

# HANSARD



## PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Speaker: Hon. Greg Deighan

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The Legislature sat at 2:00 p.m.

Matters of Privilege and Recognition of  
Guests

**Speaker (Mooney):** The hon. Premier.

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

It's pleasure to be able to welcome visitors to the public gallery today. Not a big crowd. Maybe it's because the weather is still holding reasonably well outside compared to the rest of the country.

I might take a moment to do two things. One, I want to congratulate people of Cornwall. This evening they're opening their new town hall. I know it's a great addition to the community and Cornwall is one of the fastest growing communities on Prince Edward Island, I guess symbolizing a lot the new economic development that is taking place across Prince Edward Island. So congratulations there.

Another recognition goes out to, perhaps, our Island's at least most recent and greatest success, Mark MacDonald, his harness racing accomplishments. He has now exceeded I think, with the horses he's driving, over \$10 million in earnings this year. He has won 666 races. He's closing in fast on the record win last year of 692, With a month to go this year, I think he probably will be able to achieve that and I wish him every success. He's a great tribute to Islanders and to all horsemen out there. The industry is important to PEI. We thank them for their contribution.

Hope our viewers watching on Eastlink today enjoy the proceedings.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

It's great to see you in the Chair today. I'm sure the deliberations will be definitely under control today.

I, too, would like to welcome everyone to the gallery. I especially would like to welcome Shawn Casey, who is the president of our great party. But on a better note, Shawn's wife, Kathleen Casey, is hopefully going to be the new member for Charlottetown-Spring Park area. So it's great to have Kathleen Casey on our Liberal team these days as our team keeps growing day by day.

I'd also like to mention, along with the Premier the opening of the town hall in Cornwall. I will agree with the Premier fully on this. Obviously Cornwall is a growing community here on Prince Edward Island, and I think a lot of that development that is taking place in that area has to do with the one constant that's been there for the last 21 years, and of course that's the hon. Member from North River-Rice Point, who I know is probably home hopefully watching the proceedings today on television. We wish him a speedy recovery and congratulate him on being a great member for the last 21 years.

Finally, on a sadder note, of course as we all know there was a tragic accident in West Prince on the weekend and there was a couple of young lives that were lost. I think all our prayers and thoughts go out to all the family and friends of those who perished on the weekend.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Statements by Members

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

**Souris Christmas Parade Week**

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

As all Islanders know, the residents of eastern Prince Edward Island are noted for their ability to host great celebrations. This week marks the 26<sup>th</sup> annual Souris Christmas Parade Week, and I extend an invitation to my honourable colleagues and all Islanders to pay a visit to eastern Prince Edward Island.

The celebrations have been going on all week and have included numerous contests and activities for the young and old alike. The 13<sup>th</sup> annual Santa pageant was held on November 25<sup>th</sup> followed by a dance with music by Phase II. Other events include a family skate, adult trivia, bakery bingo, lots of carolling, children's Christmas stories and crafts, and a pre-teen dance just to name a few.

Last evening the tree lighting ceremony was held with Souris Consolidated Carollers getting everyone into the Christmas spirit. And, Mr. Speaker, if you want an excellent meal, be sure to attend the Lion's Club roast beef dinner, casino night, and auction on Friday evening, December 1<sup>st</sup>. Tomorrow will see the start of the Hospice Palliative Care Unit's "Let Your Light Shine" campaign, and, of course, Santa will be at Main Street Mall throughout the week for picture taking with all the little ones.

Saturday will give way to the 10<sup>th</sup> annual Turkey Trot, and I understand Santa's elves have been keeping an eye on the Premier's running and I feel it would be a walk in the park for him. This year the run is dedicated to the memory of the late Charlie Campbell

who ran the Turkey Trot on numerous occasions.

Saturday everyone will see lots of floats, bands, elves, and, of course, Santa Claus as the 26<sup>th</sup> annual Christmas Parade winds its way through the streets of Souris. This year's parade marshals will be the residents of MacIntyre House.

So if you're ready for a terrific time and need a big boost to put you in the Christmas mood, please make the trip to Souris.

I extend a special thanks to Ginny Deveau and all the committee members for the great work in organizing and promoting the 26<sup>th</sup> annual Souris Christmas Parade Week and, actually, many people in the eastern part of the province have been trying to find out whether our Speaker of the House is the real Santa Claus or not.

Anyway, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Evangeline-Miscouche.

**Restoration of Arsenault's Pond**

**Mr. Arsenault:** *Merci, monsieur le président.*

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Recently, I had the privilege of touring the restoration site of Arsenault's Pond in Egmont Bay with my hon. colleague the Minister of Environment, Energy and Forestry, and including a number of community representatives.

This \$140,000 restoration project by our government is the first major project completed under the new capital budget for management of ponds and impoundments.

The total five-year budget will amount to \$615,000 and will make great enhancements to such areas throughout Prince Edward Island.

*Monsieur le président, l'étang Arsenault est un important point d'intérêt dans notre région et grâce à ces améliorations importantes, les résidents pourront profiter de l'étang et de ses environs pendant de nombreuses années à venir. L'habitat des poissons et de la laune de l'étang a été grandement mis en valeur et le public pourra en profiter afin d'y pratiquer toute une gamme d'activités récréatives et éducationnelles, telles que le canotage et l'observation d'oiseaux.*

*Je tiens à féliciter notre ministère de l'Environnement, de l'Énergie et des Forêts ainsi que les gens de la région pour leur beau travail. Monsieur le président, je voudrais remercier tout particulièrement David Richard et son père, René Richard, pour leur travail appliqué et bienveillant au fil des ans.*

Mr. Speaker, Arsenault's Pond is an important landmark in our district and with this major improvement, the residents will be able to enjoy the pond and its surroundings for many years to come. The pond now has a greatly improved habitat for fish and wildlife and is open to the public for a broad range of recreational and educational activities such as canoeing and bird watching.

I extend congratulations to our Department of Environment, Energy, and Forestry and to the local residents on a job well done. In particular, Mr. Speaker, I want to recognize and thank David Richard and his father, René Richard, for their diligent and caring work over the years.

In closing, I'd like to make mention of Mr. David Richard and his father, René Richard,

who have worked diligently on this pond enhancement project, and I certainly want to give them the proper recognition for all their hard efforts.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

### **Hunter River Heritage Mill Project**

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

If you enter the village of Hunter River, these days you're seeing development in the central area of the village where the old mill, the 1830 grist mill, has been - it's ongoing being renovated by an individual by the name of Dwight Parkman who, along with his wife Deborah Parkman, and their family, have been continually working hard over the last four years to develop this into an historical location.

Today I'd just like to congratulate them for their ongoing commitment. Their hope is over the course of the next few years to - they have last week hoisted a water wheel into place and their hope is to - they're counting on the wheel and the generator to create environmentally friendly energy. Their hope into the future is to restore the mill complex, have an interpretive centre, gift shop, walking trails, and many other opportunities there. I think it's been a true commitment on their part. It's been a struggle and a challenge for them to do this.

Certainly, you know, the mill holds great importance for the village as it was the grist mill in the 1800s. Bagnalls Mills took over, the building supply store was there, and then the Parkmans took over a few years ago, and they have a building supply store along with the development. I think it's going to be a

wonderful development for the village and I think everyone who has driven through the village comments on the beauty of it.

On behalf of all members here, I wish the Parkmans well into the future on this project, thanking them for true heritage protection for the central region of PEI.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Responses to Questions Taken as Notice

Questions by Members

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

**Polar Foods**

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

Like many Islanders, I was surprised and appalled when I read the Premier defending and justifying his actions surrounding Polar Foods on the occasion of his 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary in power. The Premier said he had no regrets and everything had turned out fine: the loss of \$31 million, the secret loans of \$14 million in the weeks that preceded an election, the loss of jobs and the damage to Island communities.

Has the Premier managed to recover a single dime from this collapse, and why didn't he insist on personal guarantees to cover the government's enormous risk?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier Binns:** First of all, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member misrepresents what I've said consistently over the years.

I said it's unfortunate that money was lost. What I've also said is that our fishing industry seemed to have to go through a

restructuring. What was taking place for as long as I can remember in the fishing industry is that the industry, the processing side of it, was supported heavily through either write-offs or direct grants. His party, when they were in government, provided every bit as much money in either write-offs or grants to the fish processing sector as we did in the money that was lost or written off regarding Polar Foods. The one difference is that they never fixed the problem and we did.

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

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

That was expensive to fix, but I had a direction question for the Premier. I'm wondering: Has the Premier recovered a single dime from the collapse from many of the shareholders, and why didn't he insist on personal guarantees to cover the government's enormous risk in this endeavour?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier Binns:** Mr. Speaker, that question has been addressed many times.

It's well documented, I think, in Hansard. It was discussed in committee. It's been discussed in other locations. The reality was that the fish processing sector did make an investment towards Polar in terms of assets and so on. They were not prepared to bring personal guarantees into the mix and that's why it didn't happen. No one predicted that this venture would not succeed at the time that Polar came together.

In hindsight it's easy to look back and say this was a failure. It's easy for the opposition to do that. But I point out again that his party when in government had just

as much trouble. They certainly put just as much money as our government did over the same period of time in terms of write-offs and direct grants and they didn't fix the problem. They had a plan to have I think two fish processors on PEI. They invested heavily against many of the small independents which drove this problem to where it had to be dealt with. So we tried to find a solution. The solution appeared to work at first, but we know the outcome.

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

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

Again, more defence for the indefensible. But I know this government did not require personal guarantees. But with so much money at stake, did the Premier examine the personal worth of the shareholders and look for guarantees before you handed these millions of taxpayers' dollars away? Did this government perform any level of due diligence?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier Binns:** Absolutely, Mr. Speaker.

There was a lot of time spent as the Polar group came together. There was considerable documentation, understanding, time spent on putting together the assets that these people had, both in terms of physical buildings, equipment, in terms of inventory. Those things were all taken into account when the company was structured.

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

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

It was the Auditor General who really

pointed out the lack of due diligence. But I'm wondering: Was there any attempt to get a look at the shareholders' bank statements, lists of stock holdings, or anything else of that nature?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier Binns:** Mr. Speaker, I don't have all of the details at my fingertips, but as I said earlier, the people who owned these companies, many of them were in financial difficulty.

Some were doing better than others. The reason why Polar really came into existence, there were a number of these companies that could not get any further credit at the banks. The banks had shut them off. They said: We will not give you operating funds for another year. And so, you know, that represented a big problem at that time. This fish processing industry is one of the most important sectors to Prince Edward Island, and we saw an opportunity to try to restructure the industry and to help these people out. Personal guarantees were not even an option for some of them, given the financial situation at the time, but I'm sure those conversations were held.

It's interesting. You know, here we go again. The Leader of the Opposition, now he's so opposed to government having invested in Polar, and yet at the public meetings that were held across the province when Polar collapsed he was in every community: Government should keep your plant open. Then he'd run back to Charlottetown and take a different position: Government, you know, get out of this business, shouldn't be supporting these guys. Back to the community: Government should keep this fish plant going. Did it all across the province, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

Millions of dollars, no personal guarantees. When you risk millions of taxpayers' dollars, you'd think a responsible government would look for those guarantees. I'm wondering: Before loaning out millions of taxpayers' dollars, did the Premier even ask the shareholders to divulge the contents of their safety deposit boxes?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier Binns:** I'm not surprised (Indistinct) because he knows that he's been on both sides of this issue, one in the rural communities, another one in Charlottetown. It's another one of these things where he can't decide which side of the fence he's on. Was he for these people or not? We took the position that we were for trying to keep this industry going, and when we saw that it wouldn't continue under one scenario, then we changed course, Mr. Speaker.

We weren't afraid to do that. But the good news is we have not had to reinvest money in the last number of years. First time that I can remember in my history in provincial politics in some 30 years that we have not had to put new money in the fish processing sector, in the lobster industry, and this is a truly significant turnaround.

The other thing is that we have as much or more employment now in this sector than we had previously, and you know what? Some of the little plants that have gone down have come back up pretty nicely. We have plants like Howards Cove that are going most of the year, more employees than they ever had. We have plants like Gaspereaux which have come back up in our mussel processing industry. So the job base

has expanded and it's expanded without government having to prop it up time after time as they did through the Liberal years and through the early years of our government.

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

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

I wish the Premier would listen to what the questions are before answering. I'm wondering: Before loaning out millions -

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

**Leader of the Opposition:** I'll just wait here so the Premier can hear the question for a change. I'm wondering: Before loaning out millions of taxpayers' dollars, did the Premier even ask the shareholders to divulge the contents of their safety deposit boxes?

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

**Mr. Currie:** Mr. Speaker, I think what was actually divulged at the time was their assets for their corporations, and that's what government accepted.

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

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

Here I have a couple of Conservative members behind me saying: Oh my God, asking about safety deposit boxes, I have a premier that won't even get up, and I got a minister that says no, no, they didn't do that.

