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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

OF

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

**TRANSCRIPT OF
STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS
AND THE
ORAL QUESTION PERIOD
FOR**

Tuesday 21 November 2006

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD 21 NOVEMBER 2006 PRELIMINARY PROCEEDINGS

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

TRIBUTE TO WHIT CARTER

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

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

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

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

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

Whit was held in high regard by all who knew

him and I'm sure I speak for all Islanders in offering our deepest sympathies to his wife Joyce, his son Robert, and his daughter Caroline, as well as his extended family.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Hear, hear!

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

COUNCIL OF FEDERATION LITERACY AWARD

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

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

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

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hear, hear!

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

UPSE EXECUTIVE

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

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

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

I also want to take a minute to thank the outgoing president, Sandy MacKay. Sandy

MacKay deserves a lot of credit. He did a lot of work over the government reform package, especially when the current government reduced the Civil Service and basically caused a lot of turmoil down there among the people. He managed his way through that and he deserves a lot of credit.

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

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Hear, hear!

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

The hon. Premier.

Premier Binns: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

COST OF MCQUAID COMMISSION REPORT(FURTHER)

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

In relation to the question of whether there were computers used during this process, there were but under the same procedure as would be applied to any other private member

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who brought forward a bill. In this case, the access was the same.

COST OF SETTLEMENTS

In 1997-98 there were 749 complaints that settled at a cost of \$1.6 million. That compared to the 1985-86 period in which there 61 complaints. Not one as referenced by the hon. members. The cost of those settlements was -

Speaker: All right, hon. member.

Premier Binns: - referenced by the hon. members Friday. The cost of those settlements was \$598,700 plus legal fees and that did not include the *Burge* case.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

SUNDAY SHOPPING

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

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

doors to huge corporations that sap the life from small businesses. Mr. Speaker, why has the Premier chosen to speak from both sides of his mouth on the Sunday shopping issue?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Binns: Mr. Speaker, it's interesting that the hon. member would talk about flip-flops. He is renowned for his flip-flops. I can't help but think of one recently where on Friday night he endorses his candidate; five days later he changes his mind. That's a classic flip-flop and just one more on top of the many things that he's done. It's obvious that the Leader of the Opposition really doesn't know where he is on Sunday shopping. He's not showing any leadership. He's not recognizing the appeals by the tourism industry of the province to modify our Sunday shopping laws. He's not recognizing those people who work during regular office hours and would like to have extra opportunity. He's not recognizing this thing that's changed in nine provinces out of ten across the country. He does not seem to be prepared to move ahead but we don't know what his position is. I don't think he really has one.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Binns: Mr. Speaker, one thing about our government, we've always been open to recommendations. We've always been open to hearing suggestions, constructive ideas from the general public, from even the Opposition. And in this case we listened to many Islanders. We also followed the trends across the country. We heard the court cases that have taken place in other jurisdictions which have caused other governments to change direction and we have responded.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Another quote from the same day and I quote again from the Premier: Islanders felt that there is only so much business that you can do that business over six days. If you do it over seven days, it costs more so what happened? Did the cost of doing business over seven days suddenly drop, Mr. Premier?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Binns: Well, Mr. Speaker, it appears to me that the Leader of the Opposition is obviously against the tourism industry in this province. He's not wanting to support the industry. That's unfortunate. You know, we always like to have the benefit of more research and information. In this case, the academic research is quite clear. The academic research shows that the volume of business does increase when retail facilities are open for longer hours. More people are employed in the economy. There's more

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

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

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

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

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Premier Binns: Well, we didn't, Mr. Speaker. Our uniqueness continues. Our laws will be different than what I understand the laws to be in other provinces. Other provinces are open year round. We are going to open from the third week in May, which is really usually the start of our busier tourism season, until the end of Christmas. That is quite unique. It remains unique among all of the jurisdictions in the country and I also remind the Leader of the Opposition that even in the Throne speech, we announced that we would be reviewing this policy after one year of operation and we would make amendments that more truly, if necessary, reflected public concern.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

And I've got another quote here from the Premier in 2004 and it might sound odd but I actually agree with this quote, and it wasn't that long ago that the Premier made it. And he said: Sunday shopping doesn't appear to be a big priority for Islanders. I think the majority here would still be opposed to it.

