



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Charlie Parker

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Second Session

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 2010

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House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 2010

Sixty-first General Assembly

Second Session

2:00 P.M.

SPEAKER

Hon. Charlie Parker

DEPUTY SPEAKERS

Mr. Gordon Gosse, Mr. Leo Glavine, Mr. Alfie MacLeod

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. We'll get today's proceedings underway, so I would ask everybody for their attention.

Before we start the daily routine, you may notice we have a new face in our Legislature today at the table. I want to welcome Bev Bosiak. She's the Deputy Clerk from the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, and I would ask you to give a warm welcome to Bev Bosiak. (Applause)

Secondly, the late debate adjournment motion under Rule 5(5) to be held at the moment of interruption reads as follows:

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly join me in honouring those who serve in our Canadian Armed Forces, past and present, their families and loved ones, for the dedication, loyalty and perseverance they exhibit in protecting Canada and preserving democracy and peace throughout the world.

That was submitted by the honourable member for Hammonds Plains-Upper Sackville and will be held at the moment of interruption at 6:00 p.m.

We will commence the daily routine.

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants West.

MR. CHUCK PORTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The petition presented by the Falmouth Home and School Association, the operative clause reads as follows:

“Whereas pedestrian injuries are the third leading cause of injury-related death for children under the age of 14 years . . . the Falmouth Home & School Association has gathered 172 signatures on this petition requesting the following: one four-way stop at the intersection of Back Road and Dyke Road in Falmouth; one four-way stop at the intersection of Town Road and Dyke Road in Falmouth; and to reduce traffic speeds within the school zones.”

I have affixed my signature, as well, and I’ll table that today.

MR. SPEAKER: The petition is tabled.

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Energy.

HON. WILLIAM ESTABROOKS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to inform the House today that we are introducing a bill to extend the moratorium on the Canadian portion of Georges Bank indefinitely. (Applause) Thank you for that and thank you to all the members opposite also, I appreciate that support.

Successive governments have recognized that Georges Bank is a special and unique place. It’s a sensitive marine ecosystem that has been closed to exploration drilling since a moratorium was placed on it under the Accords Act in 1988. As the House is aware, the formal moratorium expires at the end of 2012 and as a government we have been looking closely as to what is the right thing to do here.

Mr. Speaker, we believe the right thing to do is to provide certainty about our intentions around Georges. Rather than continue this debate every few years, our government is bringing in clear legislation that outlines our policy and process with regard to this important piece of Nova Scotia’s offshore. Exploration and drilling activity will not

happen in this area of our offshore unless factors such as science, technology, and environmental protection provide us with the full confidence to proceed - to do otherwise is not worth the risk to Nova Scotians. (Applause)

The bill we are introducing extends the moratorium indefinitely, and it requires a public hearing and a vote in this Legislature by all members present representing their constituencies, with full public debate, to change or lift this moratorium. Georges Bank represents between 5 to 10 per cent of the prospective area for oil and gas development in the offshore of Nova Scotia. The rest of our offshore does not contain the same characteristics as Georges and we already have full confidence in our regulatory and environmental assessment systems to permit petroleum activity in these other areas.

We are open for business in that regard and we are investing \$15 million to improve our knowledge and geoscience of these other potentially lucrative areas in the offshore. We have confidence in the laws and regulations of Nova Scotia pertaining to the offshore, Mr. Speaker, we just don't know enough about the sensitive area of Georges Bank.

Mr. Speaker, this is about making sure the right science is there to demonstrate the fisheries and ecosystem will not be, or ever, harmed. We are introducing legislation that provides clear direction on maintaining the moratorium until there is a compelling reason to not do so anymore. Of course, we share the jurisdiction with the federal government and are dependent on their process also. We've been consulting with them on the direction that we're taking today. We look forward to working with Ottawa on this important initiative. We do expect that over time the intent of this legislation will make it into the Accords Act that establishes the rules for managing our offshore.

[2:15 p.m.]

Mr. Speaker, this government, Nova Scotians, and members of this House hopefully believe that Georges Bank is a special place that deserves special recognition. That's why we're moving in this direction. At this time I would like to in particular thank the member for Shelburne, I would like to thank the member for Argyle, and I would like to thank the member for Digby-Annapolis for making sure that they clearly have the ear of this Energy Minister. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

MR. ANDREW YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, I would like to first thank the minister for the advance copy of his remarks today as well as the invitation for both myself and the member for Digby-Annapolis to his briefing earlier. I know I speak on behalf of the entire Liberal caucus when I say that we are pleased to see the government move forward with a bill, even though we see this as only an incremental step. We cannot understand why the government would introduce a bill extending a moratorium indefinitely and not go all the way and make it a full ban in legislation that would require repeal of the Act to overturn. I

point this out because only a year ago, when they introduced the uranium mining ban, this government said that a full ban was needed and a moratorium extension would be not enough to protect Nova Scotians. So why is only an extension good enough for Georges Bank?

I also note that this bill still permits seismic exploration on Georges Bank. This is something which the fishermen at the briefing today expressed concern about and which we are concerned about. Exploration was not permitted in the uranium ban, so why is it being allowed here? Seismic only allows a case to be built for this bill to be overturned in the future. You will all remember, I'm sure, the passionate arguments by many in this House urging the government to prohibit exploration on Georges Bank, but most especially the comments by my colleague, the member for Digby-Annapolis, who talked about finding God in the gales of Georges Bank. Rest assured, that member will have much to say on this issue in the coming days. We are concerned that this bill as proposed would require only a resolution to overturn it, and while the minister is right that the resolution may require debate, in fact, any majority government in the future could overturn it without MLAs having to face the Law Amendments Committee.

Mr. Speaker, at 240 kilometres by 120 kilometres Georges Bank is larger than the State of Massachusetts and is one of the richest fishing grounds in the world. While the minister claims that between only 5 per cent and 10 per cent of Nova Scotia's offshore oil and gas resources lie under Georges Bank, we know that 10 wells drilled there actually came up dry. Drilling and exploration on Georges Bank is not worth the risk either with the technology available today nor anything we currently see on the horizon. We are pleased to see this incremental step by the minister and we hope the minister will be open to considering the issues we have brought forward and issues that we see as weaknesses in the bill as currently presented.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Leader in the House of the Progressive Conservative Party.

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, I'm very happy to stand today and talk about something that's very important to the fishermen, to the people of my constituency. It would have been nice if maybe that member could have let one of the fishermen talk, to hear from the member for Digby-Annapolis and see what's important to his folks. (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: It would have been really nice to hear from the member for Digby-Annapolis, because I know he's talked very passionately about this on many occasions.

Now, Mr. Speaker, as you know, I represent the hardworking people of Argyle and their livelihoods are very dependent upon the fishery, especially that of Georges Bank. I can say that my grandfather was a fisherman on Georges Bank; my father, who just retired last year after 47 years of fishing on Georges Bank; and I can say that I've been to Georges Bank and I have fished on Georges Bank. I can tell you that this is a very positive step forward.

Now, I know there are a lot of there, there's and I thank them for those there, there's, but I can tell you, let me be clear that this moratorium is not an outright ban on commercial drilling on Georges Bank. I can tell you that it's clear from the legislation that this drilling ban is an airtight as a screen door.

First of all, this legislation is only effective in removing the constant cycle of dates that causes much concern amongst the communities and various stakeholders on both sides. Secondly, this legislation can be trumped by the Accord Acts of 1986. I'm wondering what kind of discussion went through to the federal government to see where their thoughts were on this. I think what this really means is this is step one of a process, that there has to be a step two and I wonder what the debate on step two will be, which is talking to the federal government on this.

As we heard from the minister's news conference, the fishery is concerned about the affects of seismic testing. Scientific seismic testing can have adverse effects upon whales, sharks, spawning grounds and crustaceans. This bill does allow some type of scientific seismic testing to happen. We believe this fact needs more attention and the government must do more consultation with local fishing communities.

Speaking of consultation, when the PC Government took office in 1999, we did conduct consultations in the communities that would be affected by the moratorium decisions and we strongly encourage the Department of Energy to do so. So the PC caucus also believes that the public consultation should be more defined within this proposed Act. Consultation must be comprehensive and conducted within local communities and with their associated stakeholders like inshore fishermen associations.

I would also point out that the bill also gives a majority government an opportunity, such as this NDP Government, the ability to strike down legislation should it feel the need to do so. The minister stated, should technology and other factors change then we would review the moratorium. This is very subjective and does not put the Georges Bank drilling issue to bed.

In closing, we agree that this is a very positive step going forward, but more work needs to be done in order to tighten this legislation. I have good faith in the minister, but I can tell you that faith does not extend to the Premier at this time. He can reconfigure his Cabinet any way he wants in the future, if he wants a different outcome on this one.

So, as much as we support this, we'll be watching this one closely and debating on this when we have the opportunity in second reading. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations on an introduction.

HON. RAMONA JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to do an introduction. I would like to welcome Susanne Sommer, who is in our gallery here this afternoon. I would just like to say that Susanne is a resident of Wolfville, but this summer my CA was hired in another job, in another province and Susanne Sommer very graciously stepped immediately into the - I said Susanne Sommer, I'm sorry, Susanne Winters. Susanne, you're looking great. (Laughter) I apologize, Susanne Winters.

I'm a little nervous and I'll try to re-share this, Susanne stepped in and really did a fine job for me this summer while I went through the hiring process. For that, I cannot thank you enough, she was absolutely stellar. But I also wanted to draw attention to this House that Susanne is with the Cancer Action Day today. Susanne has recently found out, just a number of months ago, that she's one of our people in Nova Scotia fighting a good fight right now. Our thoughts and our prayers are with you Susanne, as you continue to fight cancer. I would like everyone to give her a warm welcome and I know all of our thoughts and prayers are with you, as you continue your fight. (Standing Ovation)

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, minister, and we welcome all our visitors here this afternoon.

I just want to point out that it has been brought to my attention that the petition that was tabled earlier by the member for Hants West contains one page of an electronic petition. As you are aware, that is not acceptable here in the House, only original petitions or original signatures are accepted. I'm going to ask that that one page be withdrawn; other than that, the petition is accepted as it is. Just for your information, it's only original signatures that are allowed on petitions

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Deputy Premier.

RESOLUTION NO. 1863

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Premier, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas the Learning Partnership with Scotiabank Group ran the second annual national Ultimate Dream Job Contest to coincide with their annual Take Our Kids to Work program, now in its 16th year; and

Whereas over 200,000 students participate in 75,000 workplaces across Canada, this program provides a creative way for Grade 9 students to showcase their aspirations; and

Whereas this year's national grand prize winner of the Ultimate Dream Job Contest is Melanie Renn, a Grade 9 student from Yarmouth Junior High School in Yarmouth, whose dream is to become an archeologist;

Therefore be it resolved that the House recognize Melanie Renn today as the second annual grand prize winner of the Ultimate Dream Job Contest on Take Our Kids to Work Day, November 3rd - and I think some of the kids are actually in these seats today.

Mr. Speaker, I request waiver of notice and passage without debate.

MR. SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Health Promotion and Protection.

RESOLUTION NO. 1864

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas across the world, November is frequently being replaced by Movember; and

Whereas Movember challenges men to start the month of November clean-shaven before growing a moustache to raise awareness and money for prostate cancer; and

Whereas prostate cancer is the most frequently diagnosed cancer in Nova Scotia with an estimated 1,050 men diagnosed in 2010;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House mark November as Movember and acknowledge Prostate Cancer Canada for promoting awareness of prostate cancer in such an amusing and relatable manner.

Mr. Speaker, I request waiver of notice and passage without debate.

MR. SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Labour and Workforce Development.

HON. MARILYN MORE: I wonder if I might be permitted an introduction?

MR. SPEAKER: Certainly.

MS. MORE: In the Speaker's Gallery, we have Mona Woodall, who is with the NDP caucus, and her daughter Sarah McKee from Uniacke District School, and stepson Connor Warnell of Sir Robert Borden Junior High. And in the east gallery I'd like to recognize Karen Stone, who is with Communications Nova Scotia working in the Department of Labour and Workforce Development, her niece Nicole, and Nicole's friend. If you would stand and receive the welcome of the House. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Labour and Workforce Development.

RESOLUTION NO. 1865

HON. MARILYN MORE: Mr. Speaker, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas on Wednesday, November 3rd, Grade 9 students across Canada will experience a day in the life of an adult at work; and

Whereas it is important to provide young people with opportunities to test drive the many great jobs this province has to offer, so they get the experience and information they need as they make decisions about their future careers; and

Whereas here in Nova Scotia we provide many resources both in the classroom and community such as co-operative education, workplace health and safety curriculum, and Web resources such as career options that support young Nova Scotians and their families as they prepare for the future;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House thank the many employers who have agreed to mentor our students today and welcome some special guests that came here this afternoon to see us work as part of this year's Take Our Kids to Work Day.

Mr. Speaker, I request waiver of notice and passage without debate.

[2:30 p.m.]

MR. SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Education.

RESOLUTION NO. 1866

HON. MARILYN MORE: Mr. Speaker, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas Saint Mary's University English professor Dr. Alexander MacLeod is one of the five finalists for the 2010 Giller Prize, the country's most prestigious literary award; and

Whereas the finalists were chosen from 98 books submitted from every region of the country; and

Whereas Dr. MacLeod wrote the collection of short stories, entitled *Light Lifting*, over the past 13 years while earning a Ph.D., teaching and raising his family;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House congratulate Dr. MacLeod and wish him the best of luck when the winner of this year's Giller Prize is announced on November 9th.

Mr. Speaker, I request waiver of notice and passage without debate.

MR. SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of African Nova Scotian Affairs on an introduction.

HON. PERCY PARIS: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to bring the attention of the House to the gallery opposite. Today we have in the gallery one of Waverley-Fall River-Beaver Bank's youngest and brightest citizens. I'd like to introduce Connor Furey in the gallery. Connor is a Grade 9 student at Lockview High and he also has a long attachment with the government - not only this government but also previous governments - because his mom is also the Acting Deputy Minister of the Department of Economic and Rural Development. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 82 - Entitled an Act Respecting a Moratorium on Petroleum Activity on Georges Bank. (Hon. William Estabrooks)

MR. SPEAKER: Ordered that this bill be read a second time on a future day.

The honourable member for Halifax Clayton Park.

MS. DIANA WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, with your permission, I'd like to do an introduction before I read the resolution today. We are joined today by a number of guests who have been at the Legislature today for the National Cancer Day of Action, which is the campaign to control cancer. We're joined in the gallery - one of the members has already been introduced by the minister across the way but I'll just include her name again - but we are joined by Joanne Parker, Jane MacDougald, Adrienne Silnicki, Janet Martell, Susanne Winters, Jay Cartney, Yvonne MacGregor and Mary Smith. I wonder if you would stand up - you're not all in the same gallery - and receive the warm welcome of the House. (Applause)

A number of us were guests of the group at lunch today, a number of the members of the Liberal caucus, as well, had joined me there so I wanted to thank them.

NOTICES OF MOTION

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Clayton Park.

RESOLUTION NO. 1867

MS. DIANA WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas Wednesday, November 3, 2010 marks the second Cancer Day of Action in provincial Legislatures across Canada and the first in Nova Scotia; and

Whereas approximately 33 volunteers from HRM, Cape Breton, Kings County, Truro, and Pictou County have joined us today at Province House and the Halifax Club to share their personal struggles with cancer and the challenges around access to costly medications; and

Whereas in 2010 an estimated 2,750 Nova Scotians will die of cancer and 6,200 new cases will be diagnosed, highlighting the fact that cancer is one of Nova Scotia's leading health issues;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House extend our heartfelt appreciation to the 33 volunteers who took the time to remind all of us of the vitally important issues around cancer care and to Joanne Parker, Nova Scotia's team leader, for her outstanding support in organizing today's event.

Mr. Speaker, I request waiver of notice and passage without debate.

MR. SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Victoria-The Lakes.

RESOLUTION NO. 1868

MR. KEITH BAIN: Mr. Speaker, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas on Wednesday, September 29, 2010, Cape Breton University celebrated the accomplishments of four distinguished alumni: Mark Sparrow, Marlene Usher, Kirk MacRae and George Unsworth; and

Whereas these alumnists are four exceptional individuals who are making a difference in the lives of others and in their community; and

Whereas Mark Sparrow was named Young Alumnus of the Year, Marlene Usher was named Alumnus of the Year, Kirk MacRae was named Friend of Cape Breton University and George Unsworth was honoured with the Cape Breton University Line Time Achievement Award;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly thank and recognize the dedication and commitment of these four individuals and salute the hard work they've done on part of Cape Breton University and their community.

Mr. Speaker, I request waiver of notice and passage without debate.

MR. SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Kings North.

RESOLUTION NO. 1869

MR. JIM MORTON: Mr. Speaker, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas the Nova Scotia Fruit Growers' Association's goal is to assist in fostering the growth and development of an economically viable and sustainable Nova Scotia tree fruit industry; and

Whereas the NSFGA has ensured that the apple industry is a key player in the advancement of agriculture and have led the way in promoting Nova Scotia apples, including Honeycrisp, Ambrosia and other special market opportunity varieties, including the sample Gala you have received today; and

Whereas the association has worked with the Nova Scotia Government to increase production through the Honeycrisp Orchard Renewal Program;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia House of Assembly thanks the Nova Scotia Fruit Growers' Association for sharing a Gala apple with us today and commends the association for its continuing work in promoting the growth and development of the apple industry in Nova Scotia.

Mr. Speaker, I request waiver of notice and passage without debate.

MR. SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal on an introduction.

HON. WILLIAM ESTABROOKS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the member opposite for a moment. There are three guests that we have in the east gallery, and in no particular order, because I know that one particular daughter doesn't admit that she has a father - just because he is the Chief Engineer in the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal who makes all those pavement decisions - I'd like to introduce to the House Stephanie Fitsner, Bruce Fitster's daughter. Hello, Stephanie.

I also would like to take the opportunity to introduce Nancy Watson's son, Sam Doiron. Nancy is the Director of Communications in the Energy Department. Welcome, Sam. Finally, least, because of course she goes to the school where I once was the principal and she is job-shadowing her MLA, of all things. (Interruptions) Now you can see what I have to put up with in here. I'd like to introduce Grade 9 Brookside Junior High School student Nikki Giles. Welcome to our House. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

RESOLUTION NO. 1870

MR. ANDREW YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas the first week of November is endorsed by the International Paralympic Committee and the Canadian Commission for UNESCO as the Pan-Canadian Paralympic School Week; and

Whereas the week-long program adopts the ideals of the Paralympic movement, showcasing people with disabilities who are making a difference, providing a focus for school-wide community building and subject-related instruction; and

Whereas today marks 100 days prior to the start of the 2011 Canada Games in Nova Scotia, which represents an unparalleled opportunity to acknowledge these young athletes;

Therefore be it resolved that members of the House of Assembly recognize Pan-Canadian Paralympic School Week and the contributions of our athletes with disabilities.

