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OF
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STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS AND ORAL QUESTION PERIOD
(PRELIMINARY PROCEEDINGS)

FOR

Wednesday 17 October 2007

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Speaker: The hon. Member from West Royalty-Springvale.

APPRECIATION TO THE RCMP

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

It is with a great deal of pleasure that I rise in this Legislature to honour a very special group of Islanders, a very special group of our friends and neighbours, the members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

Recently, I had the distinct honour to represent the Government of Prince Edward Island and to address those dedicated men and women of all police forces that attended the memorial service at Hillcrest United Church in Montague.

As a former member of this distinguished group of peace officers and one who lost a troop mate in the line of duty, I feel it is my responsibility to honour these brave men and women, a personal duty.

Madam Speaker, all of us here in this Legislative chamber will remember just a few short weeks ago the latest fatality that was reported out of Hay River, Alberta. A young, uniformed member of the RCMP was gunned down by a fugitive, just the latest of those who have lost their lives for those of us who stay in our homes and feel safe and secure from the dangers that surround us.

When we arise in the morning, the RCMP and our municipal police forces have already been on duty all night. When we go to sleep at night, we can do so knowing full well that

we will be safe from the dangers that are out there.

Madam Speaker, 2007 celebrates the 75th anniversary of the presence of the greatest police force in the world here on our island. I celebrate that milestone and on behalf of my colleagues, I would like to offer sincere appreciation to those men and women of the RCMP and to recognize the dedication and commitment of their families.

Prince Edward Island is proud of each and every one of them.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Tyne Valley-Linkletter.

ASSISTANCE TO SENIORS

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

This afternoon I'd like to address a special segment of our population on PEI, the seniors. The Government of Prince Edward Island has made a promise to all residents of this province: a promise to secure a better quality of life for all. One key area of attention in delivering on this agenda as far as my colleagues and I are concerned will be serving a unique portion of our population, our seniors.

The key word in deliver of this initiative will be dignity: dignity in assisting our seniors with quality health care, dignity in providing long-term care needs, and dignity in response

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to a unique set of demands from our senior population.

Our Island seniors have an increasing need for our assistance.

One of the first realizations of this new government was to recognize what has been done for us by our seniors, to put into place a priority system of dealing with their unique and complex requirements, and celebrating their accomplishments on behalf of Prince Edward Island and all of Canada.

While timing is all important in dealing with our aging population, I feel we can adapt existing programs for seniors, improve essential services for seniors, and provide the support necessary for staff to meet these diverse and increasingly exclusive needs of seniors.

Madam Speaker, the Government of Prince Edward Island is confident that within the framework of any seniors' programs or initiatives, we will pursue excellence and innovation in this development and in its delivery to those special people who need it most.

Our government is enthusiastic about this concern and with any successful launch of any initiative, this government will achieve results which will be meaningful for all Prince Edward Island seniors and their families.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-

Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I rise to inform the House that later this afternoon under Tabling of Documents, I will table a copy of a petition signed by Montague residents. This petition is another attempt by parents in Montague to let this government know that they want the new school built on the same property where the existing school is located.

Let me give you a bit of background on this petition, Madam Speaker. This is the brainchild of Billy Cann, who ran for the Liberals in the last election in the District of Montague-Kilmuir. In two days, he collected over 600 names from residents in Montague area. Now, Madam Speaker, I ask: why is this government refusing to listen to the people of Montague? Is it because building the school on the current site was first proposed by the Pat Binns' government? Surely to goodness, such a petty reason wouldn't really come into play. After all, this government has taken an oath to serve the residents of this province and one would have to think that this means actually listening to the residents.

Parents and children attending the Montague school would much rather see the extra \$8 million that this government's proposed plan would cost spent on real resources for teachers and students. How about spending some of that money on implementing the free, province-wide breakfast program for Island schools promised by your government?

I am sure that Islanders would much rather

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see this extra money spent on keeping another Liberal election promise to eliminate all user fees charged to families for curriculum-based equipment and supplies.

So instead of having construction start this past July, this government continues to resist the pleas of Montague parents to have the school built on the existing site. They will finally heed the voices of these petitioners, I hope.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you.

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

The hon. Minister of Development and
Technology.