Mr. Speaker, other than the owners of Wal-Mart and a huge multi-national, does the Premier believe the majority of Islanders have changed their opinion?

Mr. R. Brown: That's all he's supporting.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Binns: Well, Mr. Speaker, obviously, a lot of Islanders have changed their opinion. There has been a move towards

more Sunday shopping in spite of the current legislation. I think the hon. member realizes but he wants to forget for the value he might get out of trying to twist the negative in here in Question Period that, in fact, there is a substantial amount of Sunday shopping in Prince Edward Island now. We're seeing many of the Co-Op stores in communities across Prince Edward Island open on Sunday. We're seeing some of the mid-size grocery stores, if you like, like Save-Easys open. We're seeing the large drugstores like Shoppers Drug Mart are offering much more than drugs who offer, you know, foodstuffs and all kinds of household items as well as drugs open and so, in fact, Sunday shopping does exist on Prince Edward Island. What we're trying to do is somehow level the playing field. And I think if the hon. member is paying attention to what people like the Chamber of Commerce is saying, he will find that they are supporting the compromise position which the government is making by modifying our laws in Prince Edward Island to try to level that playing field across the province.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

It just goes to show that last answer how this Premier doesn't listen to what Islanders are saying and I agreed with the Premier. Sunday shopping doesn't appear to be a big priority for Islanders. It hasn't been a pressing issue that we've been confronted from in the Opposition but the Premier likes to quote the Chamber of Commerce and here I have an article from the newspaper where thumbs down likely from Summerside merchants.

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This is from the head of the Chamber of Commerce in Summerside, as you're well aware of. I heard Mr. Gaudet, the president of the Chamber of Commerce here in Charlottetown after the Throne speech said that his members are mixed on this issue. It's not something that people are looking for right now and Islanders want to know why this Premier flip-flopped on such an important issue. And I just want to go back to 2004 here because it wasn't that long ago and the Premier said that current laws help out the craft industry. Will the Premier's new proposal help or hurt the craft industry?

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

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

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

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

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

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

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

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

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

And he said back in 2004 that the laws that were in place help out the craft industry. I want to know.

Mr. R. Brown: Yeah. You're against the craft industry.

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

Mr. R. Brown: Shame, shame!

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Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Binns: Well, Mr. Speaker, crafts are sold in many outlets across Prince Edward Island. They are sold in local craft stores independently owned, sometimes created right there. In some cases, they're sold in larger facilities. Some are sold in co-op stores or the drug stores and so on and so these people will have additional opportunity relative to their industry as well. But Mr. Speaker, you know, we're starting to see a pattern here. We're starting to see the hon. member who is obviously against new opportunity for Prince Edward Island. He's been against just about everything. He's against the new hospital for West Prince. He's against rural Prince Edward Island. He wants to take seats away from rural Prince Edward Island. He's pretty consistent. The pattern is coming out. We're seeing the true character of this hon. member.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

And the single person who's responsible for the largest deficit ever in the history of the province, the single person who's responsible for the largest corporate loss in the history of this province to the taxpayers at \$31 million and the single person who's responsible for closures of emergency rooms, closures of hospitals in this province should not be lecturing anyone and that's clear.

My question for the Premier is this: In 2004 - and I agree with the Premier here - the Premier said the current laws help out convenience stores operations in designated tourism areas, in other words, helping out our

tourism industry and help out craft outlets. If the old laws helped out those businesses, as the Premier said, won't this new approach harm those operations?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

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

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

And that's a record that I'm not sure quite why the Premier is proud of; kind of like how he said in the newspaper the other day that he still believes Polar Foods was the right decision to make. I'm sure many Islanders disagree with him on that but I've got a new question.

