

# HANSARD



## PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Speaker: Hon. Greg Deighan

Published by Order of the Legislature

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Fourth Session of the Sixty-Second General Assembly

21 NOVEMBER 2006

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The Legislature sat at 2:00 p.m.

Matters of Privilege and Recognition of  
Guests

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier Binns:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

It's great to be back in the House today and it is a nice fresh fall day out there. The sun is actually shining a little cool, though.

But I want to take the opportunity first of all to recognize that we have additional Page with us today carrying out her duties, Katharine MacDonald, who wasn't able to be here for the opening of the House the other day. She's representing Colonel Gray High School and we certainly want to welcome her to the House.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Premier Binns:** Mr. Speaker, I also notice that a former Page is in the gallery today this afternoon, Alicia Bremner, who was here with us only a short time ago. She brought a lot to the House. I know she enjoyed her time here and I know she is actively pursuing a lot of things right now and I wish her every success with her future endeavours.

I'll take a moment to recognize that many schools are having their career days. I especially want to recognize Charlottetown Rural who has their career day on today. I was out there earlier to speak to one of the classes and talk about the many opportunities that there are for young people to stay on PEI today in such areas as bio-science and aerospace and IT and communications. But to all the organizers of career days and especially people at Charlottetown Rural, I hope they have a

great day.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, to anybody that may be at home watching EastLink this afternoon that might be not feeling 100%, we hope they are feeling better real soon. In particular, I want to mention the hon. Member for North River-Rice Point, who we know has been a little bit under the weather the last while. Wishing him a speedy recovery. Ronnie, if you're listening, we hope you're back real soon. I understand the ratings from the opposition are way down since you've been gone and I hope you'll soon be back.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

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

I, too, would like to welcome our newest Page, Katharine. I actually had the opportunity of meeting her mother back a month or so ago at the Stonepark School when we were doing an event there one day and she was telling me how excited she was about her daughter being a Page here in the Legislature. I'm sure she'll do a great job.

It's also great to see Benny MacEachern here in the Legislature today, an avid Liberal across Prince Edward Island. Makes the odd meeting and does a great job of keeping myself and the Liberal caucus informed of issues out on the ground.

Also to Alicia Bremner who was a Page here in the Legislature. It's great to see her back. I know she's active with numerous volunteer activities, as well as first class education. So it's great to see her back in the Legislature today.

To all those watching on Eastlink Channel

10, I hope everyone is feeling well and perhaps not a little bit under the weather like I was last week. It's important that we take our vitamins this time of the year. Make sure if you have the opportunity to get a flu shot. Get a flu shot, because preventative measures are always the best for yourselves and to save us health care dollars in the long term.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Park Corner-Oyster Bed.

**Ms. MacKenzie:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to say welcome to everybody who is in the gallery, especially Garfield MacPhee. With interest there to Mr. MacPhee with the new boundaries, he will belong to the Emerald-Rustico and that's going to be a lovely new area.

For those who are watching at home, I hope they enjoy this afternoon's proceedings. I also too, hope that the Member from North River-Rice Point is watching and I hope to be by to see him this weekend. Maybe he'll have a list of questions that I can bring along to the opposition for him and they can do some research on his behalf.

So I hope everyone has a good afternoon and, Mr. Speaker, I hope we're in good control this afternoon for you.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Winsloe-West Royalty.

**Mr. Collins:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, join my colleagues in welcoming visitors to the public gallery. In particular from District 15, Paul Kelly and Blair Ballem.

Also I'd like to send greetings out to the executive members and the athletes of the PEI Soccer Association. I was privileged to represent the Minister of Community and Cultural Affairs at their big wind-up banquet on Saturday night at the West Royalty Community Centre. I'm very happy to say that the Winsloe-West Royalty Blues fared very well. The under-18 boys team won the team of the year award. Ryan Casey, a member of that team, won the Junior Male Athlete of the Year Award and the coach of the team won Coach of the Year. Our congratulations there to Wally Morrison and to all the members of the PEI Soccer Association on a wonderful season Island-wide.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

It's a pleasure to be here again today and I want to welcome everyone in the gallery.

I want to say a special hello to the people in Belfast-Pownal Bay, and I want to assure them there was a misinterpretation Friday in the Legislature. I will not be competing for the new riding of - let me get this straight - Belfast-Murray River. That's a natural riding for the Premier as my natural riding will be Vernon River-Stratford.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** We'll be waiting for that

nomination meeting, hon. member.

Statements by Members

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Winsloe-West Royalty.

**Tribute to Whit Carter**

**Mr. Collins:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Earlier this month Islanders were truly saddened by the sudden passing of Whit Carter, one of Prince Edward Island's most popular broadcasters.

I had the privilege to work alongside Whit for over 14 years at the CBC and I believe he is a man who epitomizes the word "gentleman," truly a kind and caring man. Whit spent more than 40 years in the broadcast industry, starting with radio station CFCY as host of the legendary program *Saturday Night Hoedown*. He eventually went on to become that station's news director.

After spending a brief time in his native Nova Scotia, Whit returned to Prince Edward Island and joined CBC where he served as an announcer for both radio and television. As a popular and very professional broadcaster, he spent a number of years as host of CBC radio's *Island Morning* program.

Upon his retirement in 1996, he devoted a great deal of time to his church and to his community. Whit enjoyed his leisure time at his family cottage and playing golf at his home club of Eagles Glen. It was just last summer that Whit scored his first hole in one of which he was very proud.

Whit was held in high regard by all who knew him and I'm sure I speak for all Islanders in offering our deepest sympathies

to his wife Joyce, his son Robert, and his daughter Caroline, as well as his extended family.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Morell-Fortune Bay.

**Council of Federation Literacy Award**

**Ms. Crane:** Mr. Speaker, the following is a quote from a student of Anne Morrison: "She encouraged me through all the personal and financial difficulties I had and kept me on task and never let me give up. But the most important gift she gave me was my future."

It is feelings like this which have recently earned Anne Morrison the 2006 Council of Federation Literacy Award. Anne is only the second Islander to receive this award which was established in 2005 by the Canadian premiers to recognize individuals and organizations involved in the field of literacy from across the country. Anne is known for her passion for learning and recognizes the uniqueness of each and every learner. Anne's students feel that she understands the challenges that face many of them as adult learners and she has the ability to foster an atmosphere of trust and support for them. For Anne, literacy is the key to development of individuals and communities. It's all about helping these individuals to develop their self-esteem and to move on to reach their full potential.

As MLA for District No. 2 Morell-Fortune Bay, on behalf of our community, I offer sincere congratulations to Anne on this well-deserved recognition and wish her much continued success in the years to come.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

#### UPSE executive

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

I just want to talk about this weekend. I attended the Union of Public Sector Employees' annual convention down at the CP hotel on Friday night and Saturday. I want to congratulate Shelley Ward, who is now the new president of the UPSE Union, also Debbie Bovyer, who is the secretary treasurer now, and Eileen LeClair, who is second vice. Debbie and Eileen were elected on the weekend. The other executive members are Elwood Goodwin and Michael DesRoches.

A lot of great things were discussed over the weekend in this union meeting and there were a number of resolutions and a number of debates that took place, but one particular one was where the retirees of the civil service are requesting to be under the same program as the current or the active members of the civil service in terms of health care packages.

I also want to take a minute to thank the outgoing president, Sandy MacKay. Sandy MacKay deserves a lot of credit. He did a lot of work over the government reform package, especially when the current government reduced the civil service and basically caused a lot of turmoil down there among the people. He managed his way through that and he deserves a lot of credit.

A warning to the Premier and to his Cabinet. I know Shelly Ward quite well. She is a very capable person and she'll be a tough fight for them, just like the opposition.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

#### Responses to Questions Taken as Notice

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier Binns:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In response to several questions from last Friday's Question Period, I wish to report the following:

The cost of the McQuaid Commission was \$59,281. The cost to taxpayers of the private members' bill, which led to the new boundaries was zero, but the cost of having the boundaries drawn by the former Chief Electoral Officer, Mr. Wigginton, was \$8,300.

In relation to the question of whether there were computers used during this process, there were, but under the same procedure as would be applied to any other private member who brought forward a bill. In this case, the access was the same.

In 1997-1998 there were 749 complaints settled at a cost of \$1.6 million. That compared to the 1985-1986 period in which there 61 complaints. Not one, as referenced by the hon. members Friday. The cost of those settlements was -

**An Hon. Member:** (Indistinct).

**Speaker:** All right, hon. member.

**Premier Binns:** - \$598,700 plus legal fees, and that did not include the *Burge* case.

#### Questions by Members

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

**Sunday shopping**

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

Every Islander agrees our province is unique, but over the course of this government much of that uniqueness has managed to disappear. Once we had no casino but the Premier flip-flopped on that position and now we have a casino. Once the Premier promised no discrimination but he coldly fired 800 Islanders. Once the Premier said he favoured balanced budget legislation but that didn't stop this Premier from running the largest deficit ever in the history of this province, \$125 million. Now we have a premier who once said that Sunday shopping was unnecessary but now he is throwing open the doors to huge corporations that sap the life from small businesses.

Mr. Speaker, why has the Premier chosen to speak from both sides of his mouth on the Sunday shopping issue?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier Binns:** Mr. Speaker, it's interesting that the hon. member would talk about flip-flops.

He is renowned for his flip-flops. I can't help but think of one recently where on Friday night he endorses his candidate, five days later he changes his mind. That's a classic flip-flop and just one more on top of the many things that he's done.

It's obvious that the Leader of the Opposition really doesn't know where he is on Sunday shopping. He's not showing any leadership. He's not recognizing the appeals by the tourism industry of the province to modify our Sunday shopping laws. He's not recognizing those people who work during regular office hours and would like to have

extra opportunity. He's not recognizing this thing that's changed in nine provinces out of ten across the country. He does not seem to be prepared to move ahead but we don't know what his position is. I don't think he really has one.

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

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

I'd like to offer a few quotes now. In December of 2002, the Premier said, and I quote: We just felt the negatives of expanding Sunday shopping outweighed the positives. So what changed, Mr. Speaker? Was it the Premier's disastrous handling of the tourism industry that led to his change?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier Binns:** Mr. Speaker, one thing about our government, we've always been open to recommendations, we've always been open to hearing suggestions, constructive ideas from the general public, from even the Opposition.

In this case we listened to many Islanders. We also follow the trends across the country. We heard the court cases that have taken place in other jurisdictions which have caused other governments to change direction and we have responded.

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

**Leader of the Opposition:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to make sure that I'm recognized by the chair before I get up.

Another quote from the same day and I quote again from the Premier: Islanders felt that there is only so much business that you can do that business over six days. If you do

it over seven days, it costs more. So what happened? Did the cost of doing business over seven days suddenly drop, Mr. Premier?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier Binns:** Mr. Speaker, it appears to me that the Leader of the Opposition is obviously against the tourism industry in this province.

He's not wanting to support the industry. That's unfortunate. You know, we always like to have the benefit of more research and information. In this case, the academic research is quite clear. The academic research shows that the volume of business does increase when retail facilities are open for longer hours. More people are employed in the economy. There's more money spent. There's more money in circulation. It has a spinoff effect in terms of more jobs and more economic activity.

The government has reviewed that situation and decided to make a progressive change here that would bring us more in line with other provinces. But I would remind him that in recognition of some of the issues that people have around this issue that we will only open the third week in May till the end of December. That will not start - even though there is Sunday shopping permitted in the five, six weeks before Christmas at present, there is no change. We are not opening this Christmas season to other establishments, such as our liquor stores, and the new rules will not come into effect until next May. Recognizing that the winter months are a slower period, there is not as much incremental retail opportunity, and there are costs of doing business.

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

**Leader of the Opposition:** Thank you very

much, Mr. Speaker.

The Premier can try and explain his way out of the flip-flop but we've got many quotes here from the Premier and we're also talking - he's talking about following the other provinces but I also believe it's important for Prince Edward Island to be unique. The Premier said: We think we are unique and we don't have to be the same as everybody else. I somewhat agree with that quote. So why does the Premier think that Prince Edward Island has lost its uniqueness? When did he decide that we had to be like everyone else?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier Binns:** We didn't, Mr. Speaker.

Our uniqueness continues. Our laws will be different than what I understand the laws to be in other provinces. Other provinces have opened year-round. We are going to open from the third week in May, which is really usually the start of our busier tourism season, till the end of Christmas. That is quite unique. It remains unique among all of the jurisdictions in the country.

I also remind the Leader of the Opposition that even in the throne speech we announced that we would be reviewing this policy after one year of operation and we would make amendments that more truly, if necessary, reflected public concern.

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

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

I've got another quote here from the Premier in 2004. It might sound odd but I actually agree with this quote, and it wasn't that long ago that the Premier made it. He said: Sunday shopping doesn't appear to be a big



priority for Islanders. I think the majority here would still be opposed to it.

Other than the owners of Wal-Mart and a huge multinational, does the Premier believe the majority of Islanders have changed their opinion?

**Mr. R. Brown:** That's all he's supporting, big multinationals.

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier Binns:** Mr. Speaker, obviously, a lot of Islanders have changed their opinion.

There has been a move towards more Sunday shopping in spite of the current legislation. I think the hon. member realizes, but he wants to forget for the value he might get out of trying to twist a negative in here in Question Period, that, in fact, there is a substantial amount of Sunday shopping in Prince Edward Island now. We're seeing many of the co-op stores in communities across Prince Edward Island open on Sunday. We're seeing some of the mid-size grocery stores, if you like, like Save-Easys, open. We're seeing the large drugstores like Shoppers Drug Mart who offer much more than drugs who offer, you know, foodstuffs and all kinds of household items as well as drugs, open. So, in fact, Sunday shopping does exist on Prince Edward Island.

What we're trying to do is somehow level the playing field. I think if the hon. member is paying attention to what people like the Chamber of Commerce is saying, he will find that they are supporting the compromise position which the government is making by modifying our laws on Prince Edward Island to try to level that playing field across the province.

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

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

It just goes to show, that last answer, how this Premier doesn't listen to what Islanders are saying. I agreed with the Premier. Sunday shopping doesn't appear to be a big priority for Islanders. It hasn't been a pressing issue that we've been confronted from in the opposition. But the Premier likes to quote the Chamber of Commerce, and here I have an article from the newspaper where thumbs down likely from Summerside merchants. This is from the head of the Chamber of Commerce in Summerside, Mr. Speaker, as you're well aware of. I heard Mr. Gaudet, the president of the Chamber of Commerce here in Charlottetown, after the throne speech said that his members are mixed on this issue.

It's not something that people are looking for right now, and Islanders want to know why this Premier flip-flopped on such an important issue. I just want to go back to 2004 here because it wasn't that long ago. The Premier said that current laws help out the craft industry. Will the Premier's new proposal help or hurt the craft industry?

**Mr. R. Brown:** Good question. Good question.

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier Binns:** Mr. Speaker, I've explained my position.

I've outlined it in some detail. I could do that more extensively, I guess. What I think Islanders would be wondering right now is where does the Leader of the Opposition stand. Is he for it or against it?

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

**Leader of the Opposition:** Thank you very

much, Mr. Speaker.

Our position is clear. We don't think it's a priority right now. There's no reason to change it. We believe in the Island family. We believe you have to go out and consult Islanders before you make a fundamental decision like this instead of this Premier that believes he's a dictator and just wants to make unilateral decisions without going out to consult the public.

My question: Will the Premier consider moving this bill to a legislative committee so that we can hold hearings on this across Prince Edward Island?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier Binns:** Finally, Mr. Speaker, we got an answer from the Leader of the Opposition.

We now know he's against the tourism industry. He's against families who want to have the opportunity to shop because they can't during regular hours and they've had to go off to the mainland and so on. He's against those businesses that say: We're losing a large volume of business because people will leave to shop in the box stores in the mainland and take business away from Prince Edward Island. So it's nice to finally understand his position. We're glad he's clarified that, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Leader of the Opposition:** Again, Mr. Speaker, I'm looking forward to having the opportunity to answering questions in this House, but it's still up to the Premier at this time to answer questions in this House.

He said back in 2004: That the laws that were in place help out the craft industry. I want to know -

**Mr. R. Brown:** Yeah, you're against the craft industry.

**Leader of the Opposition:** - now, if what he was saying then was the truth, won't his new laws hurt the craft industry in this province?

**Mr. R. Brown:** Shame, shame!

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier Binns:** Mr. Speaker, crafts are sold in many outlets across Prince Edward Island.

They are sold in local craft stores, independently owned, sometimes created right there. In some cases they're sold in larger facilities. Some are sold in co-op stores or the drugstores and so on. So these people will have additional opportunity relative to their industry as well.

But we're starting to see a pattern here. We're starting to see the hon. member who is obviously against new opportunity for Prince Edward Island. He's been against just about everything. He's against the new hospital for West Prince. He's against rural Prince Edward Island. He wants to take seats away from rural Prince Edward Island. He's pretty consistent. The pattern is coming out. We're seeing the true character of this hon. member, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

The single person who's responsible for the largest deficit ever in the history of the province, the single person who's responsible for the largest corporate loss in the history of this province to the taxpayers at \$31 million, and the single person who's

responsible for closures of emergency rooms, closures of hospitals, in this province should not be lecturing anyone, and that's clear.

My question for the Premier is this. In 2004 - and I agreed with the Premier here - the Premier said: The current laws help out convenience stores operations in designated tourism areas, in other words, helping out our tourism industry and help out craft outlets. If the old laws helped out those businesses, as the Premier said, won't this new approach harm those operations?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier Binns:** Mr. Speaker, once again the preamble was misleading.

He suggested the largest deficit in the province was from our government. That's not the case. He knows full well that his party had the largest deficit in the history of the province by a landslide. I mean, this was no few dollars more. These guys were masters at running up the debt. When the previous Conservative government had come into office - I forget what year it was - I think the debt was \$250 million. They ran it up in 10 years to over or close to a billion dollars. To do that they obviously had deficits that were larger than the one that we had a few years ago. But I'd also remind him that for the last three years we have met our budget targets. We have come in in terms of our expenditures, our bottom line, with an improved situation in each of those three years and we're proud of our record, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

That's a record that I'm not sure quite why

the Premier is proud of. Kind of like how he said in the newspaper the other day that he still believes Polar Foods was the right decision to make. I'm sure many Islanders disagree with him on that.

But I've got a new question. We want to stick here to the facts, unlike this Premier who likes to go off on tangents. In 2002 the Premier said: Allowing Sunday shopping would hurt others. He said: Sunday shopping would harm operations like the Harbourfront Jubilee Theatre - which I know is very important to you, Mr. Speaker - Founders Hall and others. If it's going to hurt our cultural attractions in 2002, would the Premier please tell the House how his flip-flop will now help?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier Binns:** Mr. Speaker, as I've indicated earlier, this government has been open to hearing the suggestions, the recommendations of Islanders.

We certainly heard from the tourism industry, many people in the business community over a period of time, as well as from individual Islanders, that the pros outweigh some of the cons in terms of having some more Sunday shopping. So upon significant reflection we have moved on this item and we believe we have moved ahead. Now if the hon. Leader of the Opposition wants to stay in the years past where he is - he's stuck there - if you want to be stuck in old ways on not modernizing Prince Edward Island, which seems to be where he is - don't fix the hospitals, don't build better facilities, don't expand the education system, don't modernize our shopping laws - that's up to him.

But I'll tell you one thing, Mr. Speaker. This party is moving ahead whether he likes it or not.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

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

But I know that there's lots of Islanders who don't believe that this government is moving ahead. They'd love to have back the \$31 million back lost from Polar Foods, the same as this Premier is now standing up and saying what a great decision he's making. He said the same thing back then. Or the largest deficit ever in the history of this province. Or the poor people down in Souris who don't have access to health care right now. Or the hundreds of Islanders who are still waiting to get jobs at call centres that were promised to them up in the western part of the province. Or the hundreds of Islanders who are still waiting to work at fish plants that this Premier closed down.

**Mr. R. Brown:** Three million dollar (Indistinct).

**Some Hon. Members:** (Indistinct).

**Speaker:** All right, hon. members.

**Leader of the Opposition:** Mr. Speaker, but I just want to say this.

The Premier back in 2002 said this: There is no evidence to prove Sunday shopping would boost revenues for Island merchants, no evidence. Yet now he's claiming that you have to boost the revenues, and to move forward we need Sunday shopping. So I just want to know: Has the Premier got some new evidence that he is withholding from Islanders?

**Mr. R. Brown:** Yeah. Where is it? Put it on the Table.

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier Binns:** Mr. Speaker, it's interesting to listen to the Leader of the Opposition.

You know, he really is stuck in the past. He doesn't want change. He'd be happy to try to lead Islanders to believe that we have nothing in health care. The reality is we have the most doctors we ever had in the province. We have the most nurses we have ever had in the province. We have the most jobs we have ever had in the province. In fact, you know what? When we came into office there were 59,000 people working in PEI. Today there's over 71,000 people working, an increase of over 20%, and I daresay probably only Alberta would surpass that record. We have the lowest unemployment rate today in this province that we've probably had in 30 years, maybe since they've started recording.

**Mr. R. Brown:** They're all in Alberta. (Indistinct).

**Premier Binns:** No, Mr. Speaker, they're not all in Alberta as the hon. member -

**Speaker:** All right, hon. member.

**Premier Binns:** - from Charlottetown wants to suggest. They're not all in Alberta. We've been creating jobs here in PEI in firms like CGI, firms like AIM Trimark, the expansion of the bioscience industry.

The opposition wants to be stuck in the back. They want to keep taking things away from rural PEI. Take the seats away, close down their health system, don't let any more doctors in, discourage doctors from going to West Prince. That's their idea of progress, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Leader of the Opposition:** Mr. Speaker, I just hope there's not too many people watching Question Period today because this Premier's answers are shameful today and it just shows how out of touch this government is.

It's a government that's been around too long. It's a government that's tired and fresh out of ideas. It's a premier that keeps trying to divert attention away from his current problems. I just want to get directly to the point here. The Premier can go on about - he can have the biggest preamble he wants to this next answer, but Islanders are looking for an answer.

The Premier says: There's no evidence to prove Sunday shopping would boost revenues for Island merchants. Islanders want to know: Has the Premier got some new evidence that he is withholding?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier Binns:** Mr. Speaker, I've answered that question earlier in Question Period and I suggested that the academic research is quite clear on this.

I think the University of Prince Edward Island's economics department would in fact bear this out, that more hours means more employment. It means more economic income. It means more spending in the economy. It means more spinoff. It means growth. I admit that one time I probably thought that there wouldn't be much of an increase, but the data is in right across Canada. Every province that's gone to extended hours has seen extended business.

