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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
OF  
PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS AND ORAL QUESTION PERIOD  
(PRELIMINARY PROCEEDINGS)

FOR

TUESDAY, 25 NOVEMBER 2014



Responses to Questions Taken as Notice

Questions by Members

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**FEMA minister's London trip (further)**

**Leader of the Opposition:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

To the treasurer. On Friday you told this House that you didn't disclose your secret London gaming junket because it wasn't paid for tax dollars, that your secret junket was paid for by a third party. Do you still stand by that statement?

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

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

The project that we're discussing here went on for a number of years, and we're trying to find a solution for something that is happening right across this country and across this continent. The work that was done was very much in conjunction with an issue that many of us are juggling and trying to find solutions for.

What I said on Friday, Madam Speaker, was exactly what took place and we stand by that.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**FEMA minister re: government loan**

**Leader of the Opposition:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Two hours later this same minister was out in the hallway and he told the media that the third party's money actually came from a government loan for his secret London gaming junket.

Question to the treasurer: Why did you withhold the information of the loan from this House?

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

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

There is no information that's been withheld from the House whatsoever. There's no private, secret junket. This is work, business development by this province, that was ongoing for a number of years. This is something that we all have to wrestle with to try to find a way in which we can bring this resource back to the taxpayers of this province. It's very important that we cover off the constituents that are playing on these unregulated sites, ensure that we find a way that we can make sure these profits come back for the uses and the revenues of this province.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**Leader of the Opposition:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

This government loaned a third party money, that money was used to pay for a secret trip that the treasurer took on a gaming junket to London.

Question to the treasurer: Don't you think that that was a crucial detail to leave out to the House?

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

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

All of the work that we were doing we have talked about in this House at great length, I believe. None of it is secret. None of it is any kind of private work that was going on. This was a consolidated effort from the Mi'kmaq Confederacy and ourselves working diligently toward a solution on a problem that plagues us all.

All of us are stretching to try to find a way, and now the lottery corporations have taken up that fight for us right across this nation. Hopefully we can get these dollars, these revenues, back into the pockets of Islanders and paying for things like health and education.

Thank you very much.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**FEMA minister's London trip (further)**

**Leader of the Opposition:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

It seems like a lot of details have been left out by this minister about this secret trip and there seems to be a lot of secrecy around this secret trip.

Question to the minister: What was it about this trip that demands all the secrecy even now, two years later?

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

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

The opposition leader is alluding to it as a secret trip. This isn't anymore secret than any other prospecting deal that our departments work at every day of every year. This is very important that all the public know that we prospect throughout the year to try to bring business development back to Prince Edward Island, to bring more revenues into PEI, to ensure that we can pay for health, to make sure that we can have the best education system in the world.

That's important, and that's what we are continuing to try to do for a number of years. Every province has attempted to find the solution and we were no different.

Thank you very much. –

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**Leader of the Opposition:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

There's a lot of secrecy around this trip and there's a lot of secrets even to this House. I know last week we asked the minister if he would table the documents related to this secret trip. He hasn't done that yet.

Question to the minister: How much did your secret London gaming junket cost?

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

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

As I've talked about many times now, and all of Question Period on Friday, there is nothing secret about this trip. This is business development at its very best. This is an effort by this province putting together some very fine individuals to try to bring home a solution that every province in this nation is looking for.

In February 2012 we decided it was time to hand it off to the lottery corps as other provinces have done. We could not make this solution work, but we made every effort to ensure that we would have these revenues that come from these unregulated sites here on Prince Edward Island so that we could have the benefits of it right here at home.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**Leader of the Opposition:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I asked the minister what the trip cost and he talked about the benefits of something that didn't even happen. I'm going to go back and I'm going to do it line by line for him.

Question to the minister. Was your flight to London more than or less than \$2,000?