Mr. Speaker, I request waiver of notice and passage without debate.

MR. SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Cape Breton North.

RESOLUTION NO. 1871

HON. CECIL CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas for the third straight year, Educational Program Innovations and Charity Society (EPIC) has been awarded first place and \$5,000 by the Donner Canadian Foundation for Excellence in the delivery of social services for children; and

Whereas the Donner awards are Canada's largest recognition program for non-profit social service agencies and EPIC founder Barry Waldman was awarded first place for local charity, best managed non-profit for children in Canada; and

Whereas the delivery of the Youth Peer and Parents PEACE Program was instrumental in EPIC winning this year and this program provides free after school peer mentoring, tutoring, creative arts instruction and social interaction for Cape Breton youth;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating Barry Waldman and his staff for a quality program that captured first place over 513 agencies, Canada wide.

Mr. Speaker, I request waiver of notice and passage without debate.

MR. SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Yarmouth.

RESOLUTION NO. 1872

MR. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas Xona Games is owned and operated by Matthew Doucette and Jason Doucette, two young Nova Scotian entrepreneurs; and

Whereas Xona Games is the winner of the inNOVAcorp I-3 Technology Start Up Competition and one of Xona Games' video games, *Destination X*, is the No. 1 ranked video game in Japan; and

Whereas Matthew Doucette and Jason Doucette have exemplified initiative, perseverance, and entrepreneurial spirit;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly congratulate Xona Games on this impressive achievement.

Mr. Speaker, I request waiver of notice and passage without debate.

MR. SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Colchester North.

RESOLUTION NO. 1873

HON. KAREN CASEY: Mr. Speaker, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas Marcia Jeffers from Valley, Colchester North, returned to school after 10 years being out; and

Whereas Marcia earned a Nova Scotia High School graduation diploma for Adults and a Continuing Care Assistant Certificate and was chosen as valedictorian for her graduating class; and

Whereas Marcia received the Council of the Federation Literacy Award, which recognizes an adult learner who has demonstrated outstanding achievement in literacy and made significant contributions to his/ her school, workplace and/or community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Marcia Jeffers for receiving this prestigious literacy award and for her dedication and commitment to both academic and personal improvement.

Mr. Speaker, I request waiver of notice and passage without debate.

MR. SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Truro-Bible Hill.

RESOLUTION NO. 1874

MS. LENORE ZANN: Mr. Speaker, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas Gordon Poole has been a dedicated and tireless volunteer in the Truro community, contributing to organizations such as the Colchester Food Bank (founding

member) for 25 years, the Scouting organization for 50 years, the United Church for most of his life and a lifetime member of the NDP; and

Whereas Mr. Poole was recognized in 1987 as Truro's Volunteer of the Year and has continued to be a strong volunteer since that time; and

Whereas a dinner is being held in Truro on November 6th to honour Mr. Poole for his countless hours of volunteer work;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia Legislature thank Gordon Poole for his dedication in helping his community and for being an outstanding citizen of Truro.

Mr. Speaker, I request waiver of notice and passage without debate.

MR. SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

[2:45 p.m.]

The honourable member for Digby-Annapolis.

RESOLUTION NO. 1875

MR. HAROLD THERIAULT: Mr. Speaker, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas the 100-Series Highway has been nearly built across this province and now many are being twinned for safety reasons; and

Whereas an over-30-kilometre part of this 100-Series Highway in western Nova Scotia has never been built, let alone twinned, and this has been ignored for over 36 years; and

Whereas the hundreds of people who live on this No. 1 Highway between Digby and Weymouth, who put up with the 100-Series traffic, don't know whether to continue hoping for a new road or not, leaving them continually frustrated;

Therefore be it resolved that this government either give these people some hope that this road will be built some day or tell them that it won't be, either way it may release their frustration.

Mr. Speaker, I request waiver of notice and passage without debate.

MR. SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

I hear several Noes.

The notice is tabled.

The honourable Leader in the House of the Progressive Conservative Party.

RESOLUTION NO. 1876

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Monsieur le Président, à une date ultérieure, je demanderai l'adoption de la résolution suivante:

Attendu que chaque année le Conseil scolaire acadien provincial et leurs secteurs des transports reconnaît un conducteur ou une conductrice qui a correspondu le mieux au critère de sélection; et

Attendu que Thomas Muise de la Pointe-à-Rocco, a été nommé conducteur de l'année par le CSAP parce que il a assisté a toutes les sessions de formation offertes par le conseil scolaire, n'a pas réclamé de journées de maladie, n'a pas eu d'accident, a assisté à la formation Smart Driver et a aidé durant les formations offertes aux élèves de la maternelle à la 3^e année; et

Attendu que Tommy a aussi été louangé par les parents. Il à été choisi parmi les 27 conducteurs d'autobus du CSAP at Sud-Ouest;

Par conséquent, qu'il soit résolu que tous les membres de cette Assemblée se joignent à moi pour féliciter Tommy Muise en recevant ce prix, le remercier pour son dévouement à son travail et sa vigilance sur nos biens les plus précieux, nos enfants.

Monsieur le Président, je demande l'adoption de cette résolution sans préavis et sans débat.

Mr. Speaker, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas each year the Conseil Scolaire Acadien Provincial School Board and its transportation sector recognize a school bus driver who has best met their selection criteria; and

Whereas Thomas Muise of Rocco Point was named Driver of the Year by the CSAP because he has attended all training sessions, did not claim any sick days, did not have any accidents, attended the Smart Driver training, and assisted in the training offered to students from kindergarten to Grade 3; and

Whereas Tommy was also highly praised by the parents of the children on his schedule, having been chosen from 27 other bus drivers in the southwest region of the CSAP;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating Tommy Muise on receiving this award and thank him for his dedication to his work and vigilance over our most precious possessions - our children.

Mr. Speaker, I request waiver of notice and passage without debate.

MR. SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island.

RESOLUTION NO. 1877

MR. LEONARD PREYRA: Mr. Speaker, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas the national Cancer Day of Action was established to give voice to Canadians concerned about issues related to cancer control and to demonstrate the importance of these issues to our health and quality of life; and

Whereas the Cancer Day of Action provides an opportunity for organizations and concerned citizens to meet face to face with Members of the Legislative Assembly, engage in dialogue, and encourage action on cancer-related issues; and

Whereas today, November 3rd, marks the first Cancer Day of Action in Nova Scotia, wherein Joanne Parker, coordinator of the Nova Scotia campaign, volunteers, and concerned citizens are passionately and effectively addressing key issues relating to cancer control and, in particular, the need for a national catastrophic drug coverage program;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly recognize the importance of cancer control issues to quality of life and applaud the commitment of Joanne Parker, the volunteers, and other organizers who have not only made today's Cancer Day of Action possible but are also working to effect change that will result in improved health and quality of life for cancer survivors and their families.

Mr. Speaker, I request waiver of notice and passage without debate.

MR. SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Inverness.

RESOLUTION NO. 1878

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas Dr. Robert van den Hoogen of Mabou has been named Dean of Science at St. F.X. University; and

Whereas Dr. van den Hoogen began his five-year appointment on July 1, 2010, leading a dynamic group of individuals in the Faculty of Science; and

Whereas Dr. van den Hoogen's desire for knowledge and his interest in science began on his parents' farm in Mabou;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Dr. Robert van den Hoogen and his proud parents, Herman and Toni, on this significant achievement and wish him well as he fosters a passion for science in his students at St. F.X.

Mr. Speaker, I request waiver of notice and passage without debate.

MR. SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Antigonish.

RESOLUTION NO. 1879

MR. MAURICE SMITH: Mr. Speaker, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas the NDP Government is committed to supporting cultural organizations which are fundamental to the vitality and long-term health of the arts and cultural life in Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Festival Antigonish is Nova Scotia's first and longest-running professional repertory company; and

Whereas Festival Antigonish Summer Theatre applied for and received funding through the Department of Tourism, Culture and Heritage's Operating Assistance for Cultural Organizations Program, toward the theatre's cost of administration, core programs and services;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of the Legislature congratulate Festival Antigonish for receiving this funding and wish them the best for the upcoming season.

Mr. Speaker, I request waiver of notice and passage without debate.

MR. SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Hants West.

RESOLUTION NO. 1880

MR. CHUCK PORTER: Mr. Speaker, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas the W. Garfield Weston Award, with a monetary value of up to \$40,000, is awarded to a community-minded student who is passionate about his or her field of study, curious, courageous, and working to make a difference in society; and

Whereas Justin Clark, a student at Avon View High School in Windsor, is an all-around athlete who plays football, hockey, and baseball, coaches minor football and hockey and has volunteered with Habitat for Humanity, the Canadian Cancer Society, and a literacy initiative, as well as being a 4-H council executive and host and co-prime minister for his student council; and

Whereas Justin has been awarded the prestigious Weston award which will assist him as he pursues his studies in the Business Program at NSCC Waterfront Campus this school year;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly commend Justin for all of his hard work and efforts on achieving this award and wish him the greatest success with college and future endeavours.

Mr. Speaker, I request waiver of notice and passage without debate.

MR. SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Hammonds Plains-Upper Sackville.

RESOLUTION NO. 1881

MR. MAT WHYNOTT: Mr. Speaker, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas on weekends through the month of October, residents in Hammonds Plains and surrounding areas got into the Halloween spirit by visiting the 7th Annual Haunted Hollow Maze; and

Whereas the event began as a small project for a group of women in the area and has turned into a local attraction that is highly anticipated as the Halloween season draws near; and

Whereas each and every year more supporters, volunteers and participants from the local schools and communities get involved in this fun and frightening event;

Therefore be it resolved that the House of Assembly congratulate the organizers of the Haunted Hollow in Hammonds Plains, on a 7th successful season of their unique and fun maze for children and adults alike.

Mr. Speaker, I request waiver of notice and passage without debate.

MR. SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Cape Breton West.

RESOLUTION NO. 1882

MR. ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas the Minister of Natural Resources has had months to review a report on the state of Nova Scotia's natural resource industry entitled A Natural Balance; and

Whereas the industry is still waiting to hear what this minister will do with the report and they are worried because a lot of the recommendations would have destructive effects for those who rely on natural resources for their livelihood; and

Whereas the Progressive Conservative caucus was disappointed to hear that the minister would be reporting on the direction his NDP Government will be taking as early as tomorrow, even though a consultant is still actively working on this file;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly call on the NDP Government to ensure certainty in the natural resources sector, refrain from trampling on the livelihoods of thousands of Nova Scotians, and ask this minister to implement a strategy that honours and benefits those employed in this vital sector of our economy.

Mr. Speaker, I request waiver of notice and passage without debate.

MR. SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

I hear several Noes.

The notice is tabled.

The honourable member for Lunenburg.

RESOLUTION NO. 1883

MS. PAM BIRDSALL: Mr. Speaker, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas the 2010 Spirit of Nova Scotia Local Food Award, co-sponsored by Spirit Nova Scotia and Select Nova Scotia, celebrates individuals and organizations that have made a significant contribution to the local food movement in Nova Scotia; and

Whereas the Lunenburg Farmers' Market has operated in the Town of Lunenburg for 25 years, providing a venue for local food producers to sell their products to the local community; and

Whereas the Lunenburg Farmers' Market was the recipient of the second annual Spirit of Nova Scotia Local Food Award at the Alderney Landing IncrEDIBLE Picnic on August 22nd of this year;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulate the Lunenburg Farmers' Market on receiving this award and recognize the important role the Farmers' Market plays in supporting local food producers and being a focal point for the community.

Mr. Speaker, I request waiver of notice and passage without debate.

MR. SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Victoria-The Lakes.

RESOLUTION NO. 1884

MR. KEITH BAIN: Mr. Speaker, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas many of our brightest and future leaders come from Cape Breton and are educated in our Nova Scotia universities, which will preserve and shape the future of our province and our nation; and

Whereas Sarah Quann of Ingonish, a third year Environmental Science major of Mount Allison University, demonstrated her knowledge and abilities at the 22nd Annual Atlantic Division of the Canadian Association of Geographers Conference in St. John's, Newfoundland; and

Whereas Sarah was competing against students from across the region and has received top honours for her research project, resulting from her direct studies project on past mining at the Joggins Fossil Cliffs;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Sarah Quann on her achievement in receiving top honours and as well commend her professor, Colin Laroque, for the teaching and guidance provided.

Mr. Speaker, I request waiver of notice and passage without debate.

MR. SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations.

RESOLUTION NO. 1885

HON. RAMONA JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas the Deep Roots Music Festival hosted in Wolfville, Nova Scotia, celebrates rich and diverse musical traditions from around the world; and

Whereas the 2010 Deep Roots Music Festival took place from September 24th to September 26th; and

Whereas the Deep Roots Music Festival brings together some of the finest folk and roots singers, songwriters, and musicians in the world for a weekend of concerts, workshops, and celebration;

Therefore be it resolved that the House of Assembly offer its thanks to the staff, the performers, and the many volunteers of the Deep Roots Music Festival and wish them continued success in future years.

Mr. Speaker, I request waiver of notice and passage without debate.

MR. SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Cape Breton North.

RESOLUTION NO. 1886

HON. CECIL CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas the Clifford Street Youth Centre found youth were bringing their preschool siblings to the centre; and

Whereas Constable Paul Ratchford realized that something had to be done to accommodate these preschool children and, under his leadership, a portion of the centre was renovated and equipped as a playroom; and

Whereas children are now playing in the new room, which provides a safe environment and helps the kids to develop their social skills, thanks to a host of volunteers who help run the various programs at the centre;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating Constable Ratchford, his four staff, volunteers, and supporters for their stellar support for the youth of North Sydney.

Mr. Speaker, I request waiver of notice and passage without debate.

MR. SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

[3:00 p.m.]

The honourable member for Lunenburg.

RESOLUTION NO. 1887

MS. PAM BIRDSALL: Mr. Speaker, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas this NDP Government knows and appreciates the important work done by transition houses and women's centres across the province; and

Whereas the previous government chose not to invest more in the protection of women and children in our society for nearly 10 years; and

Whereas in the first year of our mandate our government increased the funding to transition houses and women's centres for the first time in a decade, providing a commitment to making life better for Nova Scotia families;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly recognize the importance of investing in transition homes and women's centres so they may continue their vital work in our communities.

Mr. Speaker, I request waiver of notice and passage without debate.

MR. SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

I hear several Noes.

The notice is tabled.

The honourable for Colchester North.

RESOLUTION NO. 1888

HON. KAREN CASEY: Mr. Speaker, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas the Ada Mingo Memorial Teen Writing Competition is sponsored by the Colchester-East Hants Public Library; and

Whereas the competition is held each year to encourage creative writing by teenagers; and

Whereas Grade 11 student Danielle Hayward submitted a poem entitled *Memories*;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly congratulate Danielle Hayward of Great Village, Colchester North, for winning first place in the years 16 to 19 age category of the Ada Mingo Memorial Teen Writing Competition.

Mr. Speaker, I request waiver of notice and passage without debate.

MR. SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Education on an introduction.

HON. MARILYN MORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to finish, actually, an earlier introduction. In the east gallery I'd like Nicole Bradley to stand and Joelle D'Entremont. Nicole is the niece of the Director of Communications for the Department of Labour and Workforce Development, Karen Stone, who is with them. Nicole goes to Caledonia Junior High. We also have Joelle who is the daughter of Carmelle D'Entremont. Carmelle is the Director of Employment Nova Scotia with the Department of Labour and Workforce Development and Joelle goes to École du Carrefour. A very warm welcome to both of you and thank you for coming today. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Leader in the House of the Progressive Conservative Party.

RESOLUTION NO. 1889

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas the A.M. Clark Medical Centre is a newly-constructed medical facility located in Pubnico Head; and

Whereas the A.M. Clark Medical Centre was named in memory of Dr. Sandy Clark who passed away in 2009 after 27 years of practice in the Pubnico area; and

Whereas Dr. Jackie d'Eon, Dr. Terry Rohland and nurse practitioner Duana d'Entremont will be practising in the new medical centre;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating the community on the completion of this state-of-the-art facility and wish them many more years of continued service to the residents of the tri-county area.

Mr. Speaker, I request waiver of notice and passage without debate.

MR. SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Inverness.

RESOLUTION NO. 1890

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas Bill Dunphy and Inez Forbes were recipients of the Atlantic Canadian Newspaper Association Silver Quill Award; and

Whereas both Bill and Inez have each worked for 26 years in the newspaper industry; and

Whereas Bill and Inez currently ply their trade for the weekly publication, The Inverness Oran, Bill as Sports Editor and Inez as Advertising Manager;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Bill and Inez on their accomplishments and thank them for continuing the tradition of excellence in Nova Scotia journalism.

Mr. Speaker, I request waiver of notice and passage without debate.

MR. SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Hants West.

RESOLUTION NO. 1891

MR. CHUCK PORTER: Mr. Speaker, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas nursery schools are preschool education institutions, which are staffed by dedicated and qualified teachers and other professionals who encourage and supervise educational play as part of early childhood education; and

Whereas the Windsor Nursery School, located on Cottage Street at Currys Comer, Hants County, is proudly celebrating 50 years of operation in 2010, providing children with fun and structured activities to assist in the development of their socialization skills; and

Whereas teaching our children at an early age the importance of effective interaction and communication with others will help them throughout their school years and continue with them through the remainder of their lives;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly recognize Windsor Nursery School President Tom Webb, Vice-President Shauna Webb, Treasurer Maggie Shackleton, Secretary David Tremblay, Coordinator Patricia Tremblay, Registrar Dawn Block and Directors Margo Frost, Helen Saveur, Sally Fischer, Joanna Gould-Thorpe and Mark Cudmore, along with staff of the Windsor Nursery School for their dedication and commitment to pre-school children who will become our future politicians, doctors, nurses, social workers and teachers.

Mr. Speaker, I request waiver of notice and passage without debate.

MR. SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Cape Breton West.

RESOLUTION NO. 1892

MR. ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas Leim Joe, Steve Marshall, Levi Francis and Hayden Sylliboy, from the Chief Allison M. Bernard Memorial School in Eskasoni, received the E-Spirit Ambassadors Special Achievement Award; and

Whereas the E-Spirit National Aboriginal Youth Business Plan competition is aimed at aboriginal students in Grades 10 to 12 and honours and promotes the hard work and business savvy of aboriginal youth in Canada; and

Whereas more than 500 students registered for this competition, but only 198 qualified for the finals that took place in Ottawa;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly applaud Leim Joe, Steve Marshall, Levi Francis and Hayden Sylliboy on their success in achieving the E-Spirit Award and wish them every success in the future.

