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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF
PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS AND ORAL QUESTION PERIOD
(PRELIMINARY PROCEEDINGS)

FOR

THURSDAY, 13 MAY 2010

Responses to Questions Taken As Notice

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

Compensation for growers (further)

Mr. Webster: Madam Speaker, in response to the hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir, for yesterday's questions, this information came to me this morning from Mike Delaney, general manager of the PEI Grain Elevators Corporation.

I want to table this information, but I'd like to give a brief update. All producers were invited to submit a written individualized request with supporting documentation to support their claim. There is a number of steps required to insure that this takes place, and the commitment to deal with applications on a case by case basis is adhered to.

The directors, management and staff have been busy since January trying to ensure that the entire process of dealing with producers regarding milling wheat toxins had been dealt with professionally and in a fair and transparent manner.

There were nine applications received since January 2010. Seven had crop insurance, two did not.

Once this analysis is completed, the board will be in a position to review all information relevant to claims submissions.

Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I'll table five copies.

Questions by Members

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

Wind energy RFP

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

My first question today is for the minister of energy. Minister, when you announced your 10-point plan for wind energy development a couple of years ago the process was that there were to be two envelopes for evaluating the RFP. It's my understanding that Maritime Electric was to do the technical side of it. Is that correct?

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

Mr. Brown: Yes, Madam Speaker.

Maritime Electric was to look at (Indistinct) transmission, how much would transmission cost, how much would it cost to integrate that power into their system.

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

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

It seems that that process has somehow changed. It's my understanding that you have allowed complete control of this RFP process to be taken over by Maritime Electric. Is that true?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of

Environment, Energy and Forestry.

Mr. Brown: Madam Speaker, that is absolutely incorrect.

I will read from the wind plan: Through the PEI Energy Corporation, which will be supported by an independent fairness auditor - we appointed an independent fairness auditor to be our representative on that board. That independent fairness auditor would look at all the pricing and look at all the information that comes in through Maritime Electric for our benefit, for the residents of Prince Edward Island. That person would then come back and say if it's a good deal or not.

That auditor has recommended to us the same as what Maritime Electric has recommended to us: to go back to the bidders and see if we can get a better price.

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

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

Minister, are you indicating to us, to Islanders, that you are the driving force behind this 10-point plan for energy security and independence in this province? You are the driving force?

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

Mr. Brown: Madam Speaker, as I said yesterday in this House, electricity and power is a big game.

Prince Edward Island, as the Premier has indicated, is a little player in this big game. We're not Hydro Québec, we're not hydro Ontario, we are the smallest player in the game. We have to participate in the process, we have to have our numbers together. If an opening comes along and an opportunity comes along, we're going to be ready to take advantage of that opportunity. That's my job and that's this government's job, and you know what? Opportunities are out there now, and we've got our eye on the ball and we're not going to take it off until we get a better deal for the province.

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

Mr. M. Currie: Madam Speaker, I think with comments made the other day by the minister in regards to the RFP process, he was indicating that Maritime Electric is in complete control of this process and this is your government initiative.

So I'm wondering: Why did you give complete control of this RFP process, of a government initiative for wind energy, security and independence in this province, over to Maritime Electric?

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

Mr. Brown: Madam Speaker, we didn't give it to Maritime Electric.

We are a partner with Maritime Electric, and we're also working with the City of Summerside. I'm proud to say I'm working with the City of Summerside in this effort. When I go out to meet with them I get,

every time from the mayor, saying this is the first time we've seen the energy minister for a long time in this province.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Brown: We've been left out of the energy field for a long time.

An Hon. Member: Dear, dear.

Mr. Brown: So they're quite impressed. I'm quite impressed by them because we've learned a lot from their expertise, and I want to thank the City of Summerside, Terry Murphy and the mayor, for their participating and their input into our plans here.

Because they do have a utility of their own. They're an equal player, I consider them, in the Province of Prince Edward Island here, and they've given us invaluable information to go forward in this thing, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. M. Currie: Minister, I'm just wondering why, when you own the PEI Energy Corporation, why you did not use the expertise of these qualified individuals that work there, and with the wind test site in North Cape, why you did not use their expertise to evaluate the RFP process in the best interest of the ratepayers of this province.

You used Maritime Electric.

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

Mr. Brown: Madam Speaker, as I've said, we've used Maritime Electric.

