



Session:	1/65
Date:	17 November 2015
No:	24

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
OF  
PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS AND ORAL QUESTION PERIOD  
(PRELIMINARY PROCEEDINGS)

FOR

TUESDAY, 17 NOVEMBER 2015



Responses to Questions Taken As Notice

Questions by Members

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

**Disinfection fees and services**

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

Question to the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries. This summer you tripled potato disinfection fees, catching most of the industry, even this House, off guard. Why did you go from tripling the fees right to disbanding disinfection services offered by the province?

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

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

The line item in our budget went from a wide open extent to the fact that we have a line item that would allow for about \$120,000 for that program. We are the only province in Canada that offered that program to the potato industry, and the potato industry was the only commodity in the province which received that.

We did meet with the potato industry over the next couple of months to deal with that issue. In fact, yesterday we met with the complete board to look on a going forward basis how we would maintain and improve the integrity of our seed stock in the province and look forward to that program continuing.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Disinfection fees and services consultation**

**Leader of the Opposition:** I know you didn't consult with the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Fisheries on this decision. Did you consult your own caucus and get their opinion on it?

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

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

The budget was passed in July, which is when it officially happened. We had to then meet with the employees with regards to the change in the direction. We did that. We had then met with some staff and the chair of the potato board with regards to the changes we were putting forward.

We looked at several options that we could go forward with and in the end we decided, as I said yesterday, when we talked to the potato board, that we want to work together – and want to ask you to work together with us as well – in improving and maintaining the integrity of our seed stock.

We have a fantastic potato program here on the Island. We're working with the potato board that they will have the equipment that we had. Through our Growing Forward program we will allow each and every producer who wishes to set up and wants to set up and hasn't already set up a program at their own for disinfection to help them to do that.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Budget for Department of Agriculture and Fisheries**

**Leader of the Opposition:** At the standing committee last week, Mr. Speaker, the minister stated that cutting disinfection services was mostly a financial decision.

You said the department's budget was already set when you arrived. You said that: the budget was already set when you arrived. Who developed that budget?

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

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

The budget line was set. We came in, we took it over. We followed through on that because we are trying to, quite honestly, grow our industry on PEI. We have to grow our economy. We're doing that, as the Premier has asked, through our natural resources. That being agriculture and fisheries in my section of the portfolio.

We have a limited budget that we have to use for each and every commodity, each and every farmer in this province. We take each and every line item very seriously. We look at where can we do the best with the dollars we have to grow our industry. That's what we are working on and will continue to work on, and at the same time maintain and even improve the integrity of our seed stock in the potato industry.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

### Job cuts

**Leader of the Opposition:** I've got to be careful what I say, Mr. Speaker.

Can you confirm that 28 Islanders will no longer be getting pay cheques when these jobs are cut?

**Mr. LaVie:** Shame, shame!

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

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

Actually, 25 will not be employed through this program. Some of them have been employed through the work program which is ongoing as well. They still have employment through that. But the rest will be not going forward with this program. We are working through our HR department to work with them to find jobs that may be available for them.

We know even in that area, in the Borden area, there's a fish plant looking for workers, other places looking for workers, and we are working with them to develop their CVs to be prepared to take up any jobs

that come available. Our HR staff is working on that at the present time.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

To the minister of agriculture. You guys cut teachers, you cut commissioners, you've cut nurses. Why does it always seem you cut the front line? You always cut the front line, the people that need the money. You never go to management, you never go to administration, you always go to the front line.

**Mr. LaVie:** I find it hard to believe you'd do that.

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

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

Actually, when we went through our budget we looked very seriously at the front line. Seven positions that were there are no longer there. If they were vacant we swept them because we have to fit in within the budget. The Premier set a goal that we want to get to balance. When we get to balance we will be even in a better shape to go forward, bring programs forward.

The problem at the present time is much like your own credit card. If you max it out there's very little you can do –

**Mr. Myers:** Which you guys did years ago –

**Mr. McIsaac:** You have to get that paid off and paid down –

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

**Mr. McIsaac:** – then you can feel the fresh air and you can go forward, and that's what we are doing here.

We are trying to get the balance, but at the same time maintaining the very best programs we can to deliver to agriculture and to fisheries, to grow the economy, because when we grow the economy it

brings in more dollars and we'll get to balance even quicker. That's what we're focusing on.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Leader of the Opposition:** The workers, that's what drives the economy in this province. The everyday worker that goes out and buys stuff at convenience stores and goes into grocery stores or wherever, that's what drives the economy in this province.