Mr. Speaker, I request waiver of notice and passage without debate.

MR. SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, I rise today on a point of privilege. You will recall the extensive debate there has been in this Assembly surrounding the government's decision to build one single correctional facility rather than the two facilities proposed in Cumberland and Antigonish Counties. Repeatedly in this House, both the Premier and the Minister of Justice have denied that the previous government had done any work on this issue, but rather that it was simply a political promise. Last night the government leaked a document titled, Review of Proposed Construction of One or More New Correctional Facilities. The document is prepared by Diana MacKinnon, Director of Public Safety, and is dated October 30, 2009.

On Page - i - of the Executive Summary under the heading of Summary, it says:

“Approvals to date: The former government provided Tangible Capital Asset approval

- in Fiscal Year (FY) 2006/2007, to begin a land search in each of Antigonish and Cumberland Counties with the objective of constructing a 100-cell (200 bed) facility in

Antigonish County and a 50-cell (100 bed) facility in Cumberland County, to replace the Antigonish and Cumberland correctional facilities respectively.

- in FY 2007/08, to engage design consulting services to complete preliminary designs as well as a Class 'C' cost estimates
- in FY 2008/09, to continue the work on the two facilities to a milestone of complete tender-ready construction documentation.”

Under the heading of Sunk costs it says:

“The sunk costs to date are \$988,848.09:

- \$490,807.55 for the proposed 50-cell (100 bed) facility on a site adjacent to Springhill Institution, including \$38,096.55 in land development costs and \$1.00 for the purchase of the site from the Town of Springhill.
- \$498,040.54 for the proposed 100-cell (200 bed) facility, including \$34,030.54 in evaluation and assessment costs associated with reviewing potential sites in Antigonish County. No suitable site was identified and the search was halted pending direction from government.”

This document clearly contradicts the statements made in this House by both the Premier and the Minister of Justice. While both denied any work has been done by the previous government on this issue, they had this document in their possession which proves clearly otherwise. I'm left to conclude that both the Minister of Justice and the Premier have misled this House. As such, I would ask that you review Hansard and this document in question in order to determine whether a prima facie case of breach of privilege has taken place.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, I encourage you to take the member up and review Hansard because what you will find out is what we've consistently said, that there was no business case ever devised by the former government to build these facilities. That's what you'll find our position was then and it is today.

MR. SPEAKER: I will take the matter under advisement and report back on a future day.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, I rise on another point of privilege. As members of this House it is essential that we have access to all available information in order to represent Nova Scotians and hold government accountable.

Yesterday I asked the Minister of Justice to table in this House the business case he relied upon in making his decision to build one jail, rather than the two previously announced by the former government, in Cumberland and Antigonish Counties. Yesterday,

the government leaked to the media, prior to Question Period, a document entitled *Northeast Nova Scotia Correctional Facility: Site Analysis and Selection Business Case for Candidate Sites*. This document has yet to be tabled in the House for all members to access.

Later in the day, following Question Period, the government leaked another document to the media entitled *Review of Proposed Construction of One or More New Correctional Facilities*. I'm at a loss to understand why the minister would not have tabled these two documents in the House. I feel that the minister has shown contempt for this House and your position as Speaker, through his actions.

Shall it now be the policy of the new government in this Assembly that any documents requested by the Opposition to be tabled will have to be accessed through leaked documents in the media? I would ask that you review the matter and uphold the intent of our democratic system and call upon the government to table documents with the Assembly when they are requested, so that all members and all Nova Scotians may have access to them.

It is my hope that you will make a determination of whether the Minister of Justice's actions and that of the government constitute a prima facie breach of privilege of the members of this House.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: First of all, Mr. Speaker, it's up to us as government what we'll table and what we won't table. (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, order.

The honourable Government House Leader.

MR. CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, the minister clearly yesterday said that he would table, but when we talk about contempt, when you use words like "leak" and so on, it's just erroneous. If the media have that, they have it, but we told those members that we would table that and we will.

MR. SPEAKER: Again, I will take that under advisement and report back on a future day. It is now 3:14 p.m. and Question Period will run to 4:44 p.m.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

**JUSTICE: JAILS (CUMB. & ANTIGONISH COS.)
- PLANS CONFIRM**

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Justice claimed that there was no real plan to build jails in Cumberland County and in Antigonish. In fact, he called those plans nothing more than a discussion, rumour and innuendoes. The Premier was also chirping from the sidelines that there was no plan. Well, now we know officials from the Department of Justice have spent three years working on those plans and spent close to \$1 million on those rumours and innuendoes. My question to the Premier is, how can you claim there is no plan when staff from your office last night gave documents to the media outlining work done by the previous government as far back as 2006?

[3:15 p.m.]

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, in fact, there was no plan - I said that before and I'll say it again. In fact, as I understand it, the original departmental desire was to have a jail built in Pictou County and they recommended against the question of . . .

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Table that.

THE PREMIER: I'm just telling you what my understanding is. (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, order. The honourable Premier has the floor.

THE PREMIER: So, Mr. Speaker, in fact there was no business plan for those proposed jails. The decisions that were made, unfortunately, were made on the basis of politics rather than on the basis of what is good for the people of Nova Scotia. In fact, the end result is that we will have a jail that will serve Correctional Services and will save this province more than \$40 million. (Applause)

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, I'll table the document that the Minister of Justice would not yesterday. It clearly states, under Summary (i), the steps taken by the previous government: 2006/2007 a land search in Antigonish and Cumberland Counties; in 2007/2008 design services were engaged; and 2008/2009 work on a tender-ready construction document. This document was prepared and given to the Minister of Justice on October 30, 2009. My question to the Premier is, can you still stand in this House and claim that the previous government had no plan to build two jails, one in Antigonish and one in Cumberland County?

THE PREMIER: Yes, Mr. Speaker, there was no business plan for that because, of course, a business plan would look at the number of prisoners who had to be transferred from one place to another, what the most efficacious manner of doing that is, where the position of a jail should be, and not the question of land acquisition or design. In fact, things like design can be used with respect to the current facility.

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, the fix was in for Pictou County. I want to table an e-mail confirming a Justice Department official was instructed to stop working on a business case for Antigonish after the June election. I also want to further table a portion of an aborted business case for an Antigonish jail. The government instructed those same officials to come up with a business case for one jail in Pictou County. That document was in the minister's hands in October 2009, yet the Premier allowed the fiction to continue during the Antigonish by-election. My question to the Premier is, given all this information from the Department of Justice, how can you now claim that the fix wasn't in for Pictou County?

MR. SPEAKER: I remind the member that any time an e-mail or letter is tabled that the author should be there as well.

MR. MCNEIL: It's there.

THE PREMIER: Well, Mr. Speaker, this is not the case; in fact what we asked the departmental officials to do was to look at the three most advantageous sites and to do a thorough review of all of the sites in order to make sure that the best possible location was chosen. That is what happened.

What it is going to do is it is going to reduce the construction cost by \$5 million, \$1.7 million per year operating cost-savings - more than \$40 million in savings, Mr. Speaker. You don't have to be a whiz at geography to understand that Pictou County happens to be in the middle of the province and therefore is the most convenient location.(Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester North.

EDUC.: HOLY ANGELS HS - STATUS

HON. KAREN CASEY: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Education. The lack of action by this current government on behalf of the students at Holy Angels is totally unacceptable.

On December 23, 2009, I wrote a letter to the minister - I will table that letter - outlining the concerns that I had been hearing from students, faculty and parents of Holy Angels, that the Sisters of the Congregation of Notre Dame would no longer be able to offer support for the school beyond 2011. The minister responded, and I thank her for that response, saying that she was being briefed by the regional officials. So my question to the Minister of Education is, as the situation at Holy Angels School was known to you and to department staff as early as December of 2009, why have you not yet confirmed that you support the request from the school board to provide the opportunity and to make it possible for the school to remain open?

HON. MARILYN MORE: Mr. Speaker, I think it's important here to separate out where the school functions from the future of the school. Certainly - I think it was November

or December - the board notified the department that the Congregation of the Sisters of Notre Dame had decided to sell that property. The department committed to working with the board to look at what the options were. One option would have been for the province to buy that building and stay on-site, but there were several other options being considered. So our officials worked very closely with the board to develop those options and got back to the board in July, I believe it was, to say that their preferred option of the province buying the school was not feasible. With due diligence, we just couldn't afford that option, but we would be willing to look at all the others with them.

MS. CASEY: Mr. Speaker, it's very obvious that the options and the preferred option of the school, the school board, the parents, and the students is to keep the school open. The severity of the matter requires immediate attention. It did require immediate attention. Even yesterday in the House of Assembly, as the severity and the uncertainty surrounding the matter continued to grow, your government, Madam Minister, voted against a Progressive Conservative resolution calling for an all-Party meeting to find solutions. So my first supplementary to the minister is, why do you and your government continue to turn your back on the students at Holy Angels School?

MS. MORE: Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity last night during late debate to speak on the positive reputation of that school and how our government supports Holy Angels. We value not only the tradition but the continuing operation of that school. It does a wonderful job of educating young women. It has a rich history, and we will do everything we can within the fiscal reality of this province to ensure that the school continues in another form. There's lots of excess space in that board and we will work with the board to see if there is room in another school, or how they want to (Interruption)

MR. SPEAKER: Order. Order, please, the honourable Minister of Education has the floor.

MS. MORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We value that school and we will work with the board to ensure that it continues. It does not necessarily have to be in that location.

MS. CASEY: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to hear the minister say that she values the institution. I'm not pleased with a solution, a recommendation, an action that values would be to close the institution, so my question to the minister is, when will you and your department sit down with the Cape Breton-Victoria Regional School Board and the sisters and other stakeholders and begin to negotiate for the purchase of the building of Holy Angels?

MS. MORE: Mr. Speaker, there have been a number of meetings between department officials, board officials, and a couple with the representatives of the Congregation of the Sisters of Notre Dame. There has been ongoing discussion trying to resolve this concern in a way that values the traditions of the school and will ensure that that school continues. The

board has appreciated very much the ongoing support of the department officials and we will ensure that that continues.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Richmond.

**JUSTICE: JAILS (CUMB. & ANTIGONISH COS.)
- PLANS CONFIRM**

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, yesterday in this House the Minister of Justice insisted that there were absolutely no plans to build jails in Cumberland and Antigonish Counties. According to the minister it was all “rumours and innuendos”. But yesterday the government leaked a document prepared by the director of public safety in October 2009 which outlines all of the steps taken, back to 2006, to build two new facilities in Antigonish and Cumberland Counties. My question to the Minister of Justice is, is he standing by his comments that plans for the two jails were just “rumours and innuendos”?

HON. ROSS LANDRY: Mr. Speaker, I’m very glad to come up and speak on this issue. Yesterday the Leader of the Opposition - and I will quote what his question was to me that set the premise of this issue. He said: “I wanted the business case that was used by that government.” Earlier, he says: “Before you were minister.”

So given that to be the case, I’m working from the premise that there was a business case there, and there is no business case, and I absolutely stand by that, but I also (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Order. Order, please.

MR. LANDRY: Mr. Speaker, one of the confusions around this is that the Opposition is not interested in getting the facts; they’re interested in distorting the facts. The truth of the issue is I understand the facts, there was no business case by the previous government. In 2006, what they did or didn’t do was the reason why I asked for a review by our department to try and get clarity as to what previous governments did with regard to this issue - and that’s how the start of Diana MacKinnon’s report originated.

So on the issue of the question from the member who just asked this initial question, coming back to his point, yesterday I offered to get him any information that I had and that it would be submitted - at no time did I deny anything. When the Leader of the Opposition asked his question it was based on the assumption that there was a business case from the previous government - and there’s no business case. Period.

MR. SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, \$1 million of Nova Scotians’ tax dollars were spent to prepare for two new jails in Nova Scotia. The Minister of Justice calls that rumours and innuendoes - \$1 million back to 2006. For the minister to stand now in the House and suggest that no work had been done is clearly misleading, to say the least. Not only was there

work being done, but the Leader of the Official Opposition has tabled documents showing that instructions were given to staff in the Department of Justice to stop working on the Antigonish business case for a new jail. My question is, will the Minister of Justice confirm that he ordered his officials to stop working on the business case for Antigonish and begin working on the business case for one jail in his backyard of Pictou County?

[3:30 p.m.]

MR. LANDRY: Mr. Speaker, there was no decision by the previous government to go ahead with the jail. (Interruption) If the government of the day was operating off the fact that they may or may not build a jail, and look into the issue (Interruption)

MR. SPEAKER: Order. Order. I'm going to remind members that when a member is speaking, either asking a question or answering a question, they are the person to be speaking in this House.

MR. LANDRY: When I became Minister of Justice, my department was not aware that they were building a second jail. There was discussion and talk, but no decision from government to do the task. There were some preliminary views, as we've learned (Interruptions) and there was no business case, I stand by that, and what I did was that I asked to take all this information, put it together and we made a decision to build one correctional facility because that was in the best interest of the taxpayer in Nova Scotia. It made business sense then, it makes business sense today, and it will make business sense tomorrow.

MR. SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, this is the same minister who didn't know his department had given a thousand get-out-of-jail-free passes but when you look at his report from 2009 - the third bullet under Summary says in fiscal year "2008/2009, to continue the work on the two facilities to a milestone of complete tender-ready construction documentation."

Now, I don't know who the Minister of Justice thinks he's fooling in this province by suggesting there hadn't been a decision made to build two new facilities, when he has this report right under his nose.

The point I raised in my last question is that somebody told officials in the Department of Justice to stop working on a business case for Antigonish to have a new correctional facility. My question to the minister, again, who issued the order to stop working on a business case for a new correctional facility in Antigonish County?

MR. LANDRY: Mr. Speaker, I'm still not aware of a business case. The decision that I made in regard to this matter was that this province, this government, will go forward with a single institution. As a result of that, that's the plan that we move forward and the business case was developed in that regard. You can ask the questions 100 different ways, the bottom

line is I have no business case, and if somebody wants to produce a business case - if it's acceptable that one line here or there is actual policy from a government no longer in power, I question the logic in that.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

JUSTICE: JAILS (ANTIGONISH) - COMPETITION STATUS

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, the documents tabled today indicate this government stopped work on two jails after a million dollars had already been spent. This government asked for a report backing its decision to build one jail in Pictou County, that it had in its possession more than a year ago, yet the member for Antigonish, then the NDP candidate in the by-election, was allowed to promote the fiction that Antigonish was still in the mix. My question to the Premier is, why did you give false hope to the people of Antigonish?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, what we did - which is what I think the people of Nova Scotia would expect - is we looked at how to best serve the correctional services of the province to make sure that we have a facility that serves the needs of that service. After that, three sites were identified, Antigonish, Pictou, and one in Debert, and what was done then was an analysis of those sites. It seems obvious to me that - and we wanted to make sure that it was absolutely the right decision - Pictou, given the transfers of prisoners, this was the best location, and that turned out to be the case.

This is a decision and this is what, I think, perplexes most people, is how the Opposition - whether the Official Opposition or Third Party - can justify wanting to spend more than \$40 million that is not necessary in order to have a facility, or two facilities, that would not meet the needs of the correctional service.

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, we tabled a document today that the Minister of Justice would not table, and it very clearly says that this government is going to build one jail in Pictou County, yet they allowed the charade to continue, as the member for Antigonish campaigned, telling the people of Antigonish that he was going to fight for a jail and that his government was still supporting that decision. My question to the Premier is, did you tell the member for Antigonish that Antigonish was no longer in the mix and that that jail was going to the Minister of Justice's riding?

THE PREMIER: First of all, the jail, as you know, is not going to be located in the Minister of Justice's riding. Secondly, it is going to be located in a position in the province that will best serve the correctional service of the province. Furthermore, we did an analysis of three sites, which included Antigonish to look at the most efficient use of the money we had to invest in the correctional service. The conclusion was, as I think should be absolutely obvious, that it turns out that the Coalburn site was the best site, makes the most sense for the transfer of prisoners and it is the most cost-effective way to spend the taxpayers' money.

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, during an election and a by-election the Premier will say just about anything. He said he was going to balance the budget in his first year - what happened to that? - he is not going to raise taxes, the debt won't increase under his government, ERs will be kept open 24/7. Now he even allowed one of his own candidates to go into his community and face his neighbours and tell them a falsehood because Antigonish was not on the agenda, that jail was going to Pictou County and that government knew it in October 2009. So my question to the Premier is, why should Nova Scotians believe you now?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, it is hard to believe that the Leader of the Opposition would suggest that choosing a site that will save, and taking the position that building a facility that will serve the needs of the correctional centre and is more than \$40 million less expensive, is a bad decision. The reality is that the Opposition has decided that they have no respect for the money of the taxpayers in this province. They decide instead, for narrow political purposes, to try to orchestrate the idea that somehow there was a better decision.

If the Leader of the Opposition really believes that it would be a better decision, a more cost-effective decision, then he should say so.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Victoria-The Lakes.

EDUC. - HOLY ANGELS HS: STUDENTS - INSTIT. UPHOLD

MR. KEITH BAIN: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Minister of Education. Last week the Department of Education vetoed any hope of buying Holy Angels High School and providing certainty to the 299 female students who attend this unique and historic institution. This is an all-girls school which has been in operation since 1885 and now it must face further uncertainty as the provincial government has turned their back on them.

The minister just stated that one scenario could be to move the school within another school. Well, Madam Minister, to do that would destroy any concept of an all-girls school altogether. My question to the Minister of Education is, what is your department doing to ensure that the education of these 299 young women is not further disrupted and that the unique and proud history of this institution is upheld?

HON. MARILYN MORE: Mr. Speaker, I've already said in this Chamber that our government agrees that Holy Angels has a very distinguished history and it does a wonderful job of educating young women, so I think we can accept that as common ground for further discussion.

The one issue that seems to really be the essence of the debate is where the school should be. There was nothing done by the government or the Department of Education to initiate these discussions. This closure came about as a result of a decision by the

Congregation of the Sisters of Notre Dame, so the board was left with that reality. (Interruptions) Yes, the boards deliver educational programs in the various regions of this province.

The Department of Education is not in a position, nor would it want to interfere with the mandate of a regional school board to do its business. We have agreed to support them, to help them look at other options. We will ensure that they have the information they need to make further decisions. Thank you.