The tourists come to PEI from May to December primarily. The seasonal residents come in in May-December. They want to spend their money when they're here and we're depriving them, by and large, of one day of that opportunity. It's a great

opportunity. That's why the craft industry said to government: Reconsider your position. That's why the tourism industry has said: Reconsider your position. That's why the business community has suggested: Reconsider your position.

So talk about being tired and out of date, they're so far in the background of what's happening it's hard to believe.

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

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

I'm going to ask the Premier if he could please table all the research that he's been talking about here, all this new data that he's talking about. But I just want to point something out. He likes to paint me as being in the past here. But we've heard from the president of the Chamber of Commerce in Summerside. We've heard from the Federation of Labour, it's against Sunday shopping. We've heard from the president of the Chamber of Commerce here in Charlottetown that says their members are split on this issue. I've heard from many businesses that say there is just not enough money flowing around to justify opening up for that extra day of the week.

What we want to do on this side of the House is give Islanders a chance to have their voices heard. We believe it's important as legislators that we listen to Islanders before we make decisions. My question for the Premier is this: Will he allow this bill to please move to a standing committee of the Legislative Assembly so that we can hear from Islanders on this important issue?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier Binns:** Mr. Speaker, it's interesting.

He suggests that I'm trying to divert attention from my problems. I think he's trying to divert attention from his problem. They're all over the map on things like nominations. They can't decide from one hour to next whether their candidate is nominated or not. Now they're going to have a committee to study that.

We have looked at this matter, we have made a decision, and we're open until this bill is passed to hear input from Islanders. MLAs' phones are available for comment. We'll take those things into consideration but, essentially, we've determined where we're going. We're moving ahead on this matter and it's too bad the opposition is stuck in the past.

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

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

It's insulting to all the Islanders that believe that these are good questions that I'm asking today with regards to Sunday shopping, whether or not we're talking about members of chambers of commerce, whether or not we're talking about small business owners that I've heard from, whether or not we're talking about Island families that want a day off one day a week, whether or not we're talking about the individuals out there that believe there's not enough money to go around for seven days a week. But if the Premier wants to insult all those people, by all means, that's his own prerogative.

The Premier likes to talk about "all over the map." If there's one person in this province that should not be talking about maps it's this Premier here who has cost Island taxpayers more money than any other province across Canada because he can't make up his mind and respect the Charter in this country to make sure that we respect

and make sure that independent commissions' maps will be regarded.

A simple question, yes or no: Will you please move this legislation to a standing committee of the Legislative Assembly so that Islanders can have their say?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier Binns:** Mr. Speaker, you know what the hon. member did when he was faced with a serious debate.

He ran from the challenge. He directed his members, even if they disagreed with him, not to participate. That's not the way I think MLAs should act. I think they have a responsibility to debate in this Chamber. They shouldn't run and hide and hope that they won't be caught. His own people from across the province were saying that a 10% variance or trying to equalize population across PEI was not the way to go. They were telling him that. They were urging him, pleading with him: Don't abandon us. But he did abandon them, the same way he's abandoning them in West Prince over the hospital, the same way he's forgetting about the real needs of Islanders, the same way he's forgetting about the university students and the students at Holland College who will have an opportunity to have a little more employment given that there'd be more hours available to work in this province because of a change to our Sunday shopping. But that's typical of the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. R. Brown:** Yes, because you don't give them enough student loan money to go to college.

**Leader of the Opposition:** (Indistinct).

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

Hon. member, Leader of the Opposition, you had your chance.

### Facility for artifactory

**Ms. Bertram:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

A question for the Minister of Community and Cultural Affairs. Over the course of the last year the opposition has been arguing and pushing for a new facility for the artifactory, the facility that houses the 80,000-plus artifacts that the province owns. It's now located at West Royalty industrial facility.

I was very disappointed in May of this year that the minister stated in this House that there was no money in this year's budget, and I will actually - I will just read what the minister said. May 9, 2006: "The difficulty that we have is in regards to - there are so many needs in regards to a number of organizational facilities within the province. We will not have the money for a new facility this year."

Now, Mr. Speaker, in the last two or three months, we've seen that this has moved into the political agenda of this government. So we're talking about flip-flops today. The Premier is talking about flip-flops. So why the change in direction, Mr. Minister?

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

**Mr. MacFadyen:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for the question.

I know that in May the government did make the decision that we were going to build an artifactory down in Orwell Corner at one time and we didn't have the money to do so. But we had the community group - which our government has supported communities in the past - came forward and said that they had a plan to develop land

down in Murray River, that they were looking to see if they couldn't combine it with a facility. They did approach government in regards to the artifactory being located in Murray River. I guess the Northumberland Development Corporation took it upon themselves to negotiate with ACOA in regards to funding. The province is looking in regards to moving the artifactory from Charlottetown to Murray River.

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

**Ms. Bertram:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Let's just get this clear from the beginning. Are you or are you not moving the current artifactory to Murray River? Yes or no, Mr. Minister?

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

**Mr. MacFadyen:** Yes, we are.

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

**Ms. Bertram:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So I will continue with my line of questioning. Who owns the land presently, Mr. Minister, where this current facility is going to be located?

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

**Mr. MacFadyen:** The facility is owned by the Museum and Heritage Foundation.

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

**Ms. Bertram:** This is interesting, Mr. Speaker, because we have the GEO Links

here, and this land has been deeded to BDI this year.

So I would like clarification. When did this take place? When did these two properties - are they the properties at the intersection of the Mill Road and Main Street, Main Street and Mill Street? Are those in fact the two properties that your government purchased for this facility?

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

**Mr. MacFadyen:** Just to clarify, I thought that the hon. member was asking me who owns the artifactory where it's presently located. That's owned by the Museum and Heritage Foundation.

In regards to the land where the artifactory is going to be built, my understanding is that the Northumberland Development Corporation has a parcel of land that they want to refurbish by putting a new building there to construct an area that would include room for the artifactory and the possibility of having other businesses locate in the community.

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

**Ms. Bertram:** Mr. Speaker, I have the GEO Links here and I have the property numbers. Is it the property at the intersection of Mill Street and Main Street? Yes or no, Mr. Minister.

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

**Mr. MacFadyen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I don't know what lots they are but I do know that there were four lots that were down in the Murray River area that were purchased by government for the artifactory

to be built on.

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

**Ms. Bertram:** Mr. Speaker, there is an issue here.

First of all, in May of 2006 of this year this minister said there was no money in the budget this year for this facility. Now the minister and the Premier made comments where this is in fact being moved to Murray River. Where did the money come from, Mr. Minister, and why the flip-flop in this decision?

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

**Mr. MacFadyen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

If you recall, there was a previous federal government that we were looking to get money from the federal government to build an artifactory facility at Orwell Corner. We could not come up with the money in order to relocate the facility there. We now have a new government that agreed, through ACOA, that they would assist the Northumberland Development Corporation in relocating the artifactory in Murray River through the Northumberland Development Corporation, and we agreed to go with that.

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

**Ms. Bertram:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Did the federal government purchase the properties in Murray River?

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

**Mr. MacFadyen:** The province of PEI purchased the land.



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

**Ms. Bertram:** So Mr. Speaker, now the change.

First of all, it was Northumberland Corporation. Now it is in fact the Province of Prince Edward Island. Why, Mr. Speaker, when I asked these questions in May 2006, which was the spring session, why in fact wasn't this resolved and in fact put into the budget year for 2006, Mr. Minister?

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

**Mr. MacFadyen:** Mr. Speaker, thank you.

I did not flip-flop. She asked me the question earlier. Does the government own the four lots? I told her that the province purchased the four lots. They purchased them earlier this year and turned them over to the Northumberland Development Corporation.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

### US passport requirements

**Mr. McCardle:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question today is for the Minister of Tourism. There's been a lot of media attention about the new passport requirements which come into effect January 20<sup>th</sup>, January 2007. As this action is sure to impact the tourism industry, what is the current status of this new passport requirement policy?

**Leader of the Opposition:** Good question. Good question.

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Tourism.

All right, let the minister answer.

**An Hon. Member:** (Indistinct) have to be a genius to answer that one.

**Speaker:** All right, hon. member.

**Mr. P. Brown:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I'd just like to inform the House, and by way of informing the House all Islanders, that the new passport regulations for re-entry into United States by all citizens of the world is going to require that a person entering the United States after January 8<sup>th</sup> by air will require a passport.

**An Hon. Member:** And boat.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

**Mr. McCardle:** I thank the minister for his answer. Can the minister explain how it will affect tourism on Prince Edward Island?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Tourism.

**Mr. P. Brown:** Certainly, Mr. Speaker, this is a major concern for all of tourism across our country as many people travel between our two countries on a daily basis.

We're concerned with 10% of visitors to our province that come from the United States that this new passport requirement will challenge travellers when they're visiting, and so we're working with the other ministers and with the federal government to come to an understanding of how to facilitate this initiative.

**Speaker:** Final supplementary, the hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

**Mr. McCardle:** Mr. Speaker, what action is being taken to remedy this situation?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Tourism.

**Mr. P. Brown:** This has been a complex issue, Mr. Speaker, because it hasn't been a Canadian initiative.

But I will say that the Government of Canada, along with the Government of the United States, have been working on this. The Tourism Industry Association of Canada, TIAC, has been working very diligently, and myself as minister for this province and the ministers across the country are working on this.

One of the advances that has been made is that the sea component of re-entry into the United States has been delayed till June of 2009 or before that as is agreed upon by the Homeland Securities of the United States. It was to be air and sea come January 8<sup>th</sup>. That has been delayed on the sea component and the land and sea component is now - we hope not till June of 2009, but it could be before that.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Glen Stewart-Bellevue Cove.

### **Keppoch Road**

**Dr. McKenna:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question is to the Minister of Transportation and Public Works. Last evening there was an incident on the Keppoch Road in Stratford where part of the road collapsed in. I believe some of the town had some infrastructure work getting done there and I think it was a 50-metre section of the road that collapsed in. Can you give an update to the House what's going to happen with that road?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Transportation and Public Works.

**Ms. Shea:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As a result of heavy rains in recent days and combined with the town doing some sewer work along the Keppoch Road, they did have a failure there of the road, about a 50-metre section, as the member stated.

Our department is out there working with the town and the contractor to get the sewer work completed and to do the repairs necessary to the road. So as a result, the Keppoch Road will be closed probably for the rest of the week till the work has all been completed.

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

**Mr. R. Brown:** Now we get back to good questions.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

### **Facility for artifactory (further)**

**Ms. Bertram:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

To go back on the issue of the artifactory, now we know that this government had it in the cards as perhaps a legacy for this Premier in his own district to move this facility down to Murray River without any public consultation. So I'm going to ask the question. When was the decision made of this year for you to move it to Murray River, Mr. Minister?

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

**Mr. MacFadyen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I know that the Museum and Heritage Foundation was looking for a number of years to come up with a new facility for the artifactory and the Northumberland Development Corporation approached the province in regards to constructing a facility. They approached ACOA this year.

They asked ACOA if they would assist with the facility, and my understanding is the money would not be available to go elsewhere within the province but it's available to re-locate the artifactory down in Murray River. I wonder, hon. member, are you against rural development in rural areas?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

**Ms. Bertram:** Mr. Speaker -

**Speaker:** All right, hon. members.

**Ms. Bertram:** - I have editorials after editorials that have been written to the *Guardian* newspaper in regards to this. They are experts in the field, ex co-directors of the PEI foundation, curators. These people are very concerned with the decision that this government is making to place this facility in Murray River.

What public consultations did you have, Mr. Minister with any other groups besides the PEI foundation, Mr. Minister?

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

**Mr. MacFadyen:** Mr. Speaker, I know that there's been articles in the paper in regards to the location of the artifactory.

I believe that a lot of people were concerned that we were establishing another museum, which we are not.

**Mr. R. Brown:** And you are, you are.

**Mr. MacFadyen:** We are not. What I understand from the articles that were in the newspaper, that was the concern. I do not feel that on taking into question the

authority of the board at the Museum and Heritage Foundation that are individuals who are elected to serve in preserving the history of our province, and they are on board in regards to the direction that this government is going and they support this initiative.

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

**Ms. Bertram:** Mr. Speaker, true or false, Mr. Minister: Were there any other choices given to the board for re-location? True or false.

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

**Mr. MacFadyen:** Cannot answer true or false, Mr. Speaker.

I do know that the Northumberland Development Corporation, that part of the funding requests for them to construct a facility is from the area that they have put forward because it's their project that came to government in order for us to consider it.

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

**Ms. Bertram:** Mr. Speaker, Dr. Dasgupta, who is the chair of the board, does great work.

This was the only option given to them so, of course, they're going to want to see the 80,000 artifacts housed in a better facility where the present facility is leaking. But my issue with this is we need a clear policy in this province on museums and heritage here on Prince Edward Island. This government is showing no direction in this. How much money are you going to be spending on the construction of this facility in Murray River, Mr. Minister?

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

**Mr. MacFadyen:** Mr. Speaker, I do know roughly the ballpark figure in regards to the construction.

It's around \$4 million, and I believe that 75% of it's coming from ACOA. The conditions of ACOA being in on it is that the facility be located in the Northumberland Development Corporation's hands.

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

**Ms. Bertram:** Mr. Minister, how many jobs will be created for this community?

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

**Mr. MacFadyen:** It depends on what businesses locate in the facility that's being constructed and we would hope, as a government, that a new facility with area for business to locate would entice the people to locate there, whether it be a pharmacy, whether it be a doctor, or whatever. There would be opportunity for businesses to locate and I think it will help the area in regards to an economic generator and also attract tourists to that area.

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

**Ms. Bertram:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to go to the Premier's remarks in September 19<sup>th</sup>'s *Guardian* article and he states: We feel there's a need for a facelift here and something that would help bring people to the area. We're looking at something for that downtown space and there's consideration to move the artifactory to that location as well.

I would like to put this out there. An artifactory is a location, and the temperature, it's for the artifacts. There's no public component to this, so what tourism component is this bringing to Murray River? I'm all for sustainable communities and rural infrastructure -

**Some Hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Speaker:** All right, hon. member.

**Ms. Bertram:** - but now you tell me, Mr. Premier, you tell me, what jobs is this going to bring to your community, the artifactory? What jobs, Mr. Premier?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Mr. R. Brown:** (Indistinct) freezer (Indistinct).

**Speaker:** All right, hon. member.

**Premier Binns:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The one thing about the Opposition, they're consistent. They're against development in rural Prince Edward Island. I'm disappointed in the hon. member that she would take the cause to try and keep jobs away from my constituency. I, too, am a member of this Legislature. I think my constituents should have some opportunity. You know, it was okay to have a sign shop in Tignish. It's all right to have the provincial library headquarters in Morell.

These are projects that didn't hurt anybody and helped somebody. It's a shame that the hon. member would, I think, take this approach, but it is consistent with her leader that she be against development in rural Prince Edward Island.

**Speaker:** Final question.

The hon. Member from Crapaud-Hazel

Grove.

**Ms. Bertram:** Mr. Speaker, here we hear today that there's \$4 million going to be spent on an artifactory yet we have no provincial museum here on Prince Edward Island.

We have a de-centralized program here where we have Basin Head, we have the Yeo House, we have many different de-centralized museums, smaller museums here on Prince Edward Island. But we're the only province in Canada that doesn't have a centralized trunk. I see it as a tree, a trunk with its branches. We don't have that core facility.

I'm going to ask the minister responsible: When are you deciding on constructing this provincial museum? Wouldn't it be best to put that \$4 million towards housing all of it together, Mr. Minister? Don't you think \$4 million would be better utilized in housing a larger facility where all Islanders, children, schoolchildren, could use this facility, Mr. Minister? Answer that (Indistinct).

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

**Mr. MacFadyen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

First, I want to clarify for the Member from Charlottetown-Rochford Square, we do not have a freezer at the Museum and Heritage Foundation. In regards to the Member from Crapaud-Hazel Grove's question in regards to the museum, I'm wondering, does she want us to shut down the museums that are across the province in the rural communities?

**Some Hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. MacFadyen:** We are not considering at this point in time building a provincial museum.

**Ms. Bertram:** Shame!

**Mr. MacFadyen:** We have seven museums across the province. They are administered by the Museum and Heritage Foundation, and we also have roughly 25 or 30 private museums that we also support as a government.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**An Hon. Member:** Shame, shame!

**Speaker:** End of Question Period.

Statements by Ministers

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

**Mr. MacFadyen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yesterday, I, along with the hon. Premier and the hon. Minister of Education and Attorney General, participated in activities to launch Canadian Children's Book Week on Prince Edward Island. Book Week is Canada's largest celebration of both reading and of Canadian children's books. It is celebrated across Canada every year in November.

This year the hon. Premier participated in the Grade One Book Giveaway by presenting free copies of the classic children's book, *Franklin in the Dark*, to grade 1 students at Southern Kings Consolidated School. The book giveaway is sponsored by the TD Bank Financial Group, and gives every grade 1 student in the country a free Canadian children's book to be taken home to keep and to read with their parents.

Yesterday morning, the hon. Minister of Education and Attorney General and myself joined cartoonist and illustrator Mr. Bob Kain at the Confederation Centre Children's

Library to kick off the provincial school tour. Mr. Kain showed the children from St. Jean's School how he draws illustrations for *Chirp* magazine, and he got everyone, including myself and the education minister, involved in drawing characters. Mr. Kain will be sharing his talents and enthusiasm with Island students as he tours schools across the province this week.

Canadian Children's Book Week offers an exciting opportunity for authors and illustrators to share Canadian books with students. Provincial libraries offer many programs to encourage reading and I encourage all Islanders of all ages to visit a public library in your community to enjoy many new advantages through reading.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

**Ms. Bertram:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Certainly recognizing the Children's Book Week is an important event. Books are an important component to learning here on Prince Edward Island and across our country and the world, for children and for families and through adult life.

Picking up a book is easy enough, but being able to read it can be difficult. Here on Prince Edward Island, the government needs to implement more programs that will assist children in learning to read. Because as we know, we need extra speech language pathologists, we need extra specialists in the system, psychologists that will help assess our children, and then we need the proper supports in the system to help our children. Because if literacy is difficult, picking up that book will never fun for a child. We need to ensure that those services are

delivered to children on PEI.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

**Ms. Dover:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Today I would like to acknowledge with appreciation the excellent work being done by the PEI Home and School Federation.

I was anticipating in the gallery at the present time I would have Wendy MacDonald, the president, Shirley Jay, the executive director. They haven't arrived yet, but I do want to recognize the hard work of both of these ladies.

Through partnerships developed by Home and School our children are growing up to be better learners, and they are getting help to make healthy life choices.

The latest initiative of the PEI Home and School Federation is a campaign to inform parents about youth drug abuse and to help families prevent drug abuse.

This is National Drug Awareness and Addiction Week. Home and School is offering the following information sessions on youth drug abuse. Tuesday night, November 21<sup>st</sup>, at Morell High School at 7:00 p.m., and that's open to all Morell high family of schools. Tuesday November 21<sup>st</sup> at East Wiltshire Intermediate School at 7 p.m., and that's open to all the Bluefield High family of schools. Wednesday, November 22<sup>nd</sup> at Three Oaks High School at 7:00 p.m., open to all parents of schools of the Western School Board. And Wednesday, December 6<sup>th</sup>, at West Royalty Elementary School, and this is in addition to seven sessions that have already been held.

The RCMP will be at the sessions with their drug kit and they will take questions from students and parents.

I encourage parents and students to attend these excellent sessions. They are intended for all families and not just those that have problems. They're about keeping parents aware and more importantly they're about helping families to prevent problems from ever happening in the first place.

With growing public concerns about issues like binge drinking and new highly addictive drugs, such as crystal meth, it's more important than ever to stay aware of the issues and the good resources that are out there to help.

So I want to congratulate the Home and School for taking the initiative in this important area and I do wish them the best of luck in their sessions.

But before closing, I also want to congratulate Shirley, Wendy and Martha, and others, on their new Christmas fundraising initiatives. This fundraising initiative promotes the sale of Island products in our schools and workplaces. I know they were at the Shaw Building the last couple of days and we really appreciate the opportunity to pick up quality gifts while supporting Islander producers.

So, again, I congratulate them on these innovative new ideas and I wish them the best of luck in the continuing sessions.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

**Ms. Bertram:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I too would just like to rise and thank the Home and School Association for all their work. Wendy and Shirley, along with all the other members of the executive, do tremendous work with families, with our students, with schools. They are true connections that bridge the family and the school together.

It takes time. These people serve on this organization and do give a lot of their time. Certainly, initiating these drug awareness workshop sessions will be valuable. I urge all parents to go out and hear this presentation because it is valuable to hear it.

As the minister stated, their new Christmas campaign is something very special, to have a campaign where it's all Island products. I was able to see the different products that they're offering. There's even really nice jewellery. There's honey. There's food products. There's a little of everything, and you're supporting Island businesses.

I think the Home and School Association did a great job in initiating this and trying to support Island businesses with their promotional activity. I thank them for their work and I wish them continued success into the year.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Presenting and Receiving Petitions

Tabling of Documents

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

**Mr. Bagnall:** Mr. Speaker, by Command of Her Honour the Lieutenant-Governor, I beg leave to table PEI Aquaculture and Fisheries Research Initiative Inc. Annual Report 2005-2006 and I move, seconded by the minister of economic development, that this document be now received and do lie on the

Table.

**Speaker:** Shall it carry?

**Some Hon. Members:** Carried.

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Development and Technology.

**Mr. Currie:** Mr. Speaker, by Command of Her Honour the Lieutenant-Governor, I beg leave to table the annual reports for the Department of Development and Technology for 2004-2005 and 2005-2006, and I also want to table the annual report for the Employment Development Agency for the years 2004-2005 and 2005-2006 and I move, seconded by the Provincial Treasurer, that the said documents be received and do lie on the Table.

**Speaker:** Shall it carry?

**Some Hon. Members:** Carried.

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

**Ms. Bertram:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to table, seconded by the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Kings Square, the *Guardian* article from September 19<sup>th</sup> with the Premier's remarks that I used during Question Period.

I would also like to table two documents, the GEO Links of the properties that I stated during Question Period. That is seconded by the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Kings Square.

I would like to table five letters to the editor to the *Guardian* during the months of September and October that I highlighted in my line of questioning. That is seconded also by the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Kings Square.

I'd also like to table the annual report, page 14, and the cover page by Dr. Dasgupta. That is seconded by the Member from Charlottetown-Kings Square.

