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**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
**OF**  
**PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND**

**TRANSCRIPT OF**  
**STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS**  
**AND THE**  
**ORAL QUESTION PERIOD**  
**FOR**

**Tuesday 28 November 2006**



**ORAL QUESTION PERIOD 28 NOVEMBER 2006 PRELIMINARY PROCEEDINGS**

**STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS**

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Winsloe-West Royalty.

**CANADIAN BROADCASTERS' HALL OF FAME**

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

And as has been noted here this afternoon, Mr. Frank Lewis is indeed in our public gallery and gracing us by his presence today. And it is my great privilege to have the opportunity here to speak to members today about the wonderful recent induction of Mr. Lewis into the Canadian Association of Broadcasters' Hall of Fame.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Lewis is certainly one of Atlantic Canada's best known broadcast executives. He is the retired vice-president and general manager of radio station CFCY and he was one of only nine Canadians singled out for this honour this year.

The hall of fame recognizes Canadians in private broadcasting or related industries who have achieved outstanding success in helping to raise industry standards from a material or humanitarian standpoint.

To quote Canadian Broadcasters' Association President, Glenn O'Farrell, this year's inductees are innovators and leaders in the field of broadcasting and have contributed immensely to their industry and to their communities.

After 38 years in the industry, Frank Lewis truly lives up to these words but perhaps even

more impressive is the respect his staff has held for him over those years. He has always been known for his fair and caring treatment of his employees and his willingness to give of his time and energy for a project.

Through his efforts, CFCY was selected as one of the National Post's '100 Best Companies to Work for in Canada' back in 1996.

Mr. Speaker, I know I speak on behalf of all members in this chamber when I congratulate Mr. Lewis on this well-deserved recognition and to extend best wishes to him and his wife, Dorothy.

Mr. Lewis retired, as I mentioned, from CFCY but, you know, the broadcasting bug runs deep and courses through his veins and he's back at work these days as a consultant for Newcap Radio. Certainly, it's great to see him keeping an active hand in this wonderful industry that serves Canadians so well.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Belfast-Pownal Bay.

**VERNON RIVER COMMUNITY SCHOOL**

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

On December 14, 1966, a group of 25 people met in the Vernon River Parish Hall to discuss starting a community school. Little did they know that they would create something that would last for 40 years and is still going

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strong.

As Islanders, we value strong communities where we are close to family and friends, where we can share our talents, and learn from each other.

Since this community school began 40 years ago, neighbours have participated in a large variety of programs at the community level where they learn with friends and neighbours from people they know and trust.

Islanders value the many traditions we have been able to hand down from one generation to the next and what better way could we find to preserve Island traditions than by creating widely accessible opportunities through a community school to learn music, crafts, home improvements, gardening, wellness and so many other activities?

For the past 40 years, the Vernon River Community School has been a tradition. The programs offered have been instrumental in bringing neighbours together to share skills and knowledge, companionship and a light lunch.

Many people who might normally be housebound during the fall and winter months attend a community school course which brings them a great deal of enjoyment.

In congratulate the many organizers, instructors, and students who have helped to make the Vernon River community School such a success over the last 40 years and I wish them continued success in the future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Kings Square.

**GRADUATED DRIVING LICENSES**

**Mr. R. Brown:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My speech is going to be about graduated licenses and the need for it in Prince Edward Island.

I just want to quote from this year's Mothers Against Drunk Driving Report. The minimum age of licensed drivers in Prince Edward Island is 15 ½. Prince Edward Island does not have a formal graduated license system. New drivers are subject to passenger's restrictions but there are no time of day or high speed roadway restrictions. There is no requirement that new drivers have a BAC of zero percent. New drivers must hold an instruction permit for a minimum of 180 days and are then newly licensed drivers for a further two years. Mr. Speaker, in this report, we are 10<sup>th</sup> in Canada. We have a D plus..

I'm up here today to see I notice the minister has been in the news saying that changes to the graduated licensed drivers are coming. Her quote is: Legislation that applies 20 years ago is not necessarily cutting it today.

Mr. Speaker, I want to inform this House we will be supporting changes to the graduated license driving act. We, in this side of the House, have tried several times to do it but we were accused of being anti-rural but I can assure this government and the members over here we will support this legislation because we are for the children of Prince Edward

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Island and the necessity of this act. The faster the minister can bring this in, we'll support it and we are not anti-rural PEI. We are for Island children.