LABOUR STATISTICS

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

Yesterday, the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters asked the labour statistics. I have them here today. I'll be tabling them during the Tabling of Documents.

Speaker: Thank you. The hon. Minister of Agriculture.

Mr. LeClair: Madam Speaker, yesterday I was asked to bring back some information to the questions by the hon. Opposition House Leader.

Due to the sensitivities of the industry on the issue of potato wart, I will be tabling these answers at Tabling of Documents.

Speaker: Thank you. The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

ORAL QUESTIONS

GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS AND MINISTERS

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

My first question today is actually for the Premier. Would you please list for me the names of all your government departments?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

We actually have 10 departments. You can see the ministers here. We have health and social services, provincial treasury, development and technology, community and cultural affairs and labour. We have education and attorney general, also responsible for IRAC - I'd like to point that out - Minister of Agriculture, Minister of Environment, Energy and Forestry, Minister of Tourism, and Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

Leader of the Opposition: Excuse -

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct) public works (Indistinct).

Speaker: Thank you.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you.

My next question for the Premier: would you

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please list for me the role and duties of your senior deputy ministers?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Our senior deputy ministers are there responsible for the administration of the departments.

Speaker: Thank you. The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you.

My next question is for the Premier. Could you explain for me the role and duty of your assistant deputy ministers?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Assistant deputy ministers are also there to help with the administration of the departments. There's been assistant deputy ministers for a long, long time here in the government and they help administer the departments.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: My next question is for the Premier. Are the following senior government, mostly former deputy ministers, still employed: Dave Riley, Steve MacLean, Ron MacMillan, Jim Ferguson, just to mention a few?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: Yes.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you.

This question is for the Premier. In May of 2007, there was one deputy minister for the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Aquaculture. Is that correct?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: I believe so.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: The next question is for the Premier. Today is there one deputy minister for the Department of Agriculture?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: Yes, I believe so, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: The next question for the Premier is: is there actually also one assistant deputy for the Department of Agriculture?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: Yes, I believe so, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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Leader of the Opposition: Thank you.

My next question is for the Premier as well. Today there's a new Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture. Is there one new deputy for the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: Yes, there is Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you.

The next question is for the Premier. In May of 2007, there was a department known as the Department of Community and Cultural Affairs. Today it's known as the Department of Communities, Cultural Affairs and Labour. Is there a new deputy for that department?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: Yes, there is a deputy for that department.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you.

That's really interesting to see and I also see the former deputy who is still employed doing special project work out of Executive Council is still working on files from the department. Is that true?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

That deputy minister is now in charge of infrastructure for the province. We're in the midst of doing numerous negotiations with the federal government on labour market and development and on infrastructure and that's what that former deputy minister is now working on.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

BIOSCIENCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you.

My next question is for the Premier's office. One department you did not mention but you also have dollars for in the Budget is that there's a deputy minister in the department of bioscience and economic innovation. Is that correct?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: Thank you.

That's an office of bioscience and economic development.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: The question is for the Premier. Is that position, the person that's working in that role a deputy minister?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: Yes, they are and we were very fortunate to be able to recruit over from

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the NRC, the National Research Council, Dr. Michael Mayne, who happens to be the person who was responsible for setting up the NRC here in Prince Edward Island and their first director at the NRC. We view, Madam Speaker, that there's a lot of growth potential, especially in the areas of bioscience, IT, aerospace. We wanted to have someone dedicated solely to that file. We believe that especially here on Prince Edward Island where we happen to be quite unique where our largest industries still happen to be agriculture and fisheries.

And I think if you look across the country, we're not fortunate like some of our other provinces that could have uranium or could have oil and gas. What we have here is still unique with agriculture and fisheries being our largest industries and we believe that we have to try and find ways to value-add to those industries to grow on them and I believe that bioscience is one of those areas where we can do a lot of that. And we're very fortunate in government on Prince Edward Island to be able to attract over someone with the reputation and with the experience of Dr. Michael Mayne.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I absolutely agree with you. Dr. Michael Mayne is a great contribution and is a great person to have employed.

The next question is for the Premier. In health and social services and seniors in May of 2007, there were two deputy ministers; one for health and one for social services and

seniors. Do you still have a deputy minister for health and one for social services and seniors?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: Yes, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you.

