



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Charlie Parker

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Second Session

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 24, 2010

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House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 24, 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 start today's proceedings.

Before we go to the daily routine, I want to read the Adjournment motion under Rule 5(5), the late debate. It reads as follows:

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly recognize the leadership shown by this government when it made the funding commitment to the Sydney Harbour dredging project, which will not only greatly enhance the economic activity of the Port of Sydney, but will bolster the shipping industry throughout Nova Scotia as well.

That will be debated at the moment of interruption at 6:00 p.m., and it was submitted by the honourable member for Cape Breton Nova.

We'll begin the daily routine.

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS

MR. SPEAKER: There has been a request to revert to the order of business, Presenting Reports of Committees.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Justice.

HON. ROSS LANDRY: Mr. Speaker, as Chairman of the Committee on Law Amendments, I am directed to report that the committee has met and considered the following bills:

Bill No. 58 - Powers of Attorney Act.

Bill No. 72 - Police Act.

Bill No. 83 - Fisheries and Coastal Resources Act.

Bill No. 90 - Auditor General Act.

and the committee recommends these bills to the favourable consideration of the House, with certain amendments.

MR. SPEAKER: Ordered that these bills be referred to the Committee of the Whole House on Bills.

The honourable Minister of Justice.

HON. ROSS LANDRY: Mr. Speaker, as Chairman of the Committee on Law Amendments, I am directed to report that the committee has met and considered the following bill:

Bill No. 85 - Police Act.

and the committee recommends this bill to the favourable consideration of the House, without amendment.

MR. SPEAKER: Ordered that this bill be referred to the Committee of the Whole House on Bills.

The honourable member for Pictou East on an introduction.

[2:15 p.m.]

MR. CLARRIE MACKINNON: Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to introduce two of my favourite constituents, and they are Bob and Pat Matheson. Both are recipients of the Democracy 250 recognition. They are involved in everything in the constituency from the Eureka fire department and auxiliary right through to St. Columba Church in Hopewell, and everything in between the two. Incidentally, Bob is the current president of the Pictou East NDP Constituency Association and a former candidate. I would like to have you recognize them in the east gallery and give them a very warm applause in this House. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: I, too, welcome them here to our House and all our visitors who are here with us this afternoon.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Volunteerism.

RESOLUTION NO. 2359

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

Whereas non-profit and voluntary sector organizations provide invaluable services to many Nova Scotians across the province; and

Whereas these organizations employ over 24,000 dedicated people and are facing many of the same human resource and staffing challenges affecting other industries today; and

Whereas representatives, employees and volunteers from these organizations have gathered in Dartmouth to discuss best practices and work together to plan for the future of the overall sector during the course of today and tomorrow;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House thank these hard-working, non-profit and voluntary sector organizations, as well as their employees and volunteers, for the good work they do on a daily basis in their communities, and wish them good luck during this year's non-profit and voluntary sector provincial gathering.

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.

RESOLUTION NO. 2360

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

Whereas Sinclair Williams faced a devastating tragedy as a teenager, which taught him the importance of giving back to the community; and

Whereas Mr. Williams became Dartmouth's first police officer of African descent in 1968, ran a general contracting business with his wife, Dolly, and also served on several boards and committees in East Preston; and

Whereas Mr. Williams will be featured in an historical video project called "Empowerful" which will tell his life story, along with those of a handful of African Nova Scotian elders, all are considered heroes in their communities;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House congratulate Sinclair Williams for his dedicated service to the community of East Preston and for being one of the featured elders in the "Empowerful" project.

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 Agriculture.

RESOLUTION NO. 2361

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

Whereas after years of organizing and planning, the Nova Scotia Provincial Exhibition Farm Equipment Museum was officially opened on October 9, 2010, in Bible Hill; and

Whereas this museum boasts an impressive range of exhibits, including early milking machines and tractors, and shows items that were key to the development of agriculture in this province; and

Whereas this museum would not exist if it were not for the countless local businesses, community groups, and private citizens who saw the opportunity for something that positively profiles the area and our history and provided their support;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House join me in congratulating the many volunteers who worked tirelessly to realize the official opening of the Nova Scotia Provincial Exhibition Farm Equipment Museum in Bible Hill, on October 9, 2010.

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 Fisheries and Aquaculture.

RESOLUTION NO. 2362

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

Whereas aquaculture is a dynamic and exciting industry that contributes more than \$58 million each year to our economy, employs 750 people, and has great potential for sustainable growth; and

Whereas Nova Scotians got a firsthand look at three of Nova Scotia's best fish farms - Ocean Trout Farms, Scotian Halibut, and Innovative Fishery Products - during open houses in October; and

Whereas these open houses were organized and led by the Aquaculture Association of Nova Scotia;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House thank the Aquaculture Association of Nova Scotia and its members Ocean Trout Farms, Scotian Halibut, and Innovative Fishery Products, for helping educate Nova Scotians about this important industry.

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 Tourism, Culture and Heritage.

RESOLUTION NO. 2363

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

Whereas we celebrated the achievement and excellence of Nova Scotia's arts and culture sector at the Creative Nova Scotia Awards Gala hosted by the Nova Scotia Arts and Culture Partnership Council on October 29th; and

Whereas the event provides a meaningful way to acknowledge the tremendous contributions being made by our artists, performers, writers, and craftspeople; and

Whereas the Nova Scotia Arts and Culture Partnership Council partners with government to raise the profile of artists in our communities and recognize their contributions to Nova Scotia;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House extend their congratulations to the Nova Scotia Arts and Culture Partnership Council for their hard work and the success of the Creative Nova Scotia Awards Gala.

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 Agriculture.

RESOLUTION NO. 2364

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

Whereas Pork Nova Scotia, Nova Scotia Cattle Producers, and the Sheep Producers Association of Nova Scotia recently announced they are working together to address challenges and take advantage of opportunities in a strategic partnership called the Agri-Commodity Management Association; and

Whereas this partnership is allowing our province's beef, sheep, and pork producer associations to coordinate programs, share resources, and find operational efficiencies; and

Whereas Nova Scotia's agriculture industry is stronger and more competitive because of strategic partnerships;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House applaud the leaders in our red meat sector for coming together and creating an effective, sustainable business model: the Agri-Commodity Management Association.

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 Environment.

RESOLUTION NO. 2365

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

Whereas the Nova Scotia Department of Environment has forged a successful partnership with the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, assisting in the development of an integrated waste management plan; and

Whereas such agreements clearly demonstrate that Nova Scotia is a global leader in environmental technology and waste management; and

Whereas members of the new Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago are currently visiting Nova Scotia, meeting with government and environmental industry representatives;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House congratulate our province on its leadership in waste resource management and extend a warm welcome to the representatives of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, wishing them a safe and productive visit.

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. 2366

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

Whereas on October 6, 2010, Halifax hosted the annual Canadian Association for Suicide Prevention National Conference, with the theme Communities Addressing Suicide Together, and it gave communities, survivors, youth, community-based workers and practitioners, and researchers the opportunity to share their experiences and knowledge; and

Whereas most suicides can be prevented, yet suicide continues to be the top cause of injury-related death in our province; and

Whereas suicide prevention remains a priority of government through the Nova Scotia Framework to Address Suicide and by addressing this public health issue by beginning preliminary work on the mental health strategy;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House acknowledge everyone in attendance at this year's Canadian Association for Suicide Prevention National Conference, and their commitment to working together to create ongoing strategies to lower the rate of suicide in our communities and eliminating misconceptions around mental health issues.

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.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 107 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 59 of the Acts of 1993. An Act Respecting the Public Service Commission of Bridgewater. (Mr. Gary Ramey)

Bill No. 108 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 315 of the Revised Statutes of 1989. The Nova Scotia Museum Act. (Hon. Percy Paris)

Bill No. 109 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 501 of the Revised Statutes of 1989. The Weed Control Act. (Hon. John MacDonell)

Bill No. 110 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 33 of the Acts of 2008. The Animal Protection Act. (Hon. John MacDonell)

MR. SPEAKER: Ordered that these bills be read a second time on a future day.

[2:30 p.m.]

NOTICES OF MOTION

The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

RESOLUTION NO. 2367

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

Whereas November 24 - December 1 marks AIDS Awareness Week; and

Whereas AIDS Awareness Week is one of the most recognized international events for raising public awareness of HIV/AIDS leading up to World AIDS Day recognized each year on December 1; and

Whereas this year's public awareness campaign will focus on increasing public knowledge of HIV/AIDS among African-Canadians through a series of workshops and information sessions across the country;

Therefore be it resolved that members of the House of Assembly recognize AIDS Awareness Week and agree to promote awareness and increased knowledge of HIV/AIDS in their communities, helping to stop the spread of HIV and reduce its impact and overcome HIV discrimination.

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 Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party.

RESOLUTION NO. 2368

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

Whereas the Premier's State of the Province Address today was full of rhetoric and contained nothing new; and

Whereas the Premier has resorted to asking Nova Scotians to call his office if they have any ideas about kick-starting Nova Scotia's economy; and

Whereas with job losses mounting, Nova Scotians need more than fancy speeches and expensive brochures to get the province back on track;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House tell the Premier that his policy of high taxes and more bureaucracy is taking Nova Scotia further in the wrong direction.

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 Minister of Justice.

RESOLUTION NO. 2369

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

Whereas on October 16th the Annual Wishmaker Parade was held, raising over \$16,000 for the Children's Wish Foundation; and

Whereas the walk is held annually to help raise funds to grant wishes to children with chronic or life-threatening diseases; and

Whereas despite the wet weather, over 100 people turned up with smiles on their faces to walk and show their support;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly thanks all those involved in making the Wishmaker Parade another great success.

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 Preston.

RESOLUTION NO. 2370

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

Whereas on Halloween night, 2010, Constable Todd Howe of the RCMP Preston unit was called to Amos Walter Drive in North Preston where a 150-pound Rottweiler/Bullmastiff dog got off his chain and was running loose after the young children out trick-or-treating; and

Whereas when Constable Howe reached the scene, quickly assessed the situation and placed himself between the dog and the children so they could get into the house safely; and

Whereas the dog proceeded to attack him, latching onto his arm and he was able to fight the dog off but the dog lunged at him again and Constable Howe was forced to use his service revolver on the dog, fatally wounding the animal;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House acknowledge Constable Howe's quick action and heroic efforts in putting himself at risk to save the 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 Colchester North.

HON. KAREN CASEY: Mr. Speaker, with your permission I would like to do an introduction before my resolution.

MR. SPEAKER: Certainly.

MS. CASEY: In our west gallery, I would like to welcome to the House three people who are in the city for a very special event, Rilla MacDougall, Louise Cooke and Barbara Hobson. They are in the city to attend the Canadian Diabetes Association's special dinner tonight. As I know, many members from different caucuses will attend that dinner so I'd like to welcome them to the House and I hope you enjoy the proceedings. (Applause)

RESOLUTION NO. 2371

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

Whereas Rilla MacDougall from Bass River, Colchester North, who has had type 1 diabetes since 1960 and represented Nova Scotia as a delegate at the annual meetings and General Conference of the Canadian Diabetes Association held in Edmonton in October; and

Whereas Cumberland and Colchester Counties have the highest incidence rate of diabetes in Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Nova Scotia has the highest incidence rate of diabetes in Canada;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly support the Diabetic Association in its effort to make further advances in research and treatment.

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.

RESOLUTION NO. 2372

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

Whereas defending champion Citadel High Phoenix and Sir John A. Macdonald Flames will meet this Sunday for the provincial high school football championship at Saint Mary's; and

Whereas Sir John A. Macdonald advanced to the finals by defeating the C.P. Allen Cheetahs, while Citadel High defeated Lockview Dragons; and

Whereas high school football is extremely popular across the Province of Nova Scotia.;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia Legislature congratulate all high schools that played in this NSSAF high school football league this season, with best of luck to Citadel High and Sir John A. Macdonald in the championship game this Sunday.

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 Bedford-Birch Cove,

RESOLUTION NO. 2373

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

Whereas Canadian university students face the highest tuition and student debt levels ever seen in our country; and

Whereas the Canadian Federation of Students launched the Education is a Right campaign, which calls on the federal government to reduce student debt, ensure access to education, restore post-secondary education funding to 1992 levels, and adopt a post-secondary education act; and

Whereas Mount Saint Vincent University Students' Union executive members Lindy and Max Herrington will be on Parliament Hill today to present over 85,000 postcards from students across the country who have written to support the Education is a Right campaign;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly congratulate Lindy and Max for their role in the campaign and wish them success in attaining the goals of the Education is a Right campaign.

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. 2374

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

Whereas time and time again the Progressive Conservative caucus has called on this NDP Government to step up and help Nova Scotians suffering with multiple sclerosis, but the Government of Nova Scotia is content to sit back while MS sufferers who live in other provinces see their governments put real dollars on the table; and

Whereas right next door to us in New Brunswick, the newly-elected Progressive Conservative Government of Premier David Alward has announced he will be moving forward with \$500,000 to assist MS patients seeking liberation treatment; and

Whereas even though his province is facing difficult financial challenges, Premier Alward has made it a priority to provide MS sufferers in New Brunswick with this chance at an improved quality of life;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly applaud New Brunswick Premier David Alward on his commitment to help end the suffering of multiple sclerosis patients and congratulate him for having the foresight to see that liberation treatment is an investment worth making.

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 Halifax Citadel-Sable Island.

MR. LEONARD PREYRA: Mr. Speaker, before I read my resolution I'd like permission to make an introduction.

MR. SPEAKER: Certainly.

MR. PREYRA: In the west gallery today are three people who, while not residents of my constituency - I believe they are residents of Halifax Needham, mostly - do some

fabulous work in my constituency in the fight against poverty. I want to introduce them and I believe they will stand and receive the warm welcome of the House, but I'd like to name them first. Sharon Murphy is the Vice President of Canada Without Poverty. Sister Helen Danahy is a Sister of Charity, and Kendall Worth is one of the activists who is fighting for the elimination of poverty. Also, they have been very involved in supporting the Out of the Cold Shelter that exists in my constituency. I'd like to welcome them and ask them to receive the warm welcome of the House.

The honourable member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island.

RESOLUTION NO. 2375

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

Whereas Out of the Cold Emergency Winter Shelter is a community-based, volunteer-operated shelter located in St. Matthew's United Church at 1479 Barrington St. in downtown Halifax; and

Whereas Out of the Cold offers a safe, welcoming environment for homeless men, women, trans-gendered individuals and youth 16 years of age or older, having provided accommodation and food for 226 people in the last winter alone; and

Whereas on National Housing Day, November 22nd, Out of the Cold Halifax opened its doors for the season and will remain open nightly from 9:00 p.m. until 8:00 a.m. through April 30, 2011 with beds for up to 15 people at a time and four to six on-duty volunteers each night;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly recognizes Out of the Cold for its commitment to providing a safe, secure and non-judgmental shelter environment and applauds the volunteers and partner organizations who are working to ensure that Out of the Cold remains an accessible shelter to our homeless during the cold winter months.

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 Community Services.

RESOLUTION NO. 2376

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

Whereas on October 4th, Didier Julien and Laura Mulrooney, owners of Julien's Bakery and Café, which is located in Chester and Halifax, were selected as winners in the Large Business Awards from the Business Excellence Awards; and

Whereas businesses are nominated by customers, employees, suppliers and owners, and also selected by an independent judging committee formed by sponsors for the Large Business Award - Bell Aliant; and

Whereas Julien's is an authentic French bakery and pastry shop that strives for excellence in not only their breads and pastries, but customer service as well;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly congratulate Didier and Laura on their achievements and thank them for the wonderful contribution they make to our communities and wish them all the best 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.

The honourable Minister of Health.

RESOLUTION NO. 2377

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

Whereas Victoria Hall, then known as the Home for the Aged, was established on June 26, 1860 to provide a comfortable home for elderly women of modest means; and

Whereas Victoria Hall today is a nonprofit organization located in the North End of Halifax, providing affordable accommodations for over 40 women in a charming 125-year-old building; and

Whereas Victoria Hall is celebrating its sesquicentennial anniversary throughout 2010;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly congratulate Victoria Hall and its dedicated volunteers and staff on 150 years of service to residents and to the community, and extend best wishes for many more years of providing comfortable, affordable accommodations for its residents.

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

[2:45 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 Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations.

RESOLUTION NO. 2378

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

Whereas in 1980, Holland Home Leisure began as a small locally-owned business in Aylesford and has grown to include a store in New Minas and employ a combined staff of 28; and

Whereas Holland Home Leisure has provided superior quality pools, hot tubs, saunas, along with first-class customer service to residents of the Annapolis Valley and Nova Scotia for 30 years; and

Whereas Holland Home Leisure is proud to support various community groups through fundraising efforts such as Big Brothers and Big Sisters, the Canadian Cancer Society Relay for Life, Rotary Clubs, sports teams and individual sponsorships of young Valley athletes;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly commend the owners and staff of Holland Home Leisure for 30 years of valued business and community support.

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. 2379

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

Whereas the Colchester Regional Development Agency, or CORDA, founded in 1992 and located in Truro, is a strong leader in business development in the Colchester region; and

Whereas CORDA has been promoting environmental sustainability practices in business development, particularly in the development of the Debert Air Industrial Park; and

Whereas CORDA received provincial recognition for their environmental leadership and were awarded the Environmental Excellence in Business Award for their work in developing and incorporating environmental practices such as strict zoning policies, introducing alternative infrastructure, and creating bylaws to promote best management practices;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia Legislature congratulate the Colchester Regional Development Agency on receiving the Environmental Excellence Business Award

and thank them for being a leader in incorporating sustainable policies in their business development plans.

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 Queens.

RESOLUTION NO. 2380

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

Whereas Queens County resident and sous chef at White Point Resort, Dwight Dagley, created the best harvest season pasta in the Ultimate Recipe Challenge recently held in Toronto; and

Whereas the small town chef took on the big city challenge and defeated two other chefs in this culinary cook-off; and

Whereas Dwight Dagley was required to prepare his chilli pasta dish within 30 minutes and please the judge in order to win five kitchen appliances, which he did;

Therefore be it resolved that the House of Assembly recognize and congratulate Dwight Dagley of Queens County, and sous chef at White Point Resort on his big city win in the Ultimate Recipe Challenge held in Toronto, his best harvest season pasta dish, chilli pasta.

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 Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage.