Thank you very much.

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

**Speaker:** Questions by Members starting with Responses to Questions Taken as Notice.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**NOTICE OF ABSENCE OF HOUSE MEMBERS**

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

My first question today is more of a protocol question. I notice today that there's a couple of different members out of the House, the minister of health and the Minister of Community and Cultural Affairs. I'm wondering could I just ask the Premier if he could perhaps provide our office with advanced notice of perhaps any ministers' trips that might be taking place while the House is going to be in session for the week and plan around which ministers are going to be here and which aren't. Of course, we understand that some ministers might be called out due to sickness or something or an emergency or something along those lines and we will expect to be notified the day of. But I'm wondering: In advance, can you make sure that our House Leader, your House Leader lets our House Leader know in plenty of time in advance, Mr. Premier?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier Binns:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is my understanding that the Government House Leader has in fact informed the Opposition House Leader each and every day of who will be in the House. I think I understand the Leader of the Opposition is looking for perhaps notice if a minister is scheduled to be out at a ministers' meeting somewhere else in the country and we know that in advance. I think it's a good question. I'll take that - I won't just take it under consideration. We'll try and provide that information to the Opposition.

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

**BLACKJACK GAMING**

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

That's probably the best answer I've had in three years in this House. My next question is for the Premier.

And there is now talk that his government may introduce games like Blackjack into Prince Edward Island. Mr. Speaker, is this question under active review by your government, Mr. Premier?

**Speaker:** The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

**Mr. Murphy:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and than the Leader of the Opposition for the question.

Yes, we're having a look. I've asked ALC who's requested I guess earlier this year. They requested back in the spring of the year to move in this direction and during our

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conversation over the last month or so, I've asked them to prepare a business case that I could have a look at.

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

**ASSESSMENT OF GAMING ON PEI**

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

I'm going to try to keep asking the Premier and we'll see if he answers any of these questions but an assessment should have been done prior to the introduction of slot machines yet this government failed to do so. I'm wondering: Will the government conduct a full assessment prior to any moves to introduce any new games to the Province of Prince Edward Island?

**Speaker:** The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

**Mr. Murphy:** Mr. Speaker, ALC continually conducts assessment on an ongoing basis as does all the lottery corporations across Canada when they're looking at introducing new products. A broad spectrum of things are looked at when they're conducting their assessment so, yes, ALC would certainly have that information before - obviously, they would have it and it was one of the things that we talked about in the spring that that would be something that we would be interested in having that information provided to us before a final decision was made in this area.

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

**NEW GAMBLING FORMS IN PROVINCE**

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

The gambling report, which was hidden from the public view, makes it very clear and to quote from the report: Before introducing new forms of gambling in the province, it is recommended that the potential impact of the new forms of gambling and the overall health and well-being of the population be assessed. Mr. Speaker, when will this assessment be conducted as, hopefully, the minister has indicated that it will be? And I'm wondering: Will the assessment be tabled here in the Legislature?

**Speaker:** The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

**Mr. Murphy:** Well, a couple of things, Mr. Speaker. First of all, we reject the premise of the hon. Leader of the Opposition's question. The gambling report wasn't hidden from anybody. In fact, it was tabled as a public document for quite some time. Introducing a new form of gambling in the province, I would submit that there are card games being played on a number of establishments right across the province. I think we could all - when you're driving across the province, you see the signs of the Legions or other establishments, Texas Holdem tournaments and others so I don't necessarily agree that this is introducing a new form of gambling on Prince Edward Island.

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

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

And the Texas Holdem is probably not a new form of gambling but it is something that

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should be regulated here in the province. And just so the minister knows, to my knowledge, there is no legal blackjack taking place anywhere on Prince Edward Island.

My next question goes back to the minister and it says here: The impact assessment should attempt to gain an understanding of the relationship between the particular form of gambling being considered and problem gambling. Clearly, the report's author is cautioning against, cautioning our province against blindly moving into new areas. I'm wondering: Will the Premier please tell the House who is the driving force behind this? Is it himself? Is it the Provincial Treasurer or is it ALC?