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

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

The cost of the trip is inside a business development trip. Look, I have no secrets being hidden on this trip or anything else associated –

**Mr. Aylward:** Let's hear them.

**Leader of the Opposition:** More than or less than?

**Mr. Sheridan:** – with this file. Very much have it for anyone to see. Very important

that we know there is no secrecy around this. The opposition leader would like people to think that there is something to this story. This is business development, this is what we do as a province. We are a very forward thinking group here and we're going to find ways to make sure Islanders are, one, protected, and two, have the resources needed to provide services that Islanders expect.

Thank you very much.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**Leader of the Opposition:** Very simple question. It was a very simple question. It appears that the flight to London cost is a secret.

Question again to the minister: Would you say that your limousine service bill would have cost more than or less than \$1,000 a day?

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

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

As I've said many times here, this was a trip that myself and a couple of people that were associated with the initiative went on to make sure that we could try to wrap up a few points that we wanted to see at this conference. Very much like any other prospecting, that takes place each and every day here in Prince Edward Island. We have a department that does that each and every day. This is no different, Madam Speaker, we were trying to find a solution.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**Leader of the Opposition:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Such simple questions, such complicated answers that don't answer the simple question, Must be a secret.

**Mr. Aylward:** Must be.

**Leader of the Opposition:** Question again to the minister: Was your hotel bill more or less than \$1,000?

**Premier Ghiz:** A night? Or –

**Leader of the Opposition:** Total.

**Premier Ghiz:** How many nights was he there?

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

It's very clear to see from this line of questioning that this is perceived to be some kind of personal trip taken by myself.

This is business development, this is ensuring that we can try to find solutions to find ways to make sure these resources stay on Prince Edward Island and are used for things such as health care and education.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**Leader of the Opposition:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

This isn't personal at all, we're just trying to get answers, answers which you seem very reluctant to give which leads me to believe that there's a secret behind it all.

Your conference registration would have run you the better part of £1,500. Was your conference registration more than or less than \$3,000 Canadian?

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

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

As the opposition leader is stating here, these are expenses that are associated with doing business for the Province of Prince Edward Island. That's what we're here for, that's why we're elected, that's why we're appointed to the positions we're in.

There isn't anything secretive about going to find new business for Prince Edward Island, to ensure that we take care of a problem at

the same time, to make sure that we're doing the very best we can for everyone here on Prince Edward Island.

Thank you very much.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**Leader of the Opposition:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Make no mistake, I know what the secret is, we're getting to that, so you can either answer the questions or I'll answer them for you at the end.

We're adding this all up here, and with your flight, the limo that you would have drove around in for four days, your hotel, the conference registration for your secret London gaming junket, we think it's probably about \$10,000, and that's not even including meals.

Question to the minister: Does that sound about right for costs?

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

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

When we're doing business for Prince Edward Island it's very important that all of this information is put out there and there is nothing to hide.

Obviously, this is something we've talked about very clearly in this House. We are trying to find a solution. At this point we haven't been able to achieve it with the other provinces of Canada. We have now passed it off to our lottery corporations to see if we can wrestle this one to the ground. We have to find a way to police, regulate and tax this unregulated industry, bring all of those revenues back to Prince Edward Island and the rest of Canada, and make sure that the goodness of it goes toward things such as health care and education.

Thank you very much.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

### **FEMA minister and Simplex tour**

**Leader of the Opposition:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The minister said on Friday that he was having meetings to advance his secret online gaming project.

Question to the minister: Wasn't one of those meetings with Simplex that included a tour of their office?

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

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

There were a number of companies that we met with while we were in London in January 2012, many of which play a very large role in this industry as it stands today. Very important business so that we could understand exactly what we were up against in trying to bring this solution home to Prince Edward Island.

Thank you very much.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

### **FEMA minister and conference networking**

**Leader of the Opposition:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Along with the meeting and the networking events that went on at this conference it also featured social events for the delegates. On Friday you said the conference was like a home show at the Civic Centre.

Question to the minister: Were you too busy networking at these social events to advance your secret online gaming project?

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

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

As we said many times in this House, there is nothing secretive to this. Many provinces have attempted to do the same thing. While

we were attempting to put this package together we did work with every province in this nation to try to bring this forward and have talked at great length with many players in this industry across this nation.