**Speaker:** Shall it carry?

**Some Hon. Members:** Carried.

**Speaker:** Reports by Committees?

**Ms. Dover:** Mr. Speaker?

**Speaker:** I'm sorry.

The hon. Minister of Education and Attorney General.

**Ms. Dover:** Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, I read my statement in relation to the Home and School Association before the arrival of Wendy MacDonald and Shirley Jay.

I would like to recognize their presence in the public gallery. We finished Question Period a little earlier than we normally do. So unfortunately, you'll have to see the comments in the Hansard. But we certainly congratulate you both on your initiative for the drug abuse sessions and for the Christmas sessions, and the fundraising that you're doing for the schools. This was recognized not only by me, but by my hon. critic on the other side, the hon. Member from Crapaud-Hazel Grove. Both recognized and fully appreciated by the House.

I welcome you to the Chamber and regret that you weren't here to hear the initial comments.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

Reports by Committees

Introduction of Government Bills



**Speaker:** The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

**Mr. Murphy:** Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce a Bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Real Property Transfer Tax Act* and I move, seconded by the Honourable Government House Leader, that the same be now received and read a First Time.

**Speaker:** Shall it carry?

**Some Hon. Members:** Carried.

**Clerk:** *An Act to Amend the Real Property Transfer Tax Act*, Bill No. 7, read a First Time.

**Speaker:** The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

**Mr. Murphy:** Mr. Speaker, this bill basically looks at the category of exemptions and adds some additions to that category.

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

**Mr. MacFadyen:** Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce a Bill to be intituled *Archaeology Act* and I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, that the same be now received and read a First Time.

**Speaker:** Shall it carry?

**Some Hon. Members:** Carried.

**Clerk:** *Archaeology Act*, Bill No. 8, read a First Time.

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

**Mr. MacFadyen:** Mr. Speaker, this bill deals with defining that when an artifact is found in the ground that the area does not disturb the history that goes with the artifact.

It also deals with providing the establishment of a register for archaeological sites. It provides for a stop order to be issued by the minister to cease activity that may result in damage to an archaeological site. It provides for an order requiring an archaeological impact statement, and deals with publication orders in the *Royal Gazette*.

It also deals with the discovery of human remains - that they're the property of the Crown - and requires the finding of human remains to be reported to the police, and allows the minister to determine whether the human remains can be used for scientific or other investigation, and provides for the transfer of Mi'kmaq human remains to the Aboriginal community.

The other part of bill is generally housekeeping.

Government Motions

Orders of the Day (Government)

**Speaker:** The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

**Mr. Murphy:** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Government House Leader, that the 3<sup>rd</sup> Order of the Day be now read.

**Speaker:** Shall it carry?

**Some Hon. Members:** Carried.

**Clerk:** Order No. 3, *An Act to Repeal the Livestock Community Auction Sales Act*, Bill No. 4, ordered for Second Reading.

**Speaker:** The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

**Mr. Murphy:** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Government House Leader, that the said bill be now read a Second Time.

**Speaker:** Shall it carry?

**Some Hon. Members:** Carried.

**Clerk:** *An Act to Repeal the Livestock Community Auction Sales Act*, Bill No. 4, read a Second Time.

**Speaker:** The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

**Mr. Murphy:** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Government House Leader, that this House do now resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration the said Bill.

**Speaker:** Shall it carry?

**Some Hon. Members:** Carried.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Winsloe-West Royalty, Chairperson of the Committee of the Whole.

**Chair (Collins):** The House is now in a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration a Bill to be intitled *An Act to Repeal the Livestock Community Auction Sales Act*.

I am going to begin by asking the minister if he would give us a general statement of the bill's intent.

**An Hon. Member:** Good idea.

**Mr. Bagnall:** The community auction sale is an old act that has served its purpose and is not in use at the present time. The livestock industry has changed significantly since this act was put into place, as the industry evolves and the importance of centralization of the livestock auction facility has become less important.

Some of the changes include, and I'll list those: many livestock producers are moving

towards direct contract with processors now; live auctions are being held on farms as such for breeding stock; and the major events, such as the Easter Beef and the PEI Yearling sales, are being held at the civic centre which requires liability insurance as part of the rental agreement.

From the department's perspective, the following concerns contributed to the decision of the repeal. Licenses have not been requested or issued for various auctions events currently being held. They don't have to be. The act provides for the advisory board, which is no longer in existence. There are no inspectors appointed for enforcement of the act or the regulations. The *Animal Health and Protection Act* covers the welfare for animals in the housing of conditions. A major livestock auction facility in Charlottetown has now been closed and demolished, which illustrates the lack of demand for this type of facility.

**Chair:** Minister, is it okay if we take some questions now?

**Mr. Bagnall:** Sure.

**Chair:** (Indistinct) further information.

Questions from members.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Kings Square.

**Mr. R. Brown:** So if somebody wants to sell their livestock in a community after this bill is repealed, what are the consequences? Or what are they under then?

**Mr. Bagnall:** Excuse me, I didn't hear.

**Mr. R. Brown:** If somebody wants to sell their livestock in a community after this bill is repealed, what will be the procedure then, or will they be allowed to sell them

anywhere now?

**Mr. Bagnall:** They're selling them anywhere now. Like, they sell them to the beef plant for instance. There are buyers that they can still sell too. They can actually have an auction (Indistinct) this repealed on their own farm as for their breeding stock and livestock. So this is just a bill that's been sitting in limbo for the last number of years and it's being repealed. As a matter of fact, most of the stuff has been moved to the civic centre for special events. The structure (Indistinct) is all tore down and gone there now. So basically this repeals that.

**Mr. R. Brown:** Thanks.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

**Mr. Mooney:** Hypothetically speaking, if somebody is ever to start an auction barn again - which I know some of the smaller farms certainly miss it - if somebody wanted to start an auction barn again, would there have to be legislation put back in place?

**Mr. Bagnall:** No, there wouldn't have to be. They could still go ahead and do it.

**Mr. Mooney:** Okay.

**Mr. Bagnall:** I asked that question. They can just go ahead. They could have it on their own private farm and do an auction there without any problem whatsoever.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Belfast-Pownal Bay.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Was it not really the scare that we got from the, what do you call that, across the border?

**Mr. Bagnall:** BSE?

**Mr. MacDonald:** That's what caused the

auction sales to really go down there.

**Mr. Bagnall:** Actually, it was gone long before that. There were no auctions being held before that took place also.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Is that right?

**Mr. Bagnall:** So this has just been - for the last ten years there has been no auctions taking place.

**Mr. MacDonald:** The property now, who owns that property there now?

**Mr. Bagnall:** That's out there at the present time? I can't answer that.

**Mr. MacDonald:** I see.

**Chair:** The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

**Mr. Murphy:** The hon. Member from Belfast-Pownal Bay made the point that I wanted to make. There is a phytosanitary component to repealing this as well, an animal health issue. Anyway, I'll not elaborate on it. The hon. member made that point.

**Chair:** Further questions?

Is the pleasure of the Committee that the Bill be now read clause by clause?

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Chair:** Be it enacted by the Lieutenant Governor and the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Prince Edward Island as follows:

1. The *Livestock Community Auction Sales Act* R.S.P.E.I. 1988, Cap. L-16 is repealed.

Questions?

Shall it carry?

**Some Hon. Members:** Carried.

**Mr. Bagnall:** I move the title.

**Chair:** Shall it carry?

**Some Hon. Members:** Carried.

**Chair:** *An Act to Repeal the Livestock Community Auction Sales Act.*

Shall it carry?

**Some Hon. Members:** Carried.

**Mr. Bagnall:** I move the enacting clause.

**Chair:** Be it enacted by the Lieutenant Governor and the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Prince Edward Island as follows:

Shall it carry?

**Some Hon. Members:** Carried.

**Mr. Bagnall:** Mr. Chairman, I move the Speaker take the Chair and that the Chairman report the Bill agreed to without amendment.

**Chair:** Shall it carry?

**Some Hon. Members:** Carried.

**Chair:** Mr. Speaker, as Chairman of a Committee of the Whole House, having had under consideration a Bill to be intituled *An Act to Repeal the Livestock Community Auction Sales Act*, I beg leave to report that the Committee has gone through the said Bill and has agreed to same without amendment. I move that the report of the Committee be adopted.

**Speaker:** Shall it carry?

**Some Hon. Members:** Carried.

**Speaker:** The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

**Mr. Murphy:** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Government House Leader, that the 9<sup>th</sup> Order of the Day - or sorry, I guess I would seek permission to revert to motions.

**Speaker:** Agreed by the House?

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

#### Government Motions

**Speaker:** The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

**Mr. Murphy:** Mr. Speaker, thank you. I want to thank members of the House for that.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Government House Leader, that Motion No. 9 be now read.

**Speaker:** Shall it carry?

**Some Hon. Members:** Carried.

**Clerk:** Motion No. 9.

The hon. Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Agriculture moves, seconded by the hon. Member from Souris-Elmira, the following Motion:

**WHEREAS** during the Taliban regime, the landlocked country of Afghanistan often served as an incubator for Al Qaeda and other terrorist organizations;

**AND WHEREAS** this reality became substantiated on September 11, 2001 when two dozen Canadians lost their lives in the destruction of the World Trade Centre;

**AND WHEREAS** since that time, Al Qaeda has named Canada as one of the countries it has targeted to attack;

**AND WHEREAS** an unstable Afghanistan also abets drug lords who would use the country as a safe haven for the production of heroin, which works its own destruction on the streets of our communities;

**AND WHEREAS** through an integrated approach of development, diplomacy and defence, Canada has emerged as an international leader in helping to rebuild needed infrastructure, while improving access to basic necessities and strengthening democratic development in Afghanistan;

**AND WHEREAS** over 2,300 members of the Canadian Forces are in Afghanistan at the request of the Afghan Government, most of them as part of the UN-Sanctioned NATO-led International Stabilization Assistance Force;

**AND WHEREAS** with the enormous sacrifice and risk to themselves, there are Canadian heroes being made every day in the desert and the mountains of Afghanistan;

**AND WHEREAS** the positive contributions of the Canadian troops in Afghanistan have improved standards including the construction of schools, the return of young girls to school, and the return of millions of refugees to their homeland;

**AND WHEREAS** the impact of the war in Afghanistan has reached home as Prince Edward Islanders recently laid to rest Warrant Officer Frank Robert Mellish, of the first battalion of the Royal Canadian Regiment based at CFB Petawawa;

**AND WHEREAS** the men and women of the Canadian Forces share a special kinship with the Atlantic community;

**AND WHEREAS** in the last fiscal year, nearly one-quarter of the 5,873 military personnel recruited in Canada were from Atlantic Canada, although the region

accounts for approximately seven percent of the country's population;

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that the members of this Legislative Assembly, together with all Islanders, express unequivocal support and sincere gratitude to all our Troops and their families;

**THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Members of the Legislative Assembly of Prince Edward Island unanimously acknowledge the great sacrifices of our troops and their families to help Afghanistan stand on its own as an independent, stable and prosperous nation so that it never again becomes a haven for terrorism.

**Speaker:** To open debate on this motion, the mover, the hon. Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Aquaculture.

**Mr. Bagnall:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's an honour for me to bring this resolution to the Legislative Assembly and through it, to the people of Prince Edward Island. The resolution, which I have the pleasure and privilege of moving, is asking that we as Islanders and as Canadians, express our support for our troops who are serving in Afghanistan.

Specifically, it asks that we express our unequivocal support for sincere gratitude to all our troops and their families. Further, it asks that we acknowledge the great sacrifice of our troops and their families to help Afghanistan stand on its own as an independent, stable and prosperous nation so that it never again becomes a haven for terrorism.

Hon. members, this is a question that goes to the heart of every Islander and every Canadian. There is perhaps no citizen in this province or country who does not have a

family or a friend or an acquaintance who is serving or who has served as a member of the Canadian armed forces. As such, we have a personal commitment to support these brave men and women who are valuably serving our country. We have a personal stake in their safety and well-being and we all benefit from their tremendous sacrifices that they are making on our behalf.

On a personal note, I am proud to say that two of my own sons are serving as members in the Canadian armed forces. My son Douglas has served in the Canadian Army for 17 years and my son Craig has served in the Canadian air force for the past four years. I know firsthand their commitment in Canada's role in the world. I know firsthand the sacrifices they and their families have made and are making to this countries various military undertakings.

I am extremely proud of the contribution of standing on guard for Canada and know that many other members of this House have similar family ties to the military. I know that we are all proud of the international reputation that this country has achieved for its contributions as peacekeepers and for its intervention in military conflicts. For more than a century, and through two great wars and wars in Korea and in other places around the world, Canada has stood ready to help in the cause of bringing peace, freedom and justice on behalf of all of humanity.

There is an inscription in the Memorial Chamber at the Peace Tower in Ottawa which pays tribute to the sacrifices and achievements of those Canadians who fought so that we can live in peace. It states that "our children shall understand when and how our fate was changed and by whose hand." That is why we remember them.

In rising to move this resolution, I recognize that the war in Afghanistan is not without its

detractors. There are many Canadians who believe that our mission in that country is not one which we should be pursuing. There are many Canadians who have doubts about the nature of that mission. There are many Canadians who would like to see our troops withdrawn from that country.

And yet, I am sure that all Canadians recognize and understand the tremendous sacrifices being made by the men and women of our armed forces who are serving in Afghanistan. I am sure they admire and respect the bravery of those men and women who are serving in the midst of conflict. And I am sure they appreciate and support all our troops who are serving this country.

This much is certain. On September 11, 2001, our world was changed forever. Later attacks in other countries remind us of the threat that terrorists continue to pose to people everywhere. Our intervention in Afghanistan is aimed at eliminating that threat by confronting its causes. The aim is nothing less than to help the people of Afghanistan achieve peace, freedom, justice and democracy.

As we speak, there are more than 2,300 members of the Canadian armed forces in Afghanistan. They are there at the request of the Afghan government. They are there as part of a UN-Sanctioned and NATO-led International Stabilization Assistance Force. They are there to help fulfill Canada's international responsibilities.

Canada is in Afghanistan because we have a moral duty as citizens of one of the greatest countries in the world to help one of the most oppressed countries in the world deal with the challenges it faces. We are there to help the people of Afghanistan rebuild their shattered nation. We are there to help in reconstruction, in development, in providing aid and assistance.

Canada, along with its NATO partners, is working hard to bring about greater stability and peace to Afghanistan. That work is about achieving a safe and secure environment. It is about the protection of fundamental human rights. As citizens of the world, surely we have a basic responsibility to help our fellow citizens live in peace and dignity.

This is not an easy task. In Afghanistan, we are facing conflict, corruption, and controversy. The mission is not an easy one. Canadians are paying the price. And as we know to our sincere regret, some have paid the ultimate price.

We are mindful of the tragedies that have taken place in Afghanistan, and we must resolve to bring about an end to the reign of terror that has led to those tragedies. In the face of tragedy, we must remember those who have sacrificed to bring about a better world.

Many of those who do not fully support Canada's mission in Afghanistan do not fully understand or appreciate that progress is being made. During his recent visit to Canada, the Afghan president said that a democratic nation is not built overnight or in one or two elections. While the steps to stability are difficult, we know that millions of refugees have returned to their homes, children are returning to schools, and Afghans are taking more control over their own affairs.

Let there be no mistake about it: Canadians are making a difference in the lives of the people of Afghanistan. Canadians are helping to build Afghan domestic capacity and helping the people there move closer to the ultimate objective of a fully independent and stable country.

It is also not well recognized or understood that Canadians are doing more than

conducting combat operations. Canadian troops are helping to create an environment of trust and stability. They are involved in vital reconstruction efforts. They are helping to improve the lives of people who are struggling to achieve the rights and privileges that we take for granted. They are helping to rebuild a society that for too long has suffered war and oppression.

Change takes time, and we must not let up in our efforts to secure the peace.

We can all be proud of our troops. The Canadian armed forces are among the best in the world. They have earned an international reputation, one that is admired and respected. What they are doing in Afghanistan is serving Canada's obligations and responsibilities. That is why we must support our troops.

This resolution asks that we continue to support our troops in Afghanistan. What they are doing is right and just, and we must support their efforts. And yet, in a larger sense, this resolution is an endorsement of Canada's efforts. It is also a recognition of the outstanding contributions that all the members of our armed forces, the men and women who serve in the army, in the air force, in the navy, are making to ensure the rights and freedoms of all Canadians and of all citizens the world. They are part of a proud military tradition, and we will remember them for their service to their country.

I ask all members to join with me in expressing our support and gratitude to our troops, and to recognize and acknowledge their sacrifices.

Thank you Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The seconder of the motion, the

hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

**Mr. Mooney:** Can I get the podium?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is also with great pride that I stand here and support our troops that are serving overseas. As the mover of this motion so graciously stated today, not all Canadians are 100% behind this mission. Some wonder why we're there, but the one statement that you can't stress enough is that tyranny, hatred, and terror know no borders. A pure example of that was September 11 when the World Trade Centre - many Canadians lost their lives, and these Canadians that lost their lives were people from down the street, friends, neighbours, mothers and fathers. It was a real wake-up call to the world that this kind of tyranny and hatred wasn't stopped in its tracks, right where the source was that these battles would be fought on our doorsteps.

So I have quite the amount of pride behind what our troops are doing overseas.

Over the past month, Prince Edward Islanders, both young and old, have paused to remember and honour the soldiers, sailors and air personnel who answered the call and served Canada, and fought to oppose tyranny, restore peace, avert war, and gain our freedom.

We paused at the memorials and monuments dedicated to those men and women from Prince Edward Island who answered the call, volunteered for service, and some have paid the ultimate sacrifice. Whether it be the Anglo-Boer War memorial for those who died in distant lands over 100 years ago, the Cenotaph for those who paid the ultimate sacrifice during the Great War, World War II, or the Korean War, or the Service Memorial that has just been erected here in the last year or so.

Today, we lend our respect and support for the men and women from Prince Edward Island who have courageously answered the call and are serving or are preparing to serve with the Canadian Forces in Afghanistan, and fight for the same principles of those that fought and died for over the past 100 years and in the last 100 years. They are contributing to Canada's efforts to aid the citizens of Afghanistan.

I have to say I'm one that likes to watch the late news every night and follow world events. When you watch and you hear some of the world leaders speak of the changes that this task force is making in Afghanistan, where women once again are back in school, where they've been out of school in the last number of years, it's tremendous to see some of the inroads that this has made for Afghanistan. But it doesn't come without a cost.

With a coalition of other nations, they are helping the Afghan government realize its vision for a country that is secure and at peace, and capable of supplying basic services such as water, health care and education, many things that we here in Prince Edward Island sometimes take for granted. They are there to help stabilize the country and assist in reconstruction and development.

There are two key organizations making this happen. First, a battle group of soldiers who are patrolling the countryside in Kandahar, an area about the size of New Brunswick, and providing an armed deterrence against the factions that would to upset the progress that Afghanistan has made in the past few years. Second is the Provincial Reconstruction Team who is working with local Afghan authorities to improve the quality of life for those living there.

Our soldiers are interacting at the grassroots level with local leaders and provincial



governors to find out what the international community and Canada can do to assist in rebuilding the country.

Times have changed. We live in dangerous and unpredictable times these days, it seems. We face serious threats to our security, failed and failing states, global terrorism, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Seems to happen every day.

Canada must defend its interests and protect its citizens in this new environment. Despite what some say, a lot of this action has to be taken in foreign lands to ensure that these actions of terror don't come back here. It's frustrating to see it have to happen this way, but it's just a reality and the way of the world that we live in today. We must be prepared to do our part to contribute to international peace and security. To preserve the peace we enjoy at home here in Prince Edward Island, we must confront threats before they reach our shores.

The nature of international operations has changed dramatically since peacekeeping was introduced in the 1950s. Today, the Canadian forces are involved in complex missions and operating in a more complex environment. Our Canadian forces are in Afghanistan in order to provide stability and help the people of Afghanistan rebuild their country after 20 years of living in fear and having millions killed at the hands of foreign invaders, warlords, and the Taliban.

The mission in Afghanistan is of particular importance for us here in Atlantic Canada because we are in the process of preparing a Task Force for deployment to Afghanistan in February 2007.

This is the first time that Land Force Atlantic Area has been tasked to mount a complete task force for an overseas operation. We've sent soldiers from Atlantic Canada and Prince Edward Island on a

variety of overseas missions in the past, but as smaller groups or individuals to other task forces.

Here in Atlantic Canada, Task Force 1-07 will consist of about 1,600 soldiers from units across the region, including Prince Edward Island. There will be approximately 300 Reservists who will augment units of the task force and hold key positions at various levels. Sixteen of those Reservists will come from our own regiment, the Prince Edward Island Regiment.

In February of this year, the Commanding Officer of the Prince Edward Island Regiment, Lt. Col. Glenn Moriarity, received the call to identify, select, and screen individual soldiers who identified themselves as being willing to serve their country in this important mission.

Since May of this year, these members of our Island community have been undergoing intensive individual and collective training to prepare themselves for this mission. They are expected to be deployed in Afghanistan for six months, from February to August 2007. They have received the best training that the Army has to offer. The conditions of success have been set, and they have been ensured the best leadership, the best training, and the best equipment to successfully complete their mission will be given.

Now we must ensure that they have the best overall support to contribute to this success. I think it's very important that we as Islanders stand behind these gentlemen, and as I stated before, all of these people had stepped forward and said they are willing to go to a foreign land to help to secure peace, that will help keep peace on our own doorsteps.

Our nation's Chief of Defence staff, General Rick Hillier, has said in the media that "we

cannot reduce the risk to our soldiers to zero, but we will do everything in our power to get as close to zero as humanly possible”.

This operation provides an outstanding opportunity for reservists in Atlantic Canada and Prince Edward Island to step up to the plate, contribute, and participate in an international operation.

Every operation and every unit is built on our men and women, our sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, husbands, wives, mothers, fathers. They are the men and women from down the street, just around our neighbourhood in the cities, towns and communities of all over Prince Edward Island. Many here will have known some of them or have family members that could be in this 16.

They are incredible people, dedicated, devoted, courageous, and they shine most when the going gets tough. They are the face of Canada and of Prince Edward Island that millions around the world will recognize and remember because of the sacrifice they are willing to take in a distant land to ensure that all of us stay in the freedom that we have today.

As I said, I'm one that likes to keep up with current events. I watch the news pretty much every night, the late news, and one thing that troubles me - I fully support what Canada is doing in this because, as I said, tyranny knows no borders, and when you see what happened in 9/11 that's not too far away, and it rocked the world that day. I know I was on the farm that day when all the newscasts went to the World Trade Center. It was just incredible to see what can happen here in North America.

