

Foote gives Laurentians \$10,000

BY DON POWER, Express Sports Editor

Judy Foote, the MHA for Grand Bank, has taken \$10,000 from the government pot and given it to the provincial men's soccer champs as a travel subsidy for the national Challenge Cup tournament.

But the St. Lawrence Laurentians don't have too far to travel. The tournament is being held this weekend at fields in St. John's, Mount Pearl and Conception Bay South. And, according to several people involved with soccer, almost half the team lives in St. John's.

Carmel Turpin, Foote's director of communications, confirmed the donation Tuesday.

"The provincial government has provided \$10,000 to the St. Lawrence Laurentians to assist with their participation in the national Challenge Cup," Turpin said.

"It's the first time in years that the national Challenge Cup is being held here. She wanted them to be focused on training and getting geared up for the championships, and not having to be worried about fund-raising.

"This is the eighth consecutive year they're going to be representing Newfoundland and Labrador and, where it's on the home turf, she really wanted to ensure they could put forward their best effort in the games and championships."

Foote, who is also the minister of Education, pledged the money to the team during a fund-raising telethon in the Burin Peninsula community last month. She is out of the province and unavailable for comment, but Turpin said every year when the Laurentians need to raise funds, they keep going back to the same well. Foote wanted to help them out this year.

"The Laurentians come from a small community and they've had to rely on the same people year after year to help support them get to the nationals," Turpin explained.

"I guess it was felt it was time to give them some help."

Mount Pearl is the province's women's representatives in the Jubilee Cup — the national women's championship which is also being held in the capital region this weekend.

As of Tuesday, coach Ben Dunne says his team hadn't received any government funding, although he did say a request was faxed to Mount Pearl MHA Julie Bettney on Monday.

Dunne said the request was made late "mainly because we weren't travelling, number one, but we got wind several days ago that Minister Foote had opened up \$10,000 for St. Lawrence."

The Mount Pearl coach says his club's budget of \$6,500 includes new second uniforms and airfare to bring home players from mainland universities.

Six age-group soccer teams are also competing at national championships this weekend.

Five of the six are from the St. John's Youth Soccer Association, which didn't receive any government funding, according to technical director Tony Mullett.

However, Mullett adds his group didn't make an official request for money.

The St. John's teams travelling include boys and girls under-14 in Kelowna, B.C., under-16 boys and girls in Etobicoke, Ont., and the girls under-18 in Calgary.

Mount Pearl will represent the province in boys' under-18 play.

The national tournaments begin Thursday and conclude Monday.