Each of the finance ministers were involved in three consecutive years of trying to find a solution while it was on the agenda of our meetings. This is a big issue. We're talking about billions of dollars here.

To the opposition leader, we were trying to do the business of Prince Edward Island. There is nothing secretive to it. There is nothing more to it than what he has been told here in the House, Madam Speaker.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

#### **FEMA minister and conference**

**Leader of the Opposition:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

To the same minister: Do you stand by your statement on Friday that this conference was just like the home show at the Civic Centre?

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

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

This show in London, ICE, would be quite a bit larger than what our home show would be, but exactly the same layout. It has a number of booths and a number of presentations, all of them inside the gaming world, from every piece of software from every game that's offered around the world, from games that you would see on a VLT to games that are offered online. Very much like the home show here at the Civic Centre.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

#### **FEMA minister and Lyceum Fire & Ice show**

**Leader of the Opposition:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

As a part of the conference there was a social gala for delegates called Lyceum Fire & Ice show. It sounds like it was quite a party. The theme of the party was original sin, and I gather there are videos of that party online.

Question to the minister: Does that jog your memory?

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

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

We were there on business, seen a number of companies, and had all of our agenda set up. The piece of information that the opposition leader is speaking about I have no idea about, Madam Speaker.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**Leader of the Opposition:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I'm not sure what kind of a home show the minister attends at the Civic Centre in Charlottetown because the videos of the party don't look like anything I've ever seen at the home show at the Civic Centre in Charlottetown.

Question to the minister: Did you attend the Fire & Ice original sin gala for conference delegates?

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

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

As I said, we had a set agenda. I have no idea what the opposition leader is speaking of.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**Leader of the Opposition:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

There are videos of this party online that would make just about anyone blush. Definitely not safe for work, definitely not safe for our work. I mean, his own department has the page blocked –

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

**Speaker:** No props.

**Leader of the Opposition:** – you can't even view it. I'll table that later.

**Speaker:** Thank you.

**Leader of the Opposition:** Does the minister feel it was a good use of taxpayers' money to attend this event?

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

**Mr. Sheridan:** Madam Speaker, as I've said now twice, I have no idea what the hon. member is speaking about and our blocks, of course, are on all of this type of activity, including Facebook.

Thank you very much.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**Leader of the Opposition:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

It sounds like the secret has gotten a little bit bigger here today. This minister attended a conference paid for by somebody else who he loaned the money to, which turned out the event was about original sin and a great big party that would make people blush.

Question to the minister: What was the real reason for all the secrecy behind your London gaming junket – the thousands of dollars it cost or the things like this racy Fire & Ice original sin gala that you went to?

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

**Premier Ghiz:** Can you send us a link (Indistinct)?

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

As I said here many times now, when we go on these types of business trips this is to promote Prince Edward Island to ensure that we can find solutions to issues that are here in Prince Edward Island, to create opportunity, to make sure if there are opportunities to bring employment back to Prince Edward Island, to ensure that we have resources to put forward health care, education, social services.

That's our job and that's what we did on this trip. Nothing secretive about it. This is a very well-advertised conference that many people from around the globe took part in.

Thank you very much.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

#### **Island EMS rural response time**

**Mr. LaVie:** Madam Speaker, can the minister of health tell Islanders why he has failed to give Island EMS the resources to answer ambulance calls in rural PEI in a timely manner?

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

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

As the minister, we are very proud of the relationship that we have with Island EMS, and I'm very pleased with the progress that we've made in approving the role of the ground ambulance fleet across the Province of Prince Edward Island.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

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

I also respect Island EMS and I've been asking questions in the House on this for the last three years and this minister has not made any progress in the last three years.

Minister, why is your health care system lacking needed ambulance in rural PEI?

