



Session:	1/63
Year:	2007
Date:	26.10.07
No:	8

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF
PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS AND ORAL QUESTION PERIOD
(PRELIMINARY PROCEEDINGS)

FOR

Friday 26 October 2007

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Speaker: We'll start today with the Member from York-Oyster Bed, the hon. Government House Leader.

JOAN TERA AWARD TO PAT COADY

Mr. Vessey: Madam Speaker, this month, October, is Autism Awareness Month throughout Canada. The Autism Society here on PEI hopes to build on the momentum of this month by honouring a long-time member of the society with the prestigious Joan Teraa Award.

This year's recipient is a continuous supporter and volunteer with families and children. Always smiling and ever positive, this lady uses her calming influence with the otherwise panic stricken families who approach her for guidance. She is indispensable to Island families with a disability. She touches the lives of all who need her. Working in a non-profit organization, she has volunteered many hours on any day of the week. Our Island children with disabilities would not have had as much success in being included in their neighbourhood schools. Families would be less stable and the future of persons with disabilities would not be what it is today if it were not for this fine individual. This lady has treated each family support case as if it were her own child. She is called the Key Maker.

Madam Speaker, this year's recipient is my good friend, Pat Coady. She has developed many partnerships within all departments of government, non-governmental organizations, and businesses across PEI. She has set a standard for advocates in our province and we can only hope that our future holds more

advocates like Pat Coady.

Well done Pat. We are very proud of you and I again want to acknowledge you and hope you enjoy today's proceedings.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

ALLIED YOUTH

Ms. Dunsford: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Last week I had the special honour of representing our Premier at a rally land dance held by the Allied Youth of Prince Edward Island and this organization is divided into junior and senior and community posts all across the Island. It's been around internationally for about 76 years but it's been in existence on PEI for about 48 years.

So due to the high percentage of youthfulness in this House, I would assume that many of us have participated in one way or another with the Allied Youth organization on Prince Edward Island, more notably the hon. Member from Alberton-Roseville. A high percentage of youthfulness, I think I said, yes.

Madam Speaker, it goes without saying that I am so impressed with these young people and how involved and concerned they are as young Canadians.

The Allied Youth In Action focuses on three main points: community involvement, healthy choices, and leadership development. All

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members are encouraged to develop activities and events, either in their communities regionally or provincially that focus on one or all of these points.

Madam Speaker, I also have had the opportunity to attend a very interesting event on the youth and the media held by the Stratford Youth Can Do Club and was invited by Tanya Craig, their director via Facebook. To remind all members to pay attention to those invitations you might receive on Facebook; they're worth it.

It is evident to me that our Island youth are certainly preparing for tomorrow. They are organized. They are cooperative and we can learn from their activities and their initiatives. For instance, this year the youth board for the Allied Youth decided that their theme was going to be GAB, which stands for give, accept and befriend. Take time to give of yourself for others, accept the new people in our lives, and of course take the time to make meaningful friendships throughout.

On behalf of my colleagues, I would like to thank and congratulate all those wonderful Canadians and Islanders.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

ADAPT COUNCIL - MARGARET PROUSE

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Our province is known for its many distinctions and unique qualities that make it one of the world's best places to live and conduct business. As we enter the 21st century, more and more Island businesses are increasing their operations and moving further out into the global community.

I rise today to pay tribute to Margaret Prouse and to the PEI ADAPT Council through the leadership of Phil Ferraro.

The PEI ADAPT Council is a not-for-profit organization that's made up of members who serve as representatives for community groups, agri-business, farm organizations, and the government. The ADAPT Council has spearheaded new initiatives to assist primary and secondary agriculture in enhancing their competitiveness in the global stage. They also work collaboratively with members of Island agriculture sector to contribute to the future directives and opportunities in the province.

Margaret Prouse is a home economist who continues to promote Island agriculture and using our terrific Island food. She writes a weekly column for *The Guardian* and I encourage everyone to read her columns and to follow her advice. My hat goes off to Margaret and also the PEI ADAPT Council.