The Premier handed out \$14 million in secret, you lost \$31 million, and you didn't check their safety deposit boxes. But as



recently as this August your government was sending letters to senior citizens demanding, and I quote: "Written documentation of safety deposit box contents." You were willing to pry that deeply into the affairs of senior citizens seeking long-term care, but you considered it inappropriate, with a group of individuals who were getting millions and millions and millions of taxpayers' dollars. Will the Premier please explain this contradiction?

**Ms. Bertram:** Good question.

**Mr. R. Brown:** Seniors got to give all their contents over.

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier Binns:** Mr. Speaker, there is no connection.

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

**Leader of the Opposition:** Mr. Speaker, here we have a premier who loans out millions of dollars, \$14 million in secret, preferred loans of \$7 million, another line in credit of \$7.5 million, cost taxpayers \$31 million in the long run, yet doesn't ask for any personal guarantees, doesn't ask to look at safety deposit boxes.

But yet when one of our seniors has to go in for long-term care, this Premier is willing to go after any contents that they might have in a safety deposit box. Does this Premier see any contradiction whatsoever?

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier Binns:** Mr. Speaker, he forgot to finish the story.

The story is that after looking at this matter

for several years, our government decided that we were in a position to change direction. We will not take the seniors' assets into account in future and so we have no need to know all of their assets. We will simply look at income. Those details are being worked out now, but it's a major shift and it recognizes that we wanted to improve this program. It's going to mean more tax money directed towards this program. In fact, it will cost us about \$10 million, Mr. Speaker, but we feel that it's affordable and that we can do it and so we're moving ahead.

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

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

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

But until we see any legislation or any changes to regulations I'm not sure if we can really believe this government. I will table a letter received by a senior a few weeks ago after Question Period today. But this individual, like thousands of other Island families, was deeply upset that this Premier's government was so intrusive, so cold, so grasping for their hard-earned dollars.

These people watched this Premier waste \$31 million in Polar Foods and it was hard for them to understand why the Premier didn't use the same level of scrutiny for those Polar shareholders when this Premier formed Polar Foods. Instead, this Premier used the resources of government to examine the finances of individual seniors to an incredible degree. For example, the Premier - you were also making seniors provide bank statements for two years prior.

Before handing over millions, did you make the Polar shareholders hand over those kinds

of personal bank statements as well, Mr. Premier?

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier Binns:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. Leader of the Opposition knows that this policy was established probably by the Liberal government of the day but it was operated by them for years and years and years.

They never changed the policy. It was fine for them when they were in office. Only when we began to look at this option did they start to get excited about it. We've recognized an opportunity to change here. I want to tell Islanders this will be in place for January 1<sup>st</sup>. There's nothing dishonest. The hon. member wants to suggest now our motives are somehow dishonest. We put it in the throne speech. We will have legislation in this session of the House. It will be in place for January 1<sup>st</sup>.

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

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

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

I find it odd that the Premier for all those years sat there and took these seniors' assets, asked for personal bank statements, asked for safety deposit boxes, but then yet when he wanted to do a deal with Polar Foods, (Indistinct) all the money that was loaned out, didn't ask for a single thing. This was the head of our province, the Premier of our province. You would think someone in that position would see the contradiction in what he was doing. Seniors were required to provide government with

copies of cheques, receipts, and proof of all major bank withdrawals for the preceding two years.

Were the shareholders of Polar Foods asked to do the same thing?

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Mr. R. Brown:** No!

**Premier Binns:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member wants to live in the past.

He's not looking ahead to what we're doing today. We have made changes. He wants to talk about the loss of Polar Foods. I remind him again. His party, when in office, lost every bit - and I could find more money if I dug back hard enough - on the fish processing business in terms of write-offs year after year after year. Polar was no more money, but now the last three years the situation's changed. We have not had to reinvest more money in that sector. So it's a good news story. Actually has more jobs today than it had at that time.

The hon. member should know all about waste. I mean, he spent a lot of time in the prime minister's office up in Ottawa supposedly representing us here in Atlantic Canada. He knows all about how to waste money.

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

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

I guess good news for the Premier is taking assets away from seniors, looking at their safety deposit boxes, being intrusive, yet when it comes to loaning out millions of dollars to the Polar shareholders, it's all

okay.

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

**Speaker:** (Indistinct) hon. members.

**Leader of the Opposition:** Mr. Speaker, it says an awful lot about this government.

This Premier presided over a system that put seniors through the mill and this same Premier also failed to protect Island taxpayers. Again, why the double standard? When government was loaning out millions, why didn't you seek the same level of detail? As the Auditor General wrote: In a case like this, a prudent investor would have exercised a far greater degree of due diligence. So why the failure to exercise this due diligence while you were forcing Island seniors to release vast amounts of personal, technical information?

**Mr. R. Brown:** Come clean, come on.

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier Binns:** Mr. Speaker, I can see why he's upset. Our government changes a policy that was initiated by the Liberal government (Indistinct).

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

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

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

I don't know where he gets this upset from. We're upset that there was a double standard here. On one part, the Premier wanted all this personal information from seniors that were only looking for long-term care, but at the same time, he was loaning out millions upon millions of dollars without looking for any personal guarantee.

I'm wondering. The other day the minister of health said that government does not take registered education savings plan money from Island seniors. Often this is money that seniors have saved to help out their grandchildren or great-grandchildren, as the case may be. But according to the regulations, you count RESPs as income. Mr. Speaker, why does the Premier have a minister who is unaware of his own regulations?

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier Binns:** Mr. Speaker, I'm not exactly sure of the context in which the hon. member said it nor do I have the exact words he said.

The minister will be back in Question Period tomorrow. He would have been here today. Apparently, the flight he was to take from Halifax back to the Island was somehow or other cancelled so he's en route by car to PEI now. So he will be here tomorrow and he can answer that question. He knows the context in which it was answered.

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

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

It's amazing how the Premier went on about his throne speech and about announcing protection of seniors' assets. You'd figure the Premier would be more up to speed on this file if he's been working on it for such a long time.

### **Seniors assets**

But I took some Hansard with me today. You were here the other day, last Friday, when the minister of health was answering

questions, and I asked him if RESPs were being taken from seniors, and the minister of health said: No, Mr. Speaker. So I'm wondering: Does the Premier agree that RESPs have not been taken from seniors in this province?

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier Binns:** Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member is referring to the policy that existed all through the Liberal years - they probably started it - the policy that we are changing. So I believe the reference is to what will take place in the future as opposed to what took place in the past.

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

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

No, unfortunately, the Premier should really get up to speed on this file. Here we have a minister of health when I asked him the other day about taking RESPs, he said no. The Premier knows absolutely nothing about it, but yet they're going out talking about how they're going to be protecting seniors' assets. You figure they'd be a little bit more up to speed.

This Premier has presided over a very intrusive system when it comes to seniors. The Premier was also in Cabinet while millions were being lost at Polar Foods. Didn't the Premier see the double standard? Didn't you point out that it was unfair to simply hand out millions while you were forcing seniors to provide a level of due diligence that you did not require from Polar shareholders?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier Binns:** Mr. Speaker, I already answered that question.

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

**Leader of the Opposition:** It's hard to believe, Mr. Speaker, that this Premier could preside over a government that would take the assets from seniors and yet still give out loans without doing the due diligence for millions and millions of dollars.

#### **Veterans' allowances for nursing care**

Right now, this Premier's government is taking away war veterans' allowances from seniors to pay for long-term care. Will that change? Will that continue into the future?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier Binns:** I missed part of that question. Could he repeat it, Mr. Speaker?

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition, repeat the question.

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

Right now, the Premier's government is taking away war veterans' allowances from seniors to pay for long-term care. Will that continue?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier Binns:** Mr. Speaker, I have to ask that he bring that question back tomorrow.

In terms of a seniors' income, I expect that includes any current income they would receive at the present time as part of that consideration. But I'll ask the minister to deal with that question tomorrow.

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

Opposition.

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

You figure the Premier would know the answer to some of these questions since it was in the throne speech, unless they had to throw it in at the last moment.

**Mr. R. Brown:** That's when they did it.

**Leader of the Opposition:** I'm wondering, Mr. Speaker.

A lot of what the province takes away from seniors when they go into long-term care is in regulations. Have those regulations been changed yet, which I know you can do on any Cabinet day?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier Binns:** Mr. Speaker, again, the plan is to have everything in place (Indistinct) the 1<sup>st</sup> of January. The program will become effective, moving from assets to income on that date. The considerations around legislation, both in terms of any changes to the act or to regulation, are under consideration.

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

#### **RESPs included in seniors' assets**

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

For the last 10 years this Premier has led this province and for the last 10 years registered educational savings plans were included as part of a senior's assets. Does the Premier think that was fair for the last 10 years?

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier Binns:** Mr. Speaker, again, this program or policy was brought into effect by the previous government.

The problem and, you know, the way of carrying this out was the practice in the province. They have all the answers now. We are changing the program as we've indicated, so why he wants to stick on the pass is beyond me. I guess it's to, I don't know, divert attention from the good stuff that's happening. He can't seem to accept that there's a lot good happening in the province. We are changing this program for the benefit of our senior citizens. We are reducing the amount of contribution that seniors who live in senior citizens' homes have been making, from 30% of their income to 25%. These are significant changes which will make seniors' living more affordable, and we'll continue to introduce new initiatives that we can afford. We're introducing more drugs to our formulary to help with seniors. We've been aggressive in recruitment of doctors and nurses. All designed to assist our seniors in the province.

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

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

Unlike this Premier, I don't mind standing up and saying I don't care which government was in power. What they were doing was wrong. But unfortunately this Premier thinks that he can stand up and defend what he did for the last 10 years because others have done it before him. If all leaders went on that mentality, we wouldn't get too far in society, now, would we?

Now this is a regulation of the Government

of Prince Edward Island that RESPs are counted as assets for seniors. The Premier can change that at any Cabinet meeting. Will he be changing that at the next Cabinet meeting?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier Binns:** Mr. Speaker, the plan, as I've outlined to him several times already today, will come into effect for January 1<sup>st</sup>.

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

### **Cost of human rights' hearings**

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

A question to the Premier. Mr. Premier, last week I asked you about how much money we spent on the Human Rights Commission hearings in 1997-1998. You indicated it was \$1.6 million. I tabled the public accounts for that year and it showed over \$2 million. Now that you've had some time to look at it, have you come back with which figure is right, you or the public accounts?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier Binns:** Mr. Speaker, again, I don't have that information in front of me either.

As I recall, the hon. member said there was one human rights case in 1986. Actually, there were 61. I think the settlement there was about \$600,000 and that was paid out to the people who brought cases forward. In the 1996-1997 period the payout to individuals, as I recall, was about \$1.6 million. I also explained to him the other day that the difference was probably due to things like legal costs that were paid out.

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

**Mr. R. Brown:** Mr. Speaker, funny how the Premier can always remember the Liberal days but he can't remember his days.

It's pretty funny, because he can make up Liberal things. Mr. Premier, it was a simple question. You know, the public accounts showed over \$2 million paid out in these claims, okay? It said settlements, human rights settlements. Didn't say legal costs or anything like that. You told this House there was \$1.6 million paid out. I've talked to some people, and no way did any lawyers get \$400,000 of payments in this instance. So can you go back and check those figures and bring them to the House? Was it over \$2 million in payments or was it something else in that file?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier Binns:** I already did that, Mr. Speaker, last week. I informed him that the payout or the offers that were settled were approximately \$1.6 million and so the difference, as I have indicated to him, would be other costs such as legal services.

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

### ***New Police Act***

**Mr. R. Brown:** He's going to stick to that story until the end, Mr. Speaker, which is coming very fast.

Anyway, I've got a question for the Attorney General. Yesterday you tabled in the House an act called the new *Police Act*, Madam Minister. How long have you been working on this piece of legislation?

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

**Ms. Dover:** Mr. Speaker, it has been in the works from before I became Attorney

General, but once I saw that the act, the current or the former act - or I should say the current act - was as outdated as it was, my staff were instructed to begin work.

They've had a number of consultations. They've met with a number of police commissioners across the province. As I said yesterday, I think it's the 41<sup>st</sup> draft that we have in front of us. So it's been quite awhile that it's been in the works but it's this government that has brought it forward.

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

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

Another question to the Attorney General. Attorney General, have you consulted with municipalities? Municipalities are the ones that run the police departments. Have you consulted with the police committees or the mayors of the municipalities that are going to be affected by this piece of legislation?

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

**Ms. Dover:** Mr. Speaker, it's my understanding that there was consultation certainly at the municipal level but we will be taking the bill onto the floor, it's my understanding, later on this afternoon, and the lady who was involved in the consultations will be able to more specifically answer the question for the hon. member.

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

**Mr. R. Brown:** That's not a good enough answer, Mr. Speaker.

You're the minister. You're responsible. You should have known who was consulted. Now were the mayors of the four

municipalities that are affected by this piece of legislation, were they brought into your office? Did you consult with them, politician to politician? Because after all, they have to pay the bills for this act. Have you consulted with the mayors of the four municipalities that are drastically affected by this piece of legislation?

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

**Ms. Dover:** Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member is asking did I call the mayors into my office and did we have a sit-down face-to-face meeting about this, my answer would be no, but I do have reliable staff.