RESOLUTION NO. 2381

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

Whereas every day across Nova Scotia, fire and emergency services personnel are saving lives, protecting properties and providing vital first responder services to our citizens; and

Whereas Station 16 in Eastern Passage provides exceptional service to Eastern Passage, Cow Bay, Shearwater and surrounding areas such as Woodside and Cole Harbour, while utilizing both career service members and volunteer members; and

Whereas on Saturday, October 16, 2010, the Eastern Passage/Cow Bay Fire Department celebrated its 50th Anniversary of service to the citizens of the area;

Therefore be it resolved that this Nova Scotia House of Assembly congratulate the Eastern Passage/Cow Bay Fire Department on its 50th Anniversary year of fire and emergency service 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 member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island.

RESOLUTION NO. 2382

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

Whereas Capital Health Partners in Care is a charitable organization dedicated to supporting initiatives which advance Capital Health's mission of healthy people, healthy communities; and

Whereas Capital Health Partners in Care, in co-operation with Dalhousie University's Cities & Environment Unit, held a public forum on November 21st to explore the idea of an urban farm as an interim use for the site of the former Queen Elizabeth High School; and

Whereas the public forum drew nearly 100 people for sharing of ideas, the results of which will be presented at a public open house on the evening of December 1st at the Halifax Infirmary site of the Queen Elizabeth II Health Sciences Centre;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly recognize Capital Health Partners in Care, Dalhousie University's Cities & Environment Unit and the many citizens who, by working toward a community-based urban farm in the heart of our city centre, are making a significant statement about the importance of sustainability and healthy food choices for Nova Scotians.

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. 2383

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

Whereas Jim and Donna Webber, residents of North Lochaber, Antigonish County, own 77 hectares of land comprised of a blueberry farm, grassland and woodland; and

Whereas since purchasing the land in 1981, Jim Webber has worked to develop and put into practice a management plan for the land which focuses on sustainability; and

Whereas in July, Jim Webber and his family were named by the Department of Natural Resources as Nova Scotia's 2010 Woodlot Owner of the Year, an award which was presented on October 2nd during a public field tour of their woodlot;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House congratulate Mr. Webber and his family, and recognize the years of dedication and hard work that have resulted in their successful and sustainable woodlot.

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 Chebucto.

RESOLUTION NO. 2384

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

Whereas on November 18, 2010, Stephen M. Fudge died at the shockingly young age of 59; and

Whereas Stephen Fudge was a leading expert in the process of environmental assessment, being the founder of the environmental consulting practice at Jacques Whitford where he worked since 1985 taking a leading role on such major regional projects as the Confederation Bridge, Voisey's Bay, the Lower Churchill and Deep Panuke; and

Whereas Stephen was not only admired for his professionalism, he was hugely liked as an affable, social, athletic and charismatic man;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House extend their deepest condolences to Susan Wood, the wife of Stephen Fudge, their sons and all their family.

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. 2385

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 October 16, 2010, students from Charles P. Allen High School participated in Nocturne, an annual festival bringing art and energy to the streets of Halifax; and

Whereas the Fine Arts students were part of only two high school groups who contributed to the event and delivered a presentation named “904” which was a visual and sound interpretation of the Halifax Explosion; and

Whereas all who attended were entranced by the students’ stunning visual presentation of glass, movement, multimedia effects, music, vocals, and all around great time but respectful interpretation of the tragic events;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of the House of Assembly congratulate the Fine Arts students of Charles P. Allen High School on their highly acclaimed presentation of “904” in the 2010 Nocturne Festival in Halifax.

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. 2386

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 Brain Injury Association of Nova Scotia (BIANS) works to enhance the quality of life for survivors of brain injuries and their families; and

Whereas the Annapolis Valley chapter of BIANS is a tireless advocate for the needs of those who live with brain injuries; and

Whereas during October 2010, the Annapolis Valley chapter raised more than \$11,000 in a bowl-a-thon organized to support its work;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly congratulate the Annapolis Valley chapter of the Brain Injury Association of Nova Scotia on their successful 2010 bowl-a-thon, and thank the association for its ongoing and dedicated service to the citizens of our province.

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 Lunenburg.

RESOLUTION NO. 2387

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

Whereas volunteer fire departments provide an essential service to communities across Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Mr. Clarence Grondin of Riverport joined the Riverport Volunteer Fire Department in 1972, being elected as fire chief in 1988, and has served the community of Riverport for 38 years; and

Whereas “Clary” Grondin spent 23 years as the fire chief of the Riverport Volunteer Fire Department, the longest tenure of any fire chief for that department;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly recognize the 23 years Mr. Clarence Grondin has contributed to the Riverport and surrounding communities as fire chief of the Riverport Volunteer Fire Department, and wish him luck as he continues to be a member of this essential community service.

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. 2388

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

Whereas Burnley Allan “Rocky” Jones, a retired lawyer from Truro, is recognized as a strong supporter and champion of racial equality in areas of education, justice, employment, and housing; and

Whereas Mr. Jones, a lifelong member of the NDP, assisted in establishing many organizations that have promoted social justice for people from diverse backgrounds, including the Black United Front and the National Black Coalition of Canada, and developed two Dalhousie University programs - the Transition Year Program and the Indigenous Blacks and Mi’kmaq Initiative; and

Whereas Mr. Jones will be the recipient of the highest honour one can achieve in Nova Scotia, the Order of Nova Scotia;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia Legislature congratulate Mr. Jones on receiving the Order of Nova Scotia, and thank him for his commitment and determination in working for social justice for people from both African Canadian and Aboriginal communities.

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 Queens.

RESOLUTION NO. 2389

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

Whereas during the summer a small number of Air Cadets from across the province were selected to attend the Glider Pilot Scholarship Course located at Debert; and

Whereas Sergeant Jennifer Sampson from the 545 Privateers Air Cadet Squadron of Liverpool attended the course this past summer; and

Whereas Sergeant Sampson is completing her fourth year in the Air Cadets program;

Therefore be it resolved that the House of Assembly recognize Sergeant Jennifer Samson of 545 Privateers Air Cadet Squadron on having been selected from Queens to attend the Glider Pilot Scholarship Course this past summer.

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.

[3:00 p.m.]

RESOLUTION NO. 2390

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 Province of Nova Scotia, through the Heritage Property Program, is committed to celebrating and protecting the province's built heritage; and

Whereas Adrian and Maria de Witte, along with their daughter Beverley Fraser, own MacNeil House, an Antigonish County house that is more than 150 years old; and

Whereas on September 28, 2010, MacNeil House received Heritage Property status from the Province of Nova Scotia;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of the Legislature congratulate the de Wittes on their work toward achieving heritage property status for MacNeil House and commend them on their commitment to protecting Nova Scotia's built heritage.

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. 2391

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 September 11, 2010, the Hammonds Plains Fire Hall held a successful barbecue fundraiser at the fire hall; and

Whereas dozens of community members were there to enjoy barbecued hot dogs and hamburgers, kids games, and sunshine; and

Whereas it was an enjoyable afternoon for all who attended and the community looks forward to having a similar fundraiser in the future;

Therefore be it resolved that the House of Assembly congratulate the Hammonds Plains Fire Hall on a successful barbecue fundraiser and wish them the best of luck in their future fundraising efforts.

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. 2392

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 Northeast Kings Education Centre (NKEC) girls soccer team competed in the D2 girls regional tournament played at Forest Heights on October 23, 2010; and

Whereas the NKEC girls played against teams from Central Kings, Barrington and Forest Heights; and

Whereas the NKEC girls blanked Barrington 4-0 in the semi-final and then edged Central Kings 1-0 in double overtime in the regional final;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly congratulate the Northeast Kings Education Centre girls soccer team on being crowned Western Regional D2 soccer champions for 2010.

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 Lunenburg.

RESOLUTION NO. 2393

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 Lunenburg Opera House is a unique piece of architecture built in 1908 in the Town of Lunenburg, and has played host to many community events over the last century, including vaudeville theatre and operettas to modern-day movie screenings; and

Whereas Mr. Farley Blackman, who purchased the Opera House in 2005, uncovered original plans for the building at the Provincial Archives in Halifax and has set about restoring the building to its original state; and

Whereas the Lunenburg Opera House is now open for six or seven months per year, hosting art exhibits by artists such as Geoff Butler and Win Seaton, and has been used as a venue for musical acts, including the stage for the 2010 Folk Harbour Festival;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly commend Mr. Farley Blackman for his commitment to and passion for the ongoing restoration of the Lunenburg Opera House, a unique piece of architecture in the UNESCO World Heritage site of the Town of Lunenburg.

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.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS

MR. SPEAKER: Just a couple of friendly reminders, questions and answers are to be directed here through the Chair and not to have electronic equipment on during Question Period. The time now is 3:05 p.m. and we'll go to 4:35 p.m.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

PREM. - TAX REDUCTION: DELAY - EXPLAIN

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. We are 18 months into the new world order, as the Premier likes to call it. Our unemployment rate is rising, businesses are closing down and choosing to move elsewhere. Our own Premier is ignoring the advice of his fancy-pants consultant, Donald Savoie, who said that the best economic tool our province could have would be a competitive tax system. So my question to the Premier is, why are you waiting to act on reducing the tax burden on business in this province?

HON. DARRELL DEXTER (The Premier): Mr. Speaker, I am assuming that in the next question, the Leader of the Opposition will congratulate us for reducing the small business tax by 10 per cent.

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, the Premier often misleads this House when he talks about the small business tax. They have not actually reduced the small business tax yet. As you know, that reduction will not take place until January of next year. We still collect that tax sooner than anywhere else, including the province next door, New Brunswick. It gets worse. Yesterday the Government of New Brunswick announced it is cutting its small business tax by 2.5 per cent. Once again, businesses in Nova Scotia are fighting an uphill battle with no help from their government. So my question to the Premier is, why are you ignoring the obvious reason why we are losing jobs - our uncompetitive, punitive tax system to business?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, the last budget that was tabled by the Minister of Finance did two things. First of all, it continued the large corporation capital tax phase-out, and it announced the reduction of the small business tax by 10 per cent. The Leader of the Opposition is quite right that that kicks in on January 1st - five weeks from now.

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, the government is choosing to ignore the obvious barrier for job creation. The obvious reason for jobs being lost in this province is that our tax system is uncompetitive. Let's look at the facts. Our corporate tax rate is 16 per cent; it is 11 per cent next door in New Brunswick. We continue to collect a capital tax on large businesses; New Brunswick does not. But the Premier says wait - let's wait for two years. So that gives businesses longer to leave this province and find a jurisdiction that is more open for business. This gives business a lot of time for one thing, and that is to leave our province and take those jobs with them while our unemployment rate continues to rise under this government.

My question for the Premier is, why does government insist on punishing those companies which are investing in Nova Scotia and actually creating long-term, sustainable jobs?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition knows that in addition to the tax improvements that we have made, we've also put in place the Manufacturing and Processing Investment Credit and enhanced the Equity Tax Credit. He talks about the truth, but this is the truth, every business tax in this province is either lower or the same as it was for the last 10 years.

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

PREM. - JOB CREATION: PREMIER'S OFFICE - CALL

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier. The Premier delivered his State of the Province Address today, and I think it left a lot of people perplexed. Our province lost 8,600 jobs this month. Olands, Aliant, Larsen Packers, Power Post, Group Savoie - those are just some examples. But apparently now the solution is that anyone with a business idea is supposed to call the Premier's office, where government will look after them. That is not new. If that would work we would all have been on easy street years ago. My question to the Premier is, where in the world does calling the Premier's office actually create real jobs?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table for the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party an article from the Moncton Times & Transcript when they talk about the effect that 1-800-MCKENNA had in New Brunswick.

MR BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, once again the Premier is doing his best to create business in New Brunswick, as that tabled document just shows. But you know, the reason that people are perplexed by this new plan to call the Premier's office is that it defies basic economics. Economists know that the only way to create real, sustainable jobs is to have a competitive tax structure where business can grow and thrive, where people and companies are not saddled with the highest sales taxes and the highest income taxes in the country. This is not a province where there are going to be ever more programs, more funds, all directed

at business through the Premier's office. So my question is, how many calls to his office will it take before they get the message that high taxes kill jobs, not create them?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party was a member of a government that raised taxes like the gas tax. (Interruption) You remember that - the Leader of the Official Opposition says he remembers the increases.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the reality is, and I'll remind the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party, we are reducing taxes - a 10 per cent reduction on the small business tax; we're phasing out the large corporation capital tax; we've enhanced the Equity Tax Credit program; and we enhanced a program to create jobs through the program with the credit union - one with which, I am sure, the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party agrees.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, I now actually have some fear that the Premier is beginning to believe his own rhetoric, because there is not a single Nova Scotian outside of the bunch on the other side of this House that feels lighter taxed today than they did a year ago, because the opposite is the case.

So my question to the Premier is, will he direct his staff to give up on acting like a call centre and get on with the task of setting real targets for job growth and creating the true conditions to achieve them, including competitive taxes?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, we will not give up on job creation in this province. In fact, we have a three-step process: step one, get rid of the government that was there; step two, put in place this Cabinet; and step three, put in place a real economic development strategy.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

**PREM. - RENEWABLE ENERGY PROJECTS:
POWER RATES - EFFECTS**

MR. ANDREW YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, on November 15th the Premier was quoted in The ChronicleHerald, after the tidal announcement, as saying that renewable energy projects such as tidal power should cause power rates to go down.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Premier - and I'll table that article - does the Premier stand by the comment that power rates would go down, or would he like to withdraw those comments and clarify what he meant?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I don't really recall the particular article to which he is referring. I would be happy to have a look at it, but the reality is that whether it's tidal power or any other renewables, they have high capital on the front end, the result of which

is that you get stable power consumption or pricing over a long period of time which leads to lower rates over the long term.

MR. YOUNGER: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'll take that as a semi-clarification from the Premier.

As the Premier well knows, renewable energy, while very important, is not going to reduce rates. The Premier is right that we would hope that it would stabilize rates - and I hope that's what he's saying; I hope that he's admitting that it won't actually reduce rates.

Mr. Speaker, we know that power rates will jump dramatically on January 1st for residential customers, we talked about that yesterday but, of course, they will also jump for business. Industrial customers will see bigger hikes - 12.5 per cent; commercial users - 9.5 per cent; and this is in addition to the NDP legislated electricity tax which not only is doubling on January 1st, but we learned this morning they're seeking another 50 per cent increase the following January 1st. By the admission of the Energy Department's own staff and Emera, the government's feed-in tariff and Churchill Falls deals will also contribute to increased rates.

Many businesses are making decisions on whether to shed jobs based on the cost of doing business, so will the Premier tell me what measures his government is going to take to make Nova Scotia more competitive and offset the cost of rising energy prices?

[3:15 p.m.]

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I can give him the list. What we're going to do is we're going to invest in conservation measures; we're going to ensure that we bring on more renewables with stable long-term benefits for the province; we are, of course, going to look for new, innovative, cutting-edge technology like the tidal project; and we're going to sign collaborative agreements with provinces like New Brunswick, and Newfoundland and Labrador, in order to get the best possible deal for Nova Scotians.

MR. YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, the Premier well knows that all of those, while maybe they will result in stabilized rates, will still result in increased rates while our neighbours are looking at decreasing rates or actually freezing rates at the moment. While the neighbouring provinces talk about reductions and freezes, power rates in Nova Scotia are rising so it's the people who actually freeze.

What we're asking for is that the Premier and his government admit that the price of electricity is going up and will continue to climb, and admit this has a negative impact on economic development and affordability, so my final supplementary is for the Minister of Economic and Rural Development. With all this talk about renewable energy projects, Churchill Falls, your job creation plan that, incidentally, is a grammatically incorrect title -

you know, none of that's the point. The point is, will the minister admit that increasing power rates hurts competitiveness in Nova Scotia businesses?

HON. PERCY PARIS: Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to rise in my place and talk about jobs here, the economic conditions and the lay of the land in the Province of Nova Scotia. I'll say this, what this government has done is we've invested in Nova Scotians. We now have a complete build with broadband; we have the Community Development Trust which has invested in over 20 communities in this province to the tune of \$33.1 million; we have the Nova Scotia Research Investment Fund, which another \$5 million.

This government has been investing in Nova Scotia (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please.

MR. PARIS: The Productivity and Innovation Voucher Program, a well-used program in the Province of Nova Scotia - time won't allow me to go on.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford-Birch Cove.

PREM.: O'NEILL REPT. - REPORTING PROCEDURE

MS. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, the initial news release announcing Dr. O'Neill's appointment said he was working to strengthen universities. It did not say he was being directed by a Cabinet committee to preordained conclusions - and I'll table that.

Yesterday when I asked the Premier for the names of individuals on the Planning and Priorities Committee, he was reluctant to give me an answer. It's interesting, he wouldn't say the committee members are the Premier, the Deputy Premier, the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Health, and the Minister of Justice.

Dr. O'Neill apparently does not report to the Minister of Education, so my question to the Premier is, why are you sidelining your Minister of Education on the report that falls under her department?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I think the only thing revealing about that question is that the member opposite didn't know who the Planning and Priorities Committee was. The Planning and Priorities Committee is the committee of Cabinet that is responsible for ensuring that we oversee the priorities of government, and that's why Mr. O'Neill reported the draft of that report and the final report to that committee, as is perfectly reasonable.

MS. REGAN: Mr. Speaker, the members on that side of the House might think it's funny that student tuition is going to rise, but we don't think it's funny and the students don't think it's funny either.

The Minister of Education is spending \$50,000 on a student financial aid consultation. She's meeting with university presidents and student groups to mitigate the shock that followed that report. She's out consulting when it's clear from Dr. O'Neill's contract the Premier's steering committee is going to raise tuition fees. This report should be called the Dexter-Steele-Corbett-MacDonald-Landry report.

It's clear the report is just window dressing. It's clear that Tim O'Neill is the front man for the gang of five. Will the Premier please tell this House how many times the Priority and Planning and Priorities Committee has communicated with Dr. O'Neill during the course of his contract thus far.

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, Mr. O'Neill is one of the foremost economists in the country. He is widely respected not only throughout Canada but internationally. The work that he did on behalf of the Government of Nova Scotia was for the benefit of all Nova Scotians. I think all of us in this room, and many Nova Scotians, remember that the last Liberal Government gutted education funding to post-secondary institutions, caused tuition to double. That's the legacy of that Party.

MS. REGAN: Thank you Mr. Speaker and thank you, Mr. Premier, for the history lesson. The only steering the Premier's Steering Committee is doing is steering the Dexter bus over students. The NDP Government launched their so-called job strategy yesterday (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, order please. It's hard to hear the questioner. The honourable member for Bedford-Birch Cove has the floor.