Madam Speaker, it is important for PEI agriculture sector to work together to ensure the competitiveness of our local economy in the global marketplace. As a member of this House, I want to thank the PEI ADAPT Council under the leadership of Phil Ferraro and Margaret Prouse, a community person, a private sector home economist who continue with their hard work and dedication to keep PEI agriculture and food really important.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

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

RENOVATIONS TO PRINCE COUNTY HOSPITAL

Mr. D. Currie: Madam Speaker, I have two responses today for two questions that I took under advisement. The first one is the question around re-development at the Prince County Hospital. Just a comment, I had the opportunity to be in the Prince County Hospital this summer and I don't know if many of you have had the opportunity but it's a beautiful facility and I was quite impressed. It's the first time that I was ever in the hospital and was extremely impressed with the facility and the layout and, most importantly, the wonderful volume of health care professionals in the system.

In response to the question that was addressed yesterday to me regarding renovations, government is currently considering some renovation enhancements to the Prince County emergency department in the meeting and security aspects of the operation. Security has been an ongoing issue at Prince County Hospital in the emergency room for the last number of months with a number of serious incidents over the course of the summer. If renovations do go ahead, we do not anticipate any significant impact on daily ER operations or impacts on neighbouring emergency departments in O'Leary and Alberton.

I do want to also include that we have had some discussions with transportation and public works to address the security issues at the cost of \$500,000, which is presently a proposal for the capital budget.

ADDICTION PROCESS

The second question I want to take under advisement, it was regarding a question that was brought to my attention as the minister responsible for addiction services in the province regarding an individual. I do want to reiterate that it's difficult for me to speak about individual cases here on the floor of the House. I am also want to reiterate the nature of the confidentiality around addictions and it's very important for us as all members in the House have to realize the impact that addictions have and are having on youth and families across this province.

There is a process for an individual. The direction is if they've been denied services in this province, they have the ability to go through the appeal process. That individual can write a letter to the director of medical programs with his concerns and his issues, the process that he's followed to date and very comfortable of paying attention to that process if he's willing to redirect that process back to the system.

And I do want to continue to reiterate the importance of addiction services. I'm certainly excited as the minister responsible for addictions about the direction that we've been going in over the last number of months and that we are excited to announce that we are moving into phase two of the development of

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our youth addictions but we also are very committed to adult addiction services in this province as well. I know we have a great complement of people working in this province and working diligently and hard to deal with the volume of individuals dealing with addictions, whether it's alcohol, gambling and other related addictions.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

DOCUMENTS RE TRAFFIC LIGHTS

Premier Ghiz: Thank you very much.

Under questioning yesterday, I was asked about tabling some documents with relation to some traffic lights and I'm more than happy to table those.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Oral Questions

POLICY RE HARASSMENT COMPLAINTS

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I want to focus my questions today on the process of harassment complaints and how the Premier's office deals with them. I do not believe or I do believe this Legislature is the place to debate how government deals with harassment complaints, especially in the light of the Premier's claim to provide open and accountable government.

This morning, Madam Speaker, I was

approached by the Premier's Chief of Staff, Chris LeClair, and told by him to keep quiet on the issue of harassment. Well, he also tried that tact with Paul MacNeill of *The Eastern Graphic* and like him, it's not going to work with me either.

This is not about an individual. This is about standing up and protecting the right of the civil service workers in the province who need to have confidence that if an harassment complaint comes, that it's going to be dealt with in an appropriate manner. When did the Premier find out that this incident took place in the summer?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

And of course, this is a very serious issue that was dealt with with the utmost respect for everyone involved. I was very happy to say that the way everything was dealt with in an open and accountable manner that was respectful of the rights of all individuals involved.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Madam Speaker, it's interesting that everybody was happy with the process because I get probably at least nine out of ten calls in the run of a week on this issue by people who are very upset inside the civil service.

When did the Premier decide that the informal method of policy would take place versus the formal route?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

The hon. member should know that when complaints such as these come along, we always do our best to make sure that the victim involved can be dealt with in a manner that is respectful to all individuals and that is exactly what we did in this case.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Madam Speaker, my next question is for the Premier and I'd like to give a little example. For example, if two young people - one person is probably around 21 years of age, maybe the other is 19. They're students. They're working for the first time for the government. They're out on a stream enhancement program. One is male; one is female. The young woman whistles inappropriately at the young man and makes him feel in some way bad. What kind of process is put in place to protect that young person? When they bring the complaint back, who do they take it to and how is the decision made? That may be a case that's quite appropriate for an informal process. Could you share your thoughts on that?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: Maybe they would obviously take that case to the supervisor who would deal with it.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: My next question is for the Premier. Throughout the policy and

thank your minister sitting next to you who put the policy on the floor of this House yesterday. It describes throughout the written policy on harassment there is what is called the standard of duty, which means that anytime someone is working in provincial government, the position, the higher up you go has the responsibility to always conduct themselves in an appropriate manner. It also describes in full detail that if there's any grievance, people have to have confidence in the process. My question -

Speaker: Thank you.

