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TRANSCRIPT OF
STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS
AND THE
ORAL QUESTION PERIOD
FOR

Thursday 7 December 2006

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD 7 DECEMBER 2006 PRELIMINARY PROCEEDINGS

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Speaker: The hon. Member from Evangeline-Miscouche.

FUNDING FOR WELLINGTON DEVELOPMENTS

Mr. Arsenault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Le village de Wellington est en période de grande activité ces derniers temps, et ce n'est guère fini!

I was very pleased recently to join the Hon. Peter McKay, Minister for ACOA, as we announced the support of both the federal and provincial governments for two major developments that will definitely improve Wellington's reputation as the gateway to the Evangeline area.

Mr. Speaker, Barlow's Pond and Park has received funding for improvements that will establish the culturally significant site as a landmark. In addition, the commercial centre, La Place du Village is receiving a new look through extensive renovations and will be expanded by 2500 square feet to accommodate the Wellington Co-Op.

Such projects strengthen and renew our rural communities and keep them vibrant.

Je félicite le comité de l'étang et du parc Barlow ainsi que le conseil municipal de Wellington, qui ont tous les deux travaillé très fort pour mettre au point le concept et concrétiser le projet. Je félicite également le groupe de développement économique local, la Société de développement de la Baie acadienne, ainsi que l'Association de la

coopérative de Wellington, pour leur excellent travail en vue d'améliorer La Place du Village et le magasin Co-op de Wellington.

I congratulate the Barlow's Pond and Park committee and the municipal council of Wellington, both of who have worked so hard to develop the concept and make the project a reality. I also congratulate the community economic development group, la Société de Développement de la Baie Acadienne and the Wellington Co-op Association for their fine efforts to enhance the Place du Village and the Wellington Co-op Store.

Mr. Speaker, I extend a cordial invitation to you and to all Islanders to come and visit the Evangeline area. It is just one more example why Prince Edward Island is such a great place in which to live and work.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The hon. Member from Alberton-Miminegash.

9TH WORLD DOWN SYNDROME CONGRESS

Mr. Dunn: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

When it comes to competition, Janet Charchuk is no stranger. This 23-year-old has won numerous awards for both Special Olympics and public speaking events. As well, she has competed at the Canada Games in the swimming venue.

Recently, this young Montrose lady took on a

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different challenge. She was one of 44 individuals with Down Syndrome selected from across Canada to participate in the 9th World Down Syndrome Congress. Mr. Speaker, Canada was chosen as the host country and the congress was held in Vancouver, British Columbia.

Janet didn't travel alone. Her mother, Jackie, a special education consultant, also attended as a representative for the Western School Board.

Janet certainly had fun and as she put it: It was a lot of work getting ready to go but it was really enjoyable.

Janet's duties at the congress included greeting and directing delegates, introducing speakers, providing information, helping at the agency booths, and assisting with children's programs. It was a very busy schedule. At one point, Janet was to introduce a guest speaker and the bio information was missing. Not to be held back while others worried, Janet told them: I'll wing it. And wing it she did with great results.

After attending the conference, Janet's mother, Jackie, is amazed to see that we as Canadians and Islanders are leaps and bounds ahead of the rest of the world when it comes to people with special needs. Aren't we lucky to live in such a great country and a great province.

I congratulate Janet on her success and I'm sure we'll hear more from this amazing young lady in the years to come.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

**Y O U T H A D D I C T I O N
T R E A T M E N T (F U R T H E R)**

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

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

Yesterday we had a debate or a Question Period over youth addictions on Prince Edward Island and the minister says he's doing a strategy and he's working on it. I'll be tabling later a number of strategies from across this country and what should be done to help our children in need.

I'll also be tabling pieces of legislation from across the country that other provinces have implemented in order to help our children, especially when they're under youth addictions and drugs.

But yesterday, I was rudely interrupted a couple of times there when trying to make my point and I will - the Dunn report in Halifax, the final section of it I want to read it again for everyone, especially for the Premier. He's here today.

