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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF
PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS AND ORAL QUESTION PERIOD
(PRELIMINARY PROCEEDINGS)

FOR

Wednesday 24 October 2007

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Speaker: And we'll start today with the Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

PEI SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA - 40TH ANNIVERSARY

Ms. Dunsford: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

A wise person once said: Music is the speech of angels. I rise today to pay honour to a most wonderful organization in our midst. I refer to our own Prince Edward Island Symphony Orchestra and to the fact that this talented group of musicians, conductors past and present, and supporters of the orchestra are celebrating their 40th anniversary this year.

This truly professional aggregation began its inaugural season in the fall of the same year we, as Canadians, celebrated our centennial year in 1967 and then became incorporated the following year in 1968. The people of Prince Edward Island from one end to the other have had the beautiful sounds of the PEISO brought to them season after season featuring guests from all over the world coming here for Islanders to experience.

In fact, the orchestra is better known across the Island as a community orchestra with members from communities all over PEI participating, including the beautiful district of Stratford-Kinlock. I know of a few members who are currently members: Allie McCrady, and Dave Sheppard being a couple and, of course, past member the bassist extraordinaire, Wayne Dunsford, who has also been a member.

As reported by Sally Cole in *The Guardian*, the secret of this orchestra's success has many

factors. It includes the commitment of the musicians, the season subscribers, the concert goers as well as the support of the community.

The current conductor of the PEI Symphony Orchestra is James Mark, a professor at Mount Allison University.

Personally, I have enjoyed many performances of the PEI Symphony Orchestra's concerts over the years, with the most recent being this past Sunday where Monctonian, Roger Lord, was featured as a guest pianist as well as PEI's own Christina Bouey, a budding violinist in her own right who debuted with the symphony orchestra this past Sunday. Hats off to the organization for all their hard work over the year.

The PEI Symphony does appeal to all Islanders, young and old, from Sibelius to Bernstein, from Mozart to the Chucky Danger Band. They cover it all.

Congratulations to them on their 40th anniversary and we hope for many more.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from York-Oyster Bed and Government House Leader.

RECOGNITION TO LORI KANE

Mr. Vessey: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I am pleased to stand during this the fall sitting of the Legislative Assembly to recognize the

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10th anniversary accomplishments of our own Island golf legend, Lori Kane.

I'm sure many of us here today and many who will be watching these procedures on Cable 10 Eastlink will remember November, 1997, just ten years ago, when this same Legislature congratulated Lori on the completion of her first full season on the LPGA tour.

Lori was then and still is an example for everyone. Her hard work and determination have allowed her to reach international fame. She not only made the name Lori Kane synonymous with the name of ladies golf but she has also promoted our beloved province in the international media and especially on television screens all around the world.

Just a few days ago, once again, we heard the good news that our Lori Kane has attained another year of full exemptions on the LPGA and finished 4th in another prestigious ladies tournament out in Danville, California.

Madam Speaker, as our unofficial ambassador for Prince Edward Island, it is indeed a great pleasure for me to stand here today and to recognize Lori Kane for all that she has done for the world of sport and for all PEI during the past ten years.

We can only imagine how proud her parents must be. Congratulations Lori Kane, not just on your career earnings but to the honour you have brought to yourself, to the game of golf, and all of us who follow your illustrious career from here at home.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

THE WEEK OF THE COACH

Mr. Bagnall: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I rise today to express my appreciation for volunteer coaches on Prince Edward Island. Coaches across the province give generously of their time and they are an important part of every local community.

When volunteers come forward to coach local sports teams, they are enabling Island youth to exercise, participate in team sports, and to enhance their social and interactive skills. Young Islanders and, indeed, Islanders of all ages enjoy sports activities, whether as a cheering spectator or a competitive participant.

Coaches deserve our thanks for delivering a great service to islanders and they also deserve our appreciation for generously donating their time and sharing their knowledge with others. The Coaches Association of Prince Edward Island has designated October 16th to October 21st the Week of the Coach and I would like to take the opportunity to join with them in paying tribute to all Island coaches.