In the news of late, the last few nights, the one point that I've been seeing is that Canada, US, Britain and the Netherlands contribute the bulk of the forces in the

violent part of Afghanistan, down in the south where most of the action has been taking place. Some of the other larger countries are contributing but are ensuring that they keep their men and women out of harm's way.

There's an old saying, in for a penny, in for a pound. If these countries are going to take place and participate in a NATO exercise that is a worthwhile exercise to protect our whole world from terror, then by goodness they should grow a backbone. That's my personal opinion. They should step up to the plate. Our forces, if they're going there as a united force, they should share the risk.

In many past wars our Canadian soldiers have stood out among the very strongest. During Remembrance Week, the History channel, my boys and I watched movie after movie about the accolades of our Canadian soldiers and what they've done over the years, and they're still doing it.

But as I said I believe this is a very worthwhile mission because it's keeping peace, but I believe the burden of this should be spread through all of the wealth in this world and all of the countries that have something they can contribute. I think the risk should be spread out.

With that, I just want to thank the House for giving me the chance to second this. On behalf of the people in my district, I tell you we're proud of our forces and we're proud of the men and women and what they're doing for world peace. With that, I'd like to second it.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Spring Park.

**Mr. MacAleer:** Yes, Mr. Speaker.

I think that the speakers before me certainly extolled with a lot of pride our presence in Afghanistan, and I'd just like to take a little different approach to this.

I think many of us focus on this issue as it relates to what happened in 9/11 and the bombing or the attack on the World Trade Center. I wonder if I could just give a little broader context to this issue. Because I think many of us ask us why we can justify sending young men and women from our country into harm's way, in some cases to give us their lives. What possible reason would we have to do that.

I'd like to explain that this problem that we are attempting to deal with in Afghanistan, it just didn't start with 9-11, and is a much broader problem than just Canada's problem or the United States' problem. In fact, in the case of Afghanistan, we have 37 nations involved. Canada of course is taking the leading role. But one must understand that the problem that we're facing in that area is a problem which began probably after World War I, with the division of the people's into various communities as a result of the Treaty of Paris. I'm not going to go back that far, but I will explain that the attack on the World Trade Center was one that was one of a whole series of attacks that had occurred on US properties and the properties of other nations.

In more recent times, of course, we had the bombing of the transit system in London, we had the bombing of a train in Spain, we had of course 9/11, we had the attack on the USS *Cole* which was an American warship, we had the bombing of three embassies in Africa. One would ask you: Are all of these sort of linked together, do they have a common background? They do. In fact, closer to home we had the arrest of 17 individuals in Ottawa who were planning to bomb our own parliament and in some cases assassinate our own prime minister. So I

mean, is this a serious problem? It is.

The problem animates from a whole society of people, thousands of these people, not just a few, who are growing up in a society with certain values. Those values include the subjugation of women, where women are treated somewhat less than animals, that if they don't obey the authorities they are mercifully shot, but unmercifully they are either stoned to death or let hang in the sun. Where youth are not permitted to express themselves, either in terms of participating in programs which might result in their education which may allow them to participate in political processes that we know in this country, but rather are subjugated to the point where they are treated somewhat like animals, but they are trained to kill other people. They're trained to kill other people in a very acute and astute manner. They are sent to camps called madrassa camps.

Now, why would a society like this grow up? One of the challenges you have of course is the belief by a lot of people in that area that there is sort of a singular (Indistinct). They don't believe in technological development, they have a tremendous faith in a limited view of life which is expressed through their religious beliefs, but they think that by getting other people believing in what they believe in that in some way they're fulfilling a greater purpose. A small band of these people have grown into quite a large force. In fact, it's estimated that the Taliban now have about 60,000 adherents somewhere along the Pakistan border, which is where they mainly have retreated to.

If there is a group of people who are in charge of these countries, like Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Iran, who think that by keeping the people out of their society they are out of their political mechanisms and by subjugating them, then there is this great

need of the people to express themselves. We take great pride in our country in involving our youth and our women. We involve people in our political process. But there are societies which take us, you know, their objective, keeping people removed from these processes. As a result, just like a hot water tank when it overheats, it blows up. There is no capacity to let off steam. But these political leaders have decided that the best way to let off steam is to allow their youth to participate and involving themselves in spreading their beliefs to other countries. So what they do is they look for governments that are unstable in various countries and they move into those countries and take them over. They also do that by taking over the values of these countries. Afghanistan was an example of a country which was taken over by the Taliban.

But there is another aspect of this. You can't keep a program like this going unless you've got money. An overlapping aspect of this is that in Afghanistan the source of funds happens to be those who are growing a crop which provides drugs. As long as you allow those particular people to participate in their form of agriculture, they're going to continue to pay for the arms that you need in order to provide protection for them and to provide arms for the armies and the youth that these groups promote.

So therefore, you got an alliance that becomes very dangerous. Because by having money available you have increased your reach. Of course, if you increase your reach you can go much beyond your borders, which of course is what's happened with respect to 9/11, with respect to the bombing in London, the bombing of the trains in Spain. It is that alliance that becomes very dangerous.

Therefore, the only way that we as a peaceful-loving people who want to promote our youth in terms of their education who

want to live in peace, our only solution is to go back to the source of this unrest and try to disrupt it. You do that by entering into their society and attempting to overthrow the individuals who are causing this unrest.

We have no choice but to enter these areas, one being Afghanistan, to disrupt the alliance that's being built up in that country. Therefore, we either send our forces into those areas to disrupt these alliances or we will have to do it in our own homeland. That's the choice. It's not a very a good choice to have to make, but one in which the leaders of the Western countries have made.

Therefore, the role that our troops are making in terms of entering into Afghanistan is very important. It's most essential. It is very significant what they're attempting to do there. Not only are we trying to disrupt a terrorist group that has a military capability of destroying our property and killing people in other countries, we are attempting to create the infrastructure for a better society with improved values. That has to be recognized and congratulated.

While we look on this as a military operation, it is more than that. It is hopefully creating a society in which the values that we so fondly cherish are given to others.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Park Corner-Oyster Bed.

**Ms. MacKenzie:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I wonder if I might have the podium please? Thank you.

It gives me great pleasure to be able to rise today and speak to this resolution on the

troops in Afghanistan. I've had a daughter serving in Afghanistan for a seven month tour of duty. She returned to us August 29<sup>th</sup> safe and sound.

It was a very emotional time for us that last month that she was in Afghanistan than the first month that she was there. I'd like to share a little bit of that with the House.

I'd like to commend my hon. colleague who spoke before me. He certainly gave us a very good insight into how things have taken us to Afghanistan and the reason that we're there. If we don't go to Afghanistan and battle for peace there, then we're not going to enjoy the life that we have here in Canada.

That was very obvious to all of us as we celebrate or commemorate our veterans on November 11<sup>th</sup>. We live in one of the greatest countries in the world. For us to have that honour we have lost thousands upon thousands of people to have that. For us to continue that we have to continue to help other people striving to have the type of democracy that we have. That's why we are in Afghanistan and striving to help those people live in peace and not in fear.

Vanessa had a lot of times in Afghanistan you could call some fun times. I thought I might start with some fun times. Vanessa is blonde. She's blonder than myself. She's a paramedic. She's a corporal. She would work in the clinic at Camp Nathan Smith.

Camp Nathan Smith is named after one of the four of our soldiers that was killed in the friendly fire with the Americans. Camp Nathan Smith is located about 30 kilometres north of the main base in Kandahar. It's quite a rocky road to get there. It's not nice like that road going through Hunter River now up to Fredericton and beyond. It takes quite a bit of time to get into Kandahar. They didn't get in there to Tim Hortons very

often.

When Vanessa was in the clinic she had a 13-year-old interpreter for her. It's the children that tend to pick up the English very quickly. He was seen as very rich, this child. He had everything. He dressed in western clothes. He had an iPod. He was well into the western ways. His English was very good.

With Vanessa being in the clinic she didn't have a helmet on. She just would have her hair in a ponytail. So when people would come in to be treated at the clinic, not only were they treating members of the military, but they also were treating Afghani people.

The children would just stare at her blonde hair. They thought this was quite unusual, which it is because the Afghan women have black hair, dark brown hair. Vanessa said they would often want to touch her hair, just see if it was real, or whatever. That created quite a stir for her.

I mentioned in the springtime that Vanessa got to attend International Women's Day on behalf the Canadian government. There were 200 women there. She sat in the front row.

She had her gun strapped to her hip and I think she had another one on her ankle. No head covering as did the other women. There was no head covering. They were able to take their burkas off when they came into the room. It was the first time that she had seen 200 women without burkas on. She was very moved by what a beautiful race the women were.

During the event, the whole outside of the building was protected by the military, but the military upon seeing Vanessa were coming and taking pictures with her. Their children were coming then to have pictures done with her. It was sad. Vanessa said the

last teenager that came in and wanted to have his picture done asked Vanessa: Can you help me get out of the country?

Vanessa was just heartbroken. She said she would love to have taken her out of the country, but she told the girl, who was about 14 or 15, that her English was so good she said: Continue to practice your English and become an interpreter. That will help you be able to leave the country some day.

There were different people Vanessa had the opportunity to meet. Mainly, those people that came into the camp work with them who were Afghani people that she would love to have been able to put in a suitcase and take home.

There were engineers that came from Kandahar into the base to do different jobs for them on the base. Vanessa, being a politician's daughter, was taught how to shake hands very early on. When the first man came in to be treated he put his hand out to Vanessa. I guess what they do is just clasp hands. It's a show that they don't have any arms on them. Well, Vanessa took his hand and she shook it good and firm. He was just kind of taken back. That evening she could see out beyond their compound and several men demonstrating this shaking of the hands. She found that quite amusing.

When she would go on foot patrol the young people around the area knew that this woman would come out on patrol. They would watch for her. There'd be a group and it would be boys. There was a picture published in a magazine actually with these kids around her and they would be from age three up to age 15. They would dare one another to go over and shake her hand because this was quite a thing for a boy to go over and shake a woman's hand.

You can just see this kind of smile on her face. The boys are all there kind of talking

and trying to see which one is going to be brave enough to go and shake her hand.

Vanessa also had the opportunity to talk to quite a few teenagers while she was there. I'm happy to say that the teenagers in Afghanistan realized that there is a need for change, that the life that they're leading now is not the life that they choose to live in or to bring their children up in. They have such respect for their grandfathers and their fathers that they say that they cannot implement change while their grandfathers are still alive, that their culture is so strong that that is something they can't do to disrespect them.

So it is encouraging to know that teenagers have that mindset, that we're not going to be starting out a new generation that is just being born. So there is hope for peace and a better way of life in Afghanistan when we look at teenagers realizing that and ready to work on that.

The Camp Nathan Smith, the reconstruction group as they are known as, they've been working very hard training people to be Afghani soldiers. It's taking quite awhile for the people in Afghanistan to become soldiers because they've always lived in fear of the Taliban. So for them to start to take up arms and track down Taliban is really an unbelievable skill for them to learn. Just the fear that they have of the Taliban - and Vanessa said that many times when you take a group out and they would start to practice firing, somebody would think that there were Taliban in the area and they'd drop their guns and they would run away. She said then we would have to go and round them all up and bring them back and start again.

But the Taliban for all we've have had many losses with our forces, the Afghani people have become stronger. The police force, the army, they are becoming braver and they are

seeing success with the missions that they are going on and they can see that they are making a difference.

Now the foot patrols that Vanessa has been on, one time they were into a skirmish some distance from the camp. They were in vehicles and ended up getting into combat on foot, and it took five hours to subdue this group of men. So they captured five men and when they did it was a sizeable amount of ammunition and cache of weapons, and they were some distances from their vehicle. So it was quite a walk out. So they decided they would tie the ammunition and guns to the prisoners' hands and let them carry it out. So Vanessa had tied up this man and tied up the arms and things behind his back, and then when it was time to leave and she told him to start to walk, he wouldn't walk for her because she was a woman and he wasn't having any thing to do with her. So when an Afghani soldier came over and told him to walk, it was a different story. He was able to walk.

So when they got the five prisoners back to Camp Nathan Smith and then they were transferred into Kandahar, the main base, it turned out that the man that Vanessa had been tying up the ammunition and things to - that he was the third most wanted on the US FBI list. So you just don't know who you are going to find in Afghanistan. So they were quite surprised that they had this calibre of person that they had taken down.

The reconstruction team is building roads and building schools. To us here we think a school has to have a gym and it has to have an industrial arts section and it has to have so many different components, with and some textbooks. One textbook will be for the teacher to teach the students and I think there are actually 15,000 girls now just in Kandahar alone who have returned to school. That is just amazing, really amazing and it is so good to see the women able to go

back to school.

Now the reconstruction team may also go out on medical trips, and they did five medical convoys. You can imagine how many vehicles and the planning that it takes when they would go out to outlining villages, they would visit several villages at a time. The medical people had to go and you would have a doctor and two paramedics, and then you would have to have the infantry that was going to protect you. Then there was part of the infantry, they were going to surround the villages and make sure no one came in while you were providing the services.

They were going to be people meeting with the elders, having discussions with them, while their treatment was going on, and soldiers would be giving out colouring books and little gifts to the children. All of these items had to be stored. Non-profit humanitarian organizations were sending food and blankets. So that was stored in another vehicle and soldiers would give those out when they were there.

So it would be quite a convoy and they all have to travel very close together for safety. When they would get to a village it was not unusual to see between 200 to 300 patients a day. So there was a great need for the medical experience or the medical people to visit the community.

Some people did have a doctor and some didn't. I know we've been enjoying some beautiful temperatures here this last week. But in Afghanistan some of the days that Vanessa did foot patrol, when she would be the medic going with the team for the day she would carry a 70-pound backpack and the highest day temperatures they were out in was 54 C.

So you consider walking for four or five hours with that amount of weight on your

back and that temperature and that's quite a load and quite a way to go. I don't think I'd make it across the room, probably. And then at night if it dropped to 30 she was having to get extra blankets. She got conditioned over there. It was pretty cold when she came home and it was even September with that.

So for anybody to just go out to Camp Nathan Smith it was a great deal of planning and organization. Glyn Berry, the diplomat that was killed, they named a boardroom after him at Camp Nathan Smith, it is known as the Berry Room.

I was talking to Vanessa the other night and I'd had seen a story on the *National* about - I don't know his rank, but his last name was Franklin, and he lost a leg. I think he was with the diplomat Berry at the time and his last name was Franklin. He was treated in Germany and then he came back to Canada and the one leg was amputated. Vanessa was going to see him before she left Canada on the 27<sup>th</sup> of January and she probably went about the 20<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup> of January. and there was no visitors because he was having to go to the OR and have the second leg amputated.

He went through a lot of rehab, he went through a lot of pain. His whole life changed, and there was a story on the *National* about how he overcame what had happened to him. He learned to use his prosthetic legs and he's now a guest speaker at many different organizations, in schools. Vanessa said he pops up to Ottawa every second week or so and he's become quite a celebrity and he's taking it all in stride.

He is being trained to do a different job now at a desk, and he bought himself a new Mini Cooper, got it all hand controlled. He was the guest speaker at an officers' dinner and he wasn't in the officer rank, and this officers' dinner was to raise money for the hospital in Germany where our soldiers are treated before they're airlifted back to

Canada. In that one dinner they raised \$60,000 to send to Germany. Vanessa - a group from her level, she's a corporal, corporals and privates - they served the dinner, they had donated their time. She said it was just unbelievable. There were silent auction items and there was auction items. One of the interesting auction items was an hour and a half flight in an F-18, and she said it was going like 8,000, 9,000, back and forth between these two men and this man finally said: \$14,000! That was it, he got it. He will enjoy his flight. He can probably go to the Arctic and back in his hour and half.

It's wonderful to see how much they put into it. Not only are they putting their time, energy and life, but they're backing it up with their money as well.

That night, Vanessa got to meet a family that is very special to her. She hadn't met them before and they were the parents and brothers and sisters of (Indistinct). I can only tell you "Boomer" - I can't say his last name it's really long - but "Boomer" was Vanessa's ambulance partner for three years and they went to Afghanistan together. "Boomer" was killed two weeks before they came home. So that was pretty tough on all of them, and Vanessa helped write his eulogy for the service that they had for him in Camp Nathan Smith. Vanessa's fiancé was asked to complete all the arrangements for "Boomer" on his return to Canada. He was buried in Comox, BC, where his family is from.

Vanessa's fiancé, Cpl. Smithers, he had the honour of carrying his medals and beret behind the coffin. So it was quite a thing to have the two of them actually be able to participate in those final things that you can do for a friend. I got to know "Boomer" just through pictures and things as Vanessa grieved over him.



He was killed on a Friday and she called us on a Saturday to tell us and she said she was all cried out. Then she was going on and she started to talk about her work in Afghanistan and that the new people were coming in and starting to learn for the takeover for their trip home. She was really thinking she was going to find it hard to leave Afghanistan because she felt her work there was very worthwhile and they were making a difference.

So when you have somebody that has lost such a close friend one day and they can talk about the person and talk about how meaningful their work is, they really must be doing a good job. That's how I base what our troops are doing over there, that they must really have a good feeling about what they're doing when they're ready to go back. She was ready to go back once she gets her downtime. I said: The rest of them must look awful fresh coming in, Vanessa. Yeah, they don't look quite as tired as we are.

Now some of the fun things that happened when they were there. They had visits from Hillier and he was great to pop over. Brigadier General, I think it is, Hillier. He would pop by and come around their camp. Fraser who was leader of actually the whole command in Kandahar. He would come around about lunch every ten days to see them, knew a lot of them by name, and a very friendly gentleman. Vanessa tried the PEI thing on him. Told him one day: My mom is looking for a job. He said: Is she now? What kind of job? So they went off to discuss it and he said: Here's my card with my e-mail, tell her to e-mail me. So I thought, (Indistinct).

The prime minister was by, spent lots of time with them, and Peter MacKay was out. Her highlight was having Peter Mansbridge come out. Vanessa grew up with only two channels and so it was Peter Mansbridge she

watched at 10:00 at night. It was just great, she said, just to see him. It ended up she got to drive him around for the day, and they told all kinds of stories. Of course, Peter Mansbridge was married here on PEI, so he had that PEI connection as well. While they were there on their (Indistinct) their clinic was very open to the media, and it was very difficult if a soldier was brought in to try and protect their identity from the media. Because you certainly don't want to see the face of your loved one on t.v. before you've ever had a phone call.

So Vanessa was asked by her senior officer to design a new clinic, and she was quite excited. She had a blank sheet and was able to do everything herself, so it was a nice challenge for her and she completed the task. It was a much more private clinic and it was better for everyone involved. The media was always trying to interview people and they kept putting different spins on different ways to do different stories, and she just didn't want to be interviewed while she was there.

Lennie was over to Kandahar but he didn't make it out to Camp Nathan Smith. So she told me I had to growl at Lennie the next time I saw him, which I did. While they were there at Camp Nathan Smith, they took on the project of building a pool, and they had it completed for July. No, it was completed before July 1<sup>st</sup> but a couple of Taliban (Indistinct) on, what was it called, it wasn't bombs, but a couple of somethings, over their wall on July 1<sup>st</sup>. So there were a few people injured and one or two had to go to Germany for treatment.

They also built a small house on the base and everything is just gravel and rock and it's either gray or a cream colour. That's all you see when you look at the base. There is a gentleman that has worked for many years with the Canadian government there and he has a number of children but he stays for

several days at a time. He just slept on the ground, so they decided they would build him a house. The engineers all came and laughed at them when they were going to build this house. You have to make the bricks yourself and they have to dry for a day. Then they were mixing cement and I've seen them, these tiny little cement mixers, they're only about that big, if it was that big. They were dumping in probably only a ten pound bag at a time and that was how they were cementing all the bricks on. They got it straight, they got a roof on it, they put a window and a door in it, and he was very excited to think that he actually had a place to call his own and to go and be able to rest in a house and not to be open to the elements.

Vanessa, while she was there the entire seven months, she got to sleep in a tent. There was 100 to a tent and there was two tents for everybody. The entire group slept in two tents, bunk beds. Then there was just kind of drapery between them all, canvass drapery. So it was probably a dull spot. She said: Yeah, you can send me stuff so I can kind of brighten up my place. So I can see now why she wanted to do that.

Another person that passed away that was significant in Vanessa's life was Nichola Goddard. She was the first woman killed in action in Canadian history. Nichola Goddard was strongly admired by anyone who ever had the opportunity to serve under her. I didn't realize that Vanessa had the opportunity to know her. When she called us and we were talking about Nichola, she was very obsessed about: Where is she being buried? Like, why isn't she being buried in her home town and why would she be buried in Ottawa? Why would she choose to go to this memorial? What's the sense of going there? Why would you want to be there? So that was on her mind quite a bit as she worked through that, why she is going to be there. One thing I said that kind of clicked

that it was okay and I said: They bury privates and brigadier generals side by side. Oh, that's good, she said, okay. That was all right for Nichola to go there.

Vanessa, that's a journey that she was make to visit that grave with that and the Goddard family. My sympathy goes out to them if they should ever have the opportunity to see it.

On July 22<sup>nd</sup> there was a terrible accident, and Vanessa and another medic were called out from Camp Nathan Smith to respond. When they arrived on the scene, they had four injuries that they had to airlift to Germany. There were two dead soldiers from Canada. Vanessa and her colleague were given the task of returning the bodies to Camp Nathan Smith. They had the bodies in the ambulance and were on their way back, just starting on their way back, and they were hit by a suicide bomber. Usually al-Qaeda will let the village people know or someone know that a suicide bomber is coming so that they can get the children out of the way. They didn't even bother to do that this day or this suicide bomber.

Vanessa was traumatized by the fact that she was hit by a suicide bomber, not by that but by the fact that the children were involved. She said the hardest thing she ever had to do was to leave that scene without using the skills she had to treat the injured children and the adults, but the children especially. When you are given the role to retrieve and return your fallen comrades, that is the most important duty you have to do for those people and that's what they did. From that night on Vanessa never had a full night sleep. That was something she had to deal with when she came home to Canada. She is going through her process now and has started to get her sleep back which is very good and would have been very hard to deal with, to know you had the skills and not be able to go out and practice those skills.

Some of the most dangerous things that the people in Kandahar are going through - the city of Kandahar, it's a very modern city, people are going about their day. If you ever get to watch the news and see what a beautiful city it is - but because there is so much traffic you don't know what's coming at you in the traffic and there are various checkpoints around the city that have to be checked on numerous times throughout the day. When you do this checkpoint patrol your head is just swivelling every which way making sure there is nobody coming right at you.