Unfortunately, it took a criminal conviction and a custodial sentence to reach him. (This is the young fellow that was on drugs and stole a car and killed a mother of three.) This should not be the only way that our society is able to reach a small group of troubled teens who are at risk of spiraling out of control. We should be able to reach and halt the spiral through prevention, through quick action, through creative thinking, through programs

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that address clearly identified needs and we should be able to stop behaviour like AB's (That's the young fellow who was involved.) once it's started through a more flexible and more responsive provisions in our youth criminal laws.

And he concludes, Mr. Speaker, by saying: Our children and our youth at risk deserve it. Their families deserve it. Our society deserves it. I urge the government to take action so AB's situation must not be repeated. And I urge this government to take action. We don't need a bunch of studies. We don't need a bunch of work.

The Dunn report, I recommend everybody read it. It's a great report done in Nova Scotia. It's applicable to here and I think we should be able to do something fairly fast in this society and it shouldn't have to be a political gift. It should be a government initiative.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

The hon. Minister of Education and Attorney General.

Ms. Dover: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yesterday, the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Kings Square asked how many people work at the PEI Youth Centre. The answer is 42.5 FTEs.

The second question was: How many incarceration days were there last year at this

facility?

And the answer for April 1, 2005 to April 1, 2006 - 2,262 bed days.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

ORAL QUESTIONS

GOLFING PARTNERS

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

And since we have the Premier back in the House today, I'm wondering if the Premier can remember now who his golfing partners were at the money-losing for the taxpayers Legends of Golf golf tournament. I'm wondering: Has the Premier recalled who he was golfing with on that unforgettable day?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Binns: Mr. Speaker, I indicated when I was here last that he had asked me whether the Chief of Staff had golfed on the team that I was on. I said I didn't recall whether he was or not. I didn't deny that he was golfing that day. Yes, he was on our team and I'll leave it at that.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

I might come back to that later but I'm glad to see that the Premier's memory is coming back and perhaps some of that amnesia of his is disappearing.

**SENIORS' ASSETS FOR
NURSING CARE(FURTHER)**

I've got a question now for the minister of health. And the other day I asked about the price that Island seniors have been paying for nursing home care over the last 10 years. I was not surprised when I did not get a real answer from this minister because they are often too few and far between, more spin than answers usually coming from over there. So hopefully, today we'll get some more detailed answers coming from this minister.

I'll ask the minister again. Will the minister explain why it took 10 years and \$100 million taken from Islanders and their families for this government to stop its unfair and damaging practice of forcing seniors to liquidate their assets that they earned over a lifetime?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health, Social Services and Seniors.

Mr. Gillan: I think I did allude to that question by responding when he was questioning on that area by indicating that, well, in a small province with limited resources and mostly derived from the taxes of our citizens is that we have to be very careful in expenditures and we have to be also, attempt to be able to utilize to our best advantages what those individuals who are able to pay for services do pay for services. It's not intended as a hardship to inflict upon those seniors who do have the financial needs to pay a portion of this. That is what they have been doing in the past. And other provinces did do the same and then over the years, they have moved to have a separation between the two programs and that will be the way in

which we will move as well.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Well, that was another interesting answer. I guess he was alluding to something and I found it interesting when he talked about being careful in expenditures. I guess he wasn't there when the Cabinet ran up the deficit to \$125 million and perhaps he missed the Cabinet meeting where \$14 million was loaned out secretly to Polar Foods six weeks before an election. But I'm wondering: Will the minister bring back to this House as soon as possible a full, annualized breakdown of the number of Island seniors who have been forced to liquidate hard-earned assets over the last 10 years?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health, Social Services and Seniors.

Mr. Gillan: Mr. Speaker, when asked a question like that, yes, we will probably be able to supply that over time and we would get to it when we are able to do that. But he indicates that we were charging seniors anywheres from \$8 - \$10 million a year but I also indicated, and I think it was last week, by replying that, however, the cost for keeping these individuals there would represent about a \$30 million annual dollar cost to the government. So over that 10 year period, you can see that there was a tremendous cost of over \$300 million to keep these seniors in there, to keep the manors open, to keep the nursing homes open to offer the programs and the good care that Prince Edward Island has come to know and expect. Mr. Speaker, all that you have to really do is to speak to the family members of those seniors that they are very, very happy with the services and the

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programs over the years. Even though it has been a substantial cost to the Island taxpayer, it is one that we have done willingly.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

And I'm glad to know, just so everybody can take this into their own minds and what the minister just said, he's glad that the government was able over the last 10 years to help pay some of these costs. I hate to tell you, Mr. Minister. That's the main role of government to provide health care and help out our seniors in this province.