**Speaker:** The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

**Mr. Murphy:** Well, Mr. Speaker, as I answered at an earlier response, Atlantic Lotto Corporation is given permission, I guess, on behalf of the province to conduct those operations in the province, whether it be at the racetrack or at the retail sector where scratch tickets are sold. So if you will, there's a relationship between ALC and the province where they conduct those activities in, not only here, but in Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, and New Brunswick as well. The The hon. Leader of the Opposition in his preface to the question is referring to the study and, you know, it's almost as if you're implying that there's an absence of information on this area; in fact, quite the opposite is true. There's a preponderance of information in this area. We've taken the position that and the research certainly indicates and supports this that gaming activity is best conducted when it's done in a destination, when it's done in an area where it's regulated and where supports

can be provided for those people who do not game responsibly. So that's the background from where we come at this.

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

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

And it was just last Friday that we heard these new revelations about new forms of gambling coming to the Province of Prince Edward Island. I'm wondering since the minister has indicated that he has been having discussions with ALC now for quite some time, I'm wondering if he can list off? I notice there was some comments wondering whether or not craps, roulette, all these other games were being introduced. Can the minister please list off the new games that are currently being considered?

**Mr. R. Brown:** Good question.

**Speaker:** The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

**Mr. Murphy:** My discussions with the Atlantic Lottery Corporation have centered around what they refer to as table games. I believe their interest is mainly in the area of Texas Holdem and we also talked about blackjack. Those were the two table games that we had talked about.

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

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

And obviously, Texas Holdem is something that's been across Prince Edward Island for quite awhile now in Legions and bars and I

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know blackjack would be a new game. Is there going to be a specific assessment done on these games before they will be introduced, a specific assessment?

**Speaker:** The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

**Mr. Murphy:** Well, I agree that Texas Holdem has been played for quite some time. The game is common in the province and with the exit surveys that were conducted with the patrons of the racetrack to see what type of table games or what type of other games they would like to have available there, certainly the overwhelming response to them was that they would like to see a table or tables for Texas Holdems because that's what they were used to playing in other establishments in the province and that's where the big drive and demand was so I think to say that we have a level of comfort with that. We were looking at other new products in the area of blackjack, et cetera. We would obviously want to look at the research and stuff that is being done in that area.

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

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

I'm wondering: Can the minister advise this House if he can please inform Islanders that blackjack, roulette, craps - I don't know what other games there are - baccarat will not be introduced here in Prince Edward Island so no new forms of gambling will be introduced?

**Speaker:** The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

**Mr. Murphy:** Well, my understanding is that roulette is not necessarily a table game. I

don't think it's classified as a table game. I'm not sure if baccarat but that hasn't been part of the conversation. The conversation we've had around introducing table games has centered around Texas Holdem mainly. The Atlantic Lottery Corporation has also inquired about the possibility of blackjack tables.

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

**AGRICULTURE REPRESENTATIVE  
NEEDED AT S'SIDE ACCESS CENTRE**

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

We'll come back to the minister at another point, hopefully, once he tables some of that information in the House.

But I've got a quick question now for the minister of agriculture and I've received some calls, especially people in the East Prince and West Prince area who are quite concerned, especially our farmers here on Prince Edward Island, that there used to be a representative of your department stationed at the access centre in Summerside. Currently, there is no agriculture position at that access centre now. Has the minister eliminated that position and when will someone be there to be put in place?

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

**Mr. Bagnall:** Thank you very much for that question.

No, the member is right. There is nobody there at the present time. We went through a hiring process through the public service just



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last week. Right now I'm waiting for a name or names to come forward from the public service to our department and as soon as that comes forward, there'll be a person put in position. So the hiring interviews have been done and we're just waiting for the names to come back from the public service to deal with that issue.

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

**NEW MONTAGUE HIGH SCHOOL**

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

And that's good to hear because as you well know, agriculture is our main industry here on Prince Edward Island and there should be a representative there in the Summerside area. I've got a question now for the minister of education.

When the Friends of Montague High School were upset by this minister of education's refusal to attend a public meeting in September of this year. They wanted to hear firsthand from the minister why the decision was made to renovate the existing Montague High School rather than move it to a new location. Why, Minister, why did you not have the courage to attend the public meeting and will you please offer an explanation?