Leader of the Opposition: My question is: Why was the Premier's appointed Chief of Staff, Chris LeClair, given the responsibility to discipline the Premier's appointed deputy of deputy ministers?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: Thank you very much.

Being my Chief of Staff, Mr. LeClair is responsible for the deputy ministers and everything was followed accordingly and, in fact, went above and beyond and I would like to congratulate everyone involved in this process for being above board and making sure that everyone's rights and privileges were followed and to make sure that people's personal privacy was more than respected.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

My question is for the Premier. Is Chris LeClair's name signed on the letter of offer

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that you gave out to each of the deputy ministers with their roles and responsibilities and their line of accountability? Also, what are the policies and procedures for deputy ministers surrounding harassment complaints?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

When it comes to dealing with issues such as these, we take them with the utmost respect and make sure that we respect the rights of all individuals.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Madam Speaker, my next question is for the Premier. Why did it take over five weeks for the Premier's office to decide on the discipline that was handed out?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Obviously, it didn't. When we were involved in these issues, everything was done in a manner in accordance with taking in people's personal lives. All people involved, including the person who made the complaints, were very satisfied with the process, were involved in the process, and I suggest that perhaps if the Leader of the Opposition thinks that she has an issue here, perhaps she should sit down with the hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock. I'm sure she'd love to sit down with her and go over the process. The only thing she's doing here is trying to score cheap, political points

on an unfortunate situation that happened that was dealt with the utmost respect for everyone involved.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I think everybody knows in this House that my career has been as a career civil servant so when I'm asking these questions, I'm asking them on behalf of all the women, especially, and the young men and the people who work in government, over 3,000 in one union alone who are wondering why this is being swept under the rug. If it happened to anybody else, the process would be quite different. My question: Would the Premier please bring to the floor of the House a copy of the letter of reprimand that was used to discipline his deputy minister.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

I don't know how things can be swept under the rug. When a complaint came forward, we made sure that that person's rights and privileges were followed. We made sure that there was a letter of reprimand and I'm not sure why the Leader of the Opposition is choosing to go down this road. If she has some more detailed questions - and perhaps when it comes to issues such as these, the thing that is the most important and that we have to make sure is that the people involved in it, especially the victim, that their concerns are met. That is

the number one priority when it comes down to issues such as these and I really encourage the Leader of the Opposition if she thinks she has some problems with the way things were handled here - I don't want to get into people's personal matters. If she thinks that there was a problem with the way things were handled, she should speak to the people who were involved in the situation. They said all along that they believe this situation was handled in an appropriate manner and I'm very proud of our staff in our office for dealing on an issue in such a caring and compassionate manner and I really wish the Leader of the Opposition would show some respect and some tact. And if she really has some more questions on this, I suggest that she perhaps ask the Member from Stratford-Kinlock who would be more than happy to answer any of her questions.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

My question is for the Premier. Was there ever any legal advice sought?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Everything was dealt with in an above board manner and I congratulate all the people involved in making sure that this situation was dealt with accordingly.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: I take that as a no but my question is for the Premier. A young

24-year-old man has been harassed, for example, in some way by a senior director. Both individuals are employed by government and, according to policy guidelines, once the young man makes his complaint, he has to take it to the most senior person who happens to be the deputy minister who works over the, is the supervisor for the director. Well, my question: What happens if this young person, both of them work in the department of health? How comfortable do you think this young man would feel after the way this case was handled by Chris LeClair? What are the odds that he would actually come forward with the complaint?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

You know, this is a very serious situation. I think that too often these things do get brushed under the carpet and people don't deal with it in an effective manner. Too often you hear people involved in these situations where they say that their rights were not protected, that they felt that when they made a complaint that people were not respectful of their issues and their rights. Well, here we have a case where the person who made the complaint said that they were involved in the process the whole way, that they were very satisfied with it and I think that that sends a great message to people out there that if they have the fortitude and the strength to make these complaints that they will be dealt with in an effective and efficient manner. I think the only thing the Leader of the Opposition is doing today is discouraging people from having the courage and the strength to come forward because people such as her put something like this on