MS. REGAN: One of the three main pillars is to give people the chance to learn the skills they need for good jobs. My question to the Premier is, how does raising tuition and denying access to post-secondary education to those who won't be able to access student aid, fit in with your so-called job strategy?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, the reality is that Nova Scotia has one of the worst student aid programs in the country. We intend to fix it. We intend to ensure that there is accessibility for students in this province.

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

PREM. - TAX RATE: ECONOMIC - EFFECT

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier. Yesterday the government announced its jobsHere program, which mentions productivity as one of its objectives although it remains silent on the issue of taxes. The fact of the matter is that the government is creating exactly the wrong environment for improving productivity.

Yesterday during Question Period the Premier said, as recorded in Hansard, "The HST is an input tax credit, which does not affect business." Well, businesses will certainly be surprised to hear the Premier's view on that, particularly businesses in Cumberland County, where the HST has certainly had a big effect on them, because I need to remind the Premier that businesses need customers and customers are driven away by higher sales taxes. That is just business, Mr. Speaker. There is also the people themselves. One thing is that for sure this year in Nova Scotia, people's incomes didn't go up by 2 per cent but their taxes did, leaving them less to spend, thanks to the decision of that bunch over there.

My question to the Premier is, how do you expect to boost productivity and encourage businesses to invest and offer Nova Scotia hope for a better future when you have made our province one of the most highly taxed jurisdictions in North America?

THE PREMIER: I was pleased to see that the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party finally understands what an input tax credit is and that it is not a cost to business. He finally got around to admitting that.

Mr. Speaker, the reality is that in the very first budget we had, the Finance Minister announced that they would continue with the phase-out of the large corporation capital tax. In this last budget we are continuing to make this jurisdiction more competitive by putting in place things like the Equity Tax Credit, the Manufacturing Processing Investment Credit, ensuring that there is a 10 per cent decline in the small business tax, and most importantly, ensuring that there is an affordability tax credit that means that every person in this province who makes under \$30,000 will have more money in their pockets.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, through you to the Premier, one of the problems with business development in the past in this province is that companies are forced to deal with a virtual alphabet soup of economic development agencies and programs and funds and policies. Just a few examples, we have DERD, NSBI, GHP, ACOA, ECBC, CBDC and 13 RDAs in the province. It's kind of like Sesame Street - every episode is brought to you by a different letter.

Now the Premier proposes to add 20 new programs and funds on top of all the old ones and so my question to the Premier is, when will his government truly bring in real reform to this system and not just make it worse?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I always find the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party fascinating. Those are, in fact, all of the organizations that the former government either set up or financed. So we inherited a mess, he's quite right, and we're fixing it.

MR. BAILLIE: Well, I like the way they fix things - by making them worse, Mr. Speaker. This is a serious issue. The Fraser Institute has reported - a favourite of this government I know - that our average productivity per worker ranks 59 out of 60 provinces

and states in North America. The same report ranks us 56 out of 60 in unemployment. These are real challenges that require real solutions. So I would like to ask the Premier, will his government acknowledge that productivity and taxes are directly linked and they have no plan to deal with this?

THE PREMIER: Well, Mr. Speaker, of course, that productivity index reflects 10 years of Progressive Conservative Government; that's the fact. In the jobsHere document, we set out three important priorities to help with productivity. We intend to focus on learning, on innovation and on competitiveness. That, in fact, is what the business community asked.

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

HEALTH: NURSING HOMES - ACCOMMODATION RATE

MS. DIANA WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health. On September 27, 2010, the Department of Health sent out a letter to residents of nursing homes which announced, for a second year in a row, another increase to the daily accommodation rate. Once again, we had no press release from government, no reasons indicating in the letter that would justify why we have an increase, just a blanket announcement that the standard rate would rise to \$96 a day - equating to \$35,040 per year.

Mr. Speaker, since the NDP Government have assumed power, nursing home residents have seen an annual increase of close to \$3,500 a year. My question to the minister is, how does increasing the standard accommodation rate by \$3,500 in two short years without any justification or explanation to residents represent a better deal for Nova Scotian families?

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. Members of the Legislature will know that we're in the first phase of adding new nursing home capacity into the system. We've seen quite a number of new nursing home beds opened and the increased costs for the new construction is reflected now in the daily accommodation costs for nursing homes across the system.

MS. WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, that's not much comfort to the people who are still in the same homes with the same services, perhaps the same older facilities. I'm surprised the minister didn't mention the 2 per cent HST as well because that certainly is one part of the increased pressure on nursing homes.

Mr. Speaker, I'll be happy to table the letter that was sent. It's obvious from the content of this letter that it was sent to people waiting for a nursing home bed as well. The letter includes a paragraph for those who are not residing currently in a facility. Even more surprising is the warning sentence that indicates that some facilities may also request a deposit of two to three months payment in advance.

[3:30 p.m.]

My question to the minister is, why did government tell Nova Scotians in a press release on February 10th that they had abolished the practice of security deposits in nursing homes when they clearly indicate in this letter that they have not?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I hear a couple of questions there. First let me deal with the last point around security deposits. I was very pleased to announce the fulfillment of our campaign promise to eliminate security deposits in nursing homes, and I can assure the honourable member that we have done just that. If there is a discrepancy around it, it will be taken care of.

On the question of the rising cost of care in nursing homes, I want to tell members that fewer than 10 per cent of the beds that are occupied in nursing homes in Nova Scotia are occupied by people who are full-service payers for our nursing home beds. We have in excess of 660 nursing home beds in the province, and so the number of people who are paying the full per diem in the province is actually very small. The vast majority of those beds are subsidized.

MS. WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to read the quote from the letter that went out this September 27, 2010, sent out to people in nursing homes and those waiting. On the second page it begins, "Please note: if you do not currently reside in a facility, this letter does not impact how quickly you will be placed in a facility. Upon placement, the Long Term Care Facility may also request a deposit of one to three months payments in advance." If that is wrong, then I think the minister should clarify that for people who feel that they have not had the right information. My question to the minister is, who's telling the truth?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I think my last answer was very clear on this point. We eliminated security deposits in nursing homes and that will be enforced 100 per cent, without any question.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

FIN. - jobsHERE: TAX INFO. - ADD

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance. Yesterday the government released jobsHere: the plan to grow our economy. Now this is a very positive document, which is why there was no room for mention in the strategy of how the NDP's higher taxes have a negative impact on our economy. Will the Minister of Finance approach his colleague, the Minister of Economic and Rural Development, about producing an addendum to this report to show how lower taxes would support the Minister of Economic and Rural Development in his efforts?

HON. GRAHAM STEELE: Mr. Speaker, I think it's always a mistake to talk about taxes divorced from the services that they pay for. You can't talk about one without the other. Taxes are what pay for health care and long-term care. It includes Seniors' Pharmacare. It pays for the P to Grade 12 education system. It pays for the construction and maintenance of roads. It pays for a helping hand for those who are weakest and most vulnerable among us, through the Department of Community Services. I understand there is a legitimate argument that taxes ought to be lower, but if they are lower, then that Party has to identify what government services that are currently being delivered ought to be cut. That Party over there has said that they don't agree with the HST increase. You know, that's a defensible position, but that's worth \$300 million a year. Even with that new revenue we still have a deficit of \$200 million a year. So if that crowd thinks they can identify half a billion dollars in immediate service cuts to the people of the province they have a responsibility to tell us exactly what that is.

MR. MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, one of the items in the budget - in fact the fourth-largest expense in the budget - is interest on the debt. (Interruptions) I find it interesting

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

MR. MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, this government actually believes it can release a strategy to create jobs with higher taxes. I do so wish that this minister could become the baron of balanced budgets. Our trumpets would be blowing with frivolity on this side of the House, for if we had balanced budgets we'd have less need for the high taxes that slow job growth. But before we see a day where people can enjoy lower taxes in this province, we will need to see days of prudence, and not - and I'll quote from Dominion Bond Rating Service - from the softening fiscal resolve that we have seen from this NDP Government.

This Spring we will see the third NDP deficit budget. The ministers of today have not helped match expenses with revenues. Can the minister provide some hope for us and for his Minister of Economic and Rural Development that he will take measures to reduce his need for higher taxes?

MR. STEELE: Mr. Speaker, I did notice that member was evading the question that I asked him. I'd like to read something that appeared in today's Globe and Mail and here is the quotation. "For several years, the low-tax environment did lure all kinds of companies to set up shop . . . But when the economy went sour, many of them left or cut back drastically, putting people out of work and denting government revenue. Now, lenders are pressuring the government to raise taxes so it can pay back the money it borrowed to maintain spending deficits exacerbated by low tax revenue."

Of course, this particular article is about Ireland, which in the entire developed West is probably suffering the largest fiscal crisis and it's partly because of pursuing this low-tax strategy at the expense of thinking about the long term. We don't have to look very far to see

a Canadian analogy of that because in New Brunswick they cut taxes and, as a result, they have enormous deficits. In the Speech from the Throne delivered in New Brunswick yesterday, it was described as a fiscal crisis. This government has a plan that will get us back to balance.

MR. MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, this debate comes down to principles. Let's look at this minister's and this NDP Government's record on what they like to call structural deficits. They voted against solutions to eliminate 40 years of deficit budget practice when they voted in this very House against John Hamm's 2002 and 2003 budgets. The general public is free to check Hansard for the record, the recorded votes. The members on the opposite side of this House voted against solutions to balance the budget.

I would ask the minister, does the minister regret voting against those solutions or is he happy to be consistent with his decisions in 2002 and 2003 and should we expect him to continue to do nothing meaningful to balance the budget?

MR. STEELE: Mr. Speaker, the way that crowd over there talks, you'd never know that they had been the government for 10 of the last 11 years and 25 of the last 32 years. If Nova Scotia has a problem with debt, it is a problem that the Progressive Conservative Party created and they did it with help from the Liberal Party. The vote that really counts is the vote that took place on June 9th when the people of this province sent that Party to the Third Party status and they did it for a reason.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford-Birch Cove.

EDUC. - CUTS: TRI-COUNTY SCH. BD. - LETTER

MS. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Education has said the proposed public education cut of 22 per cent is a planning exercise. The minister is reported to have said, we're in the very early stages of department staff meetings and working with school board staff on possible scenarios.

My question to the Minister of Education is, if these cuts are really just a planning exercise, why has the Tri-County Regional School Board sent a letter to parents asking them to indicate what cuts they can live with?

HON. MARILYN MORE: Mr. Speaker, I asked myself the same question. I'm not sure why the Tri-County Regional School Board sent that questionnaire out to parents. Staff certainly understood that this was in the early days of a dialogue between staff of the department and the board. I know, for example, the South Shore Regional School Board had already planned, as they do on an annual basis, meetings in the community. I think there were two or three meetings set up to sort of give a report card, an update on what the board was doing, and they did add on some questions and an opportunity for parents to have some very preliminary input into those early discussions.

No decisions have been made. It's much too early in the dialogue to even suggest what is going to happen. We are continuing with a very reasonable process of getting the information the department needs before advising government on further decisions. Thank you.

MS. REGAN: Mr. Speaker, the letter circulated by the Tri-County Regional School Board asked parents to please take a moment to indicate which of the following reductions you can live with, and I'll table that document. There are essential programs and services listed there, things like school libraries, teaching staff, French Immersion Programs, less choice for high school students. My question to the minister is, is this the future of public education in this province?

MS. MORE: There are a couple of issues here. One is the process by which the board, perhaps in a too-early stage, is seeking input from parents without, perhaps, giving them the context and the information they need to provide the information required by the board.

I think the broader issue is, we have a public school system with many fewer students, and it is going down by 3,000 pupils per year. We know that all levels of government are looking at delivering the best quality programs in the most cost-efficient way. That's the exercise we're in and that's what we asked the board to do, to look at cost efficiencies, to make sure that what they are delivering is what is necessary.

As I've mentioned before, we're also doing the visioning process with the school boards, everything is under review. We certainly appreciate input, but I would agree that it's probably too early to be seeking that level of detail of input from the community. Thank you.

MS. REGAN: Mr. Speaker, because of this letter, because of the media that has been surrounding this 20 per cent or 22 per cent cut, parents in the Tri-County area are left feeling that, in fact, they are headed for a 22 per cent cut to education. My question to the Minister of Education is, will she reassure the parents of Tri-County area that there will not be a 22 per cent cut to the Tri-County Regional School Board?

MS. MORE: What I can reassure the parents across this province is that public education is very important to this government. We know that by 2020 we're going to have as few young people in Nova Scotia as we did in 1910. We want to ensure that the education they have is the best possible and supports them and their families to the extent they deserve. We will give them that assurance, thank you.

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

[3:45 p.m.]

**ENERGY - CHURCHILL FALLS DEV.:
RENEWABLE PROJECTS - ACCESS**

MR. ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Minister of Energy. We were pleased by the announcement this week that Nova Scotia is working with Newfoundland and Labrador on the Churchill Falls development. We hope it leads to even greater regional co-operation.

We also want to make sure that Cape Breton and Nova Scotia receive maximum benefits from this deal. We have to be more than just a highway for Newfoundland and Labrador electrons. What concerns me is that we have to ensure that as the power grid is strengthened, it allows more access to the great renewable energy projects that could take place in Cape Breton. My question is, what is the minister doing to ensure that new wind farms and other renewable projects gain access to this new upgraded transmission grid?

HON. WILLIAM ESTABROOKS: Mr. Speaker, thank you to the member opposite. Now there's a lesson on how to perfectly frame a question - get it out succinctly and expect an answer in return. Now, it's my turn and I thank you for the well-worded question.

I want you to know, member opposite, that the concern, of course, particularly when it comes to (Interruptions) Don't distract me. Seriously, when it comes back - I read your comments in the press earlier and I'm very well aware of the fact that we are looking at every source of renewable energy. We are proud of the great achievement that recently took place. In fact, I know the member for Cape Breton Nova was absolutely so pleased with the fact that we are going to have more jobs locally here in Nova Scotia, more jobs so that no longer do we have to have Whitney Pier West, as he calls it, when we talk about Fort Mac.

I know that's a great way to begin this, this is a great opportunity and I want the member to be assured that anybody who's taking the initiatives, particularly with wind farms or any other kind of renewables in Cape Breton, we want to work carefully and closely with them and make sure that as much employment and as much great renewable energy is created as possible in that particular part of our province.

MR. MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the minister for that answer. This agreement with Newfoundland and Labrador provides a great opportunity for Langan and the surrounding communities, but only if the government is vigilant. We want industrial benefits to stay in Cape Breton Regional Municipality. Langan should be a monitoring and a maintenance station for this infrastructure. It should be a centre of R&D on energy transmission and renewable energy. The government and Emera should be working with some of the excellent renewable energy companies in Cape Breton to explore what work can be done in association with this project.

My question to the minister is, have you or do you plan to meet with industrialists and government officials from Cape Breton to explore what spinoff projects there could be for Nova Scotia in this deal with Newfoundland and Labrador?

MR. ESTABROOKS: Mr. Speaker, thank you to the member opposite for another very important question. I want to assure that member with, particularly, the member for Cape Breton Centre and the member for Cape Breton Nova, they've already very clearly identified that fact, the important concern that I have as Minister of Energy is to deliver up on the very information that someone like Kathy Dunderdale, the Deputy Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador said when she brought it to my attention that 6,790 person-years of employment would result from this.

When we were in the Red Room, Ms. Dunderdale made it very clear, great achievement, renewables, access to power, but jobs, jobs that will have people in this province, jobs that will have the people of Cape Breton, working at home. I will assure the member opposite that I will work closely with him, I will work with Cape Bretoners, I will work with Nova Scotians to make sure those jobs are in the hands of Nova Scotians and Cape Bretoners.

After all, Lingan is a part of Nova Scotia that I know quite well. In fact, Jessie Corbett, the granddaughter of the member for Cape Breton Centre says, I'm always welcome on the Lingan Road. (Laughter)

AN. HON. MEMBER: You're welcome on the New Boston Road too.

MR. MACLEOD: You took the words right out of my mouth, or whatever you would like to call it. Mr. Speaker, as the minister pointed out, a statement last week said there would be 6,790 person-years of employment created from the Maritime link alone. That is certainly of interest to a region with a 15 per cent unemployment rate. I want to encourage the minister and all of his government to seize the day and ensure immediately that as much of this work as possible is done in Cape Breton. Will the minister commit today to an immediate launch of a study on the opportunities for Cape Breton on the Lower Churchill project to ensure that Cape Bretoners and Nova Scotians benefit from this windfall? (Interruptions)

MR. ESTABROOKS: To the member opposite, I'm getting lots of advice here and I'm not going to take any of it, particularly when it comes to studies and consultants. This is not the time to make light of a great opportunity economically. That opportunity is important because first it sends the message that jobs are going to be right here in our province and in that particular region.

I'm well aware of the fact because the members opposite - I'll say it to the member for Cape Breton West, you keep doing your job reminding me and I'll keep doing my job as the Energy Minister to make sure I've got the answers for you in this House.

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

**HEALTH: DIABETES PREVENTION STRATEGY
- TIMELINE**

MS. DIANA WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health. Yesterday with the support of all three Parties, Resolution No. 2285 passed in this House and for the minister's benefit I will just table that copy. Contained in the resolution was a commitment that all members of this House would urge government to develop a comprehensive secondary prevention strategy for individuals with diabetes. Such a strategy would provide greater access to diabetes medications, devices like insulin pumps and supplies in order to assist Nova Scotians living with this disease. The outcome of such a strategy would prevent or delay huge pressures on our health care budget as a result of diabetes-related complications.

My question to the Minister of Health is, when will the minister commence work on this comprehensive secondary prevention strategy?

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity, and was pleased to have the opportunity, to meet with the president of the Canadian Diabetic Association yesterday morning. As well as the executive director of the local chapter here in Nova Scotia prior to their press conference and the release of their report on the incidence of diabetes in Nova Scotia with projections into the future. Indeed, we're very much concerned about the high rates of diabetes in this province. That is why our government is intent on developing strategies with respect to several chronic diseases for which Nova Scotia, unfortunately, has very high rates and work in this regard has already begun in various ways in our department.

MS. WHALEN: It is good to know that it's on your radar screen, I appreciate that. We know that alarm bells should be ringing with the government and with all Nova Scotians about the rising cost and the number of people impacted by diabetes. In fact, it was estimated in that report yesterday that by the year 2020 it will cost us \$0.5 billion a year here in Nova Scotia for the direct and indirect costs of diabetes. A shift in government's approach with the private sector involvement and a broad-base personal and societal change will be needed if we are to survive this economic tsunami that's heading our way.