Still to the Premier. Before your deputy of health went off on sick leave, the former deputy of health was still employed on special projects, was he not?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: Yes, he was, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

EMPLOYEES OF GOVERNMENT

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you.

The next question is for the Premier again. Are the following people working for government and are their salaries coming out of government dollar spending: Ian Tex MacDonald, Chris LeClair, Geoff Townsend, Suzanne Copan, Matt McGuire, Alan Rankin, Danny Walker, Valerie Acorn, Vernon Doyle, Roger Duffy, Ivan Gallant, Fraser Inman, Kim Munro, Grant Palmer, and Nora Young?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: Yes, I believe so, Madam

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Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you.

My next question was going to be to the Minister of Finance but I wanted to just remind people that there seems to be \$1.5 million out of the QEH Hospital fund for salaries and I think it may be decisions that this government's making on where the money is going. My question for the Minister of Finance is: apparently, this morning, minister, and in other media interviews you've made a statement that you intend to run government as a business. My question to you is: from your experience in private sector, how many senior executives would you employ if you were actually running government like a business?

Speaker: The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

Mr. Sheridan: Madam Speaker, thank you very much. Thank you very much for the question, hon. Opposition Leader.

It's quite a question to answer in one little piece. I guess we'd have to look at what size of a company that we were trying to run and that would probably dictate to me how many executives we would need.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

First of all, I'd like to congratulate the Minister of Agriculture for bringing the information back today back to the House in

a speedy manner and I thank you for that.

I guess my next question also is to the Minister of Agriculture. Can the minister tell me: do you support the primary industries on Prince Edward Island?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture.

Mr. LeClair: Certainly, I support the primary industries, hon. member.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: That's great, refreshing.

To the Minister of Agriculture again, do you support the beef industry on Prince Edward Island?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture.

Mr. LeClair: Madam Speaker, yes.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: Thank you once again for the speedy answer.

Madam Speaker, this is to the Minister of Agriculture again. Do you support the hog industry on Prince Edward Island?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture.

Mr. LeClair: Madam Speaker, yes, I do.

**GOVERNMENT SPENDING
INCREASES**

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: This is really refreshing because past administrations on Liberal governments have never supported the primary industries and so it's nice to see that we have the minister in the primary industry here that is standing up in front for the industry and supporting it and that is exactly what the agriculture industry needs here in PEI. So I want to thank the minister for those remarks and the support put behind the beef and the hog and all the primary industries here in Prince Edward Island.

Madam Speaker, I have a very wide range of questions today on the Budget and I'm anxious to pose a number of questions to ministers throughout this session on them. However, before tackling government's rationale for big ticket items in the Budget, I feel it's important that Islanders should consider the personal accountability of people who have made decisions affecting their pocketbook, especially with so much new spending announced yesterday in the Budget. We need to find out where all the spending is coming from and so I want to begin by learning more about what is quickly becoming the bloated spending spree undertaken by Cabinet Ministers, the same people who are elected and, dare I say, sworn guardians of the public purse. Madam Speaker, if we are fortunate enough to get direct-

Speaker: Hon. member, is there a question?

Mr. Bagnall: Yes, there is. That's what I'm starting here now.

Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Bagnall: -fortunate enough to get honest answers and gain valuable insight to this priority. Madam Speaker, I see the Budget an increase of general government spending and this is to the Provincial Treasurer. How does the minister account for this increase in general government spending?

Speaker: The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

Mr. Sheridan: Madam Speaker, Thank you very much for the question, hon. member.

The contingencies that are there in general government have been there for the past number of years. Those numbers cover off things such as salaries, other contingencies, programs that we may enter in with the federal government and co-spend. We want to have those dollars available for very readily to be used. Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

**NUMBER OF GOVERNMENT
VEHICLES**

Mr. Bagnall: Thank you.

And I will get back to that question a little later as we go on. Madam Speaker, could the Minister of Finance tell us how many new vehicles or leased vehicles the ministers or deputies have purchased since this government has taken office?

Speaker: The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

Mr. Sheridan: Madam Speaker, I'd very much like to answer that question. Much to the difference of what was seen in the graphic, we did an inventory of the vehicles in hand by the government when we took it over within the first week. There were five old vehicles that were for use for ministers and very happy to say that all five vehicles were used, including one by myself still being used. The exact dollar value for the number of leases that we've decided to take on would be zero because we don't want to lease them any longer because the lease payments under the last government cost us thousands and thousands of dollars when they were turned in because of the extra mileage so we are purchasing the vehicles. I can get those numbers and table them for you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Thank you for that response so I can look forward to getting that back tomorrow like the previous minister did.