You opened the door. Let's go to the Premier.

### **Job cuts and food safety**

Mr. Premier, the cost savings that this cut's going to make (Indistinct) effect a \$500,000 on a billion dollar industry. Question to the Premier: Is it worth the potential, or is going to affect the food safety programs or the Island that we're trying to say it is on food safety? Is that going to affect that?

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

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

I would like the hon. members to look at the big picture here. We are trying to grow this economy. We are in a position of debt. We're trying to get to the position of balance. All we did in this section here was ask to share the load a little bit. We didn't come to the agreement on that, but at the same time we feel, just like they do in every other province, in every other commodity in our province, we can deliver the program in a little bit different way, but in every bit as good a way so that we maintain and even grow the integrity of our seed stock which is key and which is the most important.

With regards to the positions, as I noted, our HR staff is working with those members to get their resumés in place and get them ready and work with them. Any positions that may come available within other departments or whatever of government, that

they would be there ready and willing and able to move into those positions.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Leader of the Opposition:** Question to the Premier: Do you agree that our system of food safety and security strengthens our market positions?

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

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

This is fundamental. It really is. This is what it's all about. That's why we need to do just what we're working with the potato board to do now, and our staff is working with their staff, to make sure we can deliver a very good program, well respected, credible program with regards to the disinfection piece, and we will do that. No other province in Canada has the program we had. No other commodity within our own province has that. But we are working with each and every producer through our Growing Forward 2 program to set themselves up so they can deliver that program. The equipment that we had going before we're giving to the potato board so they will have that as well.

We are dealing with the integrity of the potato industry and we'd ask you to help us with that.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Leader of the Opposition:** We are trying to help the industry on this issue, Mr. Speaker.

I would have to say over the last week I don't know how many – I've lost count of how many farmers in District 19 alone and up as far as the Member from O'Leary-Inverness have called me on: We can't allow this to happen. I even got a call from a Member of Parliament saying that this can't be allowed to happen.

Back in the spring this House passed a motion in support of the potato industry, a unanimous motion supported by everybody in the House in regards to the potato industry and food safety. Why are we going against the spirit of this motion?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

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

I'm very proud he brought that forward because that was a motion that I moved –

**Mr. LaVie:** And I seconded it.

**Mr. McIsaac:** – and my critic, the hon. Member from Souris-Elmira, seconded. We had unanimous support for that, that everyone in this House strongly supported the agriculture industry.

The first phone call I made after I became minister to the federal level was to Minister Ritz and Minister Shea explaining this situation we have here in PEI, which is unbelievable, unacceptable, that we would have needles and nails or whatever in our potatoes. They came forward with another – besides the \$1.5 million we've put into this program through our Growing Forward 2 – another \$1.5 million that we matched with \$500,000 of our own out of other programming. We had to help the potato industry with that. That was a real commitment that we made there from the dollars we had available.

I'm still super pleased that we have unanimous support from both sides of this House for our industry and I hope we continue to have it in the days ahead.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

### **Buses with cameras**

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

Over the past couple of weeks we've heard a lot about cars passing school buses in Prince Edward Island. Question to the minister: Can you tell us how many buses are

equipped with cameras to catch this act, and where exactly they are?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

**Ms. Biggar:** I'll take (Indistinct).

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

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

Just to answer that question, hon. member, the cameras that were installed on the school buses came forward as an initiative to try and deter people going through the red lights on the school buses. There were –

**Mr. Myers:** I'm well aware what it was for, I'm asking how many and where are they.

**Ms. Biggar:** There were –

**Mr. Myers:** I know what they're for.

**Ms. Biggar:** There were approximately 20 purchased and given to the school board. That is, in particular, where they are right now, but they're at the school board –

**Mr. Myers:** School board. That's pretty specific.

**Ms. Biggar:** But we have been working with the school bus drivers to do –

**Mr. Myers:** Okay. I'll ask another question.

**Ms. Biggar:** – to do some more training on that and we will continue to work with them.

In regard to going through, school buses, we did change legislation to discourage people from doing that. We raised the fine from \$1,000 to \$5,000. We'll continue to enforce that on our highways.