MR. BAIN: Mr. Speaker, the many calls, letters and e-mails received in the PC caucus office - and I am sure in the Liberal caucus as well - in support of Holy Angels tells of the successes of the school and the impact of Holy Angels on the students, both past and present.

Yesterday the PC caucus called for the government to arrange an all-Party meeting with the Cape Breton-Victoria Regional School Board to discuss the future of Holy Angels High School and that resolution was defeated. My question to the minister is, why does your government refuse this offer of an all-Party meeting and the school board to discuss the future of Holy Angels High School?

MS. MORE: Mr. Speaker, for one reason only. The school board is an elected level of government in this province. It is their responsibility. I don't see where a higher level of government, such as the provincial government, should be politicizing that decision. You have the right to approach them directly, have the discussions with the school board. That is your right as local politicians and I encourage you to get involved and to get all the facts on both sides of that issue. Thank you.

MR. BAIN: Mr. Speaker, the school board asked for help and this government is not giving them any. That's why we proposed an all-Party meeting. Since the government has vetoed the idea of purchasing Holy Angels High School, it would be reasonable to assume that they at least have some other options in mind to protect the staff and students. So far, it turns out they do not. They continue to pass on responsibility for this very serious situation. It's unacceptable when the stakes are so high for these 299 students who are in Holy Angels High School. My final supplementary to the minister is, unique institutions such as this deserve and require unique solutions and real leadership, why do you refuse to be part of it?

MS. MORE: Mr. Speaker, I think I would like to table a letter at this time. This is the letter from the consultant who did a review of the building. I encourage the member to get a copy of it and you'll see some of the information that is available to the board as they legitimately make a decision about how facilities are used in their school board. So I'd like to table this letter. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Richmond.

JUSTICE - JAIL SITES: PERUSAL - EXPLAIN

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, the Premier started off Question Period in his first response by saying that you didn't have to be an expert in geography to realize that Pictou County was the central location for the area to be serviced for this new jail. I'm curious, based on that response, would the Premier indicate to us why his government spent taxpayers' dollars looking at sites in Debert and Antigonish County?

THE PREMIER: Sure, Mr. Speaker, in order to ensure that there was complete transparency and that there was an adequate consideration of alternatives. No one wants to be locked into one site. We looked at three sites: we looked at Debert, we looked at Antigonish, and we looked at Pictou County. We also wanted to look at the land servicing costs that were associated with each one of the sites. We wanted to look at the level of transfers that were going to take place, their proximity; for example, where the busiest courts were and therefore where most of the prisoner transfers were going to take place to and from. Those were the kinds of considerations given to each one of the sites, because that's what a government that cares about taxpayers' money would do.

MR. SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, one thing Nova Scotians know is this Premier and this government are all about transparency. While they were going out to Warden Herb Delorey and Mayor Carl Chisholm and asking them to work on a site in Antigonish - land purchasing, water service, sewer service - all the time that they were sharing that, it's unfortunate the Premier didn't exercise his whole concept of transparency because I'm wondering, at the time, had he shared with Warden Herb Delorey and Mayor Carl Chisholm the review of the proposed construction of one or more new correctional facilities, which as the Minister of Justice had said on October 30, 2009, and the Executive Summary on Page 5 says, under Potential Sites, "If one 100-cell (200 bed) facility is approved, it should be constructed in central Pictou County."

[3:45 p.m.]

So my question to the Premier is, why did you not be transparent and share this with the people of Antigonish County as to what your government's true intentions were and the location of this facility?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I would say again to the member opposite the purpose of the review of these sites was to ensure that the best possible value was gotten for taxpayers' money. All the sites were given a proper accord that was looked at carefully. They looked at all of the things that he talked about. Does the member actually think that we would go through an elaborate charade in order to try to justify (Interruptions) I mean I think it's a horrible reflection on the government that he was part of, because obviously he's reflecting upon - I assume that he's reflecting upon his own experience.

MR. SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, the Premier can make personal attacks if he wants. The question today in Antigonish that's being asked is the ruse that was played on them. I think what they're trying to find out today in Antigonish is, was the member for Antigonish part of that ruse? Was he aware while he was campaigning that the Minister of Justice actually had this report in his possession which recommended that the site be in central Pictou County as ordered by the Minister of Justice?

That's what the people of Antigonish are wondering right now, Mr. Speaker, and maybe the Premier will be able to tell us whether his member for Antigonish had that. My question is, if your government is so big on transparency, why did you not table the October 2009 report that the Minister of Justice had, that he had asked for a recommendation for a jail in Pictou County?

THE PREMIER: Well, in fact, Mr. Speaker, the opposite is true. The member says that I'm engaging in a personal attack and yet he engages us of perpetrating a ruse in all manner of things which is completely false. (Interruptions) We are here for one purpose and one purpose only and that is to serve the best interests of the people of Nova Scotia and what we are doing is ensuring that they get the best value for the money.

Did you see that, Mr. Speaker? He's here playing the violin. I mean that's how disrespectful they are of the people of Nova Scotia. (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester North.

EDUC.: ABSENTEEISM REPORT - SUPPORT

HON. KAREN CASEY: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Minister of Education. (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable member for Colchester North has the floor.

MS. CASEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the Minister of Education responded to the report of the Working Committee on Absenteeism and Classroom Climate. The report is the result of a year's worth of study by that committee.

One of the key actions in the minister's response is her decision to establish a two-year trial of a practice that will cause students who miss more than 20 per cent of their class time through inexcusable absences to be ineligible for credit for that course. This was introduced by the minister yesterday as a two-year trial project. Well, that practice is already in place in many schools across the province. We have the data. We know that 45 per cent of all of our students are absent 10 per cent of the time and this is a crisis situation. So my question through you to the minister is, what additional information does the minister need before she can support the implementation of that initiative in all schools now?

HON. MARILYN MORE: Mr. Speaker, I do want to thank the honourable member for being there at the release of the ministerial statement. I know that her government was instrumental in starting that working committee. Even though they only had three of four months to do their work, they did an extremely good job. They researched the issue in terms of references to absenteeism within our own Education Act, looked at best practices and also looked across the jurisdictions of Canada to see what was done elsewhere.

I just want to suggest that in terms of that recommendation eight, it must be viewed as the last resort in a continuum of interventions, supports and incentives that we're encouraging schools to have in order to support teachers and students, particularly students and families, with this very critical issue. Thank you.

MS. CASEY: Mr. Speaker, there does not appear to be any teeth in that particular recommendation eight, because as it stated, it's left to the school boards to decide if they want to participate in the pilot project and then it's up to the schools within the school board to decide if they want to participate. This is a serious problem, it's having a negative impact on teaching in the classroom and the learning of our students. Through you, Mr. Speaker, to the minister, why are you taking such a hands-off approach to a problem that you admitted yesterday in the media, and we agree, is getting worse every year?

MS. MORE: Mr. Speaker, I'd prefer to describe my approach as cautious and in the best interests of the youth of this province. We have a philosophy and a practice in Nova Scotia that cautions us about using academic consequences for poor judgement and misbehaviour. I think it would be very difficult to jump into having that recommendation eight enforced in all schools right away, without being sure that it's actually going to have some impact, and in the direction that we want it to have impact. That's why I compromised and am allowing school boards and high schools across this province to choose to be part of the pilot project. Thank you.

MS. CASEY: Mr. Speaker, to the minister, I believe we have the information. This has been used in many of our schools. Teachers, principals and parents are asking for this minister to set some direction that can be used in all schools. My question to the minister is, a two-year study does nothing to address the problem now, it doesn't require money, it does require action. My question is, when will the minister give the direction that parents, teachers and students are looking for?

MS. MORE: Mr. Speaker, I just want to refer to the focus group of students that the department put together for me. I wanted to test their reaction and ask them about the impact of some of the recommendations, from their life experience. In this group we had excellent students, but we also had students who had been struggling in school and their stories were very unique and very emotional. It's important to understand that this is a complex issue. Why one student might be absent from school is very different from the other 30 students who might be absent that day.

We want to make sure we're actually getting at the root causes of absenteeism and not just treating the symptoms. We don't want to put students at risk in this province and that's why we have to be careful and put together a menu of supports and not just punish students for something that they may not be responsible for. At the same time, we're giving them a message, education is important, you enhance your educational experience if you are in class and stay in school. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Clayton Park.

**HEALTH: NATL. CATASTROPHIC DRUG PLAN
- PRIORITY**

MS. DIANA WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health. Discussions around the need for a national catastrophic drug program have been ongoing since I first became a member of this House. In 2004, the federal and provincial ministers formed a working group to develop national catastrophic drug coverage options. In 2008, the provincial health and territorial ministers reaffirmed their commitment to extending catastrophic drug coverage to all Canadians.

Well, Mr. Speaker, after four years of idle words from the previous government, Nova Scotians are still unable to benefit from a national catastrophic drug program which would provide coverage, regardless of where a person lives in Canada. (Interruptions)

My question to the Minister of Health is, what specific action (Interruptions) Mr. Speaker . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order, order, the honourable member for Halifax Clayton Park has the floor.

MS. WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, my question to the minister is, what specific action has she taken with her provincial counterparts which would demonstrate that the development of a national catastrophic drug plan is a priority for her government?

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for bringing a very important matter to the floor of the Legislature. We have a working group with the other provinces and, indeed, we are doing work on a pan-Canadian Oncology Drug Review program right now that is looking specifically at having some equity across provinces in terms of the drugs that are approved and the access that people have to those drugs.

As I said earlier at the rally outside, we really need to do more work and we will be doing more work to get this on the national agenda as we move forward to replace the Health Accord in 2014.

MS. WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, we welcome the idea of the work that the minister has spoken about, the pan-Canadian Oncology Drug Review plan. My point was that this has been talked about for at least six years, the idea of looking at a national catastrophic drug plan, of advancing this agenda, and I know the minister can understand that people are impatient, that it is urgent, that every day people are making tough and almost impossible decisions between bankrupting their families or getting the drugs that they need to sustain and enhance their lives. The drug industry is unfolding at a tremendous rate, new drugs are becoming available and people want to have access to the best drugs available.

Mr. Speaker, I think what is important for the minister to understand is the urgency of taking action, so my next question is this. Given that the Minister of Health is chairing the next two meetings with her counterpart Ministers of Health, could the minister please confirm whether addressing the rising cost of pharmaceuticals also includes the development of a plan that would help people pay for them?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I want to tell the honourable member and all members of the House that as we go forward working with our federal, provincial and territorial colleagues across the country to get a catastrophic drug program in place, this government will not be sitting idle waiting for something that is going to occur in the future.

Mr. Speaker, we have a new cancer drug fund here in Nova Scotia. An additional \$10 million was put into that fund this year and this ensures that cancer patients, for example, who require drugs and intravenous therapies are able to access these drugs. We will continue to work on the national level while delivering better health care to Nova Scotians here at home.

[4:00 p.m.]

MS. WHALEN: Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, this is a very important issue, as we both agreed, not only for people with cancer but for people with other illnesses who require extremely expensive drugs, who are also making those very difficult decisions, if not impossible decisions. Last week when I asked a question in the House the minister said she was ready to go toe-to-toe with me at any time about the record of the government. I guess what I'd like to see is that she's ready to go toe-to-toe with the federal government, bringing these issues that the provinces need the support of a national program to take on the costs that we need to look after the people in our own provinces.

My question to the minister is, has she written to her counterparts requesting the agenda item be put forward at the next meeting of the Health Ministers, will she revise the work that was already underway in 2004 of the working group on catastrophic drug coverage, and is she ready to show the leadership and go toe to toe with the federal government? Thank you.

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I think most members of this House know I'm quite capable of going toe to toe with anyone. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Leader in the House of the Progressive Conservative Party.

EDUC.: O'NEILL REPT. - TUITION RATES

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, my question will be to the Minister of Education. The O'Neill Report on Post-Secondary Education has the potential to drastically alter Nova Scotia's university system. Among its main recommendations are the removal of the tuition caps, consolidation of administrative and program offerings, and changing funding formulas. My question to the minister is, in the face of higher tuition rates related to the O'Neill Report recommendations, does your government, as we did, still maintain a commitment to Nova Scotia's long-held goal of tuition rates reaching the national average?

HON. MARILYN MORE: Mr. Speaker, certainly Dr. O'Neill identified a number of issues and decision points that need to be made as we try to both balance or live within our means, but also to strengthen and protect our post-secondary education system into the future. We certainly are looking at all aspects of challenges to students. I've met with a number of student associations and groups and they're very concerned about tuition fees. They're also concerned about what assistance is going to be available, and I'm very proud to say that the Premier has committed to taking a very close look, a review, of Student Assistance. It appears that under previous governments, it has become one of the weakest packages in Canada. We recognize that and we've had good advice that it's something that we need to look at, so we'll be looking at those issues. Thank you.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for that answer. Dr. O'Neill suggests that over the next 20 years, the population of 17 to 29 year olds in Nova Scotia is expected to decline by nearly 25 per cent. Combined with the continued uncertainty over the direction of tuition rates, this will have a major impact on enrolment numbers, which have already been expected to decline over the medium- to long-term. My question to the minister is, what is your government doing to combat the problem of dropping enrolments at Nova Scotia's universities?

MS. MORE: Mr. Speaker, obviously the government has a role and a very strong interest in the students who come to take programs at our 11 degree-granting institutions in this province. Certainly the primary responsibility for student recruitment lies with those institutions themselves and they have a very aggressive, sophisticated, effective recruitment policy, both institutionally and in a collaborative sense. They understand the challenge. I've met with the university presidents and a number of the board of governor chairs and they're all working very, very hard to ensure that student enrolment stays as strong and healthy as possible.

Also, from the Labour and Workforce Development side, I want to say that I think there will be additional opportunities for older Nova Scotians to be able to return to school and strengthen their skills and learning. Thank you.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, Dr. O'Neill's very first recommendation in his report on post-secondary education says, "Allow tuition fees to increase, both as partial offset to the impact of fiscal restraint and on equity grounds." This would include anything from capping rates of increase to complete deregulation. Really, what ends up happening here is that as prices go up, tuition goes up, the enrolment will continue to go down, compounded by the issue of dropping enrolment. My final supplementary is, how does this minister reconcile dropping enrolments for Nova Scotia's universities with increasing tuition rates as recommended by Dr. Tim O'Neill?

MS. MORE: Mr. Speaker, while we certainly value the research and analysis and recommendations coming from Dr. O'Neill, we're going to use that information, that report and recommendations, as one piece of the information that government considers as it moves forward in collaboration with our post-secondary system. Certainly we're getting information from other sources and as a responsible government would do, we're going to take all those different aspects into consideration and make the best possible decisions for the youth of this province and for the economy of this province. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Glace Bay.

COM. SERV.: RESIDENTIAL ABUSE - RESPONSES

MR. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, we've been hearing about issues in residences for persons with developmental disabilities where residents are harming other residents and staff. I commend the minister for investigating incidents in Truro, I really do, but she should not have been surprised by them. These incidents have been occurring for quite some time. A year ago the minister told The ChronicleHerald that she was "shocked" by the abuse at these facilities. My question to the Minister of Community Services is, one year later are you still shocked by this abuse?

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, thank you for the question. What the honourable member needs to understand is that the recent incidents, where you have residential to staff abuse, is quite different than the other abuse that we were dealing with last year because it was residents to residents and staff to residents. It is a different type of abuse and you have to understand the complexity of the individuals who are in the residential facilities and the difficulties within that facility to be a staff person.

That's why it's very important, when I am made aware of the situation, that I go forth to look into that and gather as much information as possible to ensure there's safety for everybody, whether it's a staff individual or a resident. Thank you.

MR. MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, abuse is abuse and regardless of whether it's staff or residents, it's still abuse, and that's what we have to be concerned with.

We have to prevent abuse at these facilities, period. An investigation into past incidents is not enough. A problem exists when you mix individuals requiring high levels of care with others who may be harmed. My question to the Minister of Community Services is, what is your policy to ensure facilities handle individuals requiring high levels of care appropriately?

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, I thank him for the question because I understand and I feel the same way as you, that abuse is abuse. I think what the honourable member needs to know is the fact that what we're dealing with is the history of legislation. We did go forth, and we did make changes in that legislation, but the complexity is because of the fact that, as a government, we support the facilities with funding, however, those facilities are owned by the municipalities and the board of directors are made up of municipal appointees, which are usually municipal councillors.

They actually run the facilities and we're the funders. What we do, because of the fact that abuse is abuse, is as soon as there's a situation - or even beforehand - we do a lot of training between our staff and our government officials, to go into those facilities and to help them with the process and work very closely with the executive director and the board of directors. Thank you.

MR. MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I would agree that those changes were good, but they were reactive, and what I think we need here to protect staff and clients is a more proactive approach. A resident at the Truro facility under investigation has been abused by another resident multiple times. The resident responsible for the abuse was deemed high risk yet nothing has changed. Recently there was another case of abuse between these same two residents, resulting in the victim sustaining a concussion. My question to the Minister of Community Services is, other than just investigating, what is the minister going to do to ensure these incidents stop?

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: Thank you once again for the question. We have been proactive. As I mentioned, the nature of the structure that was developed years ago is the municipalities actually own the facilities; we do not have the legal right to go in and tell them how the facilities are run. We're there as a support. It is a difficult situation because of how the structure is there, so therefore the other avenue that I take as a minister is that I bring together the sector members, the operators of the facilities, and talk with them. We're working in a restorative approach in order to work toward how we can resolve and how we make a better place for the residents and how we can make a better place for the staff, thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants West.

EDUC.: OUT-OF-PROV. STUDENTS - TUITION RATES

MR. CHUCK PORTER: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Minister of Education. According to a recent report on the university system in Nova Scotia, 32 per cent of students attending Nova Scotia universities were from out of province. This translated into over 13,000 students during the 2008-09 school year. These young men and women have a major impact on the Nova Scotia economy yet the O'Neill Report threatens to put this in jeopardy. Higher tuition and uncertainty surrounding the direction of rates resulting from implementation of this report would drive out-of-province students to other areas to pursue their education. My question to the minister is, has your department accounted for the significant economic impact of driving out-of-province students to other provinces and countries due to the O'Neill-related tuition hikes? If so, what is that number?

HON. MARILYN MORE: Mr. Speaker, I don't have that number off the top of my head but I can certainly make it available. In no way are we going to allow that situation to evolve to that point. We recognize, as a government, the value that having out-of-province and international students in our province brings, because it not only enriches the education of their fellow classmates, but it also enriches the institution and the communities that they live and work and play in. Quite frankly, I think it's about 22 per cent of out-of-province and international students who choose to remain here in Nova Scotia, so it's a very effective immigration policy and it's one that we value and it's one that we'll ensure continues, thank you.