Mr. Speaker, those words are not mine but they come from the Canadian Diabetes Association. So my question through you to the minister is, who will the minister engage in the development of this strategy given that all MLAs in this House agree that action is urgently needed?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, as I explained in my meeting with the representatives from the Diabetes Association yesterday morning, our department is developing programs and policies that are evidence based. We very much look forward to

working with them and other organizations that are concerned about the high incidence and rates of chronic disease in Nova Scotia. I'm pleased that we already are working in partnership with the local Diabetes Association on numerous initiatives.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford-Birch Cove on your final supplementary or, I'm sorry, Halifax Clayton Park on your final supplementary.

MS. WHALEN: We don't look that much alike, Mr. Speaker. On my final question, I thank the minister for the fact that she is already working with that group and what we have an intention here is to have a comprehensive strategy, that means working with the group for a single aim, and that is to address diabetes and all of its related costs.

Again, by the year 2020 we will have 12 per cent of our population - which is the equivalent of 125,000 people - living with diabetes, and another 18 per cent at that time is estimated to be living with pre-diabetes. So this is going to have a tremendous impact on our province and certainly will be a coming wave. It's not too late to get started, of course, and the minister says she has begun those talks. What I would like to know is whether or not she has a timetable and a deadline for the time when Nova Scotians can expect to see a comprehensive secondary strategy available to the people of Nova Scotia?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, the report came out yesterday; the resolution was passed yesterday. I work very hard, but I have to admit that I wasn't up last night burning the midnight oil, developing an action plan and a timetable. I assure the member that this is an issue that is of much importance to myself and to members of this government. We are very much committed to having a strategy to deal with all the rates of chronic diseases in Nova Scotia, for which our rates are far too high - a great deal more needs to be done, and will be done.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants West.

ERD - jobsHERE: TAX RATE - OMISSION

MR. CHUCK PORTER: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Minister of Economic and Rural Development. Yesterday's jobsHere strategy had a glaring omission. It is counterintuitive to have an economic development strategy without Nova Scotia's excessive tax burden being addressed or even mentioned. We've lost 8,600 jobs in October and have seen several high-profile employers close their doors this week alone. My question is, why is your government still clinging to a policy of high taxes and more bureaucracy that kills jobs and fails to grow our economy?

HON. PERCY PARIS: Mr. Speaker, I've got two answers to that question. First of all, the job losses were due to markets, not to anything that this government - or, I might be as bold to say, any government - could have done. It is part of what has changed not only

nationally but in the global marketplace. Companies are finding new ways of doing things, being more competitive. That's what jobsHere is trying to address for all Nova Scotians.

Also, I would just like to point out - which I've done a number of times previously, and so has the Premier - that we were the first government since the early 1990s to lower the tax for small businesses in the Province of Nova Scotia. We think and we know that jobsHere is a good strategy. What I'd like to see is all members of this House get on board.

MR. PORTER: Mr. Speaker, a recent Service Canada forecast predicts an average of 0.4 per cent annual growth in employment. That number equals 9,500 jobs over the next five years, but when combined with 8,600 lost in October alone and more recent layoffs of Group Savoie, Larsen Packers, Aliant, and Olands, we'll be lucky to simply break even.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister, how many more jobs need to be lost in order for this government to realize that its policy of high taxes and more government continues to kill jobs in Nova Scotia?

MR. PARIS: Mr. Speaker, I've already said in this House that the number of jobs that this government has created, the number of investments that this government has made in Nova Scotians, and the number of jobs that have been maintained and/or created in the Province of Nova Scotia since June 2009 are somewhere close to the area of 10,000. Those are a lot of jobs. Through Economic and Rural Development, NSBI, and IEF, we have maintained and created jobs and we will continue to do that.

[4:00 p.m.]

MR. PORTER: Mr. Speaker, in a competitive global economy Nova Scotia must compete for business and skilled workers if we have any chance of achieving meaningful economic growth moving forward. Unfortunately, the state of the province is not conducive to the future success when we have a government that does not see the harm that increasing taxes does to our economy.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister, when will this government finally realize that the way to meaningful job growth in Nova Scotia is through a competitive business environment, with low overall tax burdens and not through adding levels of expensive bureaucracy?

MR. PARIS: Mr. Speaker, again I have to say a couple of things - first of all I congratulate the member opposite for getting it partly right, because he mentioned in his question, he talked about competitiveness and if he reads the document jobsHere, he will see and I am sure he will understand that being competitive is part of what jobsHere is all about. If we are going to advance the Province of Nova Scotia we have to be competitive, and I think just by the way that he asked the question by mentioning that, he realizes the

importance of that. If he doesn't, I'd be more than willing to sit down with him at any time and explain to him the full details of jobsHere.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

**COM. SERV.: INCOME ASSISTANCE RECIPIENTS
- ALLOTMENTS**

MR. TREVOR ZINCK: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Community Services, and I am going to paint a little bit of a picture here of the reality of what people on income assistance are dealing with in today's society.

A single person currently on income assistance, who would be considered disabled or dealing with a disorder, currently receives \$535 for a shelter rate and \$214 for a personal allowance. Now, in my neighborhood a somewhat decent, somewhat safe part of the community will cost you about \$600 for your rent. So if you break that down, that extra \$65 has to come from something and it comes from a personal allowance. So if we take that \$65 off the \$214, it brings it down to \$149. That individual needs a phone as well, and let's break that down to about \$30, so that individual now has \$119 in their pocket. Power - and power is going up - but let's put an average number out there of \$40, so that individual now at the end of the month has \$79 in their pocket to do their shopping.

So my first question to the minister is, does she think it's fair for income assistance recipients to be shopping at food banks instead of grocery stores?

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, thank you to the honourable member for his question. No, I think that the way things are in today's world is very difficult, and each and every day I struggle with those numbers that he has presented. At the same time our government has seen that there are these issues that have accumulated over many years and have been somewhat neglected. Therefore, that's why we brought in the Affordable Living Tax Credit, the Poverty Reduction Credit, and we're making changes to income assistance. We're making steps forward, they are not all of what we want, but what we are doing is that we recognize that it is truly an issue and we want to make a difference.

MR. ZINCK: Mr. Speaker, Canada is not exactly doing well either. Canada is currently one of the top 30 developing countries in the world; however its need to support the social safety net isn't quite up to par. Currently Canada ranks 26 out of 27 with funding for early childhood education; social assistance - 22 out of 29 countries; unemployment insurance benefits - 23 out of 28 countries; benefits and services for persons with disabilities - 27 out of 29; and supports for families - 25 out of 29. So my second question for the minister is, what exactly is your government doing to show and lead the rest of Canada in the fact that you believe that you are truly contributing to a sharing and caring society in Nova Scotia?

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, what I would like to say is that we have done many things in the short period of time that we've been here as a government. We have been talking to people, we have been out at the grassroots level to discover what those issues are, what exactly has affected individuals not only on the issues of shelter rates and IA, what we've been talking about is are there better ways for us to do services for them and work with them, and I think that shows our compassion and what we want to do.

We have come forth and we've made changes, as I talked about many times, the Affordable Living Tax Credit, the Poverty Reduction Credit - that's a \$72 million investment that we made within our first year as a government. We have taken the tax off clothing for children. There are many issues, and we are working away at each and every one of them to see what we can do to make a better and more affordable life for Nova Scotians.

MR. ZINCK: Mr. Speaker, over the years we've been assured that a rising tide lifts all boats, that it's necessary to give to the rich and that will, in turn, enrich the poor. However, the consequences have been disastrous both for the planet and those individuals who haven't had a chance to have their boat risen. So the Minister of Economic Development stood in the House earlier and suggested that his government wants to invest in people. So I'm wondering - my final question for the minister - if she can answer me and tell me exactly where she figures that 5 per cent cut in her department is going to come if it's not on the backs of low-income Nova Scotians?

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: I think that one of the struggles is we know we have to live within our means. We know that we have a huge challenge financially, but I think what the difference is that the honourable member knows - I know he knows this - the fact that we are inviting a discussion with people and we are looking at ways we can go forward that we do not, through cuts that we have to make, affect those people who need it the most. So there are different ways that we can be more creative.

We also have to look at the services we provide, and we have to look at ourselves as departments and government - are there better ways that we can be doing business so it's not on the backs of those who need it the most? Lastly, I think the most important thing is we have to work together - the Opposition, the government, the community, and the corporate level - this is not an issue for one to try to resolve. This is an issue for all of us, as human beings, to come together and help others.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford-Birch Cove.

HEALTH - SCH. INSULIN POLICY: CONSULTATIONS - DETAILS

MS. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I have received several phone calls from concerned parents in my riding who have been told a new provincial policy on the administration of insulin in schools is imminent. It should be noted that the policy on this

currently varies from school board to school board and we've been told this policy will be a joint announcement with the Ministers of Health and Education. My question to the Minister of Health is, what institutions, groups and/or organizations have you consulted with in the preparation of this new policy?

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. It is the case that the Departments of Health and Education have been working collaboratively with a number of our partners looking at some standardization in terms of the provision of good quality supports for students in our school system, students with juvenile diabetes who require the administration of medication such as insulin during the school day, to ensure that kids are well taken care of when they're away from their families.

MS. REGAN: Mr. Speaker, these parents are concerned their child will not be able to receive her insulin injections at school once this new policy is announced even though her EPA and her backup are trained to do so. So my question is now to the Minister of Education, can you guarantee that students who currently receive insulin injections in schools will continue receiving those lifesaving injections at school once the new policy is implemented?

HON. MARILYN MORE: I have to admit that I haven't had a briefing on all the details of the work that the staff of the department have been doing with the staff of the Department of Health. Certainly, looking with health professionals to provide the best possible standard of health services to allow students with health conditions to have full access to public education is a priority. I'll certainly have to get more information on that, and I would be pleased once the announcement is made to have staff sit down with you and me, and you can ask any questions you have to alleviate the concerns of the constituents you refer to.

MS. REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I would hope the ministers will release the details of this new policy soon, say, within the next two weeks, so it can be subjected to the scrutiny of the House, because these parents are pretty stressed out about this impending announcement and I think all of us here who are parents can understand their feelings. To reassure them, can the Minister of Health please indicate what this new policy will be and, if she will not, when can we expect an announcement?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, what I can say is that parents with children with type I diabetes should feel absolutely secure that there will not be any significant changes that would negatively impact their kids. Our concerns are that they get the very best care while they're in a school environment that corresponds with their health needs. The policy is developed to ensure that this will be the case, and certainly children who require, for example, insulin injections, will continue to get insulin injections without inconveniencing the parents or the families. We understand this issue. Our concern is to

ensure there is better health care, more consistent standards, and families can feel very reassured.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Glace Bay.

**COM. SERV.: POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGY
- IMPLEMENTATION**

MR. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, today several individuals were at the House advocating for government action to address poverty issues. In 2009 the Department of Community Services introduced the Poverty Reduction Strategy. The department appeared before the Community Services Committee on November 3, 2009, and March 2, 2010, to give updates on the strategy's implementation. My question is, is the Minister of Community Services committed to implementing the goals and objectives of this strategy?

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, thank you to the honourable member. He'll be very happy to know that every day I work towards accomplishing strategies, looking at new ways of doing things, looking at what we've consulted with individuals about in order to be able to help Nova Scotians. This government is committed every day to work towards those goals.

MR. MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, one objective of Nova Scotia's Poverty Reduction Strategy is to prepare for the future through training and education. It goes on to say, "One of the barriers to continuing education is affordability." The strategy credits a tuition freeze as a way of reducing barriers to higher education. My question to the Minister of Community Services is, does she stand by these statements in the Poverty Reduction Strategy?

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the honourable member for his question, because I know he cares too, the same as I do and the same as this government does. For example, Target 100, that we spoke about the other day, is a program that is looking at assisting individuals to get into the workforce and actually get higher-level positions.

The whole aspect, we do understand and we know that we must work closely in terms of looking at what the needs are for each individual in order to assist them to get into the workforce and to get good jobs for today and for their future.

MR. MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, it appears the NDP Government is going to raise tuition, although we certainly hope not. The Premier and the Planning and Priorities Committee don't seem to understand that investments in education give individuals the ability to be successful and lift themselves out of poverty. Will the Minister of Community Services ask the Premier, and her colleagues, to maintain the cap on tuition to help ensure access to post-secondary education?

[4:15 p.m.]

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, one of the things I want the honourable member to be aware of is the fact that, through the Department of Community Services, we do assist those who are on income assistance to go for further education, whether it's in the community colleges or through the universities. We identify if they are wanting to further their education, we encourage them and we support them financially to do that.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants West.

AGRIC.: STRATEGY - CONTENTS

MR. CHUCK PORTER: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Minister of Agriculture. The Minister of Agriculture has announced he will be releasing his 10-year agriculture plan to the industry tomorrow afternoon at 4:30 p.m. at the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture's Annual General Meeting in Truro. Agriculture employment, according to your Department of Labour and Workforce Development, is expected to decrease by 2014. Will Friday's strategy contain anything new to lessen the impact of the NDP's negative strategies?

HON. JOHN MACDONELL: Mr. Speaker, there are no NDP negative strategies.

MR. PORTER: Well, we're certainly pleased to hear that, but my question again is to the Minister of Agriculture. The Annapolis Valley has been subject to some harsh announcements, including the upcoming loss of 300 jobs at Larsens. What do you say to the people like Allan Burns losing his job in February, not being sure of whether he will get another job like a delivery truck driver? How do you see this strategy helping the Annapolis Valley agricultural community?

MR. MACDONELL: Mr. Speaker, I'm assuming Mr. Burns works with Larsens and I thought those jobs were going to be maintained until April. None of us like to see job losses but the position that Maple Leaf found themselves in is related to national and international structures within the industry. Actually, preliminary conversations have indicated that they have a hope that they may be able to do something else with that facility, and time will tell whether or not that is possible, but I think this government is willing and pleased to work with the employees in whichever way is possible, and the company, to ensure jobs for the future in the Valley area.

MR. PORTER: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for that answer. You hear quite frequently about young farmers struggling with the cost of trying to get into this very important industry. Will the strategy support young people getting into this important industry?

MR. MACDONELL: Mr. Speaker, yes, the strategy does take a look at new entrants with a plan to try to provide more support into the future for them to bring new people into the industry, not just young people.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Digby-Annapolis.

**FISH. & AQUACULTURE: COASTAL STRATEGY
- DELAY EXPLAIN**

MR. HAROLD THERIAULT: Mr. Speaker, just lately the NDP Government released its second report on the state of Nova Scotia's coast. On December 9, 2009, the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture announced that a coastal strategy will be developed for release in 2010. My question to the minister is, why is your coastal strategy not on time?

HON. STERLING BELLIVEAU: Mr. Speaker, I think there is a valuable lesson in here and my first response is that this particular government listens. We listen to Nova Scotians. There were extensive consultations about our coastal strategy, something that is important to a number of Nova Scotians. There were eight regional meetings across Nova Scotia. There was a phone survey. This is a very complex issue. We also have 15 departments and agencies that we consult on this complex issue. There was a message that was loud and clear, that was endorsed by the UNSM, is that stakeholders, Nova Scotians, wanted more time to consult on this and that's exactly what we're doing. Thank you.

MR. THERIAULT: Mr. Speaker, the minister and the NDP Government are delaying this report for another whole year. They are thumping their chests about doing more public consultations but the consultations won't begin until the Spring of 2011. Why is your government waiting so long to begin this second round of public consultations?

MR. BELLIVEAU: Thank you for this very important question. Again, in Nova Scotia we have over 11,000 kilometres of coastline. I can assure you that we have a number of stakeholders - but I just received a letter today and I'd like to table it.

I'm just going to read a portion of it, it's from the St. Margaret's Bay Stewardship Association: The seeds of the public involvement planted during this summer's public consultation can now sprout and grow. Nova Scotians have clearly voiced their awareness of the coast's importance and we are eager, through our colleagues and the Coastal Coalition, to expand this grassroots engagement in next year's dialogue as we move forward to discuss the draft strategy. Meanwhile, while you catch your breath, once again congratulations to you and your team on a job well done. We'll roll up our sleeves and we are eager to help.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll table that.

MR. THERIAULT: Mr. Speaker, the report states: Many current working waterfronts don't have the infrastructure needed to expand to other businesses, such as aquaculture. Aquaculture is an important instrument of economic development for coastal communities. Communities are waiting for better regulations for this industry to ensure the stability of fish farming and the safety of our environment.

My final question to the minister is, will better regulations for aquaculture be held up by your government's slow-moving strategy on coastlines in Nova Scotia?

MR. BELLIVEAU: Mr. Speaker, I just want make a clarification. There is an aquaculture strategy, it's also moving forward but talking about our coastal framework, this is a very complex issue. I can assure you that whether it's rising sea levels, municipal land use, zoning laws, coastal development or public access to our coastlines, this minister - this government knows when we need to take the time and to consult Nova Scotians on such an important issue and that's exactly what we're doing. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston.

SNSMR - TRAILER INSPECTORS: QUALIFYING COURSE - DETAILS

HON. KEITH COLWELL: Mr. Speaker, it has come to my attention that veteran trailer inspectors are being pushed out of the business by this NDP Government. The rules have been changed so that now people must take a \$250 course to qualify. Regardless of how many years of actual experience they may have, they still must pay \$250 to qualify. At \$17.50 per inspection, inspectors, especially ones who have been around for a long time, some for over 20 years, will not see any profit for a very long time - if ever. Most businesses are simply not providing the service anymore.

Mr. Speaker, would the Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations confirm that these numbers are correct, that the inspectors only bring in \$17.50, while the course is \$250 and how her department arrived at a cost of \$250.

HON. RAMONA JENNEX: Thank you for the question. What I will do is I will find out about this situation. I can't answer that question at this time but I take that under advisement and I will have that information to you by tomorrow. Thank you.

MR. COLWELL: Mr. Speaker, this fee is a barrier to growing independent business. It simply makes no business sense for veteran inspectors to pay out \$250 for what they have been doing for many years. There is no economic return for the cost. People simply cannot provide this service at a loss. We see this effect: inspectors are leaving the business, making it difficult for residents to get trailers inspected. This government is putting millions into a glossy pamphlet yesterday but there's a situation here where the government could do

something for jobs and it wouldn't cost them, by grandfathering the present inspectors into the system.