There has been some challenges in this particular area. There's only three other provinces in Canada that even have prototype cameras that they use to monitor and to deter this particular practice of drivers. It's something that no Islander wants to tolerate and we will –

**Mr. Myers:** Ten-second question.

**Ms. Biggar:** – not tolerate it either.

**Mr. Myers:** Three-minute answer.

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

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

In three minutes I got half of my question answered. There are approximately 20, which isn't a number.

Question to the minister of education: Can you tell me where in the education system are these buses?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

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

These buses are on the road and they're used daily to pick up our students and deliver them to and from our schools.

Thank you.

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

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

Question, again, to the minister of education. It's been a number of years since it's been identified as an issue with these cameras. It was raised at least two years ago about the effectiveness of this camera.

Can you tell this House today: Why were they left in place after their effectiveness was questioned?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

**Ms. Biggar:** I'll take (Indistinct), Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Perry:** Okay.

**Ms. Biggar:** Sorry.

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

**Ms. Biggar:** Hon. member, when the cameras were bought there was a particular

software that came with them. When they were turned over to the school board it has been the responsibility of the school board to keep that updated.

**Mr. Myers:** That's why I asked him. (Indistinct).

**Ms. Biggar:** It's my understanding that perhaps there have been challenges with that happening and I –

**Mr. Myers:** Thanks for updating your protocol in the House.

**Ms. Biggar:** Thank you.

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

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

This is exactly why I asked the minister of education the question because it was given to them, like the minister says.

It's been a number of years since it's been identified as being a problem. Question to the minister of education: Why is it taking so long to address this problem given that it's been a number of years since it's been first identified?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

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

This is a very serious issue and what we need to do with this is educate Island drivers to understand that they need to slow down for buses, and around school bus pickups and drops. They have to take extra caution with this.

The technology at the time wasn't where it needed to be and our department is taking a serious look at this because whatever we do, safety of our students is a top priority.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Myers:** Question again to the minister of education: If this is such a serious issue,

why did it take grandparents posting a video to Facebook for you to finally address it?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

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

I found this video very disturbing, myself. In this particular case the staff have informed me that they've taken measures to help with this particular issue by changing the pick-up and drop-off times for those that were in that video to a time where there was less traffic, and also to move the pick-up and drop-off just down the road a little ways where the visibility is a little better.

Thank you.

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

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

Since I've been elected this government has always said that safety has been their number one concern. I heard it on the Plan B deliberations. I've heard it a number of times from this government over the past four years.

Question to the minister again: Being that the case, why did you ignore this dangerous situation for several years before you finally took action towards it?

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

**Ms. Biggar:** Thank you. The hon. member is correct in that highway safety in regard to all Islanders is very important.

Just to update the hon. member on some of the policies that we've done in order to improve our safety. We have added questions to the driver's manual in particular to bus drivers and buses. On the written exam.

**Mr. Myers:** (Indistinct) government.

**Ms. Biggar:** We have begun a process, actually, hon. member, to work with the school board and the bus drivers in their training program to prepare them for court if they have to go to court. We are doing some

work with them through the justice department to present school bus drivers at their next PD event to upgrade them on some of the technical process of going to court in that regard.

We'll continue to work with them. Safe students, safety for students in transportation –

**Mr. LaVie:** Talking too much.

**Ms. Biggar:** – is something that we'll continue to collaborate with the school board and the bus drivers and work together on that.

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

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

A couple of weeks ago I attended the press conference held by the minister of education, the Premier, the minister of health, and the Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning. In that press conference the minister of education said that he was the final stop in education, he was the one that was answering to education, that over the number of years there's been a lot of confusion about who's in charge.

Yet today there's even more confusion because the minister of transportation won't let the minister of education stand up and answer his own questions. He's in charge, by his own admission in that press conference, he's in charge.

### **Gaps in education safety**

Question to the minister. During the transition period through the new changes in education there could be gaps in the system that deal with safety. How do you plan on dealing with those gaps during this transition period?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

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

As I mentioned earlier it's a very serious issue. Our department is looking into it at the moment. Again, I need to say that it's a shared responsibility. All Islanders need to

slow down around school buses and stop when red lights are flashing. Everyone has a responsibility, the department and all Islanders.

Thank you.