I probably (Indistinct). When Vanessa landed in Canada on August 29<sup>th</sup> they were greeted at the airport by military brass and then they were bussed to meet their loved ones. Her fiancé, when he met her, he had a yellow rose for her. When she had been bussed to where they were in the parking lot she could see "Boomer"'s truck. Her dear friend that she had lost, his truck was still parked in the parking lot. So when she met her fiancé, he gave her a yellow rose, and she had been crying, of course, because she had seen the truck till she saw him. He gave her this yellow rose, and yellow is the support the troops colour. So when they left and they were on their way to home she said: We have to stop at the truck. So they stopped at the truck and she put the yellow rose under the windshield wiper. That was a very emotional time for them and I think it might have helped have a little bit of closure.

Vanessa came home for a ten day visit here. I'd like to thank all my colleagues who came out to the airport to welcome her home. She was very overwhelmed to see so many come out and see her. She said: Mom, I didn't even know some of the people, and they were kissing me and hugging me." But they've listened to her mother, they've listened to me, for a long time.

Supporting the troops is a big thing right now. Friday is red day, so if you can wear red on Friday - I know the Opposition will be very happy once I get my red blazer and wear it on Friday. But if you can support the troops in any small way, that's one way that's an easy way. There are different magnets for your car, there are yellow pins, there's all kinds of ways. It's just the small things that they ask you to do to keep them in your prayers.

So thank you very much for the opportunity to talk about supporting our troops in Afghanistan.

Thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

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

It's a pleasure for me to rise in support of this motion today. I just want to talk a little about the motion, about our mission in Afghanistan. I know it's a bit of a contentious issue across Canada on really what Canadian troops should be involved in, and on what the Canadian vision is for our role across the world.

I have a firm belief, going back to Mr. Pearson's days, that we're not an adversarial country, so to speak, we're more a country that wants to be involved in peacekeeping, helping other countries develop, helping to rebuild schools, hospitals, infrastructure, things along those lines.

I don't think we have the critical mass or we don't have the finances to be able to engage in major wars. Some people might say that perhaps we should take more of a role in terms of that, but I'm content with the role

that Canadians play in terms of our peacekeeping nature, in terms of rebuilding nature and I think it's great.

I know this Afghanistan mission, there are some people out there that are still against it. I think regardless whether or not you are for or against any mission in the world, whether or not you're from the US and you're against the Iraq war, whether or not you're from Canada and you're against the mission that we have going on in Afghanistan, I believe each and every - whether or not you're an American or a Canadian - should be supportive of the troops that are there.

Because they're there representing us, they're there doing something that they believe in. I know I was proud a couple of Fridays ago to attend a ceremony out here in front of Province House. I was joined by my colleagues, the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Kings Square, the hon. Member from Crapaud-Hazel Grove, the hon. minister of economic and development, and the hon. Member from Park Corner-Oyster Bed, in supporting our troops.

I know there were a few people there that were against the mission in Afghanistan. It's not too often that my blood boils, but I honestly felt like saying: I don't care if you're against the mission in Afghanistan, still please be supportive of our troops. Those are just my personal feelings, they're not the feelings of the Liberal party, they're not the feelings of my caucus, they're my personal feelings as an individual.

Whether or not you're for or against it. I believe you should be supportive of our troops that are over there, putting their lives on the line. I happened to attend the funeral for Mr. Mellish, Warrant Officer Frank Robert Mellish, and something that really struck me was that when one of his friends was speaking - and a colleague - at his funeral, they were talking about how he

believed in what he was doing. I think that's very important and that we support our troops.

I also have had the opportunity, like many Islanders and Canadians, to watch a lot of the coverage on our national news. Sometimes I hear and I heard the other day the story about a hospital, I believe, or a school that was supposed to be built, but the contractor got fired and there was corruption going on at the time, and here they were a year later and after they made an announcement to start something and it still hadn't been started yet.

There are going to be growing pains. This is a country that was controlled by Taliban, they have different religion beliefs, they have tribal beliefs. I think we have to understand sometimes that things are not going to happen overnight, it takes time. But I also saw, I believe it was last night, a female soldier over in Afghanistan talking about how they were in a small village and they were helping to deliver medical supplies for children in some of those small villages.

So I think the media sometimes, and Canadians, it gets glorified, the problems that take place, and sometimes the good things that take place don't come to the forefront as much as they should. But we know that there are good things taking place. I think we can also learn - and one of the things that I find amazing - and perhaps when we went into Afghanistan I had forgot about this myself. But it's not something that's easy to do to go into a country like this. We just have to remember back, and my memory is not that great when it comes to the military, but I believe the Russians were in Afghanistan for a long time. They probably had the second most powerful army in the world, and they had trouble.

We're not going to see the investments that

we're making today become reality tomorrow or the next day, but perhaps in 20 years we're going to see a small child who would have died from a disease that they shouldn't die from being able to live out their life because a Canadian soldier was there to perhaps offer a vaccine. Or books that were not available before will now be available.

A lot of these are my personal feelings and I believe fundamentally that regardless of whether or not we're for war or we're for a mission that we're involved in, I think it's important for us to stand up and say we support our soldiers. We support them in the actions that our Canadian government, regardless of political stripe or anything like that, but what they asked them to serve our country and these soldiers did make the choice. There's not a draft here in Canada. They did make a choice to want to stand up for Canadian values all around the world, and that's what they are doing.

So it's my honour to stand up today in our Legislature and be able to support our troops. I urge all Islanders and Canadians, regardless of your personal beliefs that are taking place, to please remember that there are boys and girls, men and women, brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers, sons and daughters, aunts and uncles, nieces and nephews, people that are there doing something that they believe in and putting their lives on the line for it. It's my honour to stand up in this Legislature today and support our troops.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Winsloe-West Royalty.

**Mr. Collins:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I am privileged to speak to this resolution. Because I think if you asked any Canadian over the age of ten, they'll tell you yes, Canada is engaged in Afghanistan.

I think personally it's the number one issue that is facing our country today, our engagement in Afghanistan, our increasing engagement in Afghanistan. I think it is very important that we, as the elected members of the people of Prince Edward Island, in this Chamber should stand and fully express how we feel about Canada's engagement in Afghanistan, to find out why we're there, what good we're doing and what price we're paying.

I was very thankful to Don Cherry recently and his Coach's Corner on Remembrance Day. I don't know how many may have seen that, but Coach's Corner was simply photograph after photograph after photograph, 42 photographs in a row, each view lasting six to eight seconds, showing a picture of young Canadian lives that had been lost in Afghanistan since we began our engagement there.

These pictures were shown to the strings of a bagpipe, and it happening close to Remembrance Day brought it all home. I'm sure any Canadian watching that program that night could not fail to be touched to the core by the price we are paying for our engagement in Afghanistan.

Why are we there? I'll come to that answer later, but I do want to bring home a point that may show the division that's being created across Canadian regarding our engagement.

On *Maritime Noon* last week on CBC radio they told a very interesting story about a mother whose son was serving in Afghanistan on his second tour, and this mother was living her life in a state of tremendous stress, confusion, anxiety. She is

against the war and Canada's involvement in that part of the world. So she got involved with some protest groups. This lady, I believe, lives in the Nova Scotia, Halifax, area. So she went out to some of the rallies protesting Canada's presence there. Then she took the opportunity to write a long letter to her son in Afghanistan explaining to him how she felt and what she had done.

Her son wrote her back, and as politely as a dutiful son could, he told his mother that she should be supporting his work because he believed in what he was doing. He believed that what he was doing over there on his second tour of duty was for the good of the people of that part of the world, and he urged her, even if she disagreed with Canada's presence in Afghanistan, to please support the troops. He said: You can support the troops by making sure we have the equipment we need to get the job done over here, whether that is military equipment or humanitarian resources, whatever we need. So the mother's perspective was somewhat changed on this.

Because every time I know I have ever heard a Canadian man or woman serving in Afghanistan speak about what they're doing there, they've always spoken with tremendous pride in the work that they're doing, with the hope that the work they're doing will be meaningful and lasting for the people of Afghanistan. Even in the face of the tremendous price that we're paying over there, they still maintain the job is worthwhile, to a man, to a woman. As long as I hear that coming from these soldiers who are on the front line, in the midst of the battle, if they're telling Canadians at home that they believe in what they are doing, how could we not support their belief? They're over there, they're engaged, they're talking, they're helping the people of Afghanistan.

Why are we there? Quite simply, it was a

failed state that became a nest for terrorism. It's as simple as that. If we recalled what Afghanistan looked like prior to September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001, and you can recall some of the rare stories that were coming out of there from some of the major media like CBS and *60 Minutes*, and you saw the repression in that society, the extremism that was taking place. As my hon. colleague from Charlottetown-Spring Park pointed out, where women, one-half of the population, were treated just above the stage of a barn animal, where women who did defy in anyway the many rules of the Taliban were taken into a stadium, stoned to death or beheaded. This was happening all over the country.

At the same time, of course, we know that al-Qaeda was finding a home and an ally with the Taliban, and from out of that came the attack on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001.

Something had to be done. That could not be allowed to exist. It was an affront to fundamental human rights, and Canada, as a leading member of the United Nations, saw its responsibilities and has acted accordingly.

Now we have heard a great deal about the military presence in Afghanistan and the role we've played there, but I don't think we've heard enough at all about the role we're playing on the humanitarian front in Afghanistan. I really believe, even though it's very difficult to succeed in that area of building bridges and roads and trying to construct schools and to dig water wells and irrigation systems and things of that nature while you're under attack from mortars from the Taliban, our Canadian forces are holding up very well. As I said, they're certainly not complaining about the job.

We have our other branches of Canadian service besides the military and we're seeing

a lot of work through the Canadian International Development Agency. Right now there's emergency food aid going out to the tens of thousands of the most vulnerable families in that very hot part of the country called Kandahar province. They're facing acute food shortages and internal displacement for this coming winter.

As a matter of fact, we all remember Operation Medusa that the Canadian forces led in August. That displaced 1,200 families from their homes. So right now, emergency aid funding through the World Food Program is being delivered to those people because of the efforts of our Canadian troops.

Four-thousand 400 tons of food are being distributed throughout the Kandahar region as we speak. Not only affected by war, but also having been affected by drought.

Nearly \$6 million is being provided to finance reconstruction and the repair of roads and bridges in Kandahar. We're also helping build rural community services such as clinics, agricultural supports for farmers and villagers, in that part of the world.

The citizens of Kandahar are benefitting and improving their access to basic services. We heard the hon. Member from Park Corner-Oyster Bed speak of the efforts in terms of bringing medical care to many of the villagers and paramedics handling upwards of 200-plus patients a day. All of that is having its impact.

There's money being channelled through what's called the National Area Based Development Program, which is an Afghan government-led initiative that's been implemented by the United Nations Development Program. It's focusing on the rebuilding of schools, government offices, irrigation channels, water wells, health clinics and other very critical services.

A lot of this is going into the Panjwayi district. There's a name we're becoming all too familiar with in Canada. Panjwayi, a very hot area of Kandahar province, about 35 kilometres to the west of Kandahar city itself. It has been a stronghold of Taliban rebels, and NATO claims the battle of Panjwayi resulted in the death of over 500 Taliban insurgents. Our troops have had to lay it on the line in order to try to clear the area to make it safe for these many reconstruction efforts.

I know others want to speak on this resolution so I will not take up too much time, other than to say that I realize this issue is not one that receives the unanimous overwhelming support of all Canadians. That is the issue of our engagement in Afghanistan. But one thing I feel is very certain is that Canadians individually certainly do support the men and women, our brave troops, in Afghanistan, and all our other Canadian workers who are over there who may not be wearing a military uniform, but who are making that contribution to providing a safe environment so that reconstruction efforts can begin and hopefully succeed.

I think there is where the real challenge is going to be. We have to have the patience to give it our best efforts. I am not in any way, and I don't think any Canadian is predicting success, but we do know that our commitment right now is to the year 2009. I for one will continue my support for the troops in Afghanistan. I hope other Canadians too will join me in that effort. Because they have not lost faith. We should not lose faith.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

**Ms. Bertram:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to rise as well and extend my support to this resolution today.

Our men and women with the Canadian armed forces are doing wonderful work in many places of our globe, here at home in our country and abroad. Today, this motion supports those that are fighting for peace in Afghanistan. It's a very difficult mission. I think as the hon. colleague beside me stated, it's hard to know how things are going to turn out in the long term.

In this area of the world things have been going on for many year. If you look at history, you can go back to the beginning of time. Yet, our Canadian armed forces are there on the ground along with other countries and they are working for the humanitarian efforts of supporting the human condition.

As a teacher, a lot of our books in the elementary grades don't really focus on Afghanistan or the Middle East. There are some things that you can do on your own. The last couple of years as a read aloud for a grade 4 class that I had I read the book *The Breadwinner*, which is written by a Canadian author Deborah Ellis. There are two other books in the series. It's a wonderful book, sort of puts the children at their level. It's about a girl, her name is Parvana, and she's a 12 year old. The children could identify with her because of her age.

This girl was from Kabul. It took the children through the trials and the tribulations that she as a 12 year old in that country was going through under the Taliban regime.

Let me tell you that the children first of all learned about the country, but they had a hard time understanding the differences in

their world from our world here in Canada, and the freedoms that we take for granted so often.

This girl was probably, before the Taliban regime, was raised in a middle class family. Her father was a professor at a university. Yet, during this regime, her family had nothing. They were living in rubble. She actually changed her identity to be a 12 year old boy so in fact she could have employment and find, as the book is called *The Breadwinner*, the bread that was necessary to feed her family. Because as we know, in their culture and under the Taliban regime, girls were not permitted outdoors. They were not permitted to go to school. This girl did not go to school, but she wanted to win bread for her family so that they at the end of the day would have something to eat.

The children, when I read this to them, just couldn't believe that life was so different for them. How they can have their lunch and open their lunch kit and it's there for them. Yet this girl, what she had to do, change her identity. I said to them: Some days you like school, boys and girls, and some days you don't. There's good days and bad days, but you have the freedom, boys and girls, to attend public schooling here in Prince Edward Island and here in Canada. Yet over there, they just couldn't comprehend that girls were not allowed. The girls in the class just couldn't believe that their rights would be taken away like that.

Anyway, the book went further. This particular 12 year old girl lost family members, she was in refugee camps, and it went on. All of this under the Taliban regime.

Yet in the third series of the book it talked about how there was a Canadian peacekeeper. It talked about the positive where the regime was ending. That brought



us to discussion in the classroom as well of the role of Canadians in our world.

Children have a lot to share. One little girl said: Why do we have to have wars? That's a good question. Why can't there be peaceful resolve? Why can't one another respect one another? But that is not happening.

This resolution today that government is putting forth is in support of our troops that are presently serving in Afghanistan and those that have lost their lives. I know that the hon. Leader of the Opposition mentioned attending Warrant Officer Frank Mellish's funeral. That really, I think, hit home for Atlantic Canadians how close it can be. There are many other Canadians perhaps close to families in Prince Edward Island. Yet they go over and serve in these missions, ready to serve for diplomatic purposes in defence of human rights and ensuring that Canadian leadership in world affairs perseveres.

I support the member saying that I think this is probably the one most pressing issue for Canadians as a nation. I do feel if you are in discussions in a conversation with anyone on world events, political views, this is always brought up.

I don't know if there's ever going to be a solution, but I do feel our Canadians are doing their best. They are representing Canada, the face of Canada, and the face of Canada is respecting individuals, respecting men and women, respecting children and families.

The sad part about all of this are the children and those communities where the warfare is taking place. They do not want this, yet they are implicated in all of this. Their homes are taken away from them and many other things, including family members. We only have to watch the news at night to see, not

just only in Afghanistan, but other places in the world where this is happening.

I believe that Canada with our armed forces, along with organizations that we continue to support through CIDA, the Canadian International Development Agency - only I believe it was last week in Halifax was the Global Microcredit Summit. That is providing opportunities for rural based people, for men and women, women especially, to receive credit, money to start up businesses.

As we know, in Afghanistan women's rights had been taken away by the Taliban regime. Through microcredit and other projects through CIDA and Red Cross, through our armed forces too who are on the ground, we're delivering the services and programs that can help improve the human condition in these countries.

I know there are perhaps a couple of other members that would like to speak on this. I support this resolution. I support our troops. They are there on the ground defending democracy here in the world and sharing the face of Canada in other parts of the world. I hope our federal government continues to support programs through CIDA and also other programs being delivered through the armed forces as well, Mr. Speaker. So, I will be supporting this resolution.

Thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Tourism.

**Mr. P. Brown:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I too want to add my voice in support to our troops in Afghanistan who are doing such a great service on behalf of our country, but more importantly on behalf of the people in

Afghanistan. They live in constant threat for their peace and security. If you look at the history of Afghanistan and really what's taken place to breed terrorism throughout that area of the world, you look at very dictatorial regimes that are causing tremendous strife for their own people and presenting the root of that cause as the western civilization.

It is little wonder their own citizens have come to view in some ways western civilization as being a power that should be overthrown, because it is propagated by these terrorist organizations and it creates tremendous insecurities.

The fight against terrorism is indeed a reality. The only way that we can improve the lives is to show them in a very concrete manner that life can be different. First of all, you have to establish peace and security. But then beyond that, you have to establish a better lifestyle for the residents of those areas.

It is very disheartening in a way that Canadians don't understand well why we are there or how we got there. I think it's worthwhile to note that Canadians are part of this UN-sanctioned mission along with 36 other nations that are contributing troops to the mission. It's UN-sanctioned and it's NATO-led. These are two very important international alliances that have been known for the work towards human rights and civil rights on the international stage.

When Canadians are not aware of that and when they equate our participation in Afghanistan with the US-led invasion in Iraq, I think certainly we all have to be concerned about that misunderstanding in the Canadian public. There's a responsibility on us all that Canadians were led to believe that.

It's an injustice. People don't go about their

daily affairs trying to be misinformed on these matters, but the recent CBC poll indeed showed that more than 30% of Canadians didn't understand how it happened that Canadian forces were in Afghanistan. There's been a lot said about this matter, but there must have been a lot of misinformation for a full third of Canadians not to understand that.

It is important when we speak about these matters that we are very careful about the rhetoric that is involved because it does a disservice. I'm sure that our troops who are putting their lives on the line on behalf of the citizens there and in service of their country are sometimes bewildered at the misinformation and the lack of understanding that Canadians have.

I, like a good many members of this Assembly, were at the funeral of Warrant Officer Mellish. We heard it firsthand from the people that spoke at that service about their commitment and their understanding of what we were doing in Afghanistan. It really brought it home to me that these people believe so deeply into their very being how important this is. Sometimes we just stand back and make fairly judgmental statements about that.

**An Hon. Member:** Call the hour.

**Speaker:** The hour's been called.

Do you want to adjourn the debate, hon. member? Adjourn the debate?

**Mr. P. Brown:** Okay, I do.

**Speaker:** I declare a recess until 7:00 p.m.

**The Legislature recessed until 7:00 p.m.**

Motions Other Than Government

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from

Charlottetown-Kings Square.

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

I move, seconded by the Leader of the Opposition, that Motion No. 13 be now called.

**Speaker:** Shall it carry?

**Some Hon. Members:** Carried.

**Clerk:** Motion No. 13.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Kings Square moves, seconded by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, the following Motion:

**WHEREAS** increasing the amount of physical activity of Island children is a key public health goal that should be actively promoted by the Government of Prince Edward Island ;

**AND WHEREAS** the cost of sporting equipment can have a direct impact on the ability of parents to help increase the level of physical activity of their children;

**AND WHEREAS** provincial tax policy is a measure over which the Government of Prince Edward Island can directly reduce the cost of children's sporting equipment;

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that the Legislative Assembly of Prince Edward Island request that the government exempt children's sporting equipment from provincial sales tax.

**Speaker:** We have the mover of this motion, the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Kings Square, to open the debate.

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

It gives me great pleasure to put this motion on the floor of the Legislature tonight. I think it's a very important motion. I think it's one that will support our children and support all youth throughout Prince Edward Island.

We have seen report after report where the concern of children all across the world and about the excess weight they have nowadays. What better way to show Islanders that we care about this concern and this problem than by exempting children's sports gear from provincial sales tax? I think the children of Prince Edward Island, as any child throughout Canada - but we're just talking about Prince Edward Island - deserves this tax credit or this tax exemption. It's very important that we go and do this because I feel that by doing so it will just make our health care costs cheaper in the future. Because we're going to have our children out being more active throughout Prince Edward Island, they're going to be able to participate in more sports.

It's not like the old days. Maybe you're a lot of days older than I am. I remember -

**An Hon. Member:** More experience.

**Mr. R. Brown:** Yeah, more experience, thank you. I remember back when a pair of old dash sneakers were \$1.99 and you just went out and had a good time. So you know, today's challenges are a lot different than the challenges of the past. I might have said this to the House before, but I remember one day our father took us up to the old Bike Shop and he said: How much are those skates and hockey gear? The guy at the sports shop said: To outfit each child in your case, Mr. Brown, would be about \$100 each. He said: How much are those swim suits? A dollar ninety-nine. So we are all swimmers. I have to admit, my mother was quite happy because we used to go to the old YMCA and

they put a lot of chlorine in that. We were the most cleanest kids in town.

But back then, there was a lot of sports agencies, especially the YMCA. They built the pool at that time. Rates were pretty cheap because there was a lot of organizations throughout the city, and I guess throughout the province, that built facilities for us.

But I think it's really important that this Legislature ask the government and that's (Indistinct) is asking the government to consider this tax exemption. We know if you go through the sales tax law right now, there are numerous exemptions there. So I know some people are going to get up here tonight and talk about: Are we going to make laws by exemption? The sales tax law is full of exemptions, and it's quite easily done if we want to do it. We can use the sales tax law and the income tax law in order to encourage these kinds of activities.

I think all members of this House, if they want to follow their cousins in Ottawa, their cousins in Ottawa gave the parents of children a \$500 tax credit, which I think is an excellent idea. I think it's a great idea what they have done. But it only a - yes, they probably took that idea from the Liberals, that was in our policy document. I thought it was a good idea. But you have to understand. In order to get the tax credit, you have to make enough money in order to have taxes in order to get the tax credit. That's the only part of it I think is grossly wrong here. That's why I'm saying to the government, or I'm asking my fellow legislators here today, that that approach, although it's great, it will not support the vast majority of children on Prince Edward Island.