Madam Speaker, I ask that all members of this House join me in acknowledging the Week of the Coach and in congratulating these well-spirited Islanders for a well-deserved week of province-wide recognition.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STUDENT NURSING PROGRAMS

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

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

Mr. D. Currie: Madam Speaker, I rise today to respond to a question that I took under advisement from the Leader of the Opposition regarding the \$1.5 million going to the University of Prince Edward Island. The \$1.5 million is an incremental increase which totals our commitment to the University of Prince Edward Island to a total of \$29 million.

To clarify, the department of health does not directly fund the UPEI School of Nursing; however, the department does have programs that directly support the nursing school and the students at the University of Prince Edward Island to a total of \$675,000: the Bachelor of Nursing student sponsorship program for \$252,000, the Bachelor of Nursing students employment program \$375,000, UPEI School of Nursing grant \$20,000, three clinical positions which are presently working at the University of Prince Edward Island are supported by the department of health, and the (Indistinct) program which is a total of \$27,000, okay.

And I just do want to acknowledge a couple of things. As of today, the graduating class from the UPEI School of Nursing last year - 48 out of 60 nurses are working today in acute care facilities across this province. So that's certainly a great return rate in respect of the work that's been done and we are having ongoing discussions to expand seats and to work on enhancing capacity within the school

of nursing. And as I alluded to in the House prior to - the accelerated nursing program, we're engaging in discussions as well. So nurses are a priority in this province and key players in the health care system in the province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

ORGANIZED CRIME(FURTHER)

Mr. Greenan: Madam Speaker, yesterday, the hon. Leader of the Opposition asked some questions about organized crime and tobacco smuggling.

In response to the hon. member's question about organized crime, each year the office of the Attorney General identifies priorities for action by the RCMP "L" Division and organized crime is one of the current provincial priorities.

As well, the hon. Leader of the Opposition also asked how the province is policing illegal tobacco smuggling. The Atlantic Coordinating Committee on Organized Crime recently just last month identified tobacco smuggling and drug smuggling up as its two top priorities and the hon. member's question about the cost of tobacco smuggling in our province, I can tell you that in March of 2007, Sgt. Brad Chugg, officer in charge of RCMP Federal Enforcement Section of PEI estimated a \$3.9 million loss per year in tax revenue on PEI due to tobacco smuggling. The loss is continually increasing as time goes on.

Madam Speaker, I want to thank the hon.

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Leader of the Opposition for bringing this issue to the floor of the Legislature. Illegal tobacco smuggling is a matter of serious concern and this public discussion may help inform the public about the connection between illegal tobacco smuggling and organized crime. The three main areas of focus needed to deal with tobacco smuggling are: seizing contraband tobacco, legislation such as the new *Tobacco Act*, and getting the word out not only about the revenue lost but also about the potential public health risk associated with contraband tobacco, which has no safeguards in place to ensure that it is safe from fungi and other contaminants and the connection between illegal tobacco smuggling and organized crime.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Questions by Members

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Thanks to both ministers for getting back to me and it's great that you two both recognize the tremendous work the former provincial minister of health had done in regards to nursing recruitment and the supports for the UPEI School of Nursing, as well as the work the Attorney General's office and her staff had done in order to bring that legislation to the fore as we speak.

PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

My first question, Madam Speaker, I'd like to

ask the minister who is responsible for the Public Service Commission a few questions.

Could the minister please confirm the role of the Public Service Commission in its work on behalf of government as the employer's representative with the Union of Public Sector employees, who is the union for the majority of civil servants?

Speaker: The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

Mr. Sheridan: Madam Speaker, I didn't understand that last piece that you had, hon. member. Could you just repeat that? I don't see the question on the end of it, if you would just repeat that for me.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Absolutely. I'd like to clarify that for you, for the minister. Could the minister confirm the role of the Public Service Commission? As you know, the Public Service Commission acts on behalf of government as the employer and the role of the work that they do in relationship of the employer with the Union of Public Sector Employees who represents all the employees.

Speaker: The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

Mr. Sheridan: Madam Speaker, I'm struggling with the question. The role that they play is that this is the hiring entity that we use. All jobs that come into government come through the Public Service Commission, very very proud of their work. I have now had a chance to meet most of the players in that department. I can't speak highly enough of their professionalism. I just think they play a very key role here in our government and I

thank them very much for their work.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**SALARIES AND DUTIES OF DEPUTY
MINISTERS AND ASSISTANT DEPUTY
MINISTERS**

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I couldn't agree more with the minister.