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

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

Again back to the minister of education because you are the final say in education as per your own admission in the press conference that day: Can you tell this House what actions you're planning to address this serious issue and others like it?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

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

As I mentioned earlier we are looking into other options. Also, in this particular case that was brought to our attention, we have changed a pick-up and drop-off location and times to increase the safety of our Island students. That is our first and highest importance when it comes to our Island students on the roads.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

### **Maritime Electric and CT4 generator ownership negotiations**

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

Earlier this year the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy informed the House that government was in talks with Maritime Electric over the future ownership of the proposed CT4 diesel electric generator.

Could the minister please provide the House with an update as to the status of these negotiations?

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

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

Hon. member, as I noted at the standing committee when I was in there, we are putting forward legislation that outlines our responsibilities in terms of ownership of assets in the future. We are continuing going forward. That will be coming forward very soon. We'll have a fulsome discussion, I'm sure, at the table when that particular energy act comes forward.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Third Party, first supplementary.

### **Legislation timeline re: owning energy capacity**

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Okay, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you, minister. Many proposals are currently underway in your portfolio, from new cabling to on-Island diesel generation to a renewable energy plan.

The minister stated that government plans on taking over existing generating capacity. By the way, I'm in favour of that. But when will the legislation be enacted to enable government to do this and is the intent just to own future generation capacity or existing capacity as well?

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

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

I think if the hon. member may have read the energy commission report, that did recommend the province taking over all assets. However, what we have determined is we will be looking at the future assets going forward.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Third Party, second supplementary.

### **Mix of renewables**

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

I'm glad to hear that. Once government is in control of these new generating assets we'll be in a much better position to set our renewable energy targets. Can the minister give us an indication of what mix of renewables we might expect to see being brought forward?

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

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

Hon. member, as I had mentioned also at the standing committee, we are putting together a new energy strategy for Prince Edward Island that will include looking at renewables such as solar, wind, biomass, and other initiatives that will help save energy for Islanders.

We will certainly be going forward with that very soon with an RFP, and we will have discussions and consultation with stakeholders across Prince Edward Island in that regard. Our target will be to have that prepared for the spring time and be ready to implement that as part of our green energy strategy with the federal government as well. I look forward to sharing that information with you. When the RFP is finalized you'll see that coming out.

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

### **Cable status update and process**

**Ms. Mundy:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The electrical cable across Northumberland Strait represents the biggest strategic investment and project this province has made in many years. As a member of the Standing Committee on Infrastructure and Energy, I've heard from various groups about this project and the role it plays in Prince Edward Island's future energy resources.

Could the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy update the House on the status of this project?

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

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

Madam colleague, what I can tell you is that we have been having consultations in planning for the installation of the cable. There have been public consultations right across the province that my department has been involved in with Maritime Electric. We have met with the PEI Fishermen's

Association as well, and keeping in mind their fishing season, we expect to have the installation installed by next fall after their fishing season is over. We are well under way in terms of making the plan to lay the cable.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Summerside-St. Eleanors, first supplementary.

**Ms. Mundy:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister.

I've also heard of the many approvals that are necessary, both provincially and federally, that will be required before the cable project can begin. Could the minister please advise the House when the necessary approval processes might be complete?

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

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

Hon. member, there is an environmental process underway that has gone to the federal government. All of the applications have been forward that are needed to lay the cable and we are ensuring that every environmental concern is addressed as part of that particular process.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Summerside-St. Eleanors, second supplementary.

**Ms. Mundy:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I understand approvals will also be required in New Brunswick. Has the minister spoken to her counterpart in New Brunswick regarding the approvals needed for their portion of the project and, if so, could you please update the House on that matter?

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

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

Hon. member, our particular staff people from our department work hand in hand as well with New Brunswick representatives and have been involved in all the meetings that are held in New Brunswick as well. Things are going forward very well in that

particular aspect as well of that phase, getting ready to lay the cable from the New Brunswick side.

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

### Spat catch

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

My question is to the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries. This past summer there was a very low spat catch in a number of important rivers in western PEI and this situation may have a significant impact on the future of a number of our public fishers.

Is the minister aware of this situation and is he aware of any rivers that did have a decent catch in other parts of the Island, and will it be enough to sustain the industry?

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

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

Well aware of the issue. There have been some areas, some rivers, that had good collection, some that certainly did not. We've been meeting with the Shellfish Association with regards to this and we have an enhancement program that we will help to try and rectify some of the problems, but we will continue to work with the Shellfish Association to deal with this.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

There are over 700 public license holders on Prince Edward Island and approximately 40% of them happen to be from the riding of O'Leary-Inverness. The livelihood of a large number of these oyster fishers could be impacted in future years with it taking about three to four years for – well, actually, four to five years for oysters to reach maturity, maybe even longer in some cases, and this is the second year in a row that we've had a poor spat catch.