Because as we've indicated, the minister of finance has told us a number of times that 17,000 Islanders are not paying income tax

on Prince Edward Island. That's a figure that has come out of the income tax or our department. So that indicates to me there is a lot of people that don't have the taxing capacity in order to take advantage of such a credit. That's why I think if we put it on, exempt the parents from sales tax, that would give them a better advantage.

It also gives the people that least can afford it an opportunity here too. Although there are programs available, I still think this program would work much better. It is a broad-based one right across Prince Edward Island. I know there might be some arguments tonight: The rich will take this too. But I'd rather go through this type of system and allow the exemption to go right across and not make it income specific.

So I'm going to make it short because I think - we have the Canada games coming, we want our children to be ready for the Canada games. Let's face it, some of the best athletes in the world came from some of the poorest families in the world. They all did not have the advantage of this.

Just in closing, parents today are so - some people will probably get up and talk about the volunteer effort on PEI and voluntarily raising money. It's that time of year and I think I'm getting a call a night or two calls a night from organizations across Prince Edward Island. I think Island families are taxed to the limit with groups now asking for donations. That's my personal opinion. I think if we're going to ask another organization to go out and fundraise for these children, I think it's wrong. I think it's the responsibility of this government.

In closing, it's going to do three things. It's going to help our children live a healthier life, it's going to get our children out of the Nintendo rooms hopefully and onto the sports fields, off the computers and into the fresh air, and it's going to reduce our health

costs in the long run. If we do have healthy children, they will be healthy adults and they will continue that exercising process through their whole life.

Also, it will help families here. Because if we do allow this rebate or this exemption here, more families - some people may call it a stretch - but I think more families will be able to take advantage of sporting activities, and you can see more families participating as a family if they're allowed to go out and buy or purchase more sporting gear for themselves.

I go to the new CARI Complex and it's wonderful to see families out there using that facility. It's not only good for the physical being of a person, it is also good for the (Indistinct) of the person because they are participating as a family.

So in the long run, I think it would save us a lot of money, make Prince Edward Island a much happier place and definitely be a benefit to the children of Prince Edward Island.

I ask all members for the support of this resolution. It is only a support for the government to study this issue, take a look at it and report back to this Legislature, yes or no on it.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The seconder of the motion, the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

It's my pleasure and honour to stand up here this evening and be able to second this fine motion put forward by the Member from Charlottetown-Rochford Square who I know

does great work in looking for new ideas to be able to help out Island families and Island children all the time.

I think it's one of those motions that I believe we all can support in this Legislature. We all want to try and find ways to save money on health care costs going into the future. We all want to see our children today be more active and we all want to see parents be able to afford to be able to equip their kids properly going out and playing these sporting events.

So for me this is something that is extremely important. I think it's also, as the Member from Charlottetown-Rochford Square and the mover of this motion said, it's something where all Islanders can benefit. It's not a tax exemption at the end of the year when you are filing your income tax you can claim something on. Because as the hon. member said, there's a lot of families out there that don't have the opportunity to save money that way. I think this is something where regardless of your income, whether you make \$18,000 or \$100,000, you can still go out and it will be cheaper for you to help put your kids into the sporting gear that they need to participate in events.

Whether or not we're talking about soccer, hockey, figure skating, you name it, baseball, golf, any of these sports, they are all sports that help our children in the long run. I believe today one of the fastest growing sports, and probably one of the most popular sports is soccer. I heard earlier tonight - without using names, because he might not like it if I used his name - but it's not like you send him out onto the soccer field and they're all ready to roll and it's pretty much with a pair of shoes that they already have on. These cleats today cost in the hundreds of dollars' range, they have to have to wear padding of course on their shins, and whatnot, and I think that any sport that you play is costly.

You look at hockey. I won't even want to venture a guess on how much - if you had a six year old or a five year old today that you wanted to put them into hockey for the first time, going out and having to buy skates, shin pads, shoulder pads, garters, cups, you name it. All of those things today are very costly. There's a sport we like to talk about as being our national sport, being something where we believe kids should be able to participate in. They get to watch their heroes on television, they get to watch Don Cherry and our professional athletes play on a weekly basis, they get to watch PEI's very own Brad Richards go out, and some of them today have the dream that some day they will be in that position. But unfortunately, with the costs of things today, some of those kids can't make it, and I think that a motion like this asking the government to look into this, request that the government exempt children's sporting equipment from provincial sales tax, is very important.

Now I know some of the arguments that will be brought up. How do you do it? What do you need, a card that you take when you go to a sporting good store to do it? Do you take your receipt back to the provincial government buildings? That's why we have professional bureaucrats in this province. That's why we have people who know how our tax system works. It's up to us as legislators and policy makers to come up with the ideas and then we can ask the professionals to sort out the nitty gritty details that have to be done and come back with some options.

I'd be more than happy to sit down with the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Kings Square who is the mover of this and perhaps the Minister of Community and Cultural Affairs who is responsible for sport and the Provincial Treasurer, sit down and go over the options and the best way that we can implement that. Because I believe

(Indistinct) to work in a bipartisan way to come up with concrete ideas on how to make things better here in the Province of Prince Edward Island, especially for our children. We talk all the time and I'm sure the minister of health - I saw him this morning on the front page of the paper walking down the street with some kids. I know he'll be supportive of this. Someone who's involved and knows how much those kids would like to have the opportunity to play those sports, but he's also the minister of health and he understands how much cost goes into health care in the long run. I'm sure he sits down at the medical association, he sits down with the health care professionals, and they explain to him the more active you are, by getting kids involved in sports today, it'll lead them to be in sports in the long run, which is going to save us all money for a long time to come.

If the minister and the members of this Legislature are forward looking, they are not just looking, or we hope they are forward looking, they are not just to: How do we score a point today? Sometimes we have to look and say: How can we save money in the long run? I believe this here, you are going to help out a kid today, you are going to help out a family today, put more money in their pocket, whether or not they're saving up perhaps to have that family vacation, or perhaps to go and see a museum or go to a cultural event or something like that. To be able to do something with their family, more money in their pocket to help out their children in to the future.

More money for our health care system further down the road, and of course nothing can beat the smile of a child the first time they go out on the ice and play hockey, the first time they have the opportunity to kick a soccer ball, be part of a team and those things. The great thing about this is it affects everyone regardless of income.

So I think this is a very good motion, it's a bipartisan motion. I know some members might have some difficulties on how to sort things out, but we can sit down with that. The hon. member and I from Charlottetown-Kings Square will sit down with the hon. Minister of Community and Cultural Affairs, we'll sit down with hon. Provincial Treasurer, we'll sit down with the bureaucrats, and try and find a way to make this motion happen, because I believe it's an important motion. It's been my honour and privilege to second this fine idea, another fine idea by the Member from Charlottetown-Kings Square this evening.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. MacFadyen:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I do want to address some of the aspects of the motion in regards to the whereases before I make my comments in regards to the therefore be it resolved.

I guess as minister responsible for recreation and physical activity here in the province I'd like to thank the hon. member who spoke for recognizing the importance of increasing physical activity among Island children and adults as well.

In June 2006 *Today's Parent* magazine published an article on the inactivity epidemic among Canadian children. The article stated that the cost to health care due to illness, injuries and diseases associated with physical inactivity totalled \$5.3 billion last year. It said that 57% of Canadian children from age five to 17 are not active enough to meet international guidelines for optimal growth and development.

It is clear that we must address this issue, however, I do not believe simply exempting children's sporting equipment from provincial sales tax will solve this major problem. We need a much broader approach, we need to engage Islanders of all ages in the solution. We need to work with our provincial and our federal counterparts. Because this is not just a Prince Edward Island problem. We need to work closely with non-government partners here in our own province.

As a government we have recognized the importance of daily physical activity among our populations on all levels and its impact on the overall health care population. There is no question that a more active population is the goal of all partners involved in promotion and education of physical activity.

The best news here is that we do recognize that the problem must be addressed and that we are working with provincial, federal and local partners to bring about a change.

That is why as government we: have adopted a physical activity policy for the province; we have assisted in the establishment of the PEI Active Living Alliance, which is a community based organization dedicated to helping government advance the physical agenda here in the province; we continue to support the ongoing work of the PEI Healthy Living strategy; and we work in partnership with our fellow provincial, territorial and federal sports ministers across this nation in meeting specified targets to reduce physical inactivity levels in all population sector incentives.

As a follow up to the provincial health living strategy released in 2003 we developed a provincial physical active strategy for the province that outlines a variety of recommendations that we are

currently addressing to increase opportunities for Islanders to become more aware of the importance of physical activity.

The PEI Department of Community and Cultural Affairs work with key Island stakeholders who made up the Steering Committee to provide a five year framework to increase physical activity in the province.

It is no secret that regular physical activity improves health. It helps us to reduce the risk of dying prematurely. It helps to reduce the risk of dying from heart disease. It helps to reduce the risk of developing diabetes. It helps to reduce the risk of developing high blood pressure. It helps to reduce blood pressure in people who already have high blood pressure. It helps to reduce the risk of developing colon cancer. It helps reduce feelings of depression and anxiety. It helps to control weight. It helps build and maintain healthy bones, muscles, and joints and it helps older adults become stronger and better able to move about without falling, and most of all it promotes psychological well-being.

Regular physical activity also provides young people with substantial physical, mental and social benefits.

Studies even show that the more often young people participate in physical activity, the less likely they are to use tobacco or to become involved in juvenile crime. It has also been found that children who are more physically active show higher academic performance. Team games and play promote positive social integration and facilitate the development of social skills in young children.

I agree with the hon. Leader of the Opposition that we need to interest children in regular physical activities early in life so they can develop a basis for an active and healthy life. Children develop habits and set

patterns that will carry into adulthood. Inactive youths are likely to become inactive adults. Active children stand a much better chance of growing into active adults.

Unfortunately here, in PEI, nearly half of youth aged 12 to 21 are not active enough on a regular basis. People are spending more time than ever sitting: working, driving, relaxing, on a computer, watching TV or playing video games.

This isn't new information. This was referenced in a 1990 study conducted by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta.

However, studies have also suggested that the children who are less active, those who may be sitting at home watching t.v. or playing video games, are somewhat less likely to participate in team sports.

Rather than assuming that getting all children involved in a sport - or eliminating the provincial sales tax on equipment - will solve this problem, we need to seek and provide ways to make physical activity fun for children and adolescents. We also must find ways to engage parents from the very start. Parents are role models for active lifestyles and active parents are more likely to ensure that their children have increased opportunities for an active lifestyle.

We all have a responsibility to encourage healthy habits in Island children. Getting youths involved in fitness at a young age is one of the best things we can do to establish a lifetime of healthy activity, and it can begin with very young children. With toddlers you can play ball, play games involving jumping, hopping, skipping, for example. Emphasize movement as play, and be sure to encourage and praise your child's desire to explore movement.

As children grow a little older, they enjoy



noncompetitive group sports, bike riding, roller skating, ice skating and a host of other activities. Pre-adolescents may want to participate in team and partner activities, but encouraging activity may become more challenging at this age. Children between the ages of eight and ten need a lot of support because this is when the interest in physical activity may begin to decline.

As children grow into junior high age, some will continue to play on teams, and enjoy individual activities, like walking, swimming and skating. However, puberty is a time when many children feeling awkward and encouraging physical activity becomes most important.

This is when we may lose them to the TV or computer and encouraging an active lifestyle is more of a challenge. It takes the combined efforts of government, sports organizations, schools, parents and the community to involve these youths in physical activity that is fun, challenging and achievable.

I know the costs of sporting equipment can be a struggle for some families. I am not disputing that. We checked Canadian Tire, and they have a youth goalie mask for \$139.99. Provincial sales tax on that item would be about \$15.

I recognize that \$15 is not an insignificant amount of money, especially to families with lower incomes. I am not, however, convinced that reducing the cost of sporting equipment by \$15 will directly impact on the ability of parents to help increase the level of physical activity of their children.

We are fortunate in our province to have resources such as KidSport. I, along with my colleagues on Team PC, have been proud to support KidSport for many years. KidSport assists families with limited financial resources by providing funding for sporting programs and or sporting equipment.

KidSport program is a program that is based on the principle that no child should be denied the right to participate in the sport of his or her choice here in our province. Each child under the KidSport program is entitled to the amount of \$200 per child. Eligibility is based on an income scale which is assessed on people's family income on a net basis who earn less than \$26,000 per year, whether there is one child in the family, and for each additional child to the sum of \$2,000 is added to the base income allowance in determining eligibility.

The funding to support the KidSport project is being carried out by the generous contribution by some of the following individuals and corporate sponsors who give freebies to assist kids who are in need. Service quality across the province, for example the Y's Men and others, Maritime NHL Association, Tim Horton Soup Campaign, schools by holding dress up days, memorial donations, Lorie Kane, Canadian Tire Corporation, Aliant and I'm sure there are others who I have failed to mention.

In addition to the dollars allowance the KidSport program provides, equipment is made available to children who are in need over and above the actual dollar allotment. This is possible due to the fact KidSport has a equipment drive as well as many donors which allows KidSport to obtain equipment to meet the needs of individuals who apply for this kind of assistance.

After listening to what KidSport does and listening to the equipment drive we can see how much children benefit from a program such as this.

In 2002 our government completed a Provincial Sport Strategy in partnership with various partners in sport. The 2003-2004 budget provided an infusion of \$475,000

into the PEI sport system to begin the implementation of this five year strategy.

In this year's budget we have budgeted \$1.2 million for sport related initiatives. This funding for the provincial sport and recreation system also allowed us to enter into bilateral agreements with the federal government for sport development here in the province. We are just in the process of finalizing the first phase of this bilateral program and will be entering a second phase of sport development initiatives with the federal government which will take us through to 2009.

We're also about to see the launch of the Children's Fitness Tax Credit that was announced in the federal budget last spring. This tax credit will come into effect in January 2007 and we are all waiting to see if and how this initiative does impact on activity levels.

There is a lot of work ahead. A culture of inactivity has emerged within all sectors of our society. We are now faced with the problems that this presents within various areas of government and society, including increased health costs.

We did a survey in regards to health care costs and what we found out is that if we did nothing for sport in order to increase activity levels, our health care costs would increase substantially over the next five years as compared to what the cost increased in average each year over the past ten. To do nothing is not an option, and I guess for that reason it's why we as a government look at the money that we are putting into sport. We in turn have increased the allotment to sport in this province in regards to the amateur sport and the provincial sport organizations in that we have more than doubled the amount of money over the last three years each year in regards to sport organizations.

The reason for this is to allow people who want to be involved with sport to have the means to assist them with their sport opportunities and to assist them with travel for teams to go out of province. I think our government has been tremendous in regards to the amount of work. Just as a comparison, in the year 2002-2003 we were providing \$147,000 to the sport bodies here in the province and in 2003-2004 we increased that to \$347,000. This is a substantial amount of dollars that we have put into the program to allow people who wanted to be involved in sport to have the opportunity to participate.

I believe that with programs such as KidSport and what we're doing with the sports community that a lot of children do have the opportunity to participate. As I indicated, KidSport is a program that will allow no child to be denied the right to play in any sport if he or she so desires to do so.

There's a lot of work ahead. The culture of inactivity, as I said, has emerged in all sectors of our society. We are now faced with the problems that this presents in various areas in government and society including increased health care costs. However, working together with organizations such as the PEI Active Living Alliance we can create positive change for our province as a whole. We all need to be part of the solution. Because we are part of the problem.

Experts believe that any strategy to address the inactivity levels of our population and in particular the epidemic of overweight and obesity needs to be done in a coordinated and strategic fashion and should involve a comprehensive approach. Ultimately government can only do so much to encourage children and their parents to actively participate in physical activities.

While we can encourage, inform and create

supportive conditions - which we are doing through some of the initiatives I have previously mentioned - in the end, individuals themselves must make the choice to be active.

It is this personal change in behaviour, that can yield the greatest results. I must say that this province has in the past (Indistinct) four years have increased the allotment going out to organizations and individuals who want to participate in sport and we're working closely with the Sport PEI and other sport bodies to ensure that they have the means to participate in any undertaking that they want to. I believe that the people that are involved in sport deserve an awful lot of credit for their work they do for the people here in the province.

I know that it would be nice to say that we should provide the exemption -

**Leader of the Opposition:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. MacFadyen:** - for the PST on sporting goods or sport gear, but a lot of the sport gear do have exemptions already. But I believe that there is some sporting equipment that does have a provincial sales tax on it, but I'm not sure that exempting the tax would in fact involve more children being involved in sport.

I do know that the Member from Charlottetown-Kings Square indicated that when his parents took him to the Bike Shop to look at hockey gear or compared it to swim suits he said to be a swimmer was \$1.99 and for clothing for hockey was over \$100. I do know he does love the water, because I have a friend who told he was out on an island one time wondering if he was going to be okay to get back to shore.

I do know that it would be nice to do everything that people want to do in regards to the taxes that are charged on sporting

equipment, but I believe that this government has shown its initiative in regards to sport that we do for sport in this province. I will not be able to support the resolution as put forward.

Thank you very much.

**An Hon. Member:** Shame, shame!

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. Gillan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Like my colleagues and the movers, I want to pay particular attention to a couple of the whereases and then like my colleague, I will also address the therefore be it resolved clause.

Hardly a day goes by in my capacity as the minister of health where it is not evident, or it is very evident, I should say, that if we adopt the slogan prevention before treatment, we would be very much better off. Because again, as has already been mentioned a number of times, we are suffering from inactivity, overeating, poor nutrition generally, overuse of tobacco products. If we would pay more attention to our youth coming up along and give them better examples through our own efforts re: physical activity, we probably would be better off as a society.

Let me just mention a few thoughts that probably the other speakers have not brought up at this particular time. Again, in the health department, if we can prevent the obesity particularly among the children at an earlier age - I know that many years ago when you were a youth and coming up though the school, it was easier. I would never say that it was easy to be involved in sports and activity because you do obviously

have to expend a lot of effort, but it was easier because your friends, others, were doing the same type of activities and that (Indistinct) it quite easy for us to follow along in the mode and the model that they were adopting.

There was more outside time in play and a lot of that of course, Mr. Speaker, you remember, was just plain running. Be it after a ball or whatever it happened to be, there was a lot of movement involved. Many children today do not get that natural form of play. They either get it through a more structured formalized, i.e., sport and recreation, or they don't get it at all. We're sorry to say that we really do have to take the children and the youth by the hand today and teach them how to play or how to exercise in a more natural play.

But however, we always think that we can do better and I'm sure that the various groups and the individual volunteers that are out there are making a better example for the children coming up along. My colleague the minister of community affairs mentioned a number of organizations that are involved in leading and providing examples. He mentioned the Healthy Living Strategy. That has been a very good organization and it's one that works across government departments and it incorporates parents, schools, health charities, alliances. As I had mentioned, physical activity and healthy living is certainly the way to go.

These people and the organizations, the NGOs, they're having a tremendous influence. We must not overlook the influence that they are having. All we have to do is take a look at the renewed sport clubs, what we use to call them, now probably fitness centres is more the appropriate name. But there are gyms and clubs springing up all over where adults and older youth can go and participate in a sport and recreation.

The short time that I was watching *Compass* this evening there was two items of interest, one on CTV and one on CBC. The one on CTV talked about the experts, the trainers that are out there. They mentioned Oprah, of course, as involving the expertise of an export sports trainer and the gains that she was able to make. I think most of us know that she was able to because of this expertise being provided by another individual, able to reduce a lot of weight and to successfully run a marathon. She became a model. I think she did write a book for sports and running and healthy living.

They also went on then to talk about sports trainers and you have to be very careful and the fitness clubs that we have today fit the centres. Some people are now appearing apparently that do not have the certification and the training behind being a professional sport trainer. This was the theme really of the CTV program this evening: Buyer beware that the trainer that you hire is certified and trained and is not going to do you damage.

But again, that is just an indication of the type of recreation and sport that is out there that we can indulge ourselves in.

Switching over to *Compass*, it was interesting that the City of Charlottetown is now going to embark on a ten-year fitness plan and they want to form some focus groups and to be able to plan for what the people in Charlottetown will want by the way of fitness over the next ten years. Interesting, they went back just a few short years and they said that they put our hard earned tax dollars into building up softball fields. Well now, I know that that is a sport that is fairly dear to your heart because again, when you were growing up in Summerside, you played hockey in the wintertime and a lot of baseball, but softball was a big sport in Charlottetown and in Summerside when we were youths.

That has now changed. They had just got the fields finished in Charlottetown, and by golly, it was not softball. There was some softball played. The mode now is soccer and everybody wants to pursue soccer. Of course skateboarding in Charlottetown did reply with very good skateboarding.

Then of course we have the boardwalk on the waterfront, the walking trails. Sue Hendricken who is the recreation coordinator for the city, is now asking: What is the future, where are we going to go? No doubt we will encompass and embrace more walking trails. That certainly will be proper. But what are we going to be able to provide for the youth? So it's good to see that our cities and communities are indeed interested in providing these organizations.

Once again, in speaking about the Healthy Living Strategy, I do want to give credit to the many volunteer groups, the NGOs. I understand that there were over 30 organizations that came together from the community to form this healthy living alliance. They sat down and they just bombarded each other with thoughts, with ideas, as to how they could do it and over a period of years, of course, they have done it. Today there is a web site sponsored by the PEI Healthy Eating Alliance and we can go on there and understand and benefit and enjoy of course all of the many activities they are promoting.

I'm just going to mention a couple of them that may not be known to the members in the Legislature here. The Active Living Alliance - which is one of the groups that has sprung out from the healthy living - offers a variety of programs. There is one called the healthy active home rooms, Another Outdoor Adventure, Island Experience, and the Stepping Out Program. Of the four, probably the Stepping Out Program is one that is easily understood for sure but is very difficult to do.

I think that as most of the members here realize, on a daily basis, if you can attain the movement and energy to take you 10,000 steps, then you're going to be very fit. A couple of years ago when it first came out I took a pedometer and put it on my belt and it didn't take too long to realize that no wonder I was getting a little bit heavier in weight than I had intended. Because I could not, not matter what I tried to do day in and day out for ten days or so, not get enough walking steps in. So it is a good program. Then we gave it over to the junior high two years ago and they adopted it and of course it has spread like wild fire throughout this province and throughout the country as well.

In speaking about programs and becoming over weight, what we have attempted to do is not only to encourage our youth in the schools - as the minister of education is so familiar with and has been a part of this program along with the minister of community affairs. That many schools, particularly the ones in elementary, are now changing the foods that are served and the menu change has been tremendous. I know that the Member from Crapaud-Hazel Grove has been very influential in her school and encouraging the youth and their parents to embrace this change. I have been able to see firsthand that the children are happy with the new food choices and they are being persuaded to leave some of the not so good food choices behind. But there is a good philosophy accompanying it as well. It's not that you cannot eat some of the less desirable foods, you just don't eat them as often as we use to. Very good philosophy going along too.