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

**Mr. Currie:** Madam Speaker, could the Member from Souris-Elmira repeat the question, please?

**Speaker:** Could you repeat your question, hon. Member from Souris-Elmira?

**Mr. LaVie:** Minister, why is your health care system lacking the needed ambulance in rural PEI?

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

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

Government's commitment to expanding ground ambulance services and the role of the paramedic is strong. If you go online, in respect to Island EMS, I think there's a very transparent process to look at response times and the number of calls that are made in communities across Prince Edward Island.

But as government we see the role of Island EMS, we see the role of the paramedic and the advanced paramedic, as we continue to provide quality emergency response services in the province, Madam Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

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

The stats show response times of 22 minutes, up to 26 minutes in rural PEI. If those are the public numbers, you can imagine what the reality is on the ground when you're working with these Island EMS.

Minister, you have a standard which continues to be missed. You pull ambulances out of rural PEI and have frustrated Islanders, you have frustrated volunteer responders. Why have you set up your system to fail?

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

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

If you look at our investment in ground ambulance and the number of advanced care paramedics and the role of ground ambulances in community health care and in urban services, we recognize that the face of health care has been evolving. The challenges that we are presented here in the Province of Prince Edward Island are very identical to every region in the country.

We were very proud to make an investment to bring in our first collaborative emergency room centre in the community of Alberton where we have a nurse and an advanced care paramedic providing services in that community, which is a model that was first implemented by the Province of Nova Scotia, which is now being implemented in rural communities all throughout Saskatchewan and being modelled in the Province of Alberta.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

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

This minister, this same minister, has been recognizing this problem for the last three years and has done nothing to solve it. There are wait times, just in Souris alone, up to 50 minutes. The Island doesn't stop at Souris, there's another 15 to 20 minutes beyond that point. So those poor people up east are waiting, minister, anywhere from an hour, hour and 30 minutes, hour and 20 minutes. So yeah, you recognize the problem. You've been recognizing it for three years and done nothing since.

Minister, will you today admit that your health care on wheels policy is having a negative effect on ambulance response time in rural PEI?

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

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

There are times where ground ambulances are a little extended depending on the road conditions, the weather conditions. In ongoing conversations with Island EMS they recognize, but they've got a very well

documented protocol in respect to the volume of calls on a daily basis, the times. They're very public, they're very accessible.

I was very pleased, on behalf of our government, that we presented our rapid response vehicles to station vehicles in communities to improve access to emergency room services.

We want to make sure that we are constantly evaluating, and we're currently in contract negotiations with Island EMS to look at ways that we can simply continue to improve timely access to emergency room services.

**Mr. LaVie:** More ambulances. More ambulances, that's all they want.

**Mr. Currie:** Yes, the Member for Souris-Elmira who is raising the question, I realize as minister that there are certainly opportunities to continue to grow and expand, and our government is extremely committed to continue to improve access to emergency room services here in the province.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member for Tracadie-Hillsborough Park.

### **Charlottetown airport refrigerated lobster facility**

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

My question today is for the Minister of Fisheries, Aquaculture and Rural Development.

We all know the importance of the lobster industry and the seafood industry to the economy of Prince Edward Island. What makes it so important is marketing. We have to market product. In order to market a product we have to have a quality product. In order to have a quality product for shipping, it has to be looked after at the main source, and it has to be looked after by having refrigerated facilities which would coincide and go hand-in-hand with airlines and trucking and shipping.

To this point, to my knowledge, there has been no refrigerated facility at the

Charlottetown airport for holding lobster or any other seafood.

Mr. Minister, I understand that you and your department are presently working on this, on a project to make this come to fruition. If so, could you tell the House what kind of progress has been made on this project?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Fisheries, Aquaculture and Rural Development.

**Mr. MacKinley:** Yeah, it's a good question. It's very important, and especially for oyster growers in the middle of summer. We've developed a new clam processing plant up in Annandale, up in the west end of PEI that's into Sobeys and that, but it's the first one processing the bar clams that I know in the province in a number of years, and this helps rural Prince Edward Island.

But getting back, we have met there – I haven't personally, but my staff has been out there. There is room and we're looking and working toward putting, like, a freezer – no, a chiller or refrigeration – that the trucks that come in leave their products there and then get them on the flight when they're going out, whether it be WestJet or Air Canada.

