



Session:	3/65
Date:	16 November 2018
No:	64

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
OF  
PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS AND ORAL QUESTION PERIOD  
(PRELIMINARY PROCEEDINGS)

FOR

FRIDAY, 16 NOVEMBER 2018



Responses to Questions Taken as Notice

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

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

Yesterday the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale made claims in Question Period directed to me concerning the social assistance shelter rate that I would like to correct for the House.

The fact is that this 6% rate increase as part of the Poverty Reduction Action Plan will not be a 1.25% per year rate increase spread over five years as the opposition member said yesterday in the House.

In fact, and to be clear of the facts for the House, the 6% will take effect in three weeks, which is December.

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

**Ms. Mundy:** This 6% shelter rate increase is above and beyond the 3% increase my department made this past June.

So everyone is clear, that would be a 9% total increase in 2018. And going forward, my department intends to review all social assistance rates annually, including shelter, to support the most vulnerable.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Questions by Members

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

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

Higher than planned project costs have delayed work on a project to upgrade the waste treatment between Stratford and Charlottetown.

In May 2017, the province committed over \$4.7 million to this project.

**Waste water treatment project**

Question to the Premier: Does the province still support this project?

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

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

As was announced last year when the Leader of the Opposition attended the announcement, actually, that we were going to be and have made a commitment to support the sewage treatment plans from Stratford over to Charlottetown, as was reported in the media.

It was the decision of the Stratford council to delay that project this year due to higher-than-expected tender costs. We are there as a funding partner when they are ready to proceed.

**Mr. R. Brown:** Great.

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

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

I'd like to thank the Premier for that response.

This project will be a step forward on environmental sustainability and regional cooperation, something that I certainly support.

Originally, the province committed to funding 25% of the project.

**Cost sharing for waste water treatment project**

Question to the Premier: Will that 25% cost sharing remain now that the project costs have risen?

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

**Mr. Myers:** You only get him when he saves her, remember?

**Ms. Biggar:** Mr. Speaker, as was reported by the Stratford council, they are working within their budget that they see fit, that they can afford as a community, and we are there

as a funding partner as we have already indicated and were there the day the Leader of the Opposition attended when we got together as two communities and three governments to announce that commitment to that community to address a very serious potential future problem around sewage. We are there to help as a funding partner.

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

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

Again, I'd like to thank the Premier for that answer.

Stratford residents have waited a long time to see this work done. They have been more than patient and they want to see this issue resolved as quickly as possible.

Again, I ask the Premier: With the risen costs for the completion of this project, is the province still standing by their 25% commitment to this project?

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

**Ms. Biggar:** Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure how many times I can say: Yes, we are a funding partner.

But, we are a funding partner. We look forward to –

**Leader of the Opposition:** (Indistinct) 25%?

**Ms. Biggar:** – working, continuing with the work on that project with the Stratford community.

**Leader of the Opposition:** (Indistinct)

**Ms. Biggar:** Under the agreement that's in place, we will respect and work with the community as was already reported.

**Leader of the Opposition:** That sounds like a 'no' to 25%.

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

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

This summer I attended the no pipe rally in Pictou. There were thousands of Maritimers there and many, many Islanders. Actually, that morning the ferry was full going over.

Since that time, there have been a lot of developments, I guess you'd say, about this really crucial decision they're making over across the Strait.

**Premier communication with federal minister re: Northern Pulp**

Question to the Premier: When was the last time you spoke to the federal minister of environment about this issue?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, I wrote to the hon. Catherine McKenna back in the spring when this issue was on everyone's minds. I wrote at the same time to the premier of Nova Scotia, the hon. Stephen McNeil, very clearly on the record in terms of Prince Edward Island's concerns, our government's concerns, my personal concern about this matter and they're well aware of those.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. LaVie:** (Indistinct)

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

**Mr. Myers:** (Indistinct) not punching above your weight there.

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

This is a huge, huge issue for us here across the Strait and it's imperative that we have a federal review on this issue.

We know the Nova Scotia government has invested \$6 million into the plan for the pipe; a huge conflict of interest, a glaring conflict of interest.