**Leader of the Opposition:** Good question.

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education and Attorney General.

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

The request came in asking for the

information in relation to why the school was not going to be relocated to another location and I want the hon. member and the general public to know that I, along with a number of my colleagues, did attend a public meeting in Montague where we outlined the reasons and heard their concerns and then we issued a press release outlining the reasons. There were statements made in the newspaper about the reasons. I think the people who were involved were well aware and I know the Premier wrote a letter to the newspapers outlining the reasons again. So I indicated to them that that information had already been provided. We had already attended a public meeting and so the request, the information was re-sent but I didn't think there was any new information because the information had already been provided.

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

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

A clear sign of a tired, arrogant government is when they no longer want to meet with the public and I was at that first meeting with the minister of education with the Premier where they heard the passionate pleas from students, from parents, from teachers about the need to relocate a school and the things that they were looking for. And I think it only would have been courteous on the part of the minister and the Premier to go back into that community and explain why they decided not to move the high school like all those parents, teachers, and students wanted them to do instead of just sending out a press release or writing a letter to the editor. I think that the people of Prince Edward Island deserve more than that and I'm wondering: Why was the minister scared to go

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back to that community and explain her position?

**Mr. R. Brown:** Losing touch.

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education and Attorney General.

**Ms. Dover:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I think it's important for everybody to understand that it's this government who has had the courage over the years to face people who had problems with decisions that were made. No one can ever accuse our government of refusing to meet with people. In fact, when I was minister of health, I went to a meeting up west and people were actually surprised that the minister had appeared because that hadn't been the practice of the previous administration. But, Mr. Speaker, I do want it to be well understood that the information, that the reasons why the school was going to remain where it was were well known. They were well publicized. My staff met with people to explain what the reasons were. There was no question as to what the supporting evidence was in relation to the decision to keep the school where it was. The reasons were well outlined and well explained. I don't think there was anybody who should have been unaware of why the school was going to stay where it was and there were many reasons related to safety, relating to finance. We told the people who were concerned that we would take the issues back, we would look at it. We did that and, Mr. Speaker, as I say, the reasons were well outlined. They had to do with finances, safety, the existing facility and it's relation to the intermediate school. All those reasons were well outlined.

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

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

I guess now the answer will be they no longer have to attend public meetings if they believe that they've already explained it well enough without attending public meetings. It's really quite unfortunate but it's a clear indication of a government that's been in power for too long.

I've got a question for the Premier and I'll direct this question to the Premier because the minister's failure to address the issue surrounding the new Montague High School are quite unfortunate. Mr. Premier, for some time your government has been stating publicly that five options were considered for the location of the Montague High School. As recently as November 8<sup>th</sup>, you weighed in on this issue defending the government's choice. Mr. Premier, what were the five locations that were considered before the decision to renovate the existing structure?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education and Attorney General.

**Ms. Dover:** Mr. Speaker, I find it surprising that the hon. member would try to somehow paint this story as a bad news story. The thing is that this is a good news story. The government is spending \$14 million to build a new school and I know that the majority of the people in the area are very pleased that they're getting a new school. Fourteen million dollars is certainly not a sum to be sneezed at. This is a good news story and we made the decision to keep the school where it was for legitimate reasons and those have been well

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outlined. So I want to assure the people of Prince Edward Island that their tax dollars are being well spent in Montague, very carefully spent, \$14 million of them.

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

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

That's enough from the minister. We know how she feels on that but I'm wondering to the Premier. As recently as November 8<sup>th</sup>, you weighed in on this issue defending the government's choice. Mr. Premier, what were the five locations that were considered before the decision to renovate the school?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education and Attorney General.

**Mr. R. Brown:** No answers today.

**Ms. Dover:** Well, Mr. Speaker, there weren't five specific locations that were pointed out in any report such as the hon. member is suggesting. The thing is we looked at the justification to leave the school where it was. We looked at the justification there might be to move the school to another location. There were people who did contact us and say: Would you consider our property? So there wasn't a set number of locations that we were asked to look at. We did look at a number of different locations. At the end of the day, we felt that there was certainly justification to leave the school where it was. We talked about - the night of the meeting down there, there were points that were made. We looked at those. We considered those and at the end of the day, government had to make a decision and the decision was for a number of reasons

the school would stay where it was.