We're working on that now. I will say ACOA's on side with it. The PEI Fishermen's Association's on side with it, the fishery boards are on side of it, but we've got to bring their – the airport authority – I talked to Heather Howatt as of Sunday who's the new director of the airport authority who's going to bring it up with Doug Newson again. My staff's been working there and it's something we're trying to work out the details and who's going to pay the operating costs.

**Speaker:** A supplementary question, the hon. Member for Tracadie-Hillsborough Park.

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

Mr. Minister, will this holding facility be operational for the 2015 opening of the spring lobster season?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Fisheries, Aquaculture and Rural Development.

**Mr. MacKinley:** I can't guarantee it when you're dealing with the airport authority and also Air Canada and WestJet. This is what we're planning on, if we can come up to it, come up to an agreement, and that's what we're working on. Let's hope it will be, but I can't give you any guarantees when you're dealing with other authorities.

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

### Highway lighting

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

My question is for the Minister of Finance, Energy and Municipal Affairs. Mr. Minister, myself and you had met several times with the city of Summerside in regard to installing lights in the main highway between the Slemon Park roundabout and the St. Eleanors Irving on the main highway.

I notice new poles have been installed along that section. Can you give me an update on when the lights are going to be installed?

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

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

This is a great example of a member that works for a constituency. We've had many meetings over this, and have worked very well in conjunction with both the city and with Maritime Electric who are responsible, of course, for the light poles.

With the standards going up, I will attempt to get an update from both parties over the next day or two.

Thank you very much.

**Speaker:** A supplementary question, the hon. Member from Tyne Valley-Linkletter.

**Ms. Biggar:** Same minister, Madam Speaker.

So, Mr. Minister, you'll make a commitment to get back to us on when those lights are going to be installed?

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

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

This is an issue of safety. The transportation minister and myself have discussed this on a number of occasions, and the darkness that does occur from the Irving out to Slemon Park roundabout. So that is something that we were concerned about, as well as the city. Maritime Electric is working with us on the solution. Hopefully, Madam Speaker, I will be able to bring that back in the next day or two.

Thank you very much.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

### Maritime Bus pilot health project

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

The Maritime Bus pilot project for out-of-province health was announced in the spring. Could the minister update the House on how well that program's working?

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

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

As a small jurisdiction we rely very heavily on outreach health care services. Approximately 90,000 Islanders received a level of service outside the region, whether it be in Halifax, Saint John, Moncton.

I don't have the exact number, but I do know the feedback we're getting on the number of Islanders using Maritime Bus has been very positive, but I'll bring those numbers back to the House.

**Speaker:** A supplementary question, the hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

### Health care numbers outside Maritimes

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

My question is to the health minister. I have constituents, Mr. Minister, they're a couple,

they have a child that's a toddler. They actually have to go to Toronto. The community has helped with fundraising. I have constituents calling from Kensington/. Their partner has to go to Toronto, again, for cancer.

To the minister: Just how many people have to travel for health care outside the Maritimes?

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

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

I do know that we, last year, in the delivery of our health care services, we had 90,000 Islanders. A smaller proportion of those travelled outside the region, but the majority of them do travel inside the region. I can also bring the total number of Islanders that do receive health care.

We have agreements and understandings with every province in Canada. If the service is not provided here you can and will be covered to provide that service, whether it be in Halifax or Toronto or Montreal or Vancouver.

We do have a volume of Islanders who do travel outside the province. Because of our small jurisdiction and the size of our population we can't provide all services to all Islanders and attract the specialists to the region.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** Second supplementary, the hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

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

This weekend we're actually doing another fundraiser for another gentleman that has to go out of province. My question to the minister: Will your department work on solutions for people that have to go outside the Maritimes and they can't afford these services that are needed?

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

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

We're always very concerned about impact of cost to Islanders travelling. Obviously that's why we presented the role of Maritime Bus, particularly in the region. Currently, as a province, we recognize that there are additional expenses to get to the service, and we're constantly evaluating with governments and departments of health in the country more efficient agreements to provide those services.