It's my understanding that they met with the police commissioners, with the different organizations that are involved. I don't know whether they met with the mayors. It would be my anticipation that they probably did not but, as I said, for the hon. member to question me about every action that takes place in my department, especially in this regard, I think it's certainly incumbent upon the hon. member to realize that I do have competent staff. I rely on them to do a lot of work for me and they do it conscientiously. My staff lady, Ellie Reddin, will be here this afternoon and she'll be able to more substantially answer that question, but I know that there was extensive consultation. Who each person was that was consulted, I can't give that answer right now.

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

**Mr. R. Brown:** Madam Minister, did you meet with the police association and representatives of the police union over this piece of legislation? You as minister.

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

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

and Attorney General.

**Ms. Dover:** Mr. Speaker, both the Premier and I met with the police union heads. They came in to see both of us quite awhile ago, yes.

**Mr. R. Brown:** Okay, go ahead. Go ahead.

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

### Fullerton Marsh bridge

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

I've been getting a number of calls the last few weeks about the status of the Fullerton Marsh bridge. Could the minister update the House on the status of that bridge?

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

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

We are in the midst of replacing Fullerton Marsh bridge and the work began on September 5<sup>th</sup>. That's my understanding. Given the weather, it's been progressing nicely. We are doing some improvements to the road in the approach to the bridge. We have widened the asphalt and we are raising the bridge by one metre. We're also increasing the channel width and the depth of the waterway there.

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

**Dr. McKenna:** Thank you.

(Indistinct) supplementals. When is the project planned to be completed?

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

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

The bridge is closed to traffic right now, it's my understanding, but it will be opened in mid-December when the bulk of the work will be completed. There will be some final finish work to be completed next June but it should be open to traffic by mid-December.

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

**Dr. McKenna:** What is the value of this project and who is the contractor for this project?

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

**Ms. Shea:** The contractor for this bridge is Highfield Construction. It's a firm that does a lot of work for us, Mr. Speaker. The value of the total project is about \$1.3 million.

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

### Short-term loan companies

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

My question is for the Attorney General. In recent years there's been an increasing concern for the Canadian public over the operations and the practices of certain loan companies that charge absolutely exorbitant interest rates for very short-term loans. My question to the minister is this: What consideration is her department giving right now toward developing controls on the activities of these corporations?

**Leader of the Opposition:** We already got it taken care of.

**Mr. R. Brown:** If you vote for our bill, it'll be taken care of.



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

**Ms. Dover:** Mr. Speaker, back in January 2004 the ministers who are responsible for the payday lenders, as they're called, met and voiced a lot of concern about this issue.

It's currently governed under the Criminal Code, which is a federal piece of legislation. The ministers formed a working committee to try and address this issue because there was so much concern. It moved fairly slowly when we hit the federal government of the day, and in March of 2005 we commented on the fact that it was moving slowly. Again, nothing happened that was very swift until the current government got into office, and they have a bill before the House. It's in second reading. My understanding is that it moved into a committee and they're currently discussing an act which will hand to the provinces responsibility for governing the payday lenders. So we are monitoring that very closely, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Collins:** Yes, supplementary question, Mr. Speaker, to the same minister.

So am I given to understand then - if you could clarify this for me - that before provinces can take action to control the activities of these corporations, we must first have a bill passed on Parliament Hill, that federally something has to happen before the provinces can act with due authority?

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

**Ms. Dover:** Mr. Speaker, as I said, the responsibility for the interest - or in the Criminal Code it's called usury - lies currently with the federal government.

There's quite a discrepancy among the provinces as to how we should proceed. Quebec says that they shouldn't be able to charge any more than 35%. The Criminal Code says 60%. Ontario is not satisfied that the provinces should have a patchwork quilt, and so at the present time, we are monitoring what happens in the federal government with the federal bill because that has to pass before the provinces take responsibility for the interest charges.

Once that happens, then we will have the green light to proceed to discuss with the provinces whether we go with one single rate, which is what Ontario is suggesting. Nova Scotia, Manitoba - there are a number of different bills that are in progress. But you're right. The federal government has the responsibility at the present time for the usury clause of the Criminal Code.

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

#### ***New Police Act (further)***

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

I'm amazed that a minister can get up and know the tendering cost of the bridge, who's doing the bridge, when the bridge is going to be done and all those details, but the Attorney General doesn't know if she met with municipal leaders or not over an important bill. I cannot understand it that such details are known by one minister and another minister doesn't know if meetings were being held.

In the meeting you had with the union, Madam Minister, what commitments did you make to the union, you and your Premier, at that meeting? What commitments did you make to the union at that time?

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

and Attorney General.

**Ms. Dover:** First of all, Mr. Speaker, I want to refresh the hon. member.

He obviously wasn't listening when I was answering his question beforehand. I told him that I personally did not meet with the municipal leaders. He didn't hear that, I guess. In relation to the meeting that the Premier and I had, we certainly told them that we had heard their concerns and we would consider them when the bill was being enacted. That's all we committed to, from my memory. We did consider what they had asked for.

But I think the public is certainly asking for a new police act and certainly also looking for some kind of surveillance or, if you like, oversight. I know that some of the people are not pleased with an oversight clause, but it certainly has been my understanding that it's something that the hon. member himself was looking for. So I'd be surprised if he's not still of that opinion because otherwise that would suggest some kind of a flip-flop.

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

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

**Mr. R. Brown:** Mr. Speaker, I remember what I commit to, unlike this minister who doesn't even know if she met with the mayors of the municipalities or not, didn't even know her staff met with them, but the minister of transportation knows how many bolts are on the bridge. Quite a thing, Mr. Speaker.

Now I want to get it clear here. You and the Premier met with the union, PANS, and with the police association, okay? You're telling this House at that meeting there were no commitments made to those two bodies that legislation would be given to them before it

was tabled in this House. You're telling me today - now, remember now, these are police officers you met with, they're pretty good at taking notes. Now are you saying you and the Premier did not commit to tabling this legislation with those two unions, with the PANS union and with the police association of Prince Edward Island, before you tabled it in the House?

**Ms. Bertram:** Good question.

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

**Ms. Dover:** Mr. Speaker, the purpose of laying a bill on the table is to allow for people to come and read it and see what's there.

I know that there's certainly no secret that this bill has been worked on for a long time. It certainly has been available. I know that my staff made it available to anyone who is looking for input into it or anyone who wanted to see it. It's not as though it was done behind closed doors as a secret. It's been well known and certainly lots of opportunity provided for anyone who is interested in the legislation.

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

**Mr. R. Brown:** I'm getting back to that meeting you had in July with the PANS association, with the police association, and with the police union, okay?

You and the Premier, they gave a presentation to you. You made a commitment. They're telling me you made a commitment, you and the Premier, that you would give them this bill before it was tabled in the House. So are you telling me that those two bodies had a copy of this bill? Also, did the police chief have a copy of the bill before it was presented to this House?

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

**Ms. Dover:** Mr. Speaker, the final bill as it was presented to the House, I'm not sure if they saw that specific piece of legislation.

Because even at the last minute there were some minor grammatical changes, there were some minor changes to it. So did they see the final bill? As I said, my assistant, Ellie Reddin, will be here later on this afternoon. She'll be able to make a comment on just who was consulted. But as I said, it was not a secret. It's certainly been in the works for a long time, even during the years before I became Attorney General. So everybody had, as far as I know, a chance to provide input into it and, certainly, their comments were taken into consideration for the most part, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

You and the Premier met. Now I'm just going to make it a simple question. You made a commitment. Up to that point in time, PANS and the police association did not have access to the bill. You're saying today they had access to the bill and they had full input into the bill and they knew what each and every draft was going by. You're telling this House today that they had that input. Now I know the police chiefs' association had it, but I'm asking about the police association and the police union which made a presentation to you and the Premier.

You and the Premier made a commitment - not your staff - you and the Premier made a commitment that nothing would come forward until they would be further consulted and before the final draft of the bill would be presented in this Legislature,

that you would be giving it to them. Did you give - and it's your commitment, not your staff's commitment. It was you and the Premier's commitment to these organizations. So did you follow through on that commitment that you and the Premier made and give them a final draft of the bill before it was presented in this House?

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

**Ms. Dover:** Mr. Speaker, the idea that every person read every section of this bill would be rather difficult to comment on.

The bill has 50-some pages, it seems to me. But as I said, there was certainly lots of opportunity for input. The bill is currently on the Table. It will be debated on this floor. There'll certainly be opportunity continuing for input as there was previous to this. But we have been committed to this bill. Our government has been committed to it. It's my understanding that the hon. member has been looking for this bill for a long time. So it certainly is something that has been asked for. We've been pushed as a government to bring it forward. I'm very pleased, and most people are very pleased, that the bill is here. It's surprising that the hon. member would try and somehow stain the work that has been presented and seem to object or oppose what he's been looking for all along.

**Speaker:** Final question.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Kings Square.

**Mr. R. Brown:** Mr. Speaker, as I said to the media yesterday, I'm in support of the bill.

I'm in support of the bill, I'm in support of the concept. But I talked to the police association and policemen since this bill has been tabled. They have a lot of good questions they've been asking about this

bill, and they haven't even seen it. Like they're saying: Is there a standard training procedure? Are officers going to have training available for them to keep up to the requirements of this bill? That's a good question. I didn't read it here. Right now, this government, before this government came into operation, police officers on Prince Edward Island could get free training and upgrading at the academy. Now they have to pay \$500 a course and, you know, they have a lot of concerns here.

I want to see this act go through, but I want to see the best act go through, both for the police officers of this province and for the public, because it's a two-way street here. What I understand, this minister has brought this bill forward, hasn't consulted with the police association on a bill by bill basis. She made commitments to them that she didn't follow up. They're just asking me: How can we trust this minister if she and the Premier can make statements at meetings and not follow through?

**Some Hon. Members:** Question.

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

**Mr. R. Brown:** So I'm asking the minister: Has she taken all of their concerns in? How many bills has she given back to the police association and to the police union since her meeting in July? How many bills have they received back and forth?

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

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

**Ms. Dover:** Mr. Speaker, first of all, I'd like to comment on the fact that the charges that Holland College places on courses related to the police academy I don't dictate, that's their responsibility.

As I said, I believe this is draft number 41. We can't satisfy everybody in relation to what is put in a bill. I know that there's some concern about the oversight clause, but the general public, I think, will be very satisfied to know that we have placed into the bill an oversight clause. As I said, not everybody is pleased with that section of it but this is something that our government has the courage to put forward, has the intestinal stamina to put forward. We recognize what the public is looking for.

The police associations and all the people who were consulted, when you consider 41 drafts, have been pleased for the most part with the bill. I think that it's something that will go a long time to the credit of this government for bringing that bill forward.

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

**Speaker:** End of Question Period.

Statements by Ministers

**Speaker:** Beginning with the hon. Premier.

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

I will be leaving the House for a short time this afternoon to attend the annual appreciation reception for provincial government employees who have so generously donated to United Way.

I'm pleased to advise that the campaign in the provincial government service raised over \$125,000 this year through the employee campaign. It is the most successful campaign ever. The chair, Sandy Stewart, along with his committee, have done an exceptional job in carrying out this campaign.

We're proud of the way the public service supports the United Way. I hope that all members would want to congratulate our

employees for not only meeting but surpassing their goal of \$120,000, and for the support that provides to Islanders who need it most.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

I, too, would like to congratulate all the provincial government employees, and especially the chair, Sandy Stewart. Raising that kind of money for the United Way is a clear indication of the devotion that Islanders have, and our government employees have, here in Prince Edward Island for voluntarism, for charities. I think it's a great indication of the society that we live in. I'd like to congratulate all the donors. I'd like to congratulate all the organizers for this year's campaign.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**Ms. Dover:** Mr. Speaker, during Tabling of Documents, I will be tabling a summary of our recent progress to improve student achievement in our province.

The report highlights the work that has been done by the department, school boards and teachers to implement the recommendations of the Premier's Task Force on Student Achievement.

If you recall, there was great interest in this report when it was released in January of

this year.

One of the recommendations of the task force was that government monitor the implementation of the recommendations and report to the Legislature within two years about its progress.

In response, I asked my staff to provide me with a progress report at least twice a year. Today, I am pleased to share the highlights of their first report.

I am very pleased with the huge volume of excellent work that has been accomplished in a very short time.

In the April budget, government announced \$9 million over three years to support this work, with \$1 million to be made available this budget year.

This meant that plans had to be made quickly and staff assigned before the new school year began in September.

I think you'll see from the report that staff certainly rose to this challenge.

Among the highlights of their work are the following:

the development of a comprehensive framework that identifies the work that needs to be done and the resources that will be required to ensure that children are reading at a grade 3 level by the end of grade 3;

Early Literacy Mentors have been hired and they are now working with elementary schools to improve early literacy among students in grades 1 to 3;

intensive interventions are being tested to identify and assist children with learning difficulties as early as possible;

school psychologists have been hired to assess children with learning difficulties;

three new assessment specialists are in place. They are teachers who will be working with teachers to develop and administer common assessments this year in grade 3 literacy and grade 9 math;

new curriculum, standards and benchmarks are being developed in several areas;

a provincial strategy has been proposed to engage more parents in their children's learning;

new grants have been made available to promote family literacy;

a provincial committee has been formed to review our high school scheduling model and make recommendations to me by the fall of 2007.

