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RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS AND ORAL QUESTION PERIOD
(PRELIMINARY PROCEEDINGS)

FOR

THURSDAY, 12 NOVEMBER 2015

Responses to Questions Taken as Notice

Questions by Members

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Environmentally sustainable infrastructure

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Infrastructure is vital to both the sustainability of our Island and the growth of our economy. As we all know, there is a lot of work required to make sure that the infrastructure is environmentally sustainable and economically productive.

A question to the Premier: Does the Premier agree that there are benefits to having our public infrastructure as environmentally friendly and sustainable as possible?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question to the Leader of the Opposition.

We are quite committed to continually enhancing the infrastructure of the province, and we'll learn more about that when the capital plan is presented later in this session. Beyond that there will be, we believe, opportunities for further and expedited infrastructure investments through programs initiated by the new federal government on which we remain to hear details.

Of course, we always proceed with the most sensible and engaged and environmentally astute planning.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Infrastructure and growth

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Question to the Premier: Does the Premier also agree that public infrastructure projects

work towards an economical – and drive our growth within the province?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, infrastructure investments have over time, and in particular at critical times, been important to stimulate our economy, and then at all times to invest in sustainable growth, which is a principle for which we stand as a government in all of our endeavours.

I think it's really important, in that sense, to be looking at our opportunities to invest in infrastructure so that they will achieve the greatest contribution to growth over time for our communities and for our province and for our economy.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Okay.

The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Infrastructure and federal funding

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This is a question to the minister of transportation.

The new federal government has signaled its intention to increase federal investment in infrastructure. We know the minister travelled to Ottawa recently and assume she met with her federal counterpart.

Minister, what will this increased federal investment for PEI look like?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy.

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. member, yes, I did have an opportunity to meet personally with the new minister while I was there on personal business. But I also have a conference call with him this evening as well. I'll have the opportunity to further discuss our infrastructure priorities here for Prince Edward Island.

Specifically under the New Build Canada Fund is where we'll be concentrating on our priorities. At the present time we're allocated \$227 million from the New Build Canada Fund. One of our priorities and one of the issues with the New Build Canada Fund is that we do not qualify for one portion of that under the criteria, the collector roads. That is going to be our priority in speaking first and foremost with the new minister. I've already actually mentioned it on the first night that he was sworn in, and we've also had discussions prior to the new prime minister being sworn in, but also continuing discussions with the new prime minister, that that is one of the priorities for Prince Edward Island.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, minister.

As you know, we have many potential projects that could benefit from more infrastructure investment, not just collector roads. On this side of the House we think that this new federal infrastructure investment can provide an unprecedented opportunity to look at infrastructure through a sustainable lens, engage stakeholders in an open and transparent fashion, and proactively create a prioritized comprehensive infrastructure plan.

Has the minister been in contact with key infrastructure stakeholders, including local governments, industry groups, environment groups, and community organizations to discuss additional infrastructure spending?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy.

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Obviously, I think it's a week yesterday since the new minister and the new prime minister and his Cabinet was sworn in. In the meantime we've been concentrating, obviously, on getting our priorities detailed for that particular minister.

In our discussions ongoing with municipalities we will be working with them on what their infrastructure priorities will be as well, and we'll continue to have those discussions, whether it's municipalities or

other areas that can benefit from any new funds that do come through.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Infrastructure summit

Mr. Trivers: I'm glad you're working on the priorities. Now, you have been elected since May so hopefully you've talked with some of these stakeholders a bit since then.

Ad hoc consultations are fine. But on this side of the House, I mean, we believe that a formal infrastructure summit could bring together representatives of local governments, industry, environmental groups, and community organizations to identify projects that could make our infrastructure more sustainable environmentally and also enable more economic growth. Holding an infrastructure summit would be a more comprehensive and collaborative approach that's also more open and transparent. Going this route could be more fiscally prudent than previous stimulus investments that lacked that focused planned approach. After all, we all remember the hills of Borden.

Does this minister agree that using an infrastructure summit approach would be more collaborative and transparent than the current approach and the approach that has been used in the past?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy.

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Obviously, I misinterpreted your former question as to if I had discussed anything in the past week with anyone. Obviously, since the day I was elected I continue to work in collaboration with the small communities. Through the small communities fund with municipalities we have already done 12 projects this year within communities right across Prince Edward Island on what their priorities were. For those particular projects that was approximately \$9 million which has gone out into the small communities across Prince Edward Island.