We'll continue to take it under advisement and look at ways that we can alleviate the pressure for families worrying about care and to be focused on recovery and their health.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

### **Health PEI CEO and fire departments**

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

During the Health PEI AGM last week the CEO was asked about the increased burden on volunteer fire departments responding to medical first responders' calls. His answer was: Departments are responding more and more often because they are the ones asking to do so.

Minister, do you stand by the incorrect statement of your CEO?

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

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

We have a very progressive relationship with Island EMS. We have a substantial contract arrangement with them to provide ground ambulance services. As the minister, last year, after going out into community meetings and discussing emergency services, our government responded by bringing in two rapid response vehicles and also transport vehicles.

As a province we're seeing a substantial increase in the number of Islanders that –

and the volume is rising in the number of Islanders calling 911. I believe last year we had approximately 15,000 calls. Today we're seeing more ground ambulances leave the province to transport Islanders outside the province.

As the population gets older and they need services, our government is adjusting and responding to those needs accordingly.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

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

I'll ask the minister once more. The CEO was asked about the increased burden on volunteer fire departments responding to medical first responder calls and his answer was: The departments are responding more and more often because they are the ones asking to do so.

Minister, do you stand by the incorrect statement of your CEO?

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

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

I know that Health PEI does a lot of great work and they fund training opportunities for fire departments. The first responder in communities all across Prince Edward Island play a vital role in responding and supporting Island EMS and working together.

If we can continue to find ways to expand on that partnership, we want to make sure that our first responders are trained. Obviously they don't have the same level of training that some of the advanced care paramedics have, but they, in most situations, do arrive on the scene. I will take information back to the Member from Souris-Elmira.

As minister I value the role of the first responder, I value the role of the partnership that they have with Island EMS, and I will continue to commit to the additional training and resources to make sure our first

responders are getting the training that they're requiring and asking for.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

### **Ambulance need**

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

I think the minister has been taking this information back for three years now and has done nothing yet.

The truth is the volunteer firefighters are dedicated community members who are trying to fill massive wait gaps created by this government and help their communities. I have great respect for Island EMS also. Island EMS are also telling us they need more ambulances from this government. That's the government's part, to supply more ambulances.

He's losing these volunteers, he's losing these first responders. They're going from a level I to a level II. Some are going from a level II to a level III. Some are dropping out altogether. You're losing these first responders.

Minister, will you agree on the floor of the House today that you will supply more ambulances for Island EMS so they can do their job?

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

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

Our track record since 2007, whether it be the expansion today, we've got currently 17 ground ambulances in strategic locations all across the Province of Prince Edward Island. We recognize that there are high volumes of call in the more densely populated areas. Our government continues to show a commitment, whether it's adding two rapid response vehicles, adding more transfer vehicles, whether to transfer from facility to facility here in the province.

Yes, I will make a commitment that we'll continue to work with Island EMS. Recently

had a discussion with Island EMS to look at the role of –

**Mr. LaVie:** (Indistinct)!

**Speaker:** Order, hon. member, the minister has the floor.

**Mr. Currie:** Looked at the role of community paramedics. We're looking at the Province of Ontario which launched 30 community-based paramedicine programs. I see that there's tremendous opportunity to continue to expand on the role of Island EMS and the role of the paramedic, and also continue to work with our first responders to make sure they have the appropriate training and can triage and work with the paramedics on scenes of incidents and accidents throughout the province.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

### **PTSD and community volunteers**

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

The minister is burning out these volunteers. We are losing our firefighters and there is no support system in place for these volunteers.

Minister, do you recognize the reality of PTSD that many community volunteers are now battling with?

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

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

I'm very concerned about post-traumatic stress disorder with our first responders, with our police officers. When I was the minister responsible for public safety was very engaged with the work of our first responders and was very aware of the additional supports and training that are required to help support them as they risk their lives every day in incidents when they're called upon.