Mr. Speaker, why has the minister not considered requiring new entries and those who receive complaints against them, to take the course, but allowing veteran inspectors to be grandfathered in so that they can continue the business and service our communities?

MS. JENNEX: The most important thing that we can do at Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations is make sure that we're following safe practices so that Nova Scotians are safe. As I said earlier, I'm not aware of the actual situation that the honourable member is bringing forward, but as I said, I will have that information to him tomorrow. I just want to repeat that we are making sure that our roads are safe and our practices are based around safety, so that would be a part of my answer tomorrow, to find out exactly the situation that he refers to.

MR. COLWELL: Mr. Speaker, trailer inspections tend to happen in the Spring. It's already hard to find an inspector, and if you call, you usually have to drive a long distance to get this job done - providing very poor service to the residents. Because of this fee people have to leave the business and it makes it even more difficult. These inspectors are entrepreneurs who have found a way to make a business and service our community at the same time.

Inspectors have been contacting me and are concerned about what seems to be the minister's lack of understanding of the business. My final question to the minister is, when will you be seriously addressing this issue and responding to the concerns of the inspectors and, indeed, to the residents of the province, who are not being provided the same service they were a year ago?

MS. JENNEX: This minister has an understanding of any issue that's brought forward to her. If industry has a problem and they want to come and speak with me about it, I am always available to meet with industry. I have not investigated this situation that has been brought forward today. I will become very aware of it in the next few hours and I said I would report tomorrow, but I have not had any letters and I have not had a meeting with the people in that industry. I welcome hearing their particular situation so that we can move forward with this appropriately.

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

**EDUC. - HOLY ANGELS HS: 2011-12 ACADEMIC YR.
- OPTIONS**

HON. CECIL CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Minister of Education. It's getting close to two weeks now since the minister went down to Cape Breton for the matter of Holy Angels High School and I just want to thank the minister on

the record for going down there. She met with the students, she met with the board, and I do respect that. We didn't respect some of the processes around it, but I do acknowledge the minister for going down and taking the time and getting involved with the issue. Can the minister update the House on the status of the working committee she established and, specifically, what options she has put on the table to keep Holy Angels where it is for the 2011-12 academic year?

HON. MARILYN MORE: Mr. Speaker, I can only repeat that the timeline for the staff committee made up of senior officials from both the board and the department is to look at options that allow the board and the province to live within its means and do what it can to save Holy Angels, especially in terms of those young women who are receiving an excellent education continuing to be educated together. We expect the report to be made to the board early in January. The report is to be finished by the end of December. We have full confidence; I understand that the participants on that committee have been in touch with one another and meetings have been set up and scheduled. I anticipate some very innovative, useful information coming out of that that will help the board in their decision making.

MR. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, to the minister, as she knows, there are many pressing matters. She knows it's a priority within the community and that people would have thought by now, in close to two weeks, that there would have been some things disclosed and brought forward to the board. The minister knows the enrolment process for the next academic year will be underway very soon and will require a definite decision on Holy Angels sooner if Grade 9 students are going to have Holy Angels as an option for next year. Will the minister assure the girls in Grade 9, in the Cape Breton-Victoria Regional School Board, that Holy Angels will be a choice for them in the next academic year?

[4:30 p.m.]

MS. MORE: Mr. Speaker, as I understand it, students from Holy Angels actually told me that the recruitment process for the upcoming year happens in the early Spring. Certainly the board has several months in which to prepare their recommendations and to fit it in with the other budget deliberations that they will be having over the next several months. In terms of time pressures, there is time for Grade 9 students in the junior highs to get the information that they will require to make course selections and to choose Holy Angels, which I'm assuming is going to be the positive outcome from this joint committee and the board's decision making. Thank you.

MR. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, I do know, and I do take the minister at her word that she will sincerely look for a solution for the next academic year. That's what the community is expecting, nothing less than that. With the boards across the province struggling with mitigation plans for a severe budget cut and having to review every line in the budget, especially with young girls now looking and knowing that the fate of Holy Angels is in question, will the minister ensure Holy Angels will be a budget line item that will continue where it is for the 2011-12 academic school year?

MS. MORE: Mr. Speaker, one thing became clear to me during all the meetings with the students, the parents, the staff, the principal and the board. That is the quality programming and the safe, nurturing atmosphere of Holy Angels is the educational experience that we want to offer every single teenager in this province. I have no doubt that all the boards across this province share that objective with the provincial government. We want to make sure their secondary school experience is as positive as possible and that we prepare them to be international graduates, to go out into the workforce - hopefully in Nova Scotia - but that they will be well prepared for the 21st Century. Thank you.

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

HEALTH: MIDWIFERY - ACCESS

MS. DIANA WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Health. My question is about something that is very important to women and families in Nova Scotia and that is the subject of midwifery. Four years ago legislators in this very House finally passed the Midwifery Act to make it available to Nova Scotian women under the public health system. When the Act was passed, it took another three years to have regulations available. Unfortunately today women have less access in Nova Scotia to midwifery under the public system than they did in the past when they could pay for it.

The current system that's in place, the pilot project, allows only three DHAs in the whole province to offer midwifery and there are only seven midwives operating under that system in the entire province. My question to the Minister of Health is, in view of this sad state of affairs, when is she going to ensure that women across Nova Scotia will have access to midwives through their DHA regardless of where they live in the province?

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I'm aware of the long struggle to get midwifery into the public health system. In fact, I would like to say that during my time here in the Legislature I've been very supportive and involved in supporting that effort to get midwifery into the public system.

It's not the case that there is less access than previously. We have access in three DHAs in Nova Scotia - GASHA, the South Shore, and here in Capital Health through the IWK. In fact, there is more access. Those pilot projects are being evaluated with a view to seeing what it is that we've learned from the pilot project.

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

OPPOSITION MEMBERS' BUSINESS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Progressive Conservative House Leader.

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: 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 Progressive Conservative House Leader.

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 80.

Bill No. 80 - Multiple Sclerosis Liberation Therapy Act.

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

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak in support of Bill No. 80 and to start the discussion about Bill No. 80. I note that we have many bills before the House this session. Some are more important than others. There have been some dealing with issues like protecting our children from tanning beds, there have been others to discuss whether or not the Motor Vehicles branch should be able to send a letter after four demerit points or not.

Those are clearly housekeeping bills, they are not items of urgent importance to Nova Scotia but those are bills that the government has decided to bring forward. I'm not here to debate the merits of them individually, other than to say that I believe with Bill No. 80 we have an opportunity to do something very important and very real with this session of the Legislature by passing Bill No. 80 and getting on with the worthy objectives that that bill contains.

As members know, Bill No. 80 is about funding clinical trials for the MS treatment in order to give Nova Scotians the facts, in order to give government the facts about the benefits of liberation therapy. This is a government, after all, that claims it wants to make decisions on the basis of facts. I will say they're often selective on their use of facts but they claim, at least, that they want to make decisions on the basis of fact, then it begs the question, why would we deny Nova Scotians the benefit of scientific trials? What are scientific trials anyway, other than the use of science to get at the facts about the benefits of this treatment?

The bill itself calls for a panel of experts to be formed that will lead to a request for proposals from the Nova Scotia Health Research Foundation. These are the places where facts get determined, where information is gathered in a scientific manner, so that good decisions can be made.

It begs the question, if we have a government that wants to make decisions on the basis of fact, why would we deny clinical trials of a scientific method of ascertaining the facts in this case? The goals of the bill are very laudable and they're very important, that we provide hope to those individuals and families that suffer from this disease, that we provide clarity as to the options available to them for treatment. Again, all of this, the bill only asks that it be done on the basis of scientific trials and the gathering of facts, something the government has yet to see the benefit of.

We certainly recognize that there is a cost to gathering facts. We recognize that we live in an age of financial restraint, but even in an age of restraint, it is important that this body set priorities for the province, that it indicate what it believes are important even in a time of financial restraint. I can tell you that Nova Scotians see this as a high priority, the Progressive Conservative caucus sees this as a high priority and even in a time of restraint we need to have priorities.

I can't help but note that in the province of New Brunswick, right next door, where they have a far more drastic fiscal position than our own province, that they have identified helping those who are suffering from MS but who see some hope, they have found a way to identify some money for that purpose. That is an example, it's an even better example, of setting priorities in an age of fiscal restraint and that is what they are doing in New Brunswick.

One might ask, why is this a high priority? Well, the answer is very simple. Nova Scotia has the highest incidence of MS in the country. There are very few families that are not affected by this disease in our province, the highest incidence in the country. A member brought a petition to this House with 10,000 signatures on it. That is a phenomenal amount of support for moving forward with a bill like Bill No. 80. We rarely see petitions of that size on any subject and yet for MS we had a petition with 10,000 signatures on it. I can tell you personally, having just campaigned through Cumberland South, that this was raised an amazing number of times on the doorsteps of my riding.

One would expect that citizens would bring up taxes and health care and education but in equal measure, Mr. Speaker, citizens were bringing up providing treatment, funding scientific trials for liberation therapy, living proof in that one riding which is representative of every other riding, that there are a high number of Nova Scotians that want this body to move forward in the direction that Bill No. 80 proposes. After all, this is a time when leadership is required and if this is a province that leads the country in the incidence of the occurrence of MS, then surely we should be a province that leads the country in funding scientific trials and finding a cure or some treatment that alleviates the suffering of MS sufferers. That only makes sense.

Not only that, Mr. Speaker, but there are other reasons why this bill should be a high priority for all members of this House. Nova Scotia has all it takes to lead the country and participate with other provinces in clinical trials. We have world-leading researchers, we

have great surgeons who do similar procedures already, we have wonderful equipment and facilities at our disposal within blocks of this great building, that could be put to this use, to address this issue, in a scientific manner, as the government claims to want to proceed, to the benefit of tens of thousands of Nova Scotia families and to the benefit of our country as we partner with other provinces that are coming to the conclusion that they, too, should do their part to advance the cause of science and to search for a cure, to search for a way to provide liberation therapy and other methods of mitigating the pain and suffering of this disease.

We have all that we need to have to make this happen right here in our province. At the moment the one thing we don't have is the will of the government, but I'm hoping they'll see the wisdom of this bill and support it, so that last obstacle, their will to proceed, can be removed and good things can happen on this high priority item.

Mr. Speaker, I could go on for a while but if the government does need a business case, as it sometimes does, one can only point to the thousands of dollars that could be saved at the family level in Nova Scotia as we no longer need someday, hopefully, to drive Nova Scotians to other parts of the planet in search of this procedure, to save the fundraisers that go on in communities big and small across our province, as whole communities come together, basically voting with their fundraising dollars in support of this treatment by gathering to help their fellow citizens go wherever they need to go.

The Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture shaved his head. I'm an admirer of people who do that. Some of us don't need to actually shave, Mr. Speaker, but it's a good thing to do.

On top of the business case, Mr. Speaker, there is a real human story that is being told across our province, whether it is people that this House has been introduced to, like Yvonne Anderson in Truro or Kevin Saccary, a world champion curler in Dartmouth, who was not able to pursue his sport but has received liberation therapy and is now back to competitive curling, or Keith Riley in Louisbourg or Crystal Bruce in Yarmouth. I am just naming a number of areas of the province where people have sought treatment and have seen their life improved.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, we all want to provide a better life for those people and to see that they can be full participants in the life and the workforce and the communities of this province and that's what this bill is ultimately aimed at. Thank you very much.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Health.

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to have an opportunity to rise to speak today on Bill No. 80 which is a bill - an Act to Require Clinical Trials Respecting Multiple Sclerosis Liberation Therapy - and to allocate \$5 million and to have a call for proposal for clinical trials in January.

[4:45 p.m.]

Mr. Speaker, I and members of my government, have said that we will participate in clinical trials if and when the scientific evidence to do so is there. This is, without any question, it has been one of the most difficult issues that I've had to deal with as Minister of Health, in my time as Minister of Health. We all know people in our community who are suffering with the effects of this disease - MS - and we know that there are many different kinds of MS. There are people who are at different stages but the thing that we do know about people who have MS is that we don't have an effective treatment that halts or reverses this disease and that there is a huge desire on the part of people who have the disease, their families, their friends, their communities, their physicians, all of us would want nothing better than to find an effective treatment.

When Dr. Zamboni postulated his hypotheses and published his paper and the first reports came with that study, there was great excitement, enthusiasm and optimism, and I've done a lot of reading on MS. I've done a lot of reading on the history of MS. I've spoken to practitioners who are specialists in this field as well as had presentations from vascular surgeons and other people with experience and expertise around diagnosis, radiologists and what have you, to try to understand all of the dimensions of this issue that a layperson like myself who is not a clinical physician needs to understand because I take my responsibility as Minister of Health in terms of approving new treatments very, very seriously.

Mr. Speaker, it is not the case that there is no research going on to substantiate a scientific basis for this new therapy. In Canada today we have a number of research projects underway. We have four, in fact, in Canada - two in Ontario, one in British Columbia, one in Alberta - and the funding of this research is about \$2.4 million. There are additionally three research projects in the United States and the seven research projects that are underway, are underway to attempt to make the link between the blockages of veins and MS as postulated by Dr. Zamboni.

They are not what we would call clinical trials. Clinical trials tend to be providing the treatment with a controlled group where you actually do some comparators. I think one of the best explanations that I've seen on clinical trials was published in *The ChronicleHerald* on September 8, 2010 - a piece written by Stan Kutcher, who would be well-known to members of this Assembly. Dr. Kutcher, although he is very open about not being a clinical practitioner with specialization in MS or vascular practice but in psychiatry. Nevertheless, he is a well-known health researcher in his field, very familiar with the scientific research process, and has laid out how we get to clinical trials.

Dr. Kutcher - I just want to quote from his article here. He says, "Before any treatment proceeds to a clinical trial, it must be based on a large body of evidence that has already evaluated potential benefits and risks. Clinical trials are the end point of a long, arduous and complicated process of scientific evidence generation, not the beginning."

Now, Mr. Speaker, I understand how difficult it is for people who want answers immediately. It is for that reason that health ministers in this country asked that the research that I spoke to a little bit earlier is accelerated and that we have foundation-based research done as rapidly as possible that will then allow us to move forward with clinical trials. Frankly, we are not there yet. We are still waiting for the results of the seven funded research projects that I referred to.

I'd just like to give members of the Assembly a bit more depth of understanding of the research that is currently underway. The research in the Hospital For Sick Children in Toronto is studying vein abnormalities in children and teenagers who have MS and healthy controls of the same age. They are seeking to determine whether the veins are abnormal at an early age among pediatric MS patients, and these findings will add to the depth of studies of CCSVI in adult MS patients.

In Calgary, the research is focusing on a cross-section of people with MS compared to other neurological diseases and healthy volunteers. The idea, as I understand it, is there is some question about whether blocked veins can be isolated to people with MS or, indeed, if this is a condition that is found more broadly in the population of people suffering from neurological diseases like Parkinson's, for example. These are very important questions to determine.

We also have a research project going on at the University of Ottawa that is exploring the best approach to diagnosing the vein abnormality or blockage. Is it MRI technology or is it other technology - ultrasound, for example, which is in fact what Dr. Zamboni used in his initial piece of research, as I understand it.

Finally, we have research occurring across provinces, at the University of Saskatchewan as well as at UBC and the Faculty of Medicine, looking at the prevalence of blocked veins in people with MS and comparatively to other people in the population more broadly.

I think it's important to say to members of the Chamber and beyond the Chamber that it is unprecedented in this country that on the basis of one very small study, without any control - that is Dr. Zamboni's original study - the research community would have responded with a \$2.4 million investment in these kinds of research studies. This has not ever occurred before and it is only because the CIHI and the federal Health Minister and provincial ministers have willed it to be so.

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

MS. DIANA WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to rise today and join the debate on Bill No. 80, the Multiple Sclerosis Liberation Therapy Act. At the same time, I would like to mention there are two bills before the House, the second one being the Multiple Sclerosis Patient Support Act. I believe it is Bill No. 96, which is a Liberal bill, but

I think it does show that a large part of those two bills are similar and the additional part that is in Bill No. 96 is that not only does it call for clinical trials, that Nova Scotia should play a role in clinical trials, but it also calls for the following, monitoring and identification of those Nova Scotians who have raised the money, or spent their own money, and gone to other jurisdictions around the world to receive this therapy.

We know that there are many who have done it. In fact, the figure we were given was around 125 Nova Scotians. Remember, this is a therapy - well, I don't know what it is and the minister doesn't know either. She's not sure it's 125, but I don't know either, and none of us know, but I know that in my community there are fundraisers going on. I attended a dinner not very long ago, in fact, for a woman who is planning to go to Costa Rica and there are others. I have talked to people in other communities and so on. I know many people are anxious to go, as well.

We know the number is rising and the fact is that I think it's irresponsible not to know where the Nova Scotians are who have had this treatment and what are their outcomes when they come back, just so that we can learn something more as well, there is another level of study and understanding. I think it would also help us to understand the complications that may be there or the long-term benefits. Many people are returning and saying that they are definitely feeling better, their family members are confirming that as well, and we need to understand it.

I hear the minister about being responsible and being careful and following the proper scientific procedure to look at clinical trials, but we have Nova Scotians whose health is declining, sometimes very precipitously, sometimes quickly. As the minister said, some people can have MS for years, and continue to function, and others will lose their capacity very quickly and find themselves in a wheelchair or worse.

There's this idea - I think even some doctors feel - that it's not such a dreadful prognosis to have MS, but I had a mother in my office very recently, who I know in the community in Clayton Park, whose daughter is 23. She's the same age as my daughter and she has MS. That girl said, when she was into see the doctor first they said, I don't know what you're so upset about, it's MS, what are you so upset about? It doesn't kill you. She said, yes it does. Her uncle had died from MS at the age of 50. It can be terminal. It is serious and people are desperate and they're looking for how they can not only have a better quality of life, but hopefully continue to live a long life.

I just mention that because people are so anxious to know more. The only way they're going to get the evidence is to speed up the clinical trials. I know the minister mentioned \$2.4 million, and I'm very glad that there has been enough pressure that money has been dedicated to some studies, but we all know in the realm of medical studies that \$2.4 million is a baby-step, it's a first step, it's very small. People are aware of that, that in order to get a reliable clinical study, you need to have two groups. You need to have one group

that is getting the placebo, one that gets a different treatment and so on, and it takes time, so getting it going is what is so important.