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

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

And I'll go back to the Premier again and the issue of where the new Montague School is located is an issue that touches not only the residents of Montague but in the many communities that this school serves. Parents have been overwhelmingly in favour of the new location of building a new school at a new location. Mr. Premier, will you table the report, the analysis that shows that your government's decision to renovate the existing school is in fact the best option for those students?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education and Attorney General.

**Ms. Dover:** Mr. Speaker, I think it's important to understand that not only were there discussions between the members of Cabinet but there were discussions within Cabinet itself. There were discussions with transportation and public works as to how costs would be derived at in relation to the building of the new school, the amount of money it would cost to relocate the school, the economic impact on Montague so there were a number of discussions. Did we write everything down into an official report? No, Mr. Speaker, we didn't but there certainly were different papers that came to Cabinet, which are confidential papers of course, but the justification for why the school was going to stay where it is were very well known. It had to do, as I say, it's co-location with the intermediate school and the use that the

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intermediate school makes of the current facility. It had to do with the economic impact on the town with the extra costs for busing if the school was moved to a new location so all of those became part of the discussions that took place and we did talk about it very seriously. It wasn't as though we just with a flick, wink of an eye or blink of an eyelid made a decision. There were justifiable reasons for it. The decision was made after a lot of discussion.

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

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

And you can tell when a government has been around too long when parents, students, and educators are all wrong but the government is right.

I've got a new question now for the Premier and your decision to renovate the existing Montague School raises a number of environmental concerns as well. Concerns have been raised about asbestos in the school. There were also concerns about possibility of lead paint in the support beams. I understand an environmental assessment of the renovations has been completed. I'm wondering: Will the Premier please table in this Legislature the results of the environmental assessment?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education and Attorney General.

**Ms. Dover:** Mr. Speaker, I think it's important that the public understand that this is not the first time that a school has been renovated on Prince Edward Island. There are

a number of different schools where Department of Transportation and Public Works officials because of their expertise are called in to assess the school. If asbestos or any other substances are found, there are safety controls in place where the workers work and under certain regulations. They're certainly aware not only of the need for safety for the staff and the students at this school but they're also, of course, their own personal safety is involved but these are people who are professionals. They're well trained in handling asbestos or any other (indistinct). Their intention is that the portion of the school that is going to be torn down will be done during the summertime but I think we have to credit the workers at the transportation and public works, the officials, with the knowledge. They've done it before. They're well trained. They're very concerned about safety and they'll certainly do, take whatever safety measures are needed in relation (indistinct).

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

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

My question for the Premier is direct. Will you table the environmental assessment that has been done?

**Mr. R. Brown:** Premier, Premier.

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education and Attorney General.

**Ms. Dover:** Mr. Speaker, the report that was done for transportation and public works is very technical. I understand that but the point is that these officials and these workers in

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transportation and public works are well trained with safety measures. They certainly have done this before and I think the assurance of the public servant, the workers in my colleague's department have to have - people have to have confidence in it and there's been no indication that these people would in any way, shape or form allow measures to be taken that were not safe for not only the staff and students but for themselves as well.

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

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

Very simple yes or no from the Premier - Will you table that assessment?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education and Attorney General.

**Ms. Dover:** Mr. Speaker, I have talked to members of transportation, public works and they assure me that the proper safety precautions are going to be followed. They're well aware of the environmental issues. Certainly, they know how to do this kind of work. They're well trained and I have every assurance in the staff of transportation and public works that they will follow whatever safety procedures have been recommended.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Winsloe-West Royalty.

**GRADUATED DRIVER LICENSING SYSTEM**

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

My question is for the Minister of Transportation and Public Works. In the recent Speech From the Throne, government announced its intentions to strengthen the graduated licensed program for young Island drivers. I'm wondering if the minister could expound a little bit on her commitment in this regard and, specifically, what areas does she anticipate will indeed be strengthened?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Transportation and Public Works.

**Ms. Shea:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the hon. member for that question.

I know that having served as chair of the standing committee that produced the report on impaired driving last spring that this issue is very important to the Member from Winsloe-West Royalty.

We do plan to strengthen our graduated drivers' licensing system and, first of all, we're going to start by actually naming it or renaming it from newly licensed driver to the Graduated Driver Licensing System.