These are only a few of the many activities underway to improve student achievement.

I would like to commend our staff for this excellent work and we look forward with interest to their continued success.

Mr. Speaker, I will be tabling these reports during Tabling of Documents.

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

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

I would like to respond to the minister. There are some changes taking place where we are seeing the literacy specialist in the system this year. A few have been hired. We are seeing a few more school psychologists hired. But we're just making a dent into the necessities of what is necessary in the front line services of classrooms on Prince Edward Island.

I hope that the document that the minister is going to be tabling - when you look at the fiscal budget of 2006-2007 where it talks about the task force recommendations and \$560,000 that was going to be spent on the implementation - that those costs are analysed in this tabled document, that it's broken down and we can see where the money is going.

It is important that this money is reaching the children, it's reaching front line services. To my knowledge, when we met with a member of the minister's staff, they are clustering these areas of student achievement into early learning and literacy, under student engagement, under curriculum and assessment, and the list goes on.

However, when we listened to the presentation, I was glad to have the presentation, but I don't see the concrete front line services that are needed to improve learning here on Prince Edward Island and to support learning here on Prince Edward Island. We need to support our children, support our students, support our teachers and staff in our system. Supporting parents, as well.

Words are a great thing. We can speak here today, we can put things on paper, but what we need is action, and action for our children. I need to see a better commitment from this government.

As I said, there is a dent being made. There is a little bit of improvement being made. I will not say that there are no improvements, but we need to do a lot more. Every year that we wait in showing that action our children are lagging behind.

Because we have children in our system that have learning disabilities. We have so many children in our system who are not being serviced - if we want to use the word serviced - by key professionals that should

be helping them, to engage them, and help them be engaged, and true partnership with all staff that are working in the system.

I hope that the tabled document will give further breakdown analysis of this \$560,000 that the government is putting aside. Because if not, we will have many questions on the opposition side to see where this money is being spent.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

As Minister of Tourism, I'd like to rise to inform members of the House that *Condé Nast Traveler* magazine designated Prince Edward Island as one of the top ten North American Islands in the world, in their "Best of the Best" 2006 Readers Choice Awards.

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

**Mr. P. Brown:** The Island was ranked alongside Martha's Vineyard, Nantucket, and San Juan Islands, just to name a few.

*Condé Nast Traveler* magazine provides travellers around the globe with current travel information and trends. Their web site is linked to many upscale publications such as *Gourmet*, *Vanity Fair*, *Golf World*, *Golf Digest*, numerous bridal guides, and the *New Yorker* magazine, as well as others. *Condé Nast Traveler*, with a customer base around the world, promises in its mandate to not only inform readers, but to ignite and nourish their passion for a myriad of aspects in life.

Capturing this type of attention by an avid travel enthusiast in such an important travel magazine is a source of pride for everyone involved in the tourism industry on Prince Edward Island. In order to be truly

successful in this highly competitive industry you must please your customer, and this recognition proves that we are doing just that.

When determining their islands of choice, readers were asked to rank different activities, beaches, friendliness, lodging, restaurants and scenery. Personal recommendations, such as those relayed through readers' choice awards, are intensely valuable as a marketing tool and will provide our province with heightened interest in coming months through the distribution of the magazine and media attention surrounding the awards.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the many people who work in our tourism industry for their part in this very notable success. The readers of *Condé Nast Traveler* have obviously been treated well when visiting Prince Edward Island and their votes have provided us with the opportunity to boast that we are one of the top ten islands in North America.

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

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

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

Just in response to the minister, certainly it's nice to hear that there is recognition from this magazine as PEI being a destination of choice for islands. However, I hope that Grey Worldwide - or maybe it's obvious from this award that Grey Worldwide chose perhaps a different theme campaign for their advertising in this magazine, reaching its readers. Last session I brought up *Harrowsmith* magazine, and perhaps the advertising that was listed in *Harrowsmith* magazine was reaching the messages of - the readers' gardening magazine.

If we look at the media recommendations from Tourism PEI and the breakdown of the cost analysis for magazines, we're not spending - it's a drop in the bucket what we're spending on magazine allowance for media. We're spending, I would say, from this tabled document from the minister, less than half a million dollars on media in terms of magazines. I think this is an area that we should be looking at to increase our budget allowance in this area, getting the word out.

But it's quality. We can put as many advertisements as we want in these magazines but it's important, it's imperative, that the message reaches its readers and its readable. I've brought up these concerns in the past. I hope for the upcoming tourist season that the minister, the council, and members of his staff look to a campaign that really focuses on the true Island beauty and increasing tourism numbers here on Prince Edward Island for next year.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Presenting and Receiving Petitions

#### Tabling of Documents

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

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

I beg leave to table a document here, seconded by the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Kings Square, outlining what a senior has to show to government before they can receive long-term care in this province.

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

**Ms. Dover:** Mr. Speaker, by Command of Her Honour the Lieutenant-Governor, I beg leave to table the Student Achievement Action Plan Progress Report and I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Energy, Environment and Forestry, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

**Speaker:** Shall it carry?

**Some Hon. Members:** Carried.

#### Reports by Committees

**Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Dunn:** Mr. Speaker, as Chairman of the Committee of Committees, I beg leave to introduce a report of the said committee and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Glen Stewart-Bellevue Cove, that the same be now received and do lie on the Table.

**Speaker:** Shall it carry?

**Some Hon. Members:** Carried.

**Mr. Dunn:** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Glen Stewart-Bellevue Cove, that the report of the committee be adopted. Your committee has recommended that the composition of the various standing committees of this House remain unchanged from the Third Session of the 62<sup>nd</sup> General Assembly.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** Shall that last one carry?

**Some Hon. Members:** Yes.

#### 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 Income 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 Income Tax Act*, Bill No. 12, read a First Time.

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

**Mr. Murphy:** Mr. Speaker, the amendments to this bill seek to do a couple of things.

One is to enable the province to establish a young child tax credit which passes on the universal child care benefit. The second is it provides an amendment to the dividends tax credit, and that's in keeping with some changes that were introduced in the 2006 federal Budget. Section 3 also deals with young child tax credit as does section 4. So those are the substantive parts of the bill.

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

**Mr. Ballem:** Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce a Bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Environmental Protection Act* and I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Tourism, 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 Environmental Protection Act*, Bill No. 11, read a First Time.

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of

Environment, Energy and Forestry.

**Mr. Ballem:** Mr. Speaker, this allows for a provision that in an order a person must meet with the department representative before cleaning up a contamination.

The second part will allow for an alteration of a watercourse or wetland by license as opposed to always being done by permit.

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

**Ms. Shea:** Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce a Bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Off-Highway Vehicle Act* and I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Environment, Energy and Forestry, 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 Off-Highway Vehicle Act*, Bill No. 13, read a First Time.

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

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

This bill pertains to ATV legislation. It allows for the seizure of ATVs for violation of the act. It also amends a penalty for violations of the act. It also is enabling legislation for changes to regulations involving ATVs.

#### Government Motions

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

**Mr. Murphy:** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Government House Leader, that Motion 19 be now read.

**Speaker:** Shall it carry?

**Some Hon. Members:** Carried.

**Clerk:** Motion No. 19.

The hon. Minister of Transportation and Public Works moves, seconded by the hon. Member from Morell-Fortune Bay, the following motion:

**WHEREAS** on Prince Edward Island there are many community organizations which strive to advance matters of interest, importance and equality to Island women;

**AND WHEREAS** the work of these organizations add value to the discussion about ways to improve the social, economic and legal position of women in Island society;

**AND WHEREAS** projects and research activities done by these organizations support that goal and add positively to the dialogue on women's issues;

**AND WHEREAS** some of the areas in which work has been undertaken on Prince Edward Island include family violence prevention, parental benefits, legal aid, and issues relating to women in the Aboriginal and Francophone communities;

**AND WHEREAS** funding assistance through Status of Women Canada is critical to enable these types of projects to be completed;

**AND WHEREAS** recently announced changes to the terms and conditions for funding from Status of Women Canada have raised concerns that projects which have previously received funding support will no longer be eligible;

**AND WHEREAS** continued financial support for worthy projects and research is

necessary to help sustain progress achieved to date;

**AND WHEREAS** the province has raised this issue with the federal government to make sure there is awareness of adverse impacts that this decision will have upon Island women;

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that this Assembly express its continued support for the research and project work undertaken by various community organizations to advance women's equality on Prince Edward Island;

**THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that this Assembly call upon the Government of Canada to commit to ensure that important research and projects are able to continue to benefit Island women.

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

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

Unlike other resolutions, it's certainly not with any pleasure I rise to move this resolution, but unfortunately it is necessary.

First of all, I'll try to clarify the number of women's groups that are in the province and the funding that they currently receive.

The Advisory Council on the Status of Women receives core funding through the provincial government, as does the Transition House Association and the Rape and Sexual Assault Crisis Centre. Transition House Association also funnels some of that funding to the various out-reach groups in Prince County, Queens and Kings County which provide out-reach services to victims of family domestic violence.

There are a couple of groups such as Women's Network, the East Prince Women's Information Centre and possibly some that don't come to mind right now, who do not receive any core funding but rely on project funding to take care of their day to day costs of operation.

The cuts made by Status of Women Canada was \$5 million, and we've been assured that the \$5 million would be cut completely out of the administrative budget, the Status of Women Canada.

Now, the Status of Women Canada had one employee, one person, an administrative officer on Prince Edward Island. This position has been vacant for more than a year. So as far as the \$5 million affecting the province of PEI, we're not going to see any difference because we only had one position that was vacant anyway.

There was some concern that cuts to the administration would lead to loss of the regional office in Moncton. I did get confirmation today from Minister Oda's office that the regional Status of Women office in Moncton will be maintained. So that's good news.

I don't have a problem with making changes to administration. What I do have a problem with is making changes to front line services.

The criteria around how a group will be able to access program funding seems to be the problem. There's been no reduction in the amount of money that will flow through to program funding, but what actually will be funded seems to be still unclear.

I have written to Minister Oda with my concerns. I know the Premier has spoken to the prime minister on this issue. I expect that the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women will be - we're hoping to have a

conference call at some point in time and we hope that's going to happen very soon.

Awaiting clarification on the criteria would probably clear up a lot of the, I guess, unknowns that are out there as to exactly what will be funded. Some of the projects in the past that have been funded include work on maternity and parental benefits. That's something that's enjoyed by many young parents now. They're allowed to stay at home for the first year of their child's life, which is so very important. A lot of that work was done by women's groups. There currently is some research going on to extend that to women who are self employed or women who are stay-at-home mothers and do part-time work from home.

There's also a project that was being worked on by the East Prince Women's Information Centre that was to do with addiction by prescription. We do have a big problem in this province with many people becoming addicted to prescription drugs. The East Prince Women's Information Centre had received funding through Status of Women Canada and through Health Canada, I believe, to do some work around this problem to see if we could not improve the situation.

There's also some work being done on family legal aid. When I speak with women across the province who are in need of legal aid or legal advice, they find it very difficult to get it, and that is if they can afford it. I know their legal aid offices are booked. They work very hard to try and provide as much service as they can.

We have a group that works with the Aboriginal community Marilyn Sark heads up and does some really good work with women in that community, and we have a group of Francophone Acadian women who do work in the French community on PEI. They also access funding through Status of

Women Canada for various projects.

So I guess until we know for certain what is not going to be funded or what is going to be funded - the press release that was put out by Status of Women Canada (Indistinct) changes to their criteria was not very clear, I guess, as to what might no longer be funded.

So I support this resolution. It's my pleasure to move the resolution and call upon the Assembly to call upon the Government of Canada to make a commitment to ensure that important projects such as these continue to benefit the women on PEI.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

I am very pleased to be seconding this important motion. Before I get into the content of my speech, I'd get people to think a little bit about who we're really talking about and the kind of contribution many women actually make on a daily basis as well as the organizations that we're talking about.

For me, often I think about my own mother and my two grandmothers. My two grandmothers both were midwives here in the province back in the days where there were not a lot of formal organizations to do the kinds of work that we're lucky enough to have the Status of Women to do today.

Both of these grandmothers of mine actually delivered many of the babies in Kings County, which means there would be a really big connection to a lot of their valuable work. Other than delivering babies, these women often helped people that were

in violent situations or situations of poverty where they had absolutely no money.

I remember one time attending a course at university back in the late 1980s period. A professor I had by the name of Professor Joanne Veer, who was a great history professor, worked really hard to introduce a course on women in history. I couldn't believe at the time in the late 1980s she was having such a difficult time to have a course that would concentrate on the contribution women made over the years.

Often we can think of things that have happened that were really important to us as we start to think about our mothers. One of the exercises Joanne Veer used to get us to do was to actually think of your mother's name, your mother's maiden name, her mother's maiden name, and go back about three periods of time. Then do the same thing with their fathers.