One of the things that concerns me is that when you give money to the MS Society, you can tick off a box that says you'd like it to go to this new CCSVI, I think are the initials, which is the liberation therapy. I think a lot of people, as they're supporting the MS Society, want to do that. I'm very concerned that as people tick that off, and the amount of money coming in exceeds the commitment that the MS Society has made to liberation therapy or any of these trials on the blockages of the veins, that money will not go or be saved for CCSVI research, but will be redirected to the research and drugs and therapies that are more traditional.

I think the government should be aware of that and should make sure that's not happening. If the trials are coming slower than the money is coming, the money should be held back and used only for that MS liberation therapy studies because that, I think, is really misrepresenting the intent, when you allow people to tick off that box and say that's the kind of funding I want to donate my money to. That is something that I think is critical, if that's being done, so I would like the minister to look at that as well.

[5:00 p.m.]

There are too many different kinds of procedures being done around the world that are being done under the umbrella of saying they're following Dr. Zamboni's procedures. I had the opportunity in the summer to spend a couple of hours with Dr. Sandy MacDonald, who is a vascular surgeon from Barrie, Ontario, who's actually studied under Dr. Zamboni in Italy. He's been outspoken - I believe he was featured in the original shows that we saw on The Fifth Estate that first had two shows that discussed this procedure - am I right? (Interruption) W5, sorry. W5. I knew it was Canadian.

In that instance, he had actually been a proponent of it and he still is, but he said in the absence of more trials and some standardization what's happening is the procedure is not standardized and people are getting different care depending on where they go. The government has a role to play here to try and ensure that what are the best practices and what is known about this procedure are followed. Right now we can't do that with people going elsewhere. We need to get the trials going here in Canada.

Here in Canada is a place where we have a world-class system. Here in Nova Scotia we have terrific researchers - a research group at Dalhousie and at our Capital Health District who have many people who would be willing to be in that trial, who would volunteer to be part of a clinical trial on MS. As was mentioned, we are the province with the highest incidence of MS per capita. We don't know why, but we know that we have more people in our little population per hundred or per thousand that have MS. That makes it a more compelling reason why we should be part of those trials, even if it's in a small way, even if it's in conjunction with some neighbouring provinces or contributing to a bigger study.

I was surprised and interested to see that New Brunswick today had begun to put something behind this, but I think the Health Ministers have talked about it when they've gathered this year; the Minister of Health has assured me they did. There is pressure from our population and it is urgent. This is not a disease where we can assume people can continue to just live with maybe limited or declining capabilities. It can be terminal. It also takes away so much of their energy and their enjoyment of life.

In my community, there's a young mother who's raising two young girls, who has MS, and really feels she can't enjoy so much of their lives because she doesn't have the energy. She said to me the other day, I can get up and get them out to school and then I have to go back to bed. I know the member for Cape Breton West will understand what that means because his wife has said similar things about her day. It's very debilitating. It takes away so much enjoyment of life.

When we're talking about this MS liberation treatment, I think it's important to know that people who are studying it and reading about it and looking to go away are not saying it's a cure. None of us here in the House should say it's a cure. It appears that it's a treatment that could make their condition better and give them a higher quality of life. There are examples of people coming back and returning to work, people who have been on long-term disability being able to go back and resume their work. How much does that cost the Province of Nova Scotia?

If we can take these young people - remember who gets MS. It exhibits itself generally in that sort of 20- and 30-year-old age group. It's something that hits people in their prime. I think there's a great deal of benefit to be able to say that there could be a treatment there, and we should be exploring it because that can give back the quality of life to those people.

I think I have only one minute left. I'd certainly like to say that I believe Nova Scotia should be part of these clinical trials, that we have an obligation to the people who feel so strongly that this is something they would want to access that they are actually taking risks and going overseas to different countries. Even today in The Globe and Mail, there was an article where Dr. Zamboni was saying governments have to step up because this almost-industry that has grown up in different countries so quickly, in one year, around the world, is really out of his control in terms of what treatments and what sort of standardized treatment they're going to get there.

I think government needs to move more quickly and the trials need to be more aggressively begun. People are not waiting. We need to be able to follow their results and see how they're doing. Nova Scotia really owes it to the people who are suffering with MS, and their families, to do something about it now. Thank you.

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

MR. ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, first I'd like to thank my colleagues for their thoughts on Bill No. 80 and on MS. I rise today to speak in favour of Bill No. 80, the Multiple Sclerosis Liberation Therapy Act. I know very well that we are still in difficult economic times and that we must be very careful stewards of taxpayers' dollars. Because of that, my caucus colleagues and I thought very carefully about the general situation before deciding to move forward with this legislation.

We concluded that, first and foremost, government has a responsibility and a duty to perform essential services, including health care, to Nova Scotians in the most effective way possible. It is the duty to government to ensure our citizens have access to all drugs and treatments they need, including those that can save, prolong or significantly improve the lives of our people.

I am proud that has been the Progressive Conservative policy since we introduced Medicare to Nova Scotia more than 40 years ago. I was proud of our former government when we decided to cover the cost of the cancer drug, Avastin, and I was pleased to see that the current government recently announced funding for the eye drug, Lucentis. It is in that spirit that I introduced Bill No. 80 earlier this month.

Mr. Speaker, there is another feature of Bill No. 80 that I would like to talk about. Providing liberation treatment in Nova Scotia for our MS patients will actually help save money. The liberation treatment for MS patients can probably be implemented as a day surgery with a cost of probably less than \$5,000. There are some MS medications being used in this province today that cost \$40,000 a year, so it seems to us that \$5 million for clinical trials on liberation therapy makes common sense from all perspectives, both compassionate and economic. It is the same number that the Province of Saskatchewan is using.

In this regard it is very important to note that Dr. Zamboni, who pioneered the liberation treatment in an interview that was in today's The Globe and Mail, from the University of Ferrera in Italy, where he works and teaches, said, "Governments must take responsibility to prevent unsafe treatments or applications of Liberation Therapy by offering a safe procedure at home. - - the only right defence (against faulty treatment), is clear action from government."

Dr. Zamboni also went on to question why a country like Canada, with a very good public health system, refuses to support a treatment study on 500 people. His point, Mr. Speaker, is well taken, and I find it difficult to understand or accept why governments in Canada cannot seem to understand the need to move forward on this potentially life-saving medical issue in a much faster fashion.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health here in Nova Scotia is developing a new drug strategy. Common sense tells me that this liberation treatment for MS could be part of that strategy. MS is a terrible disease, often MS patients lose their ability to swallow, or even lose their eyesight. Men and women suffering from it want to be helped. They want relief from the debilitating symptoms and they want hope. Liberation treatment represents that help and that hope. Therefore, I believe all members of this House should join our caucus in support of this bill that will make life bearable for many of our fellow Nova Scotians and also help save some tax dollars.

The \$5 million that the bill will spend is one of the best investments in building a better, healthier Nova Scotia that can possibly be made. Mr. Speaker, as many in this House know, in late August I had an opportunity to meet with the federal Minister of Health. She told me, at that time, there were federal funds available for MS research. She also said that at that time no group or government in Nova Scotia had sought any of that funding. I mention that today because it is possible that some of that federal funding is still available to help with the cost of clinical trials of liberation therapy and we should go and look for that.

It's never easy to move into new territory in the world of health care delivery or in any other area of public policy, but our society has moved forward and our province and country have become much better places in which to live and work because individuals, entrepreneurs, scientists, and governments have had the courage to blaze new trails as they saw the positive potential of promising new innovations. Dr. Zamboni's liberation therapy is such an innovation. It's just a year ago that Dr. Zamboni's procedure came to light and MS sufferers had a new reason for hope.

People who deal with MS in their daily lives believe strongly that this treatment is the biggest breakthrough yet in helping to battle this disease. It offers hope, it creates focus, and yes, it improves their lives. So it is time for us as elected folks to step up to the plate and show we care, show that we are real listeners and leaders of our province. There are some critics or skeptics around, but I believe they are wrong. I have seen proof in my own family. At any rate, if we get these clinical trials done we will know what the real answers are.

I know that at least one doctor here in Nova Scotia has sent an associate to Barrie, Ontario, to learn to do the Doppler process for finding blockages that Dr. Zamboni believes to be associated with MS. A major report several years ago indicated that one of the criteria for MS diagnosis was related to blood flow. Blockages of blood have a critical effect on MS patients.

Now, some folks say that not all MS patients have blockages, and my wife, Shirley, underwent the Doppler test and it showed no blockages. As a matter of fact, when she had the procedure done, on the left side she was 95 per cent blocked and on the right side her vein was bent and they were able to straighten it out. I've heard the same story from other

people who have gone for the treatment, and there was no indication when they had the Doppler.

It is incumbent upon us to provide the opportunity and hope that this offers. The current practice of saying to MS sufferers who have reached a certain stage, sorry, folks, there's nothing else that can be done, is unacceptable. As I have said before, in Atlantic Canada we have a high rate of MS. I believe from personal experience that it does work. Shirley is a living example of the positive effect of liberation therapy. I see good things all the time when I see Shirley go about her day fully and confidently and in control of her life - something that wasn't there before the treatment.

Mr. Speaker, we know it's not covered here in Nova Scotia, and that's part of the reason why we're here. We also know that Newfoundland and Labrador, Saskatchewan, and even today the Province of New Brunswick, have put forward some ideas as to how they can help with this. I'm pleased to say that the minister, when asked the question here in the House, talked about people getting treatment when they came back, if they needed follow-up. She was the first one to say that that would happen here in Nova Scotia and I thank her for that. However, I must say that her comment about medical tourism was not needed or appreciated.

The honourable Premier and the ministers across the way say they're not doctors, and we're not either. There's so much more that I would like to say, but I want to leave this House with this thought. We have many Nova Scotians who have travelled and had this procedure. We should be working with them to find out how it's affecting them and what's the better way. The quality of life that people can get by having a treatment done is important. My colleague, the member for Halifax Clayton Park, introduced a bill as well, and I want to say thank you to her for that - Bill No. 96.

[5:15 p.m.]

Mr. Speaker, I want to make this one thing perfectly clear. It matters not to me whether Bill No. 80 or Bill No. 96 or which bill it is that might get passed, if it's a bill that's brought forward by the minister. But what is important, what matters is that we, as members of this House, do the right thing for Nova Scotians with MS, that we allow them to be treated at home, maintain their dignity, and have a quality of life that is deserved by all Nova Scotians.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Progressive Conservative House Leader.

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 44.

Bill No. 44 - Maintenance and Custody Act.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester North.

HON. KAREN CASEY: I rise in my place to speak to Bill No. 44, the Maintenance and Custody Act and I want to thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to do that.

It is with a great deal of pride that I stand here today to speak in favour of this legislation because it is an example of the Progressive Conservatives having listened to Nova Scotians and we are taking action on the things that they care about and I know that members of the Opposition Party have also spoken favourably about amendments to the Maintenance and Custody Act.

People like those who are involved with the Grandparents Rights for Nova Scotia, an organization that has been working to ensure grandparents are able to maintain ties with the grandchildren they love. I've had an opportunity to speak with the member for Cumberland North, and some of those grandparents in that association are constituents of the member for Cumberland North.

It should be noted that this is a vital piece of legislation and it's important to many Nova Scotians because it will make a real difference in their lives. It's important to grandparents and children who have seen their families separated by family break-up and sometimes in very difficult circumstances.

The Law Reform Commission of Nova Scotia recommended these changes in its April 2007 report and I will table that report. The report noted that relatively few cases will actually end up in Family Court as a result of what's proposed in this legislation, so the impact on an already busy court system will be minimal. The report states, "The cases that do come before the courts, therefore, represent a very small percentage of the overall number of potential family law disputes."

This means that while the administrative impact will be minimal, the benefits to families will be great. As a Private Member's Bill, this was brought to the floor of the Legislature on October 14, 2009, and it was not called for second reading. It was re-introduced as Bill No. 44, the Maintenance and Custody Act, amended in April 2010, and it was not called for second reading. So it is being put on the floor of this Legislature today as our Opposition Day because it is a bill that is worth discussing and it deserves the discussion on this floor.

I want to help those members of the House who may not be familiar with the bill to understand exactly what the amendments will do and although the amendments seem minimal, the impact is significant.

There are three main amendments. The first one is to define grandparent, and grandparent will be defined as the parent of a parent of a child. The second amendment talks about adding grandparent to Subsection 18(2) and in Subsection 18(2), it is talking about custody and everywhere that parent is considered for custody, this amendment would also add grandparent. Thirdly, it talks about and it refers to the principles that would be adhered to when the courts respond to an application by a grandparent for custody. It speaks to the principle that a child should have as much contact with each parent or grandparent as is consistent with the welfare of the child and those are important words. Secondly, the importance of maintaining emotional ties with the child and the child's parents and grandparents. The third consideration, the willingness of each applicant for custody to facilitate the child's contact with each parent and grandparent.

Those are the amendments that will allow grandparents to apply for access to their grandchildren and they apply through the courts and it is the courts that will determine whether that access is granted or not.

Bill No. 44 was introduced and supported by our caucus because we want every child in Nova Scotia to have as much contact with their parent and their grandparent as is consistent with the welfare of the child.

In the April 2007 report that I tabled states, "In order to help guide judges, parents, grandparents and other interested persons, the *Maintenance and Custody Act* be amended to provide a 'best interests of the child' list of factors to consider, similar to the provisions in the *Children and Family Services Act*." That's exactly what happens with Bill No. 44. The commission also recommended that Subsection 18(2) of the *Maintenance and Custody Act* be amended to provide an application process that may be made by a parent or grandparent and Bill No. 44 speaks to that.

It's also noted in the Law Reform Commission that grandparents have no automatic right for access to their grandchildren and legislation in all Canadian jurisdictions now makes that possible for them to apply. This amendment will make it possible for grandparents in Nova Scotia to apply for access to their grandchildren.

What the amendments to this legislation propose is not unconditional access and I want to make that very clear - it is not unconditional access. Unfortunately, there may be situations where access should be denied and these amendments protect the child from that unconditional access. The legislation calls for access to be considered and could be granted through a custody application in the courts and a ruling by the courts.

The legislation is committed to raising public awareness about the important issue of grandparents' rights and to remind us how important the relationship between children and their grandparents is. It should be noted that many Nova Scotians, including myself, have a warm and close relationship with a grandchild and that is something that every grandparent should have access to and a process so that access can happen. We pride

ourselves in Nova Scotia in being close-knit families and this is one of the ways that we can maintain the closeness of a child with their parent and their grandparent.

In closing, I want to remind all members of the basis for this bill, decisions made are in the best interests of the child, decisions made are with the safety and well-being of the child as a top priority. Decisions are determined by the courts and decisions provide a vehicle for grandparents to be considered in the custody decision of the courts. I'm asking that all members of this House understand the amendments and support Bill No. 44 so that Nova Scotia grandparents can grow old enjoying their grandchildren.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Antigonish.

MR. MAURICE SMITH: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today to speak on this Private Members' Bill No. 44 to amend the Maintenance and Custody Act so as to provide grandparents with an automatic right to apply for access to their grandchildren.

This government is committed to making life better for families in all regions across our province. We all know that children are the most important members of families. This government understands that in most circumstances, grandparents want to have a relationship with their grandchildren. Healthy relationships between children and their extended family are something this government values. In many cases, it is a positive experience for the child.

In order to properly facilitate those relationships when access is concerned, we must remain respectful of the child's rights and best interests. Under the Maintenance and Custody Act, all grandparents have a right to apply for access to their grandchild. However, they are not automatically granted access. Under the current legislation, grandparents who wish to obtain access to the children must participate in what is called the "best interests of the child test." This means that each case is to be assessed on the basis of its own merits as determined by careful consideration of the particular facts presented by that case.

In some cases, the test may lead to a grandparent being granted access to their grandchild, and in some cases it may not. I appreciate that when access is not granted, it would be very emotional and difficult for the grandparent involved. However, like all decisions relating to children, we must not lose sight of what is important, and that is the child's best interests and rights.

When it comes to legislative authority, we must ensure that appropriate processes are in place to ensure that legislation focuses on the child's best interests. The Maintenance and Custody Act, in its current form, accomplishes this. That is why this government has some concerns with Bill No. 44. To begin, in these types of cases, there is no way to distinguish between the rights of a grandparent and other close family members, like an aunt or uncle, when determining who is to have access to a child.

In this province, parents have a right to decide who will have access to their child. Therefore, parental decisions regarding whom their children will associate with should be left to the discretion of the parent. The court only interferes in the most compelling circumstances and when that is consistent with the child's best interests. A review of the case law indicates that in many cases where parents have denied access to a grandparent, the courts have agreed with that decision.

Also, providing grandparents with automatic access to their grandchild when the parent objects could potentially cause a parent to become defensive and could create conflict in the family and for the child. Currently the legislation works to protect the child from those types of conflicts.

At the risk of sounding repetitive, we must put the rights and interests of the child first and this government has confidence that the Act in its current form provides a balanced approach. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, because of the concerns I just described and our confidence in the current legislation, this government is unable to support this Private Member's Bill.

My own experience with these matters is that when there is a dispute, the grandparent is entitled to apply to the court, to make an application for access to the grandchild. The court then becomes involved and makes a determination of whether that access is in the child's best interests. It's a two-stage process. Leave must be granted. At that stage, the court can look at the case in particular and decide whether or not it's in the child's best interest to allow the application to go forward.

What this bill is attempting to accomplish, we suggest, is already available in the current legislation and therefore it's unnecessary for us to amend or to change the Act as it exists. When it is the best interest of the child that has to be considered, the grandparents' interests have to come second. If a court determines that the best interests of the child are not to allow access, then that determination has to be respected. As I said, under the current legislation, we're able to accomplish that now.

[5:30 p.m.]

So with those comments, I want to just reiterate that we have to assure ourselves that when we're passing legislation, it is what is aimed at trying to accomplish. We have in the existing legislation ample means of protecting the children's rights and ample means of allowing grandparents, in appropriate circumstances, to have access. The process is there. It is cumbersome sometimes to have to go through these processes, but, again, we have to keep in mind always that what we're trying to achieve here, in these very difficult situations where families are in dispute about who should have access, it's not the grandparent's rights, it's not the parent's rights, it's the child's rights that have to be maintained and upheld.

In these kinds of cases, yes, it's very difficult, it's an emotional situation. It's hard for grandparents to have to perhaps not have access to their children, but it's not a determination that's made by a parent who has a grudge against a grandparent or something like that. The grandparents have the means of coming forward and saying to a judge, an independent person, somebody who's trained particularly to deal with these matters, and say - and we have these courts across the province, both Family Court and the Family Division of the Supreme Court of Nova Scotia, that allow grandparents to come forward in an appropriate situation to make this application. So it's not the will only of a disgruntled or warring family faction here, it is a determination made by a court based on solid evidence.