An Hon. Member: - still waiting.

Speaker: Order.

REDECORATING TOURISM OFFICE

Mr. Bagnall: Madam Speaker, my next question will be to the Minister of Tourism.

I understand upon taking office the Minister of Tourism's first bit of business that she undertook in her office was to redecorate her office. What has the minister done besides buying new furniture for her office since she's taken office in the last five months?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Tourism.

Ms. Docherty: Madam Speaker, thank you for the question.

I have been having a great time working with the tourism industry all summer attending every event that I can, every function, being there as the ambassador that I would expect the Islanders would like me to be as Minister of Tourism. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: She forgot to mention - Oh, thank you, Madam Speaker.

She forgot to mention that she spent a lot of time redecorating her office too. I guess I want to know what the cost of taxpayers of Prince Edward Island for re-doing her office over and furniture and whatever you did. Can you bring the cost forward to that for me please?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Tourism.

Ms. Docherty: Definitely. I'll bring it back to you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

PRIORITIES OF TOURISM

Mr. Bagnall: Can the Minister of Tourism - Madam Speaker, this is a question to the Minister of Tourism. Can the Minister of Tourism please tell us what the priority is for your department is?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Tourism.

Ms. Docherty: Madam Speaker, I'm sorry. I don't understand the question.

Mr. Bagnall: Well, obviously, most ministers, Madam Speaker, obviously, most ministers have priorities in their departments which they're going to achieve and move on into the future. What are your priorities in your department?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Tourism.

Ms. Docherty: Madam Speaker, the priorities are being worked on. As you are probably aware, hon. member, I was just taking over everything that the previous administration had put in place. We are now in the process of planning for 2008.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: Thank you. Well, Madam Speaker, the minister has had five months to start doing some priority lists in her department and they're bringing down a new Budget and no priorities. I guess my question is: how can you stand up and represent the tourism industry of Prince Edward Island when you didn't put any new initiatives into the Budget and you've got no priorities to move into the future. So I guess what I have

to say there is that the minister should be putting priorities put in place so I'll ask you once again. Do you not have any priorities for the Department of Tourism?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Tourism.

Ms. Docherty: Madam Speaker, I guess what I'd like to say in regards to that question is the fact that our government is actually doing some research and investing the best needs for the tourism industry instead of willy-nilly trying to make decisions that may not grow our industry. So that takes a little bit of time and we will make sure that it takes place for 2008.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

COSTS OF REDECORATING OFFICES

Mr. Bagnall: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

And it's obvious that the ministers have been spending more time decorating their offices than they have looking after the industry.

I move to the hon. Provincial Treasurer. It's my understanding that the Provincial Treasurer had a mural painted in his office, gone out, bringing in fancy paintings to do a mural. Is this an initiative for the arts council or is this an issue for you to bring in one of your constituents from your district to paint your office without putting it out to tender?

Speaker: The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

Mr. Sheridan: Madam Speaker, thank you

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very much for that hon. member.

As a matter of fact, I brought in the former minister of the treasury, his niece, to do the mural for me - very appropriate. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: A question to the Provincial Treasurer again, Madam Speaker. Where is this individual from?

Speaker: The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

Mr. Sheridan: Madam Speaker, same district as her uncle.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: Madam Speaker, what district is that?

Speaker: The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

Mr. Sheridan: Madam Speaker, my district, of course. Thank you very much.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you. I'd like to rise and welcome the new students in the gallery from Grace Christian School. Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: I understand, Provincial Treasurer, I understand that there was new office furniture purchased for the deputy minister. Can you tell me what the cost of that was and was it tendered out?

Speaker: The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

Mr. Sheridan: Hon. member, I have no idea of the cost. I will find that for you, table it, and was it tendered out? I have no idea of the process of this but I'd be very happy to find that for you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: Madam Speaker, we seem to be getting a pattern here of government spending more time on redecorating their offices than they are looking after government.