Our question for you is how - can you provide an annualized breakdown of the number of Island seniors who have been forced to liquidate hard-earned assets over the last 10 years?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health, Social Services and Seniors.

Mr. Gillan: Mr. Speaker, it is the very same question and I have indicated that it is going to take some time because we have to be able to visit all of those statistics and I think the hon. Leader of the Opposition realizes now that instead of regional authorities, we are doing everything in the one office. And we will certainly provide that information when we are able to get there.

But don't forget that when we are talking about the taking care of the senior population and having to charge them a certain amount, depending upon their income, that for the 10 years preceding this government coming in, it

was the Liberal Government who indoctrinated that, had the very same set of rules, charged the seniors the very same, undoubtedly provided again a good service during those 10 years. So from one set of government books to the other set would be very, very similar.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

And you would think that if you were ready to finally change this outdated mechanism of taking away seniors' assets that you would have had a full analysis done of what happened over a long period of time. So I'm not sure why the minister is trying to dissuade us from finding out what these answers are. I'm wondering: Will the minister please bring back a full breakdown of the assets that seniors were forced to liquidate over the last 10 years?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health, Social Services and Seniors.

Mr. Gillan: Mr. Speaker, I'm not absolutely sure whether all of those assets have been enumerated. I don't know. It's a fact that I am not absolutely familiar with as to all of the assets of each individual senior would have been enumerated. I know the cost - we certainly would have those but as to whether or not we have a list of the assets, it's not known to me and I would have to check on that.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: I'll give this

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minister credit for something. I understand that all ministers at one point took a course in spin. I would say that this minister could now probably teach the teacher and he's received a PhD in spin by listening to these answers in the House today. He should know what the answers to these questions are considering the Auditor General has been looking into it. I'm sure his department must have been doing an analysis over the last number of years to be able to make the announcement that his government made.

But I've got another question now for the minister. I'm wondering: Will the minister please tell the House under the current system, how many hours a day of nursing care is devoted to each senior citizen in a long-term care facility?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health, Social Services and Seniors.

Mr. Gillan: Mr. Speaker, I think that that would depend and would vary on the needs of each individual. Some of them would be more extensive than others. Some of them would have physical and possibly mental limitations as to the type of services that they would need. I'm sure that that is enumerated and if the hon. member does not have that type of a breakdown and the services that are provided on a daily and a weekly basis, I would get that for him.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

VETERANS' ALLOWANCES FOR NURSING CARE

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you very much.

Well, at least he indicated he'd get something for us this time, Mr. Speaker, so he's making an improvement. But we've also received a large number of calls from seniors who are uncertain about how the government plans to go about covering the health care costs of nursing care after 10 years of having their assets and resources drained. Under regulations passed in November, 2005, the government chose to force veterans to use their war veteran's allowance to cover the cost of long-term care. Will your government finally drop this unfair requirement of penalizing veterans and forcing them to use their allowances to pay for long-term care?

Mr. R. Brown: Good question.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health, Social Services and Seniors.

Mr. Gillan: Well, Mr. Speaker, there's one aspect that I can deal with very quickly and that is that the act and the regulations that we will be introducing to support this separation of nursing or medical treatment care from accommodations is going to be a long list. We don't have all of the answers at this particular time. We, as well, are getting a lot of calls from seniors wondering about a particular situation and whether it will apply. We would have to take a look at each of those but we are working in the broadest sense and I think that we are moving fairly close to having a workable act accompanied by a set of directions through the regulations and as far as the veterans are concerned, that would be addressed as well.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you very

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much, Mr. Speaker.

Well, let's ask for what you're fighting for around the Cabinet table and what you're fighting for on behalf of our veterans. Do you believe that veterans' pensions should be used to pay for their long-term care?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health, Social Services and Seniors.