What happens is we quickly can't remember way back on the mother's lineage, but we certainly can on the father's. I remember my grandmother, Bessie Crane, who was a great midwife and did all kinds of community work. Unfortunately, at the time of her death her obituary actually read about Mrs. Ward Crane and gave all the attention to my grandfather who happened to be a famous fiddle player. Yet, she was the one that went door to door delivering babies. In those days a lot of the babies that were born to unwed mothers, no one would attend to them.

When you think about where we're at today around the work that a lot of our organizations continue to do, sometimes we get asked the question: Do we still need people out there fighting for women's rights?

A few weeks ago I was talking on the telephone to my mother-in-law, Shirley. She reminded me that it was in her time when

she was allowed to vote for the first time because of her husband. She wasn't married all that long ago.

Personally, I remember when I worked at the correctional centre in the 1980s. At that time it was still a struggle whether or not everybody accepted women working in a jail system. There was one particular guy that had an issue with this. Every time you'd come into the staff room you'd see a little note on the bulletin board that wouldn't be signed, but everybody knew the author. He put things like: Women don't belong in the system, women should be home, you name it. That was as recent as the 1980s.

I've been lucky enough over the years to be able to work with Aboriginal communities, especially women in PEI, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and into Quebec. My daughters have good friends, of course, from the (Indistinct) community where there's a lot of Aboriginal people live in Scotchfort and in Morell Rear. I can remember one night when one of my older daughters came home, because she had been at a dance with one of the local girls from the Abegweit community, and she couldn't believe what was yelled at both her and the young woman simply because her friend was Aboriginal. These kind of slurs weren't only racial. There were other slurs as well.

I guess when the minister decided to bring this motion in we can start to think of all the great work that a variety of different people put together because of all the work that is yet to be done.

When I think of the Status of Women, one of the things - I don't know if anybody was watching t.v. this week. It may have been on Monday evening. There was a school in Montague that had a guest speaker, a young woman who lost her mom to violence. Her dad had murdered the mother. It left such a lasting impression. Because when you think

of your own kids when they're eight and nine years old and how happy you are about the kind of things you can do as a family, I couldn't imagine for a minute this particular young girl. She described how she had to raise her two brothers. The memories she must have, and the daily things she needs to endure.

One of the things that our (Indistinct) government has done that I think is really important was to include a lot of work around violence and to keep the issue of family violence front and centre. We're soon going to be coming up to the anniversary on December 6<sup>th</sup> of 1989, 17 years ago, when 14 women were murdered in Montreal because they were women.

Often sometimes what happens when there's a crisis people feel really badly at the time when something happens for a minute. But the work that a number of the women's groups do, they do it for everybody and they do it every day.

The other part too, I can remember my mom had a friend around the time that women when they got married, if they had no property from the time they got married, especially in the area of family farms, that they were often left upon divorce in extreme poverty. I remember one time mom and some of her friends talking about a famous case of a farm lady who actually, when her husband divorced her, was so extremely poor and fought in the court system for rights of property. That's not that long ago.

The other part, when you think of the work that the Status of Women and other women's groups do too, not only in terms of whether it's Anderson House, Queen's County Outreach, West Prince, East Prince Family Violence, across the province, you can see that the work of these groups touches everybody.

Last week in the paper, I believe it was, it talked about another case. It was a group of young women who thought they were only participating in a publicity event around the swimsuit at one of the local bars in the summer. Unfortunately, unbeknownst to them, it ended up someone was taking pictures and the next thing you knew they were part of the wild girls whatever this is across the Internet. You can see that there's still a lot of work to be done in a variety of different ways to protect women and girls.

Another area is certainly violence against even young girls. I had a stat here that I think was actually sent around to most provincial government people. It talked about: Girls between the ages of 12 and 18 are the most abused group of people in the world. Canadian children and young people under the age of 17 accounted for 61% of sexual assault cases reported to the police. This has a lot to do with the work that many women's groups are really still concerned about and try to make a difference, not just on one day demonstrations, but every day.

Between 40% and 80% of female children and adolescents with developmental disabilities may experience sexual abuse. Almost 90% of the abuse of persons with disabilities occur in the family home. In Canada up to 75% of Aboriginal girls under the age of 18 have been sexually assaulted. It goes on and on and gets into lots of notes around poverty issues, immigrant girls as well, or for children with different sexual orientation.

I guess when it comes down to it, often we try to sometimes forget and think that all the important work has been done and there's not a lot of things that still need to be done. But often in my lifetime I think about the women that used to work with me in fish plants. It's interesting how times have changed. At one time, it was really hard to work in a fish plant because of things that

used to constantly happen. Sometimes it was just issues around the difference of pay. You could be working next to a person, who may be male, doing the same job - this is in the 1970s I'm referring to - and the rate of pay was different.

Also, sometimes what happens at some work sites is still the kinds of abuse that women have to take, whether it's poor language or other kinds of innuendo. I'm really happy that we have women's groups out there that continue on a daily basis to lead the charge of continuing to say: We need to make more changes.

I think I'll conclude my comments with that, and I'm very pleased to second this motion brought in by our hon. minister.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Speaker:** Any other speakers to this motion?

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Kings Square.

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

This is a very important motion. I think that this Legislature should support the motion. I do have a number of shelters in my district. I can tell you that the work of these shelters is extremely important. I've worked with the Status of Women. I can tell you how important this organization is to not only Prince Edward Island, but to all Canadians.

I was extremely disappointed when the federal government cut funding to the Status of Women. They just shoved them off as no longer significant in our society. No longer does the federal government want to hear from advocacy groups. They're no longer needed. That was a sad day for these

organizations. I think that we have to and we must ensure that the federal government restore this funding to the Status of Women.

**An Hon. Member:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. R. Brown:** It's nice to have a nice motion that the Assembly calls upon the Government of Canada (Indistinct) to commit to ensure that important research and projects are able to continue to benefit Island women. That does not go far enough.

Let's make one thing clear. You need money. You need money to do research. You need money to do projects. They don't happen without it. That's why I'm calling upon the federal government to restore this funding. The projects that were done through these organizations benefitted a lot of women in our society.

I bet dollars to doughnuts that if it was not for the Status of Women and their organizations we wouldn't have the equality that we have today in this country. I think we owe it to that organization that we continue to support it fully. After all, they speak for a very large portion of the population. I'm not quite accurate, but I think it's more than 50% of the population.

I also think without the Status of Women organizations we would not have the centres we have now in Charlottetown and across the country, i.e., the shelters for abused women. It came out of these organizations and their fortitude to speak out on important issues. Before this organization it was taboo that women would speak out. This organization gave protection to women in this area. It was a collective body that said: Look, together we can do bigger and better things, we do not have to sit and take it anymore. This is the type of organization that allowed that to happen. Before that there was no formal organization that women had to go to.

That's why I think we should change this motion. Let's put it where it is.

"Therefore be it resolved that this Assembly call upon the Government of Canada to commit to ensure that important research and projects are able to continue to benefit Island women." Great, I think that's a great thing. We're missing one thing.

I want to move, seconded by the Leader of the Opposition: Therefore be it resolved that this Assembly call upon the Government of Canada to restore funding levels to the Status of Women organizations in this country.

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

**Mr. R. Brown:** They have to have - will that be now read or -

**Speaker:** He moves and seconds (Indistinct) Charlie?

(Indistinct) speak to your amendment.

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

I'm going to support the motion. I think the motion is great. But I think it lacks the most important part of what we're trying to accomplish here. I think it lacks the funding and the commitment of the federal government towards this organization.

I watched Question Period quite a bit in the House of Commons and to tell you, I was extremely disappointed some times on the answers to some of the questions from the Harper government concerning this organization. They've basically said: This organization is no longer needed, it's an advocacy group that basically tortures governments to do certain things, and we don't want that any more because we're going to move on and we're going to get

things done, we're going to use their money that we gave to them to cost programs.

With a \$13 billion surplus left from the Liberal government, surely they could keep this funding level ahead. It's not about the funding levels with the Harper government. It's not being challenged. Not unlike this government. Anyone that challenges them, they will change legislation in order for the challenge to go away. We've seen it a number of times in human rights' acts.

We have to have organizations like the Status of Women to look after federal government policy and provincial government policy. This is the organization that takes the information that's coming out of the federal government concerning women issues, looks at it - they have researchers in their offices - and they say; IS this going to fit with us or not going to fit us? Is this going to improve the lives of women in Canada. That's what they do with this money. They look at federal government proposals each and every day, and there's lots of them. They look at programs, they consult with people. They are an independent body outside of government, and maybe that's the problem. Maybe the Harper government doesn't want that anymore. They want a bunch of their own running around the country coming back with reports to them: Look, you're doing a wonderful and great job. We're an independent organization funded like the Fraser Institute and we think you guys are doing a wonderful job and there's no need for changes.

That's not what I want. I want independent bodies out there challenging government. Members will probably be getting up and say that's the job of the opposition. Maybe it is, but the opposition cannot be involved in every issue and these organizations - I've known a lot of people that worked with the Status of Women on Prince Edward Island.

Matter of fact, they were on the first floor of the Jones Building for awhile. They work extremely hard. Let's make no mistake about it. This organizations works extremely hard for women on Prince Edward Island. The federal organization works extremely hard for women of Canada. But they cannot do this work for free.

We cannot as a government or as a society expect them to do this for free. After all, we're not doing what we're doing today for free, so why would we expect them to do it for free. Or why do we expect them to go out and fundraise through different organizations. Because if we make them do that as in other advocacy groups, they will be spending most of their time fundraising and a lot less time on the issues that they're supposed to be discussing. Why do we want these organizations spending so much time, 50 to 60% of their time, out fundraising in order to support their efforts?

I think that's wrong, I think we as a provincial government and as the federal government owe it to these organizations to contribute to their well being. Especially in terms when you look at the fiscal update that the federal government has in place. Billions upon billions are coming in over the next few years. There is no excuse whatsoever for this federal government to cut funding to these organizations. This is just outright meanness when it comes right down to it. It's just a put your head in the sand and we're not going to listen to any groups with this. We will just cut their funding so we'll have no opposition in this country, we will have no advocacy groups in this country.

Just to think about all the good law that has been defended in this country with the court challenges program out of the federal government. This program which was supported by the Status of Women has also been cut. This was a program that women used a substantial amount of times,



especially when it comes to Charter of Rights issues. This government or the federal government, with the support of the provincial government if this resolution doesn't pass, the amendment, is in support of that. Is in support of cutting funding to these vital programs that allow the underprivileged to challenge the federal government in court.

We're unlike the Americans where you have big organizations allowing all kinds of money coming in for this type of thing. But I think even the federal government of the US has a program court challenges with the NCAW. But if we're so scared of the laws that we're creating that we don't want anyone to challenge them and when - I know the members are going to be getting up here in a few minutes and saying: No, anybody can challenge anything at any time.

All we have to look at is the eleven individuals that have been tortured for the last ten years by this provincial government in terms of court challenges. Some of them have even gone bankrupt. But you know what? This Legislature owes a tremendous thanks to those eleven individuals. This Legislature owes a tremendous thanks to the women across this country and across North America that have taken (Indistinct). Just to think, if Rosa Parks didn't have the national organizations behind them to back them up when such important issues were put forward in the United States. What would have happened to these organizations if - these organizations like the Status of Women and the equivalent in the United States - did not come to their calling. What would have happened to Rosa Parks? She would have been dealt a bad deal and put aside. But that's when people come together, when human rights are suffering.

For this federal government to cut the funding to this very vital organization and

the very vital court actions, the court challenges program, is a government of tyrants, as was stated sometimes in the Supreme Court of our own Island when it comes to a government trying to eliminate human rights on people.

If these members really believe in this resolution and really believe in its contents, as I do, and as I think it's great whereas, great therefore, but we're missing the main component of it. I don't think we should put the Status of Women through the hoops and loops of now having to set up a fundraising organization, half of them spending their time fundraising instead of looking at the important issues of women in this country.

So I ask each and every member in this Legislature to vote for this amendment. Let's show a little courage here, let's show a little backbone here when it comes to the federal government. Because rest assured, if this was last year there would be resolutions on the floor of this Legislature condemning a federal government. Let's not make a mistake here. I sat through the last three years in this House, and if the federal government cut one nickel from a program there was a resolution on this floor condemning the federal government. So if we really believe in what we're saying in this Legislature, and if we're really going to be standing behind the women of Prince Edward Island, the women of Canada, we will support this resolution. Let's put our own political appointments aside. I know there's a lot of members looking for federal political appointments at this time. Let's put them aside.

One of your high praised guys from the Premier's office is going to the Atlantic conservative opportunities agency. So let's make no bones about it. You're really looking for appointments. He made his own announcement.

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

**Speaker:** Hon. member.

**Mr. R. Brown:** Atlantic conservative opportunities agency, made his own appointment in the paper, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Dunn:** You said a member of the House.