As you know, we got a new Budget out yesterday and it was the Budget that was brought down by the Conservative Government last year. After six months, the Provincial Treasurer didn't have enough - I don't know - time, took too long painting the mural in his office to bring down a budget from the Liberal Government. It seems to me there should be more time spent on government than decorating offices. And as a minister who stood up and talked about accountability and looking after taxpayers' dollars, it seems to me-

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Speaker: Order.

Mr. Bagnall: -that the minister is not looking

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after his responsibilities as the Provincial Treasurer. So once again, what was the cost of that furniture?

Speaker: The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

Mr. Sheridan: Madam Speaker, I thought I made it very clear. There is new furniture purchased for my deputy minister. My deputy minister uses a computer that is nine years old. We do not spend money unwisely. This furniture was falling apart as the hon. member probably would know from visiting there and my deputy minister can have a little desk to work behind. I will get those numbers on that important matter. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

TRAVEL COSTS RE AGRICULTURE

Mr. Bagnall: My next question goes back to the Minister of Agriculture. Could you update the House on what trips you've taken since you've become minister and the cost of each trip?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture.

Mr. LeClair: Madam Speaker, I can update you on the trips I've taken but as far as the cost, you can probably pick that up on the website. The trips I've taken were to British Columbia and to Russia and last week I took a trip to Toronto, sorry, Ottawa.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: On your trip to - This is to the same minister, Madam Speaker - on your trip to Russia, who did you take with you?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture.

Mr. LeClair: Madam Speaker, I took a deputy minister with me.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: So that's all you took. That's all the people from government that attended that meeting with you.

Mr. LeClair: Yes, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: Can you tell Islanders what the benefits of that trip to Russia will be to the province?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture.

Mr. LeClair: Madam Speaker, I certainly can tell you that the benefits will be forthcoming in this year. There's already been a number of initiatives that have been started because of that trip and I think it will do us, the Island a lot of good. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. LeClair: The hon. Member from O'Leary-Inverness.

An Hon. Member: It's a good riding.

TOBACCO TAX REVENUE

Mr. Henderson: Madam Speaker, a question for the Provincial Treasurer.

As we go through the provincial Budget, there's a number of red flags that have been raised; for example, the estimate on revenue from the tobacco tax is now \$10 million. Last spring the estimate was \$27 million. That's a \$70 million over-estimate in revenues of this particular area. Will the minister please explain why the former administration inflated this particular revenue stream which should be relatively easy to predict?

Premier Ghiz: Good question.

Speaker: The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

Mr. Sheridan: Madam Speaker, hon. member, thank you for the question.

With regards to the tobacco tax, in good faith with the former administration, I would know that it would be very difficult to put budget estimates out there. The problem was that those numbers in the estimate were put to \$27 million the year before. Actual numbers 2006-2007 reflected somewhere in the vicinity of \$23 million and I believe that the former administration thought that they could go out and sell a little bit more tobacco and possibly police it better and bring it to \$27 million. Meanwhile, the numbers that are coming in now project that it will come in at \$20 million. Thank you.

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

Mr. Henderson: Supplementary, Madam

Speaker.

This, as you are well aware, was quiet a source of argument in the spring. The Opposition at the time argued that it was obviously wrong to estimate tobacco taxes quite so high. That's especially true given the fact that many Islanders are thankfully quitting that habit. Will the minister please tell the House who directed the staff of the provincial treasury to include such an obviously inflated number in the spring budget?

Speaker: The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

Mr. Sheridan: Madam Speaker, as to who would direct it, I know that the Provincial Treasurer would have the final say in what took place there but I think a lot of factors would have come into play. We know that the smoking numbers are going down as you had mentioned and, of course, with high taxation we know that smuggling and contraband is on a rise so I do, myself, struggle with where the projection came from.

LOW INTEREST LOANS FOR FISHERS

Speaker: The hon. Member from Tracadie-Hillsborough Park.

Mr. Watts: Madam Speaker, questions for the minister of fisheries.

After many years of being neglected, many people in the fishery were quite relieved with the announcement of the low interest loan, particularly for those who have been faced with high debt and low catches. Many fishermen are still somewhat unclear about

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the program so will the minister please offer the House a brief explanation as to how this will work?

