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

FOR

Tuesday 30 October 2007

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Speaker: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

INDUCTEES TO PEI CURLING HALL OF FAME

Ms. Sherry: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Thursday, November 15th is going to be an important day in the life of Prince Edward Island sports and, in particular, the sport of curling. On that day, the PEI Curling Hall of Fame and Museum will hold its inaugural induction ceremony at the Silver Fox Curling and Yacht Club in Summerside. The first ten inductees will be honoured on this occasion for their outstanding contribution to the sport of curling.

All of us here today know the worldwide recognition the sport of curling receives on television and in international news coverage. Canada is especially singled out as a world leader and champion of this winter sport. Madam Speaker, the participants from our small island of PEI are quietly joining the ranks of the heralded champions of this promoted sport.

The first inductees to the PEI Curling Hall of Fame will include notable athletes, such as: Thane Campbell, Doug Cameron, Cathy Dillon, George Dillon, Robert Dillon, Elizabeth Linkletter, D. Alex MacDonald, Kay MacDonald, and Helen and Hugh Robbins. All Islanders are justly proud of these individuals and because of their abilities, sportsmanship, and characters, my colleagues and I salute them and wish ongoing success to the Prince Edward Island Curling Hall of Fame.

Speaker: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

TRACADIE CROSS DINNER THEATRE

Mr. Watts: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Last week I had the distinct pleasure of attending a dinner theatre presentation at the Tracadie Cross Community Centre. I must say this was the perfect example of what the word community is all about.

The residents of that area cooked the meal. They served the food. They performed the skits and they provided the musical entertainment as the closing act. All of this was done in the name of community spirit, togetherness, and volunteering while providing a terrific meal and an evening of topnotch entertainment and this was done to a sold out house.

Congratulations must go to all who participated; however, one person clearly deserves special mention and she was the writer-director of this program, Mary MacDonald. And about the best I can say about her tremendous work on this presentation is: Cecil B. DeMille, eat your heart out.

This band of entertainers has informed me that they will perform free of charge for any group or any organization looking for a popular fundraising event. Countless hours were donated in practicing and rehearsing and all

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proceeds from this popular event went to the Lions Club, the community center, and the Parish of Saint Bonaventure.

I am proud to represent these generous people and I would urge all communities on PEI to be as actively involved in making our island just a little bit better place to live.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

CITY RANKED NUMBER TWO FOR BUSINESS

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

I would like to today to congratulate the city of Charlottetown for being named the number two city to do business in Canada. I think this is a great accomplishment, not only by the mayor and city councillors but also by a lot of other organizations including the private sector, our downtown business association, Charlottetown Area Development Corporation and, of course, ACOA, and I'd be remiss if I didn't mention Business Development Incorporated. They implemented a number of tax incentives a number of years ago to attract and bring businesses to PEI so my hats off to all of the people that have reached these accomplishments. I think it's a great honour.

Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Questions by Members starting with

Responses to Questions Taken as Notice.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition. The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

COST OF GOVERNMENT VEHICLES

Mr. Bagnall: Thank you.

Madam Speaker, in Question Period, I had asked the Provincial Treasurer to give me a list of vehicles. I did get a list of six vehicles that were purchased but it didn't say who or how much or anything else on any of that information, just a straight six names. I guess my question to the Provincial Treasurer: Did you purchase a new vehicle?

Speaker: The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

Mr. Sheridan: Madam Speaker, no.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: And I guess why I wanted to ask that question is there's no information as to how many cars, just the amount of cars and I'm wondering if the leader could, the treasurer could bring me back the number of cars. I know I got that already but who purchased them and how much they were. That must be standard quotes on all of those.

Speaker: The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

Mr. Sheridan: Madam Speaker, I will table that. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Bagnall: Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-

Kilmuir.

CHARGES UNDER ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION ACT

Mr. Bagnall: My question goes to the minister of environment. Can the minister of environment tell this House how many charges were laid under section 10 and 11 of *The Environmental Protection Act*, in 2007?

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

Mr. Webster: Madam Speaker, I can table that. I don't have it with me but I did see the numbers.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: Madam Speaker, there were 17 charges laid so, obviously, charges can be laid under that act.

My next question to the minister: Can you tell me how many charges have been laid since 2002 under *The Environmental Protection Act*?

