minister, have you done a cost benefit analysis on bringing them in, what this is going to do for the province on this?

**Mr. Sheridan:** Return on investment.

**Mr. Bagnall:** Yeah, exactly, is there going to be a return on investment on this? What do you think, provincial treasurer, would (Indistinct)?

**Speaker:** Is that to the Minister of Tourism and Culture?

**Mr. Bagnall:** (Indistinct) Minister of Tourism and Culture.

**Mr. Vessey:** Madam Speaker, again, I said, if my department's in negotiations with anything there has to be an announcement made on, it'll be done at the appropriate time.

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

### **Tourism Charlottetown**

**Mr. Bagnall:** I'm going to continue with the same minister, Madam Speaker.

Minister, can you tell us, on a different subject, how much money does your department give Tourism Charlottetown?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Tourism and Culture.

**Mr. Vessey:** Madam Speaker, I don't have that number right with me, but I'll gladly have a look at it and bring it back if I can.

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

**Mr. Bagnall:** If you don't know, minister, could you give us an estimate of approximately how much?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Tourism and Culture.

**Mr. Vessey:** (Indistinct) I'll bring it back if I can.

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

### **Performers at Festival of Lights**

**Mr. Bagnall:** Minister, I understand that there are some additional unanticipated costs with regards to the performers this year at the Festival of Lights. Can you comment on this?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Tourism and Culture.

**Mr. Vessey:** I guess, Madam Speaker, Tourism Charlottetown, I think it's a question for them.

We fund Tourism Charlottetown but we don't oversee their operations.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

**Mr. Bagnall:** Madam Speaker, to the same minister.

Minister, I understand that someone at Tourism Charlottetown forgot to read the rider that accompanies Cirque du Soleil when they were here and that they now require an additional 200,000-plus worth of equipment. Who fumbled this file on this, minister?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Tourism and Culture.

**Mr. Vessey:** Madam Speaker, again, if it's an issue with Tourism Charlottetown that's a question for Tourism Charlottetown.

We fund them, I don't oversee them.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

**Mr. Bagnall:** Minister, will you table any costs associated with the Festival of the Lights for the coming year?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Tourism and Culture.

**Mr. Vessey:** Madam Speaker, I'll go back to my department and look at that, and if there's something to table, I will.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from

Montague-Kilmuir.

**Mr. Bagnall:** Minister, have you been in any conversation, or your department been in any conversation, with Tourism Charlottetown to pick up some of these extra costs?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Tourism and Culture.

**Mr. Vessey:** Madam Speaker, my people are in discussion with Tourism Charlottetown all the time.

To what magnitude, I don't listen at their office doors or on their phone lines, but not to my knowledge, Madam Speaker.

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

**Mr. Bagnall:** So, minister, you're telling us that if there is a \$200 cost to Tourism Charlottetown that it is not going to be paid for by your department?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Tourism and Culture.

**Mr. Vessey:** Well, \$200, I'm sure they could probably themselves recoup the cost to Tourism Charlottetown, if it's only \$200.

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

**Mr. Bagnall:** Minister, it's 200,000. You're telling me that none of that \$200,000 is going to come of the department of tourism.

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

Culture.

**Mr. Vessey:** Madam Speaker, again, what went on at Tourism Charlottetown I can't comment on that.

So until I look into Tourism Charlottetown, or whatever the hon. member is making the accusation on, I'll comment on that when I can.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

**Mr. Bagnall:** Same minister, Madam Speaker.

Is it fair to say that you don't know anything about this? That you haven't been briefed on this whatsoever?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Tourism and Culture.

**Mr. Vessey:** Madam Speaker, I've been briefed on a lot of stuff since I came in three months ago.

To my knowledge, we fund Tourism Charlottetown and Tourism Charlottetown run their show. I'll go back to my department and look into it and if there's anything I can bring back, I will.