So, we do have many supporters out there that do help us, not only in the government, but in society as well. But the mover of the motion, the Member from Charlottetown-Kings Square, was correct when he said that it was the government's responsibility to provide many of the sporting, the recreation,

the leisure activities for its citizens. I support that. It is the government's responsibility. But the government can't do everything. If the government is looked in many instances correctly and rightly as being the sponsor, as being the provider of tax dollars, then I don't think that we can also be responsible for looking across the fence and saying: We are also now going to support a tax exemption on certain clothing. We know of course that on certain items of clothing or footwear there is a tax break. But I think that the role of government is best played in a direct and in an indirect provider of the sporting venues, the programs, the hockey rinks, all of those activities and facilities that we have embraced as a government in the past. That is I think where we need to stay.

I do not support the present motion of providing a tax exemption on certain articles. Even though it is well intended, I don't think that government can be expected to do everything. I think that if we stay in the traditional role of government and get it right, I think that we have with the help of the volunteers and the society in large have been able to get it right over the past number of years. I think the article on the *Compass* this evening was proof of that, where Charlottetown is saying: We built softball fields, we don't have to do anything else for many years. No, that's not what the people want now. So it is up then to those who have those tax dollars to be able to work and to get it right.

So, Mr. Speaker, although I am a proponent of sport of course and healthy living, I feel that the tax exemption is not the way to go, and I will not be able to support this motion as it is written.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

**Ms. Dover:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wouldn't mind having the podium.

I do want to stand and talk about the motion put forward by my hon. colleague across the floor in relation to a tax exemption for sporting goods. It's quite easy to stand and talk for a long time about the benefits of sport and the benefit of physical education. This is something I think all of us can agree on. If it were a resolution calling for more physical activity, among not just our youth, but all the population, I think all of us in this House could agree with that kind of a resolution.

It's a kind of a motherhood issue. All of us know that to be sedentary is not conducive to good health. To be active and mobile and using our muscles, those are the important aspects that will help to keep us healthy.

The resolution does more than that. We want to take a look at the implications of the tax incentive that the hon. member is proposing.

I'm going to spend just a little while, with your indulgence, talking about the importance of regular physical activity. I think it's important to recognize that this is something that we all should be doing to reduce the risk of developing or dying from some of the leading causes of illnesses and death that occur to all of us.

Some of my staff put together some of the positive attributes that result from regular physical activity. It was quite an interesting list that they came up with. They have provided me with the following. They say that regular physical activity improves health in the following ways, and there are so many of these.

The statement says that it reduces the risk of dying prematurely; it reduces the risk of dying from heart disease; reduces the risk of developing diabetes; reduces the risk of developing high blood pressure; helps reduce blood pressure in people who already have high blood pressure; reduces the risk of developing colon cancer; reduces the feelings of depression and anxiety; helps to control weight; helps to build and maintain healthy bones, healthy muscles and joints; helps older adults become stronger and better able to move about without falling; and promotes psychological well-being. That's probably just a small list of some of the benefits of regular physical activity.

Now, if you talk about young people - and we can't just talk about young people, because it's like continuous learning and literacy among all of us regardless of our age. Physical activity is not exclusive to one group of people. Among young people it does provide them with substantial mental benefits, substantial physical benefits, and substantial social benefits. Indeed, engagement in play and sport gives young people the opportunity for natural self-expression, self-confidence. It helps to relieve tension. It improves achievement. It's a way to socially interact with your peers. Certainly, it provides for a feeling of solidarity and fair play.

Regular physical activity therefore improves children's overall health and contributes to their growth and development. You have improvements in discipline, improvements in academic performance, improvements in self-concept. These are all benefits that are associated with regular physical activity.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

**Mr. Mooney:** With the House's indulgence, I just want to introduce a constituent of mine in the gallery, Mr. Waldron Leard.

When you talk about sports, Wally has worked with the soccer association many years ago when soccer really was barely going out in our neck of the woods. He's done an awful lot to promote sports.

He is The History Room in my district. If you go on the Internet on The History Room, he has daily web shots of what's going on in the east and does an awful lot to promote tourism in our area. I just want to wish him the very best and introduce him to the House.

Thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

**Ms. Dover:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I was just beginning to talk about infants. When infants are born and start their growth spurt they are spontaneously active. People who care for these infants as they start their growth spurts are well positioned if they provide opportunities for them to exercise, give them freedom of movement.

I remember the Jolly Jumpers and how much enjoyment young people got out of these Jolly Jumpers, the little strollers that activate their legs. Any one of you who has held a child know that they're kicking and they're moving and they're trying to get going. If the rest of us could remember that for our entire life we would be certainly well advised. An active infant is on the way to becoming an active child. We have to continue provide opportunities for that growth.

Children are also naturally inclined to exercise, but they need their parents, they need care providers, daycare centres, kindergartens and schools to make sure that

they do it on a daily basis. Otherwise, many children can and do fall into more sedentary forms of play. Indeed, one modern study claims that children are choosing to watch television, surf the internet, and play video games instead of engaging in more active leisurely pursuits.

Children, we're told, are 40% less active than they were 30 years ago. The consequences of this behaviour are affecting the health of our children to a negative degree.

Our province since our government got in back in 1996 has certainly indicated to nobody's doubt that we are a government that believes very strongly in providing opportunities for sport and recreation across the province. If you take a look at what we've done as a government in relation to sports, I know my colleagues the ministers of health and community and cultural affairs have indicated some of the opportunities that we as a government have provided to Islanders to help boost their physical activity.

The one that comes to mind first because it goes from one point in our Island to the other point in our Island is the Rails to Trails. I know that these trails are extremely well used by people who walk, by bikers. This was an initiative of our government. There was a lot of money put into the construction of the Rails to Trails. They're well maintained. There are people who work on the trails every summer.

This was an initiative that we thought was extremely important for all Islanders. The amount of use that these trails get is an indication of how well received these trails were.

Then, within the municipalities, I doubt if there's one municipality - there probably are, and I may be exaggerating to a degree -

but certainly most of our municipalities have boardwalks. This is something that our municipalities were able to come up because of our Community Development Fund. This was a fund that our government decided to set up. It is a fund that is extremely well used by our municipalities. If you go to Rustico, if you go to Souris, if you go down around the boardwalk in Victoria Park, you'll see how well used these boardwalks are.

A lot of them came about not just because of the commitment of the municipality, but because of the commitment of our government in setting up a Community Development Fund. A lot of money has gone into the Rails to Trails and the boardwalks across this province. Those aren't the only things that this government has done.

One of the first things that we did was to take away the tax on footwear and clothing. That's been a really significant thing for parents of young children. For all of us, actually. When you talk about the cost of sneakers, when you talk about the cost of shoes and clothing, to have a tax break on all these items has been well received by not only Islanders, but people who come into the province from Nova Scotia and New Brunswick to take advantage of the tax breaks that we have provided on footwear and clothing.

You have the Rails to Trails, you have the boardwalks, and you have these tax breaks, but that's not all that our government has done. If you take a look at the rinks and the fitness centres around this province you can see another example of how our government has committed itself to the improvement of sports.

Not that long ago I was in Cornwall taking a look at the new sports field there by the school. This is something that was well



received that night for the official opening. It was a project that this government participated in, provided funding for.

The rinks. You go to some of the communities across this province, see the amount of money that our government has put into the establishments of rinks in conjunction with municipalities and ACOA and some of the other funding partners. Our dedication to the sports activities across this province is quite obvious.

We have fitness centres, we have senior active living centres, we have boardwalks, Rails to Trails, interscholastic activities and we assist minor sports programs across the province. If you take all the money that our government has already committed, and I've just named a small portion of it, the commitment that our government has made to involvement in sports and recreation is very obvious.

Within the school system we have active living centres. We have \$10 million invested in physical education facilities in our Island schools. As my colleague the Minister of Health, Social Services and Seniors indicated, we have worked on the diet of our students within the cafeterias across the province. To say to our government: Okay, you've done all these things, but there's something else we want you to do, I think we have to take a look at how much we have done. I think we have to take a look at all the programs, all the partners that we've worked with, the physical activity strategies that we have.

There's only so much we can do. We have to take a look at what we've spent money on and ask ourselves how much more the opposition would like us to do.

We have a collective responsibility as Islanders and as parents and as schools. Government can't do it all. We use the tax

dollars that we have. We spend it on rinks, and schools, and Rails to Trails, and boardwalks, on taking away taxes on footwear and clothing. I think that our government certainly has done more than its share. More than I think most provincial governments probably have done to establish and increase the amount of sport.

I can't support adding one more thing. There's only so much money that we have. I think that we've done a great job in spending that money wisely. The initiatives that we have are a large portion of the budget. We have a health budget. We have Transportation and Public Works. We have all the other departments of government. There's been no shirking away from our responsibility in relation to physical activity. I think the amount of money that we've spent on that is to be applauded. To ask for more is stretching it a little too much.

I will leave it to others to speak about their feelings, but I think that I can't support another drain when we're already doing more than most provincial governments across this country have done.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Evangeline-Miscouche.

**Mr. Arsenault:** Mr. Speaker, on a point of privilege.

I'd like to introduce a couple of people that are here in the gallery today. We have Cecile Gallant and Jean Bernard. They are employees of the Acadian Museum in Miscouche.

*Donc, bienvenue à l'Assemblée législative. Je sais que ça fait un bout de temps que vous êtes ici, puis j'espère que vous allez*

*apprécier les délibérations qui vont prendre place d'ici 9 h.*

Welcome to the Legislative Assembly. I know you have been here for a while, and I hope you will appreciate the deliberations that will be taking place until 9:00 p.m..

On a final note, Mrs. Cecile Gallant is mother to our Page, Jacques Gallant. We certainly welcome her to the Chamber.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Spring Park.

**Mr. MacAleer:** Yes, Mr. Speaker.

I'll begin by saying that I think that physical exercise is important. It promotes good health, and good health provides a society that's is both productive and happy. I think the spirit of the motion is in the right place, but I have some problems with just its implementation. But very quickly I would say that I know that a focus on getting their children involved in sport would gladly pay the tax if they could afford the equipment. In other words, the people who really are the ones we want to assist, they can't afford the equipment, let alone the tax.

I assume here in this motion that you were talking about new equipment. Because used equipment is available at a lower cost. We can buy or get equipment donated.

My second comment is that this motion obviously discriminates against those sports that have lower equipment costs, like swimming, racket sports, and favours those sports like hockey, American style football or lacrosse, a lot of protective equipment. So right away I'm confused here as to which sport we're trying to promote.

In very quick order I want to tell you from

my own experience there are three areas, if we really want to help people, such as youths, get involved in physical activity. One is the availability of facilities which is very expensive, and I say that because facilities and their availability and their accessibility are important and relevant. Because the people who have to get to those facilities have to travel distances and most parents who have to get their children to the facilities have travel costs and those travel costs are a factor, probably a greater factor than the equipment.

Secondly, it's fees, even with kids' sports getting - families that have difficulty paying their way, \$200. The fees for joining minor hockey, that's only half the fees.

The third and most important feature that we are not discussing in this motion is the match between the capacity of those that we're trying to influence and the adult community that needs to take an interest in this area.

We have a large number of people involved in sport who are very interested, who are most enthusiastic and are best equipped, to coach and encourage elite sport. By the time a hockey player or a tennis player or a volleyball player gets to be really good, then you've got lots of adults that want to go out and coach these people and encourage them and drive them there. But find me the adult community that wants to encourage a kid or a child that has very little ability, doesn't have the capacity to learn, that can really benefit from physical activity. They're hard to find. The Leader of the Opposition, to give him credit, he's involved in Big Brothers and he knows and should know how difficult it is to get the adult community involved at that level.

So while I think that the intention of this motion is good - we do want to have children involved - I would say the cost of

equipment has a very indirect impact on whether or not you can get children involved in sport and to promote their physical activity.

In fact, not to complicate the issue but just to give you an example, if you want to equip a young hockey player it's \$400 for the equipment, and that's a lot of money, but by the time you pay the fees which is another \$400, by the time you get them to the arena, it's close to seven or \$800, which means that the benefit that you have achieved by taking away the tax is about 3%, not 10%.

So, Mr. Speaker, while this is a motion that probably should take consideration, I maintain that the cost of equipment is a very clumsy, indirect, not very helpful way to help getting young people involved in physical activity.

Thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

**Ms. Bertram:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Before I speak to the motion. I would like to extend (Indistinct) to our guests in the gallery tonight. In June we had the opportunity as a class to go up to the Acadian museum (Indistinct) tour with our group and it was wonderful and the exhibition was wonderful and the children enjoyed it. Great work.

I rise tonight to support this resolution brought forward by the opposition. I'm going to begin by stating this. Let's look at low flush toilets, tax exemption on that, provincial sales tax on low flush toilets. Here we are tonight discussing sporting equipment for children. Now a toilet is not a piece of equipment. Maybe for some. But to

be serious, we're talking about children here, and these members that stood up here tonight and spoke that, for example, it's indirect funding, that there are other ways to do this.

Being a responsible government, responsible, this is a responsible message that you would be sending to the people of PEI, to children on PEI, that their sporting equipment would not be taxed provincially. As a provincial, responsible government.

Many of the speakers tonight alluded to the fact that we need more activity, that our children are overweight, that we need to encourage activities and by imposing this resolution and taking away the provincial sales tax on sporting equipment is not going to increase or decrease sporting activity or physical activity.

I beg to differ on that. Because I don't know how someone can stand here this evening and say that dollars and cents don't matter to families here on Prince Edward Island. A mother, a father, could work a month, two months, and be putting away \$50 a week, \$20 a week to pay for their son or daughter's hockey registration. What have you. Swimming lessons, what have you. At the end of the day there's only so many dollars. So yes, it could be \$400 registration. It's not to say that perhaps a single parent that's trying to have their child participate in organized sport. It's still allowing the child to participate in sport but they might be saving over a month period to save for that \$400 registration fee, plus the equipment fee. Because they see that this is something that they can give their child and perhaps they didn't have that when they were growing up. So to stand up here tonight and say: If they can afford the \$400 registration they can certainly afford to pay the provincial sales tax, that is ludicrous.

We have the Healthy Eating Alliance -

there's a whole bunch of organizations that are doing great work here on Prince Edward Island, getting the message out in to the school system, meeting with families, holding public meetings and different programs that are offered. Including the breakfast programs. Those are something else that is very positive and many members of this Legislature were at the launch at the Stonepark School. There's benefits out there, programs are being offered by these organizations and affiliated with government.

But here we are discussing this resolution, calling on the government to exempt children's sporting equipment. I bring it back to the low flush toilets. Hybrid cars. If we can't see the benefits for our children, the minister of environment brought this forward in his department relating to the environment, and this afternoon we were debating about the armed forces and Afghanistan and issues related to that. A couple of us mentioned how this is a pressing issue for the population of Canada as Canadians.

Environment is another issue, and perhaps putting initiatives in the environment is good too for tax exemptions. But children, how could you not support a resolution that is supporting children? Now some of you alluded to, well, it's not adults. Guess what? Adults, yes, it would be good if you exempted all sporting equipment, sure, that's a positive measure, that's a responsible government. You're promoting activity. However, adults hopefully can work, hopefully they are employed. Maybe they aren't, but they have more of an ability to pay for those items where the child - we are legislators here in the province. We have to look out for children on Prince Edward Island. This resolution to me is so proactive I can't understand how some of the members tonight talked about this five-year framework and the benefits, their

psychological benefits, well being, bone health related to cancer rates.

Yet why won't you support exempting children's sporting equipment? Then another topic tonight was ultimately we can do so much but government can't be the be-all and end-all to everybody.

These are kids, children. I'm ashamed tonight to stand in this House and have heard from people that think that this is not - you can't do this as government members. Now some government members haven't spoken to this, but I'm sure you're going to vote with government and not vote - your not going to vote with the opposition on this. Like always for most resolutions that the opposition brings forth.

This is a very good resolution and there is no reason that people in this Legislature tonight do not support this. Because it is a positive measure, a very positive measure. I think this government goes down the road of means testing. I forget which minister it was that was speaking, but they were talking about the 26,000 threshold with KidSport. So that's what we want to become is looking at parents' income, just like the dental care program for children. Means testing a parent's income based on the accessibility of programs. Now, I'm glad KidSport does exist, that there are families and children out there that do need that. But let's not rely on that full heartedly.

Government needs to be responsible, government needs to send a positive message. I heard tonight that we have to be models. Isn't it a positive model to show that you don't want to collect provincial sales tax on equipment used by children to become physically active? Let's look at that. Physical activity. Organized sport might not be organized sport, might not be a team sport, but if you're going to the Bike Shop, if you're going to SportChek or all those

places, and you're wanting to become physically active as a child with your parent with you or whoever, you're going to those stores. Are you purchasing to sit on your couch and watch t.v.? I don't think you're going to buy the soccer shin pads to sit home on the couch and watch television. You're buying that equipment to be physically active.

I believe that this is a concrete idea. We heard about these broad ideas tonight, broadness. Well here is an idea that you can do immediately, it can affect - support families and children here on Prince Edward Island and it's just not over (Indistinct) idea. Let's promote physical activity among our children. How are you going to do that? This is an idea and I believe that the member from Charlottetown who brought forward this resolution tonight - it's in good spirit to do this, it's in good heart to support this resolution tonight. Because it supports families and it supports physical activity here on Prince Edward Island and no, I believe it doesn't discriminate. How could it discriminate? You're providing the opportunity for people to be tax exempt, the children to be tax exempt on their sporting equipment.

Again, I bring it back to our priorities. Low flush toilets, tax exempt provincially; children's sporting equipment, not tax exempt provincially. Where is the priority, where is the direction, where is the support for children on Prince Edward Island?

I think all members of this Legislature should support this. It's a good step forward and I hope you will change your minds and support this.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Park

Corner-Oyster Bed.

**Ms. MacKenzie:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I wasn't going to rise to speak to this resolution, but with the hon. member's comments from Crapaud-Hazel Grove, I do have to rise and speak.

I had three children that went through the various boarding programs up through the years, and while I was a member here, they were into all kinds of different sports. I will use some of the members words back to her.

But first of all I can't believe how naive she is on the dedication that's required by parents to take children to sports. Equipment means nothing. You have to have somebody who's dedicated to take the child to the rink, to the soccer field, to the rugby field, to take them to the sporting event. Not every parent is ready to do that or committed. They might go for one or two or three games or the start of the season, but then if you start to travel with your team, work becomes an issue. You might not have the gas to go for it.

She also said that people are putting away \$50 a week to pay that registration for hockey. Well, you also said that they could get that \$400 in a month. Over a month, \$400. Very few families can come up with \$400 in a month. You can check the Hansard when it comes out. Four hundred dollars of additional money, it's just unheard of with most families, to come up with that in a month. Most people aren't like yourself, receiving a schoolteacher's pay cheque and an MLA salary, about \$100,000 a year. They just can't write these cheques. Most people have to write postdated cheques and they're allowed to write them - three different cheques that will be cashed over the year and that will pay for their fee. Some of them have two or three different children in the same sport and it doesn't matter till

you get to about three children until you can actually get a reduced rate. Everyone looks at, well you have the same amount of children as other people getting instruction.

The low-flush toilets, three toilets probably are going in your new house, that's equivalent to one pair of skates. A pair of skates might last you a season as a child grows. So that's not very - that really doesn't go with the flow, excuse the pun there. Children go through skates a season. You're lucky if you can get two seasons out of it. The tax on that is minimal compared to what you're going to use for them.

If you join any hockey team at all today, we intend to be talking about hockey tonight, it tends to be our Island sport. But it's - even the house league, they intend to travel. They have games away. Most of the children don't phone up and ask people to take their kids for a game, it's parents that have to phone and make the arrangements. Most people are very good to take other people's children to games, but it is the parents responsibility, and parents don't always do that for their children.

So the big thing is the parents have to be motivated to try and get their children motivated to join a sport. If you're not a committed parent you're not going to have a child committed to a sport. You might have a child that doesn't like sports. You might get them to try a sport, pay them money, get your tax exempt. Lo and behold, a month into this sport there is just no way that child is going to do the sport. You might have to try a couple of different things before. The child might like to be -

**An Hon. Member:** At least you saved the tax.

**Ms. MacKenzie:** Yeah, you wasted the money but you saved the tax, that's a good one. We can see if you ever get in

government how it will be. It's the committed parent and the committed child that are going to make a difference on exercise.

Low income families, they're not going to be buying the hybrid cars. That's people with a lot of money. There are not many people that buy cars today that are brand new that would be able to enjoy a hybrid car. It's a long time since I bought a new car with the wage I have. Most people are doing well to get by with vehicles and insurance and things like that. It takes a lot of money today to raise a household. If you have two kids or three kids, three is (Indistinct) big family today. Some people have more than three children today.

So life is expensive. Commitment to your children, wanting them to have a sports activity, if that was a strong point for either parent, then that is a big sacrifice for the whole family. I swam at the Y, as well as the hon. member. I did gymnastics in the gym and I didn't do outside sports other than that. My husband, hockey, hockey, hockey. So our three were very busy in hockey and figure skating and we were on the go all the time. If it was me responsible for getting the three to everything it wouldn't have happened because I didn't have the dedication to the team spirit, effort and commitment that he had. It's really something to see how much effort and commitment you have to have to get your kids to all those different games. We have friends who had three boys in three different levels of hockey. Mom would be going one way with one son, dad would be going another way, and she'd have to hear from another family member how the third son did.

So with regards to saving the tax on the sporting goods, I mean, that's a drop in the bucket compared to what the whole thing is about, commitment by parents and child to

make activity possible. If you want to go for a skate it's \$2 at the local rink. If skating's not your thing, walking, running, soccer is a great sport as well. The cleats, yes, you can pay over \$100 for cleats, but you can also get cleats at a much better price. Today we seem to think we have to have everything brand new, shiny and away we go. There is a lot of people that make due with second-hand equipment in different sports.

So thank you very much, Speaker, for allowing me to speak to the resolution.

**An Hon. Member:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** Is there any other member who would like to speak on this motion?