The next question: Would the minister please describe for us and the House the senior government benefit package for senior deputy ministers, assistant deputy ministers? You can include please the salary range and benefit plus the scope of authority and responsibilities.

Speaker: The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

Mr. Sheridan: I'd like to speak. I think it gives us a great opportunity to speak here to the scope of practice of our deputy ministers and other senior members in our government. I think I've been quoted publicly now as saying that that has been my greatest joy in coming to government is to see the professionalism, the dedication of our senior service. It's just incredible. I'd like to speak personally on my deputy minister, Paul Jelley. I don't think I've ever met a gentleman who has been more dedicated in his career to one service and that is to the betterment of Prince Edward Island. Paul Jelley has served our Island government as well as the Canadian government for over 30 years and to my knowledge, I can't recollect anyone who would put out this kind of service that Mr. Jelley has.

As for compensation packages, I can table that

for you, Madam Speaker. I don't think that I would ever be able to stand here and quote you numbers. I don't think that it would achieve anything here today to try to pull that back. I'll table that for you and bring back those compensation pieces.

Again, I'd like to reiterate that I just can't say enough about our senior service.

An Hon. Member: Good. Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**P U B L I C S E R V I C E
COMMISSION(FURTHER)**

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you for that answer. I couldn't agree with you more. The senior deputy ministers like Paul Jelley are worth their weight in gold and I understand that most deputy ministers in the province probably make somewhere around \$110,000 but I believe there's a few more deputies who are making around \$130,000 as well as other benefits.

Madam Speaker, would the minister responsible for the Public Service Commission please describe the process that the commission goes through to develop policy in order to provide a workplace so all persons can expect to be treated with dignity and respect.

Speaker: The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

Mr. Sheridan: Madam Speaker, thank you very much. A great opportunity to speak to the professionalism of our Public Service Commission - the policy surrounding equal opportunity in the workplace is one of the

pieces that give me great pride in seeing what the public service stands for in our community. The policy that they've worked on over a number of years under the leadership now of Jim Ferguson, I can't be more proud of. I think that what's going on right now is review, actually, visible minorities in our workplace. The work that we've gone into putting all of these efforts into equal opportunity in our workplace is just fabulous and I can only thank the Public Service Commission for doing that. Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

POLICY ON HARASSMENT

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you, Mr. Minister, for that answer.

My next question is to the minister responsible for the Public Service Commission. Could you please highlight the harassment policy developed by the Public Service Commission and the Union of Public Sector Employees?

Speaker: The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

Mr. Sheridan: Madam Speaker, all policy with regards to Public Service Commission is very much public knowledge. It is on the website. All of our policy is there, very easily taken and received. I will certainly table all of that policy if the hon. member would like that. There's no problem with that. It's very much common policy and very, very pleased and proud of what we stand for. The commission has taken each and every one of these kinds of cases in hand, deals with them very consistently, and I'm very proud of what they do with it. Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Would the minister responsible for the Public Service Commission please describe in detail under the harassment policy and procedure, the procedure process and who in the policy makes the decision when to use the formal or informal process of investigation if a complaint has been made by anybody working in the civil service?

Speaker: The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

Mr. Sheridan: I'm sorry. I missed the first part of that. I'll have to have it repeated.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: No problem. I'd be happy to repeat the question.

Madam Speaker, would the minister responsible for the Public Service Commission please describe under their harassment policy procedures, the procedure, the process, who in this policy actually makes the decision when to use the formal or an informal process of investigation when a complaint has been made?

Speaker: The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

Mr. Sheridan: Madam Speaker, as to where the complaints lie and how they're handled, I'd have to get an exact handle on who makes those decisions. I can find out who in the department judges those types of things and I can table that information for you. Thank you very much.

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Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

My next question is for the minister responsible for the Public Service Commission. Could you please tell the House what assumptions are written into this policy? For example, is there a standard of duty being written in the policy? For example, the more senior the position, the more it's connected as the extension of a government, the position that has to be guarded by behaviour both by example when on duty and on personal time. Could you please explain if there's a standard of duty theme written throughout the policy?