Mr. Gillan: Mr. Speaker, I know that each case is individual and there are instances of asset - income sharing, for instance, has been a recent advantage and advancement announcement this past October by the federal government that individuals now, two spouses can share income. I think that is an advantage. We take a look at all of the assets and whether one is more unfair than another, that is the type of thing that has prompted us to say that now it is the time for this government to be progressive and to move ahead and to be able to indicate to all of the seniors going into subsidized nursing long-term care is that there is now going to be a separation of the health care cost from the accommodations.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Unfortunately, we're hearing more spin than anything else. And I'm wondering, the same regulations passed by the current government in November of 2005 take away veterans' pensions from widows to cover the cost of long-term care. Will widows and widowers of veterans who are receiving benefits and pensions under the *Veterans Affairs Act* be forced to give up these benefits to cover the

costs of their nursing care?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health, Social Services and Seniors.

Mr. Gillan: Well, Mr. Speaker, again it is impossible for me to answer this now because not having had an opportunity to take this to the floor of the Legislature to be debated. This will be outlined in regulations. I know exactly what the Leader of the Opposition is indicating that this is one area that should not be touched but we are taking a look at it.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

I really wish that the minister would be more up to speed on this file because this is a very important issue and he's been working on this for awhile. You'd think he'd have some better answers than that so I'll move on now.

NEW GAMING AT RACINO

A question to the Premier and I'm wondering: Has the Premier done an economic impact assessment of bringing poker to the Racino?

Speaker: The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

Mr. Murphy: Yes, Mr. Speaker, there has been a business plan completed.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: I believe he said there is a business plan completed. I'm wondering will he table that business plan.

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Speaker: The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

Mr. Murphy: Yes, Mr. Speaker, that can be made available at the appropriate time. Part of the business plan has some numbers in it on procuring some startup costs for the operation of facilities. I can certainly provide that when that process is complete. I believe Atlantic Lotto had indicated that it will take 12 to 14 weeks to complete that process.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

A quick question to the minister. Are the tables already at the Racino for poker?

Speaker: The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

Mr. Murphy: No, not to my knowledge.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Another question, this time back to the Premier. I'm wondering: Can the Premier please tell us when did ALC request to introduce poker to the Racino?

Speaker: The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

Mr. Murphy: Mr. Speaker, ALC made the request I believe in the spring of 2006.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you very much.

Another question for the Premier. I'm wondering: Can the Premier please tell the House and Islanders when did he decide to allow poker to be played at the Racino?

Speaker: The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

Mr. Murphy: Mr. Speaker, we had some discussions with ALC in the spring of the year. We told them that we would want to have some more information that we could consider before we proceeded to make that decision by information such as surveys of people to see if they were interested in playing at the facility so they conducted some surveys. They did some focus groups and determined that the request that was there for, in this case, the Texas Holdem and then we had asked them to prepare a business plan what the startup costs would be from the project and what they expected to make on an annual basis. So when that information was provided, we had a look at the business case and made a determination to proceed.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you very much.

Another question for the Premier. Can the Premier please tell us whether or not ALC has requested Blackjack, craps, or any other casino games?

Speaker: The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

Mr. Murphy: No, they haven't, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you very

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much.

Can the Premier please tell us whether or not ALC has had discussions on whether or not to bring in any of those other games?

Speaker: The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

Mr. Murphy: No, they haven't, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you very much.

Another question for the Premier. Can the Premier please tell us if the ALC did request Blackjack or roulette or any other games, would your government allow it?

Speaker: The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

Mr. Murphy: I think that the province has been pretty clear. We're not interested in expanding this operation to a casino.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

And that was really the answer that concerns me because I remember originally they said they were just bringing in VLTs and the VLTs moved to slots and then slots now and additional card tables came in so how can we believe the minister that no other games are going to be coming to this casino? I'm wondering: Can we have the minister show us something in writing that he sent to ALC saying no more games will be allowed and please do not make any requests for it?

Mr. R. Brown: Good question.