If not, to close out the debate, the mover of the motion, the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Kings Square.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

Just on some of the rebuttals and some of the arguments that were raised tonight, I was quite interested in the - and I stand to be corrected here, but I have the *Revenue Tax Act* in front of me here. His sport - which is equestrian running or driving or horse - his equipment - which is the horse - is tax free. So when he talks about - he's quite a minister when he talks about why shouldn't people pay taxes on their sporting gear. Here's a minister that drives a - the major cost of his sport is tax-free. Anyway, (Indistinct).

Also, another thing that is tax-free and I stand to be corrected, but it's in here, it's T-1, tobacco. Tobacco is tax free, just if you buy tobacco by itself. So that sets the priority for government. If you want to buy tobacco, that's tax free, and if you want to

get into the high end sports of horses, as the minister of health does, that's tax free. As the Member from Crapaud-Hazel Grove has quite clearly indicated, low-flush toilets are tax-free. Also there are pages and pages of tax-free exemptions in the *Revenue Tax Act*.

So it's a matter of priorities, it's a matter of this government's commitment to our healthy children. I was amazed by the Minister of Community and Cultural Affairs who started out by saying the cost of not being healthy to the health system in Canada or there are reports is \$5.3 billion. That alone would justify our exemption of these goods.

The minister also went on and talked about: Although it may be a good idea, we want to engage Islanders. That just tells me this party has been in government too long. Because now it's about engaging at some issues. The ones they want to avoid, they take the bureaucratic approach: We want to engage people. But the ones they don't want to avoid and get on with right away, they just ram right through this House.

The minister also talked about the federal government's commitment on the tax credit. That should be evidence enough to this House to support this. The federal government recognizes the importance of sports and recognizes the payback in healthy living. I don't know why we cannot go along with the federal government here and do this.

I heard a lot tonight about parents' involvement. It's the parents' - I agree wholeheartedly, it is the parents' responsibility, a lot of it is the parents' responsibility. But we have to understand that today it takes two incomes, two incomes of average Islanders, just to make it by in this society. Everybody does not have the opportunity as the front bench in government to make \$100,000 a year. Get a

free car and get free gas and a couple of trips a year, like the government front bench.

A lot of Islanders don't live that way, a lot of Islanders barely meet the \$50,000 level when two people are working, let alone one person for \$100,000.

So it may be easy for the front bench of government to talk about parents' responsibility. I guess I could talk about parents' responsibility, and this is not really needed also, if I was in the \$100,000 bracket and getting a free car and free gas all year. But I guess it depends on where you are on the scale of what you think of reforms. If you are at the high end and this money really doesn't mean anything to you, then the issue is not an issue for you or you cannot see it being an issue for anyone else. But if you are at the middle income or the low income as most Islanders are, then it is an issue.

We have to look at the cost of living today on the average families. More and more money is going out. We just saw this government over the last few years raise fees, driver's license fees, building permit fees. A lot of fees have gone up over the last couple of years. Gasoline, they've gone from not taxing gasoline sales taxing to sales taxing it. So every time the price of fuel goes up they get a bigger cut of that person's income. Not necessarily - how many people can go to their bosses after the price of gas goes up: The price of gas went up, boss, my income has to go up. Doesn't happen. So it cuts into their income again.

I hear a lot from the minister. KidSport is a great thing, a great thing. No child left behind, but you have to understand, KidSport is where you have to apply and you have to show your income and all that. Why do we always want to make people for an embarrassing situation say: Oh, you're

poor, okay, well, we will give you something for your kids to play with or play in? Why do we want to put low income or marginal families through that all the time? I commend KidSport, and maybe if we tax exempt sporting gear just think about the money that KidSport spend on sporting gear. They would be able to buy more equipment and give it away to more children and this would help even better.

So with that argument about: Let's let KidSport do everything, let them do the social policy issues that we don't want to address as government, is just not the way we should be running things. We should not be putting all the burden into our volunteer groups and into our NGOs.

We or this government seems to think that NGOs will solve everything on the Island. I can tell you it won't. They will be a tremendous help, but at the end of the day it will not happen.

We also heard from a couple of the ministers over there. To do nothing is not an option. I agree that to do nothing is not an option and that is why you should be supporting this resolution tonight.

I also heard that we should have a natural way of sports. Too much organized sports are in Prince Edward Island and maybe that is hindering children from going into organized sports. I agree, maybe that is a case, and that's a good argument. But if we allow a tax free exemption or an exemption to tax goods maybe that will provide the kids with more money for the kids that don't want to be in organized sports. The parents cannot afford the full organized sport, but could say to the child: Okay, I'll buy you a basketball or I'll get you some sporting gear and you can go out to the local park or you can go down to the park, in my neck of the woods, and play basketball. Maybe that would encourage that.



I don't think a lot of the members in the front bench or some in the backbenchers really understand what it costs to bring up a family today. It is very expensive to bring up a family. My wife and I have two children, and I can tell you it's very expensive and the demands are great all the time. To say that parents - I'm repeating myself, but I heard it time and time again - parents' responsibility, parents' responsibility. Parents are responsible each and every day to cloth, house, provide their education fund for the children. A lot of things are on a parent's backs nowadays.

I'm just pleading with the backbenchers that maybe that some members will support us, but from the discussion I've heard tonight there will be very little support for this resolution and I just can't understand why. We're asking for the government to take a look at this and come back to the Legislature with a cost estimate of this item to see how much it would cost and to see what benefits or what data is available to support it or not to support.

I know you hear a lot from the ministers today about how much they're already providing now. How many millions of dollars they're putting into the rinks and the sporting facilities. The millions of dollars that government has donated towards it. There are three levels of government in that, that is federal government, provincial and municipal, a lot of the time, and a lot of volunteer time in a lot of these facilities.

But I remind the members that you can have all the best facilities in the world, you can have all the best rinks and grounds equipment and everything, but if the children cannot afford the equipment to use those facilities, those facilities aren't worth too much except for a cornerstone with the politician's name on it. That's maybe why we're not doing this. Maybe that's the reason, Maybe it's easier for us to build big

rinks, to build big sporting facilities to enshrine into history our name.

I'm a firm believer in I'd rather do something for children without recognition because I feel that it's much more beneficial to them. But I guess when you get in power for a long time, the cornerstone and your name in eternity is more important than helping somebody out. I guess you don't really get your name recognized for that and people can not walk into the brand new facilities that you claim that bought and built and worked on and look at your name for the rest of eternity. I'm not into that game. This government spends countless hours on this game and that's a shame.

We heard about one member's discussion over there about the cost of low flushed toilets from one of the members. I'd argue the cost of a few of those cornerstones would go a long way in providing a lot of children an opportunity to participate in some sports.

In closing, just one other thing. A lot of other provinces have child - we have the National Child Benefit that this government claws back from the children of Prince Edward Island, the most unfortunate children in Prince Edward Island. I know they'll get up and argue they don't, but the National Welfare Report says it time and time again. They claw this National Child Benefit supplement back from the poorest children on Prince Edward Island.

So what are those children suppose to do? That's less money for them to get sporting gear. Other provinces, a lot of provinces - I think we may be the only one without it or one of the few - most other provinces have a supplement to the National Child Benefit, they have a provincial child tax benefit that they pay out to the children in order to subsidize sporting gear and stuff like that and offsets some things. We don't have that

on Prince Edward Island. I know some will get up and argue that yes we do in other areas and things like that, but this is New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Alberta, Manitoba. The majority have those kinds of systems where they provide more money to parents and maybe we should be doing that if this is not the case.

I just hope that I am not asking for the exemption at this point in time. We're asking that the government take a look at it, that the government come back to the House with a cost estimate and a cost analysis of it in their budget, and maybe we can have a formal debate on it.

That really disturbs me because we don't even want to discuss it. We just want to put it away, off the table right away. We don't want to do any analysis on this at all. We just want to shove it under the table and put it away. Or maybe yet it's just another good Liberal idea that they know is a good Liberal idea and they're saying: We'll squash this right now and we'll introduce it at a later date as their own. And you know what? I don't mind that, I don't mind that one bit. When they do introduce it at a later date, if they do, I will be supporting it 100%. I'll support this exemption.

Matter of fact, I can commit right now that I'll not be up trying to take credit for it. I'll give the credit to the government if that's what they want. If that's what you want, just say it, we'll give this resolution or we'll give this bill right over to you and you can have the cornerstone, you can have your name on the press release, you can have your name on the bill that does it. If that's what you're into nowadays, go ahead and do it. If you want to do it next session or later on in this session, go ahead, introduce the bill.

I'm not into it, I'm not into getting my name on things in order to moralize myself.

Because I don't think that's why we're here.

Anyway, I'm just hoping that maybe a few members will see the difference, maybe we might be able to pick up a few votes here, hopefully. Enough to make a tie. I know the Speaker would break the tie in our favour, but I'm going to ask for a standing vote on this because I consider it a most important issue, I consider it a priority issue of this. Again the ones that are going to be standing we're just asking for the government to consider this, for the government to do a cost analysis on it. For the government to come back to this House with a discussion paper or some sort of analysis on it, just not to reject it outright.

So I want to see how we stand on this very important issue. I consider it a standing vote for the children of Prince Edward Island and more so it's a standing vote for the children of Prince Edward Island that cannot afford to get into sports or their families are struggling to have money in order for their children to get into sports or their family is taking away from other necessary items in order to put their children into sports. I find it pretty hard that some parents would give up maybe some of their drug treatments or cut back on their medication or some things like that. I know parents would be doing that in order to provide their children. So we are putting the parent at risk a lot of the time.

So think about the children, think about the people who are going to be affected by this, and by no means tonight are we voting for the exemption. Tonight we are voting just to take a look at it and come back for an analysis and see where we are.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** Sergeant-at-Arms, ring the bell.

[The bells were rung]

**An Hon. Member:** Caucus is here.

**Speaker:** Thank you.

Government House Leader, is your caucus in the House?

**Mr. Dunn:** All accounted for.

**Speaker:** Are you ready for the question, hon. members.

All those opposed to the motion, please stand.

**Clerk:** The hon. Minister of Community and Cultural Affairs, the hon. Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Aquaculture, the hon. Minister of Development and Technology, the hon. Premier, the hon. Government House Leader, the hon. Minister of Health, Social Services and Seniors, the hon. Member from Park Corner-Oyster Bed, the hon. Minister of Environment, Energy and Forestry, the hon. Minister of Education and Attorney General, the hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora, the hon. Member from Evangeline-Miscouche, the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Spring Park, the hon. Member from Morell-Fortune Bay, the hon. Member from Glen Stewart-Bellevue Cove and the hon. Member from Winsloe-West Royalty.

**Speaker:** Those in favour of the motion, please stand.

**Clerk:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition, the hon. Opposition House Leader and the hon. Member from Crapaud-Hazel Grove.

**Speaker:** The motion fails.

The hon. Opposition House Leader.

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

In discussions with the Government House Leader earlier in the day, we are yielding the rest of our time back to the government to conclude the important resolution that the government brought forward today on our soldiers.

**Speaker:** Have consent of the House to go back to Orders of the Day (Government)?

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Speaker:** Agreed.

#### Government Motions

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

**Mr. Gillan:** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. House Leader, that Motion No. 9 be now read.

**Speaker:** Shall it carry?

**Some Hon. Members:** Carried.

**Speaker:** It's already been read, Motion No. 9.

The hon. Minister of Tourism adjourned the debate.

The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Dunn:** The hon. Minister of Tourism is out of the House this evening, but he concluded his remarks.

**Speaker:** Any other member who would like to speak?

The hon. Member from Glen Stewart-Bellevue Cove.

**Dr. McKenna:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think it's a pleasure to stand here tonight to

support this motion supporting our troops in Afghanistan. I look at the situation this summer when we brought our former Islander home from Afghanistan, Mr. Mellish. I know that family very well. His own aunt worked in my office for about 10 or 15 years of my life. So, I know that family very well. I know a number of his aunts and uncles in the family. I know his grandmother.

Actually, as a kid, I knew a bunch of his uncles used to be around my potato warehouse as potato inspectors. The family came from the Union Road originally outside of Montague. It certainly grieves me when you realize you know that's come home, not the way you like to see them come home. I really appreciate what he's done for us, but it's not the way you want to see the outcome.

I also am reminded of another individual who has family ties who served time over in Afghanistan as well. I indicated in the House earlier this spring he was the grandson of a former MLA, George McMahon and Trudy. His mother is Lorraine and Lorraine lives in Calgary. Their son was injured in the friendly fire over there. At the same time, he had two of his friends that were killed in Afghanistan as well.

I know the trying times that family went through. I actually golfed with his father this summer and his mother. It was a pretty trying time for them. They were glad when he finally did come home in July or August. We just realize that some of these things are pretty close to home and we don't realize what these people go through.

I've always had a very long interest in Afghanistan. From as far back in history as I can remember, there's always been struggles over there. In our short history that we've been around this earth there's been wars

going on for the last number of decades. Certainly, it came to life after 9/11 with the bombing in New York.

I look at the history of the country there. There's been millions of people killed. Many people have been injured. The homes have been destroyed. The infrastructure's gone down to zero. The people don't have any education. The girls didn't get a chance (Indistinct) to go to school. That country's gone through an awful lot.

I think we have to look at why we're over there. No one wants to be involved with war. No one wants to see someone get injured or hurt, but those people have had a pretty traumatic life for the last number of years. I certainly applaud our troops for being over there.

We have big task over there to rebuild that country. A lot of work has been done already, but certainly there's a lot more work to do.

I was glancing at the *Globe and Mail* last week. There was a very interesting article in the *Globe and Mail*. It showed a picture of the map of the country. It showed the area that our soldiers are in. As the speaker from Souris-Elmira indicated this afternoon, we are in probably the worst part of the country. There's about four or five countries that are in that area, mainly Canada, the United States, UK, Netherlands, Romania, Australia and Denmark. A lot of other countries much bigger than Canada, much bigger than these countries, are in the northern parts of the country where there's probably very little war, very little activity going on over there.

We have certainly as a country done our duty, more than our duty. I looked at the number of troops that we have over there. We probably rank the fourth or fifth highest of the (Indistinct) countries that are over there in this war torn area.

I certainly applaud our country for being over there. But I also agree with the Member from Souris-Elmira, maybe some other countries could also come to the plate and help us with what we're doing over there, because it is a pretty sad situation.

With anything like this I look at the things that have gone on over the last three or four or five years over there. Canada has worked very hard to do a lot and has done a lot of projects over there. I just want to highlight that I think now that a lot of the students are getting back to school. A lot of girls have probably never been in school most of their lives and are starting to finally get back into the classroom. A lot of the refugees have now started to return home. I don't know what kind of home they're returning to, but at least they've got a place to go back to.

The country has had elections. There's been two elections over there in the last little while. It's great to see that there's a little bit of democracy starting to occur there.

I think it's starting to see a little fiscal stability and economic growth in the country as well. Probably one of the biggest problems over there - one of the biggest industries in the country is the poppy. The poppy is not used for purposes that we like a poppy to be used for. That's right. That country is very big into the drug trade. That's probably part and parcel with what goes on in terrorism in this country. It's a combination of the drugs and the terrorism over there.

I really think we have to continue to stay there to make sure we succeed (Indistinct). Will there ever be an end? I don't know. I just hope what we've done so far has mattered and that we will see a little more help down the road there.

Basically, I just want to add my support to our troops. I think they've done a very good

job to date. I hope we don't see anybody come home the way they came home the last little while. I'm amazed how some of our young members will continue to join the armed forces for our benefit. We are the ones who are benefitting from it. We don't have the terrorism over here like other countries have. We have the freedoms that we take for granted. We must applaud the efforts that our soldiers have done to date and will continue to do.

Basically, I just want to thank those men and women that have gone over there. We have a well equipped armed forces. We have a mission we can accomplish if we stay there. To leave in the middle of all this would not be the proper thing to do at this time.

I (Indistinct) add my support. Hope we'll get some resolution to this ordeal over there. See some freedoms for those people.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier Binns:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, rise to support this important resolution. Our troops in Afghanistan are doing a great service on behalf of our country. They are certainly making a presence in Afghanistan in so many ways. Many of the items which the resolution refers to of course are important: whether it's construction of schools so that young people can get an education; giving the opportunity for young girls to go to back to school, many of which have been deprived of that opportunity; the return of refugees to their homeland. Those sorts of things could not take place without the contribution of our troops.

Now they are doing many other things. They are enabling Afghanistan to have its infrastructure rebuilt. Of course a war torn zone like that doesn't have much infrastructure. (Indistinct) was bombed and destroyed, so you're starting from scratch. Plumbing systems, the infrastructure that's needed to move people around, whether it be roads or canals or bridges etc. which need to be developed. So there is a major reconstruction effort necessary and our troops are enabling that kind of progress to be made. It's no question, it's all been impacted somewhat for terrorism, and Canada has a responsibility to try and alleviate that threat in the world, I believe. It's always a question of how you go about that.

I think we're all troubled somewhat or at least questioned to what extent we should be attempting, if at all, to impose our value system on another country. Particularly in this case, a country that is primarily Islamic with a different culture, background, value system they're on. These are issues I know that we all struggle with. But I think we all agree that no people anywhere in the world should have to live under the conditions that the ordinary Afghanistan person has had to live under. A country that obviously has been destabilized by war lords, a country that is a safe haven for the production of heroin for example. That's not the only problem there, but it's a problem because those drugs are exported to the rest of the world and do have an impact on our streets and the safety of our own people.

Think of the 9/11 days. We were all impacted some way or another. I think I've mentioned this before. The first Canadian identified that was killed in one of those jets that crashed into the World Trade Center was a childhood friend of my own. He was a hockey scout travelling from Boston to the west coast. Certainly I know when he got up that morning he never expected his life to

change so dramatically. Then of course there were all of those who lost their lives not only on board those aircraft but the people in the towers. Others who were impacted on September 11 then, we do have a responsibility to try to avoid that kind of situation in the future.

You wonder if your own relatives are impacted. This is an interesting story, but I met some relatives of ours from Ireland a year or so ago. Interestingly enough, this cousin of mine that worked in New York City for all of his working life is a painter. When I saw him he moved back to Ireland. But guess what? He spent his whole life painting in the World Trade Center - I don't know how many years that was, but basically his whole working career - and made enough money working in New York City painting in the towers to move home and retire. He was fortunate. He got back home just a short time before in fact that had happened. So he was one of the lucky ones, but realized the impact that it's had.

On Remembrance Day I had the opportunity of meeting a number of our soldiers at various events across the province. I had the opportunity of meeting a young soldier from Murray Harbour who was home on leave from Afghanistan. In fact, he was going to be returning the next day back to another tour of duty in Afghanistan. I certainly got the sense from him that he and other soldiers, they were part of his platoon or brigade or contingent, realized the kind of responsibility that they had. There was no question about the commitment to try and improve the lives of ordinary people in Afghanistan. There was no question that Canada in his mind should continue to play a role in that regard.

As many others had mentioned, we were all saddened to learn that Warrant Officer Frank Mellish, a distinguished officer with deep roots in Prince Edward Island, lost his

life in Afghanistan working to help the citizenry there re-establish their lives. He paid the supreme sacrifice. Having talked with many of his family and knowing many of his family, I know that they've never questioned his commitment to service and helping this country at a time of need.

So I'm pleased to stand and support this resolution which supports our troops, and hopefully Afghanistan people will enjoy a better life because of our intervention. Hopefully we can find or see the day ahead when countries like Canada can exit from Afghanistan in a way that leaves that country of a more stable government that's not controlled by war lords, dictators etc. and can have some kind of reasonable life.

So in that, because of that, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to support this resolution.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

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

It's my pleasure to recognize Mr. Tim Carroll in the gallery.

**Mr. R. Brown:** Best agriculture minister.

**Leader of the Opposition:** As everyone knows, Mr. Carroll was a member here in the Legislature between 19896 and 1996. One of the things that probably a lot of people don't know about the former member is, in fact, that he's undefeated. He never did lose an election. He in fact even ran for, I think, only one position outside of politics, when he ran for president of the party and won that.

I'd like to point out, Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity probably about four or five

months ago - when leadership candidates come to Prince Edward Island I have the opportunity to meet with them. I remember the first time sitting down with Bob Rae. Bob Rae came in and sat down in my office and had no support whatsoever on Prince Edward Island. Didn't even have an organizer. I looked at him and I said: How is your support going on Prince Edward Island? He looked at me and he said: That guy right there, that's my support. As we all know, Mr. Bob Rae managed to sweep pretty much in terms of delegates, thanks to the support of Tim Carroll.

I'm happy to inform everybody that he's an integral part of the Liberal Party of Prince Edward Island right now, being the past president, is a main advisor for myself, and we're happy to have that undefeated record on our side. The fact that he's one of probably the best organizers in the province I'm sure will help lead us to victory in the next election.

So it's my pleasure to introduce Mr. Carroll.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** Any other member who would like to speak on the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** (Indistinct).

**Speaker:** Hon. members.

To close out the debate on the motion, the mover, the hon. Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Aquaculture.

**An Hon. Member:** The best minister of agriculture.

**Mr. Bagnall:** I'll make no comment on that, Mr. Speaker.

In introducing this motion, I want to recognize and express the support and

appreciation for the outstanding work that has been carried out by our Canadian troops in Afghanistan. I am sure that all Canadians admire and respect the contributions that are being made on a daily basis by men and women who are part of the Canadian armed forces.

They need and deserve our support for the sacrifices they are making on our behalf. While this resolution is about supporting our troops, it is also about supporting our cause. That cause is nothing less than bringing peace and security to a war torn country that has too long been immersed in conflict. It is about bringing freedom and justice to people. It is about restoring confidence in the future of a nation and of its people.

Ten days ago we gathered in towns and cities and villages across the country to pay tribute to our war veterans. We gathered to express our deeply felt appreciation for their sacrifices. We joined with them to renew our hope for peace throughout the world. Unfortunately, the war to end all wars is not over. As much as we hope for peace, we face the reality that conflicts still exist. We would not engage in such conflicts if we did not believe in the goal of peace.

In passing this resolution, we are affirming not only our support for our troops in Afghanistan but as well, our hope and confidence that their mission will be successful and that it will help to bring some measure of peace to that corner of the world.

In doing so, let us continue to look forward to a world where swords are indeed turned into plowshares and when men and women of all races, religions and regions can live in peace with one another.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** Hon. members, are you ready for the question?

All those in favour, say 'yea.'

**Some Hon. Members:** Yea!

**Speaker:** Contrary, 'nay.'

Unanimous consent on that motion.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Dunn:** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Spring Park, that this House adjourn and stand adjourned until tomorrow, at 2:00 p.m.

**Speaker:** Shall it carry?

**Some Hon. Members:** Carried.

The Legislature adjourned until tomorrow, Wednesday, at 2:00 p.m.