**Premier communication with Nova Scotia premier re: Northern Pulp**

Premier, have you spoken to premier McNeil about this conflict?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, I have written premier McNeil, and indeed we have spoken on this very point and our clear view that the matter should be addressed from an environmental assessment perspective through the federal jurisdiction and the federal process.

The premier of Nova Scotia is well aware of Prince Edward Island's position on this matter, as are all of the relevant sectors and actors in Prince Edward Island. I can say I've heard on numerous occasions from the fishermen's association, for example, that they sincerely appreciate the strong stand that the province has taken on this matter and that stand continues. We fully support all of the efforts that are made to ensure that that pipe does not proceed without a full assessment.

Indeed, the key line in my letter –

**Mr. Myers:** So you're not against it. You're for it (Indistinct)

**Premier MacLauchlan:** The key line in my letter to both, minister McKenna and premier McNeil is: We do not support the proposal as submitted.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

This is crucial to our fishery. I hear it over and over again; I will not stop talking about it. I will keep pushing, because we need to ensure that the province is on board and thoroughly engaged and on a regular basis with the federal department and the minister of environment.

Can you tell me if you have had a response from the federal minister of environment about your concerns and the provinces concerns, Premier?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, I did have a response from minister McKenna. To the best of my recollection, I tabled it in this House during the spring sitting. But if the hon. member didn't realize that, I would be

happy to table it again at the first of the week.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

There have been a lot of developments since the summer, and since we have sat in the spring, so again, I am pushing you, Premier, to interact with the feds, not just in the summer, but now – again.

### Extra steps to ensure no pipe in Strait

We are looking at what's going to happen next, there has been a delay. Can you tell me what extra steps your government and you, Premier, are willing to take to ensure there is no pipe in the Strait?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, it is timely that the question comes up.

I will be seeing this afternoon the hon. Dominic LeBlanc, the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, who has been appoint, in fact, since the spring that the hon. member refers to with that responsibility and I indeed will be picking this up with the minister –

**Mr. Myers:** (Indistinct)

**Premier MacLauchlan:** – the federal government is fully aware, and this matter has been made clear. The federal government is fully aware of the Province of Prince Edward Island and our government is fully supportive and clear that we are asking for the federal environmental assessment.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

We know that by law, the pipe is to be in the Strait by 2020. That's only 14 months away, and there were new developments just in the very recent news about the fact that they

have to put the pipe somewhere else— and now it's going to go close to the ferry terminal or to the ferry in Caribou.

### **Possible pipe near ferry terminal**

Premier, are you comfortable with or happy with the idea of visitors of PEI coming through basically a dead zone in the Northumberland Strait, when they come to visit this beautiful province?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, I think the question speaks for itself. Of course, I'm not in – no expectations whatsoever that the Province of Prince Edward Island or visitors or the people in the fishery would have any intention of being supportive of such a proposal.

The proposal has not been put forward, I think that's exactly where this matter stands, that Northern Pulp has in fact been, I might say stymied and I'm not, to tell you the truth, opposed to that. In the various sets they've taken to try to meet the deadline referred to by the hon. member and I think that's exactly where this matter stands.

I'm happy to say that the view taken by myself and by our government and by very important players in Prince Edward Island – the fisheries association, the Aboriginal people, have in fact contributed to that situation as it stands and I'm happy for it to stay right there.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Farmers are a big part of our economy here in Prince Edward Island. They need good roads to get their goods to market.

### **Safe roads for farmers to travel**

Question to the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries: Do you agree with that statement?

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

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

Yes, obviously when farmers are growing crops, the crops are located in all kind of various locations throughout Prince Edward Island on our million-acre farm here and getting that access from the field to the warehouse or through to the processing plant is imperative.

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

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

We know that roads in rural PEI are in rough shape. Some have really broken down over the last 10 years.

### **Process for road repairs**

Question to the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries: What is the process for farmers and residents to get these rough roads fixed in their areas?