Speaker: The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

Mr. Sheridan: Madam Speaker, I can't speak to that in any way, shape, or form. I can certainly table that piece of policy. I would have no idea how that would lay out in any kind of format-wise that way as to senior employees. As the hon. member would know, those senior employees that she may be referring to as deputy ministers and such, all those type of policies surrounding those senior deputy ministers, for instance, we know that most of those decisions are made around Executive Council with regards to their benefits and their pay periods and all of their pay levels. So I just, I want to make sure that everyone is well aware of that piece. If that's where the question is going, that's what I'd like to make very public.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Excuse me. In regards to the Public Service Commission who works on behalf of the employer to develop the policies and procedures, under the harassment policy my next question is: Could the minister responsible for the Public Service Commission tell the House what assumptions are written into this policy because this is extremely important. For example, the Union of Public Sector Employees you probably have at least 3,000 people who work for your senior management.

Speaker: The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

Mr. Sheridan: Madam Speaker, again the question is very vague. I don't see the meaning behind the questioning. I don't understand it. I will table that regulation. I do not know where the hon. member is going with this question. If she'd like to ask me straight out, I would be very happy to answer.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

My next question is for the minister responsible for the Public Service Commission. Would you like to interpret section 4(c) of the policy for prevention and resolution of harassment in the workplace? And I'll give you the quote of what the definition says where the workplace takes place. Workplace includes but is not limited to the actual work site, lunch room, or cafeteria, a client's home or a work site, training sessions, conferences, business travel, or work related social gatherings.

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Speaker: The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

Mr. Sheridan: Madam Speaker, was there a question?

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Bagnall: Doesn't listen very well.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Earlier in Question Period, I asked about the scope of practice and authority for deputy ministers who are hired on behalf of government. The hiring authority that works to develop policies and procedures is the Public Service Commission. In terms of policies that take care to protect all employees who work for government, the question reads: How would you interpret section 4(c) of the policy for prevention and resolution of harassment in the workplace? And I'll give you the quote to help you. Workplace includes but is not limited to the actual work site, lunch room, or cafeteria, a client's home or work site, training session, conferences, business travel, or work related social gatherings.

Speaker: The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

Mr. Sheridan: The hon. member is obviously asking a question with regards to something we feel is a very private matter in this House. If the hon. member would like to get to that question, that would be very much appreciated.

As to the actual harassment 4(c) portion of it, I'll table it and speak to that at another time. Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

RESIGNATION RE CONFLICT OF INTEREST ISSUE

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you for that.

In terms of my next question is actually going to be for the acting Premier. The question is, acting Premier: Have you been in touch with the Premier of the province and does he have any intention of asking for the Minister of Transportation and Public Works' resignation?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Development and Technology.

Mr. Brown: The Premier and I have talked last night, Madam Speaker. The Premier has no intentions of asking for the resignation or the setting aside of the minister of transportation. This is a matter, as you are well aware of, goes to the conflict of interest officer. The conflict of interest officer will investigate this, report back to the House. We presume people are innocent until they're found guilty or not guilty. That is our law in Canada and around the world.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you for that answer. It's interesting how the Premier has changed his mind. People would like to go back and take a look at Hansard and some quotes that were done this year in *The Guardian* paper as to what he would choose to

do if any of his ministers were involved in anything even while an investigation would go on.

YOUTH ADDICTION SERVICES

My next question is actually for the minister of health. Adult addiction programs are not well suited for the treatment of youth. Youth programs on Prince Edward Island rely mainly on out-patient services in our hospitals and our schools where counsellors have student assistance programs. Could the minister of health and social services please provide an update on the steps this government is taking to improve remedial programs for youth suffering from substance abuse.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Development and Technology.

Mr. Brown: Madam Speaker, in the preamble to the member's, Leader of the Opposition's statement she has indicated comments by the Premier. The Premier has made it quite clear in his rulings. If laws are broken, he will deal with them when a person is found to have broken the law. No one has broken any law at this time. There has been an allegation made and I wish the Opposition would allow the process to carry out in this. If she wants to debate the allegation on the floor of the Legislature, let's do it then. But no, we have a law in place now that has put an independent person into this decision to look into these allegations and to investigate them and to be unbiased. So I wish that the Leader of the Opposition would allow that this process takes place. We cannot, as politicians, run down to the courtroom at any time and start intervening on judges in rulings so I would allow - I hope that the Opposition allows for the process to

take place. The allegation has been made. The law is quite specific what will happen and allow it to follow out and we will get a report back because I have every confidence in the commissioner involved in this case. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Madam Speaker, I don't mind repeating my question and the other part, I'll just refer people to *The Guardian* article January 31/07 that was published in *The Guardian* in regards to a finding where the Conflict of Interest Commissioner actually had ruled that there was no conflict and then the comments by the then Opposition leader.

