

Francophone community has the support and tools to continue thriving.

Madame la présidente, tel que la résolution l'indique, la communauté acadienne et francophone de l'Î.-P.-É. s'est créé un réseau dynamique d'organismes qui assurent sa croissance et sa vitalité.

As the resolution says, the Acadian and Francophone community of PEI has built a dynamic network of organizations that ensure its growth and vitality.

Nous avons tous l'obligation d'entretenir des relations de travail positives avec ces organismes, puisque la vitalité d'une communauté a un impact direct sur la vitalité de l'ensemble de la province.

It is incumbent upon us to foster positive working relationships with these organizations as the vitality of one community has a direct impact on the vitality of the entire province.

Madame la Présidente, le gouvernement a clairement articulé sa vision avant-gardiste qui veillera à assurer l'avenir de notre province : investir dans les individus et bâtir notre main-d'oeuvre afin de répondre aux besoins de notre économie en évolution.

Madam Speaker, government has clearly identified its forward-thinking approach to ensure our province's future: investing in people and building our workforce to meet the demands of our evolving economy.

In our global economy and society, the ability to speak more than one language has long been recognized as an advantage. We must continue to instill the value and importance of Canada's official languages and ensure opportunities to take full advantage of our bilingual population.

Again, I go back to my own life. I came from an Anglophone family and I certainly would never have learned how to speak French if it wasn't for the French immersion program. Certainly we were bused out of the district, and maybe at the time in the early 1980s it wasn't seen as a great idea, but there are lots of children - as I stated, we are the third most bilingual speaking province in Canada. I think we have a success story for our education system here on Prince Edward Island. It is good, because many of our children that are exiting the school system today from grade 12 are bilingual thanks to French immersion. So it has given

a whole new lease on life and opportunities for their future.

While being part of this global economy in society, we must continue to preserve and promote our culture and heritage of which the Acadian and Francophone community is an integral part. Our identity as Islanders, regardless of our origin, is directly tied to our culture.

In this year commemorating the deportation of Island Acadians, let us celebrate the survival of the Acadian people, the riches of the French language and Acadian culture and whole-heartedly embrace our true diversity.

Je vous remercie, Madame la Présidente.

Merci.

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

It gives me great pleasure to stand and to support this motion. I also would like to say hello to the people in the gallery. As other people mentioned, it's difficult from this side to see who's behind us.

The other part is I want to start off by saying it was certainly a very sad day in our history, the deportation of our Acadian people.

Other people have talked about the great contributions the Acadian people have made historically in the past, and some people have talked about even in the present and in the future, which I think is terrific.

I think a number of speakers have already spoke about the contributions Acadian people have made culturally, whether that's been through their music, their food, their hospitality.

I thought I might focus a little bit on community economic development and of the great contribution the Acadian people have made. I believe many people are aware of the Acadian communities movement around co-operatives, and I also thought we should give some thank you to people like Léonce Bernard who's well known for helping out with the co-operative

movement.

The other part, too, is I was lucky enough in my own past to be able to sit on a national organization called the National Council of Welfare. When we had an opportunity to bring this group from across Canada to Prince Edward Island, as a community developer at the time I chose the group to be able to come to the Evangeline area. In the Evangeline area not only did we stay for the entire week, and we got to see first hand a rural community that was thriving at the time, we also had a lot of time to spend with people, whether they were from Ottawa or Saskatchewan. It gave people a chance to really realize how a bilingual community actually works.

In terms of the Acadian people, they've always been so good to those of us who do not have French as our second language. I myself went to school, my first few year in a one-room school, so it was at that particular time not even having French immersion.

The other thing I wanted to mention about, again on the community development theme, is I was lucky enough to work with a man by the name of Aubrey Cormier. I believe people from the Wellington area recognized Aubrey. At that time there was a national program that was coming out through the community access. Although I worked in Souris at the time, Aubrey and I developed dual proposals that we could have submitted at that particular time to get the Community Access Program started here on Prince Edward Island. I'm really proud that Aubrey, not only did he get the program started, but we were actually able to help over a number of years. That program evolved from the Community Access site to the present Collège Acadie.

I remember at the time the vision that Aubrey and the staff had there was not only as the Premier talked about - trying to prospect and bring people here to the province that may want to do business - but at one point in time the people in that community actually were prospecting themselves and bringing work from France and Quebec here to PEI to be developed.

The other part that I was really proud of is when Aubrey was still with Community Access Program in the Wellington area and I was doing some work as a volunteer in the Morell area, we actually participated