Premier Ghiz: Good question.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

Mr. Campbell: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and I want to thank the hon. Member from Tracadie-Hillsborough Park for his great question. It gives me great pleasure to rise in the House today and answer a question regarding our low interest loan program.

Low interest loan program was something that was clearly identified by the Northumberland Strait working group and by licensed fishers in areas 25 and 26A as one of the keys to sustainability in the fishery in areas that were suffering from declining catches and increasing costs. Basically, the way the new program works - fishers are asked to bring forward their income tax form for the 2006 year. There is a qualifying criteria where fishers who have a net cash available position of less than \$40,000 and whose situation is deemed to be sustainable under this program will be deemed qualified and they will become eligible for a loan of up to \$200,000 at a 4% interest rate. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Tracadie-Hillsborough Park.

Mr. Watts: Supplementary question, Madam Speaker.

Do you have any idea as to how many fishermen may in fact apply for this loan, Mr. Minister?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

Mr. Campbell: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Obviously, it's a little bit difficult to determine the numbers that will qualify for this program since the program did not exist in the past. Our estimate is that somewhere in the neighbourhood of 200 fishers will qualify. Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

**TRAVEL RE
AGRICULTURE(FURTHER)**

Mr. Bagnall: Thank you and this question will go back to the Minister of Agriculture again. You said there were a number of initiatives that are coming forward from this trip. Can you give us an example of one or two?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture.

Mr. LeClair: Madam Minister or Madam Speaker, sorry, the details - there was a group of people all from different sectors of PEI, the industries on PEI. There's a number of them that have called and came back to me and told me that they have started initiatives. Now I wasn't - I was there as minister for PEI to promote Prince Edward Island. I did that. As far as the industries go and as far as the members of the industries, they are

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working on their own projects and if you need more information, I suggest you get in contact with those people. Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: Madam Speaker. Mr. Minister, you're telling me that you went to Russia, took staff to work with development for the area and yet you come back here and say that you can't give any information out because that would be against policy. Well, you used government dollars to go to the trip to Russia. You took your deputy minister with you and yet you will not give out any information or any business that's coming back from that trip. What's going on? What are you trying to hide?

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture. Order. The hon. Minister of Agriculture.

Mr. LeClair: Madam Speaker, I didn't say it was against policy. I said there were members of the industry, all aspects of the industry that came. I said if you wanted to find out, you can ask those people. There are initiatives because I've had feedback from them. What I did was talk to the federal minister in Moscow, the Moscow minister. I went to the potato exhibition. I promoted our province. We are working on trade initiatives as far as potatoes go and the agriculture industry. And to tell you the truth, I'm not the first Minister of Agriculture that ever traveled.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. LeClair: I could probably ask the same questions to another person. Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I recognize that fact too, hon. minister, but the same thing. I guess what the next question I'll ask you on that: was there government dollars put into helping out the cost of these individuals going to Russia with you?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture.

Mr. LeClair: Madam Speaker, yes, there was.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: Then why can't government give us details on what happened? You paid for the trips. You took people there. What I'm saying is: why can you not give us at least one indication of something that you did when you were there?

Premier Ghiz: He told you. He listed off five things.

Speaker: Hon. member, the hon. Minister of Agriculture.

Mr. LeClair: Madam Speaker, I represented the Province of Prince Edward Island in Russia. The organization that called and asked me to go - this was not my initiative. It was an initiative of CASP and there was federal money put in there as well as

provincial and I'm telling you that what I did bring back were very positive results to the industries, to all of our industries that were involved. Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

INITIATIVES OF OTTAWA-QUEBEC CITY MEETINGS

Mr. Bagnall: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I'll leave that question for now because, obviously, he was vacationing and didn't know what was going on when he was there.

So my next question will be to the minister of development. Can you update the House on any trips that you've taken since you've been minister?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Development and Technology.

Mr. R. Brown: Madam Speaker, yes, I went to Ottawa. On my way back from Ottawa, I dropped off in Quebec City. In Ottawa I met with the minister, staff in immigration. There were regulation changes that were going to be going through. I want to thank the previous premier who wrote a letter on behalf of that initiative. We were able to get regulation changes that were being made to the *Immigration Act* changed or stalled for another couple of months and renegotiate it.