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

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

**Mr. Henderson:** Mr. Speaker, I'm sure there is a process but it is involving the road supervisors within each particular area. I know in my own particular district, farmers, fishers and general residents are always notifying me of a certain particular road they would like to see improved.

**Mr. J. Brown:** (Indistinct) MLA.

**Mr. Henderson:** I work with the road supervisor, plus the department of transportation usually makes a request every year to prioritize roads that need to be repaired.

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

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

Well there is something wrong with the process. A farmer from up west wanted to see a bad piece of road fixed, not only for himself, but for the residents; he was a spokesperson. The road was broken up so bad that they were driving on the shoulder of

the road. With their big machinery, that is dangerous. So, he went to his local MLA, his local MLA passed him onto another local MLA that said it was in this new district.

**Mr. Myers:** Uh-oh.

**Mr. LaVie:** And number two MLA sent him back to his first MLA –

**Mr. Myers:** Oh, no.

**Mr. LaVie:** – so he didn't know what to do. So he went back to the –

**Mr. Myers:** I bet they were both Liberals.

**Mr. LaVie:** – so he did call the transportation minister.

**Mr. Myers:** I bet they were both Liberals.

**Mr. LaVie:** Question to the transportation minister: How do residents make sure bad roads don't become political footballs?

**Mr. Myers:** Oh, good question.

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

**Mr. Myers:** Vote for Tory, I'd say.

**Mr. Roach:** Vote consensus, right?

**An Hon. Member:** Yes.

**Some Hon. Members:** [Laughter]

**Mr. Roach:** (Indistinct) shot at you soon.

**Mr. Dumville:** You're coming around.

**Speaker:** Okay, from now until the end of Question Period, let's listen to the answers. And I think I've said before in this House – if you don't want to listen to the answer, don't bother asking the question.

The hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy.

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

I appreciate the opportunity to explain the process that is used in determining what roadwork and what our priorities are on roads.

First of all, we are very pleased with the amount of money we've been able to invest now that we are under a new collective agreement with the feds. Any roads now that have 1,000 cars or more on it are now eligible for 50/50 funding. So we can invest more money –

**Mr. Trivers:** Whether they need it or not.

**Ms. Biggar:** – and it depends on how much traffic is on that road.

We talked yesterday about the 48 Road, as minister of transportation, I was glad to put a roundabout down there to protect the area.

**Mr. Myers:** (Indistinct) put that in that was there before the election.

**Ms. Biggar:** We work with the residents, we work with the road masters, we work with statistics, and we work with data on making our priorities and our decisions –

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

**Mr. Myers:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. LaVie:** (Indistinct)

**Ms. Biggar:** – for the best access to farming, and we will continue to do investments. We did over \$8 million in investments in side roads and paving, and we will continue to do that next year, and even more.

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

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

I'll tell the minister of transportation how roads get paved.

After getting the run around from local MLAs and government, the resident went to the media.

**Mr. Myers:** Oh.

**Mr. LaVie:** He went to the media! Once they did that, all of a sudden, the government earmuffs came off.

**Mr. Myers:** Oh.

**Government action on paving of roads**

**Mr. LaVie:** Question to the transportation minister: Why do residents have to go through such length to get action from the government?

**Mr. Myers:** Good question, good question.

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

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

I get calls – and I guess I’m not allowed to take any calls according to yesterday or reply to anyone by email.

**Mr. Myers:** No, they just want you to stay off Twitter, now.

**Ms. Biggar:** – I’m not allowed to respond to anyone that may call may call the district supervisor –

**Mr. LaVie:** I wonder why (Indistinct)

**Ms. Biggar:** – whenever I get approached, I refer that onto my district supervisors –

**Mr. LaVie:** I wonder why.

**Ms. Biggar:** – to our –

**Mr. LaVie:** You should read before you hit send.

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

**Ms. Biggar:** – to our county supervisors to work and identify the priorities and the needs and we will continue to work, based on again, how much traffic, working with local areas, working with municipalities –

**Mr. Myers:** The Internet’s been a blessing for a lot of people; you’re just not one of them.

**Ms. Biggar:** – and together we will make improvements where needed.

**Mr. R. Brown:** Great job.

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

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

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

**Response to road repairs via media**

Question to the transportation minister: Why is going to CBC the best way to get rural roads fixed on PEI?