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

Mr. Webster: Madam Speaker, I can't quote the exact number but I did see the numbers. I can't recall that many but I will table that as well.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

DUNK RIVER FISH KILLS

Mr. Bagnall: Actually, it was 54, Madam Speaker. I know the minister has a pretty good job reading the answers when he has questions from his members here but it seems like any time there's any questions asked from this side of the House, he can't answer that.

Speaker: Can the minister of environment find out - when did the minister of environment find out that his family was involved with the fish kills in the Dunk River?

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

Mr. Webster: Madam Speaker, I made a conscious decision to actually let my enforcement officers handle that. It wasn't until, I think it was late August, maybe the 20th or the 21st before I was made aware of the fish kills and one of them was not with regards to the fish kill but with regards to a headland violation with my brother.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST ISSUE

Mr. Bagnall: Did you farm with your brothers, Bertram and Jason?

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

Mr. Webster: Madam Speaker, I run a separate operation. I was incorporated approximately 10 or 11 years ago. I have separate bills, separate debts, totally separate financial statement. We do share equipment

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with my brother and my nephew, yes, I did.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: Is Troy your son?

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

Mr. Webster: Yes, Madam Speaker. I am pretty much retired now but my son is running my own business.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: I know as minister in the last number of years in the last 15 months, any issue that came up when staff or anybody else were investigating, the first person they come to when they do that is the minister. So how can you stand in this House and tell the Legislative Assembly that you knew nothing about any of these issues until August?

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

Mr. Webster: Madam Speaker, I knew there were violations on the headlands on 10 to 12 cases. I knew my officers were investigating. The minister does not get involved with the names. I believe early on it's a violation for the minister to be involved in the names. I do not need to know that. All I need to know is that my people are operating in a professional manner as they should.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-

Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: Madam Speaker, the question is not about whether the staff were operating in a professional manner; it's whether the minister was.

When you were notified that your brother was involved in this issue, why did you not distance yourself from the case and walk away? Did you not feel you were in direct conflict of interest with an issue related to an operation that you had taken part in for the last number of years? Should you have not distanced yourself? Are you not in complete conflict of interest here?

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

Mr. Webster: Madam Speaker, I want to remind the hon. member that he just said: Look. Get involved. Know who the persons are. I thought that's - now he's coming back and saying that I should walk away. Well, I didn't do it in the first place. I kept my bounds where I needed to be and that's what I did. I think that was the professional thing for a minister to do.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: Madam Speaker, it's great to have all the clappers over there. The \$5,000 clappers are in action again.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

An Hon. Member: That's copywrited.

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Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Isn't it true that when you found the information and your brother was involved that you decided to make your staff at the Attorney General's office look by it by saying that no charges could be laid under this legislation so that you could protect your brother?

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

Mr. Webster: Madam Speaker, I want to be extremely clear with the hon. member. I did not interfere in any way. I let the justice system prevail. My staff went to the Crown Prosecutor and said: We want to lay some charges. This is what they tell me after the fact and I accepted that ruling. I would never, never, never interfere with the judicial system in this province.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: That's good but why would the minister come out ahead of the Attorney General and announce that no charges were going to be laid and which is exactly what happened?

An Hon. Member: No, it's not.

HEADLAND VIOLATIONS

Mr. Bagnall: Yes, it is. Anyway, Madam Speaker, in 2002 there were over 200 warnings issued for *The Environmental*

Protection Act under the same thing on fish kills. And in those 200 warnings in the operation that you've been involved with for the last number of years was also issued a warning for violation to headlands at that time. Working in that operation and being such an environmentally friendly person, why would you not -

Speaker: Is there a question, hon. member?

Mr. Bagnall: I was just starting the -

Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Bagnall: Why would you not be prudent in your planting knowing that there was already a warning issued against the operation that you would go out and be charged again under this issue?

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

Mr. Webster: Madam Speaker, I want to advise the hon. member that I am not aware of myself ever issued a warning under a headland violation and/or any member of my family.

An Hon. Member: Oh, oh!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: Madam Speaker, I have that information right here. Investigation enforcement, on detailed list for warnings issued under section 10 and 11, 2002, under section 11.1(9)(a), Jason Webster was issued a warning under this act. So why would you -

An Hon. Member: That's his nephew.

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Mr. Bagnall: They still ran the same operation. They used the same equipment.

Speaker: Order.

Mr. Bagnall: They planted together. They worked together. There were operating and worked together. Why would you not correct that issue? Why would you continue to break the law?

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

Mr. Webster: Madam Speaker, I want to advise the House that I run a separate, separate business. I can show you. I can table today, if you like, my acreage report planted as records from PEI Quality Institute and CFIA where all my acres are registered. I can table that today if the hon. member wishes to have it.