They are the distributor in PEI. They have the monopoly in PEI. Their job is to make the price as low as possible for Islanders. Naturally, they've been doing it for us since 1923, I understand. Why wouldn't I go to them? They're the ones that are going to have to deliver this power to the consumer. Why wouldn't I go to them first? They've been in the business for many years. They know the market, and that's why I went to them.

But we've hired an independent fairness auditor to make sure that that auditor looks out for the best interests of Islanders. That auditor is working with the department of energy. Through our independent auditor we're working with Maritime Electric, with the City of Summerside, to get the best deal we can for Islanders, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. M. Currie: Madam Speaker, I can't understand why the minister does not value the expertise and the quality and the qualifications of these individuals like Carl Brothers and Wayne MacQuarrie.

I mean, they built two wind farms on this province already. They have a profit. I'm wondering if you can tell me which wind farm Maritime Electric built on this province that they have the right to evaluate these processes. Tell me which one.

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

Mr. Brown: Madam Speaker, the two wind farms on PEI - and I give the member credit, I'm going to give him a lot of credit here, Madam Speaker.

He deserves it. He was the one who put the first wind farm up in Prince Edward Island and it's been a great investment for Islanders. Okay? But he probably went and worked with Maritime Electric in this to see how that could be integrated into the system. We are working with our staff and with Maritime Electric, with the Wind Energy Institute of Canada. We are working with the wind institute right now in order for them to put nine megawatts of additional wind power on the grid. Maritime Electric has the grid. We have to work with that partner in order to get the best price for Islanders, Madam Speaker.

Thank you.

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

Mr. M. Currie: Madam Speaker, I believe the minister has - he's not in control of this process, he's not in control of this file, because he gave up all of that to Maritime Electric, and I don't think he's looking after the best interest of Islanders, he's looking after the shareholders of Maritime Electric.

So I'm just disappointed that you didn't use people like Wayne MacQuarrie and Carl Brothers, and other people in the industry, to evaluate this process in the best interest of Islanders. I'm just wondering why you feel they're not qualified to evaluate this process.

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

Mr. Brown: Madam Speaker, we are involved, and anyone that knows me knows I'd be involved.

As for being a friend of Maritime Electric, I guess anyone in this building could call over there and they would say that: He's been one of the toughest ministers ever to be the minister of energy. He puts us on the spot each and every day. I do put them on the spot each and every day, and they deserve to be put on the spot each and every day, because the former minister's right, they represent their shareholders. I represent, through the Premier's appointment, the people of Prince Edward Island. I don't mind them getting a fair rate of return, but I want Islanders to have the best deal Islanders can get, Madam Speaker, and I (Indistinct).

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

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

Minister, I'm saying that you're not in control of this file. Because I received a letter this morning from Maritime Electric indicating - and very adamant - that you are not in control and that they're apologizing for your comments in the media in the last few days. So I'm asking: Are you in charge of this file or is Maritime Electric in charge of that file? Because this letter says that they are in charge.

Some Hon. Members: Let's see it!

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

Mr. Brown: (Indistinct) in trouble, you know. I know he's got the letter. I know he's got all the information from the bidders, Madam Speaker, and that's okay.

What I said out in this House the other day is quite clear. I want the best deal for Islanders.

I, and this government, want the best deal for Islanders. It's all about lower power rates, or stabilized power rates. Power rates are an economic driver, and I'm going to make sure that our businesses also have the best power rates, because with higher power rates we're only going to lose jobs, and that's not going to happen under my watch, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. M. Currie: Madam Speaker, if he was in charge of the file he would ensure that the right people are evaluating the process to not undermine the government policy and initiative that you put in place, which is the 10-point plan, for energy security and independence in this province.

You have not done that. You have vacated and skirted your responsibilities by giving it to Maritime Electric.

So what I want to know is that what they're indicating in this letter is that you have

meddled in their affairs and they want you to stay out of their business. They're in charge of this file. Do you agree with that?

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

Mr. Brown: Absolutely not, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. M. Currie: Madam Speaker, what they're indicating in this letter is that the minister is meddling and interfering in their business and that it's jeopardizing a \$300 million project for construction in this province.

So I want to know: Minister, is Maritime Electric in charge of your initiative?

An Hon. Member: No.