We will continue to work with them through our infrastructure secretariat and work

together with them in looking forward on what infrastructure projects are important to them.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Again, using an infrastructure summit approach would help ensure that projects are identified that would bring the highest return on investment to enhance our environment and grow our economy.

Taking a fiscally prudent approach like this would stretch any dollars coming down the pipe – that may be coming down the pipe – as far as possible. Do you agree that using an infrastructure summit approach would be a good thing to do going forward? Pointed question.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure, and Energy.

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That's a great question, hon. member. I would like to point out, too, as well – and I think it's a great idea. I have no adversity to meeting at any time with any of those particular groups and pulling together a collaborative approach. We work very closely with the Federation of PEI Municipalities. Through that collaboration they do bring to us a list of what their priorities are and we certainly work collaboratively and will continue to do that as we go forward.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. LaVie: You missed that question, too.

Mr. Trivers: We appreciate that.

Ad hoc consultations are fine. Here in the opposition we feel that having an infrastructure summit, bringing all of the groups together in the same room, would be a more positive step forward, and that's why we've tabled a motion urging the government to convene an infrastructure summit as soon as possible to get that conversation started. This is a motion that we hope all parties in the house can support.

Will the Minister consider holding an infrastructure summit to develop a focused plan before any new federal investments come online and give our motion full consideration based on its merit?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure, and Energy.

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

If you're putting forward a motion I'm sure we'll have lots of time in the upcoming session to discuss –

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct).

Ms. Biggar: – that particular motion. But we're not adverse, as I said, to having meetings –

Mr. Myers: Give her one of those things that you put in your ear (Indistinct).

Ms. Biggar: – so we will consider that and bring it forward, and thank you for the suggestion.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Exports

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Question to the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism. Our provincial exports contribute greatly to our economy. Does the Minister agree that encouraging greater provincial exports is a good thing?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. Aylward: Now we're getting somewhere.

Infrastructure and exports

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We export a lot of goods from this province by land, sea, and air. Does the minister agree

that having quality infrastructure allows for the safe and efficient movement of goods to off-Island markets?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Trade groups and exports

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Growing our economy long term requires partnership between all levels of government and the private sector. Does the minister think it would be a good idea to work with our key trade groups to identify projects that would enhance trade and export opportunities?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Infrastructure summit (further)

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That's where we see the value of an infrastructure summit on this side of the house. Bringing all the players to agree on a common plan going forward.

Does the minister agree that an infrastructure summit could help with the development of a common plan for our province?

Mr. LaVie: Yes.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'll take that particular question again, if I may.

Speaker: Go ahead, minister.

Ms. Biggar: Just to answer that question again, hon. member, I would also point out that every year the Cabinet does meet with municipalities to discuss, through the federation, their infrastructure priorities, and we will continue to have those meetings.

I would also point out that I believe this Saturday there are meetings as well with municipalities that the Communities, Lands and Environment minister will also be attending. But on a regular basis every year the Cabinet meets with municipality through the Federation of PEI Municipalities. We do have a great collaboration and discussion, and also, within their own municipalities, they represent certainly and bring forward a lot of the needs in the outlying areas and we will continue to work with them as well.

Mr. Trivers: Be a good start for an infrastructure summit.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That was a great answer, but I'd like for the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism to answer that question as well.

Does the minister agree that an infrastructure summit could help with the development of a common plan for our province? Yes or no? –

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

Mr. MacDonald: I think we have to talk to all our partners, Mr. Speaker, in regards to collaboration and coordination and working together on any infrastructure projects that PEI takes on.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River.

Infrastructure and water quality

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question is to the minister of the environment. Minister, improved infrastructure for water quality can have

great benefits for communities and for the public. Do you agree with this?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment.

Mr. Mitchell: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Absolutely, those are very important discussions that have taken place with stakeholders of all watershed environmental groups over the past summer.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River.

Infrastructure and water resources

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again to the minister. The more efficient our water infrastructure is the more opportunities there are for our water resources to be managed more effectively. Would the minister agree with point?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment.

Mr. Mitchell: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Those are discussions that take place every time that we meet with our groups in all sectors of environmental concerning (Indistinct) issues.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River.

