

visited with your relatives. We're all too busy for that now. It's the beginning of the end of family life."

Nova Scotia Premier John Hamm has drawn both support and ridicule for his staunch opposition to Sunday shopping. "I respect the right of John Hamm and his country cousins to sing their Sunday hymns in the wildwood," said one letter writer to the Halifax *Herald* newspaper, "but it's a shame the average working person has to suffer financially as a result. Most Nova Scotians live in the 21st century, and they want this archaic law tossed into the dustbin."

*Herald* columnist Paul Schneiderreit called the Sunday shopping ban "ridiculous, annoying and paternalistic," and "one of the country's most backward pieces of legislation."

And now, after Moncton's initiative, even Hamm says he is "not blind to the fact that this could have big ramifications for the Amherst area. I am looking at it with a great deal of concern."

In other parts of the country, the battle against Sunday shopping was lost a decade or more ago. Alberta and Northwest Conference Executive Secretary Rev. George Rodgers admits he was picking up some items for supper in Edmonton recently when he met a fellow church member who was embarrassed to be caught in the grocery store on Sunday. "But it has become a part of life here," he says.

"The church still exists, and families still have time together; we just have to do it differently. We've adapted and adjusted, and life goes on."

Hamilton Conference Mission and Communication Officer John Asling says that "in the end, the debate in this Conference was more about a common day of pause than about Sunday shopping." United Church people he works with didn't necessarily feel it had to be Sunday, he says, not "in this multicultural society." But he adds: "We don't have a Sabbath at all in our lives now. Even that's been lost — especially for retail workers."

Which is exactly what people like Craig Dickson, and Mary Jane and Graham Fraser fear as the dominoes begin to teeter in the Maritimes.

*With files from John Wilson*

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Mobeen Khaja (left) and Mark Persaud are promoting mosque and peace centre.

## From Toronto to Kabul, in peace

Civil and political unrest drove Mark Persaud and Mobeen Khaja from their homes in opposite corners of the world (Guyana for Persaud and Pakistan for Khaja). They sought refuge in Toronto, and rebuilt their lives.

Now Persaud, outreach-committee chair at Lansing United Church, and Khaja, a Sunni Muslim who founded and presides over the Association of Progressive Muslims of Ontario, have gathered an eclectic group of supporters across religious and ethnic lines to raise \$1 million for the people of Afghanistan.

Sitting together in the small 34th-floor office in Toronto's financial district where Persaud is a crown prosecutor for the federal department of justice, the two men express their gratitude for the openness of this multifaceted population, where people from five world religions and five Christian denominations have rallied behind an idea that developed on a morning subway ride to work.

"We're going to rebuild a mosque," Persaud had exclaimed to himself when he read news coverage of a Muslim holy site destroyed by American bombing in Afghanistan. He took the idea to his minister, Rev. Brian Brown, and the two called in Khaja — whom Persaud knew through multicultural outreach work — to share their plans and hopes. "I literally had tears in my eyes," says Khaja. "After all, this is what Canada is all about."

The supporters held their inaugural

meeting in January with representation from Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh faith groups, from Anglican, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic and United Church congregations, and from Concordia, a secular peace organization. Already the coalition has moved beyond the initial plan of simply rebuilding a mosque in Kabul, to creating an "international peace and development centre" to provide educational, health, social, cultural and humanitarian aid. The International Peace Project, as it has become known, will work with both the Canadian and Afghan governments, employing local Afghan producers, distributors and workers.

## Gifts help feed Afghans

By late January, United Church supporters — including a family-controlled charitable foundation that made a \$150,000 contribution — had already donated more than a quarter of a million dollars through the national church to help the Afghan people recover from more than two decades of war and oppression, compounded most recently by drought.

The money is being channeled to Afghan aid mainly through ACT (Action by Churches Together, a joint development and relief project of the World Council of Churches and the