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

Mr. M. Currie: Yes they are, they're saying it in the letter.

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

Mr. Brown: No, they're not, Madam Speaker.

They're in charge of evaluating the wind, the tender. They're in charge of that. They're in charge to see if they can get the

best price. They can come back to me and say: This is the price we're getting. I said: No, if it's not competitive, we don't want it. We're not just going to build wind farms here. Ontario and a couple of other provinces are starting to experience higher power rates because of some of the renewable energy initiatives. We're not going to do that. We believe in renewable energies and we will get to our targets. But it's all about being competitive and we are going to be competitive, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. M. Currie: Minister, we're after building two wind farms on this province already, and we know the cost for wind and we know what we sell it for. I know what the price is.

Minister, what I want to know now is what benchmark price you have set that is going to encourage developers to come here?

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

Mr. Brown: Madam Speaker, negotiations are going on everywhere.

This is for the best interest of Islanders. I'd appreciate if the opposition would give us a little bit of time here to let those negotiations go.

What the former minister wants me to do today is start negotiating on the floor of the Legislature. That's what he wants to do, okay? I'm not going to negotiate a power deal on the floor of this Legislature. I'm

going to let the process go in its place. It's going to be finally reviewed by the Cabinet, and if it's a good deal for Islanders, a good deal for Island businesses, it will be accepted. That is the primary objective here, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. M. Currie: Minister, I guess what this letter indicates is that you already breached the confidentiality of the RFP process and they're indicating that they do not want you to meddle in it any more.

So will you guarantee the developers that you're not going to meddle or interfere in this RFP process any more, because Maritime Electric's in charge of it?

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

Premier Ghiz: We make the final call.

Mr. Brown: Madam Speaker, did I breach any -

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Speaker: Order, please!

Mr. Brown: Did I breach any confidentiality, Madam Speaker?

All I told the reporters outside this Legislature, and in this Legislature, was that our government-owned wind farms produce power at around 7.5 cents. That wasn't the benchmark. I just made a comment that we produce power at 7.5 cents. Now if the

developers want to take that as that's our benchmark, they can do that. But I can tell you, prices are fluctuating. Gas in the United States is getting cheaper. The competitive market is getting better for us.

Our primary objective here is, and always will be, better rates, stabilized rates, better rates for our businesses, which means economic development, which means jobs, which means more money into the provincial coffers to go back to health and education as the Premier has indicated time and time again, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. M. Currie: Minister, you indicated that you're not going to interfere and meddle in this process any more. Now these developers have invested almost a year of their time, they got hundreds and hundreds of thousands of dollars invested in it, and they just feel that you have interfered in the process and you breached the confidentiality.

So will you ensure these developers that you're not going to interfere any more in this process?

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

Mr. Brown: Madam Speaker, I haven't interfered in the process.

What I said outside of the Legislature was quite clear. We can produce energy at 7.5 cents. That wind farm was developed in 2000. The former minister should know

because he developed (Indistinct). At that time turbines were running, what?, around a million dollars? Turbines now are \$2.5 million.

So what I said was that is the energy coming off those public systems right now. Prices have fluctuated, inflation has come into play. That's why I said - we produce it at that rate. I left the door open to inflation, cost differences that were occurring, competition that's occurring. There are a hundred other factors involved here.

So for a developer to phone up this member to say: He breached confidentiality by saying that the public wind farms produce power at 7.5 cents, I can't understand why any wind developer would say that. It's the public record.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. M. Currie: Minister, would you indicate to Islanders what was the average price that Maritime Electric paid per kilowatt last year in this province?

Is that the benchmark you're going to use?

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

Mr. Brown: I stand to be corrected, but in their current rate hearings I think they're running around 130 million for their cost of power.

It's pretty hard to determine what Maritime

Electric is paying for its power because when the previous government changed the power act they put the Energy Cost Adjustment Mechanism in, which is called ECAM. What that does, Maritime Electric can then now produce its statements based on the Energy Cost Adjustment Mechanism. Islanders cannot see on the financial statements - and that's why I've asked Maritime Electric to look at this - what is the true cost of power on Prince Edward Island? What is the true selling price on the Island?

That's why I've asked Maritime Electric to put that on their bill from now on in order for all Islanders to see it, instead of just seeing the Energy Cost Adjustment Mechanism there.