I want to advise the hon. member that he grew up next to my grandfather. His grandfather and my grandfather were next door neighbours in the Twenties and Thirties. His grandfather and my grandfather shared equipment. That fact still goes on today in this province. That is a normal practice between farms. I share equipment with my brother and my nephew. That is the extent of our business.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: Madam Speaker, sharing equipment is a practice but when you walk in and you plant potatoes, you are on the digger or the planter or hauling (Indistinct) and you are planting potatoes with your brother and

your son is and you work together. You are doing it. To say that you have no involvement in farming whatsoever, you're trying to cross, dot the i's and cross the t's here but the actual fact is - minister, you know very well. You knew what your brother had planted on the headland. You knew all about this. You knew about the warning.

Speaker: And do you have a question, hon. member?

Mr. Bagnall: Why did you not remove yourself from this file? There'd be no questions today if you'd have moved. You're in direct conflict.

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

Mr. Webster: Madam Speaker, what I did - I want to advise the hon. member that what I did this summer in carrying out the duties of the minister of environment, I believe, was prudent. I did it the way a professional should do it. I've been accused of charging my brother. If I'd went and said once I knew: Oh, he's okay. Don't charge him. I didn't do that. I sent my brother to the gallows because of a matter of principle. I let my officials go forward which I should do and charge my brother if he was in violation. He does not believe he's in violation. He doesn't think the interpretation is accurate as you can interpret but I followed proper procedure and served the public like I believe I ought to have, Madam Speaker.

Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

BIOGRAPHY ON INTERNET

Mr. Bagnall: Madam Speaker, if he had of been that conscious of the issue, he would have charged his brother rather than issued a minister's order because he knows that a minister's order is not the same as laying a charge and he took the easy route here and didn't charge him but give him a minister's order which just allows him to clean up the mess that he made.

When did you get instructions from Chris LeClair to change your biography on the Internet?

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

Mr. Webster: Madam Speaker, because my business - all businesses today actually go for quotes for inputs like parts, fuel, those kinds of things so when I shared equipment with my brother, I took - we would go out for quotes on fuel for a year, two years tender as most people do. So we put our total volume of litres for diesel or gasoline together to get a better quote. The actual document that we used from my biography was pretty much along the lines of the actual document that we would submit for quotes to get a better pricing on our inputs. That biography got rolled over into the political biography, if you like, that was taken forward when I decided to run for the Liberal Party of Prince Edward Island. So that biography never got changed so we felt in order not to mislead anyone in any way, we should go and change it and we did.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

DUNK RIVER FISHKILLS(FURTHER)

Mr. Bagnall: That's all well and good but it's funny how it's changed after the issue comes out that your brother was the one who was being charged for the fish kill on the Dunk River or for the headlands. But the problem being here is that we get more pesticides running off going into the Dunk River and by violating the protection act, we had a major fish kill in the Dunk River. What are you going to do with the Dunk River to correct that fish kill? I mean it's closed now. The recreational fishers, there's four people who have lost money doing this so why are you - what are you going to do about this?

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

Mr. Webster: Madam Speaker, I want to advise the hon. member that we take the issue of fish kills very, very seriously. I want to advise the House that it was his party that put the buffer zone legislation in place with relationship to *The Environmental Protection Act* in 2001 and 2002.

I want to advise the House that this act is flawed and deficiencies in it to no bitter end that very few people out in the system can actually interpret what the act says. This is the problem we have, poor workmanship that went on for quite a number of years. What I'm doing is in March or April I wanted to unveil an environmental enhancement package or program for Prince Edward Island that will

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have an analysis component to it that will address buffer zones, as they need to be addressed. We're all aware that the Premier has asked for a commission on nitrates. That report will be back on June 10th or 15th. That will be another component of my watershed enhancement package that I plan to deliver. I have about four or five components of this environmental enhancement package that I want to take forward over the next two years to solve the problem. I believe I can do that. The government here is committed to doing that and we think we can deliver that piece of business that this province really, really needs right now. I also - our government plus the federal government have each allotted \$100,000, \$200,000 over two years for fish restocking on Prince Edward Island. We're going to do that piece next summer. I believe we're on the road to recovery on PEI. We have to. We cannot have issues of pesticides in streams any more, Madam Speaker, thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

CHARGES UNDER ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION ACT(FURTHER)

Mr. Bagnall: Madam Speaker, I guess it's easy to say that you can't charge anybody under the act. We already know that there were charges made under the act, under these clauses in the act. We also know that there were convictions made under it so why when your brother was involved, why did you automatically say that this act was unchargeable? Was it not so you could get your brother out from being charged for a violation of this act?