Will the minister of this department look at increasing expenditures for spat collection to the industry next year to make sure that these catches can be spread out on public grounds to make this industry sustainable?

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

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

It is a fairly serious issue. I've been to some of the Shellfish Association meetings, I've been to harbours where they're trying to collect the spat. There was one down in my own riding and he was showing me the new ways they're trying to do this. Unfortunately, this was a bad year with regards to spat collection.

We actually are putting \$100,000 into the enhancement program to deal with issues like this and we will continue to do that, continue to monitor the situation, and do what we can, working with the Shellfish Association, to, in whatever way we can, rectify this situation and ensure that the future of the oyster fishery is in good shape.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from O'Leary-Inverness, second supplementary question.

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

Yes, this industry is an extremely important industry to the province of Prince Edward Island. The PEI Shellfish Association – which I've been down to see some of the work that they've done in Paughs Creek and other locations in the province. It is pretty critical that we do what we can to try to make sure we can sustain this industry.

Will the minister be collaborating with his department and maybe make a little ring on the credit card there to see if we can provide the funding to make sure that this industry is sustainable for our public fishers?

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

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

I've been down to Paughs Creek myself and it was a great work that they do there. Unfortunately this was a bad year. Good news is there is a possibility of a hatchery going, actually, in the western end of the province. We've been approached with regards to that, which would certainly help out the situation.

Also, through DFO, we're working with them and on their committee with regards to bringing spat in from offshore. You need a permit for that, but we're working with shellfishers to look into that. We'll continue to work with the DFO, with the Shellfish Association, and the producers themselves – the shell fishers, harvesters themselves – to make sure that we have a great industry going forward, and we will do whatever we can with regards to that in continuing our enhancement program as well.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira and the Opposition Whip.

### **Eastern Kings ambulance**

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

In July I asked the Premier about the government's promised second ambulance for eastern Kings. Premier, when is your promised long-needed ambulance, going into Souris out of the Island EMS base?

Premier, you promised it, Premier.

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

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

Very well aware of the discussion from the Member from Souris-Elmira. Government continues to roll out a very robust plan for rural health care in the Province of Prince Edward Island and that would be including the area that the member represents. I was down there recently and we had the opportunity to open the new investments in dialysis of approximately \$300,000 dollars.

We're recruiting aggressively for a new physician to stabilize physician services.

We're very committed, and I give credit to the Member from Souris-Elmira for the wonderful job he does in representing his constituents and being a strong voice for rural health care.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira and the Opposition Whip.

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

I do appreciate the credit that the health minister is giving me and I do – that's one promise I did make, to be a voice of the people of Eastern Kings.

**Mr. Myers:** And good job you're doing (Indistinct).

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

**Mr. LaVie:** But Premier, you came during your campaign and you promised the people of eastern Kings another ambulance, a second ambulance in Souris. You promised it.

To the minister of health, this is what you had to say: I'm very committed to our ground ambulance in the eastern Kings part of the province and will make sure that the Member from Souris-Elmira will be fully updated and aware of when that investment will be implemented.

Minister, where is that second ambulance for eastern Kings?

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

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

Ground ambulance, since coming into government, has been a top priority by our government. If you look at the investments that we made in additional training and the relationships that we have with Island EMS to expand the role of paramedics in all vehicles today, we have an advanced care 3 paramedic. Very closely monitor the

response times in rural Prince Edward Island.

I'm pleased to announce here today –

**Mr. LaVie:** (Indistinct) this is the minister that cut schools in eastern Kings. (Indistinct) shut our (Indistinct) down.

**Mr. Currie:** I'm pleased to announce that the current average response time in minutes from September 15<sup>th</sup>, just recently to October 15<sup>th</sup> of this year, in Souris we had 38 calls at 9.49 minutes were the emergent response times and the urgent was just a little over 10 minutes to respond.

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

**Mr. Currie:** So we are responding, and we are very committed, Mr. Speaker, to make sure that we continue to strengthen and improve and support efficient emergency response times in the eastern part of the province.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira and the Opposition Whip.