Anyway, I'm more interested today on health issues. Adult addiction programs are not well suited for treatment of youth. Youth programs on Prince Edward Island rely mainly on out-patient services in our hospitals. There are schools where counsellors have student assistance programs. Could the minister of health and social services please provide an update on the steps that his government is taking to improve remedial programs for youth suffering from substance abuse?

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

Mr. D. Currie: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Certainly, we'll give an overview and update on where we're at with addiction services in this province. Certainly we're very pleased at

the progress we're making.

In my former life, I had the opportunity to work very closely over 20 years with youth in this province. I also spent a tremendous amount of time coaching this province and through those experiences, I was exposed to a lot of personal situations and continue to watch individuals I coached as they progressed through their lives. I certainly have a tremendously strong belief in enhancing addiction services in this province. I've witnessed some personal stories of youth in this province who have struggled with addictions and eventually have taken their lives. So it's very personal with me and I'm extremely committed to moving this agenda forward.

Phase one in the addiction youth strategy was implemented under the previous administration in December, 2006. Through that process, they engaged stakeholders across this province, collected a lot of great information across this province in respect to what a new program, a new facility will look like. Phase one was completed. We do have a report that's basically on the table being fine-tuned. I'm pleased to announce here today that we will be beginning phase two which will be taking that information back out to the stakeholders. We'll be bringing in some experts to evaluate the direction and input that we have received. So phase two will be implemented and basically is in the process of being implemented between October and the end of December. We're excited about the work that's been done and I credit the process. There's a lot of great work but we have to validate the process right now. We have to go back out to re-assess and bring that information back to the key stakeholders who

were at the table before we finalize our direction. This is an issue that my department is taking very seriously. It's a huge priority but it's very important to understand that the development of programming is equally as important as actually where we put the facility and what that facility looks like. The heart and soul of the facility is going to be the most important priority right now to look at in-service, out-patient services provided to youth struggling with addictions in this province and we'll be diligently working. I've directed the department I want phase two completed by the end of December so we can move into an implementation by, hopefully, the spring of next year. That's the whole - so we're excited about the work that's being done but I also want to recognize the work of individuals in this province who have been under a tremendous amount of stress over the last number of years in respect to providing youth services in a system that has been very restricted in respect to a demand that's intensifying and we know the pressures and the problems that the enhanced level of street drugs are causing in the city and across this province. So as the minister responsible for youth addictions, I'm extremely excited about moving this agenda forward and that's it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

It's obvious the minister of health and Opposition agrees how important this youth interventions are for youth struggling with substance abuse.

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My next question goes to the health minister. Could you be a little bit more specific? We notice in your budget document it does not indicate what your government is going to address with youth substance abuse problems in terms of an actual dollar figure. Would the minister please tell us what money has been made available for the Youth Addiction Center?

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

Mr. D. Currie: Well, in respect to actual figures, we have a \$200,000 commitment in Budget as we speak for operational to continue the process to gather the information. And once again, the importance of going out, gathering the information and bringing back the information so people on this Island and the key stakeholders are a key player in helping us direct where we go with youth addictions in this province.

The second part to that, we budgeted \$300,000 in capital budget to look at having that into next spring's budget for a facility. We also have the program that was announced by the federal government, the anti-national strategy against substance abuse. We are anticipating anywhere between \$200,000 and \$300,000. Figures haven't been confirmed so that money will go into the support of us making sure that our government defines and develops a quality, top end youth addictions facility for this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you,

Madam Speaker. Thank you, minister.

My next question is for the health minister. I know it's important sometimes to take time to study; however, I believe the work that you described was ongoing for at least 2.5 years. So this is not the time for any more study but probably more for a time of action.