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the line and I find it shameful and so disrespectful.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Excuse me. When you think of the position of deputy minister and then deputy minister who is chair of all deputy ministers, that is the ultimate authority in the civil service. In light of an employee's right, the 3,000, their right to be not harassed in the workplace, does the Premier still support his Chief of Staff, Chris LeClair's decision to use a politically expedient solution?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: Thank you and here's where we have the problem with the Leader of the Opposition. She's talking politically expedient solutions. That is ridiculous. It's not true. It's unfounded. The only thing she's trying to do is score cheap, political points by getting down in the mud and throwing mud around. I find it absolutely disrespectful to this House, disrespectful to the people involved and it's really quite unfortunate that she's going down this route and I suggest that perhaps she take a look at herself in the mirror before she decides to come into this House and ask these questions to really decide what her priorities are.

Mr. Brown: Right on.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Madam Speaker, my next question is to the minister of health.

When were you informed about the investigation concerning your senior deputy minister?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Everything was dealt with in accordance manner.

Speaker: Order.

Premier Ghiz: And I'm very proud of the way that this issue was handled and anyone who makes a complaint, we will always make sure that the rights of the individuals are always protected.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Madam Speaker, my next question is for the minister of health. I understand that you were told during a regular Caucus meeting that your senior deputy minister was under investigation. I should say that that may be when all members of your Caucus found out about the investigation. I'm also told that you were very upset. What were you upset about? Was it the way the process was mishandled or were you upset that you were kept in the dark?

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

Mr. D. Currie: Madam Speaker, I certainly want to continue to reiterate the process that was put in place. I have tremendous confidence in the way the situation was handled. I, once again, to reiterate and I stand firm on my conviction here that these issues as I alluded to earlier in my response to a question that you gave me yesterday. Addiction issues are personal issues and I will continue to respect the individuals involved. I have confidence in the way the process was handled. I am the minister responsible for addiction services in this province and I will continue to stand tall on our ability to provide supports and enhance services in this province to all individuals, irregardless of their level of income in this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: My next question is for the Premier. Why did the Premier's office only speak to two people and why did it take five weeks to talk to these two people involved?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

As the hon. member knows, there were two people involved and we wanted to make sure that we were dealing with this in the best possible way to respect people's rights and privileges and I'm happy to say that the way things were handled the person who made the complaint involved was very happy with the process that was undertaken. And it's unfortunate that the Leader of the Opposition

wants to try and make political hay of an unfortunate situation but, obviously, we know that perhaps these are the types of issues that the hon. Leader of the Opposition thinks she can score some political hay on.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Chris LeClair was the head of the transition team which lobbied for the deputy minister to come back to the Government of Prince Edward Island from his federal government position. Should he have been put in charge of this investigation or is there an obvious conflict of interest here?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: Absolutely not.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

REPRIMAND OF DEPUTY MINISTER

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

My next question is for the Premier. What conditions for continued employment are attached to the reprimand that was issued? Is it the intent for the Premier to retain his deputy minister in the same capacity as deputy of health when he returns to the province?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: That will be explored at that time.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

It's my understanding that the Premier's office only made this public after the staff on the fifth floor went to *The Eastern Graphic* editor, Paul MacNeill, to try and intimidate him similar to what was done to me this morning. Was it ever the government's intention to publicly announce that the senior deputy minister had been reprimanded?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

That was placed on a personal file and being a former bureaucrat, I'm sure that the hon. Leader of the Opposition knows that when it comes to people's personal files, those cannot be released.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

From the sounds of that there was never any intention to release that there was any issues with the senior bureaucrat, the most senior position in the province.

You know, at the time the Premier had the choice to speak to HRA to get advice and then to set up the proper formal investigation. If it had of been handled that way, none of this would be happening today.

OPERATION OF HEALTH DEPARTMENT'

My question is to the minister of health. Knowing that your senior deputy minister was under investigation and subject to disciplinary action, what steps did you take to ensure the efficient operation of the largest department, that being the department of health?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

And through the whole process, I must say that our, the bureaucracy was very professional in this whole manner and we were fortunate enough that the former deputy minister, Mr. Dave Riley, was able to step into the position where he was undertaking to do a review of another program and we're very happy that that support network is there.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you.

My question is to the minister of health. Knowing your senior deputy minister was under investigation and subject to disciplinary action, what steps did you take to ensure the efficiency and continued operation of the largest department, that being the department of health?