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

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Binns: Mr. Speaker, as I've indicated earlier, this government has been open to hearing the suggestions, the recommendations of Islanders. We certainly heard from the tourism industry, many people in the business community over a period of time as well as from individual Islanders that the pros outweigh some of the cons in terms of having some more Sunday shopping. So Mr. Speaker, upon significant reflection, we have moved on this item and we believe we have moved ahead. Now if the hon. Leader of the Opposition wants to stay in the years past where he is - He's stuck there - If you want to be stuck in old ways, I'm not modernizing Prince Edward Island which seems to be where he is. Don't fix the hospitals. Don't build better facilities. Don't expand the education system. Don't modernize our shopping laws. That's up to him but I'll tell you one thing. This party is moving ahead whether he likes it or not.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you very

much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. R. Brown: Three million dollar (indistinct).

Speaker: All right, hon. members.

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

Mr. R. Brown: Yeah. Where is it?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Binns: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's interesting to listen to the Leader of the Opposition. You know, he really is stuck in

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the past. He doesn't want change. He'd be happy to try to lead Islanders to believe that we have nothing in health care. The reality is we have the most doctors that we ever had in the province. We have the most nurses we have ever had in the province. We have the most jobs we have ever had in the province. In fact, you know what? When we came into office, there were 59,000 people working in PEI. Today there's over 71,000 people working; an increase of over 20% and I daresay probably only Alberta would surpass that record. We have the lowest unemployment rate today in this province that we've probably had in 30 years, maybe since they've started recording. And, no, Mr. Speaker, they're not all in Alberta as the hon. member from Charlottetown wants to suggest. They're not all in Alberta. We've been creating jobs here in PEI in firms like CGI, firms like AIM Trimark, the expansion of the bio-science industry, and the Opposition wants to be stuck in the back. They want to keep taking things away from rural PEI. Take the seats away, close down their health system, don't let any more doctors in, discourage doctors from going to West Prince. That's their idea of progress.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Mr. Speaker, I just hope there's not too many people watching Question Period today because this Premier's answers are shameful today and it just shows how out of touch this government is. It's a government that's been around too long. It's a government that's tired and fresh out of ideas. It's a Premier that keeps trying to divert attention away from his current problems and I just want to get directly to the point here and the Premier can go on about -

he can have the biggest preamble he wants to this next answer but Islanders are looking for an answer.

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

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Binns: Mr. Speaker, I answered that question earlier in Question Period and I suggested that the academic research is quite clear on this. I think the University of Prince Edward Island, economics department, would in fact bear this out that more hours means more employment. It means more economic income. It means more spending in the economy. It means more spinoff. It means growth and I admit that one time I probably thought that, you know, there wouldn't be much of an increase but the data is in right across Canada. Every province that's gone to extended hours has seen extended business.

You know, the tourists come to PEI from May to December primarily. The seasonal residents come in in May-December and they spend - they want to spend their money when they're here and we're depriving them, by and large, of one day of that opportunity. Well, it's a great opportunity. That's why the craft industry said to government to reconsider your position. That's why the tourism industry has said reconsider your position. That's why the business community has suggested to reconsider your position so talk about being tired and out of date. They're so far in the background of what's happening it's hard to believe.

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Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

I'm going to ask the Premier if he could please table all the research that he's been talking about here, all this new data that he's been talking about but I just want to point something out. He likes to paint me as being in the past here but we've heard from the president of the Chamber of Commerce in Summerside. We've heard from the Federation of Labour is against Sunday shopping. We've heard from the president of the Chamber of Commerce here in Charlottetown that says their members are split on this issue. I've heard from many businesses that say there is just not enough money flowing around to justify opening up for that extra day of the week. What we want to do on this side of the House is give Islanders a chance to have their voices heard. We believe it's important as legislators that we listen to Islanders before we make decisions. My question for the Premier is this: Will he allow this bill to please move to a standing committee of the Legislative Assembly so that we can hear from Islanders on this important issue?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

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

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

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

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

The Premier likes to talk about 'all over the map' but if there's one person in this province that should not be talking about maps, it's this Premier here who has cost Island taxpayers more money than any other province across Canada because he can't make up his mind and respect the Charter in this country to make sure that we respect and make sure that independent commissions' maps will be regarded. A simple question, yes or no: Will you please move this legislation to a standing committee of the Legislative Assembly so that Islanders can have their say?