I, as the minister, along with our government, recognize – and our investment in supporting first responders and fire

departments all across Prince Edward Island has been strong. As long as we have the privilege to lead this great province we'll continue to support our first responders.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

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

Government's own stats show that 80% to 85% of responders are affected by traumatic events.

Minister, why has this government failed to fund or set up any PTSD support systems?

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

The hon. Minister of Environment, Labour and Justice and Attorney General.

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

I'm sitting listening to debate in regards to post-traumatic stress disorder and our first responders. I think it's very important to recognize that we do have a critical incidents stress management team that deals with first responders immediately following any critical incident. The reason they do that is to try to alleviate or at least lower the possibility of those individuals to be impacted by post-traumatic stress disorder.

I think it's also timely to have a discussion or to make it known that between our department and the Public Service Commission, we are looking at that very issue right now to put together a program to move forward to ensure – we had a workshop I believe a week and a half, two weeks ago, for social workers who also are at risk for post-traumatic stress disorder.

There is work being done. The work of first responders and anyone who is working in a high stress area where they're exposed to trauma, we have to make sure that that is a priority for our government and we are moving in that direction.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

### **Critical Incident Stress Management Committee funding**

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

Now that she wants to answer the questions for the minister of health I'll ask the minister of justice and labour a question.

The Critical Incident Stress Management Committee is the only support system on PEI and it is voluntarily run, with no funding or administrative support.

Minister, will you agree to put stable, multiyear funding in place for CISM starting immediately and not waiting for next spring?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Environment, Labour and Justice and Attorney General.

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

I'm not sure whether the hon. member heard my response to his first question, but that's exactly what I made a commitment to here on the floor of the Legislature.

There has been support workshops held in the last number of weeks for people who work in high stress areas. There are discussions happening right now between staff in the Public Service Commission and our staff, and we are moving forward. We fully recognize and realize that there is a responsibility to ensure that those who provide services, especially first responders, and work in these very difficult areas have support.

We are working on it, and I'm sure if you stay tuned over the next few weeks you will hear how that rolls out.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

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

I'll be looking forward to that. Matter of fact, I'll probably go home and tell the first

responders that we will have a support system in place in two weeks' time.

### **Health PEI CEO removal**

One more question to the minister of health. Twice this week the CEO of health has failed his duties to Islanders, first with an insensitive comment around yet another suicide, and now more insensitive comments about our volunteer firefighters at your AGM the other night.

Minister, will you now do the right thing and remove the CEO of Health PEI from his post?

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

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

I'm very aware of the insensitivity of the comment and I know that Dr. Wedge, the CEO of Health PEI, made a public statement, and I did speak to that here in the Legislative Assembly.

Am very conscious of the work that Dr. Wedge and his senior team do across the Province of Prince Edward Island.

I clearly am aware of the issue and the concern raised by the Member from Souris-Elmira, and Dr. Wedge has made a public statement and apology to the family for any undue and further pain that he may have caused.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

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

**Speaker:** Final question.

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

I am aware of the apology that Dr. Wedge has made, but when he spoke the other night about the firemen, all fire departments, they want to be called when ambulances are called out – all fire departments want to be called, the fire departments want this.

Dr. Wedge is wrong again because all fire departments don't want to be called out

every time an ambulance is called out. If Dr. Wedge is going to keep making mistakes in public meetings, minister, will you now do the right thing and remove the CEO of health from his post?

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

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

I know that Health PEI is very engaged in supporting and working with fire departments. They continue to make investments, they continue to work Island EMS, they continue to provide training opportunities which are funded by Health PEI which are put on by Island EMS to continue to support our first responders in communities all across Prince Edward Island.

Our track record and our investment in supporting our fire departments is unprecedented. As long, as I said, as we have the privilege and honour to lead this great province, we'll continue to support our volunteers –

**Mr. LaVie:** You're burning them out.

**Mr. Currie:** – and support the great work that they'll –

**Mr. LaVie:** You're losing them.

**Mr. Currie:** – do in this province.

Thank you.

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

**Speaker:** End of Question Period.