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Improved infrastructure for our water would also assist efforts to improve conservation of our water resources. Does the minister agree that supporting greater conservation of our water resources is a worthy objective?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment.

Mr. Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, yes indeed.

That's a very worthy cause that all watershed groups work towards continuously.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River.

Infrastructure summit (further)

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again to the minister, I'm glad to hear that you agree with this and I'm glad to know that water consultations are now underway and that you're identifying the quality and quantity of the water issues that we have and what needs to be considered.

Does the minister agree that having an infrastructure summit would be a good chance to discuss some of these issues and to help identify projects that could advance these goals?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I certainly would appreciate the opportunity, of course, to speak towards the water act consultations that have been ongoing over Prince Edward Island over the past couple of months. We're now surpassed the halfway point of those consultations, and I must say that I am very pleased and impressed with the attendance, first of all, and with the input that has come from all of those meetings.

Currently over 33 presentations have been made from a wide, broad range of presenters and we look forward to continuing that on over the next month or so.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Infrastructure and products

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question is for the minister of transportation. A great part of our GDP comes from the output of our primary industries. The bulk of these industries are located in rural communities around, as the minister would know.

Does the minister think it's important to have the right infrastructure in place to get these products to market?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy.

Ms. Biggar: Absolutely, hon. member, and that is why we are encouraging and encouraged by the discussions that we are having in regard to our connector roads, our roads to resources, if you will. It's very important that we have the infrastructure on Prince Edward Island and continue to work towards that with the federal government.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

With all the emphasis on Canada's Food Island it's obvious that these goods are essential to our future prosperity.

Does the minister think that funding the rural infrastructure projects that help us further Canada's Food Island would be a good thing?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy.

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think any time we can fund anything in rural PEI is good for Prince Edward Island.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Infrastructure money

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I understand that we have under spent our infrastructure money for the past year and it was mentioned here that there was \$227 million available this year. Will we be accessing all of that money?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy.

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We spent, as I mentioned, \$9 million this year. We cost shared with municipalities on those projects and we'll continue to work with them to see what projects are coming forward.

Speaker: Now we will go back to the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Paladin Security

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Question to the minister of health. Recently your government entered into a new contract for security services with Paladin Security in British Columbia, a company outside of this province. What was the main reason why you changed contractors?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness and Family and Human Services.

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

Health PEI in this province takes the responsibility of providing safe, secure security in all our hospitals. On a daily basis approximately 3,000 Islanders are coming through the doors at our main referral hospital, so security and the services that we provide to keep our staff and our patients safe is a top priority, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Okay, now we're going to revert to questions from members, and we're going to start with the hon. Leader of the Third Party for his first question.

Psychiatrist's salary

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question is also to the minister of health and wellness.

We learned recently that a psychiatrist on Prince Edward Island received a salary of \$1.13 million last year. At a time when the average salary for a psychiatrist in Canada is a small fraction of this amount and when almost every other facet of health care is crying out for more funding, can the minister please explain how one individual can possibly justify such a salary? More importantly, how does his department measure the effectiveness of this individual?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness and Family and Human Services.

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

I've had the opportunity to be through two Master Agreements. Currently we are in negotiations right now with the Medical Society of Prince Edward Island to negotiate a third Master Agreement. I can't speak specifically about the individual, but I do know that currently under the Master Agreement, which is a contractual arrangement, physicians in this province have the ability to work fee-for-service, they have the ability to work as salaried, and do contract work.

As the minister I'm very concerned with the current growth of medical services here in the Province of Prince Edward Island. Currently our budget is approximately \$110 million. In negotiations – I can't speak specifics, but we have expectations in how we can continue to get good value for the envelope of money that we do have and continue to provide the best access we possibly can for all Islanders who are requiring medical services here in the Province of Prince Edward Island as well as out-of-province, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party for your first supplementary question.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to talk about this specific individual. Was this psychiatrist on a fee-for-service remuneration schedule, and if so, are there audit mechanisms in place within Health PEI to ensure value for taxpayers' dollars?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness and Family and Human Services.