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

Mr. D. Currie: Madam Speaker, as I continue to reiterate as the minister responsible for addictions, addiction services in the province

are a huge priority and I take them very seriously. In my previous life, I worked very closely with youth and families that were dealing with addictions and I saw the potential and damage that addictions do to individuals in this province. My priority and this responsibility I have as minister responsible as the Leader of the Opposition alludes to, the biggest responsibility in government is to continue to come into my responsibility every day and provide the leadership and direction needed inside our departments: health, seniors, and social services to provide quality services to all Islanders across this province. There's strong communications. I continue to support workplace environment that is positive and conducive. We have a volume of directors in our system in both departments that have managers that monitor situations on a day-to-day basis and I'm very pleased with the present state of the departments and the direction and my responsibilities as the minister responsible.

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

LIGHTS AT CORNWALL AND WINSLOE(FURTHER)

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

A question for the Premier. I asked you yesterday if you were going to table the design work and tender work for two sets of lights. Did you bring that with you today?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: Yes.

Mr. M. Currie: Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

FISHERMEN'S ASSOCIATION MEETING

Mr. Bagnall: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

My first question is for the minister of fisheries. Recently, the Southern Kings and Queens Fishermen's Association held a meeting at Poole's Corner and discussed the fishery in the southern strait. Can you give the House an update on that meeting?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

Mr. Campbell: I was not in attendance at that meeting.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: Were part of your staff in attendance?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

Mr. Campbell: Not to my knowledge.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: Thank you.

I really find that disturbing because we all know that the southern fishery in the Northumberland Strait is in dire straits in the fishing industry. They're in financial difficulties. There's all kinds of problems there

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and the minister can't take enough time to attend their meetings. Why were you not in attendance?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

Mr. Campbell: I didn't receive an invitation.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: As a minister of fisheries, you have to wait for an invitation to attend a fishermen's meeting. It was advertised in *The Graphic*. It was advertised in *The Guardian*. I mean, what more do you need? You're the minister of fisheries.

Speaker: Do you have a question, hon. member? Is there a question in there?

Mr. Bagnall: I'm getting there.

Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Bagnall: Why were not in attendance? Why were you not there?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

Mr. Campbell: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker.

Just to reiterate, I didn't receive an invitation and coming from a fishing background, I know that I've attended numerous meetings over the years with fishermen where they chose not to have government officials at meetings. Maybe there's some things that they want to discuss, formulate their ideas, bring them forward and

then consult with the government. You know, I'm not just going to go to a meeting where I'm not invited in case, you know, that my presence isn't required by the group.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

DREDGING OF STREAMS & RIVERBEDS

Mr. Watts: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

My question today is for the minister of the environment. The bays and rivers on Prince Edward Island are getting shallower and shallower every year. A number of reasons for these conditions are, two of such are runoff from farmlands and waste from aquaculture. Because of those shallow waters, the penetration of the sun's rays is adding to the tremendous growth of plant life on the bay and riverbeds. As representatives of the people of this Island, I believe we should be taking the initiative to develop a schedule of dredging activities to minimize -

Speaker: Is there a question in there, hon. member?

Mr. Watts: Yes, Madam Speaker, there is a question. So I would ask the Minister of Agriculture, although I know, Mr. Minister, that the dredging responsibility is with the federal government. So would you work with the federal government and, in particular, the department of public works in investigating such a program of dredging and I would also suggest, Mr. Minister, that if this goes ahead that you would consider Winter River and

Winter Bay as a pilot project?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment, Energy and Forestry.

Mr. Webster: Madam Speaker, thank you.

I want to recognize the hon. member for that question. That's a very good question. I want to inform Islanders that clean and healthy streams and water on Prince Edward Island is a high priority for this government. I do understand that all the water that comes into Charlottetown for use for domestic use does come from the Winter River system, which is very, very important to Charlottetown. I have not had any discussions with the city of Charlottetown but I would be only too glad to sit down with the city and discuss that situation and how dredging might affect their water supply.

Prince Edward Island's major water supply does all come from groundwater on Prince Edward Island, 100% of it actually. Nitrates are a risk and a threat, if you like, to Island groundwater. I want to inform the House that we are carrying out a nitrate commission led by Armand DesRoches, which is going to have a report back on June 1st on water and how that affects our estuaries, rivers and streams.