**Mr. R. Brown:** Well, he may as well be sitting in here, he's controlling you all anyways.

Mr. Speaker, so this is your time, this is your time to stand up and be counted. If it was a Liberal government there you guys would be up in arms complaining about this. I cannot see this resolution not receiving every vote in this House because this amendment is putting the real meat to this resolution. This amendment is putting the backbone in this organization. You cut its funding you cut its backbone, and that's why I want each and every member to stand on this amendment and support women in Canada, the Status of Women.

We're going to say to them: We think your work is great, we think what you're doing is great. You have advocated, you have made a tremendous amount of social changes in this country. You put families first, you put children first. We're going to stand behind you and we're going to ask the federal government to support this motion. We're going to ask the federal government to restore funding to this organization because we feel it's the right thing to do. We feel that these organizations are looking out for the best interest of Islanders and of Canadians. This organization is the main voice of families. So if you really believe in families and the family values there, you would vote for this resolution.

So I cannot believe anybody that is going to

get up and vote against this resolution. So I look forward to a unanimous vote on this amendment. Let's show some backbone in this Legislature for once in awhile with this new federal Conservative government and let some of us stand up against them and say: Yes, restore the funding.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Speaker:** To speak to the amendment, the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

I believe I'm the seconder to the amendment. It's my pleasure to stand up in support of the amendment. I think it's important to realize that even though we would like to believe that we live in an equal society today, I think the facts speak for themselves. I understand that women make up 52% of our population. They earn perhaps 70% of what men earn on a regular basis. They account, I believe in the federal parliament, for 19% of the MPs. I believe here on Prince Edward Island we're somewhere around the same mark. I think it's important that we support organizations like the Status of Women who are there to promote equality and make sure that they're there to represent those people that need representation.

I agree wholeheartedly with this motion. I think it's a very good motion and I congratulate the minister of transportation and the hon. member from Morell. I've read the motion now in quite detail. I must say that the point that the motion is trying to make is the exact correct point. But at the same time the teeth to the motion are not there. I think that the amendment introduced by the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Kings Square will really add teeth to this

motion. Make sure that the federal government knows that the people of Prince Edward Island, that the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Prince Edward Island, was not happy when this Prime Minister Stephen Harper made the cut to the Status of Women in this country.

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

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

**Leader of the Opposition:** I just want to read the fourth whereas, the one that I agree with most: "And whereas some of the areas in which" - and, Mr. Speaker, I really take offense with the hon. Member from Alberton-Miminegash when we're talking -

**Mr. Dunn:** (Indistinct) the amendment.

**Leader of the Opposition:** - on such an important motion and an important amendment to the motion, that he would stand over there and continue to chirp when we're talking about equality for women in this country.

I find it quite unfortunate that he continues to do it as I try, Mr. Speaker, to support the motion, which I congratulated the hon. Minister of Transportation and Public Works for, where I congratulated the hon. member from Morell. Support them on adding more teeth to this motion.

The whereas that I think that I agree with the most: "And whereas some of the areas in which work has been undertaken on Prince Edward Island include family violence prevention, parental benefits, legal aid, and issues relating to women in the Aboriginal and Francophone communities" -

**Speaker:** Hon. member, you're right off the amendment there.

So you want to speak to the amendment.

**Leader of the Opposition:** Yes. This is why the amendment -

**Speaker:** You're not speaking to the amendment now.

**Leader of the Opposition:** Mr. Speaker, the amendment will add teeth to this motion.

This is why it's important that we ask the federal government to restore the funding that was cut. Here we have, in the Province of Prince Edward Island, too many areas that have been cut. The hon. member mentioned the court challenges program. That was a program that protected people, protected minorities in this province. That's what they did. But yet this federal government chose to cut it.

I believe that its imperative that all members of this Legislature show their support for the women of Prince Edward Island, show their support for the Status of Women here in the Province of Prince Edward Island, and tell the federal government that it's not just good enough to call upon the federal government to commit to ensure that important research and projects are able to benefit Island women, but to demand the federal government to restore the funding to the Status of Women in the Province of Prince Edward Island. If all members really want to try and make a difference here today in the Legislature, I urge each and every member to please support this amendment and then support this important motion.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Transportation and Public Works to speak to the amendment.

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

I have to rise to speak to the amendment.. First of all I guess - I don't know if there was any members of the opposition in their seats when I gave my remarks earlier, but they obviously missed something. This amendment, the way it's read, I would love to support it because I know what their intention is. But you have to understand that this was an administrative cut in a federal government department. It was a cut to administration. There was not a cut to any women's organizations of funding. What has changed is the criteria around program funding and, like I said, we're not 100% sure what will be funded and what won't be funded. The amount of money that's there for program funding has not changed. So this is a government department that's reducing its administration, which is good. If that money could be funnelled to front line services, that's even better.

I just wanted to clarify that. The way the amendment reads is: that this Assembly call upon the federal government to restore funding levels to Status of Women organizations across the country. There hasn't been any cuts to women's organizations across the country. It's a federal government department reducing their administration and working more efficiently.

So as this reads, it does not make any sense. I just wanted to clarify that, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** Speaking to the amendment, the hon. Member from Crapaud-Hazel Grove.

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

It is ridiculous to state that - these are cuts to Status of Women Canada. This is an e-mail from the Public Service Alliance of Canada and it states - and this is today it was sent: Out of 131 positions, the majority of which are held by women, 61 positions are being cut. We know that the government is setting

down 12 of the 16 regional offices in all parts of the country. We also know that some senior managers at Status of Women Canada are getting a promotion.

So, where's the direction of this Harper government in Ottawa? These members in this Legislature and this Chamber today should be supporting the amendment brought forward from the Member from Charlottetown-Kings Square. We are supporting the reinstatement of funding.

I'm further, after we get through this vote on the amendment, going to further share details and statistics with the House in regards to this program renewal that your government in Ottawa is stating. Maybe they got the terminology from you. It's called Women's Program Renewal.

So I will be supporting this amendment. If you look, we have tabled a resolution calling on the reinstatement of funding. The Status of Women of Prince Edward Island, the Advisory Council has spoke out against this, Women's Network has spoke out against this. Where's the communication from this government with the local groups and agencies?

I will further comment later on but I will be in full support, and I hope all members in this Legislature, especially of the female gender, are supporting this, because there's no reason that they are not. Because we need to support women's equality here on Prince Edward Island and in Canada.

Thank you.

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

**Speaker:** Any others to speak to the amendment?

**An Hon. Member:** Question.

**An Hon. Member:** Standing vote.

**Speaker:** The question has been called.

Standing vote.

Sergeant-at-Arms, ring the bell.

[The bells were rung]

**Speaker:** Standing vote.

All those in favour of the amendment, please rise.

**Clerk:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition, the hon. Opposition House Leader and the hon. Member from Crapaud-Hazel Grove.

**Speaker:** All those opposed, please rise.

**Some Hon. Members:** Shame, shame!

**Clerk:** The hon. Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Aquaculture, the hon. Minister of Development and Technology, the hon. Government House Leader, the hon. Minister of Tourism, the hon. Minister of Environment, Energy and Forestry, the hon. Minister of Education and Attorney General, the hon. Minister of Transportation and Public Works, the hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora, the hon. Member from Evangeline-Miscouche, the hon. Member from West Point-Bloomfield, the hon. Member from St. Eleanors-Summerside, the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Spring Park, the hon. Member from Belfast-Pownal Bay, the hon. Member from Morell-Fortune Bay, the hon. Member from Glen Stewart-Bellevue Cove and the hon. Member from Winsloe-West Royalty.

**Speaker:** Hon. members, the amendment has been defeated.

The hon. Member from Alberton-Miminegash to speak to the motion.

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

I would like to adjourn the debate for today until a later date.

**An Hon. Member:** Shame!

Orders of the Day (Government)

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

**Ms. Shea:** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Education and Attorney General, that the 10<sup>th</sup> Order of the Day be now read.

**Speaker:** Shall it carry?

**Some Hon. Members:** Carried.

**Clerk:** Order No. 10, *Police Act*, Bill No. 10, ordered for Second Reading.

**Ms. Shea:** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Education and Attorney General, that the said Bill be now read a Second Time.

**Speaker:** Shall it carry?

**Some Hon. Members:** Carried.

**Clerk:** *Police Act*, Bill No. 10, read a Second Time.

**Ms. Shea:** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Education and Attorney General, 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 Glen

Stewart-Bellevue Cove, Chairperson of Committee of the Whole.

**Chair (McKenna):** The House is now in a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration a Bill to be intituled *Police Act*.

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

**Leader of the Opposition:** Mr. Chair?

**Chair:** Yes.

**Leader of the Opposition:** I'd like to move that this bill be brought off the floor. Because yesterday when the hon. minister introduced the bill, she assured me that a briefing would be offered to myself as critic for the Attorney General in our office. Unfortunately, we haven't received any briefing yet. So therefore I move that this is brought off the floor until we're able to have that briefing, if the minister wants to live by her word.

**Ms. Dover:** Actually that's true, hon. member. I did promise that yesterday and I know that it hasn't happened yet. So I'm quite willing to agree with that and take it off the floor until you've had your briefing.

**Leader of the Opposition:** Good.

**Ms. Dover:** Mr. Chairman, I move the Speaker take the Chair, and that the Chairman report progress and beg leave to sit again.

**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 *Police Act*, I beg leave to report that the

Committee has made some progress and begs leave to sit again. I move that the report of the Committee be adopted.

**Speaker:** Shall it carry?

**Some Hon. Members:** Carried.

**Speaker:** Can I have unanimous consent of the House to revert to Government Motions?

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

#### Government Motions

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

**Mr. P. Brown:** Motion No. 19.

**Speaker:** Shall it carry?

**Some Hon. Members:** Carried.

**Speaker:** The debate had been adjourned by the Government House Leader, so anyone else to speak to the motion?

The hon. Minister of Tourism.

**Mr. P. Brown:** Mr. Speaker, I do want to rise today in support of the minister of transportation, the minister responsible for the Status of Women here on Prince Edward Island.

In support of this motion, I commend the minister and the Member from Morell-Fortune Bay for bringing this forward. Just I think maybe because some people would be wondering why the amendment was not supported. It was obviously, from what the minister said, that the amendment did not deal with the issues before us, so therefore want to affirm our government's support for this organization and affirm our government support for the efforts made on behalf of Island women.

It is always worthwhile in these types of debates to review a bit and to acknowledge from where we came on this particular subject and these types of issues. So much has been done over so many years by women in gaining equality and their place in society. There will always be the need for ongoing work because society evolves and circumstances change and there are new realities in society.

I do hear quite often people that have been around the women's movement for a long time suggesting that the people of today may not realize how difficult it was to accomplish rights and equality over the preceding number of years. When we look at things like the right to vote, which is such a part of our democratic exercise, and to think that one sector of the population had a right to exercise the vote and another sector did not, just to think about that seems so unrealistic that that could actually exist, that thinking, caring people could accept that reality. Still, that was the reality, was the reality for native people as well, here in Canada. So much work has to be done and much work has to be continued to be done. The whole area of employment equity and equity not just in position but in compensation. Changes that had to be made.

So it is important that we support the organizations that do this. I'm very appreciative of the minister calling on our Assembly to express its continued support for the research and project work undertaken by the various community groups. Too often, since becoming a member, too often as we relate to the issues of women, we are dealing with the issues that are not a very - searching for a word here - they're the issues that create a real blemish on our society. The issues of violence, of neglect, of family and poverty.

But there are so many great accomplishments, so much contribution to

Island society. I think sometimes that while those issues that have to be dealt with have to be dealt with honestly and caringly, are important in the discussion, I think sometimes we tend not to celebrate the tremendous contribution that women have made to the development of Island society and our way of life.

Being always doing this, if you think about the tremendous effort of women during the Second World War to maintain the factories and basically keep the economy of this country going during a six-year period when so many men were in Europe fighting on behalf of our country and the tremendous contribution that was made in what we would view now as normal workplace environment. At that time, women found themselves in environments and workplaces that weren't traditional to that point and time. So they shouldered the burden and kept our country moving forward during that time.

We can look through - I mean, from my own perspective I think of my mother and all of what she did raising ten children, and not in an easy time. But the amount of work that is required and the amount of contribution that was done, and from post-war, when the men returned from war - and it's not to degrade anyone, but the country reverted very quickly back to the contribution of the male for really another almost 20 years right after the war. Maybe we forgot the tremendous efforts put forward by women in our national economy.

When the war was over and things returned somewhat to normal - we lived in a period that if we honestly look at it was probably 20 years long, and it was an unrealistic period. It was the move into industrialization, it was the - really, when rural Canada moved into the city, most of the factories, most of the suburbs, most of the middle classed, if you will, evolved in

this country. There was this sense that the man got up in the morning and he went to the factory, the mother stayed home, and you had programs like *Leave it to Beaver* where such a stereotyping of roles took place for about 20 years.

Some people - and we always do this, because the time when we live we become accustomed to thinking that that is what's normal - some people assumed that that phase in their history was what is normal, what family life was supposed to look like, and what even, to go to the point, that that indeed was the way it always was. But certainly that is not the way it always was.