**Mr. Myers:** Good question.

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

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

We didn’t have to go to the CBC. We worked with our federal partners to come up with a new agreement that would – under the Tory government that was in Ottawa wouldn’t even let PEI have any kind of leeway to do anything. –

**Mr. Myers:** You signed it with (Indistinct)

**Ms. Biggar:** We now have negotiated a deal with the federal government that recognizes that we need to pave our collector roads and make sure farmers and fishers get their products to market.

**Mr. Trivers:** You didn’t apologize though.

**Ms. Biggar:** And we’re the ones who sat down with Justin Trudeau and the federal government and negotiated a new deal for PEI.

**Some Hon. Members:** Great.

**Mr. Myers:** Your sister’s a Tory.

**An Hon. Member:** They all are.

**Mr. Myers:** They all are.

**Mr. R. Brown:** They just haven’t seen the light yet.

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

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

This was a half a kilometer of road – broken pavement, broken down; half a kilometer.

These people were sent from one MLA to another MLA, to a transportation minister.

This is why people go to the media – to get things done. Media are starting to decide who gets roads paved on PEI.

Question to the transportation minister: Why do people only respond – why do you only respond when there is a media crisis or political damage control to be done?

**Mr. Myers:** Good question.

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

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

We're responding to needs right across Prince Edward Island with our capital budget, with our infrastructure program. We've done the most that's been done in Prince Edward Island long before – since 2007.

In 2015, we have incrementally multiplied the amount of work that we're going to be able to do and have done. We're working to ensure that our products are getting to market in the most efficient way. We are working together to make improvements right across Prince Edward Island.

I guess maybe those MLAs over there, hon. members, forget the work that has been done in their districts and right across this Island. I, as transportation minister, am going to continue to do that.

**Mr. Roach:** Good work, minister.

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

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

Yesterday during Question Period, the Premier defended an ad placed in *The Guardian* as being nonpartisan and he said: It's only partisan because he doesn't like it – he being me. But even a local journalist stated on Twitter, and I quote: It's hard to see this misleading graphic as anything other than an election ad.

So clearly it's partisan, but it's also misleading. It states inaccurately that, and again I quote from the ad: Over 24 months with all other plans an average household would have incurred a cost of over \$1,000 –

suggesting that this government's plan is the only one that is revenue-neutral.

**Mr. J. Brown:** I guess he's misleading the House, I don't know. I guess he's misleading again.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** However, both the federal backstop and the made for PEI green plan are also revenue-neutral with every penny collected in tax being returned to Islanders.

**Mr. Myers:** So just don't take it – problem solved.

### **Defending of carbon tax ad in *The Guardian***

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Question to the minister: Why would you defend such a misleading ad?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Mr. Trivers:** Indefensible.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** I kept listening beyond the 40-second mark so perhaps I'll return some of the time and simply say, we're going to have a lot of time to debate when the legislation comes to this floor, which is the carbon plan –

**Ms. Biggar:** Give us some notice when it's coming.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** – the climate change plan, including the price incentive that is part of our plan. We look forward to talking fully on this floor on that matter.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Yesterday in Question Period, you also claimed that our plan would result in again I quote: Islanders paying in the order of \$47 million in additional taxes; when the Green plan, like yours, will return every penny to Islanders. In fact, 80% of Island households would end up with more money in their pockets.

A question to the Premier: Don't you agree that it would have been much more accurate if your ad had read: with all other plans over 24 months an average household will get more money back in rebates than they spend in carbon taxes?

**Mr. Myers:** Isn't that what Stalin was doing?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** I kept listening past the 25-second mark and I did note that the question four times referred to me in the second – or sorry with the word you, which I don't think is proper in this House, but I'll give my answer back through you, Mr. Speaker.