My question to the minister is in regards to the interest groups that have been taking the lead here, are you willing to help this interest group and their troubled families by actually speeding up the process? Like you talked about more research for the next several months. Since all your research has been done, can you speed up the process?

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

Mr. D. Currie: As the minister responsible for addictions and, certainly, it's a big issue and it's a huge priority. The time lines, if anybody - my colleagues know my personality. I'm not the most patient person and I certainly understand that government, being inside government new for the first time, we understand that process and some of the former members across the floor certainly can appreciate by some of the comments they've made with respect to how things work in government. Certainly, I respect the question from the Leader of the Opposition and as the minister responsible, I will be paying very close attention to the time lines but I think it's also important that we make sure that we do this right and that we do follow a process that engages all Islanders that want to be part of developing a process.

I also would like to add that I have had some

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pretty, some wonderful discussions with Portage in New Brunswick in respect to what their services look like to give myself a better appreciation for what a quality facility would look like. This is about taxpayers' dollars but it's also about young lives and I know the challenges that we're facing every day in this province and the seriousness of it. So I will take that question very seriously in respect to doing my best as minister to expediate the process to make sure that we have a quality program/facility for all youth in this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Vernon River-Stratford.

**S T U D E N T C O M M O N
ASSESSMENTS(FURTHER)**

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

My question is for the minister of education. Maybe it's because I'm new in this House but yesterday I was appalled at the comments coming from the Leader of the Opposition with regards that possibly some people in the department of education may be falsifying the common assessment scores. She mentioned earlier about going back in Hansard and looking at what the people had said. And if we do that from yesterday, I'll just quote you, comments she had said: "Are we going to receive the details from that report or is your department working on changing some of the figures, the data from that report?" is what she asked the minister of education. She continued to say: I must say I'm a little concerned that someone may be doctoring up the report.

As a former civil servant and also having family and friends in the civil service, I was really put off by that comment. The question for the minister of education then is since I think these are quite below the dignity of this House, do you take these accusations seriously and what do you make of the comments made by the Leader of the Opposition?

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

Mr. Greenan: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

And I want to thank the member for his question. I was somewhat surprised by the comment made by the Leader of the Opposition and upon reflection of what was said, I was offended that the Leader of the Opposition would suggest that officials in my department would practice such an activity. The results of the common assessment program are going to be true and will reflect what the students in this province actually did in the intermediate math and primary literacy and those are going to be rolled out this week and I thank the member for the question and I hope that the Leader of the Opposition will at some point speak to the officials in my department and make an apology.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Vernon River-Stratford.

Mr. McIsaac: Supplementary for the minister. Yesterday, you offered her a briefing with regards to the results of this common assessment testing. Can you tell me if she has accepted that and she will take from that for what the accusations she made with regards to

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Department of Education officials?

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

Mr. Greenan: Madam Speaker, yes, I did offer the Leader of the Opposition an opportunity to get a briefing and she has accepted that and she will be meeting with the officials in my department before week's end and I'm sure that she will take that opportunity to make her apologies known. Thank you.

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

MEDICAL CENTER FOR TYNE VALLEY

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

My question is for the Minister of Health, Social Services and Seniors. The previous government neglected to budget the \$500,000 promised for a new professional medical center in Tyne Valley. Could the minister update the House on what his department is doing regarding plans for this project?

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

Mr. D. Currie: Madam Speaker, first of all, I would like to acknowledge Lorraine Robinson who is in the gallery today and who is the chair of the board of Stewart Memorial and the work that her board is doing and has done in the community of Tyne Valley. I also want to acknowledge Dr. Roy Montgomery who is a 29-year physician who grew up in the community of Tyne Valley and certainly has done great service in health care in Tyne

Valley. I also want to acknowledge the fact that he's moving down the road to O'Leary and certainly wish him well.

In respect to the medical services center in Tyne Valley, the process for this started in July of 2006. There was a community health assessment done in the community of Tyne Valley and Lennox Island. The recommendations from that assessment were referred to the Stewart Memorial Hospital Board. The board prepared a letter on recommendation of what that assessment directed the board to do and that was calling for a medical services center. In January, 2007, the department of health received that notice and letter and request. On February 14th, the department of health referred back and confirmed that Stewart Memorial would be receiving a medical health center in Tyne Valley.