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

Mr. M. Currie: Madam Speaker, the question I asked the minister was: What does the average price per kilowatt that Maritime Electric paid last year in this province?

Is that the benchmark price?

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

Mr. Brown: Madam Speaker, I stand to be corrected.

I'm sure it's about 14 cents at some point in time because our power rates are not fixed to New Brunswick rates any more, as they were. One time we could go to New Brunswick power rates and say: That's what

it is, add 10%, and that's what PEI is. Since the changes to the act in 2004 - which I tried to tell the government of the day, and the opposition tried to tell the government and the lone Leader of the Opposition before that tried to tell the government - that this was going to cost ratepayers a substantial amount of money. They didn't listen.

Some Hon. Members: Shame, shame!

Mr. Brown: That's when they should have listened because we had our homework done. We told them there was going to be a 40% increase in power rates. They had a news conference, discredited us and told the people of Prince Edward Island that power rates were going to be lower. We tried and tried to tell them hundreds of times when we were in opposition. They wouldn't listen. If they would have listened, we would have lower power rates today on Prince Edward Island.

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

Mr. M. Currie: Madam Speaker, what the minister is trying to tell Islanders, I guess, is that he thinks he's in control, but Maritime Electric is indicating with this letter that they are in control and they trust that the minister will not meddle or interfere with the confidentiality of this process any more, because they are in complete control.

So, minister, I'm disappointed that you have an initiative, a 10-point plan for energy security and independence, and you're not following it. I'm just wondering when you're going to take control of this process and the 10-point plan. When?

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

Mr. Brown: Madam Speaker, when are we going to take control?

When we got elected we took control of the electric file right off the bat. We went out right away and did an energy plan for Prince Edward Island. We did a wind energy plan. But you know what? The most important thing about this government, and about myself as an energy minister, is if the economy changes or the atmosphere changes or the prices change, why would I stick to a plan if things are changing? Okay?

This plan was put in place. The principles of the plan are being followed. The principles of the plan are simple. Renewable energy for Prince Edward Island at a cost effective rate for Islanders.

We could go out and sign up all kinds of deals, look good, do good things politically, but would it be good for Islanders? No, it wouldn't. Islanders are ahead in this game and they'll continue to be the prime objective here, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. M. Currie: Madam Speaker, what this minister is proud of in his last three years is that he's driven the price of electricity up for Islanders by 42%, so that's something to be proud of.

I guess what I want to know, minister, is in

this 10-point plan you say you're going to drive the government initiative. This is your policy. But what you have done is skirted your responsibility by giving all of the control over to Maritime Electric and I'm disappointed that you did that, minister. I'm just wondering when you're going to take control of this file.

Are you going to take control of this RFP process? Because you do have the expertise in the PEI Energy Corporation with Carl Brothers, all those fellows. Why don't you get them to look after it?

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

Mr. Brown: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I want to say to the member, we do have good people at the department of energy. We do have good people at the wind institute. We are using these people as much as possible and we will continue to use them. They are a valuable resource to us and they've got tons of good information.

We've also went out and hired the former New Brunswick system operator in order to look at this. What better person could we have got, Bill Marshall, in order to take a look at this?

As for the 40% increase in power rates, I'll tell you where it came from. Any Islander can go to the Hansard and look at it: 2004, when we got off NB plus 10, that's when the wheels fell off her, that's when the windmill blades fell off it and that's when power rates started to increase for Islanders, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Shame, shame!

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Build PEI signs (further)

Mr. Bagnall: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I want to thank the minister of transportation, yesterday, for putting his spin on costs related to signs before Question Period yesterday. But he didn't bring back the information that we had asked for or what we were looking for.

So I'm going to back to the Premier because the Premier's the one that made the commitment. Premier, you told me you were going to find the costs of print, radio and advertisement ads. Have you done this, Premier?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

We've got individuals working on that now. What I can assure the member is this, that project signs are actually mandatory under federal-provincial agreements on infrastructure programs at every approved project signs. Not putting up signs at projects is not an option. It's a requirement and the cost of doing business with our federal funding partner.

This is the interesting part here, because the hon. member has a very short-term memory,

obviously. We thought that all along. This is now the case, and was the case, through all of the last 25-plus years. With the opposition having been in government they should have known this. It's really quite a shame that the hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir is trying to forget the past, Madam Speaker.