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Speaker: The hon. Premier.

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

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

Speaker: The hon. Member from Crapaud-Hazel Grove. Hon. member, Leader of the Opposition. You had your chance.

FACILITY FOR ARTIFACTORY

Ms. Bertram: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

A question for the Minister of Community and Cultural Affairs. Over the course of the last

year, the Opposition has been arguing and pushing for a new facility for the artifactory, the facility that houses the 80,000+ artifacts that the province owns. It's now located at West Royalty industrial facility.

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

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

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

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

I know that in May the government did make the decision that we going to build an artifactory down in Orwell Corner at one time and we didn't have the money to do so but we had the community group, which our government has supported communities in the past, came forward and said that they had a plan to develop land down in Murray River, that they were looking to see if they couldn't combine it with a facility. They did approach government in regards to the artifactory being located in Murray River and I guess the Northumberland Development Corporation

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took it upon themselves to negotiate with ACOA in regards to funding and the province is looking in regards to moving the artifactory from Charlottetown to Murray River.

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

Ms. Bertram: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Mr. MacFadyen: Yes, we are.

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

Ms. Bertram: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

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

Ms. Bertram: This is interesting because we have the GEO Links here, Mr. Speaker, and this land has been deeded to BDI this year so

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

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

Mr. MacFadyen: Just to clarify, I thought the hon. member was asking me who owns the artifactory where it's presently located. That's owned by the Museum and Heritage Foundation. In regards to the land where the artifactory is going to be built, my understanding is that the Northumberland Development Corporation has a parcel of land that they want to refurbish by putting a new building there to construct an area that would include room for the artifactory and the possibility of having other businesses locate in the community.

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

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

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

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

I don't know what lots they are but I do know that there were four lots that were down in the

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Murray River area that was purchased by government for the artifactory to be built.

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

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

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

Mr. MacFadyen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Ms. Bertram: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Did the federal government purchase the properties in Murray River?

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

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

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

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

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

Mr. MacFadyen: All right, Mr. Speaker, thank you.

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

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

U.S. PASSPORT REQUIREMENTS

Mr. McCardle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question today is for the Minister of Tourism. There's been a lot of media attention about the new passport requirements which

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come into effect January 20th, January, 2007. Now this action is sure to impact the tourism industry. What is the current status of this new passport requirement policy?

Leader of the Opposition: Good question. Good question.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Tourism. All right, let the minister answer.

Leader of the Opposition: (indistinct)

Speaker: All right, hon. member.

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

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

An Hon. Member: And boat.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

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

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Tourism.

Mr. P. Brown: Well, certainly, Mr. Speaker, this is a major concern for all of tourism across our country as many people travel between our two countries on a daily basis. And we're concerned with 10% of visitors to

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

Speaker: Final supplementary. The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

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

Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Tourism.

Mr. P. Brown: Well, this has been a complex issue because it hasn't been a Canadian initiative but I will say that the Government of Canada along with the Government of the United States have been working on this. The Tourism Industry Association of Canada, TIAC, has been working very diligently and myself as minister for this province and the ministers across the country are working on this.

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

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

KEPPOCH ROAD

Dr. McKenna: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Ms. Shea: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As a result of heavy rains in recent days and combined with the town doing some sewer work along the Keppoch Road, they did have a failure there of the road, about a 50 metre section, as the member stated. Our department is out there working with the town and the contractor to get the sewer work completed and to do the repairs necessary to the road. So as a result, the Keppoch Road will be closed probably for the rest of the week until the work has been all completed.

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

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

Hear, hear!