I also want to inform the House that we did purchase a portable nitrate tester that can go in the trunk of a car or a pickup truck. It will be going around to five different sites scheduled on PEI over the next two or three weeks, which will actually - you'll be able to - people from that community would be able to come into that area where it's duly advertised and get water tests done free and immediate so they can go home. That will give us a better

snapshot of what that situation is like.

That all connects back to our estuaries, rivers, and streams. Nitrates are building up. That is - we know that. We think that anyway and that is actually causing growth which slows the waterflow in the rivers and streams which is where the dredging may come into play.

This whole issue has to be looked at. I'm only too prepared, very glad to sit down with the Winter River people and the city of Charlottetown and all other stakeholders to address this particular issue.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Watts: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

A supplementary question: If this project goes ahead and is deemed to be successful or some success, then would you consider expanding this to other bays and rivers on PEI?

An Hon. Member: Good point.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment, Energy and Forestry.

Mr. Webster: Madam Speaker, certainly, this is a new idea that I've only been made aware of in the last couple of days. We will be looking at that. We'd have to be very, very careful of getting in and dredging somewhere, stirring up silt when the city of Charlottetown was pumping water because, first thing, we've got a dirty water problem. That would all have to be taken into account. We would have to have engineers to decide if this is doable. Is it

affordable? Obviously, we want to maintain the high quality water for all Islanders, including the city of Charlottetown. You know, we could address this in many different ways. I'm not - I haven't been made aware that any other sites have had this interest but, again, I'd be only too glad to sit down and discuss that sort of an option with anyone.

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

IMPROVEMENTS TO PRINCE COUNTY PARKS

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

My question is for the Minister of Tourism. Madam Minister, could the minister tell us what are the improvements which were made to two provincial parks in District 23 Tyne Valley-Linkletter; the first is Green Park and the second is Linkletter Provincial Park?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Tourism.

Ms. Docherty: Madam Speaker, I'm just going to get some briefing notes here. In regards to the two parts that are mentioned, we have in our budget for Green Park \$132,500 and Linkletter \$220,000 for renovations and upgrades. Currently, we have this past summer in Green Park built a new park office. Unfortunately, it wasn't ready for - there were some issues with the construction but it is now finished and ready to open in the spring. In Linkletter, there was a new park office open and was actually used and I believe that we have a new washroom in Linkletter and next time we're going to be putting in some three-way sites. I'm not sure of the number but that's what we will be doing there.

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

My supplementary question is to the same minister. I also have in my area a day park in Belmont and the residents there have made it quite clear to me that they are wishing for that to remain under the guise of the provincial parks program. The previous government refrained from putting any funding into day parks until 2010.

Speaker: Is there a question, hon. member?

Ms. Biggar: Yes, Madam Speaker. Due to the state of disrepair of that park in Belmont, can the Minister of Tourism give assurance to this House that maintenance will be updated so that the present facilities at this location won't continue to go into a state of disrepair to the point where they won't be able to be used?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Tourism.

Ms. Docherty: Madam Speaker, we were made aware of more than just Belmont Park that there were some issues with lack of maintenance over the past few years. We're going to be spending the winter looking at all of our parks, both 24/7 parks as well as our day use parks and we'll definitely make sure that Belmont Park, like all the others, will be considered as to how we can improve the current situation.

Speaker: Only two supplementary questions are allowed.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**OPERATION OF HEALTH
DEPARTMENT(FURTHER)**

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

My next question goes to the minister of health. Knowing your senior deputy minister was under investigation and subject to disciplinary action, what steps did you take to ensure the efficient operation of your department? But I want you to remember back. If you only found out about this incident in September in O'Leary in the summer the hospital had to close. There wasn't enough nurses. The number of nurse vacant positions across the province July and August, the number of doctors who have left - you find out about this in September. What steps were in place or we can expect to be in place to insure that you have confidence in how your department is being run?

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

Mr. D. Currie: On June 13th I was given the honour and the huge responsibility of taking on one of the biggest challenges in government, the Minister of Health, Social Services and Seniors. At that point in time, I accepted the responsibility and have continued to on a day to day basis provide the leadership and direction. I continue to face head on the challenges that health care faces in this province. We continue to demonstrate on a day to day basis the work that's being done, whether it's the commitment to acute care service, the continually intense effort to recruit health care professionals across this province. There's no hidden secret that health care in this province and across this country is a huge

challenge. This government has embraced and continues and will continue to embrace and provide quality service for across this province.