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

Mr. Webster: Madam Speaker, the violations that are in question were not the violations that the charges were laid on previously, I've been told. In the previous cases where the violations were laid, the people stepped up and paid their \$200 fine or \$250, whatever that number would be. This year with 8 or 10 or 12 actual violations and some warnings as well, my officers, chief officer-director decided he'd better take it to the Crown to make sure everything is airtight. He went to the Crown. The Crown said that the act, as it's worded now, you cannot - there was no reasonable grounds that they felt, the Crown Prosecutor felt that they could actually get a charge. So therefore, they issued - asked the people to remove the headlands, which most of them did.

In my brother's case, his interpretation was and his legal counsel said that he is not in violation. I, we issued a ministerial order to have that removed regardless just as a precautionary point of view. We did that and we felt that that was proper procedure.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

LOTTERY TICKET SALES

Mr. Vessey: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

My question is for the Provincial Treasurer. I've had representation from several people in my district of York-Oyster Bed and it seems these people are concerned with the

availability of lottery tickets. I'll just explain that a little.

There are quite a number of people who undergo the treatment of gambling addiction and each time they go into the corner stores or the gas station, the first thing the clerk says when they come up to the cash is: Would you like a lottery ticket today? And Madam Speaker, we now have legislation in place to keep our cigarettes out of sight but yet we have these lottery tickets in plain view and it's enticing to some people who struggle with this addiction. It's an ongoing thing daily and a struggle with it. On behalf of these people who brought this problem to me, I'd like to ask the Provincial Treasurer to look into the situation and take into consideration their wishes to have this problem resolved.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

Mr. Sheridan: Madam Speaker, as minister responsible for this part of our industry, I will certainly take it under advisement, the points that have been brought up by the hon. member. As our record stands to this point, we stand for responsible gaming on PEI and we'll certainly take that under advisement. Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader. Are you all done there?

Mr. Vessey: I'm done.

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

LEARNING DISABILITY ASSESSMENTS

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

My question today is for the minister of education. Our Island parents have expressed frustration about the delays for assessment for learning disabilities. It has been reported that under the previous administration that the waiting period to have their child tested has been up to two years. Could the minister please report what his department is doing to address this problem and what progress has been made?

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

Mr. Greenan: Madam Speaker, in response to the question, we're improving services and supports for children with learning disabilities and that is a priority with this government. The provincial joint working committee on learning disabilities has just completed a comprehensive, multi-year learning disability strategy and they will be presenting that to the deputy ministers within the next couple of weeks. The departments involved are education, the Attorney General's office, health and social services and seniors, and this government is committed to reduce wait times for learning disability assessments to 90 days within our mandate. Thank you.

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

SUPPORTS FOR LEARNING DISABLED CHILDREN

Ms. Biggar: Thank you. Supplementary

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question, Mr. Minister.

Would the minister tell the House what his department is doing to support children with learning disabilities?

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

Mr. Greenan: Well, school aged children with learning disabilities, firsts of all, receive supports from their teachers. Then the school-based team, consultants at the school board office, and we also have a department specialist in learning disabilities, and professionals in the health field also are there to support students with learning disabilities. We are currently doing a pilot study in six schools in the province in grade one and there are two intervention programs. One is called Jolly Phonics and the other is Letterland and those are being done and will be completed in January. We are about to roll out four positions and they will be advertised soon and they are for speech language pathologist.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

NEW GOVERNMENT VEHICLES

Mr. Bagnall: My question back to the Provincial Treasurer again and I asked a comment a minute ago to the minister if he bought a new car and your answer to that was no, correct.

Speaker: The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

Mr. Sheridan: My answer to that question is

no. That's three times I've answered in the House that I did not buy a new car. Would you like to come out and go for a drive in your friend's car?

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: Getting awful touchy over there.

Mr. MacKinley: That's my (Indistinct).

Speaker: Order.

Mr. Bagnall: Can you tell me then which members bought new cars?

Speaker: The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

Mr. Sheridan: Madam Speaker, I will table that tomorrow.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

SOUTHERN FISHERIES REPORT

Mr. Bagnall: Thank you, Madam Speaker. And I'll put that question back until tomorrow when he tables it then for me.