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

Under the *Medical Services Act* Health PEI does have the ability – and do random audits on physicians who are under a contract or fee-for-service or salaries physicians. I will bring back specifics to the questions. I can't speak specifically about his entire package, but as the minister, I know that back in 2007 when we came into government we were in a situation where we were struggling to attract physicians, particularly specialty

physicians, to our province. As a result of the latest CIHI data we've seen that we are very competitive now in the region in respect to attracting and retaining physicians, particularly specialists here in the province. But would be more than glad to bring back that information in detail to the member.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party for your second supplementary.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

At full-time, 40 hours a week, working 52 weeks of the year with no vacation, this psychiatrist would have made \$543 per hour. A mid-end or a mid- to high-end MRI machine costs about the same amount as the salary of this physician and you can get cheaper models for half of that price.

Given that Islanders still have to wait several months in certain cases, or even travel to Halifax for some diagnostic testing, could the minister please explain to the House how Health PEI prioritizes resources and how it managed to set a higher priority on paying a single psychiatrist rather than purchasing new testing equipment?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness and Family & Human Services.

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

I do want to allude, too, that we do have a contractual arrangement and an agreement that is negotiated between the province, the medical society, and Health PEI in respect to the pay structure and pay fees here in our province.

I said earlier that I had the opportunity to be part of two of those negotiations. We are currently right in the middle of Master Agreement discussions and negotiations. My expectation is that we continue to get the best value and continue to expand and provide the best access for every dollar that we have. We're currently in discussions with Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Newfoundland who have recently signed contracts with their physicians.

But our priority as government is to make sure that we get the best value for every health care dollar we have in the entire envelope and we'll continue to work to that goal. I will bring that information back specifically for the member.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton and the Government Whip.

Premier's priorities re: federal government

Mr. J. Brown: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I have a question for the Premier and minister responsible for intergovernmental affairs.

Last month millions of Canadians cast their ballots during a federal election and a new government was elected by Canadians. Here on Prince Edward Island and across Canada, there is great hope for this new government and that it will bring more and pay more attention to the finely attuned needs of our province.

Will the Premier please outline the priorities he has set for dealing with this new federal government?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I might preface my remarks by saying that I realize all members of the House have followed the federal election closely. In my own case I was successful in winning a pool where you had to predict the outcome of all 338 seats across the country. Now, I don't think that gives us any extra advantage in dealing with the new government, but in any event, we have to keep following these things.

Mr. Aylward: You guys like to gamble.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Premier MacLauchlan: I might add that the winnings were donated to the United Way, Mr. Speaker.

We have been, of course, following the program of the new government in the course of the campaign and have had various interactions including a meeting that the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy and I had with our now-prime minister while the campaign was under way.

On Friday of last week I wrote to Prime Minister Trudeau – and I will put my hands on that letter and table it in the House tomorrow for the information of members – but in that letter we identified four areas where we have priorities in our relations with the federal government and where we intend to move forward with sustainable growth and benefits for Prince Edward Islanders.

The first of those is jobs and the economy, where we are committed to continuing to build on the success that Prince Edward Island has in growth in exports. I might note that to date, that is to say to the end of September in this year, Prince Edward Island leads the country, among other provinces, in our export growth. We intend to be at that point at the end of the year, and we build on a successful year the previous year.

The second item is that we –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Premier MacLauchlan: The second item where we intend to pursue our relations with the federal government: health care and indeed our fiscal transfers. Third, the hon. members opposite will be pleased to hear, infrastructure. The fourth, climate change. The fifth, immigration and refugees.

On that note, I might add that it's envisaged that there will be a First Ministers' conference sometime within the current month. It's likely that the two priorities for those discussions will be to deal with refugees on the one hand and climate change. That will be the first time in seven years that there's been a First Ministers' conference.

Speaker: The hon. member from Charlottetown-Brighton and the Government Whip with first supplementary.

Mr. J. Brown: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think I just have the one supplementary question subject to anything that may come out of it.

Mr. LaVie: Something's going to come out of it.

Mr. J. Brown: Second question to the Premier and minister of intergovernmental affairs.

Recognizing the response to the first, it seemed like the previous administration in Ottawa neglected the interests of Islanders in many of their decision-making processes.

I'm wondering if you've had any indication yet, recognizing that you've sent a letter and that we've been in contact with the new government, when we might expect to see a response in terms of what their plans are for the Island.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We, of course, will be engaged in various conversations with ministerial counterparts in the new Cabinet and indeed will be working very closely with the four Members of Parliament who've been elected to represent our province.