I do want to share statistics with the Leader of the Opposition and these are very interesting statistics as I go through this journey as the minister responsible. From 2002 to April of 2007, the average vacancy rate of physicians in this province was 16.1. Today in this province, the physician complement is at an all-time high at 2010. But the most important statistic that I want to share on this floor today is as of the first week in September, the first week in September our vacancy rate for physicians was at 9.6 at an all-time low over the last seven years that that administration was in power. Now I know ongoing day to day challenges. Physicians are coming. Physicians are leaving. We know that in the last number of months we had a physician leave for personal reasons because of illness in India. He had to return home to his mother. We also had an issue with the physician in Souris who left because his wife wanted to return back to Windsor, Ontario, to get closer to her family. We had another issue in Montague where a physician retired. These are ongoing challenges.

I had the pleasure last night to watch CBC News and, once again, it reiterates the challenges. But I, as minister, am going to embrace the challenges and continue to provide quality health care in this province for all Islanders and work diligently under my responsibilities and the advantage I have is I've got a wonderful department and a wonderful, committed group of health professionals and I just want to conclude with that comment today.

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Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

My question to the minister of health was in regards to the five weeks when you didn't know what was going on. There was an internal investigation going on, a lot of serious things that were taking place. What steps since that has taken place that you had to review some work because, you know, consider it. If there's issues, then you have to make sure with due diligence that in the five weeks that you didn't know what was going on internally that all other matters that were taking place were appropriate and decisions were appropriate by your deputy. What assurances did you put in place?

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

Mr. D. Currie: Madam Speaker, every day that I come in to my responsibility, I've got a huge, huge responsibility and I continue to reiterate to all Islanders from Tignish to Souris that health care is a huge priority within this government. I have the great pleasure to work with seven directors in the department of health and my priority every day is to come in and make sure that health care issues are dealt with in a timely, professional fashion across this province. Hospital issues, health care issues are very serious matters and they are a

huge priority every day in our government. Once again, we have people in place. We have great leadership. We have directors. We have managers that have the responsibility to supervise the operation of not only inside the department but facilities across this province and their priority is to make sure that these facilities are well run, that individuals work professionally together and that there's a professional level of respect. And every day it's a priority to make sure that we are at our best and we continue to deliver and deal with the issues and the realities that not only our government are dealing with but the realities that governments across this country and the realities of issues that that previous administration has dealt with for the last 11 years.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

My next question is to the minister of health. June 12th or 13th you were sworn in. Two thousand and seven, May 28th your government was elected. This is one of your first areas you had to deal with. It sounds like you're extremely used to making decisions without your deputy because you keep referring to the great directors, the great managers, et cetera. At the time, you had a deputy minister. You also had a former deputy minister who was doing special projects. My question is: What steps did you take to make sure in the five weeks - you didn't know about this incident until September - that all the other work that was done under the direction of this deputy was competent work?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health, Social

Services and Seniors.

Mr. D. Currie: Madam Speaker, in respect to the question, as we discussed over and over again, certainly, as the minister responsible for health, I have certainly respected the process and certainly respected that the individual that's in discussion here today needed supports and is off getting those supports to find a better place in his life.

My initial response when my previous deputy needed supports, which we supported, the first responsibility was to continue to respect the immense challenges and responsibilities that our department had. We were fortunate enough to have our former deputy was doing some work on the provincial territorial file which I'll be the lead minister on for health care issues in Canada starting in January. He obliged to taking on the responsibility so the priority was to continue to move the agenda forward. As a minister, I feel very comfortable with my ability to have an appreciation for the challenges and the responsibility to continue to move the agenda forward because it's a huge agenda and it's important to remember that health care in this province has to be a number one priority over personal issues which are ultimately as important as well. But health care for all Islanders, the 138,000 people who need service in this province were and will continue to be the priority from this day onward.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

We spoke about the deputy minister Dave Riley who, I believe, assumed his role back as senior deputy in September, which suggests that's exactly when you did find out about this internal problem. My question is for the Premier. After the mishandling and attempt to cover up this situation, what assurances do you give civil servants today in the province that their interests are going to be protected? What confidence will a young woman or a man, for that matter, if they have a complaint when they lodge it against a manager, a director, or a member of senior management, that they're going to be taken seriously?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

And I always say that actions speak louder than words and I'm a firm believer that when you have someone involved who makes a complaint who says that they're satisfied with the way the complaint was handled and the outcome that was achieved by that complaint, I think that sets an incredible example for our civil servants and for everyone in society that when they do have the courage to come forward and make the complaint that those complaints will be dealt with in a timely and efficient and effective manner. And I think that's a great, great responsibility to be able to have and it's a great responsibility to be able to deliver on.