My question now goes back to the minister of fisheries. In Question Period on Friday, I had asked you if you saw the report, the draft report of the Southern Queens and Kings Fisheries Association and you said you had. Do you agree with the report?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

Mr. Campbell: There's a lot of parts to the

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report and I haven't had a chance to review it extensively. There's some interesting initiatives in it and I would invite the people who put the report together to come in and I would like to sit down and discuss it with them at any point in time.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: He said he has reviewed the report. Do you think there is some area there where they can reduce their traps from 300 to 250, which the report suggests?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

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

Obviously, a decision of that nature would have to meet with the entire industry. As the hon. member is aware, we have three LFAs here in the province and we also have bordering LFAs from other provinces. And a decision of this nature, we would have to enter into a discussion with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, of course, but I would like to get a sense from the entire industry here on Prince Edward Island if that's something they would like to pursue.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-

Kilmuir.

RFCC REPORT

Mr. Bagnall: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

And also in the FRCC report, you've had a chance to review that one.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

Mr. Campbell: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Yes, I have.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: Do they also not suggest that that would be an option of moving from 300 traps to 250 and why I say that, the FRCC made public appearances across the province here last year and fishermen from one end of the Island made recommendations to this report. Do you agree with their findings on this issue?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

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

I'm not sure whether do I agree with the FRCC report or with the fishermen's recommendations?

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: It was the FRCC report that I was referring to.

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Speaker: The hon. Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

Mr. Campbell: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

And again, I've had the opportunity to review the FRCC report extensively. We have had some preliminary discussions with the Prince Edward Island Fishermen's Association around the report. Those discussions are ongoing. There are some concerns from the industry with regards to that report and we will be meeting with the industry to discuss it further.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

NUMBER OF SENIORS IN CARE FACILITIES

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Yesterday I attended a fundraising luncheon put on by the Prince Edward Island division of the Canadian Mental Health Association. The guest speaker was Margaret Trudeau and there were well over 500 people in attendance.

My question is to the minister of health. Margaret Trudeau spoke on the issue of mental health as well as the importance of raising awareness on the seriousness of the issue of diagnosing mental health. My question is in regards to mental health and the number of seniors in the province, roughly how many seniors are in say community care facilities, manors, and maybe even at the hospital at this time?

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

Mr. D. Currie: Madam Speaker, I, too, attended the function yesterday that was put on by Canadian Mental Health and I want to acknowledge the work that was done to attract Margaret Trudeau to come. I found her story very empowering and certainly was excited to see the response by the community. And that response sends me a clear message that people in this province are concerned about mental health and issues around addictions and, certainly, that was very empowering.

In respect to specifics on numbers of seniors who are in facilities, I'll have to table that information. I don't have that information right to present today. We do have a variety of seniors in various health care facilities across the province.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you health minister. My question is again for the health minister just on the topic of mental health and I know it would be very difficult to have the number in your head but if you could give us a rough estimate of how many seniors you think maybe are in the province and then out of that population - you know there's 138,000 people in the province, what percentage are seniors and then what percentage do you estimate may actually be in facilities?

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

Mr. D. Currie: Seniors in this province are a huge priority. As I've indicated in the House, that is one of the most densely populated

sector of our province and we have a rapid increase in our aging population. We continue through services through the Department of Health and Social Services and Seniors provide tremendous amount of support to all our seniors across the Island. Once again, I do not have a specific number but I will table that information for the Leader of the Opposition.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

GERONTOLOGISTS

Leader of the Opposition: My next question is to the minister of health. In relation to the number of Island seniors who are living in the facilities, once we get the number, could you please tell the House how many gerontologists are actually working to serve the needs of the seniors in the province?

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

Mr. D. Currie: I'll take the question under advisement.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

SUPPORT SERVICES FOR GERONTOLOGISTS

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you.

The next question is for the minister of health and it's in the area of mental health and seniors. Could you please describe for the House the programs and services that support the work of gerontologists and do they have rapid access to psychiatric services, psychiatrists, psychiatric nurses, et cetera?

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

Mr. D. Currie: Madam Speaker, in this province today, we have 15 psychiatrists who are actively practising in facilities across the province and I do know that the workload on our psychiatrists is very demanding and we continue to work through the Department of Health and the Canadian Mental Health Association, which is an NGO, to provide community supports and services to all Islanders and, particularly, seniors on services and programs to address these serious issues.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES FOR SENIORS

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

My next question is for the minister of health. Just in regards to that, the 15 psychiatrists, do we have a number of licensed psychiatric nurses and also psychiatric nurses that may be available at manors, nursing homes, community care facilities to help with the diagnosis when a senior is actually having some issues around mental health?