[4:15 p.m.]

MR. PORTER: Mr. Speaker, the direct economic impact of universities in Nova Scotia is over \$1 billion, therefore all of the potential effects of this report must be weighed very carefully before such drastic decisions are made, otherwise the impacts could be disastrous. My first supplementary to the minister is, what is this minister's plan to retain these important out-of-province students in the face of higher tuition pressures here in Nova Scotia?

MS. MORE: I think the very reputation, quality programming and excellent reputation of the staff, the faculty and instructors are what is going to recruit them to this province and keep them in this province. Certainly the universities have had an excellent track record of attracting out-of-province and international students and there is nothing to indicate that's going to change in the future, thank you.

MR. PORTER: Mr. Speaker, what's striking about this report is how little it does to address the need for enrollment increases at all in Nova Scotia universities. My final supplementary to the minister is, how do you expect to retain, let alone grow, the university student population here in Nova Scotia when the threat of drastic tuition hikes loom large in the minds of our over-burdened students now?

MS. MORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased, quite frankly, that the presidents and the board of governors and staff and students of the universities are not taking the same gloom and doom view of the future of post-secondary education in this province. They actually are very excited about the opportunity to work more collaboratively together to fine-tune the delivery of post-secondary education in this province. They are professional, they are bright and they are committed to education.

I have faith that working alongside a caring government that values the importance of post-secondary education, we realize that it's going to be part of the solution of turning the economy or promoting the economy and growing it in Nova Scotia, so it is a good, healthy partnership and it's going to work. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

**COM. SERV. - AFFORDABLE HOUSING: FED. FUNDING
- DETAILS**

MR. TREVOR ZINCK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Community Services. This past October 12th to the 17th marked the 5th Annual Halifax Housing Week, the week's events to inform the greater community about homelessness issues and the need for safe, accessible and affordable housing. My question to the minister is, how much of the \$128 federal stimulus funding last Spring went towards affordable housing units for the 1,718 individuals who stayed in shelters last year?

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: Thank you very much for the question. With respect to the housing stimulus, we have invested more money that has ever been invested in housing in this province for decades. We are able, through partnership with the federal government, to put in that \$128 million. That money was focused on helping seniors, upgrading homes and affordable housing units, along with persons with disabilities. The issue of homelessness is a separate issue that we are dealing with, so thank you very much.

MR. ZINCK: Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation believe in a 30 per cent rule. They believe households have many demands on their income, including providing for basic needs like food, shelter and clothing. In low-income households, especially, the more income spent on shelter, the less available for basic needs. To be productive and a contributing member of society, people also need the financial means to be included in that society.

Mr. Speaker, inclusion means access to social and economic activities and transportation to get there. So spending only on basics, having to make a choice between food and rent, reduces low-income households' ability to participate in the broader society. My question to the minister is whether or not she and her government believe in this same policy that the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation believe? If so, how come so many people on income assistance currently pay 50 per cent to 60 per cent on shelter?

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: Thank you very much. I'm very aware, as Minister of Community Services, of the many issues that surround homelessness, surround persons living in poverty. It was very unfortunate to come in and find that that whole area has been very neglected over the many years by previous governments, therefore we're doing catch-up in the first place.

I'm very proud that this government, we recognize that, so we are putting steps in place. For example, in our first year, investing \$72 million in Affordable Living Tax Credit and also in the Poverty Reduction Credit and also making changes to the ESIA program that we have and making steps towards that. That is what I am very proud of, that we recognize it and we're also working with the community and those people who we need to speak with. We are working with them to make a difference to go forward. Thank you.

MR. ZINCK: Mr. Speaker, the federal stimulus money will soon run out and the government's commitment to spending that money will end very shortly. So with that happening and the federal government obviously not taking up a national housing strategy, I'm wondering when the money dries up, what this minister's plan is over the next two to three years to provide affordable housing units for those folks who are so badly in need?

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: Thank you very much for the question. The fact is that we do know that that money will be completed in 2011, and that's why we're going forward and discussing the strategy that we need in the Province of Nova Scotia. It is a strategy that we need everybody at the table. It is a strategy that will only work when we have community members, corporate members involved along with the municipal, provincial, and federal government. We have opened the door to those discussions. I've had people around my ministerial table to discuss it and we do certainly plan to go forward and tackle the horrible issue of homelessness and the housing issue in the Province of Nova Scotia.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

GAMING: MY-PLAY SYSTEM - EFFECTIVENESS

MR. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, it is becoming increasingly clear that this government is all about controlling the message when it comes to gambling. This morning, at the insistence of the NDP caucus members, Sport Nova Scotia was used as a shield for the Gaming Corporation during the Public Accounts Committee. Controlling the message is different than addressing the effects of problem gambling in Nova Scotia. Mr. Speaker, would the minister responsible for the Nova Scotia Gaming Corporation please explain how the My-Play system is of use for anything other than political cover, as it doesn't help responsible gambling?

HON. GRAHAM STEELE: Mr. Speaker, I'm a bit puzzled about the introduction to the question. The Support4Sport topic was one agreed on by all members of the Public

Accounts Committee, which is chaired by a member of the Liberal caucus. So I'm just not sure what would cause the member to question that or make a partisan comment about it.

In any event, Mr. Speaker, if the real question is about the My-Play system, the My-Play system is a system put in place by the previous government - a system that is now installed on every video lottery terminal in Nova Scotia. Of course, the question of the effectiveness of that system is something that's very much under consideration by this government as we see whether the investment made by the previous government was, in fact, a good and useful one.

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, the research on this system is unequivocal. This has no effect on high-risk or problem gamblers. In fact, this My-Play system isn't intended for much other than controlling the message. These cards are specifically targeted to those who already are responsible gamblers and are at no risk to develop a problem. These cards don't seem like much of a tool for prevention or promotion. They don't seem to be much of anything except a win for Techlink, and it would take quite a leap of imagination or spin to believe otherwise.

Given that the My-Play system is only intended for those who are at absolutely no risk to develop a problem, will the government be reconsidering the My-Play system in their upcoming - and quite late - gaming strategy?

MR. STEELE: Mr. Speaker, the question of the effectiveness of the My-Play system is a good question. It's a real question. The member said that the research shows unequivocally that it doesn't work. I'm not familiar with that research, and perhaps the member could table the research which shows that. The research that I'm familiar with says that it does work but, as the member indicates, under limited circumstances. It doesn't work for everybody all the time, and of course one of the key questions in front of us as we develop the gaming strategy is whether, in fact, the system would be more effective if it were made mandatory or if we will continue the decision of the previous government that the system should be voluntary.

It's a very good question. It's an important question as we try to deal with the issue of problem gambling and VLTs, and I look forward to getting a copy of the research to which the member refers.

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, this gaming strategy was promised to Nova Scotians in time for Responsible Gaming Week back in October. The minister said that it would be unveiled in time for the Fall session so that we could debate this important issue on the floor of this House, where it needs to be debated, but it's message control all over again. They suppressed the socio-economic study on gambling. They used Sport Nova Scotia as a shielding committee. They're using delay tactics so they won't have to debate the tough issues on the floor. Will the government please tell Nova Scotians when exactly they will release their five-year plan for gambling in Nova Scotia?

MR. STEELE: The issue of problem gambling is real, it has touched many, many Nova Scotia families including my own family. I understand how important it is. I also understand how important it is that we get the gaming strategy right and we will take the time that is necessary to get it right rather than doing it fast.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

ERD: FUNDING - EQUITY

MR. ZACH CHURCHILL: This NDP Government is not treating Nova Scotians equally. They see fit to give Cape Breton rail more than \$3 million to subsidize that service for another year, yet they cancelled the Yarmouth ferry with no warning to the community, no consultation, without providing any shred of evidence to support that decision and, to make matters worse, no plan to support the region economically in the wake of that decision. When the people of Yarmouth were able to come up with half the cost needed to subsidize the service for another year, this issue wasn't even brought to Cabinet. My question to the Minister of Economic and Rural Development is, why is this government not treating the regions of Nova Scotia equally?.

HON. PERCY PARIS: I'll say first, and I appreciate the question, and I would invite the member opposite, because I am not going to have time during Question Period to elaborate on the difference between equal and fairness. What we do, this government, we treat every region in the Province of Nova Scotia fairly. By that, if we treat everyone equally and if we treat everyone the same, we are in fact ignoring the differences of all the regions of Nova Scotia. That's one thing we do not want to do. Again, I reiterate that I would invite the member opposite to sit down and have a conversation about how we do treat regions of the Province of Nova Scotia.

MR. CHURCHILL: The people of Yarmouth and the people of southwestern Nova Scotia have been hurt. There's nothing fair and equal about that. I have been hearing from many operators, tourism operators from across the region, not just Yarmouth and they are understandably angry and disappointed with this NDP Government. One operator wrote: I run a restaurant in the historic district of Shelburne. I depend on tourism and I was extremely upset with the minister when he cancelled the ferry service with no warning to the industry. Furthermore, I contacted his office to see what their tourism plan was. They very openly admitted to not having a plan. My question to the Minister of Economic and Rural Development is, what is being done to support the economy of southwestern Nova Scotia?

MR. PARIS: I think there are a couple of points that I want to point out. Number one, is that we didn't, meaning this government, we didn't stop the ferry in Yarmouth. What we did is we said we weren't going to subsidize it anymore based on good reasons. What we've done in southwestern Nova Scotia, we have set up, in partnership with the residents, with the businesses, with the federal government, a committee down there to work with people and to work with the industry. We gave \$400,000. What we are trying to do, with the co-

operation of the people in Yarmouth and area, is we are trying to create a place for destination. No longer do we want Yarmouth to be a drive-through. What we want for the benefit of businesses, for the benefit of tourism in the area is we want people to go there to stay there and enjoy what Yarmouth has to offer.

[4:30 p.m.]

MR. CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, I've met with representatives from Team West and they indicated to me there was one project working in southwestern Nova Scotia, a micro environmental assessment to see if the region can grow cranberries. For the people who have been hurt in southwestern Nova Scotia, for the businesses that are struggling because of their decision to cut the ferry and for the families that are trying to make ends meet, cranberries aren't enough.

I presented the facts to the minister, operators and business owners are hurt by this government's decision. American visitations and tourism is down 40 to 100 per cent in Yarmouth. I have tabled a report detailing the cost benefit analysis of the Yarmouth ferry and economic impact of that ferry to the province, which saw that a \$6 million investment in the Yarmouth ferry would yield over \$22 million of returns to Nova Scotia. Will this minister right now commit to the people of Yarmouth and this province to help us secure ferry service for next year?

MR. PARIS: First of all, Mr. Speaker, what this minister and what this government has committed to Nova Scotians is to live within our means. We will consider anything and everything. We've worked with the people of Yarmouth, we have representation on that committee from the Department of Economic and Rural Development, with the Department of Tourism, Culture and Heritage. We are endeavouring, as we do in all regions of the Province of Nova Scotia, to make life better for all Nova Scotians. We will continue to do that.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

EDUC. - UNIVERSITY COSTS: REDUCTION - PLAN

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Education. Education is critical for productivity in Nova Scotia. In fact, we need to align our Nova Scotian economy with the needs of China and India so we can supply their growing middle class with the things that they need. It will be difficult to compete with low-cost manufacturing in developing countries but we can compete with knowledge-based product development and service. Affordable university education will help. To the minister, how are we working with universities to reduce education costs for students?

HON. MARILYN MORE: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question. I'm not in a position to talk in much detail about the various initiatives and the various levels of

consultations and discussions that are going on with our post-secondary institutions and the various representatives but it's a very healthy dialogue. They are very pleased to be consulted and to be involved in providing information and options and impacts and that process will continue with the universities. Thank you.

MR. MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to hear that there is dialogue. Universities are free to operate independently from government and they can set their own priorities, whether that be infrastructure or specialized studies. To the minister, do you think that government has a responsibility when it funds universities to ensure that their business models do not lead to excessive tuition costs for students?

MS. MORE: Mr. Speaker, our government believes that post-secondary students deserve the best education that we can give them. The most effective way that we have to deliver on that promise is to make the most of the resources that we have as a province so it's a very delicate balance. Nova Scotia invested nearly \$450 million into universities last year. It's the second highest per capita funding in Canada. We have a strong, healthy, progressive university system and our government is committed to ensuring that it stays healthy. Thank you.

MR. MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, it is true that Nova Scotia puts a lot of money into our universities here. I would also point out that a lot of efforts in the past have focused on tuition subsidies and tax credits. These measures only reward the rapid rise in costs faced by students. What does the minister think - and I believe that the Opposition has a duty to provide ideas in this Legislature as well, Mr. Speaker - my question to the minister is, what do you think about implementing a core university program, a funding program for universities, that rewards universities for keeping costs down so that tuition is more affordable?

MS. MORE: Mr. Speaker, I'm not going to presume that I can guess what the outcome of those consultations and discussions and decision making will be. We know it's a delicate balance for universities, between the revenue they raise from tuition, the revenue that they raise through donors and supporters - some of them actually have commercial enterprises - and the public funding that they receive from the government.

We understand that times are tough and we want to ensure that the right balance is there so that they can stay as strong as possible. Now, certainly, we will be looking at innovative approaches alongside - as you recognized in one of your earlier questions, the universities are independent organizations, they are governed by boards of governors, and they have top minds on these boards, top business people, top community volunteers, they have a lot of expertise to draw on, so we will wait for them to make suggestions and make their own decisions and we'll support them in that. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clare.

TCH - SOUTHWESTERN N.S.: TOURISM - PLAN OUTLINE

HON. WAYNE GAUDET: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to begin my questioning by reading a quote from the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Heritage last week during Oral Question Period and I quote, "What we do is we plan for the future. For the first time in two decades we have a government that not only has the strategy, but actually has the plan." My question to the Minister of Economic and Rural Development is, will you clearly outline your plan to this House of how to go about reviving tourism in southwestern Nova Scotia?

HON. PERCY PARIS: Mr. Speaker, I will say this, that tourism in the Province of Nova Scotia, generally speaking, we had an increase this year. I'd like to be able to stand here on my feet and take sole responsibility for that, but I've got to give kudos to the men and women who work in the department, they worked hard. They worked hard to maintain and increase the level of tourism at a time - it's a difficult time. It's a global difficult time. Despite all that, with hard work, due diligence, people have been working hard, not to just maintain a certain level of tourism, but to increase it. I can tell you this, the Minister of Economic and Rural Development and the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Heritage talk with one another on a constant basis.

MR. GAUDET: Mr. Speaker, I'll try another day to gather some information on that plan. However, I'll pursue a different direction.

Since the loss of the Yarmouth ferry, the economic development of southwestern Nova Scotia has been hit hard. The Princess of Acadia is all that is left right now and it is a vital transportation link between Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. The deadline for a decision on whether there will be a ferry between Digby and Saint John has been extended until March 2011 - that is only five months from now, so again to the minister is, what discussions have you had with your counterparts in Ottawa and New Brunswick, and what response did you receive to ensure the ferry service will continue past March 2011?

MR. PARIS: Mr. Speaker, I heard a couple of questions there, and one is what response have we had from Ottawa, so I don't know if you're allowed, but I'll try to answer both of them. (Interruption)

I will say this, Mr. Speaker, we are in dialogue, we are in engagement, not only with Ottawa but also with the Province of New Brunswick, and as things become available and when we're ready - and the second part of the question is we are not ready to reveal anything at this point in time. We are in a process of negotiation, and when those negotiations are complete the members on the opposite side of the House will know the same as the colleagues here will know, and the general population will know.

MR. GAUDET: Mr. Speaker, the Princess of Acadia has served the people of Nova Scotia well for nearly 40 years. The people of this area and the economic development of

Nova Scotia depend on a new ferry for this region. So again to the minister, will there be a replacement for the Princess of Acadia if your discussions with your counterparts are successful?

MR. PARIS: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite in asking the question answered his own question, and I reiterate, we are in discussions. Until those discussions are complete, I'm not about to stand here and say what could be. I don't have a crystal ball. When the discussions are complete, everybody will know what the conclusions are. Until then it would be inappropriate for me or for anyone else to say what the ultimate conclusions from those discussions are going to be.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Glace Bay.

**COM. SERV.: CO-OPERATIVE HOUSING UNITS
- STATUS**

MR. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, the Department of Community Services' 2009-10 Accountability Report has a ranking system for co-operative housing units. Level 1 and high Level 2 units are deemed healthy. Low Level 2 and Level 3 units are deemed to be unhealthy. My question to the Minister of Community Services is, what is the total number of units deemed to be unhealthy in this province?

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: Thank you very much for that question. I don't have those figures in front of me, but I will certainly bring them in and offer them to the honourable member.

MR. MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I'd appreciate having that information. According to the Community Services' Accountability Report, 30 per cent of co-operative housing is deemed unhealthy, and 20 per cent of housing is deemed Level 3 - the lowest ranking. My question to the Minister of Community Services is, why aren't maintenance issues addressed sooner?

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: Thank you for bringing that question to me. What we need to do is we need to go forward and we need to be asking those type of questions, and that's exactly what I do as minister as soon as somebody brings an issue forward to me. One of the areas that I'm looking at, in particular, is with regard to the housing issues, as I mentioned earlier.

MR. MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, it's clear there are many affordable housing units across the province that are indeed unhealthy. The department claims to be addressing this issue, but we don't know when or which units.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The time for Oral Question Period has expired.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS' BUSINESS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Opposition House Leader.

HON. MANNING MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, would you please call the order of business, Private Members' Public Bills for Second Reading.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Opposition House Leader.

HON. MANNING MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 73.

Bill No. 73 - The Forests Act.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

MR. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased on our Opposition Day to bring forward Bill No. 73, introduced on October 29th of this year, the Forests Act. The bill requires the Minister of Natural Resources to determine and set an annual allowable harvest of forest land on Crown lands in our province. This bill will protect Crown lands from overharvesting - and I agree with the minister when he opened up the rally last Friday when he said, you know, we have one forest in the province and that is true because only about 25 per cent of our land is protected or comes under the Crown and 75 per cent in private. The bill would make the Minister of Natural Resources responsible for determining and setting the annual allowable harvest on Crown lands. The annual allowable cut is the amount of wood permitted to be harvested in the province within one year to ensure sustainability and productivity of our forests.

[4:45 p.m.]

Nova Scotians have made it clear that they want their forests to be protected. We've got that message loud and clear during the Phase 1 of the Natural Resources Voluntary Planning exercise. Ever since the report came out on Phase 2, we've also been hearing from many Nova Scotians. In fact, those who were at the rally last Friday - about 300 - and the number of people who had the opportunity to speak, realized that really we were representing tens of thousands of Nova Scotians. The voice now and the message is being solidified and that is, give us the greatest degree of protection for this renewable resource.