With the previous administration- when taking over government, I sat down very early in my responsibilities and met with the board and, basically at the end of the day, the \$500,000 which was the cost of the facility was not implemented in the Budget. After looking back through the documentation by the previous minister in the department, it was a commitment that was made which involved the community, the federal government, and the province. At that point in time after government had changed, we had learned that the process had started but the process and approval for money from the federal government, the processes were not in place but, most importantly, the money wasn't in the previous administration budget as indicated.

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

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Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Minister.

My supplementary question is for the Provincial Treasurer. Will the Provincial Treasurer assure this House and the residents of Tyne Valley and area that the \$500,000 for the professional medical center will be in the 2008 budget and that construction will begin in 2008?

Speaker: The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

Mr. Sheridan: Madam Speaker, as our health minister has spoken too, we realize the value, the importance to Tyne Valley this facility would mean to you. We have taken it under advisement and we will be meeting with budget cabinet within the next two weeks. As you've been told, we will be tabling our capital budget here within two weeks' time and at that point, we will have made our decision on that. Thank you very much.

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

APPROVAL FOR LIGHTS IN WINSLOE

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

My first question is for the acting Premier. And to gain access unto an arterial highway, do you have to have approval from Cabinet?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Development and Technology.

Mr. Brown: Yes.

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

Mr. M. Currie: Madam Speaker, when you are in Cabinet and an executive memo is brought forward for new lights in Winsloe for the MacDonald-McQuaid application, did, as it was posted on IRAC, did you realize there was no IRAC approval for this new site?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Development and Technology.

Mr. Brown: Madam Speaker, I spent seven years in this House asking these members about Cabinet memorandums. Each and every time in this House, the answer was the same. We are not allowed to discuss Cabinet information in the Legislature. He is fully aware that Cabinet memorandums are confidential but they are made available after 20 years. Thank you.

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

Mr. M. Currie: I guess, Madam Speaker, the hon. member is not going to answer any questions about the lights in Cornwall either, are they? Cabinet approval?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Development and Technology.

Mr. Brown: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The member has made an allegation of conflict of interest. We have jurisprudence in this country and in the world that when a person is alleged to have committed a crime, that person is allowed to be judged. This issue has gone to the Conflict of Interest Commissioner. The Conflict of Interest Commissioner has access to that information. He will review that information. He will make a decision on

whether a conflict of interest occurred and he will bring it back to you and you will file it in this Legislature. If the member wants to put the person that he alleged the conflict of interest on trial in this Legislature, then say so or does he want the case to go before the conflict of interest? He could have denied making the allegation and continued to ask the questions in this Legislature on this important issue. He chose to go the legal route to the Conflict of Interest Commissioner. That has taken it out of the Legislature for the time being and into the conflict of interest officer's hands. Let the conflict of interest officer do his job and report back to the Legislature as we allowed the conflict of interest officer to do it when an allegation was made against one of their members. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

CHEMICAL FREE ZONE FOR SCHOOLS

Mr. M. Currie: Madam Speaker, I see that he's not going to answer any of the question so I'll move to a new minister and the question today is for the Minister of Agriculture. I guess there's a lot of talk in the last little while about a one kilometre chemical free zone around our schools. I'm wondering if the Minister of Agriculture is in favour of that.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture.

Mr. LeClair: Madam Speaker, I didn't hear the last part of the question.

Speaker: The hon. Member from

Georgetown-St. Peters.

Mr. M. Currie: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The question is there's been a lot of talk lately about a one kilometre free zone for spraying around our schools. I'm wondering as Minister of Agriculture, are you in favour of that?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture.

Mr. LeClair: Well, Madam Speaker, we will be discussing that and I'll discuss that and have been with my colleague here. What I do assure the member across that whatever is best for everyone involved is what I will be in favour of.

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

BODY BURDEN TESTING

Mr. M. Currie: Madam Speaker, I don't know if I got a yes or a no or if I got any kind of an answer but I do want to, I guess, ask the minister. There has been a lot of talk lately about chemicals that are absorbed in our bodies whether through the air or water or what we eat and, certainly, there is some testing that's taking place. It's called body burden and I'm just wondering if you'd approve of that testing being done in our children in our schools.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture.