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

Mr. D. Currie: Madam Speaker, health care services across this Island are a huge priority. We do have a volume of seniors who are in our manors, who are in our hospitals, who are in our psychiatric hospitals. We do have seniors who are in our community care facilities. We basically provide services to all

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seniors and to address these needs and we're constantly evaluating and looking at new initiatives and strategies to attract more health care professionals into the province. The question is a question that as far as an exact number of psychiatric nurses, I don't have an exact number but I do know the services are important and we continue to work diligently and looking at new initiatives via the office of recruitment and retention secretary that we just announced to assist us in fulfilling our complement, which is an ongoing challenge in our province in respect to meeting the demands for health care professionals.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Thank you, Mr. Minister. My next question is actually to the minister of health again. Another question to the Minister of Health, Social Services and Seniors: What staff, programs and services are available today for seniors in institutions and in the community to actually diagnose mental health and in turn make a referral? For example, who does the assessment? Who does the referral go to? Could you please explain the process and how many cases they may be currently working on?

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

Mr. D. Currie: Right now we, Madam Speaker, in the province we do know that we have a level of shortages in health care issues that we've inherited in the province and we are certainly putting a tremendous amount of

focus into reaching our complement in respect to services to our seniors. Our seniors are a huge commodity to our government. We're working closely with them. The office of the senior secretariat, I meet with on a regular basis to update me. I've had ongoing meetings with the Seniors Federation and the Seniors United Network briefing me on their ongoing issues of seniors across the province and one of the issues that they have raised with me is accessible services for seniors, not only in our facilities but services that can be brought into the homes of seniors who are still in their homes but we are working very diligently. Our seniors are a huge priority and we understand that we have some work to do and I'm excited about the challenges to meet some of these shortfalls.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

My next question is actually for the minister of health. Who does an Islander contact if they suspect that their aging parent, for example, is suffering from a mental illness or help with diagnosis for help with programs and services either in the community or the actual institution?

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

Mr. D. Currie: Madam Speaker, we do understand, all of us in the House, and we've met them through our campaign. We do have a lot of seniors who are living alone in their homes. The reality of it is seniors in this

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province at times need a tremendous amount of support to access services. We are looking through the Seniors' Secretariat to provide awareness through media in respect to services that we do provide. We are working right now on a handbook to provide all seniors across the province to address the questions if they are dealing with an issue on a clinical need. That information will come out in the handbook that we're releasing, I believe, in early November. We're excited about that but it's a very important issue. Our seniors need to have the support and access to the support but we also need to work very diligently as a government to make sure that family members of seniors who are living in unhealthy conditions that we do get the information out to them that there is help available and that we are working hard and we'll continue to work hard to get that information to all Islanders in respect to services that they rightly deserve.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you.

My next question to the minister of health. Is there legislation available today? What is the scope of the legislation in relationship to mental health and the senior population to assist caregivers and their families who are coping with some of the mental health issues around relatives living with mental health disease?

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

Mr. D. Currie: Madam Speaker, in respect to the question, we are looking at all aspects of legislation in government. Most recently, we are looking at the legislation around

community care facilities and we do have, obviously some outdated legislation that we do have to place as priorities between now and the spring. We know that there's been legislation sitting for a large number of years that has to get activated and prepared for the House in the spring.

Specific to the question, in respect to her direct question, there are a couple of pieces of that that I will table and take under advisement and bring back to the House.

Mr. Brown: Great job.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: That and I look forward to the discussion when the legislation is brought before the House.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

ROLE OF PUBLIC GUARDIAN

Leader of the Opposition: My next question is to the Attorney General's office. What is the role of the public guardian in assisting seniors and/or their families when dealing with mental health issues?

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

Mr. Greenan: Madam Speaker, I don't have those specific guidelines with me and I will get that information and table it tomorrow.

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

Leader of the Opposition: My final question

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is to the Attorney General. In terms of the general role, maybe you could explain what is the general role of the public guardian in assisting seniors and their families when dealing with mental health issues and then what is the relationship between the public guardian and the adult protection consultants that work in the province?

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

Mr. Greenan: Madam Speaker, again I will take that and get the information and table it tomorrow for the Leader of the Opposition.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

End of Question Period.