We have put forward a plan that is in the best interest to Prince Edward Islanders, that is in the best interest of our climate commitment and it is the best interest of the environment and addressing the issue of climate change.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

When we analyze and debate a budget, we look at both the expenditure and the revenue sides, but when it comes to carbon plan our Premier chooses to see only the expenditure side of the ledger. Like the budget that this would create, it's hardly balanced.

### **Green Party carbon plan**

Premier: You seem not to have read our plan. Would you like to stop by our office for a briefing?

**Some Hon. Members:** [Laughter]

**An Hon. Member:** Oh.

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, earlier this week, the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale offered me a reading list. It sounds like the Leader of the

Third Party is kind of following a similar tactic.

Perhaps I could offer them a map that show we have Prince Edward Island which goes from tip-to-tip with Islanders who are doing well and prospering and they do require to move around to live and build great communities and to continue to build our economy. That is our climate change plan – that is our approach to carbon price and we are proud to bring that forward. It is being supported by Islanders throughout this province.

We're going to debate that on the floor of this House and I look forward to see what opposition members are going to do in response to that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point.

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

My question today is for the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy: Minister as a resident of Charlottetown and an MLA who represents a Charlottetown city riding, I've seen firsthand the importance that investments in our highways make, like the construction of the Charlottetown Bypass.

Without this bypass, transport trucks and cars would be travelling through our city streets and in our neighbourhoods. I am so pleased with the investment. Additionally, I know that the Maypoint roundabout in Charlottetown-Lewis Point has improved safety and improved the safety leading into Cornwall – one of the fastest growing communities on the Island.

### **Schedule of Cornwall Trans-Canada project**

Minister, would you please tell us if the Cornwall Trans-Canada project is on schedule?

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

**An Hon. Member:** Let's find out. Let's get the facts.

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

Hon. members, we had a lot of discussion yesterday about this project and it's great to be able to make some real accurate facts here on this topic. –

**Mr. Myers:** You didn't have them yesterday.

**Ms. Biggar:** First of all, the fact is we are improving environmental projects in that area, building roads unlike the Green Leader doesn't want us – excuse me, I'll call correctly because we don't want to refer to people in the wrong way here. The Leader of the Third Party wishes that there would be no new roads built on this Island, but I'm happy to report that we are ahead of schedule.

We are pleased to respond to the requests that the residents and the school in that area made that we try to do paving ahead of time and that's what we did this fall.

**Mr. R. Brown:** Great, great.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point, your first supplementary.

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

Throughout the week it seems the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters repeatedly has trouble getting his facts straight. –

**Some Hon. Members:** Ooh.

**Mr. R. Brown:** That's not new.

**Mr. Myers:** (Indistinct)

**Ms. Casey:** Transparency and accountability are important principals for any government and I know Island business pride themselves for operating in a professional manner.

### **Cornwall bypass project procedures**

Can the minister tell this House, were all tendering and contract procedures followed on the Cornwall Trans-Canada project.

**Mr. Myers:** Yeah can you tell us and can you (Indistinct) church parking lots while you're at it.

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

**Ms. Biggar:** You don't want me to help the churches in your area?

**An Hon. Member:** I'm just asking.

**An Hon. Member:** Did you pave them?

**An Hon. Member:** (Indistinct) pave any church parking lots?

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

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

Absolutely, all of the regulations, the requirements of tendering are and have been followed, it's unfortunate that the opposition wish to put out facts that are not presented correctly on this.

General provisions and contract specification manuals allow for contracts to be altered for the quantity or scope of work for an existing project.

**Mr. LaVie:** (Indistinct)

**Ms. Biggar:** This work that was done, that was talked about was not for round-a-bouts and ramps as the opposition stated yesterday. It was for paving to the Cornwall Road.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point, your second supplementary.

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

Minister, investments in highways and roads are critically important for our province and I know you know this for the safety of the public and to allow our goods to get to market and in fact, last year PEI exports in September 2018 year to date are of 1.1% and that's more than one billion in exports so far this year.