Now there's just one thing that I want to say about the remarks of the Member from Charlottetown-Rochford Square when he read from the MADD report that said that PEI currently has no high speed highway restrictions and the reason for that is because we have no high speed highways.

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

**Speaker:** All right, hon. member.

**Ms. Shea:** That's what the report said but, you know, I just want to point out.

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**Speaker:** All right, hon. member.

**Ms. Shea:** Anyway, we are going to look at strengthening the Graduated Driver Licensing System in several areas and one will be in seatbelt usage, the use of personal communications devices while driving, time restrictions around when young drivers are allowed to operate a vehicle, and blood alcohol content. We know that all drivers, young drivers are faced with many demands for their attention and we're going to try to reduce driver distraction and help improve road safety by strengthening these regulations.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Winsloe-West Royalty.

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

I wonder if the minister could be a little more detailed when it comes to the driving time restrictions here. Could you give us a clearer indication of what particular part of the day young drivers may be restricted from being behind the wheel?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Transportation and Public Works.

**Ms. Shea:** As in many other jurisdictions, Mr. Speaker, I believe that our legislation will come to the House to be debated as restrictions between 1:00 a.m. and 5:00 a.m.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Alberton-Miminegash.

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

**Speaker:** Hon. member, you'll have your

chance at Question Period please.

**MONTROSE BRIDGE**

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

I'm asking the question to the minister of transportation regarding the number of people who travel highway 152 between Alberton and Tignish. We have a bridge there called the Montrose Bridge which has been under disrepair for a number of years and I'd like to know if the minister can inform this House and inform the residents of the Montrose area and those people who use that highway 152 if any repairs or replacements specifically will be done to the Montrose Bridge.

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Transportation and Public Works.

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

That's a very good question. We hope to set aside some of our capital budget for planning to replace the Montrose Bridge. The planning should take place in 2007. Hopefully, the bridge will get replaced in 2008 and I would like to say for the hon. Member from North River-Rice Point, who is probably home watching today, that we still have Dunedin on the list.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Alberton-Miminegash.

**Mr. Dunn:** Supplementary question, Mr. Speaker.

The minister understands, as well as all residents of that area, that there's quite a bit of risk when crossing the bridge. The approach

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to the bridge is quite treacherous and dangerous. I'm wondering: Will the minister consider re-engineering that approach so it would make it safe for all the traveling public?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Transportation and Public Works.

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

Safety, of course, is the first and foremost in the minds of our engineers when they design roads and bridges. I have talked to several farmers in that area who are quite concerned that the bridge was not wide enough to accommodate the wide farm machinery that we have now and the combination of turns and hills makes it very dangerous so we will do our very best to improve the safety on that bridge.

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

**VISITOR TAX REBATE PROGRAM**

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Crapaud-Hazel Grove.

**Ms. Bertram:** Mr. Speaker, today I would like to revisit some questions and responses from last week from the Minister of Tourism related to the changes to the federal *Excise Tax Act* related to the visitor tax rebate on the GST for foreign visitors to Canada. And I would just like at the onset of questioning just to clarify - does the Minister of Tourism support the GST program as it presently was before this presentation by the federal government to cut it? Do you support the program or are you supporting your federal friends in Ottawa by cutting this program?

**An Hon. Member:** Good question.

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Tourism.

**Mr. P. Brown:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

And I think what - was it the VST program or the GST program that -

**Mr. R. Brown:** G.

**Mr. P. Brown:** The GST program.

**Mr. R. Brown:** What is the VST?

**Mr. P. Brown:** The visitor rebate program but the GST program, as we all know, was decreased by the present Conservative government from 7% to 6% as part of their election promises, a promise they kept.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Crapaud-Hazel Grove.

**Ms. Bertram:** Mr. Speaker, the minister did not answer the question. I was contacted by members in the tourism industry concerned with the minister's statements from last week. He did not answer the question. Do you support the old GST rebate program and are you supporting it as the Minister of Tourism on Prince Edward Island, Mr. Minister?

**Leader of the Opposition:** Good question.

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Tourism.