When I went to Quebec City, I visited with the Ocean Group who rebuilt three tugs from the Georgetown Shipyard, excellent tugs and I commend the workers and the management of the Georgetown Shipyards and three jobs

well done. And I can assure the members that Georgetown Shipyards and the workers at Georgetown we are working on getting more tugs.

Then I visited with the Minister of Industry for Quebec. The C-17 contracts were signed between the US and Canadian government. These are three big jets that are coming to the military in Canada. With that, Boeing has agreed to transfer \$3 billion worth of money back into Canada. It's called an international program for bringing whatever Boeing has to spend or we spend to Boeing, they have to spend back in Canada. We believe that we deserve at least 5% of that. That is \$150 million. I met with the minister in Ottawa. He has a big aerospace industry in Ottawa. I said: Look. Why are we going to compete against each other here for these contracts and waste government money competing with each other? Can we work out some sort of a deal that we forego all these freebees to companies when they come here and let's try to work together and get the maximum benefit for Canada instead of fighting with each other and that was the meeting that I had with the minister when I was there. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: Thank you. At least I know you weren't vacationing. You were busy.

Who attended? Who accompanied you on those trips?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Development

and Technology.

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

In Ottawa, there were a number of people who attended the meeting. I can assure members that no one in Ottawa except for myself was paid for out of government. There were some private sector companies that came with me in order to negotiate that and it's all about immigration and some changes that were being made to it. When I went to Ottawa, my communications person came up with me because he arranged the meeting with the Minister of Industry in Ottawa. He had a bunch of the facts available for me. I had a meeting in Ottawa. I had to prepare for that. I got him to come to Quebec with me in order to help out there.

And just on one point, one of the things that all governments in the Maritimes are concerned about is that the Conservative Government in Ottawa signed a free trade agreement with the EU and maybe you and your members could contact the Minister of Industry up in Ottawa and talk to him about this. This free trade agreement with Europe especially in the shipping industry is really going to hurt Georgetown in the shipping industry. Maybe if we can get together with the Opposition critics here and write Ottawa and tell them how hard this is going to hit our industry, maybe we can work together on that.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Premier Ghiz: Great idea, great idea.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

COMMUNITIES, CULTURAL AFFAIRS TRAVEL

Mr. Bagnall: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

My next question is to the hon. Minister of Communities, Cultural Affairs and Labour. Could you update the House on any trips that you've taken as minister since you've been in government?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Communities, Cultural Affairs and Labour.

Ms. Bertram: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

It would be a pleasure to update the House on the trips that I've taken. I've gone to Greece on behalf of this province as minister responsible for sport on Prince Edward Island to the Island Games. I have gone as minister responsible to local governance in Winnipeg. I've also attended the ministerial meetings and presented for Prince Edward Island on culture relative to the Heritage Initiative Project. I've also attended the ministers' conference on la Francophonie in Halifax and I've presented on behalf of all ministers on the French language service agreement. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Your trip to Greece, what business part for

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the province was in that and who attended that meeting with you?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Communities, Cultural Affairs and Labour.

Ms. Bertram: Again, it's a pleasure to discuss this trip, Madam Speaker.

I attended this meeting or this sporting event with our deputy minister and we were there because we are vying for the 2013 Island Games to host them on Prince Edward Island and we wanted to show with our contingency of 64 at the Island Games in Rhodes, Greece. We wanted to look like we were there to do business and we had many meetings with the organizing committees along with the (Indistinct) group that are the next hosts in 2009.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. R. Brown: Great job.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

**MINISTERS' EXPENSE ACCOUNTS
ONLINE**

Mr. Bagnall: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I guess what I'm trying to do in my questioning today is show accountability in government and they had talked about being open. And when they were in Opposition, one of the biggest things that was said was openness and fairness in getting information to the public. One of the things is ministers' expenses. Now it's in policy that all ministers issue their expenses on the website. To date,

only one minister has put his minister's expenses on line and they're not all there but at least his department has done that. We also have nine other government ministers who have failed in being accountable for their departments and their expenses and the Premier of this province has stood up and said that we are going to be open and accountable. And yet the very first chance he has to follow that up, they fail.