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

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

Mr. Minister, will you guarantee the House

today that your department is not going to pay the \$200,000 to Tourism Charlottetown if they made a mistake in this contract and it's going to cost an extra 200,000? Will you tell us today that it's not going to come out of your budget?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Tourism and Culture.

**Mr. Vessey:** (Indistinct) go back again and look at this, I'm not going to comment or make any commitment on this.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

**Mr. Bagnall:** Madam Speaker, it seems like he is ducking and hiding on this issue, doesn't want to bring out the costs back that he has been asked to pay \$200,000 from the city and it's another cost.

I wonder, minister, who's going to get fired over this? Because obviously somebody made a bad mistake if these figures are true. Then somebody should be on the hook for this. Who's going to be on the hook?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Tourism and Culture.

**Mr. Vessey:** Madam Speaker, the comments the hon. member are making, they're just all over the map, I guess.

Until I go back and look into this, the hon. member can make accusations all he wants. I'm not going to sit here and guess at what he's trying to ask. I'll bring back the

answers to his questions once I look into it.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

**Mr. Bagnall:** Thank you. I'm glad he's got the would-be minister giving him the answers over there.

### Compensation for growers

Next question is to the minister of agriculture. Minister, you recall that we had an excessive drain that was destroyed back in the fall because of miscommunication between Dover Mills and officials here. The growers suffered significant losses as a result of having to destroy their product.

Minister, have they been compensated yet?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Deputy Premier.

**Mr. Webster:** Madam Speaker, there were high levels of toxins in the wheat produced last summer because of all the moisture, and there was a lot of wheat that was unsuitable for market.

The wheat that's in question, once the number was moved from one to two, any person that was above that or any lots of wheat that were above that were covered by crop insurance, Madam Speaker.

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

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

To the same minister. Minister, there was some producers that weren't covered with crop insurance and I understand that they've put together a package and sent to you on an individual basis. I understand you have those.

Minister, can you tell the House why you haven't settled any of these claims yet?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Deputy Premier.

**Mr. Webster:** Madam Speaker, I have not received a proposal from any individual wheat producers.

The grain elevators corporation's a Crown Corporation and they are usually the buying agent in the province. I know they were looking at something for two or three individuals that fell through the cracks in the floor or had no insurance or something. I'm not sure what the resolve is on that, but I would gladly investigate that.

I want to remind the Member from Montague-Kilmuir that the grain elevators corporation is a Crown Corporation that operates independently of government.

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

**Mr. Bagnall:** Thank you. As you remember, minister, this was promised by your department, and that was when the minister of finance was acting minister, that the grain farmers were going to be compensated, the comment he made. So I ask you again: Have they been?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Deputy Premier.

**Mr. Webster:** Yes, Madam Speaker, to my knowledge the producers that had toxins between one and two parts per million, I believe the terminology is, those people then were upgraded by the elevator at that particular point in time, or they were covered off by crop insurance on the crop that was deemed to be unacceptable for the marketplace.

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

**Mr. Bagnall:** I'm kind of confused because you told me a few minutes ago that there was proposals that hadn't been settled, and when I ask you again you say they have been settled. So, have these claims been settled, minister? So every grain farmer in PEI now that has made for compensation that didn't have crop insurance, they've been looked after like the minister of treasury said they would be? Has that been done?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Deputy Premier.

**Mr. Webster:** Madam Speaker, I don't interfere with the board of directors that manage the grain elevators corporation.

They did advise me several months ago that they were trying to address those concerns of some individuals that had a situation, and they have not come back to me saying that they have not resolved those issues. So, I have to make the assumption that they did resolve those issues.

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

**Mr. Bagnall:** Madam Speaker, I got a call this past week saying that they haven't been compensated for, and the file - that they're trying to put crops back in the ground and they haven't received funding.

Now, if that's incorrect then my information is incorrect. But minister, my understanding is they haven't been compensated for it. I'm wondering why they haven't been if that's the case. Because there was a commitment made, and the commitment was made by the acting minister of education at the time, the provincial treasurer. He said that there were farmers that would fall through the cracks and they would be compensated for it.