So when we look at this bill and we say, well, why are we doing this, why is this bill coming forward, I suggest the legislation that's in place now clearly enables a grandparent who seeks redress or needs redress to have that. Again, we have to weigh what is best here for the child. The child is the focus of this access application. The child is the one whose interests must be put forward first. Yes, grandparents do have, and should have, rights to come forward to get access to their children when that is being denied and being denied willfully or arbitrarily by a parent perhaps, but that can be addressed and is often addressed, and has been addressed under the present legislation for quite some time.

So it's not as if this is going to make a big change, this bill, it's not as if it's something that is going to be coming forward that's going to solve a problem that doesn't have a solution to it already. You can't legislate, I guess, peace between warring factions in a family, but what you can do is make sure that the child, who sometimes is the object being fought over in these kinds of family disputes, is being protected.

That is happening now. I don't see that there's anything in this legislation that needs to go forward that's going to improve the situation. We have a system in place, an orderly system, and the speaker before me indicated that there is a process that through the new legislation can get access to the court. Well, that is in existence today, it's not something that's foreign to the courts. The courts have been dealing with these situations appropriately for quite some time now. So, again, if we try to fix something, to make something better, it seems to be that there has to be something here that would indicate that there is a need and I don't see in this legislation anything new being brought forward that doesn't already exist in the current Act. (Interruptions)

I have had 35 years of experience working in the Family Courts and I've seen many of these similar types of cases in the past. It is a painful situation for all involved but, again, all we can do and hope to do is try to protect the child and that's what the existing legislation can do. So with those few comments, I would indicate that we are not going to be able to support this bill.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

MR. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased today to rise to speak Bill No. 44 and to offer our caucus position here. The very basic position, of course, is very strongly in support of grandparents' rights in Nova Scotia.

It is interesting to note that the grandparents' association came before the Standing Committee on Community Services on Thursday, March 31, 2005. At that time the member for Dartmouth South-Portland Valley was the chairman of the committee. Looking at some of the comments made at the committee level, I would say that, perhaps, the NDP position was more empathetic at that particular time than the current dissertation that we had from the member for Antigonish. So we do see somewhat of a change going on there.

At that time they were asking for a few changes in the legislation because they saw what had been done in British Columbia, Quebec, Alberta, New Brunswick, the Yukon and I think on further inquiry today and a little bit of research, just about every province in Canada in their legislation is using the word "grandparent", whereas in Nova Scotia we don't have that direct reference to grandparent. So that's an area that I think we support - the use of the word "grandparent". Any changes that would come about in legislation must be in the best interests of the child and a continued relationship based on concrete evidence. That, of course, is where the courts come into play in this regard.

We know, as the member who put the bill forward, from Colchester North, was very explicit in saying that it would be the court that would be making decisions on access for grandchildren. So I think we've established the importance of that process, which brings to light, as well, some discussion, perhaps more behind the scenes in our province, about the very future of Family Court.

I think Family Court provides grandparents with one of the best opportunities to have access and to have their rights, again based on concrete evidence, to allow them to have the right access and proper relationship cultivated through, I believe, Family Court. I think there's a greater sensitivity to families and I think greater discernment on the dynamics of the family as to whether or not - and again, as the member for Colchester North pointed out, it's not in the best interest in all cases that a grandparent has access, let alone custody of a child.

There are many in this House who know from their life experience, and I know as an educator, family separation is alarming to children. The kind of impact it makes on their lives when it does happen, also the support that they need - very often it is the grandparents - but we know that during that process that grandparents can be left out of the picture because they are caught up, many times, in a divorce, in a separation and there is anger towards grandparents. Very often this is the essence of why sometimes grandparents, in fact, are shut out of the lives of children.

In my view, I've seen grandparents take over very, very strong roles as parents and provide the kind of strong relationship, the kind of guidance, the kind of stability that is lost when divorce, separation or death - we all know that can be a factor as well, that sometimes needs to be taken into account. Grandparents need the kind of support, through legislation, that, in fact, can give them assurance when the evidence supports what they would need to do.

One of the documents tabled today by the member for Colchester North, of course, was the *Grandparent-Grandchild: Access, Final Report - April 2007*, from the Law Reform Commission of Nova Scotia; it has already been tabled. The commission at that time determined that there was an opportunity for reform in the area of grandparents and grandchild access. Now we know that was done in 2007, grandparents came before a standing committee in 2005 and yet we know that there are a lot of gaps in terms of the development of grandparents' rights in our province and that is why this bill has come forward.

In fact, at committee, grandparents said judges, lawyers and others need education on knowing the importance of having grandparents play a significant role when and where possible, in the lives of grandchildren. This is why I brought up the matter of the importance of Family Court. There seemed to have been cases, and again, those who appeared before our committee actually noted some cases where there seemed to be a lack of sensitivity that grandparents could, in fact, carry out a significant role in the lives of their grandchildren.

We know that child neglect and abuse takes place and this is not something particular to Nova Scotia, we know that it does occur. One of the areas that I'm familiar with - grandparents who often came into school because they knew a grandchild had left home without any lunch that day. So just on basic welfare issues grandparents have an important role to play in the lives of their grandchildren.

One of the things that the commission talked about and was one of their final recommendations for reform, was, in order to help judges, parents, grandparents and other interested persons, the Maintenance and Custody Act be amended to provide a best interests of the child list of factors to consider, similar to the provisions in the Children and Family Services Act.

This is an area where I think all of us, as legislators, and all those who are wanting to promote, cultivate grandparents' rights in this province, setting down some of the factors to consider would, in fact, provide the courts with greater guidance and a greater level of comfort for grandparents.

Mr. Speaker, I know my time is running short or perhaps just about out, and so with that, I will take my place.

[5:45 p.m.]

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle.

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to stand today to speak for a few moments on Bill No. 44. First of all I want to thank the member for Colchester North for bringing this forward. It is a very important bill and I know that the member for Antigonish did stand in his place and speak against the bill, not understanding the full implications of grandparents, or children not being able to see their grandparents.

Mr. Speaker, the primary concern of our caucus is the safety and best interests of children in our province. Where appropriate, we believe having a close and warm relationship with their grandparents is in the best interests of children. Presently Nova Scotia grandparents have neither the presumptive right of access to their grandchildren, nor the right to apply to the court for access. This legislation will give grandparents the opportunity to apply to the courts for access to their grandchildren.

Mr. Speaker, I know many people in here can talk fondly of our grandparents, things we were able to do, some of us. I have grandparents who are still alive and we do get to spend time with them. I spoke many times before of my grandmother, who is 97-years-old, and I still have a great opportunity to go down and tell stories with her. She has always got some great stories and she always comes out with a new song that none of us had ever heard before that she used to sing as a child.

Mr. Speaker, sure, I'm 41 years old and I can make my own choice to go and hang out with my grandmother or see her at different functions, what they may be. If I didn't have access to my grandmother, I don't know where I would be in this world. I have a very loving set of parents, but should they have divorced along the way, which seems to be the trend, I might not have known my grandmother or had the opportunity to know my Acadian roots and to understand the importance of being bilingual. There was many a time when my grandmother would tell the other children that we were playing with - talk to Chris in French, he can. Do you know what? I thank her for that but, do you know what? I might not have had that opportunity.

Mr. Speaker, we always have the quintessential story of fishing with your grandfather. I remember my time fishing on the Medway and catching my first fish with my grandfather. Now, I thought it was the biggest darn fish going, and I remember eating it and thinking that was a pretty darn good piece of pink fish but, do you know what? I caught a gaspereau and he gave me a piece of the salmon he caught the day before. I remember those things. They were very important to me.

Mr. Speaker, I don't know where this government Party is today. I don't know where the member for Cumberland North is today because I know the member for Cumberland North had been approached by the grandparents' association led by one of his constituents,

Pauline Glenn. I know by putting the lawyer up to speak to it, someone who has 35 years experience to speak to it, is important, but I wonder where and what the thoughts are for the member for Cumberland North because I think he said something different to those folks.

Mr. Speaker, I want to refer to a letter dated August 25, 2008. It was written to Pauline Glenn of Wallace, Cumberland County. It goes like this:

“I have received your letter and a copy of Private Members Bill 33 which was presented in the Ontario Legislature on the issue of grandparents’ rights.

I applaud your association for the work it is doing on behalf of grandparents as it relates to having access to grandchildren. Your suggestion that legislation similar to Bill 33 be introduced during the next legislative sitting will be taken into consideration with caucus members and our research staff.

I thank you for writing and my staff may be in touch with you before the legislature resumes in the Fall.

Sincerely,

Darrell Dexter,

NDP Leader
Leader of the Opposition.”

I want to table that.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to table a letter, and maybe the governing Party can have a look at this, and maybe put some more thought into whether supporting or not supporting Bill No. 44. Or, heck, I know Mr. Speaker, when you were speaking to your bill just a few moments ago, you sort of said it really doesn’t matter if this bill goes forward or if the Liberal bill goes forward or if the government introduces a bill and that one goes forward - in the end, we want children to have access to their grandparents.

Even though we say it’s grandparents’ rights - I’ll table that letter and, by the way, that letter is from the Grandparents Rights for Nova Scotia Association and it went to the Justice Minister and I think you’ll find it interesting to see what she had to say to him.

I can tell you that divorces are going to happen. I know the member for Antigonish has seen many divorces and he talked about the warring factions - not all divorces end in an amicable conclusion. Who’s left in the middle of that? Children are left in the middle of that. The parents are caught up in whatever they’re caught up in, and the grandparents are trying their best not to take sides because they understand what’s important in this too - the children.

Never mind the semantics of this, never mind whose good idea this is. If we have good ideas, then let's bring them forward and let's talk about them and do things that are right. In a perfect world there would be no need for this legislation but, like I said, unfortunately, family breakdown and divorce are facts of life.

I can say that our caucus sees this legislation as something that will cost government very little and at the same time provide a very large benefit for many, many Nova Scotians. As my colleague, the member for Colchester North, said, this legislation is recommended and supported by the Law Reform Commission of Nova Scotia and, as she said, members of the Law Reform Commission believe the legislation will add little burden to the courts and pay large dividends to families.

So it's not just our caucus saying that, it's not just Pauline Glenn and her association saying that, but it's the Law Reform Commission of Nova Scotia. I know Jerry Pye had - I know the member for Kings West was speaking about that as well. All around us we have the best intentions for children, yet we're letting this opportunity pass us by. Pauline Glenn and her association are going to have to work even harder to convince that lot that this is something that needs supporting.

Mr. Speaker, I can say the member for - I heard some noise over there and he was saying why didn't you do it? Well, I can quickly say to that member and he knows the minority situation that we're in, that many of those bills were brought to their attention. They knew about them and they didn't support them, so they weren't brought forward in this House. Even though they think maybe we don't know about this, we've never paid attention to this, we never brought it forward - they've had a handle on this for a long time. They have. We have the support of two Parties here and I can say that many grandparents are over there today - I don't know how many, but I'm sure there are a few - and put yourselves in the shoes of a grandparent who has lost access to their grandchild, and how much of a turmoil your life would be in if you didn't have that access.

In conclusion, I again want to thank the member for Colchester North for bringing this issue forward and championing this in our caucus and in Nova Scotia. All that I can ask is that it be given due consideration in this House and due consideration by the NDP Government. Thank you very much. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: I want to thank all members of the House for their participation in the debate.

The honourable Progressive Conservative House Leader.

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, that concludes our Progressive Conservative Opposition business, and I'll ask the Government House Leader to inform us of the hours and what we're going to be working on for Thursday.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, after Question Period tomorrow, what we'll be doing is going to Public Bills for Second Reading with Bill Nos. 88, 102, 103, 105, 106, 108, 109, 110. If time permits, we will go into Committee of the Whole House on Bills with Bill Nos. 7, 74, 75, 76, 78, 79 and 81.

I move we now rise to meet from the hours of 2:00 p.m. to 8:00 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 now reached the moment of interruption. The late debate tonight was submitted by the honourable member for Cape Breton Nova:

“Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly recognize the leadership shown by this government when it made the funding commitment to the Sydney Harbour dredging project, which will not only greatly enhance the economic activity of the Port of Sydney, but will bolster the shipping industry throughout Nova Scotia as well.”

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION UNDER RULE 5(5)

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

SYDNEY HBR. DREDGING - NDP GOV'T.: LEADERSHIP - RECOGNIZE

MR. GORDON GOSSE: Mr. Speaker, it's with great pleasure that I rise in the House today to speak to this resolution. Economic growth in Cape Breton is a top priority for my government. This is why we worked so hard since June 2009, to create jobs and invest in the services Cape Breton needs.

My government is keeping its commitment to create the secure jobs that the Nova Scotia economy needs by investing in local business, which is why we have committed to funding the Sydney Harbour dredging project. Unfortunately, we are still waiting for a

commitment from the federal government to fund their portion. This project would help us to continue to create the secure jobs Nova Scotia's economy needs and keep Cape Breton communities strong. It would bring more business here and would give the Port of Sydney a competitive advantage.

In addition to the harbour dredging project, we are making the investments in Cape Breton that are needed to ensure our young people are able to stay and build a life there. In my constituency of Cape Breton Nova, people told me that we need programs for youth. My government listened and provided Lighthouse funding, a community-orientated, crime prevention initiative. The program helps community organizations to create healthier and safe communities by developing, delivering and maintaining effective recreational, educational, cultural life skills in after-school programming for youth.

Sustainable partnerships among youth, police, government officials and the community are essential to healthy communities. Communities and individuals must support those who are at risk of being involved in crime, in many ways that reduce the likelihood of offending. Lighthouse is one of those initiatives intended to support this.

Building strong communities encourages economic growth, this is why we have opened the new community home for adults with disabilities, invested in affordable housing, invested in womens' centres and transition houses. We have awarded grants to recreation facilities to ensure that Cape Bretoners have access to the services they need.

Cape Bretoners told us they needed to access cancer treatment without having to drive to Halifax and we listened. Cape Bretoners now have the best possible cancer care, with the official opening of an expansion of the Cape Breton Cancer Centre in the Cape Breton District Health Authority. Government is committed to providing better healthcare for families and the official expansion of the state-of-the-art Cape Breton Cancer Centre will allow the people of Cape Breton to have access to the quality care they need as they face one of life's toughest battles.

[6:00 p.m.]

The province invested \$4.35 million in the expansion project through funds from the Government of Canada. The \$8 million expansion will increase the Cancer Centre's capacity to provide radiation therapy and to allow more people to get more advanced treatment at home in Cape Breton. The commitment and generosity of people in the community has also been most outstanding. By working with provincial, federal and community partners we are making a difference for patients and their families.

The people of Cape Breton raised \$4.7 million for this project. I am truly impressed and amazed by the generosity of the people of Cape Breton and I want to congratulate them on their efforts. Mr. Speaker, the government is not simply concerned with the services that

are accessible in Cape Breton but also in ensuring that businesses have the infrastructure they need to succeed.

In the Spring the government announced the construction of a new \$6 million home at the Marconi Campus for five programs, including a new combined metal fabrication/welding program. The project is a reflection of the government's commitment to create good jobs and grow the economy and is a good example of the innovative thinking on education our Premier outlined this week in his jobsHere announcement.

The new building will prepare graduates with the advanced training needed for trades and technology sectors and will address the forecasted labour shortages in Nova Scotia. The building will also house the automotive service technician, motorcycle and power products and heavy duty truck and transportation program.

We are taking steps to ensure that rail service continues in Cape Breton by extending its funding agreement with RailAmerica and creating a working group to look at its long-term future. The Cape Breton and Central Nova Scotia Railway will continue to operate until at least September 30, 2011, under this agreement. This investment supports the business and jobs that count on the railway to receive materials and deliver products.

Mr. Speaker, everyone in this House is aware that dredging and deepening the Sydney Harbour will allow it to receive larger container vessels, giving the Port of Sydney a competitive advantage to receive more international business. A deeper harbour will provide the opportunity for Sydney to position itself as a world-class shipping depot. The Government of Nova Scotia remains firmly committed to investing the \$15.2 million and the Cape Breton Regional Municipality has agreed to provide \$2 million for the dredging project because we realize that this is an economic priority for Cape Breton.

In September of this year the Government of Nova Scotia agreed to provide up to \$300,000 to develop a detailed design for the Sydney Harbour dredging project. This is because we recognize that dredging the harbour presents a tremendous opportunity to create good jobs and grow the economy of Cape Breton. As you know, the timing for his project is critical and this initial funding will ensure an early start to the design work. This is why we are really hoping for a funding commitment from the federal government.

The Deputy Premier and I have worked under the leadership of our Premier to engage with our federal counterparts on several occasions, including a visit to Ottawa to meet with the Honourable Peter MacKay and the Honourable Keith Ashfield in June of this year, accompanied by the honourable member for Cape Breton South, the honourable member for Cape Breton North and the rarer - the mayor - a Freudian slip on that one, the Mayor of the Cape Breton Regional Municipality, the honourable John Morgan, at that meeting that we attended.

Most recently, Mr. Speaker, upon hearing the news that the federal funding may be in question, the Deputy Premier sent a letter to Minister Ashfield, encouraging open dialogue and continued work towards this very important project. I'm so happy to have this opportunity to work to create the jobs that Cape Bretoners need and deserve. I sincerely hope that all of my Cape Breton colleagues in this House will continue to work together in the spirit of co-operation to make the best decision for Cape Breton.

I was at a rally in early June of this year when many Cape Bretoners of all walks of life attended and what I heard at that rally was that this was such an important project for Cape Breton that it actually galvanized the people. They've never been so committed and so united on one hope and one project that can move Cape Breton forward economically.

The unemployment rate in Cape Breton has always been around the national average and it's still quite high, as we speak, today. Our young people and our young tradesmen are away working in Alberta and our labourers are in Alberta. So a commitment by our government to this funding of \$15.2 million to help bring this along, to bring our young people back home where they can work at home, live with their families and sleep in their beds at night. What we need most importantly is the colleagues in this Legislature to work together to accomplish our goal of getting the Sydney Harbour dredged.