Governments should lead by example and set a limit on harvesting on Crown land. We know that the practices over several generations have not been of the highest standard. They haven't really been the gold standard for making sure sustainability and best practices are used on a constant basis. To point out one example, we have the Chignecto Game Sanctuary where within those lands, those Crown lands, we have permitted large tracts to

be clear-cut, so even in a game sanctuary we haven't put forward the best practices. Our system has been one of demand as opposed to an allowable cut based on the amount of growth that we have in a given year.

There are more than 30,000 private woodlot owners in Nova Scotia and many private woodlot owners are true environmentalists and stewards of the land. Again, we heard from them during the Phase 1 that went around the province. We've heard from them since the report came out - the Natural Balance report - and we heard again last Friday and we'll continue to hear. In fact, in many ways, I feel that the small woodlot owner, the vast majority who have had good practices, as fourth, fifth and sixth generation Nova Scotians making all or a good part of their living from the forests. They've, in fact, been the ones that government needs to take a look at and have been the drivers to make sure that we do right for the next generations of Nova Scotians.

In Nova Scotia, forests cover over four million hectares or about 75 per cent of the province. These forests are a diverse and productive resource providing citizens of our province with environmental, economic, social and cultural benefits. An Atlantic Provinces Economic Council study commissioned by FPANS in October 2005 concluded that Nova Scotia's forest industry generated about \$650 million to the provincial GDP in that year, directly and indirectly employ about 11,000 Nova Scotians, and exported well over \$1 billion worth of products internationally. Including indirect effects on other industries, the forest industry accounts for an estimated 3.6 per cent of the province's employment and GDP.

Bill No. 73 is an important measure and would assure Nova Scotians that public lands are being harvested in a sustainable way using the best science available. That's the point at which we have heard, and we're hearing more, about the whole question of how we have practised forestry in Nova Scotia. Especially as we practice it on a demand basis, when our pulp and paper mills, when our log mills, when all those operations are running at peak and they haven't been in recent times. We heard, in fact, at Resource Committee, from the Woodlot Owners Association of Nova Scotia that, in fact, there are peaks and there are valleys. There are years in which we over cut the replacement level in the province and hope we have a catchup year. That, indeed, is not a best practice.

Newfoundland and Labrador is one such province that already has an annual allowable cut in place to protect forest sustainability. We must start now to ensure our forests are properly maintained for our children and grandchildren.

It doesn't hurt, I think, to point out that there are seven major forest industrial sites in Nova Scotia: Northern Pulp, Nova Scotia Limited in Pictou, NewPage in Port Hawkesbury, Minas Pulp and Power in Hantsport, Bowater Mersey, J.D. Irving in Truro and Enligna in Upper Musquodoboit.

One of the areas that we need to see in this province is the whole tree harvesting. We are hoping, our caucus is hoping and we're speaking for the majority of Nova Scotians, that we hope this practice does, in fact, come to an end. While Bill No. 73 is designed to take a look at the amount of harvesting, as well as how we harvest in this province, needs to be given very strong consideration. We know that Apple Head in Cumberland County is an unfortunate development and whether something can still be done in that regard, we are not sure. With that, Mr. Speaker, I take my place.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Natural Resources.

HON. JOHN MACDONELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just wonder if you could tell me how much time I have because it doesn't correlate with . . .

MR. SPEAKER: You have about eight minutes.

MR. MACDONELL: Thank you. I appreciate the efforts of the member opposite, the member for Kings West. We have an annual allowable cut on Crown land. For the time from 2006 to 2010, about one million cubic metres of softwood and 400,000 cubic metres of hardwood was the sustainable harvest on Crown.

In 2008, according to the Registry of Buyers, we could have harvested 1.4 million cubic metres and only harvested 781,000 cubic metres, so a little over half of what was deemed to have been sustainable that year.

The member raises some good points, I think some of which I would have to agree with. I can tell him and the House, because I've been saying this, that there is going to be a reduction in clear-cutting in this province (Applause) and there's going to be no whole tree harvesting.

The member mentioned the Apple Head property that the province bought last year and this was raised in the rally last Friday. The province is limited, actually, in that we can only buy by appraised value. We had \$9 million, actually, to try to buy that property at Apple Head, about 8,500 acres. The company that owned it wanted \$14 million and we had \$9 million, so there was quite a gap there to try to bridge.

Finally, through a fair bit of negotiation, the deal-breaker was whether or not we could allow them to harvest part of it and get it for the \$9 million and that's what we agreed to do. It was, I think, \$1.5 million to \$2 million in the difference by allowing them to harvest 2,000 acres and 500 acres of that would be whole-tree harvested, Mr. Speaker. They have two years to do that. If they don't do it in two years, they don't do it.

The member mentioned Chignecto Game Sanctuary. I have to tell the member that the province's largest Crown allocation belongs with NewPage and that's an historic, long-term agreement. Over time, with negotiation, that agreement changes a bit. For other mills,

generally, I think Northern Pulp has about 200,000 acres of Crown, but generally other mills, saw mills in the province - the province really doesn't allocate more than 10 per cent of what their harvest is, whatever they show in the registry of buyers.

One of the complications to that is the province is pretty well strapped with where it can allocate Crown land. We don't have a lot to offer to mills, so they quite often come looking for more than the 10 per cent of their harvest, but I have to say, most often we don't have it.

We have some obligations to fill in the Ship Harbour Long Lake when that wilderness area was created. About 8,000 acres of harvestable timber was taken out of that allocation for Northern Pulp and we have to find that to ensure they get that volume.

The member raises a good point, but the Crown has been doing an annual allowable cut on their land for some time and has been moving for some period on doing harvests that are stand-specific, which has really minimized the amount of clear-cutting on Crown land and tries to harvest those stands so that they actually harvest them as a treatment. The stand will actually be better for the future.

The member who introduced the debate raises a point that I would say almost everybody raises when they speak about forestry. I don't think they intend to confuse the issues, but it always come down to this: it's the volume we harvest and how we harvest. It's those two issues. The bill addresses purely an annual allowable cut, which is the amount that we harvest. As I said, the province already watches that very closely and has applied an annual allowable cut on the Crown land for some years.

The issue around how we harvest is one that I think is probably uppermost in the minds of Nova Scotians. If you throw into the mix the term "biomass," that has raised the ire of many people simply because they've seen photographs of large clear-cuts of forest that were taken for biomass, even though the biomass was not for the NewPage-NSPI project. It was biomass that's actually used in the pulping process. That tends to confuse the public as to how biomass has to be harvested - it doesn't. There's no reason to assume, when you use the term biomass, that you're always talking about electrical generation, number one and there's no reason to assume that because it's biomass you have to clear-cut to get it.

I think usually in this province biomass that's used for the pulping process is done with whole-tree harvesting, and as I said earlier, we're going to bring that to a stop. What's generally referred to as the fines - the tops, the limbs, et cetera - that's going to stay on the forest floor for the nutrients that are necessary for the next generation of trees. For all that we've done in improper forest practices in the province, in the 21st century we're not going to allow that to happen. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cape Breton West.

[5:00 p.m.]

MR. ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, it gives me great privilege to rise this afternoon to make a few comments on Bill No. 73, about the annual allowable harvest on Crown lands put forward by the honourable member for Kings West.

We in our caucus actually are having a little difficulty figuring out just what the purpose is for bringing this bill forward in the Legislature at this time. We know that the Minister of Natural Resources will be bringing forward the government's new forestry strategy - he keeps on saying, in a couple of days - and, indeed, I believe that he will. I do question that a little bit too, because he still has a consultant out there working on the plan, so I would like to see the consultant finish his work before he brings forward his plan so that we can have a discussion based on fact rather than fiction.

However, while we may have some fairly solid guesses as to what might be in the strategy or the policy, we think it would be good to wait a few more days to see what the strategy contains and what, if any, legislation might be required to implement or - if we so feel as a House - to change it. It does not make any sense to discuss a single, one-off amendment to the existing forestry legislation today, when we know there will be a new policy that will demand a great deal of discussion, very shortly, in this House of Assembly.

The annual allowable cut issue has been a big subject of debate in Nova Scotia for some time. As a matter of fact, during the interval that I was not a member of this House, around the year 2000, I believe, the Department of Natural Resources was forced to discontinue the allowable annual cut on private woodlands because there was no mechanism really to keep count, although the federal government had demanded we try to do that. Yes, at that time there were some critics of the decision to abandon the annual allowable cut on private lands, but the Progressive Conservative Government of the day felt that a better and more effective tool for measuring wood supply would be through wood supply analysis, which it has been using for the last number of years. This, the department figured, would be a good planning tool and it has been.

Although the annual allowable cut for private woodlands was abolished earlier this decade, the department maintained an annual allowable cut for Crown lands after that time, and as far as I can figure out, they still maintain it. In the most recent year for which records are available, for 2008, the annual allowable cut on Nova Scotia Crown lands was one million cubic meters of softwood and 400,000 cubic meters of hardwood. That information from the National Forestry database. The annual allowable cut on Crown land information is available from that source going back 20 years to 1990.

Why on earth are we spending time in this House discussing whether or not the Minister of Natural Resources should be responsible for the annual allowable cut on Crown lands? Earlier this year the Forestry Steering Panel - that was part of the natural resources consultation the current government undertook - recommended a triad approach to Crown

land management and did, indeed, recommend the specific annual allowable cut on Crown lands continue. This panel also recommended an analysis of realistic management alternatives for Crown land.

This whole woodlot management policy is a big deal throughout rural Nova Scotia, make no mistake about it. The Official Opposition knows that, and I think that's why they're playing silly games in the House, trying to score points on one aspect of this whole issue. There are a whole bunch of issues tied up in the new Natural Resources forestry strategy, a lot more than just the allowable cut matter.

For instance, what about the matter of defining what clear-cutting is. The Minister of Natural Resources made some comments here yesterday in this Chamber about what clear-cutting was, but the clear-cutting explanation was not that clear, and it is something that I think still needs to be figured out and something that we need to know, precisely, as we are moving forward with this legislation. If we're going to build a sound legislation, we need to know what, indeed, clear-cutting is in the eyes and the minds of the people who manage our woods.

Now I hope that when the strategy is unveiled and legislation implementing it is introduced, we will really find out what the government intends to do on the whole issue, not just a single matter of annual allowable cuts on Crown land, important as that may be. At that time too, Mr. Speaker, not only will we have time to study the government's ideas, but we will also be able to debate them here and industry stakeholders will be able to come before the Law Amendments Committee of this House to make their views known clearly, once and for all. Then all the honourable members of this House will be able to listen, judge and vote on the whole issue.

Again, it makes no sense to us right now to pass or even really debate the legislation formerly entrenching one specific aspect of forest management policy that will be addressed very shortly in the government's new strategy and accompanying legislation. Once we see and understand the strategy, we will be in a much better position to determine whether a bill like that, proposed by the honourable member for Kings West, makes sense. Right now it does not. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, our caucus will not be supporting Bill No. 73. Thank you very much.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

MR. ANDREW YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, it is interesting listening to the member from the smaller Third Party. You know, he speaks as though this bill might actually pass today, in advance of the forest strategy. While that might be a very happy thing for many Nova Scotians, I don't think there's much risk of that and therefore, there is no problem, in my view, in bringing forth the bill that the Official Opposition, and especially the member for Kings West, has been talking about for a couple of years, waiting for the previous government and now this government to act on, and that just hasn't happened. There's a

certain point where you give up waiting and you just take action and that is what the member for Kings West has done.

The fact of the matter is that it is extremely important that this one line be put into the Act governing forestry in our province. The fact that we would take the lead and set the total allowable cut on our own Crown lands not only establishes how much forest can be used and harvested for hardwood production and pulp and paper, but also for biomass. The minister did mention biomass. One of the things that prompts us to now come forward with this bill at this time, in advance, as the member has quite rightly pointed out, of the forest strategy, is that the energy regulations were released just a couple of weeks ago, which actually allow for 500,000 tons of forest biomass for the purpose of energy generation, still without a total allowable cut that would include other types of forestry. So we feel that while there is no doubt room for biomass electrical generation in the province, the fact of the matter is that without having a total allowable cut in the province first, it makes no sense to set that limit.

This bill does not actually set a limit but requires the minister to set the limit, which allows him to use the information from the Voluntary Planning strategy to establish that. Perhaps that strategy and recommendations will come forward with such a measure included and certainly we hope it does. If it does, we'll be happy to support that.

You know, I must give credit to the minister for something he said the other day at the rally outside the Legislature. I had brought up the issue of Apple Head and expressed my disappointment, and the disappointment of many Nova Scotians, that the province would buy land and then allow it to be clear-cut. I want to recognize the fact that the minister did stand up at that rally and acknowledge that he, too, was disappointed in that and he understood that people were concerned about that. I do want to say in this House that I think it takes a lot for the minister to get up and make that admission. I appreciated it and I know the people there appreciated the fact that he was willing to point out the fact that even he was concerned about that.

There are things that we've heard that I know the member for Kings West is happy about hearing, such as the banning of whole-tree harvesting, such as the reduction of clear-cutting. When we look at NewPage, for example, and the biomass project in Cape Breton, they've already announced that they plan to reduce clear-cutting by 50 per cent. That is the kind of thing that can be done where we actually have industry perhaps leading where the government should be going in that direction.

We do have to be concerned, though. We've heard a lot and we've heard this minister and other members of the current government talk a lot about the things they're going to bring forward, talk a lot about the things that they believe in, that they believe very strongly in. Then when the bill comes forward or the legislation comes forward, it doesn't actually include those things. That's why we're concerned.

We hear the minister say there will be no whole-tree harvesting and we certainly hope that will be the case, but we've heard things said before. We watched Apple Head happen with whole-tree harvesting and in fact, out there today there is equipment on that site. I believe it was yesterday that work started on that site, clearing land that the province is going to buy. The minister could today issue an order to stop that. (Interruption)

Mr. Speaker, the minister suggests he can't, but he could. He has that power to say we've changed our mind, we're not going to allow that to be harvested. The government has found money to waste on other things and said that was a priority - they could put the money there.

Specific to this bill, the fact of the matter is that the reason why it is important to bring this bill forward now is because we cannot sit around waiting and waiting for the government to act. We spent a lot of time doing that when the previous government was in power and nothing happened. Now we don't want to make the same mistake waiting for things to happen with this government. If the minister includes this sort of thing in legislation, we'll be happy to support it. We'd be very happy to support it.

But the minister has talked about things like banning whole-tree harvesting and reducing clear-cutting for two sessions now and we haven't seen anything come forward. We are going to bring forward the ideas. The fact that the Third Party would like to sit around and not take any action on issues because they hope the government will take action doesn't make any sense to me at all.

Let me say that - I said outside and I'll say in this House - there are many things we've heard the Minister of Natural Resources say that should they come forward, we're very supportive of. They mirror some of the things the member for Kings West said and if those things come forward, we will be there to support those actions by the minister. We think they're the right things to do.

But we believe that the longer we wait on taking action on these issues, the worse it gets. Just the fact that the energy regulations came out in the Province of Nova Scotia with 500,000 tons of assigned biomass with no science behind it - at least, none demonstrated to the public. We questioned that in the Spring and it was admitted at the time that there were no regulations. The media asked at the time the Minister of Energy whether there was science behind that to support that 500,000 tons. That concerns us. That's why we feel it necessary to take action.

I think this bill is extremely important to have this debate on and the fact that the Third Party would try and brush it off because it might suddenly pass today? I'm reasonably certain the bill is not going to pass today. That is such a red herring in terms of being a fear. (Interruptions) If it does, I just don't know, I really don't know. I can't even believe the member for Cape Breton West even suggested that. That member has been in this House long enough and he has been the Speaker of the House that he knows there is a process and

it would be very easy for the government to know that this is an issue that we have. It would be very easy for the minister to include this, should he deem it responsible, to put in the forestry regulations that he will bring forward.

The fact is we do want to see this as part of the process and we would love to see this pass but I know there are a lot more people who would like to speak on this bill other than we will have time for today. If the members in the Third Party had fewer resolutions, maybe we would have more time to debate this today. But, of course, we don't.

The fact of the matter is (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, order.

MR. YOUNGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will close by saying I know the member for Kings West and I have met with woodlot owners around the province. We have met with some of the industry involved in forestry around the province in various locations, and there is absolutely a problem. This is an issue that has come forward time and time again from small woodlot owners, small-forestry operators, large-forestry operators, and it is something that we have heard across all sectors of the industry that is widely supported.

[5:15 p.m.]

The member for Kings West has brought this forward as a question repeatedly in this House, to this and previous governments, and there hasn't been action. So there's a certain point where you have to take action yourself to try to make sure that it's included and is appropriately considered. I have every faith that the minister will consider this in the recommendation, but this is something that has been talked about for a long time. Why would we even think about waiting another couple of days or another week or another two weeks? As the member for Cape Breton West said, the new forestry regulations have always been coming forward in another two days.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Opposition House Leader.

HON. MANNING MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 77.

Bill No. 77 - Tax Review (2010-11) Act.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Clayton Park.

MS. DIANA WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today to start the debate on this bill, which is a bill to call for a tax review in Nova Scotia. It actually, just in brief, gives a lot of detail on a time frame for doing that. It calls for a report back to the Legislature by April 29, 2011, and it suggests that this should begin on or before December 15, 2010.

As I go through the bill as presented - you know, this is a Liberal bill - it's a bill that calls for a comprehensive look at the taxes that we pay here in Nova Scotia, with an eye to the competitiveness of our province and how we relate to other provinces around us and across Canada. This is a theme that you've heard a lot of here in the House over the last number of years, and it has certainly gotten even more acute in the last year and a half since the NDP took government in this province. It has not gotten better. It has, in fact, gotten worse. The additional 2 per cent that was added on to the HST has again eroded the competitiveness of Nova Scotia for all of us, for individuals purchasing things, for business to be competitive, and so on.

I think the need for this bill can be best accentuated by going through the quick facts about tax in Nova Scotia. There are a number of different studies that point time and again to us being in, if not the lowest third, the very bottom of the pack when we're compared to other Canadian jurisdictions. This is a situation that cannot be allowed to perpetuate and continue endlessly. People in Nova Scotia need to know that there's a plan, that there is an understanding of the full tax implications in the province. That's why we're talking about a comprehensive tax review. It can't just be a single tax or picking away at one thing or another. We've got to look at the full tax burden on business - small business - and on corporations and on the individuals living in this province.