It wasn't the grain elevators that made that commitment, it was the minister of agriculture that made that commitment, that these individuals would be compensated. So minister, have you compensated those individuals?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Deputy Premier.

**Mr. Webster:** Madam Speaker, with the evidence that's on the floor, I will have to go and ask for a report from the grain elevators corporation to get the real story.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Bagnall:** I was just wondering, minister, if you're avoiding the issue

because the finance minister made the commitment and you didn't. That you weren't going to live up to the commitment.

Is that the reason why the farmers haven't got looked after?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Deputy Premier.

**Mr. Webster:** Madam Speaker, we as a government will always continue to live up to our commitments, and we always have to analyze what we promise and what we can't live up to, or can't deliver.

I'll go and investigate this issue and see what the resolve is on it. I want to point out to the House that there are people that did not buy crop insurance, a small percentage of producers, I might add. We encourage everyone to buy crop insurance to have that protection. I do know of some producers that don't buy it, and they had five or six parts per million, and their crop was unusable for any purpose - livestock feed, or human consumption, or whatever.

So it's very difficult to go back and say: You had a choice to buy crop insurance and you didn't buy crop insurance, and therefore we go in at the 11<sup>th</sup> and a half hour and pay for a crop that was unusable. It would be very similar to owning your home and having no fire insurance on your home, and your house burns down and you're trying to get insurance after the fact.

We just don't operate that way. We operate in a fair and equitable way. I will go back to the board of directors and get the real story, Madam Speaker.

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

**Mr. Bagnall:** Madam Speaker, to the same minister.

So, minister, according to your answer, if they didn't have crop insurance you weren't going to do anything for them. But (Indistinct) previous minister, who was acting for you at the time, he understood that there were a few farmers that were going to slip through the cracks, as he said, and that he would make sure that they got compensated for it.

Minister, are you going to honour the word of the provincial treasurer? Because he made that commitment to the agricultural community when this happened, and he had an interview with the *Guardian* on that issue, too. So, minister, are you going to honour these individuals that have claims in that aren't being dealt with to date?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Deputy Premier.

**Mr. Webster:** Madam Speaker, it's appropriate for me to reiterate the fact that I will go back and get the appropriate information from the board of directors to make sure that we're speaking apples and apples and oranges and oranges, if you like.

I will do that as a minister and see where that lies at the moment.

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

**Mr. Bagnall:** Thank you.

I see that the provincial treasurer is giving you some answers there (Indistinct), but anyway, that's good.

So, minister, do you want to show some leadership on this issue? I mean, there was a promise made by the provincial treasurer when he was acting minister, and now it's in your hands. Will you compensate these grain farmers who have their application sitting in there, wanting the money so they can put in crops this year? Will you compensate them, as promised?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Deputy Premier.

**Mr. Webster:** Madam Speaker, the grain elevators corporation is an independent Crown organization and they do - we do see their minutes on a monthly basis, or whatever frequency they meet, and we do stay in touch that way.

My last conversation with them was approximately four months ago and they were looking into that issue, and they were going to try to make a determination and identify the growers that fell through the cracks in the floor. They were going to address it from their level, which is their responsibility. The minister of agriculture or any other minister shouldn't be interfering, if I can use that word, with a Crown corporation of government.

So what I will do - and I'll make that commitment again, restate my situation - I will go back and get the information from that organization and see if that issue has been addressed, Madam Speaker.

Thank you.

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

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

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

To the same minister. Minister, it wasn't a grain elevator that made this commitment to those farmers. It was your Department of Agriculture who made that commitment. You told them they were going to compensate them. You should be calling them and saying: What's the bill? We're going to pay it. Minister, will you do that?

You made the commitment. Your department made the commitment. Will you honour your word and pay the bills?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Deputy Premier.