Speaker: The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

Mr. Murphy: Well, Mr. Speaker, the four Atlantic Provinces have asked ALC to manage the business on their behalf so I'm certainly not going to tell Atlantic Lotto to stop doing that. Part of their market analysis is that on the Texas Holdem is simply they have been requested by a large number of individuals to place some tables at the driving park to allow people to participate in that game. It's widely held that people are playing Texas Holdem in a lot of venues across the province so this is responding to a request from the consumers. That's what they're doing. They're providing that space at the games. It's not our intention and I can state unequivocally on behalf of the government, we have no interest now or in the future of moving this here to a place that would have wheels and other types of things that would constitute a full-blown casino.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

REDUCTION OF VLT MACHINES

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

I've heard that to bring in these Texas Holdem tables that some of the slot machines are going to be taken out or VLTs taken out of the Racino. Will you please indicate whether or not you'll take that off of the ceiling on the number of VLTs in the province?

Speaker: The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

Mr. Murphy: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's a good

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question. Physical space limitations will demand that some of those machines will be removed, I think somewhere in the vicinity of 15 to 20 machines. In keeping with the policy that we've established that as machines are taken out of circulation, they do not go back into circulation. I think since the Racino has opened in August, 2005, there's been 33 machines retired, if you will, from other establishments across the province and any machines that come out of the Racino as a result of creating space for the tables to go in will also be retired.

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

CONTRACT MANAGEMENT SERVICES CONTRACT

Ms. Bertram: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

A question for the minister of health. In what year did the health department become a member of Contract Management Services Limited, Mr. Minister?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health, Social Services and Seniors.

Mr. Gillan: Mr. Speaker, I believe the latest contract - I'm not sure whether this was the first one or not - was 2004.

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

Ms. Bertram: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Last week I questioned the minister in regards to the chemical and cleaning supplies contract and the minister misled the public in stating

that this was an open process, and I quote, that this call for supplies has gone out. It was an open tendering process. Now, Mr. Speaker, this was not an open tendering process. The companies on Prince Edward Island that did have these contracts were never notified that CMS Limited was taking over this part of health supplies. Can the minister respond to this?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health, Social Services and Seniors.

Mr. Gillan: Mr. Speaker, as I understand the CMS contract, it is a tendered contract; however, it is done by the proliferation or it's somewhat of a collaborative or a cooperative effort. It's done by the CMS and it is a tendering. They do tender all of the contracts and then the hospitals, the manors, in other words, the groups, the shareholders that are part of it can decide whether they want to be part of that tender or not. And from that point of view, I was replying that, yes, it is not a private company from the point of view that they do not tender. The other part of that response was that as I understand it, we did not have in most instances with our local suppliers tenders. And we still abide by the process that quite a bit of the material that we do buy locally here is at the list price and we do make considerable purchases with the locals here without those tenders.

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

Ms. Bertram: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Companies contacted me following the minister's statements in this Legislature last week following this line of questioning and

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they are very concerned because this is a significant amount of money for these local companies and they are not looking for preferential treatment. They are looking for fair treatment in all of this. And I would like to ask for more clarification to this because this is a larger issue and because we need to make sure things are open and transparent on Prince Edward Island. I would like to know if you're saying that CMS Limited put it out in terms of bids. When did that take place, Mr. Minister?

Mr. R. Brown: Good question.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health, Social Services and Seniors.

Mr. Gillan: Well, Mr. Speaker, I understand that CMS has been around for quite some time since 1994 but I indicated that we did become a full-fledged partner or shareholder in 2004. But going back since its inception back in 1994 - and that would have been under the previous government as the questioner is well understanding of that fact - CMSL has helped save in excess of \$30 million on supplies and services. That is the buying power that is given to its shareholders to the co-op members by belonging to this. So that has gone back to its inception in 1994 and as I've already indicated a couple of times, the new program in 2004 allotted us a full membership for shareholder rights.

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

Ms. Bertram: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Let's just get some clarification here. The minister is using \$30 million in savings.

Where's the \$30 million saving? What province is he talking about? Is it nationwide? Can you please refer to that, Mr. Minister, in your response?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health, Social Services and Seniors.

Mr. Gillan: Mr. Speaker, CMSL itself is, the shareholders are from both New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island. There are 21 hospitals and 49 manors in New Brunswick and joining them here from Prince Edward Island would be our own seven hospitals and our manors and not all of the manors and there are some other facilities as well so it's New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island.

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

Ms. Bertram: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Nova Scotia is not part of this and it is a private company and it is owned, partly owned by the Province of Prince Edward Island. So in fact, we're working against private business here in Prince Edward Island or any business that's part of the Maritime agreement.