Some of the facts are - and actually, I want to begin with a quote from Donald Savoie in the report that he did called *The Way Ahead for Nova Scotia*. On Page 10 of that report it says: "I have long believed that a competitive tax regime is a powerful economic development instrument. Nova Scotia's tax structure is not competitive, at least when compared to other provinces." I mean, who else are we going to compare ourselves to except our neighbours and the rest of this country that we belong to?

We have the highest general corporate rate in the country here in Nova Scotia. Nova Scotia's small business tax is also too high, and we begin to collect it at an income level that's lower than our neighbours. So we're hitting small business at an income level below what would happen in our nearest provinces. In our fourth- and fifth-highest tax bracket, ours are the highest in the country. That means for our highest income earners, we're hitting them at a higher and more damaging rate than they are in other provinces. In fact, some other provinces don't have that fifth tax bracket, which was added when I was still the Finance Critic, and I remember it being added in a recent budget - not an NDP budget, I don't believe, it was a budget before that. At any rate, we have the highest rates for our high income earners, which is a disincentive for people at the high end to live and work and contribute here in our province. It goes without saying, that affects our doctors, our recruitment of medical specialists and others. It just makes us uncompetitive in terms of attracting the best people to our province, to help build this province up and make us more competitive in the long run.

As I say, the two percentage point that we got on the HST this year has been a real hit to the province and we have the highest HST in the country. Now, P.E.I. has a slightly

higher rate, but they're not in the HST regime, so other than that, we rank number one and it is not a level or a ranking that we want to have.

I know the Minister of Finance knows these figures and I know that he has talked to the CFIB as well, who have done some very detailed studies across the country. They're a very effective lobby group on behalf of small business and they have repeatedly called on government here in Nova Scotia to understand better the negative implications of this combined tax, from all quarters, that are the highest in the country. It's not just that we have the highest small business tax or that we have the highest property tax, it's all of them combined.

We're in a position where, here in this Legislature, we should be looking squarely at the facts, getting a complete picture of the taxes in this province, and I think we will be surprised when that is done. I'm hopeful that at some point in time the government is doing that, that this bill, if not passed, would in fact be acted upon. I don't believe you can go forward unless you fully understand the picture before you, the actual current snapshot of where we're at in this province, and it is not a pretty picture.

I'm going to go back for a minute to the CFIB who scores all of the provinces on an index with regard to taxes. The overall ranking is that the CFIB found that Nova Scotia was the third worst province in the country based on our provincial tax regime. A quote from their study says, Nova Scotia has the second worst score on property and capital tax and is in the bottom three on corporate income tax. I would venture to say that when you roll all that together, we're right at the bottom in terms of this country.

We know in terms of corporate tax - and all of us would agree that we need some of the larger corporations that provide a lot of employment, although small business collectively is the biggest employer in the country and here in our province as well - we need those big employers: the Michelins, the power plants, the paper companies that employ a lot of people. In terms of how we tax them, there is a gap that widens as you go up in terms of income, but if they earn \$1.5 million, the gap between us and the Canadian average is \$30,000 extra, paid in taxes.

Other provinces, including the federal government, have plans to lower income taxes by 2014. I'll just name them: BC, Manitoba, Ontario and New Brunswick are four that have said they will lower their corporate income tax by that date, 2014. Nova Scotia has no plan and we don't have the review and the understanding of the total picture of our tax burden and this bill would address that need. I think there is a crying need for us to move forward on it and I hope to hear from the government side and from our colleagues in the Third Party that there is support for this kind of a venture because, as I said, it is long overdue and needed in this province. I believe my time has expired. Thank you very much, I will turn it over to the others, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Finance.

HON. GRAHAM STEELE: Mr. Speaker, it's one of the truisms of government that nobody likes paying taxes, but everybody loves the services that those taxes pay for. It's always a mistake to talk about one without the other. It is a mistake to talk about taxes in isolation, without talking about the fact that the money raised from taxes pays for schools and the teachers in them. It pays for hospitals and medical centres and the nurses and the medical technicians and technologists in them. It pays for roads. It pays, in short, for all the things that the members of our communities, our constituents, our families, ourselves expect from our provincial government.

Mr. Speaker, it's also a mistake to go the other way, which is to talk about the services that people want without talking about where the money is going to come from to pay for it. We've had a good long time of Liberal and Progressive Conservative Government where that simple question was not addressed. Our commitment as a government is to be different from Liberals and Progressive Conservatives, to deliver quality health care and education that people need, and to do it while living within our means.

Any government, and I would suggest any Opposition Party, has to answer a couple of questions when they're talking about revenue. The first question, Mr. Speaker, is what is the total revenue requirement that is needed to deliver the services that Nova Scotians expect and need? Then the second question, once that's fixed, is from what tax base will it come? Who is going to pay for that revenue requirement?

Let me look at those two things in turn, Mr. Speaker, first of all, the total revenue requirement. The main things that the Government of Nova Scotia provides to its citizens, of course, are health care, education, community services and roads. Now together with debt payments - I should say interest payments on the debt - that is \$8.5 billion of the \$9 billion budget. Those are the things, those are the services that the Government of Nova Scotia provides to its people.

Now the question of how much service and what level of service is an iterative process back and forth. You don't just say, well, here's what we're going to do and we'll find the money, however much it takes, we'll find the money somewhere. It's a back-and-forth process, trying to find the balance between the services that people want and need and the money required to pay for them.

The second question, Mr. Speaker, once the government hits on its total revenue requirement, is where will the money come from? Now in our budget the largest single source of revenue is actually the federal government, and of all of our revenue it provides \$2.9 billion of revenue, \$2.9 billion comes from all federal sources.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I think all of us would like to increase that amount because any money coming from the federal government is spread over the entire national tax base so we

get a large benefit at a very small cost to our own citizens. I think we all recognize, and everybody who has been in government recognizes - like the member for Cape Breton North who spent a good deal of his time as Minister of Energy trying to increase that amount that we get from the federal government, and did a very good job at it, may I say, did a very good job of it - I think we all recognize that there is a limit to how much the federal government is willing and able to transfer through the provincial government.

Among provincial sources, the largest single source is provincial income tax at \$1.9 billion, followed by HST at \$1.4 billion. Those are, by far, the two largest sources of revenue. Every other provincial source of revenue is much smaller than those two items. I'll get back to the significance of that in just a minute.

Total provincial own-source revenue, \$4.7 billion and that leaves the Liquor Corporation, the Gaming Corporation with revenue to the province of \$348 million. That's where our revenue comes from.

Now, if there is going to be some form of tax review, it has to start with a framework. Here's the essential thing about that. The Liberals, by proposing something called a comprehensive tax review, are dodging the really hard questions. They are simply hiding behind this bill. Every question to do with government services and revenue, they don't know what the answers are, they just say we'll do a comprehensive tax review and hope that everybody reads into that whatever they want to hear.

[5:30 p.m.]

The key question in any review of tax is, is the tax review supposed to result in greater revenue, the same revenue or lower revenue? Now let's assume that none of us wants to further increase the government's revenue, that's our commitment through the Back to Balance process, that's a commitment that we made in the last provincial budget. So if the purpose of the tax review is to raise the same amount of money, then the real question is, who is going to pay more? If the total tax take is the same, the total revenue is the same, if somebody pays less, somebody else has to pay more.

That's the really difficult question and the Liberals refuse to address that question. Who do they think ought to pay more than they're paying right now? Who do they think ought to pay less? That's the tough question and they completely evade it. But if the purpose of the tax review is to produce less revenue, which appears to be implied in the news release of the Leader of the Official Opposition, then they have to answer a different question, which is, what services to the people of the province would they cut? That's the real question.

We're trying to take the services and fit it within the total revenue available to us, but the Leader of the Official Opposition says in a news release that he's going to further cut the revenue. That money pays the wages of nurses and teachers, it paves roads, it pays for social assistance, it pays for housing. What is it that the Liberals would cut? They refuse to say. So

by advocating something called a comprehensive tax review, all the Liberals are doing is completely avoiding any of the difficult political questions that face any of us in government.

We don't have to look very far to see what Liberal economics look like. Let's look next door in the Province of New Brunswick. They did a tax review, but they only picked the bits that cut revenue, not the bits at the back of the report that increase revenue, and what happened? Well, there are certain rules of economics. If you cut your revenue, your revenue is going to go down. So the Province of New Brunswick is running a massive deficit, a massive deficit that the new government has to deal with. That's the bit of the equation the Liberals leave out because they refuse to deal with the real issues.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: The impetus for the introduction of this legislation is no doubt due to the decisions of the NDP Government - over \$1 billion in debt since they came to office, increased taxes, failure for government to live within its means. They are making life more expensive for Nova Scotians. Now, when Dr. John Hamm gave Nova Scotians their first balanced budget in 2002, NDP members who are still sitting in this House today, were vehemently opposed to it and they voted against those budgets. Imagine where we would be today if we did not have the foresight of our former Premier, Dr. Hamm, to start putting this province back on course after 40 years of deficit budgets.

We do agree with the Liberals on the point that the people of our province pay too much tax, but unless government starts to live within its means, we don't really have much choice but to endure high taxes. Now there was a reference made to the CFIB study and the lack of competitiveness in our Nova Scotian economy. I took a look at the numbers in that study and the thing that struck me the most is that we have a small section of our economy that's entrepreneurial. One of the reasons for that, I believe, is because of our high taxes and no doubt if we do have high taxes it is going to be harder for that sector of the economy to grow.

Why do we have high taxes? I would say that perhaps our government has grown too big over the years. That needs to be addressed. A government needs to match its expenses with its revenues, it's as simple as that. Now in today's difficult times there are many needs demanding the attention of government and we in this House do not see the merit in passing legislation to do another study.

The Progressive Conservative Government, before 2009, had commenced such a review, so I don't see why we would need to start the process all over again. The government can make use of the work that was completed by senior servants in the Department of Finance before the change of government, and I expect most of the information that is the intent of this bill would be available to the department.

The issue here is not more study, but action, and with respect to the Liberal caucus on this side of the House, we need to balance the budget as soon as we can, we need to move toward a future of lower taxes, and we should remember that the budget was balanced for eight straight years before this NDP government came to power. So to do this extra work, it really comes down to busy work, and I don't think it really helps to provide a vision for the future of our province, it doesn't start to solve the problems. As our new Leader, on the weekend just past, when he was made Leader of our Party, he agreed with the honourable minister and acknowledged that we want the government to come back to balanced budgets, but we only wish that the NDP hadn't brought us there in the first place.

We do need more competitive tax structure in this province but we must balance the budget first. If we look to New Brunswick - and my honourable colleague raised it here today already - if we look under the Graham Liberal government, the debt in New Brunswick grew from \$6.7 billion in 2006 to \$8.3 billion. We note that they were going to try to sell NB Power to Hydro Quebec. One of the challenges with selling a utility that a province owns is we can see how quickly a government can come to power and waste that money in over-spending. We've seen it here with the money that was put down on the royalties in this province - the prudent decision by the Progressive Conservative Government of the day - to put down royalties on the debt and now, within a year, that debt has been run right back up by this NDP Government.

If we wanted to look at the taxes that we do have, I would give a quick review right now. Forty per cent of our taxes come from the federal government, that's outside of our controls, so that's almost half of our taxes and the nice thing about them is that they're legislated to grow. Health care is legislated to grow by 6 per cent, the social transfers that we receive by 3 per cent - together they make up about 12 per cent of our revenues. We have another 17 per cent of our revenues from federal equalization and that has grown by 2 per cent over the past year. We have lost some on royalties but that is completely out of our control, it's dependent on the industry.

Our income tax is the biggest generator for the province and that's at about 21 per cent. The other taxes, corporate taxes brings in about 4 per cent of revenues, HST brings in about 14 per cent and there are various other measures that would equal the remainder. I don't really see that there's much the government can do around tax. In the future, I hope that we can reduce it but right now we have to get to work to balance the budget. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to join the debate. First of all, I want to respond to the Minister of Finance's suggestion that the Liberals don't have any solutions to our challenges in front of us. I can tell the honourable member the one thing that I know since standing in this House is that I did not walk out in front of Nova Scotians

during the general election and tell them one thing and then come in here and do something different, like you did.

We, as a Party - and I believe all members of this House - recognize that as a province we are becoming uncompetitive. All of us - I'm sure many members of this House had an opportunity to campaign in the by-election in Cumberland South where the new Progressive Conservative Leader was elected to represent them. Doorstep after doorstep the issue of cross-border shopping, the fact that jobs were being lost, and it kept coming up that we were in an uncompetitive environment. The simple solution, as was presented in the election campaign, was we'd create a new zone around gas taxes. Well, that was a silly notion and we all know that. The challenge facing our economy is much greater than that and it needs to have a long-term view on how we sell it.

I listened to the member for Inverness who talked about the great glory days more recently. Well, the total revenue in the Province of Nova Scotia in terms of covering all those expenses around 1999 was around \$5 billion. We've grown to almost \$9 billion and I would dare say that Nova Scotians are not better off today in terms of health care services. We have challenges around education and apparently the school boards are being asked to cut up to 20 per cent. Are we better off? How come? It's because of the way government has done business in the past. Any revenue that they've received they've spent and that's what happened through the 2000s; it was really a missed opportunity.

There's no question, there were challenges by all Parties. Nova Scotians were looking for something new, but reaching out and looking at an uncompetitive tax environment prior to the last election and then coming into power and increasing the HST by 2 per cent, creating another tax bracket, giving members of this House a tax break while low income Nova Scotians hadn't received any was shortsighted. What we've asked for is that, as legislators, we look at a comprehensive review. What are the unintended consequences to our economy of that 2 per cent HST increase? We've talked an awful lot about government services. How are we going to grow the private sector in an environment that's uncompetitive?

Mr. Speaker, this is not the province of my parents. My children will have an opportunity, as everyone's children in this House will and every Nova Scotian, they are very mobile and they'll move. They'll move to an environment where they're going to be treated properly, where they can grow a business, create a life and environment for their children. It doesn't work any more to say we're a beautiful place so everyone is going to stay. Every province boasts of that. The challenge for the government and us, as an Opposition, is to create an environment where the entrepreneurs of this province can grow.

What are we doing for the Nova Scotians who are creating the jobs today? We're doing very little, we're doing very little. This government continued the same practices of previous governments except they increased the Industrial Expansion Fund to funnel money out the back door where it's not being viewed, whether it's a good investment in the

economy, whether it's going to continue to grow jobs. What we're asking for is to have everything reviewed with an eye on not the next election but 10 years out, 15 years out, what does our province look like? Can we create the kind of environment where the men and women who stood through the tough times in this province for generations, who created the jobs for generations, will have an opportunity to continue to do that and allow their children to do it here in the Province of Nova Scotia?

The Minister of Finance, who got up and talked about more political rhetoric than any substance, around talking about how we're going to move our province forward, never suggested or never said to the people of Nova Scotia what the increase in the HST has done. It has just presented him with more revenue. He's doing exactly what every Finance Minister has done long before him. What's new and what's different?

What's new and what's different, Mr. Speaker, is we are falling further behind as a province and as an economy. What we're asking for in this review is to look at which tax can we change that would create economic opportunity and would allow to grow our economy in the Province of Nova Scotia. It's interesting if you go back and you talk about what happened under Dr. Hamm when we increased the motor fuel tax by 2 cents a litre, it was supposed to fix all the highway challenges in the province.

I daresay in Pictou West you have a few roads that still aren't paved. Nova Scotians were inflicted with a 10 per cent tax increase under the John Hamm Government following the 2003 election campaign. What has that done to our economy? What this government is doing and continues to do is to look at our tax system as a cash cow and where can I make a quick grab to increase my revenues, as opposed to making - quite frankly to the Minister of Finance - some of the tough decisions. How do we deliver those services? Will there be cuts required?

The Minister of Finance - all Nova Scotians would like to know if the cuts are going to come in the emergency rooms around our province. Is that where they're going to find the revenue? If you look at what the Economic Panel had suggested to this province, there were three things that they could do to grow the economy or to bring it back to balance, sorry. They could cut services, increase taxes or grow the economy to create jobs and economic opportunities for Nova Scotians. (Interruption) As I'm hearing one of the members say you can't do all three, well, I disagree with him. I disagree with him and it is government's responsibility to create an environment where we can grow the private sector.

What has the increase in the HST done to grow the private sector? Nothing. What is creating a fifth tax bracket for the very professionals that we have challenges to keep in our province, what has it done to help us solve those challenges? It hasn't done anything and it has made the problem worse. What we're suggesting is that the government should look at and engage Nova Scotians in a review on what happens if we reduce the small business tax. What would happen? How much revenue loss would we see but how much growth would

we have in our economy from one end of Nova Scotia to the other - how much? No one seems to have the answer, the place has gone silent.

[5:45 p.m.]

The real challenge is, we are a non-competitive tax environment. The only thing that's going to get us out of the challenges we're facing today is if we grow the private sector. If we grow the private sector to allow the men and women who are creating the jobs in Nova Scotia to flourish and work here. We cannot continue to rely on government to continue to bloat the bureaucracy of Nova Scotia and somehow think that's going to create economic opportunity that will allow us to grow.

Who's going to pay for that bureaucracy? Where's the new revenue source? Where's the new money coming from? I would suggest by doing a comprehensive tax review we could look at the tax system, where we could make changes that would create those economic opportunities for Nova Scotians and the men and women who have continued to invest in this province to grow their businesses, to hire your children and mine so they stay here in the Province of Nova Scotia. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Opposition House Leader.

HON. MANNING MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, the discussion on Bill No. 77, the timetable for that discussion was Liberals 5:40 p.m. to 5:48 p.m. and then we were going to adjourn. It's not 5:48 p.m., it's only 5:46 p.m. The reason is the Third Party didn't use up all their time.

MR. SPEAKER: That's correct.

MR. MANNING MACDONALD: That's permitted, they're permitted to do that if they want. We stood up and we took their time because it was our turn to get up and speak. So, I'm saying to you that the time frame here should be followed. We were supposed to speak to 5:48 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER: Okay, that's fine.

MR. MANNING MACDONALD: And you're about to give the government a second crack at this resolution?

MR. SPEAKER: No . . .

MR. MANNING MACDONALD: I saw the member over there stand up.

MR. SPEAKER: Does the honourable member wish to speak on this topic or any member of their Party, go ahead.

MR. MANNING MACDONALD: Pardon me?

MR. SPEAKER: You may speak on the topic.

MR. MANNING MACDONALD: I am speaking on it, I'm speaking on a point of order.

MR. SPEAKER: And I'm allowing you to continue on Bill No. 77.

MR. MANNING MACDONALD: Well, look, I will continue on Bill No. 77 if that's okay with the Chair. (Applause)

I can tell you one of the things that I will follow up on . . .