But the facts of the matter are that this a federal-provincial agreement.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Premier - and I loved how you indicated that when I was asking you the questions, and I quote: The cost for the ads, you said, was priceless. That taxpayers would be paying the cost for your ads and your newspaper articles and your email or your website. You said that cost was priceless, that the taxpayers would be using their heard-earned money to pay for that advertising.

Premier, why would you say that, and why would you think it is priceless to use the taxpayers' money?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

The same reason why I think the Legislative Management Committee, when we came into power, increased their office budget by \$25,000, so that they can go out there and do their work. It's important, as government officials, that we're able to do that.

Perhaps, if he disagrees, he can take his opposition budget and give it back to the provincial coffers and we'll find somewhere else to put it.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: So, what are you saying, Premier? Trying to blackmail us into stop asking these questions -

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Bagnall: - so that - or you're going to take our funding away from us in the opposition office? It looks like that's what he's trying to do, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Speaker: Order, please! Order, please!

Mr. Bagnall: You stated before, Premier, that there was no Cabinet ministers in any of your ads. Do you still stand by that statement?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: I don't think I said I stated no names or pictures. What I said was that there's no pictures on the signs that are out there across Prince Edward Island. Of course, there's the names of the ministers that are responsible for the departments, but there's no pictures put on the signs.

Like I indicated to the hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir, this is part of a federal-provincial agreement. Perhaps the hon. member doesn't think that we should be

doing renovations at the QEH. Perhaps he doesn't think that we should be building a new high school in Montague. Perhaps he thinks that we shouldn't be fixing up the bridge in Montague. Perhaps he thinks that we shouldn't be putting the new government department in Montague.

If he doesn't think that, we'll take down all the signs tomorrow and then we'll take everything and we'll put it up in Tignish. If that's exactly how he feels, Madam Speaker, well, that's what we can do for him.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Summerside-St. Eleanors.

HYPE program

Mr. Greenan: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

My question today is for the Attorney General. There's a program running in cooperation with provincial community and correction services and the John Howard Society, with some funding provided through federal sources, called HYPE.

This program, I believe, has had a good success rate in keeping our youth out of the criminal justice system. Can the minister let the House know if this program is expected to continue?

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

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

As the Attorney General, I have strong

belief in supporting youth at risk in this province. The HYPE program is the Health Youth Potential Explored program. It is a program that is funded by Justice Canada and is administered through the Community and Correctional Services program inside my Office of the Attorney General, in conjunction with the John Howard Society.

They've had tremendous success with the program. There's approximately 17 to 20 students that are in the program, that are deemed as high-risk and referred through various youth agencies.

The program, right now, is under review and my department is working with Justice Canada to continue to look at funding arrangements, as funding will expire in the fall of 2010.

As the minister, I'm advocating with the federal government to continue to support these programs to make sure that we provide opportunities and alternatives for youth that have experienced some time in the system and will allow them to redefine themselves and to engage and be more productive citizens in our communities.

I know that the member from, Charlottetown, District 12, Minister Brown and I have worked closely with the Murphy group to make investments in programming to keep kids off the streets and be productive in their communities.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Alberton-Roseville.

Partnering in Go! PEI

Mr. Murphy: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

My question is for the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness. I was very happy with the announcement this week on the Go! PEI initiative.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Murphy: I've had inquiries from communities in my district wondering how they go about becoming a partner in this initiative. Can the minister tell the House what communities need to do to become a partner in this initiative?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Ms. Bertram: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I thank the hon. Member from Alberton-Roseville for his question. It is very exciting, as I had in a minister's statement this week, that we did initiate Go! PEI this week. We do have 15 community partners that have signed on as initial partners. Certainly if there are communities like in your community, hon. member, or others in the Island community, they can contact Recreation PEI or they can go online to www.gopei.ca.

I encourage every Islander, including all of us in this House too, to go and make a pledge and take the first step to this wonderful pledge and to get active and eat healthy in this coming year.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Alberton-Roseville.

Mr. Murphy: Is there a cost to communities to partake in this initiative?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Ms. Bertram: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

There has been programs over the years looking at active living and healthier lifestyles, but it's been more of a provincial focus. We're taking a unique approach to this. We want communities to show us and demonstrate what they want, as a community, to look at the inter-generational approach, to see what population needs are there, and certainly that they can apply. They have to sign an MOU as a community, obviously, to show ownership to the project.