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

HON. MANNING MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for Cape Breton Nova for raising this issue today in late debate. I was listening to him very carefully. He was waxing eloquent about just about everything but the harbour dredging for about eight minutes of it, which is a good commercial to get in for the very closely scripted NDP propaganda. He did get into the important area of the dredging of Sydney Harbour and what he was talking about, when he veered from the subject a little bit, was about all of the economic development that's taking place in Cape Breton. I must be living somewhere else because I haven't seen too much of that economic development going on in the part of Cape Breton that I know.

When we talk about harbour dredging and the member for Cape Breton Nova and the member for Cape Breton North and the other members who were interested in this project from all three political Parties, signed an agreement with municipal officials and federal officials, signed off on an agreement to go forward with this project some two or three years ago now - it's like the death of a thousand cuts.

We've been waiting and waiting and, to the provincial government's credit, they jumped in before somebody else did but there is one word there that bothers me and it's the word, contingent. It's very easy to commit to something if it's contingent upon somebody else coming to the table and I congratulate the government for getting their foot in the door before anybody else did. I just hope though that the word, contingent, will be taken out of there and the government would actually commit this money to the project. Regardless of

who else is committing money to the project, that the provincial government, if they care deeply about this particular project, they would commit the money in any case.

I listened with great interest last week to the mayor's remarks regarding the letter he received from Chuck Strahl. Chuck Strahl is not going to decide whether or not the federal government is going to be involved with the Sydney Harbour dredging. I doubt if Chuck Strahl even knows where Sydney Harbour is. Chuck Strahl sent a letter explaining the position of his department in funding harbours, that's all there was to that letter and we've heard that before about funding of harbours throughout the country. In fairness to Chuck Strahl, he's probably got a lot of things on his plate and he was told by his bureaucrats, we don't fund harbours, send the mayor a letter and tell him that, and that's what he did. This matter is going to be decided at the federal level, probably in the PMO and that will be done at an appropriate time and I would hope that it's a positive announcement.

Like I said, we in Cape Breton are waiting all too long and this has been the history of my area, waiting for these mega-projects to come and waiting and waiting and sometimes they come to fruition and sometimes they don't. A couple come to mind when we were pushing for the Sydney Steel plant to be modernized, the Premier of the day went one step further than that and said, I'm not going to modernize the old plant, I'm going to build you a new one out on Cape Gabarus. That never happened - the government was defeated and the next government didn't see the wisdom in putting a new steel plant in Cape Gabarus, but anyway.

Then we are suddenly on the radar about being a world launching station for space ships. Everybody got excited about that in Cape Breton. We were going to be the major launching pad for all the - I don't know where that went. I hope this is not another one of those incidents when it comes to the dredging of Sydney Harbour. The member for Cape Breton Nova is absolutely right when he says it's very important to have that harbour dredged for the commercial activity that could take place in that harbour.

It must be very frustrating for Jim Wooder and the Marine Group, trying to go out there and get a book of business together with this great uncertainty. How do you go to international customers and say, we're going to have a harbour that will suit your needs in Sydney, Nova Scotia? The obvious question would be, when is it going to be dredged? We don't know, we're waiting for the funding, it should have been there last year and it didn't come last year.

Now, we're still waiting. I think there's a lot of patience in the area among the major players there, but I would have hoped that we, collectively, could have gotten together in a room and decided that this project is good for Cape Breton and come out of the room with all the commitments, instead of playing with what some people now refer to as the political jockeying game that's going on, both for the funding, and also for the credit of who puts the funding at the table.

It's an important project for Cape Breton and it's a project that I believe has to go ahead if we're ever going to do anything with continued promotion of the cruise ship business in and out of Sydney Harbour and the post-Panamax vessels that could come in and out of there. We are strategically located to serve the world when it comes to it. We have a terrific facility in Point Edward, a lay-down area there. As the member points out, we have a Donkin mine there that could be exporting coal out of the island instead of the situation now where we see the ships coming in there, importing coal, for Nova Scotia Power to use.

I think the tough negotiation that's been going on with Nova Scotia Power, with the municipality - everybody is of one mind in Cape Breton, that this project has to go. This project is the panacea for development in the future for our area. You know what? I believe that, although when you've been around as long as I have, you see these grand schemes come forward, and I had visions of that project being underway by now. You know, a couple of years ago I said, by the time the next session of this House goes, we'll have signed off on it. I know the member for Cape Breton North, the member for Cape Breton Nova, the federal members in that area and some of the other municipal officials all got in the same room and signed off on it, with great fanfare, in a room full of people down at the Fiddle.

I thought when we were going out of that room that day, it was a fait accompli, because we all signed off on it, but then the political machinations came into play here among the three levels of government. Perhaps the mayor and his council were a little bit frustrated that things weren't moving along as quickly as they wanted. I know the provincial government came forward with their money, but again, I remind the member for Cape Breton Nova that the funding from his government is contingent upon the federal government coming in.

[6:15 p.m.]

I would have hoped the provincial government said, here's our money, here's our commitment, put it in the bank, and it's there, no matter what happens it's there. You can start the process with our money and hopefully, if you can't get it from the federal government, maybe you'll get it from the private sector who want to do business in the Sydney area, because they know the project of dredging is underway.

But that didn't happen. What the provincial government said was, we are going to put it there contingent upon the federal government coming to the table. In other words, I think there was a little bit of jamming going on there, that our money is here, now you guys come to the table.

I don't know whether or not the Premier has been talking to the Prime Minister on this issue, I haven't heard that. I would have hoped that at his level, at the First Ministers level, that they would have had this discussion. I'm not privy to whether or not they did, although I haven't heard the Premier say that he had been talking to the Prime Minister on it. I'm not so sure whether anybody in the Department of Economic and Rural Development

is doing any studies along with the marine group right now, to determine a book of business for the future. I'm not even sure of that.

What I am sure of is the people of our area want that project to proceed and they are of like mind in saying that if this project goes ahead - I'm certain that the old adage "if you build it they will come," in this case if you dig the harbour, the business should be there, and will be there in the future, but there has to be a united attempt by everybody in this area, no matter what political stripe they are, everybody who is concerned with that dredging project should be getting together, with one like mind in this, to get this project underway as soon as possible.

He has been dragging his feet far too long and I don't think we have the luxury of waiting for particular points in time, that these things are perhaps more appropriate than not, to be announced. I think what we have to do is get the Premier talking to the Prime Minister, to get the mayor talking to the Premier and the Prime Minister, and everybody getting behind the marine group to make sure this project is a reality. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. CECIL CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to join in the debate here this evening at the Legislature with regard to the motion brought forward from the member for Cape Breton Nova regarding the Sydney Harbour dredge and to sort of build on the comments. I must say to the honourable member, it's much better when he doesn't have the government notes, and he goes, because he has a detailed knowledge of the community and could have foregone that because he is aware of the level and the detail that is there. I guess part of his meandering into other topics is that things like the dredge hopefully mean the economic future, so therefore, the social outcomes will improve in the region. I'm sure that's what he wanted to emphasize, but at the same time to recognize that as a society things have to come to play.

I know there are discussions this evening around timing of announcements. I know that at times people were kind of cynical, saying that the provincial numbers coming in had something to do with a by-election in Glace Bay. I don't believe that to be the case. I went to that announcement and I know people are saying that the timing may have something to do with federal politics. I know the province went forward to commit, with contingencies, the \$15.2 million. I was in that room and I lauded my colleagues and the government because it was an important next step and I do believe that it has helped to clarify to the Government of Canada the importance that the province has seen. I suspect as well that people - and the member for Cape Breton South has talked about uncertainty and in some ways why the government only chose to put a one-year deal in place with a continuance of rail is to see if this is really going to come to pass. Is it really going to be?

There have been five years of agreement put in place, yet there is only one-year continuance of that. The member for Cape Breton South talked about the time that we, as

MLAs, and the federal representatives, sat down with the port master plan and signed off on that. We did it as an all-Party process. It was recommended when I was on the government side, that we do it all-Party because it was about making sure the community saw that we were working together and that partisan politics would be set aside for the interests with regard to the development of the Port of Sydney. In fact, that's what we did.

Further to that, I know the member for Cape Breton Nova recently recognized the \$300,000 that was extended to continue the work on the engineering and other preparatory work toward the dredge that has been communicated to the Government of Canada. In advance of that, that's why the post-port master plan sign-off, that when we were in government I was very proud and pleased, on our mutual behalf, to invest \$2 million so that more technical work could be done, so we could actually get to the process of a dredge tender going forward.

That worked provincially, we worked with the federal agency of Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation. One of the things that came forward is that when this proposal was coming through its processes in the community, it is one of the things that we, in the region, understood very well. By the time it actually got through a tender process - I think it's important to recognize for the record that it did not make a federal budget round, it became an issue with other projects as a non-budgeted item, it was made very clear to us. So everyone went back to the task, recognizing that the need-to factor around the country must be quite large if you start adding up \$19 million requests by 308 federal constituencies in this nation, that are probably some worthy projects.

So everyone went back to the task of saying come back and as was indicated, we did the all-Party process led by the Deputy Premier. We joined in that with the municipal leader. At the time we met with the two Members of Parliament. We met with the ministers, as was indicated by the member for Cape Breton Nova. At that meeting, they said, look at other alternatives, and we said, okay, where are there other pools of money? I remember catching the eye of my colleague, the member for Cape Breton Nova, saying, well, you know, there are the tar ponds offset. There's money set aside there, this is the community, there are things have flowed to the harbour, and I know that he wants to see other things expended in the region that may be more landside. So then we went back to look at other things.

The agency and the community came together to say where is there a case that can be made and that is when the honourable member for Cape Breton South talked about the confusion of literally a process being cleaned up so the paperwork and the audit trail to close out an initial request for infrastructure, because that's where the request had flowed and the thoughts initially was infrastructure and then they thought it might fall under stimulus spending, is there a way to capture that? Well, the answer came politically, no, and that's when we had to set to the task of the meeting of all Parties going to Ottawa. Then subsequent to that it was an Economic Development initiative and that's the case that's before the Government of Canada today.

So what we do have is the provincial government with its commitment on the table, the fact that even through this process, and I would say to my honourable colleague, the member for Cape Breton South, the Government of Canada has not said no because it has recognized the historic disappointments of an area that has gone through more than its fair share of downturns versus upturns, that this is just as much about vision and hope for the future of the region, to be able to have an opportunity to capitalize on where the future markets will be, as we go into a new era of trans shipment and global business and trade.

That's something we've clearly understood and what we're talking about as well with the dredges, how it complements and not competes with the Port of Halifax or the Superport at the Strait region - what is relevant, what works. We also know that dredging Sydney Harbour, aside from any potential shipping and post-Panamax, we know a complementary relationship with the Port of Halifax is with cruise ship traffic, that has seen a trend moving, where we're now seeing tens of thousands, in fact over 80,000 visitors, and the fact that Sydney has increased capacity helps Halifax, because you have to have sites. Those larger ships, there are ships that come in right now and have to use launches. The member for Cape Breton West has talked about the issue of the coal boats and the Donkin Mine and the fact that we have boats coming in half-loaded rather than fully utilizing their capacity, thus impacting the ratepayer. So all of those things are known.

I do know subsequent to that, I have had the opportunity to meet directly with the Prime Minister and when those opportunities are afforded to me, you take them, and to the Prime Minister, I put forward that case. We didn't talk about who was not in the tent. We complimented people for stepping up but, more importantly, my opportunity to meet with the Prime Minister was to clarify that this is the single largest priority. It is the only opportunity that we've seen come forward where there is widespread, not just across political lines, municipal, provincial, federal, it has captured the imagination and the belief of the citizens of Cape Breton within Cape Breton County and the CBRM to say this is where we need to move forward.

So I do believe, as we've moved forward, as the Government of Canada has addressed this, those are the things that have been articulated. There has been some suggestion that this is about political posturing and who's going to ride in on the white horse and take credit. Well, the reality is, quite frankly, even from a political process, and I know the member for Cape Breton South has been involved, I think 11 straight elections where he has won 33 years in politics, he also knows when a project gets funded, you're on to the next project. You're not standing around patting yourself on the back and pounding your chest about how great I am, it's about what else are we going to do, because the members for Cape Breton South and Cape Breton Nova know in politics you're only as good as your last yes and really what does the dredge mean for the future and what is coming next?

That will be the political debate, and should be the political debate, that will come forward as to who is most capable and positioned to advance what the dredge represents, because the dredge is an enabling activity. It's who can work with the stakeholders and the

private sector, who can leverage public dollars for infrastructure as government, as an enabler and a facilitator. Those are the discussions we're going to move forward on.

The Prime Minister has committed to visiting Cape Breton. Now I know the Prime Minister has not - both outside of politics and inside politics - been to Cape Breton, but when I also met with him, he had a very intricate and detailed knowledge of the area, and we discussed the dredge and he was able to put it in context with other things. He was able to speak about some of the other aspects that have affected our area in a negative light and how we move forward. Those are the types of things that I'm assuming that the Prime Minister will address when he comes. It's for the Prime Minister, not for me, to speak on the case before him and I agree with the member for Cape Breton South - the fact that it has been brought to his attention, it's something that he will deal with with his ministers. I feel confident that all of the necessary information has gone forward.

I do know, and I do thank the government, the Deputy Premier, for communicating to the Government of Canada. I do know the lines of communication still flow open. I do know - and I expect and remain confident - the member for Cape Breton South's concerns about, is this another red herring that comes up on a mega-project, that we don't have to be as lofty about what's going to be a trajectory to the moon in terms of space travel. We want to deal with shipping. We have a strategic natural advantage in the Port of Sydney, a long heritage of being involved with that and something that will build on that. Cape Bretoners know that when the world needed Cape Breton during the World Wars, our port was strategic, our port was integral, our location was everything, and we know that to our future.

What I would say is that, as former Premier John Hamm said, do I think, "soon, very soon." The Prime Minister is coming soon, very soon and I hope he will bring with him the good news that we'll all laud and we'll leave it to him to come in on a white horse.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. That ends the debate on the motion by the honourable member for Cape Breton Nova. We will now rise and meet again tomorrow from 2:00 p.m. until 8:00 p.m.

We are now adjourned.

[The House rose at 6:27 p.m.]

NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3)**RESOLUTION NO. 2394**

By: Hon. Jamie Baillie (Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party)

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

Whereas last Friday a huge gas explosion ripped through a New Zealand mine and trapped 29 miners within the Pike River Mine; and

Whereas Nova Scotians have witnessed many mining tragedies throughout our history from the mining industries within Cumberland, Pictou and Cape Breton Counties; and

Whereas the second explosion today within the Pike River Mine has resulted in the confirmation of 29 deaths and an unimaginable loss to the loved ones left behind;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in offering our deepest sympathies to the families of the deceased miners, the community of Weymouth and to the nation of New Zealand who are all in mourning with this terrible tragedy.

RESOLUTION NO. 2395

By: Hon. Jamie Baillie (Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party)

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

Whereas AIDS Awareness Week is held every year in Nova Scotia to increase public awareness about HIV and AIDS and will take place this year between November 24th and 30th; and

Whereas this year AIDS Awareness Week will focus on increasing public knowledge of HIV and AIDS among African-Canadian communities in the Halifax Regional Municipality; and

Whereas the AIDS Awareness Week planning committee of the Nova Scotia Advisory Commission on AIDS has organized a number of workshops and information sessions to discuss HIV/AIDS issues as they relate to the needs of families, youth, men and women;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly thank members of the Nova Scotia Advisory Commission on AIDS for the work they do to strengthen the response to HIV/AIDS in Nova Scotia and wish them success as AIDS Awareness Week begins.

RESOLUTION NO. 2396

By: Ms. Becky Kent (Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage)

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

Whereas in May 2010, 25 students from Eastern Passage Education Centre took part in the school's Third Annual 30-Hour Famine where they ate only one bowl of rice, drank only water and learned about poverty and hunger around the world; and

Whereas student leaders Fallon Hudak, Alex Wilson and Sophie Boileau, along with participants Brandon Daniel, Corey McCrae, Kevin Waite, Jennifer O'Keefe, Kimberly Hartling, Samantha Logan, Gillian Hayman, Darian Mansfield, Miranda Osmond, Andrea Hope, Alicia Kearley, Taylor MacAulay, Haley Pickering, Brandon DeYoung, Stacey MacKay, Jessica Wilson, Shelby Stevens, Jessica Boutilier, Katie Ferguson, Shelby Rondeau, Justin Hall, Sarah Matheson, Joel MacLeod, Katie Hanrahan, Jessica Cole, Sydney Morash, Hillary Edwards and Kelsey Chisholm raised \$805.00 with Justin Hall and Brandon DeYoung being the top fundraisers and students Gillian Hayman, Samantha Logan and Jennifer O'Keefe completing all three famines; and

Whereas Grade 9 student Fallon Hudak was honoured at Halifax City Hall as recipient of the Halifax Regional Municipality Citizenship Award for her positive contributions and leadership at her school and in her community;

Therefore be it resolved that this Nova Scotia House of Assembly recognize the students at Eastern Passage Education Centre for their participation and dedication during the 30-Hour Famine which took place at the school in July 2010 and congratulate Fallon Hudak on receiving the Halifax Regional Municipality Citizenship Award.

RESOLUTION NO. 2397

By: Mr. Harold Theriault (Digby-Annapolis)

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

Whereas Sidney McCullough, an employee at Sissiboo Farm Supplies in Weymouth, created an award-winning and cost-effective solution for waste separation bins, dubbed the Easy Sorter; and

Whereas in the two years since beginning production of the Easy Sorter, the idea has garnered praise for Sissiboo and this summer the company won the Small Business Mobius Environmental Award from RRFB Nova Scotia; and

Whereas this new product has fostered more effort at product research and stopped a cycle of winter layoffs for employees;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House congratulate Sidney McCullough and Sissiboo Farm Supplies on their outstanding new product to help the environment and wish them great success with their future developments.

RESOLUTION NO. 2398

By: Mr. Harold Theriault (Digby-Annapolis)

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

Whereas Gary Sabean of Weymouth, a nine-time national black belt Karate champion was recently inducted into the Nova Scotia Sport Hall of Fame at a gala held at the World Trade and Convention Centre in Halifax; and

Whereas Gary, now based in Calgary, was National Athlete of the Year in 2000 and National Coach of the Year in 2007 and 2009 as well as Alberta's head Karate coach and a coach with the national team; and

Whereas along with nine national titles, Gary was grand champion at the 2004 world championships in forms and sparring disciplines and grand champion on sparring at the 2001 world championships;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House congratulate Gary Sabean on his outstanding achievement on being named to the Nova Scotia Sport Hall of Fame and wish him many more years of success.