In Canada, especially, the women and men worked side by side, shoulder to shoulder in the development of our country. This was rough barren land that was inhabited by the Europeans in the 1500s and the 1600s and it took everyone's effort to create the civilization that we enjoy today. They worked extremely hard and they worked extremely close together. The effort was shared on the farms and in the small communities. The workload was tremendous and people worked together on it. There wasn't your job and my job and his job and her job, it was everyone's effort. Our history certainly shows that in terms of the clearing of the land and the looking after the animals, the planting of the crops, the harvesting of the crops. The pictures of the day show that as well. If you look in the history books you see pictures of men and women pitching hay and plowing fields and working on all kinds of activities together. Clearing land was very hard work physically and it was shared.

So we did kind of seem to shift in our focus, so therefore there is a need always - I think when things get out of sync there is a need for groups to gather together and to push back and to reshape our society that it's more reflective of the realities in which we all live. We see that happening today. I

know that some of my own daughters that experience freedom and a quest for life and a desire to accomplish don't always understand that others went before them to create that reality for them. I guess that is sometimes the way it is, that we live in the reality of our day and of our time and we don't always look and think necessarily to the past in terms of who made this possible for me.

But many have made it possible and many will continue to make equality of opportunity and careers and family life possible in the future. This is a shared responsibility. Today I think we have a much better understanding of this. I do not feel, Mr. Speaker, and I can only speak for myself, I do not feel that there are issues that pertain only to particular groups of society. I think these are society issues. These are the causes - if one person within the human race is not able to meet their full potential, then it's incumbent upon us all to work so that's no longer the case.

So, I believe that we all have a responsibility, these are all our issues. Family issues are all our issues. We were all children at one time. We have parents. Those are our issues, equality issues. Those are all our issues and we all have to work to accomplish those things. While there are never excuses for the past, we are able to build one accomplishment on another to achieve some of the objectives of equality. Sometimes we are concerned that progress is slow, that things don't happen, and quite often that criticism is appropriate. But we do advance and we're able to understand in a different light because of the circumstances that surround us.

If I use the situation of our Aboriginal people not having the right to vote, to think that in our mindset and in our day, we're aghast at that kind of thinking and how that situation could possibly be allowed to exist.



But I would have to believe that the people that lived at that time were good people that desired good things, that wanted equality, that were expressing themselves as they were able to understand those issues. So they weren't malicious and attempting to keep people down and deprive them of their rights. I don't think that within the human being those traits are what guide people for the most part. Sometimes things happen.

But for the most part I would have to think that legislators of the day wanted to do what was right for society. You can think of other issues like the slavery issue in United States, that society. Now we look at it and we're again aghast at the whole concept of that and how could that be. How could a government allow those conditions to exist where that could be. But I have to believe that there were good people trying to govern the population at that time as well.

So we need to support people in the cause of equality. We have to support people in the cause of human rights, we have to support people in the cause of opportunity and advancing people to be all they can be.

That's one thing that I say to my children: I don't know what you're going to be, but I hope that you will be all that you're destined to be. If conditions do not exist where that is possible, then we have to work very diligently to improve those conditions so it is possible.

Mr. Speaker, I do look forward to the remarks of others as we continue on this motion, but I certainly support the minister and I support the seconder in bringing this forward.

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

**Speaker:** Anyone else to speak?

The hon. Member from Winsloe-West Royalty.

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

I think it's very important that I rise here today to support this motion. I think it's everybody's business in this House about how well supported the projects and research that has been undertaken here on Prince Edward Island that has benefitted our Island society so much. It's important that we stand and rise here today and to support the continuation of that program funding for this very important work..

Also, I guess you could say I got a personal reason for standing here today as well. I'm the proud father of two daughters and the grandfather of two sweetheart granddaughters. One of my mantras through my life has always been to say to my children, and I will be saying it to my grandchildren when they get old enough to comprehend its meaning: You can become whatever you want, you can do whatever you want, your only limitation is what you put on yourself. I hope fathers are saying that to their sons, as fathers would say that to their daughters.

We like to think that things are equal these days, among the sexes, the genders, but we all know that's not quite the case. We see it when we see the economic statistics that come out and talk about the wage gap when it comes to gender. We all know about the many female senior citizens across this country, single women in particular or widowed, who are well below the poverty line and struggling to survive there. It's a documented fact. Statistics support that.

Also, not even to mention the various biases that some people still have as was outlined. I believe the Member from Morell-Fortune Bay spoke about some of the invective that her daughter suffered just walking with a friend from one of our nations, Aboriginal. We certainly know that in that community right across Canada, Aboriginal women, the

efforts to improve their lot in life must continue.

That is why I support this resolution. Because the work that has been conducted across Prince Edward Island, as the minister moving this resolution has rightly pointed out, by the East Prince Women's Information Centre, doing research into addiction by prescription - I mean, how important a work that is right now, that there is a group out there that is delving into this issue to try to find out the extent of it in their community and hopefully suggest ways that we can go about as governments in trying to prevent and try to remediate that problem.

Family legal aid - another project that's been under way and has been worked upon here on Prince Edward Island - maternity and parental benefits, and research in that area. Francophone Acadian women. I mentioned the Aboriginal community that worked there.

I think the concern I have, and I'm sure the minister shares this, obviously, from her remarks, and I think everyone in the House does as well, is when it comes to the criteria. We need to know what the criteria is going to be and we need to be vigilant as legislators and keep a very close watch on the direction that the federal government may be headed in here. I'm not going to prejudge them. I think that perhaps what's at the heart of it, if I'm reading it from this distance, is they want to make sure that the tax dollars that are expended in the areas of trying to advance women's rights and opportunities for women in this country and those dollars are going to really spent very efficiently and with some real good long-term impact.

There is nothing wrong with that. There is nothing wrong every once in a while in any area of government to step back and try to

evaluate the effectiveness of your programs and whether or not you're getting value for the taxpayers dollar. To some extent I presume the federal government is doing that right now in this particular area.

But I will caution them to be very careful in establishing this criteria, and to really take their time and understand what programs are being conducted, not just here on Prince Edward Island, but right across Canada that are really proving of great benefit. And that as they go by establishing this criteria I hope that they will be very mindful of this. It's very important that we not lose these projects. It's important that the people on the front line not lose heart. I really feel for those people, mostly women, who are working very hard through the Advisory Council and at Transition House and at the Rape and Sexual Assault Crisis Centre, and through the Women's Network and all the other associations across Prince Edward Island, who are perhaps living on tenterhooks these days, wondering what's going to come down next.

I think we, as the Legislative Assembly of Prince Edward Island, through this resolution will be offering them assurance of our vigilance and our concern and our determination on this matter, to ensure that in the long run, when the criteria is established, that they will still find for themselves the necessary supports to continue their very important work. Because this isn't just work for women, by women, on behalf of women, this is work for the benefit of our entire society in Canada.

As the Minister of Tourism rightly points out, this is a family matter, and families come in all shapes and sizes these days and varieties, but they're families. Whether it's a single-parent family, two-parent family, whatever, the results of the kind of work that are being conducted by these front line organizations is going to benefit Canadian

families, the core, the basic unit of our society.

So I believe it's really important that both Ottawa and Charlottetown, and every other provincial and territorial capital, that its legislators make sure that the end result of this renewal, if you will, or evaluation of these programs, that we will not lose all the good things that have happened. Indeed we should be able to improve what is currently there today.

So I certainly will be supporting this resolution, and I commit to those organizations on Prince Edward Island that I certainly will continue to support their work.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Speaker:** Any other speakers to the motion?

The hon. Member from Crapaud-Hazel Grove.

**Speaker:** Any other speakers to the motion?

The hon. Member from Crapaud-Hazel Grove.

**Ms. Bertram:** May I have the podium please?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise to speak to this resolution. First of all, let me say I was disappointed that the amendment brought forward by the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Kings Square was voted down by government members.

The general aspect of this resolution is good. It's talking about women's issues. It's talking about the research activities that women's groups are doing. You can look at every paragraph as part of this government's

motion today. If you look at the seventh clause:

“And whereas continued financial support for worthy projects...”

The key word, “worthy.” There are key words in the language of this resolution that we have to look at today and key words that are missing from this resolution today. Why are they missing? It's because Prime Minister Stephen Harper and the federal government and the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Status of Women Bev Oda do not want lobbying efforts to take place on behalf of women's groups to provincial, federal or municipal governments.

I have different correspondence here. I have the Newfoundland Advisory Council release. One section of their release says - here's what the new funding guideline says: Status of Women Canada does not provide funding for... Domestic advocacy activities and lobbying of federal, provincial and municipal governments.

So, there we go. The key words, advocacy lobbying. That is what's taken away from Minister Oda and Stephen Harper's decision to eliminate these millions of dollars from Status of Women Canada. They do not want to see these groups advocating to government, lobbying government on women's issues. That is the key difference.

If you look at the resolution that we tabled versus the resolution that this government has tabled today and we're speaking on, those are key issues. That's a key difference. We're calling on the reinstatement of \$5 million to Status of Women Canada.

When I was at university I took a lot of women's studies courses, women's history, etc. We looked at different groups over the years that promoted women's issues, the general promotion of women, how women

got the vote in the 1920s. The list goes on. Over the years, women's rights have increased. They're still not equal in society. We're still not equal.

It's interesting to note that Real Women of Canada - and some of you may not be aware of Real Women of Canada. It's an organization of women that started out in the western parts of Canada. Harper is taking their agenda. They wrote and advocated to Harper to take away this funding on the lobbying efforts and the advocacy efforts for women's groups in Canada. They don't agree with the Status of Women Canada. This is a western organization called REAL, Real Women of Canada. In their press release of September 26<sup>th</sup> it states:

We're "especially pleased that the Status of Women's budget will be reduced by \$5 million in the cutbacks. This is a good start, and we hope that the Status of Women will eventually be eliminated entirely since it does not represent 'women,' but only represents the ideology of feminists."

I guess the question here today, with men and women in this Legislature, is: Do you consider yourself a feminist? I think over the years it's been a negative connotation to the word feminist. I feel myself a feminist. I believe in women's rights and equality. It's not just for women to think that. A man could be in this Legislature and consider himself a feminist.

We know that Real Women of Canada is playing into the Harper agenda.

**Mr. Collins:** (Indistinct) Prime Minister of Canada?

**Ms. Bertram:** They are taking on that agenda. They are wanting the lobbying efforts taking place, they are wanting the advocacy, to be gone. They feel that the Status of Women Canada don't represent

real women. Who are real women?

What is their definition of a real woman? I don't know. All I do know is the advocacy work that has been taking place on Prince Edward Island on behalf of family violence, legal aid, and the list goes on, are important issues. Accessibility to child care for families. Those are important lobbying efforts that the Advisory Council on the Status of Women is doing on Prince Edward Island.

Today's press release from the Public Service Alliance of Canada states:

"Canadians are outraged at the \$5M cut to Status of Women Canada (SWC) and the changes in the guidelines which saw the elimination of the funding for research and advocacy for women's equality rights.

"To add insult to injury, under the guise and premise of 'achieving efficiencies' at SWC, the government has decided to eliminate almost half its workforce across the country."

This is a release from today. Quoted:

"How can Minister Oda expect Canadians to believe that she and her government are acting in the best interests of women? We are calling on this Minister to resign. She simply cannot profess to represent Canadian women, nor can she claim she is defending women's equality," stated Robyn Benson, PSAC officer responsible for women's rights.

"Out of 131 positions, the majority of which are held by women, 61 positions are being cut. We know that the government is shutting down 12 of 16 regional offices in all parts of the country."

But, this is interesting: "We also know that some senior managers at SWC are getting a

promotion.”

It was told to me by a friend that has a friend in senior management in government and been there throughout successive governments, they were brought into a room by the Stephen Harper crew and told: Here's the memo, here's what you do, and don't ask any questions.

Even the people in the upper echelon of management who are wanting to voice cannot because Harper wants them tightlipped on all these issues.

**Mr. Collins:** The Prime Minister of Canada.

**Ms. Bertram:** Yes, and let's see how long the Prime Minister of Canada lasts.

**Mr. R. Brown:** That's right. Old Stephen (Indistinct). We'll put it back.

**Ms. Bertram:** Let's hope there's a spring election and let's see the Liberal government come back to Ottawa.

These types of cuts are jeopardizing society on Prince Edward Island and in this country. We're taking steps backwards. We have been going forward, we've been examples to other countries in the world, and we're taking steps backwards.

Status of Women Canada should be more than a granting agency and the secretary to the minister. This is still the press release: We still need in-house policy development on gender equality. We still need independent research on women issues. We still need in-house monitoring of government policy for its impact on women. We still need (Indistinct) Canada to promote women's equality all over the place, inside and outside of government here in Canada and internationally, but that's what the Harper government administrative efficiencies are going to costs us.

We take a look at the website under women programs under the Status of Women in Canada, it's called Women Program Renewal. So perhaps our Premier and the Prime Minister of Canada are on the same agenda here. There's a common agenda to shortchange women groups in Prince Edward Island and in Canada. So if we're not supporting the advocacy and the lobbying efforts towards government, on all levels, then you're shortchanging women's rights on Prince Edward Island and Canada.