**Mr. P. Brown:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

And as I informed the House last week, I was

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the first Minister of Tourism in the country to present this as a concern. I continue to raise it as a concern. I told the hon. member that last week and the tourism industry of Prince Edward Island is well aware of our concerns around it so my position on that is not new. It's been clear from the first.

This weekend the federal, provincial, and territorial ministers of tourism are meeting and this issue is going to be discussed and my position is clear.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Crapaud-Hazel Grove.

**Ms. Bertram:** What is his position, Mr. Speaker? He says he's concerned. Last week it was a complex issue. Yes or no. On December 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> when you meet with the other territorial and provincial ministers, will you be at the table saying PEI does not support this? Are you, yes or no, going to say that, Mr. Minister?

**Leader of the Opposition:** Good question.

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Tourism.

**Mr. P. Brown:** Mr. Speaker, I was asked this last week. I said I was concerned about this issue. For the hon. member to suggest that this is not a complex issue is not accurate; it indeed is. We have the position that this is a marketing tool. It is used by tourism, especially the convention and the tour operators to promote their activities. Now we have to discuss that. It was a federal initiative and we have to allow the federal government - we can't dictate their policy but we lobby for changes to benefit the industry.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Crapaud-Hazel Grove.

**Ms. Bertram:** We can't dictate policy. Tourism - important component to the Canadian economy here in our great country. I have the correspondence that TIAPEI wrote to Mr. Flaherty concerning this cut to the GST program and I would like to, first of all, ask the minister does he have correspondence with the minister responsible for this from your department or from you, Mr. Minister.

**Mr. R. Brown:** Good question.

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Tourism.

**Mr. P. Brown:** The correspondence that TAIPEI wrote was copied to me as well and we corresponded with the minister responsible as well as the other ministers across the country.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Crapaud-Hazel Grove.

**Ms. Bertram:** What's in it, Mr. Minister?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Tourism.

**Mr. R. Brown:** Words.

**Mr. P. Brown:** You were listening to the political panel last week. The, our position was with the minister that we were concerned that this would impact tourism travel, especially international travel in the country.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Crapaud-Hazel Grove.

**Ms. Bertram:** Well, Mr. Speaker, TAIPEI's



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letter that was written to the Minister Flaherty is completely against the decision to eliminate this program. And I guess I would like to go back to some of the other comments made by the minister last week in this Legislature where he talked about it being a very complex issue and relative to saying that there's only 3% of visitors taking into account this program and that we do not have to see the energy and the efforts spent on this particular initiative is where we should be directing our efforts. So Mr. Minister, do you feel that jobs in Summerside are directly impacted by the decision of the federal government to cut this program?

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Tourism.

**Mr. P. Brown:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Premier has already indicated and I have indicated and many have indicated that we are concerned about the service jobs at the GST Centre in Summerside and we have received assurances from the hon. Peter MacKay that there will be no job loss as a result of this decision. Now we can take the federal government on their commitments and the hon. minister has assured us of that. The issue is one that has to be researched and our position developed. It is true that only 3% of international visitors who would potentially have had the ability to access the Visitor Rebate Program exercise that right and so, therefore, we have to look into it and see what sectors does it specifically impact. We're aware that it impacts greatest the convention and the touring sector and so can there be accommodation accomplished relative to those sectors? Is that the best position for the

tourism industry to take? That's the position that's being developed at the present time.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Crapaud-Hazel Grove.

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

Meeting professionals can (indistinct). The 3% takeup rate may be misleading. When we make the plausible assumption that each claim is filed on behalf of a travel party rather than an individual, the percentage claimant rate is likely to increase so in fact using the 3% statistic is not correct. There are many others that are utilizing this - travel groups, packages, that all comes into account. So Mr. Minister, how can you justify 3% being your answer?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Tourism.

**Mr. P. Brown:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

And the hon. member confirms what I just said. I did say the sector that is most impacted by this is the convention and the touring group sector and we're working with - and I made comments to that regard in a conference call with the federal minister responsible for tourism last week that this is where this particular program impacts the greatest and we have to raise that. Where the impact is the greatest, that is where the greatest concern is and it's from that point from which we'll be lobbying.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Crapaud-Hazel Grove.