### **Cost of Cornwall bypass project**

While these are important and needed investments, it's important that Islanders are aware of the facts and again the opposition continue to get their facts wrong –

**Mr. LaVie:** By two million dollars.

**Ms. Casey:** – for the Cornwall bypass project is \$75 million, minister is this correct?

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

**Ms. Biggar:** Actually to correct misinformation that was put out there yesterday, the actual budget for this project was \$65 million, cost shared by the federal government and I'm pleased to report though that we are 10% under budget on this project.

**An Hon. Member:** Under budget?

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

**Mr. Myers:** (Indistinct)

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

**Ms. Biggar:** That's going to allow us to be able to look at other priorities but we are on target, under budget and on line to have that project completed next year and open to the public.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road.

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

My question today is to the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Minister, as we know the striped bass is a recreational fishery here on Prince Edward Island. I grew up in a fishing community. I never heard anything or much of this species in the past.

### **Number of striped bass in the region**

Has your department noticed an increase in the number of striped bass in the region?

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

**Mr. Henderson:** Yes we have noticed a significant increase in striped bass in the shores of PEI.

As the hon. member may know is that striped bass has recently been taken off the endangered species list in the Gulf of St. Lawrence and when that happened a recreational fishery has been established between April 15<sup>th</sup> and October 31<sup>st</sup> – but it is for only accessing fish of (Indistinct) 50cm to 65cm.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road, your first supplementary.

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

### **Feed for striped bass**

Minister: What does the striped bass feed on because what I'm hearing is they feed on juvenile lobster?

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

**Mr. Henderson:** The striped bass is a predatory fish and they do eat different marine species throughout their lifetime.

They start off at a younger age – they would eat plankton, zooplankton some of those types of things but as they get older they do evolve into eating other fish, also crustaceans and lobster as well, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road, your second supplementary.

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

### **Commercial striped bass fishery**

Minister that really concerns me because the lobster fishery is one of our main economic drivers here on Prince Edward Island, so what would it take to establish a commercial striped bass fishery here on PEI?

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

**Mr. Henderson:** That's a really good question, Mr. Speaker.

Right now there currently is a commercial fishery in the Miramichi area, it's with actually the Eel Ground First Nation community and they are allowed to harvest 25,000 fish.

There is a process should that be at a point at time when they think there should be a commercial fishery and that is actually, DFO does a stock assessment to determine what the a viable fishery would entail and they would also determine what the quote would be.

What I can say here is that Prince Edward Island would like to get its fair share of particular quota for a commercial fishery for either commercial fishers or for our First Nation fishers.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

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

The Malpeque harbour in my district is one of the busiest in the province, with many people earning their living through fishing lobsters and mussels.

Channel dredging is a major ongoing issue at the harbour with the mussel boat getting stuck and another one sinking just this August. Thankfully, no one has been killed yet.

### **Solution to dredging in Malpeque harbour**

Question to the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries: What is the province doing to help come up with a long-term solution to the dredging issues in Malpeque harbour?

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

**Mr. Henderson:** Mr. Speaker, also a very good question and it's been a question that our department has been working on in collaboration with our federal counterparts.

As you know, Small Craft and Harbours in this province are responsible for the dredging of our harbours and I would say that we only have five dredges actually in the Maritimes.

Recently, I will say that I have brought the issue to forefront with Minister Wilkinson and have also met with parliamentary assistant to fisheries, Sean Casey.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

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

The harbour gets dredged in the spring for lobster season but (Indistinct) quickly so dredging is only a temporary solution at best.

DFO did a study on long-term solutions and one of the options considered was bypassing the need to constantly dredge the channel by relocating the harbour.

### **Relocation of Malpeque harbour**

Question to the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries: Do you agree that something like this could improve safety for our fishers and shell fishers working on the water?

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

**Mr. Henderson:** Mr. Speaker, I have had the opportunity to look at the DFO study and they have looked at two particular locations that could be possibilities to establish another harbour, when you look at the logistics of dredging a harbour.