Now it is interesting to note that these companies that lost business here on Prince Edward Island have been taking away business. Wood Wyant now is a vendor through CMS and is now getting this contract. Is this not true, Mr. Minister?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health, Social Services and Seniors.

Mr. Gillan: Well, Mr. Speaker, I certainly do

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not agree with the questioning that indicates that we are taking the business away from the present Prince Edward Island vendors, the companies, and there are not very many of them. But the ones that are here, we still do purchasing from them. We do not ask CMSL to provide all of the services. There is still a certain amount of the services which we do shop for and receive the products locally and what we are talking about is cleaning our janitorial supplies Island-wide but when we do enter into contract with the contract management services nationally or ourselves and New Brunswick, we are able to get many more products, medical supply products as well as janitorial.

Mr. Speaker, normally on a regular year, we are able to save in purchasing through this company in the vicinity of \$50,000 by going through that. And if you wanted to think of how could the health care system in Prince Edward Island use \$50,000, that would be the price of a nurse so it is dollars well spent.

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

Ms. Bertram: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's interesting that the minister states \$50,000 in kickbacks as being a member of this co-operative. Well, it's interesting to note that while these private businesses here on Prince Edward Island are providing employment to Islanders and how much is that generating into the economy of Prince Edward Island?

So my question is this. This is not just - it's mattresses, drapes, disinfectants, mops, chemicals, floor finishes, carts. The list goes on. Now up to, I believe it was this summer

these businesses on Prince Edward Island had this. It was an open tendering process. Any maritime businesses could bid on this. Now why weren't they even approached, Mr. Minister, to even give them to tender on the process to see if they could meet the price of CMS?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health, Social Services and Seniors.

Mr. Gillan: Mr. Speaker, I am told that in order to be part of the shareholder bids, it is an open organization. There is a website. There is a process whereby all vendors - and this is the important part - all vendors have equal access of doing business with this CSML and that is the important aspect is that Island bidders, companies if they wish, can go on line and put their prices in. I'm not sure whether or not they do. I would hope that they would because, again, CMSL has great buying power. And as I have indicated already, not only do we buy exclusively from that company but we also still continue to buy from our own distributors here on Prince Edward Island, our own companies, and we do have a written agreement with CMSL that in the case where we do not want to go with the lowest tender of CMSL, we are still permitted to purchase locally and we do so.

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

Ms. Bertram: Mr. Speaker, I have from the website that the minister refers to of CMSL, their supplier agreements. And within that it says that the primary vendor states that it expects to enjoy 85% of the market share of being a member of purchases through this. So that means Wood Wyant who has now taken

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over the contract of all supplying these products to Island health facilities is now going to enjoy 85% of the market share here in Prince Edward Island because of this agreement. Now my question to you: Why wouldn't you have even put it through the public tendering process here in Prince Edward Island? These companies go and check out the public tendering here on Prince Edward Island? Why wouldn't you even put it out that way first so that in terms of being fair and transparent that these companies would have had at least due process, Mr. Minister?

Leader of the Opposition: Good question.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health, Social Services and Seniors.

Mr. Gillan: Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member opposite is losing sight of exactly what is expected of the government and what is expected of the department of health in procurement. We have to be able to get the very best price that is possible for our taxpayers. These are taxpayers' dollars that we are using and it became obvious back in 2004 when we took at again of procurement and being able to get services and chemicals and janitorial and medical from both in the province and out, that it would be expected by our population to be able to do good business, in other words, get the very best price possible. To that effect, this is what we are now doing and by belonging to CMSL, we are now getting by belonging to this group buying power four to five times greater than if we did it by ourselves as we have done in the past. So this, we are saving dollars for Islanders. The money goes right back into the health care services and we are able to use that very wisely here.

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

TUNICATE PROBLEMS ON MUSSELS

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question is for the minister of fisheries. I've been getting some calls from workers at mussel plants concerned about tunicate. Could you explain what it is and what it does?

Mr. R. Brown: Oh, come on. He'd have to be a genius.

Leader of the Opposition: He can't know that.

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

Mr. Bagnall: Well, Mr. Minister, the tunicate is an invasive species that's getting into the shellfish industry here on Prince Edward Island.