I know there were congratulations earlier to Lawrence MacAulay and to Bobby Morrissey. Of course we have Sean Casey elected in Charlottetown and Wayne Easter in Malpeque. We've met with all of our MPs since the election and we look forward to working very closely with them as well as with all members of the national government.

As I said, there will be a First Ministers' conference, and I'm under the understanding that there are a number of other ministerial or national minister's meetings that will take place between now and Christmas. Generally what we expect is a heightened and a much more engaged relationship with

all aspects of the federal government, and we look forward to that working out to the benefit of Prince Edward Islanders.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Potato disinfection

Mr. Henderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question is for the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Last week, minister, your department announced the pending closure of the PEI disinfection services as of December 31st, 2015.

Internationally there are numerous quarantinable potato pests that can limit access to international marketplaces.

With the recent signing by the Canadian government of the Trans-Pacific Partnership and the Comprehensive and Economic Trade Agreement trade deals are possibly going to open for numerous potato markets for export.

Canada is the seventh-largest potato exporter in a competitive global market place. Minister, is this the time to limit the opportunities of Canada's Food Island where we can have a competitive advantage by offering reputable potato disinfection services on PEI to boost our exports and to reduce the PEI trade deficit?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries and the Government House Leader.

Mr. McIsaac: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and an excellent question.

As we all know, agriculture is the number one industry in this province and the potato industry is certainly the biggest driver of that. We as a province count on our natural resources in agriculture and fisheries to drive our economy. It's been the request of the Premier that we do that.

In no way are we, in any way, shape or form going to do away with that. We're going to work strongly and very hard at and we are going to maintain the integrity of our potato industry.

We have met with the potato board on several occasions since the suggested changes that were due to a financial budget we put through last time. Out of those discussions we actually ended up saving our producers some money. We realized there were many of those potatoes that the disinfection did not need to occur with through and we eliminated that, saving dollars for the producers.

We want to concentrate on the seed, which is fundamental to the future of our industry, and we are going to do that. We will work and continue on with the integrity of our disinfection system. It may have changed in somewhat way, but we will work with the potato board. We have a good relationship. We're going to have minor disagreements, discussions, time to time but I think we will see through this that we can fully maintain the integrity of our seed stock and our whole industry going forward. We're very excited about the opportunities through TPP for our potato industry and many other of our commodities.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Phytosanitary rules re: CETA and TPP

Mr. Henderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Supplemental to the same minister.

Minister, in past when a quarantinable contagion has been identified, competing market places can take advantage of the phytosanitary situations, and I'm sure there will be bilateral agreements within these trade partnerships.

The potato crop is Canada's and PEI's largest horticultural crop. In fact, we have seen increasing imports of seed potatoes to PEI. We also have limited access to our borders should an outbreak from a quarantinable pest be evident on Prince Edward Island.

Are you aware of any phytosanitary rules that will be implemented by either the CETA or TPP that will impact our potato industry?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries and the Government House Leader.

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

We just received the final text on the TPP just within the last few days, a very thick document. We have a staff member going through that at the present time. I've looked at it partially myself as well. We're looking at delving right in to see exactly what is in that.

On the CETA agreement it is before the 22 countries in the European market at the translation stage. There's a lot of work that has to be done with that. TPP may well come into place before the CETA or somewhat around the same time. It'll likely be 2017 at the earliest.

But we're looking at those to see how we can benefit our province, grow our markets, grow our exports through those two trade deals, all in the same time protecting the supply management commodities that mean so much to our province. We are looking at maintaining the integrity of all our commodities here and building upon our trade.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from O'Leary-Inverness for your second supplementary question.

Potato disinfection and marketplace

Mr. Henderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, when the incidence of potato wart was found on PEI a few years back the US marketplace was willing to open its borders because PEI had a disinfection service in place that was able to control the issue fairly quickly, as well as it was able to apply the proper phytosanitary protocols to contain this spread of this contagion, thus to the satisfaction of the US government, thus

permitting PEI's access to a vital US marketplace.

Minister, by doing away with this service on December 31st, what happens if some future pathogen was found on PEI? Would we be able to respond quickly to get that disease under control to the satisfaction of our competing marketplaces?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries and the Government House Leader.