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. It's not their turn if the member sat down. I can tell you from the Government's caucus, if you so wish it, we would support the Leader of the Official Opposition to finish his time. We would be very supportive of that.

MR. SPEAKER: That's fine and that's what I'm allowing the Opposition Party to do. So if the honourable member of the Official Opposition, the honourable member for Cape Breton South may speak.

MR. MANNING MACDONALD: I'd certainly like to have half an hour to speak on the particular topic that our Leader was so succinct in talking about the problems of the government and what they're doing with the budget. But, I don't have that kind of time and it is now, I believe, 5:48 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER: If you wish a couple of extra minutes, by all means.

MR. MANNING MACDONALD: No, what I want, Mr. Speaker, is for you to follow the Rules of the House. The Rules of the House say to 5:48 p.m., that's what I want. I don't know who made the deal that the government could get up and take an extra couple of minutes, but I certainly wasn't going to sit back and let that happen.

MR. SPEAKER: Okay, I'm allowing you a couple of extra minutes if you wish.

MR. MANNING MACDONALD: No.

MR. SPEAKER: Okay.

MR. MANNING MACDONALD: The time has expired, you know that.

MR. SPEAKER: Time has expired. The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: The hours of the House tomorrow will be from 2:00 p.m. until 6:00 p.m. and the bills for second reading will be Bill Nos. 78, 79, 81 and 82. I move the House do now rise to sit at the hours between 2:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is to adjourn.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

We have reached the moment of interruption. The adjournment motion was submitted by the honourable member for Hammonds Plains-Upper Sackville:

“Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly join me in honouring those who serve in our Canadian Armed Forces, past and present, their families and loved ones, for the dedication, loyalty and perseverance they exhibit in protecting Canada and preserving democracy and peace throughout the world.”

That was submitted by the honourable member for Hammonds Plains-Upper Sackville.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION UNDER RULE 5(5)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hammonds Plains-Upper Sackville.

CDN. ARMED FORCES: MEMBERS/FAMILIES - HONOUR

MR. MAT WHYNOTT: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today on this very important topic, especially since Remembrance Day is coming up shortly and I believe Veterans' Week begins on November 5th. Unfortunately, I know there is a guest who is supposed to arrive here - he was supposed to be here at quarter to six. Unfortunately, he is not here as of yet. This gentleman has served in our Canadian Forces for many years and he lives in one of the communities that I represent, Hammonds Plains.

This gentleman, by the name of Sergeant Kevin Byrne, is, in fact, from Sydney, Nova Scotia - a good Cape Bretoner. I know that the member for Cape Breton Nova is very proud

of fellow Cape Bretoners. This gentleman is a dedicated member of our Canadian Forces. He has served for 31 years and has travelled to various missions across the world, including Israel, Syria, and most recently in Afghanistan with Task Force Freedom.

This soldier retired in February 2001, after serving 28 years, and returned to the Forces in January 2007. I think that just shows the dedication that he, as an individual, has for his country and for his province and for the community that he comes from.

In the resolution we talked about today it states that as members of this House we honour those who serve and have served in the Canadian military, both past and present, their families and loved ones, for the dedication, loyalty, and perseverance that they exhibit protecting not only our country but other countries around the world. We, as legislators, as 52 people who sit in this Chamber, if it wasn't for our military and the Canadian Forces who served in the past, and for the present, we would not be here today.

I have met many constituents of mine who I have met through door knocking, who have come to my office, who have really shown their perseverance and dedication to their country because they show me their appreciation for the things that I do. The member for Queens, her brother is in Afghanistan, a Warrant Officer in Afghanistan right now, and we are certainly proud of the work that he does.

The reason I brought this subject forward is that on October 23, 2009, the then-Master Corporal Byrne contacted my office - as we all do - looking for pins and flags. At that time I didn't know that he was in the Forces. It's a common type of request for us all to receive. However, Sergeant Byrne had requested these items to bring along with him on his upcoming tour to Afghanistan, that he would fly this Nova Scotia flag proudly in his quarters and display patriotism for his province. I said, absolutely.

Sergeant Byrne handed them out to people in many different countries, from France, England, Scotland, the U.S., Afghanistan, Australia, New Zealand, and that's just to name a few. The two flags were well-travelled. One flag is signed by members of the Canadian Helicopter Force in Afghanistan and was actually carried on board on one of Sergeant Byrne's Helos missions. The second flag was carried with Sergeant Byrne when he travelled on leave and he carried the flag to England, Scotland, Wales, and France. He had the opportunity to visit Normandy with his son and follow some of the footsteps of the North Nova Scotia Highlanders, the flag was with them every step of the way. He also paid a visit to Vimy Ridge.

Sergeant Byrne has since given the flag to the young Gryphon pilot, also from Nova Scotia, who carried the signed Nova Scotia flag with him during the missions. His intent was to return one of those flags to the Government of Nova Scotia and to this Legislature, and has since presented this flag to me in this House a couple of weeks ago, a great honour, that over 50 people in the Air Force had signed this flag and presented it to me. It was quite an

honour, Mr. Speaker. With that flag was a signed certificate from the commanding officer stating that this was a certified flag flown in Afghanistan.

We all know every single one of us have Legions in our constituency that play an important role in the lives of veterans. Now we are coming to November 11th, believe it or not, another year of supporting our veterans and supporting our current members of the Armed Forces.

The Royal Canadian Legion Calais Branch 162 in Lower Sackville is the local branch for Sergeant Byrne and has been a valuable resource for both him and the other 1,500 active members of the branch. Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to say that before next week I'm going to have this flag folded properly, contained in a shadow box and on Remembrance Day, with the permission of Sergeant Byrne, I will be presenting this flag to the Royal Canadian Legion.

It certainly was an honour for me to receive that flag, but I believe that the proper place for that flag is to be at the local Legion where legionnaires can see it every day when they visit there. I'm certainly proud to have received that honour from Sergeant Byrne. It is quite unfortunate that he isn't here to hear it. I know he said he was going to try his best to be here for 5:45 p.m., but unfortunately he isn't.

Mr. Speaker, the other group of people I want to thank are the families of former personnel in our military, as well as the people who are serving today. As legislators, we know that our families, sometimes, are left behind. We are here in Halifax and yes, we get to go home on weekends, some of our members travel from Cape Breton, down to Yarmouth. Luckily I get to go home every night and see my family, my new wife, but some people don't get to see that.

[6:00 p.m.]

AN HON. MEMBER: God bless her.

MR. WHYNOTT: God bless her, exactly. Mr. Speaker, you know the six months, or nine months, or a year that members of the Armed Forces do not see their family is unfortunate and without the support of their wives, their brothers and their sisters and their cousins, they couldn't do it. I would like to pay tribute to those families for everything they do, the wives and the husbands, the daughters and sons.

I do see Sergeant Byrne coming in. Sergeant Byrne, I have two minutes to talk and I've already done my spiel about how wonderful you are and about the 31 years you've served in our military. I want to personally thank you and your family for everything you have done for our nation, for our province and for our community. We are truly proud of you and I know that you and your wife - that your wife is proud of you and your family.

I know for a fact that those medals he wears today represent the type of person that Sergeant Byrne is. We thank you so much for your service and the service of your family, because I just spoke about all of the things that you have done in your career to better the lives of not only the country you serve, the province you serve, the community you serve, but the nations around the world. Because of the efforts of you and your comrades, you have made this world a better place for all.

I notice that the honourable member for Cape Breton South just recognized Sergeant Byrne, I believe, and the first thing he said to me when he presented me with the flag is, I'm from Sydney and my former MLA was the member for Cape Breton South. So, Sergeant Byrne, thank you so very much for being here tonight and a few other of my Opposition colleagues will also talk about all the service of the military. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cape Breton South.

HON. MANNING MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the member for Hammonds Plains-Upper Sackville for bringing this resolution to the House here for late debate. Before I get into my remarks, I just want to also welcome Kevin to the House of Assembly here today. As a matter of fact, Kevin was a Sea Cadet when I was an officer with 2 RCSCC Sydney many years ago. As a result of him and his friends that were in Sea Cadets at the time, almost all of them did very well, if not all of them, in later life, including Kevin.

I'll tell you how astute he was, he worked for me in my first mayoral campaign, as well, in Sydney back in 1978 - him and some of (Interruption) Yes, I won. How could you not win with guys like Kevin and all his buddies, and he certainly knows who I'm talking about, and I certainly wish Kevin many more years of good health and happiness. He certainly has served his country and it's just a pleasure to know this fine young man for as long as I've known him. I know that he keeps in touch with some of the other people who went through the cadet movement when I was executive officer of that corps. So again, Kevin, welcome to the House of Assembly here today.

Remembrance Day, is one of the most important days in our calendar and it's coming up next week. So I think it's very appropriate that the member opposite brought this resolution to the House today. Every year when I speak of Remembrance Day, I ask the audience, some of them veterans but most of them people who were involved with the cadet movement or the different military - Navy, Army, Air Force - and the veterans of the Second World War, those few who are still left. I always say to them, look around because there are friends here this year that you can see but they're not actually here. They were your friends who were here each and every year and every year there are seats missing. They know who they are and they recognize that fact.

I would just like to pay homage to two of them who died in the past year, who were Second World War veterans, two good friends of mine. People who live in Cape Breton

would know who they were and even some people who would recognize one of them from hockey prowess in Pictou County.

Anyway, Alex McInnis was a close friend of mine who passed away last year. He was a valuable member of Branch 12 in Sydney, a Second World War veteran, and the kind of person who served on city council when I was mayor and also did great community work in and around the City of Sydney for many years.

The other one was “Stan the Man” MacDougall who was also a Second World War veteran and he passed on this year. While it was difficult to get stories out of Stan about his wartime activities, it wasn’t as difficult to get stories out of him about his hockey activities when he played in Pictou County. After leaving the Sydney Millionaires, he went up to Pictou County and played. He’s famous for scoring three goals in 27 seconds and he would tell everyone that story who asked him rather than get into his war record, which was substantial I can tell you.

Some days when Stan would talk about it, he would tell you about his days in Holland and went back to Holland each and every year after the war was over to play hockey, to take senior teams from the Sydney area over to Holland. Every time they went over there the Village of Apeldoorn, where he went, would give him the kind of recognition only reserved for heroes. Stan never wanted that, but he did get that kind of recommendation.

I can remember when I was mayor in Sydney, the mayor of Apeldoorn called me and said, your friend Stan MacDougall is over here with a bunch of hockey players from Sydney, and while they’re not doing all that well on the ice, they’re doing well everywhere else in Apeldoorn. If I started telling you the names of the members, the gentlemen here from Cape Breton would know exactly what I’m talking about.

Those were two of my close friends that passed on this year. When I go to the Remembrance Day service this year, I’m going to see some other empty seats and some faces I would like to have saying hello to me. I can see the faces but unfortunately they’ve passed on in a lot of ways.

The other thing that I’m very proud about is the fact that I’m a life member of Branch 138, Ashby Legion in Sydney. I represent that particular legion at functions and also Branch 12 and Branch 126 are in my riding of Cape Breton South. A lot of them still have a great number of veterans who are still going to legion functions. That’s going to end in another few years, but we have to pay particular attention to those who are coming back, the force’s members who are out there now making sure we can still live in peace in this country, and we do that because of the efforts of veterans from World War I, World War II and now some of the hot spots throughout the world like Afghanistan and other places where our military people are being put in harm’s way.

We have to look after them. I think the Legion is a great vehicle to do that when they come back home. Veterans Affairs has a responsibility to do that and hopefully they'll do it well in the future as they veterans start to return to Canada and need the assistance of the Canadian Government. The Legion also has a role to play there to encourage these veterans to become involved in the legion and to look after their needs and the needs of their families.

At a function last year I was talking to a veteran who noticed my Canadian Forces medal, which means that I'm proud to also be a reserve Naval Officer and a commission in the Canadian Forces and, by the way, the Royal Canadian Navy, before the Canadian Forces were born - that's telling you how old I am - I was a commissioned officer in the Royal Canadian Naval Reserve prior to the integration of the Canadian Forces. The veteran looked at my medal and he said, sir, where did you serve in World War II? I said, sir, my only contribution to World War II was to be born during it, but I appreciate your efforts and the efforts of your people who made sure that I could be born and grow up in a country that's free and it was because of the efforts of those people that I could do that.

One of the greatest things that happened to me, I think, was to come up through the cadet movement, as did Kevin and others that I know, a lot of them living in Halifax and a lot of them throughout the country and abroad, some of them are in the Canadian Forces, some are in the RCMP. One of my greatest accomplishments, if you will, as a sea cadet officer was to see the - one of my greatest joys, I guess - was to see how these young men, and now young women, who are in the cadet movement have grown because of their experience in the cadet movement over the years. It has taught them discipline, taught them respect for their country, and I can tell you, those are invaluable tools to have when one is going through life and trying to make a success.

The cadet movement to me was a very important movement. I've said it in this House before, I would encourage parents out there to have their young men and women, their children, take a look at the cadet program, whether it be air cadets, army cadets or my first love, the sea cadets, of course, and to get involved in that program of discipline so that they will know what it's like to live in a country that's free, but yet a country that has to remain free. I think we have to be vigilant about that.

The military personnel who have given us the freedom we enjoy today, in the past and in the present and hopefully in the future, will be ever vigilant. We will have young people getting the kind of discipline they need in the Canadian Forces as they leave the cadet program to do what they can to make sure that Canada remains free. I would hope that everybody who can make it to a place on November 11th, a place of remembrance for veterans, that they do so. They take time out to go to these Remembrance Day services, to pay homage to the veterans who are still with us and to encourage other people who are there to remember the sacrifice that they gave, lest we forget. Thank you very much.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cape Breton West.

MR. ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I too would like to welcome Sergeant Byrne and congratulate the member opposite for bringing forward this resolution. It is a true honour for me to stand in my place in this historic House to pay tribute to the veterans of this province who, in fact, have made it possible for me to stand here. Like many of you here, I have attended many services of remembrance in our home communities. In fact, every year it seems like the crowds get bigger and bigger, a testament to our loyal Legion members. Most of all, it's a testament to our veterans, whose service and sacrifice guaranteed our freedom and the freedom of millions of people the world over. It's a testament to the courage of our men and women in uniform today who continue to put their lives in harm's way so others can live in peace and freedom.

We are so lucky to live in a country as we do here in Canada. Most of us here today have no idea what it is like to live through a war. We see the black and white images of men huddled in muddy trenches, we see the tanks rolling down the bomb-ridden streets of a besieged and beleaguered Holland. We see the huge, gray naval ships rolling onto the beaches of Normandy and the small white crosses in Flanders Fields. We can only marvel at the bravery of those who stood firm for democracy, who stood firm for us. Our veterans guaranteed us free enterprise and free speech. They guaranteed us the freedom to assemble, to worship, and to vote.

Today, we live in a world rich with opportunity and possibilities because of their loyalty to King and Country, because of their sacrifice and service. Today I have the great honour of representing the people of Cape Breton West in this Legislature because of them.

Now, I never slept in a muddy trench and I never experienced the terrifying whistle of incoming bombs. I never saw my friends shot down before me or knew the fear of waking up one morning, realizing it could be my last. My life has been far different from those of the veterans like Alex MacEachern, Harry Morris - who are 52-year members of the East Bay Legion - and Mike Farrell, a 53-year member of that Legion, and many, many more.

I'd also like to thank our active service personnel for continuing the proud Canadian tradition of defending freedom abroad. We must remember that freedom is never free. There is always a price. Let us be grateful to those who serve in our armed forces. Let us remember and keep in our prayers and memories Nova Scotia's soldiers who have fallen in battle in Afghanistan.

Two years ago, Nova Scotia celebrated a proud first: the 250th Anniversary of the birth of parliamentary democracy in Canada. As we prepare to put our poppies away for another year, let's not forget that it was the veteran who ensured democracy, who triumphed over oppression in the end. We could not have celebrated this important milestone for our country, an important first for our province, if it weren't for them.

[6:15 p.m.]

I'd like to share with you what someone recently shared with me:

It is the VETERAN, not the preacher, who has given us freedom of religion.

It is the VETERAN, not the reporter, who has given us the freedom of press.

It is the VETERAN, not the poet, who has given us freedom of speech.

It is the VETERAN, not the campus organizer, who has given us freedom to assemble.

It is the VETERAN, not the lawyer, who has given us the right to a fair trial.

It is the VETERAN, not the politician, who have given us the right to vote.

It is the VETERAN who serves under the Flag,

It is the VETERAN who salutes the Flag.

Today it is our turn to turn to salute to our veterans.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to share a poem with you about someone in the military. It is called *The Final Inspection*.

The soldier stood and faced God,
Which must always come to pass,
He hoped his shoes were shining,
Just as brightly as his brass.

“Step forward now, you soldier,
How shall I deal with you?
Have you always turned the other cheek?
To my Church have you been true?”

The soldier squared his shoulders and said,
“No, Lord, I guess I ain't,
Because those of us who carry guns,

Can't always be a saint.

I've had to work most Sundays,
And at times my talk was tough.
And sometimes I've been violent,
Because the world is awfully rough.

But, I never took a penny,
That wasn't mine to keep . . .
Though I worked a lot of overtime,
When the bills got just too steep.

And I never passed a cry for help,
Though at times I shook with fear.
And sometimes, God, forgive me,
I've wept unmanly tears.

I know I don't deserve a place,
Among the people here.
They never wanted me around,
Except to calm their fears.

If you've a place for me here, Lord,
It needn't be so grand.
I never expected or had too much,
But if you don't, I'll understand."

There was a silence all around the throne,
Where the saints had often trod
As the soldier waited quietly
For the judgment of his God.

"Step forward now, you soldier,
You've borne your burdens well,
Walk peacefully on Heaven's streets;
You've done your time in Hell."

Mr. Speaker, we should all be proud of those who have taken on the challenge of being members of the Armed Services in our country. There is no higher calling and it has been a real pleasure and honour to say these few words in this House of Assembly tonight. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, honourable member, and thank you to all the members who participated here in the debate this evening.

With that we will close today's session, to meet tomorrow at 2:00 p.m.

[The House rose at 6:18 p.m.]

NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3)**RESOLUTION NO. 1893**

By: Ms. Kelly Regan (Bedford-Birch Cove)

I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas the Giller Prize was created in 1994 to honour literary journalist Doris Giller and has become one of the country's most popular and lucrative awards; and

Whereas Saint Mary's University English professor Alexander MacLeod has published his first book of short stories - *Light Lifting*; and

Whereas this collection, Professor MacLeod's first book, has been shortlisted for the Giller Award;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House congratulate Alexander MacLeod and wish him every success with his book and at the Giller Awards on November 9th.