So Madam Speaker, my question is to the Premier. When are you going to have your ministers put their expenses on line as government policy?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

And first of all, I'd like to congratulate all our ministers for the great work that they've been doing and out trying to promote Prince Edward Island by attracting new businesses to the Island to help out the district of Georgetown, by going off looking for games to come here to Prince Edward Island, by representing Prince Edward Island at a First Ministers' meeting for the Francophonie (en français) qu'on avait la première chance dans l'histoire dans les dernières onze années d'avoir un ministre qui était à la table pour la Francophonie qui pourrait parler en français puis je pense que c'était un honneur d'avoir ministre qui peut parler français à c'est rencontres.

Now I know what the hon. member is asking. Unfortunately, he knows that it's supposed to be recorded every quarter. There was an election in the way. A lot of the ministers

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didn't even have credit cards. A lot of the ministers weren't even able to submit anything because they didn't have any credit cards. Once they get back into the system where we're going to get back into the next quarter, you'll be able to see all that on the Internet.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir. Oh, sorry, Georgetown-St. Peters.

STATUS OF HOG PLANT

Mr. M. Currie: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I have received a lot of calls from very concerned workers and also a lot of farmers and my question is for the Minister of Agriculture. It seems quite apparent I guess with our hog industry on PEI that it's only a matter of time, maybe days or weeks that you and your government are going to close the hog plant here in Charlottetown and put 125 men and women out of work and we're going to lose a \$4 million payroll. Is that true?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture.

Mr. LeClair: Madam Speaker, no, it's not true.

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

Mr. M. Currie: You're stating that the hog industry here in Charlottetown is not going to close and the 125 jobs that are out there are safe.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture.

Mr. LeClair: Madam Speaker, he asked if I was putting them out of business. I'm not putting them out of business. It's not true.

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

Mr. M. Currie: Madam Speaker, is the minister and his government going to close this plant and not support it?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture.

Mr. LeClair: Madam Speaker, no, we're not going to close this plant. We will support this plant.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

**MINISTERS' EXPENSE ACCOUNTS
ONLINE(FURTHER)**

Mr. Bagnall: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

And back to the Premier's answer, that probably would be good enough if none of his ministers had been able to put their expenses on line but he does have one minister that's actually doing his job there when he's not vacationing and putting his expenses on line. So I don't think that's any excuse for every other minister to not follow procedure. And the Premier can get up and congratulate them on all the good work but we're talking about accountability here and the expenses. We know that they've been traveling everywhere rolling up all kinds of bills and expenses for travel, decorating offices. We want to see the accountability put

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on the Internet and when can we expect that? I know you're saying in the future but will it go on this week?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

I'm not sure when the recording periods are. The next time that it has to be involved for recording periods the minister will be able to see them on there or the member will be able to see them on there. And I can assure all Islanders that the travel that we've been taking is necessary for government business. We are a province of Prince Edward Island. We are an equal partner within the Canadian jurisdiction. We have to make sure that when there's ministerial meetings going on that they attend and I applaud some of our ministers who one week into a job had to go off to a ministerial meeting and represent the Province of Prince Edward Island and I think they did a very good job in doing that and made sure that Islanders were well represented at all these meetings. And unlike the former government, there's going to be no personal charges put on our government credit cards. We're going to make sure that we're going to be accountable to Islanders.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Final question. The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

And for the Premier to stand up and go on like that, that's great but he is the one that was going to introduce a bill in this House on

the exact same topic of accountability. The first time that he has a chance to show that he can be accountable, he fails. I mean he literally failed and all of his Cabinet has failed because they did not follow the procedures that were set in by the government. Premier, when will this be done? Give us a date.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

I'm not sure where the minister was that day but it was actually the hon. Minister of Transportation and Public Works who came in with that bill and it was in fact that member there who voted against the bill when it was brought to the floor of the House so perhaps the hon. member should check his facts. We're going to make sure that we're going to be accountable to Islanders. You're not going to be able to put on personal charges on your government credit card. Madam Speaker, we're going to make sure that we're going to be accountable to Islanders and when the next reporting period comes on there, you're going to see all the charges that were made for the previous time and I can (Indistinct) you I believe I probably used my government credit card twice, I think off the top of my head. I just signed off on something today, \$444 I think it was, to go to a first ministers' meeting over in Moncton so we're going to be accountable to Islanders. We'll stand up. What we want to do is make sure that this is a new Liberal Government that's going to be open and accountable, unlike the former government was.

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Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!