**Mr. Webster:** Madam Speaker, the word compensate is perhaps a broad word.

I think the reference was made by the acting minister at that particular point in time, made reference to the fact that because the number was actually two parts per million people would be compensated or paid from the original lower price, so these people did receive an extra 50 or \$60 dollars a ton for their wheat that was in its storage at the grain elevator at that particular time.

The word compensation was to pay them the higher rate because of the confusion surrounding the request from Dover, so I'm led to believe that everyone within that

system received that level of compensation. If they didn't receive that level of compensation, if they were still over and above those numbers, then the crop insurance kicked in and paid them for their crop, and they disposed of it at that particular point in time.

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

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

**Mr. Bagnall:** Minister, I can understand why the provincial treasurer's clapping, but he's the only one.

Madam Speaker, to the same minister.

Minister, compensation to the farmers meant that they were going to get dealt with. If you were trying to use trick language so you could get out of the issue and get away from the issue at the time, then that's misleading the farmers, Mr. Minister.

The commitment was made by your department that you would compensate these grain farmers for their losses. Very simple. Are you going to do it? Or are you going to hide again?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Deputy Premier.

**Mr. Webster:** Madam Speaker, the grain elevators board hasn't advised me that there were any producers that did fall through the cracks in the floor, that everything wasn't taken care of as it need be.

So I'm not aware of that. I would have

thought they would have come to me and said: There still are some issues. But they have not done that. So I will have to go and inquire from my end and see in fact if that is true. I'm making the assumption - because I haven't been asked - that everyone has been compensated appropriately by either the higher price or by receiving crop insurance, Madam Speaker.

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

### **Energy industry meeting**

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

My question is for the hon. Minister of Environment, Energy and Forestry.

Yesterday an important gathering of Atlantic energy industry representatives were meeting in Saint John, New Brunswick. Knowing the importance that energy costs play in the day-to-day lives of Islanders, can the minister provide this House with details of what was on the agenda and what was accomplished at that meeting?

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

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

It was a great meeting. There were the suppliers of power, the distributors of power and the users of power at these meetings. The general consensus at the meeting was that we have to cooperate in terms of Maritime. We have to get together, we have to work together because there is enough

energy supply within Atlantic Canada and Quebec to supply our needs, New Brunswick's needs and Nova Scotia's needs. There are some issues now around transmission and the rights of transmissions.

Industry told us their costs are rising and a major part of their cost is energy. If we don't bring that energy cost down, Atlantic Canada's going to lose jobs. One company basically said that 25% of their costs of running their operations is electrical power. They can move and save millions of dollars, and it's been harder and harder for them to stay in Atlantic Canada in order to compete against those.

No longer do we have the cheap dollar that we relied on for so many years. We have to compete. We have to compete on an equal field with Americans. We have to reduce our costs, and one of those major costs is electricity. We all identify that this is an important issue that has to be addressed.

Thank you.

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

### **Future PEI energy rates**

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

Knowing that the PEI government has a 5% share in the refurbishment of Point Lepreau electrical plant, and this project has been delayed yet again, what impact will this have on future energy rates on Prince Edward Island?

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

**Mr. Brown:** Yeah, that is a good question.

Madam Speaker, I was disappointed to hear yesterday that AECL, which is a federal Crown corporation which is refurbishing Point Lepreau is, yet again, not giving firm deadlines on when that completion is going to be done.

I have to tell Islanders that each month that that plant is down it's costing us 1.8 million to \$2 million a month in the rate.

AECL is committed. We are committed. New Brunswick is committed to get this plant up and running because at the end of the day, nuclear power is good, affordable, long-lasting power and it is a great energy source. It doesn't create much pollution in the air and we want to see this plant up and running.

We are discussing with the federal government, in terms of compensation, in terms of the energy that is not being produced at the plant while refurbishing is going on, and us and New Brunswick are asking the federal government to contribute towards some of those delayed costs. We're hoping that the federal government will come up.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

### **Homelessness report card**

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

A question for the Minister of Community Services, Seniors and Labour. Last week the homelessness report card came out and several gaps were identified within the system, in programs and services. I'm wondering, Madam Speaker, what the department plans to do with this information.