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

This is an issue of mine for the last four and half years. Anybody who was elected here in 2011 knows we deserve a second ambulance. Everybody was on board, the Premier was on board, the minister of health was on board. If he wants to talk response times, on November 4<sup>th</sup> a heart attack – 45 minutes for the ambulance to respond.

**Mr. Myers:** Oh, that's not right.

**Mr. LaVie:** Forty-five minutes.

**Mr. Myers:** That's not acceptable.

**Mr. LaVie:** That's not acceptable, Minister.

Minister –

**Mr. Trivers:** (Indistinct) on volunteer firefighters.

**Mr. LaVie:** – you promised the second ambulance. You even promised that you'd drive in the second ambulance over LaVie Bridge when it was done, and that bridge was done in August, and you said I'd travel

with you. Now it's four months away. Where is that second ambulance?

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

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

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

As I indicated, government is extremely committed to monitoring and improving and making investments in rural health care. The ground ambulance fleet, which is operated by Island EMS, is a contractual agreement that we have. We continue to monitor. We'll be updating response times on the Health PEI website. We've introduced a new computer assisted DPAT system for us to monitor very closely how efficient our ground ambulances are in respect to emergency calls. I want to reiterate to the Member from Souris-Elmira that we are very committed to the additional ground ambulance in the eastern part of the province, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira and the Opposition Whip.

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

But this is the same minister that came into eastern Kings and shut our schools.

**Mr. Myers:** Yes.

**Mr. LaVie:** This is the same minister that came into eastern Kings and shut down our doctors.

**Mr. Myers:** Yes.

**Mr. Aylward:** Tried to shut down dialysis.

**Mr. LaVie:** This is the same minister that tried to shut the dialysis down, only for opposition and the community, the fight for the dialysis. This is the same minister trying to cut our service.

Now, question. Premier, you came to District 1 and you promised, without your health minister there, a second ambulance

for eastern Kings. Do you stand by that promise today?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Yes I do, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira and the Opposition Whip.

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

Premier, I will hold you responsible for that promise. I heard this for the last four years now. I heard everything he's said today, the health minister has said here today, I heard it for the last four years. It's the same as I said to the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries: everything in a committee meeting, I heard that for the last four years and nothing done.

Now Premier: When will this ambulance come to eastern Kings?

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

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

As I shared through some of my responses to the questions, government is extremely committed to rural health care in this province. I value the comments from the Member from Souris-Elmira. I am a minister that is part of the government that implemented and built a new bridge in the town of Souris. I'm also the minister that was involved with the renewal of Colville Manor, which is a brand new manor in the community. I'm also the minister that had the opportunity to work very closely with the town of Souris to implement and invest over \$300,000 for a state-of-the-art infiltration water system for dialysis patients in Souris. I'm also the minister that has been able to stabilize physician services in the community of Souris when we came into government back 2007 when we were on the brink of almost closing the facility down.

We continue to invest, we continue to advocate, we continue to support residents of Souris who are coming to Charlottetown for health care services. I'm extremely proud of government's investment in the new \$20 million infrastructure building school that I had a chance to be in two

months ago when the Premier and I announced a substantial investment to the capital campaign for the Souris Hospital, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira, final question.

**Mr. LaVie:** Final question?

Mr. Speaker, thank you very much.

These are the same answers that I asked back in July and we always hear what this minister does. He always likes to get up and tell us what he does. I'm surprised he doesn't give the big send-off here on the last question.

Minister, you forget that you strolled in and you were the one that shut the schools. You were the one. We only have two doctors. You were the one that got rid of our doctors and won't replace the doctors. You're the one. Don't come up and say what you did. Come up to us and tell us what you're going to do. The Premier promised a second ambulance. You make it happen.

Minister: Will you make that happen now, the second ambulance?

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

**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 carry the responsibility as the minister of health in this province now for the majority of my time. I continue to share publicly, I share in this Assembly, that our government is extremely committed to improving and expanding and supporting health care services in rural Prince Edward Island.

On any given day in our two largest referral hospitals we're embracing over 3,000 Islanders to provide a range of health care services. It's paramount by our government that we continue to build on the investments we made such as a new manor, new dialysis

unit – we continue to recruit aggressively to support physician services.

I continue to look forward to working with Island EMS and continue to stand by our commitments as government as we continue to improve response time for ground ambulance services here in the Province of Prince Edward Island.

Thank you very much.

**Speaker:** That ends Question Period.