We have invested, as a province, approximately \$140,000 into this project. It is co-sponsored by the Public Health Agency of Canada. It's through the sport bilateral program. It's all being paid for by the Province of Prince Edward Island and the Public Health Agency of Canada.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Build PEI signs (further)

Mr. Bagnall: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Premier, when I did ask you the question the other day we weren't talking about signs.

We were talking about t.v. ads, and you said that none of your ministers or any of your Cabinet were in any of your ads in the province. Do you still stand by that statement?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

It depends exactly on what the ads are. I was pointing out that the hon. Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal, his department does a lot of public safety announcements and he's not in the commercials.

I can also indicate that I did a Christmas commercial myself and, of course, I was in the Christmas commercial, the same as the former premier, Pat Binns - I think you probably remember him - was in the commercials as well.

So we follow guidelines, Madam Speaker, and make sure that we're using the tax dollars to the best of our abilities.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Premier did stand up and say that they weren't used. I remember seeing the minister of health in an add, who was on TV all prettied up there doing the Anne of Green Gables. Talking about the history of the Acadians. Do you remember that ad?

An Hon. Member: That's very

inappropriate.

An Hon. Member: Give it to him.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: I thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

The hundredth anniversary was obviously a big event. I think there was a poll done across Prince Edward Island, and we polled Islanders and asked them whether or not they wanted the Member from Montague-Kilmuir or the minister of health in the ads, and it came back 99% that they wanted the minister of health.

Some Hon. Member: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

An Hon. Member: Apology.

Mr. Bagnall: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct) one per cent?

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct).

Government advertising

Mr. Bagnall: Madam Speaker, to the Premier again.

Mr. Premier, we talked about your propaganda advertising here last week. Now, I opened up my tax bill, and I look in the tax bill where you're charging taxes to us. Everybody hates to pay taxes, but we do.

But on the back of your tax bill they got another propaganda sheet telling about all the things that you're saving taxpayers.

At the same time you're sending out a tax bill to Prince Edward Island, charging them property tax, and you're putting out a propaganda sheet trying to tell them all the things you're saving.

How much did you pay for this brochure that you put in the tax bills? It's a shame.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

If you want to talk shameful, saying that the 100th anniversary of Anne of Green Gables is propaganda, that's shameful. If you want to talk about shameful, talking about the 250th anniversary of the deportation of the Acadians here in Prince Edward Island, saying that that's propaganda - that's shameful.

When it comes to the tax bills that go out, we're very fortunate in this province now that back in 2007 a Liberal government was elected that, after years of gouging Islanders with huge increases in their property tax bills, we were able to implement a property tax freeze in this province. Not for a three-year period, but for, in fact, a four-year period. We were also able to reduce taxes, whether or not we're talking about the gas tax by 4.4 cents a litre, and we're very proud of those initiatives.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Premier, this was another slap in the face to Islanders and taxpayers in this province. You put out a glossy partisan flyer with their tax bill, on their tax bill. Then you expect the government and the people to pay for your fancy flyer that you put in on there bragging about your accomplishments in government. Another partisan thing.

Are you not embarrassed that you would put this out on your flyer? On the tax bill?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

I haven't seen the flyer yet. I'll have to talk to the provincial treasurer. Because I opened up my tax bill the other day and I didn't see it in there. It's important, obviously, to let Islanders know exactly what is happening with their taxes in this province.

Because if you remember, going back - this is the spring session, I believe - going back to the fall session of the Legislature, when we implemented changes to property taxes in this province, that the hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir made sure that he did his best to mislead Islanders with respect to what was happening with their property taxes in this province. It created quite an uproar.

So perhaps if the Member from Montague-Kilmuir would get his facts a little more

straight we wouldn't be in a position where we'd have to continuously educate Islanders on the misleadings of the hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: Madam Speaker, the facts are (Indistinct).

This has nothing to do with property taxes. This is showing the accomplishments that this government is doing at taxpayers' dollars. We're talking about property tax bills going out with propaganda added to them.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!.

Mr. Bagnall: Premier, taxpayers want to know how much you are spending on these ridiculous ads. Will you put an ad in the paper with your face on it, above your one big red line of Island community, Island future, and tell taxpayers how much money you are spending and wasting on these ridiculous partisan ads you're putting out?