Thank you.

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

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

That's an excellent question from the Member from Stratford-Kinlock. The homelessness report did come out last week, and to begin with I would like to thank the committee for their wonderful work on this report. I think it was well needed and will provide very important benchmarks for us to move forward and to make changes in our system.

The other important part of it was it was evident in the report that responding to individuals who are at risk of homelessness is the responsibility of all three levels of government, of community and other people who are major stakeholders. The report will allow us to put together some plans to move forward to create better circumstances into the future.

Also, to answer the question for the hon. member, I think it's important to note that the government is working towards a social

prosperity framework that will improve the lives of Islanders. This information will be very valued in that journey.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

### **Renovations to housing**

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

A supplementary question for the Minister of Community Services, Seniors and Labour. Within the existing housing that the province is responsible for, could the minister share with the House if the renovations are taking place and where they are in that process?

Thank you.

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

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

Again, a very excellent question. In Montague last week, and I think the hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir was there, we had announced 10 new units in the Montague area. We also announced half a million dollars towards renovations in some of our family housing units in eastern PEI. There are upgrades going to happen to 19 units in Souris, 10 units in Georgetown, six in Mount Stewart, one in Cardigan and one in Vernon Bridge.

Everybody should stay tuned because

there's a number of announcements that will be coming forward in the very near future. This will allow for better living conditions for all of those people who are in need.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

### **Compensation for growers (further)**

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

To the minister of agriculture again. Just one more question before I leave, minister, there, of you. So you have not received any claims for any farmers on the wheat issue to your department?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Deputy Premier.

**Mr. Webster:** Madam Speaker, I have not received an ask personally to my department for the wheat issue that was out there last fall.

I am aware that the grain elevator received some requests, and the conversation I had with them was that they were going to look into it and address the issue, Madam Speaker.

That is what I know today.

Thank you.

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

### **Paramedics and home care in West**

**Prince**

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

My question today is for the minister of health. Minister, I understand a week or so ago that you announced that you were going to use paramedics to do home care in West Prince. I'm just wondering, minister, when is that project going to start?

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

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

I thank the hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters for the question. We're very excited with the allotted amount in this year's Budget for paramedicine in the West Prince region. The hon. member from Georgetown did ask questions during budget estimates in this regard. Like I said during that time, it's very much in the organization process right now.

It is going to take place in this Budget year, but as we are prepared, we will make sure that we announce that publicly and obviously consult with our stakeholders. But we are very pleased that the hon. treasurer, in access to \$100,000, that this money was put aside in our home care and support section of our budget.

We're just utilizing every health care professional in our Island community to their full scope of practice, and paramedics a very valuable asset to our health care team on Prince Edward Island.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

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

**Mr. M. Currie:** Minister, can you tell me, did EMS lobby you to use their paramedics to replace the home care workers in West Prince?

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

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

I, as Minister of Health and Wellness, have been lobbied by no individual in terms of EMS. I have no correspondence, hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters. We looked at initiatives that are taking place across the country and this is one initiative that is taking place in the Maritimes as we speak.

We thought that we should, perhaps, look at a pilot here on Prince Edward Island. So the dollars have been allotted. We will be consulting with stakeholders in regards to this. We feel that this is a very exciting opportunity for the West Prince region and utilizing our paramedics to fill their full scope of practice.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

**Mr. M. Currie:** Question to the minister. So, minister, are you indicating to us that

EMS did not come to you with a proposal to replace the home care workers in West Prince? This was a proposal or an idea that you generated on yourself?

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

**Ms. Bertram:** Madam Speaker, I'm pleased to say that I have had many occasions to sit down with EMS, in regards to issues relative to ambulatory care and emergency services across Prince Edward Island, but I received no proposal from EMS.

We have a medical program, the division within our department, under the direction of Dr. Richard Wedge. We're working in collaboration with that division under Health PEI and operations.