I quoted national quotes that have come forward in this email, but there's local outrage over this as well. You look at Kelly Robinson, who is with the PEI Rape and Sexual Assault Crisis Centre. She states:

“The rights and privileges that women on PEI enjoy are not ‘inevitable’ outcomes of a liberal democracy - they are the result of decades of lobbying, advocacy, and hard work. All Islanders and Canadians - adult and children alike - benefit from the work of the women's communities. These changes to the Status of Women Canada ultimately severely impact our ability to continue to advocacy work that has benefitted so many.”

This is PEI. This is Kelly Robinson from the PEI Rape and Sexual Assault Crisis Centre. That's a quote.

I'll go on to Michelle Harris-Genge who is the co-executive director of Women's Network. She states:

“Removing the advocacy component from the women's programs takes power away from Canadians. It eliminates another venue to participate in the creation of policies and programs that directly affect women. Women's voices are effectively being silenced. Removing the voice that advocates for fairness is - ironically enough - unfair.”

So going back to the resolution that the

government has put forward and has been brought forward by two women of the government caucus and the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women on Prince Edward Island, I'm ashamed. We are eliminating advocacy and lobbying efforts for women and women's groups here on Prince Edward Island, policy efforts on their behave.

We talked about - the member from West Royalty being vigilant. Well, here let's be vigilant. When Minister Oda, the federal minister, in October announced these cuts, Canadians were outraged from coast to coast. Here we are on PEI, here we are a government presenting a resolution supporting such a cutback. Because basically this resolution is just agreeing with Minister Oda. You're agreeing that advocacy and lobbying efforts are taken away. Because guess what? You go through your motion. If you go through your resolution, and I'm sure those - perhaps Peter McQuaid who wrote this up knew very well that the words lobbying, advocacy, were eliminated from this resolution, because that is a key component to what the problem with these cutbacks is. Advocacy and lobbying efforts.

But perhaps you're taking the western agenda of REAL Women Canada. You're bringing it to Prince Edward Island because the Status of Women Canada don't represent real women.

As I've already stated, being a feminist is an important thing. I think and I hope men and women in this House could consider themselves. But if you consider yourself a feminist and supporting the equality based on gender, I cannot see how you could support your government in Ottawa, the Harper government, taking away the advocacy, those limitations based on advocacy and lobbying efforts.

At the onset when I spoke, components to this resolution are good. It does talk about the projects, the research activities done by these organizations, whether it was the Women's Network, whether it's the Advisory Council on the Status of Women, whether it's the PEI rape sexual assault - all those. East Prince family - all those groups that have been doing wonderful work in our community. But why are they speaking out? They are the ones that are speaking out. These are the people in the trenches who are working day to day helping and supporting families, women and children here in this province. Why would we not give them the respect that they deserve and support them in their efforts to reverse a decision by the federal government and Minister Oda's decision to cut back this \$5 million to this organization?

Why isn't the Premier supporting this? Why would the motion today (Indistinct) brought forward (Indistinct) these key words in it? Because they are on the Harper agenda and they do not want to see any lobbying effort taking place. No. That could end up affecting policy for the good here in Canada.

So here we are on PEI. As I stated the other night with one of the resolutions that was on the table, we could be an example. We could be putting forth this resolution this afternoon stating that we want the lobbying efforts to continue. I do know that the minister responsible for the status here - the hon. Minister of Transportation and Public Works has a good relationship with the organization. But if she is having a good relationship and she's in full communication and dialogue with these organizations, she would know that they are against this decision. She would support taking this motion off the floor and bringing it back with those key words included in it. Your group can come back with the wording that is necessary to make this a stronger document to be put forward to the federal

government.

The Leader of the Opposition and myself have put Motion No. 21 which is addressing the funding cuts to women's organizations and reinstating the funding. You could take components of that motion, bring it forward and make this resolution stronger, stronger for PEI, stronger for the women's groups, and we will be in full support of that.

But this is weak, so weak, this resolution today. It's doing nothing that we already don't know. We know that they are going to get funding for research activities if they are not in lobbying or advocacy efforts on behalf of research activity. They will get their money.

If these groups are speaking out, as they do on PEI, then they fully know that they aren't going to get the money. It's very sad that here we are in the year 2006 - the Minister of Tourism was talking about, and another member talked about, legal aid and the native people. In one of these e-mails it goes on to say - here it is. This (Indistinct) goes back to REAL Women of Canada, how they were delighted that the budget cuts included the elimination of the troublesome court challenges program.

**Mr. R. Brown:** They weren't for that too, were they?

**Ms. Bertram:** So there you go. So that's gone. So that's the legal aid component that you were talking about, Minister of Tourism. So again, Harper is listening to REAL Women of Canada. That's what they want.

It's interesting that the Minister of Tourism talked about the native people. Marilyn Sark, who is the president of the Aboriginal Women's Association of PEI, stated: "We have received funding from the Women's Program in the past two years to bring

Aboriginal women together to explore issues such as equality, governance and leadership, and to ensure that Aboriginal women have a voice. The recent cuts and changes to the Women's Program will curtail these activities, and, in particular, will put an end to our ability to use the funding to lobby for the rights of Aboriginal women in PEI and across the country."

Here we are, in the year 2006, and we're stepping back. We are going backwards. The minister was talking about the native people and the different rights of people, how they've progressed over the years. Well yes, it is wonderful to grow as a society, but we're not there yet. We need to continue the efforts. The member from West Royalty stated about being vigilant. Let's be vigilant here. Let's continue the work, the efforts, the advocacy, and let's reinstate the actual funding that is necessary for this.

So in closing I guess I'm reading this, and it's the last whereas: "...that this Assembly call upon the Government of Canada to commit to ensure that important research and projects are able to continue to benefit Island women." If I support this resolution today, I am supporting a government's motion that takes away advocacy and lobbying efforts. There are good components, but there are key components missing.

I cannot support this resolution today because those key words are missing, and I think they're missing for a reason. If the minister wants to take this off the floor and come back to this Legislature with terminology changed and another whereas and the reinstatement of the funding, I can support this. But if I support this today I would be supporting a backward action for women's rights in this country and I cannot support it. If we're not going to be bringing into this motion the issue of advocacy and lobbying efforts - so I'm disappointed.

I cannot support it, but I think I have shown why I can't. Because I truly believe in our groups that are working in the trenches here on PEI for women's rights and families and children and I've been listening to them, I've met with them and I'm standing for them today. I will not support this because I'm supporting them and their message.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Speaker:** Anyone else who would like to speak on the motion?

The hon. Premier.

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

I'm very happy to support this resolution. Our government has always been proactive in terms of its support for women's organizations on PEI. We have, in recent times, added to the contribution which we make in support of women's organizations. Recall recently we discovered that the Aboriginal Women's Association of PEI - this was before the latest changes by the federal government - was badly without any administrative funding. As a result, we made the first-time contribution this year to the Aboriginal Women's Association to help them cover some of their overhead and administrative expenses.

Of course, in all of these areas we have tried to maintain funding even in difficult times, and I guess our action, I think, is indicative of our ongoing commitment in this area. We view the whole area of family violence as being a very important one, because there are instances on PEI where we know that violence has occurred, in some causing death, and that is obviously unacceptable. It's important that women not feel threatened by a domestic situation, that they

feel empowered to be able to take action on their own behalf and on behalf of the family if there are children involved, and know that the government is behind them. Everyone should be able to act without fear of reprisal or recrimination and that sort of the thing.

So in every instance we have tried to ensure that those needs are understood and supported. I did have the opportunity last week of attending briefly the rally that was held at UPEI in regard to the Status of Women and their need for ongoing funding. I did that because I feel that this area is important and is deserving of ongoing support. Our government will continue to provide that support and we hope that the federal government will seriously consider these matters in the allocation of funds in the future and that funding will continue.

So I applaud the mover and seconder of this resolution in continuing to ensure that this Legislature is proactive in supporting women's issue, and I will be supporting the resolution.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Speaker:** Any other speakers to the motion?

The hon. Minister of Transportation and Public Works to close the debate.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

It's my pleasure to rise right now. I think it's important for every member in this House to really listen to the one member, I believe, who probably has the best grasp on this issue in the Legislature that I know of, and that's our critic for the Status of Women, the hon. Member from Crapaud-Hazel Grove.



In hearing her arguments, there was no doubt in my mind that this motion is obviously not going far enough. She listed off numerous cuts that were made and have been made and why they have to be reinstated. I think it's important to realize the good work that these Status of Women's organizations do, that a lot of these different organizations do, whether or not we're talking about family violence prevention, parental benefits, legal aid, and issues relating to women in the Aboriginal and Francophone community.

In our society and in Canada, one of the main reasons why I believe we're so well respected around the world is because we have something called the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Yes, governments are able to pass laws in this country. Whether or not you're talking the federal government or any provincial government or any provincial legislation or the federal Parliament. But the great thing about it is if someone feels that they are being taken advantage of, or that their rights aren't being protected, we're able to challenge those laws. Not through machine guns, not through tanks, not through violence, but through the court system. I believe the lobbying aspect and the awareness aspect of what the Status of Women raises, as the hon. Member from Crapaud-Hazel Grove so rightly mentioned, is probably one of the main things that these organizations do.

Now I would agree with a lot of what the motion says. It is a factual motion for the best part of it. But what they're failing to realize is that all of the organizations, whether or not it's the Status of Women or any other organization, are upset with the funding cuts that have been made. I can't see them supporting this, now that I've had the opportunity to listen to the hon. Member from Crapaud-Hazel Grove.

"And therefore be it resolved that this

Assembly express its continued support for the research and project work undertaken by various community organizations to advance women's equality on Prince Edward Island."

Well, of course, but we also have to make sure that we give them the tools necessary to carry out their work.

The cuts that we've seen, I believe, have been totally against what these organizations stand for and what they're trying to promote. The last therefore be it further resolved: "... that this Assembly call upon the Government of Canada to commit to ensure that important research and projects are able to continue to benefit Island women." It doesn't go far enough.

I've heard other members here in the Legislative Assembly stand and try to defend the cuts that were being made, saying: They're administrative cuts. That is still cutting these fine organizations. I think it's really quite unfortunate that we have to be put in the situation that we are today by the federal government. If they were in a situation where they didn't have a \$10 billion surplus approximately or anything like that, there were areas where you had to cut a little bit from everywhere, it might make some sense. But why pick on an organization or organizations when you're running such large surpluses?

It is about making sure that we promote the idea in this province and in this country that women are equal, if not better, and that we have the measures in place. I discussed before some of the other things that I've heard recently. Whether or not it's - women earn approximately 7% of the salary that men earn in this country. Whether or not we're looking at the amount of women that we have in our Legislature today. Wouldn't we all love to see more women in our Legislature? Whether or not we're looking at the federal Parliament on the number of

women that are there.

So I think it's really shortsighted by the federal Government of Canada to impose the cuts that they have made. Like I said, I believe it's now imperative for our Legislature to stand united and say that it was wrong. To say that we believe that these women's organizations deserve the funding that was cut, and even more funding. Until that equality reaches the equilibrium where everything is equal, we cannot stand by and allow further cuts to take place.

It's interesting. The title of this motion is Federal Funding for Status of Women. Federal funding for Status of Women has been cut. So if we support the motion, are we not supporting the cuts that have been made? While I agree with everything in the motion, almost, and would like to support the motion, I believe it would be difficult for myself or any other member who believes that the cuts that have been made are cuts that go against our values and go against the values of promoting equality, so therefore it's going to be difficult to support it.

Like I said, a lot of these whereas now I support: "Whereas on Prince Edward Island there are many community organizations which strive to advance matters of interest, importance and equality to Island women." It's imperative that we support, I believe, our Island women in this province to make sure that there can be a striving for equality.

The hon. member (Indistinct) some quotes earlier and I have major problems with it. I'm just going to quote another person here, and I believe it's Kirsten Lund who is the head of the Status of Women of PEI:

It's not just the budget cuts and the elimination of equality funding for women's organizations that concerns women. It's the sentiment behind the cuts that is truly ominous as it speaks to this government's

attitude toward women and women's equality. Women across Canada are fearful about how this attitude will play out in the future.

So in essence, when I heard other members of the government side, the Progressive Conservative Party side, speak on how, oh, it was only administrative costs, well, obviously you disagree with the comments made by the head of the Status of Women here in Prince Edward Island.

I was really quite intrigued by the Premier's remarks. I applaud the Premier for being in a rally last week at UPEI to support people who are against these cuts. But if the Premier really just doesn't want to only pay lip service to these organizations, he would stand up and in fact he would pull this motion off the floor of the Legislature and show -

**Mr. Dunn:** Call the hour.

**Speaker:** Hon. member, the hour has been called.

The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Dunn:** I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Winsloe-West Royalty, that this House adjourn and stand adjourned until tomorrow at 10:00 a.m.

**Speaker:** Tomorrow at what time, hon. member?

**Mr. Dunn:** At 2:00 p.m.

**Speaker:** Shall it carry?

**Some Hon. Members:** Carried.

The Legislature adjourned until tomorrow, Thursday, at 2:00 p.m.