Mr. LeClair: Madam Speaker, did you say testing of children? I didn't get the question. I was talking to this person here. I'm sorry but I was talking to my colleague here but I can't hear.

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

Mr. M. Currie: The minister of development is trying to coach the Minister of Agriculture. I'll move to the new minister. I'll go to the minister of education.

Minister of education, would you agree or think that your government should start doing body burden testing on our children? It's a test that I guess determines the level of toxicity in our blood. Would you do random testing in our schools across PEI?

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

Mr. Greenan: Madam Speaker, that question is an interesting question and it's certainly something as a government we would not make hastily. We would have to get more information and in concert with the department of health and we would look into such a test. I am not familiar with it but, certainly, it is an interesting concept and I thank the hon. member for bringing it forward.

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

Mr. M. Currie: Well, Madam Speaker, at least he didn't say it was going to be under this mandate. So could you narrow that down a little bit that if you would consult with the minister of health, maybe the Premier, and some other people in regards to doing some random testing on our children, of course, with the consult of their parents on this test to determine if there are any toxic buildups. I guess the point I'm trying to make when previous governments across Canada and

United States took lead out of their gasoline and out of their paint, we saw that lead compound be reduced in the blood of our children and stuff. So I'm trying to find out is if you're prepared to do those tests now, if you, as you said, put Islanders first.

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

Mr. Greenan: Madam Speaker, I guess in response to the hon. member of the Opposition's question, if those requests come from the parents of the students, then we certainly would react since they're coming from the parents. For us, as a Legislature, to make that decision, again, we have to work with the other departments. But if the parents are requesting that, then I think we as a government should indeed look into providing that but we'll see what happens. Thank you.

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

Mr. M. Currie: Madam Speaker, to the minister of education. Are you a parent?

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

Mr. Greenan: I am indeed a parent of two adult sons.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

FUTURE YOUTH ADDICTION FACILITY

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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I'm going to go back to the health minister who we were talking a little while ago about Portage. I couldn't agree with you more about that facility that's located in rural New Brunswick. The programs are exceptional as are the staff. I actually was lucky enough to attend one of the graduation ceremonies of one of the young people who had to go there.

My question is back on the facility. You were talking about studies. My question is: Where do you believe is the best location to locate this new facility that's probably going to be very similar to Portage with its programs and services and its aftercare are modeled? Where will this new location of this facility be?

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

Mr. D. Currie: Madam Speaker, in respect to the question, to date my focus has been on the process, implementing the process, and making sure that we're validating the information in order to get to the point where we know what a quality program looks like as well as a facility. To date I've had no discussions on location or space. I know that there are a number of community groups that have brought to the attention of the department an interest but as far as my understanding, we haven't looked at an actual site or location as of today.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**Y O U T H A D D I C T I O N
SERVICES(FURTHER)**

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Mr. Minister, for that question.

Madam Speaker, my next question is to the health minister. We'll go back to talk about addiction programs for youth in Island schools. Island schools have replied with programs to help youth. What steps has your government taken to coordinate programming between education, health, and social services?

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

Mr. D. Currie: Madam Speaker, addiction services - I, personally, in my previous life, I was a school counsellor so I certainly have a tremendous amount of respect for the role the school counsellors play and the impact that they can play in working with students with addictions in our schools. I am a huge proponent of inter-governmental discussions around how we can best utilize the services with inside help, education, social services and I think that we have a tremendous amount of opportunity in front of us as we continue down the journey here looking at youth addictions to engage the Department of Education, the department of health, which is under my direction, and social services to collaboratively look at how we can best enhance services inside the school system to allow us to continue to bring those services inside, hopefully, which will be a quality facility.

Speaker: Final question. The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you health minister and Madam Speaker.

My next question is for the minister of health and social services. Could you please tell us what programs and services are available to off-Island youth when substance abuse

programs on PEI are either not suitable or have not worked for the individual, where they are, and what's the per diem rate to actually attend such a facility?

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

Mr. D. Currie: Madam Speaker, I know that Portage, we do pay for beds at Portage and we do have opportunities if services aren't successful in our capacities within the province. I know that we have had access to beds in Calgary. I don't - the name of the facility doesn't come to me but I'll bring that information back with the exact data of costs for individuals who are requiring those much needed services out-of-province.

End of Question Period