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Premier Ghiz: Obviously, the hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir doesn't read the ads enough, Madam Speaker.

Because it's One Island Community, One Island Future, because that's what we believe in in this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Premier Ghiz: I'm glad that the hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir is starting to realize they are accomplishments, Madam Speaker, but they're accomplishments for the people of Prince Edward Island.

They deserve to know that no longer is there a Conservative government in power in this province putting up their property tax bills by 7, 8, 9% a year -

An Hon. Member: Shame, shame!

Premier Ghiz: - year after year. In fact, there was a new government that came in that froze property taxes in this province over a four-year period. That's important knowledge for people to have.

They also need to recognize where there are other tax breaks that they're able to look for. We've also been able to increase the basic personal exemption in this province that has provided huge tax decreases for everyone in this province. I think it's very important that we go and do that.

The hon. member talks about propaganda, Madam Speaker, we talk about facts.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The facts speak for themselves. If you check the flyer that comes out with your tax bill, it is a partisan propaganda sheet that they've added to it.

Changes to PEI Grain Elevators Corporation

My next question will be to the minister of agriculture. Minister, I understand that there have been changes made recently to the PEI Grain Elevators Corporation board. Can you tell us who was replaced on that board?

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

Mr. Webster: Madam Speaker, the chairperson and one other individual - time expired.

They were there for two full terms, two three year terms, a total of six years. It's against the law, against the regulation of the *Grain Elevators Corporation Act*, to sit any longer than six years or two terms. We've appointed two new individuals in their places, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: Minister, could you tell us who you reappointed, or who you appointed to those positions?

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

Mr. Webster: Dave Thompson has been appointed as chair, and the other individual - I'll have to bring the name back. I'm not positive of that individual.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

To the minister of agriculture. I know he

finally - he got part of it right. The second member was Tracey MacEwen. Is that right, minister? Minister, is that the same Tracey MacEwen that worked with the minister of finance when he was working at the Credit Union?

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

Mr. Webster: Madam Speaker, Tracey MacEwen is unknown to me.

We do go through a process and -

Mr. MacKinley: You're against women on the board, are you?

Mr. Webster: - the recommendation came forward that she would be a great individual. She was authorized by me to sit on that board for a three-year term.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: Is this the same Tracey MacEwen that you appointed to the Social Assistance Appeal Board, too?

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

Mr. Webster: Madam Speaker, that person - individual - is unknown to me, I can't say for sure, but I can find that information and bring it back.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: Madam Speaker, to the same

minister.

Do you know what area of the province these two individuals are from?

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

Mr. Webster: Madam Speaker, Mr. Thompson is, I believe, from the Charlottetown or surrounding areas, and Tracey - I don't know where the other member is, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: Thank you.

Mr. Minister, why would you take two people off the board from West Prince and not replace anybody back to West Prince?

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

Mr. Webster: Madam Speaker, there is one more position that's going to be available, or expires rather, in, I believe, September or October, and in the next 30 to 60 days we'll be appointing a person from the western area to sit on that grain elevators board, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Bagnall: Pardon?

Speaker: Final question.

Mr. Bagnall: Final question?

Minister, don't you feel it's important, when you're taking people off the board - the grain elevators board - that you keep people from all over the province on it, rather than segregating the west like you have done on this? Minister, you did the same thing when you were minister of environment. You turned around and took them off the western part of there and eliminated them from the board at the time, too.

So minister, why would you do this? Why are you segregating against western PEI? What have you got against West Prince that you're taking everybody off the board in West Prince? What's your problem with West Prince, Mr. Minister?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Actually, it's about time, after 11 years of neglect, that West Prince started to get their fair share. If we just start moving up in the East Prince area - in your area, Madam Speaker, with the new Tyne Valley Health Centre that went in there. We just go up and we look at renovations that have been made in many areas in the O'Leary community. A new Holland College centre that's going in in the Alberton area, a new government department that's move up in the Tignish area. Our government has been all about West Prince, and we're going to continue to do it.

The former government was going to close down two main hospitals in the O'Leary and

the Alberton area. We said: No, we don't believe that. We're not going to take two and give them one. We're going to make sure that West Prince gets what they deserve, unlike what the former government did.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[End of Question Period]