

for the Island.”

Another study by the province is also underfoot, with input from Charlottetown, Stratford, Cornwall and the CADC (Charlottetown Area Development Corporation).

In January, 2001, the Public Transportation Coalition (PTC) met with Don MacKinnon, the Minister of Public Works and Transportation, and were “surprised and heartened to hear that his department was [also] working on a proposal for Island-wide public transportation.” At the minister’s request, a three-person coalition was formed to review research documents. The next meeting was slated for July 10th.

Also, on June 27th, the PTC met with Charlottetown mayor George MacDonald for a briefing. They were particularly interested, at that time, in the reasons for yet another new parkade in downtown Charlottetown, and in learning of the “parameters of the new study and its relationship with other two.”

Apparently, the new 500-plus car garage is *quid pro quo*: they were required to build a new parkade for the Department of Veteran’s Affairs and the new Information Technology Centre which is currently being constructed on Queen Street. The new real estate taxes from the federal building initiative are expected to cover those costs.

“It is clear to the PTC that the decision to build a parkade had nothing to do with the transportation needs of the city.” In fact, the PTC believes that this will lead to increased traffic congestion in the downtown core.

As for the study, the Mayor reported that “tenders would require proposals to establish a viable Public Transportation System in Charlottetown.” The city is receiving \$75,000 for the study, coming from the Federal government’s Green Fund. MacDonald believes that a viable plan will be in place by approximately May, 2002.

MacDonald, however, had “no knowledge of the Public Works study (to the best of his knowledge),” and he also thought that the CADC-3 city-provincial study was primarily “about traffic patterns and flows.”

The PTS concluded that there

was a “great need for more communication on public transportation between the different levels of government,” and that they still awaited “announcement by our three levels of government to establish the funding required to establish PTS in the island.”

At the time of this article’s publication, the PTS were also considering a request to meet with Shawn Murphy, the federal MP of Hillsborough, “to ascertain whether he is aware of the negative impact of federal building initiatives on the PTS movement.”

When I interviewed David MacKay over the phone recently, he reported that the PTC had met with Minister Don MacKinnon within the past month.

“They are intending to do a survey of Islanders this month and over winter ... They are concerned that it [a public transportation service] won’t be used by Islanders. We understand that concern, but we feel there needs to be education and outreach.”

“There were start-ups before that were half-hearted or underfunded,” MacKay added, citing that without a standard of 30 percent government funding, projects were “bound to fail.”

“We’d like them to move forward as quickly as possible, to make a commitment over the next four to five years.”

MacKay had recently attended the Conference on Newcomers, and reported a “lack of public transportation as deterrent for newcomers to stay [on PEI].”

“If they’d have a wider economic perspective, it’s good for every sector of the economy ... including in the marketing of schools,” MacKay stated, alluding to benefits for UPEI and Holland College for recruiting students in the future.

As for the meeting with MacKinnon, MacKay reported that “he’d offered to share documents, but we’re unsure about that commitment now.” MacKay expressed disappointment over this roadblock.

“I saw seniors crawling over snowbanks this past winter,” MacKay added, emphasizing his belief in the vital need for action on this issue.

Being a Refugee

by Ruth MATHIANG

When I look up the word “refugee,” I learn that the word *refugee* originated from the French word *refugie*, coming out of the time of persecution in the French revolution of 1789. It would enter the English language in 1865. Rousseau, a French writer, once said, “man is born free yet everywhere he goes he is in chains.”

As a refugee, tears roll down my face writhed in agony, while others look from the sideline of wealth. What is the easiest way to avoid being a refugee? That is a question I always ask myself, but I’ve found no answer. Refugees bear the brunt of war, but their resolve to build a peaceful life never dies, they only cry for international solidarity. One prime minister said that the United Nations was set up not to take refugees to heaven but to save them from hell.

I was born in a small town called Malakal, and grew up in Khartoum, the capital city of Sudan. Being the middle child of three brothers and five sisters, we lived through the hard way, learning to share what God put on our table to eat. My father was a minister with the Presbyterian church in Sudan, but we were not given the freedom of worship nor he the right to preach. The Sudan government continually showered him with threats for his political ideology, so he arranged for us to leave the country and move to Kenya, in East Africa.

Reaching Kenya, I lived in KRC (Kakuma Refugee Camp). It was comprised of many nationalities

with different cultures, religions, politics, and traditional backgrounds. There were Somalis, Sudanese, Ethiopians, Rwandese, Ugandese, Burundians, and Zairians. Again these nationalities were divided along ethnic lines. For example, the Sudanese are grouped into communities according to their tribes, like the Nuer, Shiluk, and Dinka. This is to give a sense of belonging, identification, easy administration and, more significantly, to avoid ethnic clashes.

Life in the camp was not easy for me. I spent my days just taking one meal a day, buying water, and being sick with no proper medication. I learned how to be a survivor. Through thick and thin, I struggled my way to see the next day.

I got accepted in a refugee sponsoring program called WUSC (World University Services of Canada), and they offered computer skills, lessons in English, and essay writing. This is to prepare a student for university. WUSC sponsors students for one year in Canadian universities, and this is to help get African refugee students to a university.

A smile can now be seen on my face because I am happy: I know that I did not end up here by mistake or chance, but because it is the will of God. I know that I can do something, out of the education I get here, for my country. I miss home and family all the time, but this is okay because I believe I will see them again.

UPEI Student Charged with Attempted Murder

by Matthew DORRELL

Ian Lawlor Ritche, an 18 year-old UPEI student, has been charged with attempted murder after a stabbing in Halifax during the weekend. The Charlottetown teen is currently undergoing a psychiatric assessment

to determine whether he will stand trial. The victim, a Dalhousie student, was stabbed in the chest and stomach, but is in good condition. The UPEI President’s office had no comment as of press time.