Leader of the Opposition: Where does it come from?

Mr. Bagnall: It is an organism that comes into the water. It attaches itself to dark and hard covered surfaces and continues to grow and what it does, it feeds on the mussels and shellfish. All are fighting for the same food and it attaches itself to - well, what really is bothering us is to the shellfish like the mussels. And what's happening is it attaches right to the mussel lines and it cuts down the feed that is actually going to the mussels because of being in abundance on the mussel lines.

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An Hon. Member: Good answer.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. MacDonald: Supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

And what has the industry and your department done about it and what are the prospects of getting rid of tunicate?

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

Mr. Bagnall: Right now we have a study that's being taking place right now that's working on this issue but we also actually have our members from our department on the water about three times a week right now monitoring this issue. And we've been working at more, different ways in trying to solve the issue. We've sprayed lines and tried dealing with that issue. Right now we've funded a project with (indistinct) to build a sprayer with high pressure nozzles on it that would take the mussels off of the lines, which seems to be working right at the present time, not 100% but it's getting better. And we've also started a process of dropping some lines unto the bottom of the base on the bottom. And what's happening there is that it seems to that the tunicate that's on the bottom will die off and if we leave it there for seven days and bring the line back up, what we're finding is that it's clearing off the lines and that it's allowing the growth of the mussels to start again. So that has been working really well except that we are having some mortality on the mussels themselves. There's about a 20%

mortality rate that's taking place but it's a lot better than losing your whole operation so we have been making some progress that way. We're also experimenting right now in that issue. We're doing two days. We're doing four days and seven days of the lines on the bottom and seeing if which will work to keep the mortality rate of the mussels at the highest rate possible.

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

Ms. Bertram: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Just to go back to the minister of health. He states that they go through Contract Management Services to get the price, to get the best price. Now I'm not a business person but I do know if you're looking for prices, you probably check around. If you're buying whatever goods you're trying to buy, you're checking around. So I'm wondering how the minister can make a statement like that when in fact they never checked with the local suppliers here if they could match the price of CMSL. Answer that, Mr. Minister.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health, Social Services and Seniors.

Mr. Gillan: Mr. Speaker, I would imagine that our purchasers would have been very aware of the prices that they would have to pay. As I have indicated, they did not overly, hastily, or quickly or without study form or want to become part of this buying group from New Brunswick. And even becoming a full shareholder, we still retain the rights to buy locally whenever we want to. And it is interesting that the local suppliers still do give to or sell to or make available to the

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department of health the janitorial supplies that no one in their business would be overly affected than any more than 10% - 15%. In other words, by becoming a shareholder and purchasing nationally as well as opposed to just provincially, up to 15% of their business here may be affected but as indicated in the past here with my past responses is that I would expect that Prince Edward Islanders would want us to be able to get the very best deal and to save as many dollars as we can and yet still give a certain amount of business. So 85%, as I am told, is still given to local companies.

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

Ms. Bertram: Mr. Speaker, the minister just doesn't get it. Wood Wyant, who is out of Quebec, okay. It's not even a maritime-atlantic regional company and here we are on Prince Edward Island trying to support - and again, these folks are looking for fairness. I've met with them and they're going to be interested to see what the minister's statement has been today, very disappointed saying that 10%, 15% isn't going to affect their levels in business. That is significant and I believe it's probably even more than that because they came to us stating that this is very important for their business. So Mr. Minister, what is your message to our local companies here on Prince Edward Island? Why didn't you contact them in the first when you changed to go through CMSL? Please answer that question.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health, Social Services and Seniors.

Mr. Gillan: Mr. Speaker, I'm glad that the

Member from Crapaud-Hazel Grove has indicated that Wood Wyant is one of the big janitorial suppliers of these products and, yes, she is correct in assuming that it is huge. There is a contract there last year. We would have purchased janitorial supplies in roughly \$240,000, which is considerable. But again, you must remember that we are purchasing not only janitorial supplies but medical supplies and others that are needed in all of the health care. And normally, our annual sales here on Prince Edward Island are between \$2 and \$2.5 million. So there is a bigger purchasing power at work here. It is not only the 240 on janitorial supplies that we spend but these pharmaceuticals and/or medical, housekeeping, laundry. When I mentioned medical, it is for such things as sutures, low grade alcohol, food supplements, all of those other medical supplies so this is the type of venture through the atlantic procurement that we are able to serve Islanders.