When you look at the logistics of dredging a harbour I think we've allocated over half a million dollars a year to dredge in that particular harbour and in my discussions with parliamentary assistant of fisheries, Sean Casey, we've brought him up to speed on that particular issue and I do agree that our mussel industry is a very valuable industry and DFO needs to take a little more credence into the value that it has to this province.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

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

When those mussel boats ran aground and sank this summer, tens of thousands of dollars of product and equipment were lost.

Fishers are telling me that they worry more than just fish and equipment could be lost.

### **Safety of fishers**

Question to the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries: Will you lobby the federal government and our Liberal MP's to get this solution moving forward for the safety of our fishers as soon as possible?

**An Hon. Member:** Good.

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

**Mr. Henderson:** Agreed, Mr. Speaker.

Our harbours are seeing massive changes due to whether it's climate change or very strong weather conditions.

I know in Malpeque harbour they can dredge that harbour and probably within a few weeks it will be filled back in again. I remember the same issue with my own riding in West Point and we'd really want to reiterate to the minister and to his parliamentary assistant the importance of having a timely dredging and to try to come up with solutions that make sense

In fact, last Friday I met with the fishers, both mussel fishers and the lobster fishers in the Malpeque area and we met with the parliamentary assistant, Sean Casey, so we'll do our best, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Well, we all know meeting with Sean Casey is a useless task to get anything done.

**Ms. Biggar:** Ouch.

**Mr. Myers:** In Brudenell, the shellfishing industry in Brudenell is a really part of the shellfishing industry down in my end of the Island and I've heard a lot of concerns recently about the river.

Question to the minister: Can you confirm that every summer the Brudenell River shuts down shellfishing?

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

I'm starting to think I'm minister of health again here with all of these questions.

The hon. member is correct in saying the Brudenell River is under a conditional management plan and at times, it can be shut down based on testing that's done by the communities, land and environment with decisions made by the department of environment – the federal department of environment, I should say.

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

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

### **Shellfish industry closures**

Question again to the minister: Can you explain how those closures to the shellfish industry are determined?

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

**Mr. Henderson:** Mr. Speaker, many of our rivers are under what's called the Canadian Shellfish Sanitation Program and in that particular case, communities, land and environment, actually in contract with the federal department of environment, does testing of water samples throughout our river systems and then that information is decided by Environment Canada to what the classification, whether a river should be determined – or parts of the river should be determined prohibited, conditional or open for harvest of shellfish, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

So the curious thing from the perspective of the shellfishers out there is that they have a feeling that the shellfishery closes down every year right about the time that the golf course opens up.

### **Shellfishery closure/golf course opening**

Question to the minister: Can you please look into this matter with your staff and

confirm that the river isn't actually being closed down because of the golf course, or that it is?

**Mr. Roach:** (Indistinct) river has been open almost all summer for fishing (Indistinct)

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

**Mr. Henderson:** Mr. Speaker, obviously when it comes to every river system, like I said before, it is based on water samples that determine what the bacteria counts would be in any particular river system and it's really based on the science of the counts that they receive. It's not about what goes on within the land part of it.

Although, once again, we see when water temperatures increase things like that can have factors and it is the department of Environment Canada that determines where the lines would be, to what designation or classification a certain section of a river would be, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Again from the perspective of the shellfishers in that area, they are curious as to whether or not it's being unduly influenced by, perhaps either the golf course on one side or the million dollar mansions on the other side of which the Member from Montague-Kilmuir has.

**Mr. Roach:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. Myers:** Question to the minister: Can you confirm that the closure of the river isn't being influenced by people like the Member from Montague-Kilmuir who wants to have his view free of fishermen?

**Mr. Roach:** (Indistinct)

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

**Mr. Henderson:** Mr. Speaker, once again, there would be so many factors that would have an influence on – whether it's nitrate levels, whether it's of bacteria counts within a particular river system.

What I'm trying to say to the House here is there is a process that tests our water, it determines whether there is either bacteria counts or other counts that get to a point that are in excess of safe harvest of our shellfish and they have also implement whether shellfish have to be decontaminated or sanitized in clean water to be sold on the market, Mr. Speaker.

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

End of Question Period