But if the hon. Leader of the Opposition is so concerned about the rights and feelings of the civil service, I think perhaps she should take into consideration the harm that she's now doing to the people who were involved in this situation and to the families involved and

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perhaps if she did that, it would be much easier for people to come forward in the future who do want to file a complaint.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

My question is for the Premier and I couldn't agree with him more about the mishandling of this particular incident. If it had of been done in the proper way, none of this would be happening today but my question is: Will the Premier quickly get some advice from HR Associates or wherever else legally to be able to get help from today on how you're going to proceed? How is the Premier intending to get the trust and confidence back to the civil service in regards to harassment? My last call I took last night was from the lady who reminded me: what's going to happen when this deputy comes back as the deputy of health? What advice are you going to take from whom? Hopefully, it's not from Chris LeClair.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

And I think the civil service has the utmost confidence in the way that things were handled and we handled this in an open and accountable manner. A lot of administrations might have just brushed it under the rug. We chose to deal with our senior deputy minister in a way that any civil servant would be dealt with. And I'm not sure where the Leader of the

Opposition is coming from but I can assure you that I haven't received any complaints and I'm very proud on the way that everything was handled.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

**FISHERMEN'S ASSOCIATION
MEETING(FURTHER)**

Mr. Bagnall: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

And I guess to the minister of fisheries again. The reason I didn't bring this up two weeks ago because I thought I'd give you a chance to get up to speed on what's going on in the Northumberland Strait fishery. Have you had a chance to review the draft plan of the organization in there dealing with the conservation and protection of their fishery?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

Mr. Campbell: I'm not sure whether the hon. member is referring to the Northumberland Strait working group report or not. If that is his question, that report was presented to deputies. Perhaps I could ask the hon. member to repeat his question.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: The meeting of the Southern Kings and Queens fishery organization had a meeting that you didn't attend or you didn't have a staff in attendance to do. They brought a draft report of a conservation plan to deal

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with the areas of low catches and in the area. Do you support their plan?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

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

First of all, I would like to take the opportunity to applaud the hon. Premier who, in his wisdom, has fulfilled his platform commitment to create a full Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture here in this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Campbell: And what that has allowed me to do as full-time minister is to visit all stakeholders at their place of work in the industry. I've been in the water meeting with oysters fishermen, mussel growers. I've been in the seafood processing plants. I've been around to see many, many, many of the stakeholders in the industry and the message that I've been hearing from those stakeholders over and over is that they are very, very appreciate to have both a full department and a minister who gets out into the field and visits them because the message I've been hearing from them is with the past administration, we have never seen the minister at our place of work and they're very appreciative to have me visit.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

And in response to the hon. member's question, I have been forwarded a copy of the report from the Northumberland Strait group or the Southern Kings and Queens group. I have reviewed that report and I would

welcome the opportunity to sit with this group, with the Southern Kings and Queens group at any time to sit down and address their concerns included in this report.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

MATTER OF PRIVILEGE

Ms. Dunsford: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I rise, pursuant to Rule 44 and on a matter of privilege, if I may. I feel it unfortunate that the Leader of the Opposition is choosing to undermine my integrity by assuming that the process in this case that we speak about of a complaint that I made toward a deputy minister is flawed. She is ignoring a very crucial fact that has been stated many times in the media and now in this House. The fact that this process took place was one that was followed properly but equally as important, a process that I was involved in. By questioning this process, she is in fact saying that I'm lying and I not only resent this but I refute it. As well by trying to score political points, she does indeed make it more difficult for anyone to come forward in the future who has a complaint like this, of this nature.

I do say shame but at the same time, I invite the Leader of the Opposition to perhaps share a few words with me if she so wishes. As a matter of fact, I invite the entire Opposition if they so wish. Perhaps at that time, they may want to share with me how when they were in government, the Opposition at the time dealt

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with issues of addictions. I propose that we may find we may have some similarities when it comes to process.

Madam Speaker, I thank you for allowing me to take this time to make my statement.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

End of Question Period.