LOCATION OF ARTIFACTORY

Ms. Bertram: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Mr. MacFadyen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I know that the Museum and Heritage Foundation was looking for a number of years to come up with a new facility for the artifactory and the Northumberland Development Corporation approached the province in regards to constructing a facility. They approached ACOA this year. They asked ACOA if they would assist with the facility and my understanding is the money would not be available to go elsewhere within the province but it's available to re-locate the artifactory down in Murray River. And I wonder, hon. member, are you against rural development in rural areas?

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

Ms. Bertram: Mr. Speaker -

Speaker: All right, hon. members.

Ms. Bertram: - I have editorials after editorials that have been written to *The*

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Guardian newspaper in regards to this. They are experts in the field, ex co-directors of the PEI foundation, curators. These people are very concerned with the decision that this government is making to place this facility in Murray River. What public consultations did you have, Mr. Minister with any other groups besides the PEI foundation, Mr. Minister?

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

Mr. MacFadyen: Well, Mr. Speaker, I know that there's been articles in the paper in regards to the location of the artifactory. I believe that a lot of people were concerned that we were establishing another museum, which we are not.

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

Mr. MacFadyen: We are not and what I understand from the articles that were in the newspaper, that was the concern. I do not feel that in taking into question the authority of the board at the Museum and Heritage Foundation that are individuals who are elected to serve in preserving the history of our province and they are on board in regards to the direction that this government is going and they support this (indistinct).

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

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

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

Mr. MacFadyen: Cannot answer true or false. I do know that the Northumberland Development Corporation that part of the funding requests for them to construct a facility is from the area that they have put forward because it's their project that came to government in order for us to consider it.

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

COST OF ARTIFACTORY FACILITY

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

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

Mr. MacFadyen: Mr. Speaker, I do know roughly the ballpark figure in regards to construction. It's around \$4 million and I believe that 75% of it is coming from ACOA and the conditions of ACOA being in on it is that the facility be located in the Northumberland Development Corporation's hands.

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

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

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

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

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

Ms. Bertram: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to go to the Premier's remarks in September 19th's *Guardian* article and he states: We feel there's a need for a facelift here and something that would help bring people to the area. We're looking at something for that downtown space and there's consideration to move the artifactory to that location as well. And Mr. Speaker, I would like to put this out there. An artifactory is a location and the temperature, it's for the artifacts. There's no public component to this so what tourism component is this bringing to Murray River? I'm all for sustainable communities and rural infrastructure.

Speaker: All right, hon. member.

Ms. Bertram: But now you tell me, Mr. Premier, you tell me what jobs is this going to

bring to your community, the artifactory? What jobs, Mr. Premier?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Mr. R. Brown: (indistinct)

Speaker: All right, hon. member.

Premier Binns: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The one thing about the Opposition, they're consistent. They're against development in rural Prince Edward Island. I'm disappointed in the hon. member that she would take the cause to try and keep the jobs away from my constituency. I, too, am a member of this legislature. I think my constituents should have some opportunity. You know, it was okay to have a sign shop in Tignish. It's alright to have a provincial library headquarters in Morell. Mr. Speaker, these are projects that didn't hurt anybody and helped somebody and it's a shame that the hon. member would, I think, take this approach but it is consistent with her leader that she be against development in rural Prince Edward Island.

Speaker: Final question. The hon. Member from Crapaud-Hazel Grove.

Ms. Bertram: Mr. Speaker, here we hear today that there's \$4 million going to be spent on an artifactory yet we have no provincial museum here on Prince Edward Island. We have a de-centralized program here where we have Basin Head. We have the Yeo House. We have many different de-centralized museums, smaller museums here on Prince Edward Island but we have - we're the only

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province in Canada that doesn't have a centralized trunk. Mr. Speaker, I see it as a tree, a trunk with its branches. We don't have that core facility and I'm going to ask the minister responsible. When are you deciding on constructing this provincial museum? Wouldn't it be best to put that \$4 million towards housing all of it together, Mr. Minister? Don't you think \$4 million would be better utilized in housing a larger facility where all Islanders, children, school children could use this facility? Answer that.

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

Mr. MacFadyen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

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

Ms. Bertram: Shame!

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

Speaker: End of Question Period.