**Ms. Bertram:** Mr. Speaker, impact. Last

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week the minister stated 10% visitors being affected internationally. Well, Mr. Speaker, we have over 22% of visitors coming to our province here that are either U.S., international-based tourists. This is a very important program for them and I'm going to go back to the minister's statement where he called the member from Egmont grandstanding. He stated that he was grandstanding as part of this committee looking into this issue and my questioning was: Why didn't the minister here on Prince Edward Island for tourism go to the committee and present to the committee the case here on Prince Edward Island? So Mr. Minister, maybe if you went back to your department and consulted a little bit more - why didn't you go and present to this committee?

**Mr. R. Brown:** Good question.

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Tourism.

**Mr. P. Brown:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

It's funny that the hon. member would bring up that point. The member from Egmont reminded me of that statement the next day so, obviously, someone ran out and made sure that he was informed of my statement, which is quite interesting. But anyway, the committee hearing was a time when workers from Summerside along with the member from Egmont presented to the hearing. I am working through the federal Minister of Industry, Maxime Bernier, who is the minister responsible for tourism and also we've made our feelings well known to Minister MacKay as well as Minister Flaherty.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Crapaud-Hazel Grove.

**JOBS AT GST CENTRE**

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

Going back to this issue of grandstanding, Don Harding, who is the union president for the employees at the GST Centre went and presented. As well, the Mayor of Summerside went and presented to the committee so where was the Minister of Tourism from Prince Edward Island at these committee hearings, Mr. Minister?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Tourism.

**Mr. P. Brown:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

We are concerned about the jobs in Summerside. We've always been concerned about the jobs in Summerside. I might remind the hon. member that it was the federal Conservative government that built the GST Centre in Summerside.

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

**Mr. P. Brown:** It was the federal Conservative government that made sure that there was offset for the loss of the airforce base in Summerside. It was the federal Conservative government that insured the development of Slemmon Park and increased the jobs in the Summerside area by tenfold so there's been a lot done. There will be a lot continued to be done and we support the Summerside area. We support the jobs there and this is a very, very important part of the economy. That's why we talked to Minister

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MacKay, sought the assurances that there would be no job loss and received those assurances.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Crapaud-Hazel Grove.

**Ms. Bertram:** So now it's what's done outside, Mr. Speaker. Here we have a parliamentary committee looking at at this issue. It's an industry, very important industry in Canada and important on Prince Edward Island and let's just look at the name of the GST Centre up there. What's the name of it? But if you want to go into what Peter MacKay is doing and what not, well, why didn't you as minister of Prince Edward Island go and fight? So answer that question. Why didn't you present to the committee, Mr. Minister? Answer the question.

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Tourism.

**Mr. P. Brown:** Mr. Speaker, we sought and received assurances prior to those hearings that there wouldn't be job loss. That's what the minister responsible, the hon. Peter MacKay assured us and so why did we have to go when we already received that assurance? But there was maybe some value in the union presenting to the committee hearing and I'm not disputing that. But as the minister responsible for national revenue said, Mayor Basil Stewart went up and met with her and received the assurances while others didn't bother to darken her door but went to the committees and made claims that they couldn't substantiate. Like the fact they were saying there was a job loss of 120 people and there was 53 people involved in the program.

Where they came up with those numbers, I'm not sure.

**Speaker:** Final question. The hon. Member from Crapaud-Hazel Grove.

**Ms. Bertram:** Here is the minister attacking the union, the representative who took time to go up and present to the committee. Let's be under the understanding that what is said in the parliamentary committee is recorded. So if Peter MacKay wants to go and present to a parliamentary committee and say the jobs aren't lost here on PEI, it's recorded as public information. But if he says that outside the Legislature, outside Parliament, who's to say that's not going to happen? Are you going to fight on December 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> for PEI industry here, PEI, and say: No, we do not support this cut, we will not support this cut, Mr. Minister?

**Leader of the Opposition:** Good.

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Tourism.

**Mr. P. Brown:** Mr. Speaker, to correct the record - and it is terrible when people make claims that they can't support - I did not attack the union. I clearly said there may have been value for the union to go before the committee. I said that. If I'm not speaking loud enough, I don't think - I apologize for that. But I see the value in what the union did. I read the letter to the editor today from the union on this matter and we're working to ensure those jobs stay in Summerside and that the tax centre continues to benefit the economy of the Prince County area and all of Prince Edward Island.

**Speaker:** End of Question Period.