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

**L E V Y O N R O O M
ACCOMMODATIONS(FURTHER)**

Ms. Bertram: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Just to - I'm going to go to another minister. But let's look at the slogan for Wood Wyant: 'Sanitation for the Nation'. Medical supplies come from Wood Wyant. Anyway, the minister is skating over the issue and I would hope that he would have more clarification to this and offer maybe more clarification for the local companies.

But anyway, my next question is for the

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Minister of Tourism. In regards to the room levy that's going to be taking place, I'm going to ask you Mr. Minister: Did you question in the exit survey this past year, our tourists who came to Prince Edward Island whether they agreed with the 2% room tax?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Tourism.

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

As part of the Tourism Advisory Council strategy, we didn't do an exit survey this year. We're going to do one in 2007 but, no, in answer to the hon. member's question, we didn't ask that question but there was a lot of research done into the whole area around the tourism levy. The tourism Charlottetown came forward with their research done and made this request.

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

Ms. Bertram: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So what research has taken place, Mr. Minister, and from what areas have those researches taken place?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Tourism.

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

In response to questions earlier in the week, I told the hon. member that more than 37 communities in Canada have this room levy in place and so there is a good body of evidence showing its impact on the market and its impact on competitive pricing of those communities. A consultant was hired to look into this to develop a strategy around the

possibility around a tourism levy.

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

Ms. Bertram: Mr. Speaker, I just think it's just awful that we're considering this 2% levy on room accommodation here on Prince Edward Island. We should be trying to promote tourism as much as possible here on Prince Edward Island but I'd like to go back to the Minister of Tourism. What survey or questionnaire has been sent out to general membership of the tourism industry in regards to this? No, there wasn't an exit survey as you stated. What kind of survey or questionnaire was given out to entire tourist operators across Prince Edward Island? Can you answer that please, Mr. Minister?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Tourism.

Mr. P. Brown: Mr. Speaker, I want to emphasize that this request for a tourism marketing levy came from the tourism industry in Charlottetown. What the provincial government is doing is enacting, enabling legislation for municipalities to enact by-laws that allow for the collection of a tourism marketing levy on behalf of tourism operators within their jurisdictions. The definitions of the marketing levy, the percentages, the amount to be collected and how it's to be distributed is going to have to be developed between the municipalities in which it's collected and then also in consultation with the tourism organization from that area.

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

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Ms. Bertram: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like some clarifications from the minister. Within the new bill, there is a section that applies to your bill that you represent in regards to the definition of a tourist establishment. Mr. Minister, what is a tourist establishment and according to this, those are the accommodations that will be taxed according to this. So can you please define what a tourist establishment is?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Tourism. The hon. Minister of Community and Cultural Affairs.

Mr. MacFadyen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The bill that's on the floor has not been debated yet. That bill is a bill from our department and I will be addressing the issues that's in the bill once the bill is called.

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

Ms. Bertram: Well, it's clear the Minister of Tourism didn't know the answer to that question. You know what, Mr. Speaker?

Some Hon. Members: (indistinct)

Speaker: Hon. members.

Ms. Bertram: Tourist establishment is part of his bill of his department, the act, the *Tourism Industry Act* which defines it's a cottage, it's a camp cabin, it's a motel, hotel, bed and breakfast, inn, you name it. Those are all the accommodations according to this act or bill that they're bringing forward that could be possibly 2% tax, Mr. Minister.

Speaker: Question, hon. member.

Ms. Bertram: My final question to the Minister of Tourism. Under his act, the *Tourism Industry Act*, why is he passing it off to the minister, Department of Community and Cultural Affairs, municipalities, when section 2.1 of his act, the *Tourism Industry Act*, you could have actually put it under your act. So I would like to see why you're skating over this issue, Mr. Minister. Please answer the question.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Community and Cultural Affairs.

Mr. MacFadyen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The bill that the hon. member is referring to is the bill that is the responsibility of community and cultural affairs and we'll be addressing it when it is on the floor.

Speaker: End of Question Period.