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

Maybe we need to do a little bit of history here. When we met with the potato board we looked at: What do we really need to do with regards to the disinfection services that we have in place? When the board came forward and spoke with us the first time they said: You know what? We've never really believed that we had to do disinfection for our table stock and our small bit of export that is going out of province. I said: If that's the case why are we even doing that? Let's check the science on it. That's what we want to focus on is the science. We had in a former or a retired plant pathologist. We worked with CFIA to get the information from him, and two of my staff met with staff from the potato board and the retired scientist to actually look at what we have in place and what we need.

He said: For those potatoes we don't really need to do this inspection, but we should concentrate more on the seed side. So we've eliminated the disinfection from that side and we are concentrating on the seed side.

We sat down to discuss: How would this be funded? The decision was we could have two things. We could either work together on this – I promised that we would put up 120 of the \$286,000 needed if the – we would put up 120 if the potato board and the producers would put up the other 166. We were putting up 42%, we're asking them to put up 50.

We did not come to an agreement on that so we are changing the focus of that. Not in any way lessening the integrity of the system. In my riding alone we have some of the largest potato producers on the Island that do a

fantastic job of disinfection on their own site and we're going to continue that. We have dollars that we can use through Growing Forward 2 to help each and every producer who wants to set up the disinfection system on the farm – if they don't have it in place already, and many of them do from my understanding – and we will improve upon or at least come very close, I think, in many ways every bit as good a job in the new system that we had in the past.

But that's what we want to do, focus on keeping the integrity of our seed stock because we need that for the TPP, for the CETA, whatever it may be down the road, and I look forward to working with the potato board to continue that system.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Paladin Security (further)

Leader of the Opposition: Back a minute or two ago the minister of health alluded that everything was great within the contract or the people that were providing the service in the past in regards with the hospitals. In the wisdom of Health PEI you guys went and switched, went to an out-of-province contractor.

Can you confirm that the difference in what the commissionaires gave for a contract price and what Paladin Security gave was less than \$80,000 a year?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness and Family and Human Services.

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

I can confirm that the security contract that was awarded has a total value of 4.2 million over the life of the four-year contract with a possible year extension. I can confirm that in the life of the contract it's approximately \$500,000 in savings. I will confirm that 27 out of the 32 commissionaires that were working at the QEH, 27 were offered positions back. I will guarantee Islanders that we'll continue to get quality, friendly, safe service from the organization.

I had friends and individuals I knew quite well, as the minister, that were impacted. As the minister I have to adhere to Treasury Board policies, trade agreements. This is a substantial volume of money that is public money and we have to adhere to the policies and the practices and an open, transparent tendering process.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: So, it came down to money. That's all it came down to. Came down to a little bit of bucks and you could have spread that over the other departments.

Can you confirm, or deny, that you awarded the contract to Paladin Security and then they came back and they asked for more? Yes or no, was the contract renegotiated after they already signed it the first time?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness and Family and Human Services.

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

I can confirm that the process to award the contract was followed under Treasury Board policy, met all requirements. As the minister I do not get involved and run interference on contracts. We respect the Treasury Board policies that guide the direction of public funds in this province. I have valued the work of our corp commissioners, particularly at our main referral hospital, the QEH, and the PCH.

But if you look at the volume there was set criteria that was selected and chosen to award the contracts, and I will go back and bring information. I have total confidence that all requirements and protocols were met under the Treasury Board and trade agreements regarding the procurement process.

Thank you.

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

Leader of the Opposition: You lost me after that one.

I'll ask this question again. You awarded the contract to Paladin Security. Did they come back after the contract was awarded and signed and ask for more money and you gave it to them? Did that happen?

Mr. Aylward: Yes or no.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness and Family and Human Services.

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

I'll take that question under advisement. I wasn't directly involved with the contact and awarding the contract.

I do know that it's a substantial contract valued at 4.2 million. I do know that the savings of the five years of the contract is approximately \$500,000. I do know that this company is in 200 health care facilities across Canada. I do know that all employees that will be working with this company will all be Islanders. But I will go back and find out and take the question specifically under advisement.

Thank you.

Speaker: That ends Question Period for today.

Speaker's Comment

Members, I find that we started asking Questions by Members at 3:00 p.m. and it took us to about two minutes before 3:20. That in my mind is spending a little too much time. I think your questions are too long, and in a lot of cases the answers are too long.

In all fairness to everybody here, let's make it a little more to the point for those asking the questions and for those answering the questions.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct).

Speaker: So we do have – we went over two or three minutes today, but in all fairness to the opposition, I think they need their time too.