But again, this is going back to our model of care and utilizing and doing a pilot in terms of utilizing our paramedics across PEI - primarily for this, it's going to be the West Prince region - to their full scope of practice.

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

**Mr. M. Currie:** Question to the minister of health.

Minister, there's a number of unions that represent the public service in this province and our home care workers are one of them. They're indicating that you did not consult with them before you made this decision to use paramedics to do home care in West Prince. Is that true?

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

Wellness.

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

I have our budget right here for our department. Like I said to the hon. member during Budget estimates, our department is divided into many areas. We have a home care and support section to our department under Mary Sullivan. Like I said, our government was very pleased to announce \$750,000 additional money to home care - home care - in this Budget. We have increased by 65%, Madam Speaker -

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

**Ms. Bertram:** - the expenditure in home care services in this province. Over \$13 million are being spent on home care services.

It is exciting. We're moving ahead. We're moving forward to reach our national stats in home care. It's very critical that we do this, that we move away from bed-based care in this province, that we move towards helping people live their life as long as they can in their home. Home care services are going to provide that.

But in addition to that Budget line item, Mr. Member, this is support also to home care. We see our paramedics being a true integral part of the team of health care delivery in this province. We are very excited that we have this pilot project and dollars allocated in the 2010-2011 Budget to go towards this paramedicine pilot project.

Thank you.

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

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

I believe that's where I'm asking these questions. Who's going to be doing the home care work in this province? If you're not going to at least be decent enough to talk to the unions, are you going to undermine it now - their job position and their security - by using the paramedics? It seems that you're going to put extra money in, so is that what you're doing? You're not talking to the unions.

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

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

I think it's very important, and our department does a great job in terms of consulting with stakeholder groups. We will certainly be consulting with stakeholders in regards to this.

Like I said, this is allocated money, a new pilot project that is in its developmental stages. We have a committee that has been struck and it's in its early stages, and we will be consulting with stakeholder groups. We have been allocated \$115,000, I believe, in our budget for this particular pilot project. There have been issues around - I know the hon. member raised a question about taking a truck out of service - that is not what this is part. It doesn't even mean that the paramedic might not be even in an ambulance, that it might be a different type of vehicle for this pilot.

So we're enhancing services across this province. We're utilizing this pilot as an opportunity, and hopefully it will work, but it will be a way to see if it works. I think the West Prince region is very accepting of this proposal. It's only going to support our home care workers across this province in addition to what they do, because this is an over and above amount to the home care budget in our budget this year. It's very exciting, Madam Speaker.

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

**Mr. M. Currie:** Madam Speaker, the minister indicated that you have struck a committee to oversee this.

Could you please tell me who's on that committee?

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

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

I understand that there has been - I have a sheet here - that tells us that they actually - I believe the unions were communicated to attend a committee meeting, but that was turned down. I can return to the House with more information with regards to that.

Like I said, we are going to be consulting in due process with stakeholders. There is a committee formed for this. It's in its early stages. But I guess the best message here today - we're enhancing services across Prince Edward Island, we're enhancing health care service across Prince Edward Island, and we are acknowledging the full

scope of practice of all health professionals in this province, Madam Speaker.

[End of Question Period]

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

**Mr. M. Currie:** Madam Speaker, I guess my final question is to the minister of health.

Do you feel that the home care workers we have in this province now, that have been doing this work for decades, are not qualified to do the work any more? Are you going to push this project across PEI?

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

**Ms. Bertram:** Madam Speaker, I have a note here.

The union coalition, including CUPE, was invited to a planning committee meeting but refused. The coalition, including PEINU, (Indistinct), UPSE, CUPE, have requested a meeting with myself. We will be meeting with them in due process, but again, we are in its early stages.

The main message here is our government has committed \$13 million dollars-plus, 65% more dollars into home care in this province, and we are investing an additional \$115,000 into this pilot project. We are responding to the needs of Islanders. We are wanting quality of care in this province and we are very proud of the initiatives that are taking place today.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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