



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Charlie Parker

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Second Session

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 30, 2010

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House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 30, 2010

Sixty-first General Assembly

Second Session

2:00 P.M.

SPEAKER

Hon. Charlie Parker

DEPUTY SPEAKERS

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

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. We'll get today's proceedings underway.

The honourable Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party.

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. It has come to my attention that yesterday I inadvertently introduced a resolution into the House, Resolution No. 2471, which is not in conformity with the Rules and Procedures of the House. It is not an in order resolution and therefore I withdraw it. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, honourable member. The motion then is withdrawn and it is ordered that it not appear on the order paper.

The topic for late debate today, the motion under Rule 5(5), reads as follows:

Therefore be it resolved that the Minister of Agriculture put in place a real strategy to address the needs and concerns of farmers in Nova Scotia.

That was submitted by the honourable member for Bedford-Birch Cove and it will be debated during the moment of interruption at six o'clock.

The honourable member for Yarmouth on an introduction.

MR. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to bring the attention of the House to the west gallery, where we have in the audience today Matthew Anderson, who is the president of the Saint Mary's University Students' Association. He is a good friend of mine - he didn't want to get into Dal. He comes from a long line of strong student leadership at Saint Mary's University, and I would ask Matt to stand and receive the warm welcome of the House. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: We'll begin the daily routine.

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants West.

MR. CHUCK PORTER: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to table a petition on behalf of the folks in western Nova Scotia. The operative clause reads:

“We the residents of Western Nova Scotia including health care professionals and employees at hospitals from across the region request the Minister of Health's Immediate attention and action ON THE PURCHASE OF A DIGITAL UNIT FOR THE WESTERN REGIONAL Breast Screening Mobile Unit servicing Berwick, Hantsport, Greenwood, New Ross, Windsor, Wolfville, Caledonia, Chester, Liverpool, Lunenburg and New Germany.”

Mr. Speaker, it has 628 signatures, one of which is mine.

MR. SPEAKER: The petition is tabled.

The honourable member for Colchester North.

[2:15 p.m.]

HON. KAREN CASEY: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to present a petition signed by 1,037 university students, members of the Canadian Federation of Students, who have asked me to present this on their behalf. According to the proceedings of the House, I have affixed my signature to that, the operative clause being:

“We the undersigned petition the Legislative Assembly of Nova Scotia to:
- immediately reduce tuition and ancillary fees for all students;
- provide 50% of every provincial student loan as a grant; and
- Increase per-student funding to the national average.”

MR. SPEAKER: The petition is tabled.

The honourable member for Cape Breton West.

MR. ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I hereby beg leave to table a petition, the operative clause being:

“We the undersigned from the Mira River area in Cape Breton met on 28th November 2010 at the Community Hall in Grand Mira South to discuss the removal of the CAP . . . **The unanimous decision from the meeting was that the Cap in its present form be kept in place.**”

Mr. Speaker, it's signed by 100-plus people and I have affixed my name in agreement as well.

MR. SPEAKER: The petition is tabled.

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 121 - Entitled an Act Respecting Human Organ and Tissue Donation. (Hon. Maureen MacDonald)

Bill No. 122 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 34 of the Acts of 2001. The Lobbyists' Registration Act. (Hon. Ramona Jennex)

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

NOTICES OF MOTION

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants West.

RESOLUTION NO. 2563

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

Whereas the Farm Environmental Stewardship Award is a program of the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture that promotes farmers who have made strides toward healthy soils, improved water quality, diverse landscapes, and vibrant communities; and

Whereas Dean and Catherine Manning, along with their son, Andrew, and daughter, Caylene, operate a mixed-operation farm in Falmouth and were recently announced as the winner of this award for their dedication and commitment to protecting the environment by ensuring the preservation of woodlands on their property and protecting various watercourses that cross their land; and

Whereas by operating their farm in an environmentally friendly manner, the Mannings are teaching their children good practices that will establish a thriving farmland for future generations;

Therefore be it resolved that all members in this House of Assembly congratulate the Manning family on receiving the Farm Environmental Stewardship Award and thank them for the positive difference they are making in the farming 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 member for Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage.

RESOLUTION NO. 2564

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

Whereas Clyde Henneberry of Eastern Passage is a senior in his eighties who began painting at age 60 and has since become a renowned artist who paints from his heart, depicting the culture and heritage of his community and life experiences; and

Whereas in August, the community of Eastern Passage honoured Clyde by reproducing one of his paintings, titled *The Captain Kent*, in a large mural on one side of the Marine Interpretive Centre at Fisherman's Cove; and

Whereas CBC Toronto highlighted the life of Clyde through their series "Show Off!" on September 23, 2010 which brought well-deserved exposure to the rich culture and heritage of Eastern Passage;

Therefore be it resolved that this Nova Scotia House of Assembly commend Clyde Henneberry of Eastern Passage, for sharing his experiences of life through his paintings and congratulate him on being featured on the CBC "Show Off!" program on September 23rd.

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 West.

RESOLUTION NO. 2565

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

Whereas the Run for Awareness Association is a non-profit group whose main objective is to increase the community's awareness of the benefits of plant based foods and the importance of healthy eating; and

Whereas for the past six years Run for Awareness has hosted an annual Cooking with Awareness Week to presenting vegan meal preparation with guest chefs, along with lectures and workshops; and

Whereas part of their philosophy of healthy eating is to promote the consumption of local foods and the importance of a healthy agriculture industry;

Therefore be it resolved that members of this House of Assembly congratulate the volunteers with Run for Awareness, in Sydney, and wish them continued 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 Colchester North.

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

MR. SPEAKER: Certainly.

MS. CASEY: I would like to draw people's attention to the gallery opposite where we have students from two student union associations representing their association here. I'd like to welcome them to the House.

From the Canadian Federation of Students we have Elise Graham, Chairperson of the Canadian Federation of Students. I would ask you to stand as you're introduced, please. Rebecca Rose the Maritimes Organizer for the Canadian Federation of Students; Kaley Kennedy, Government Relations and Research Coordinator with the Canadian Federation of Students; and joining us from the Alliance of Nova Scotia Students, Matt Anderson, President of Saint Mary's University Student Association. Would you please stand and receive the warm welcome of the House. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester North.

RESOLUTION NO. 2566

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

Whereas the O'Neill report threatens to drive students away from Nova Scotia universities; and

Whereas students currently struggle with the burden of tuition and university costs in Nova Scotia; and

Whereas recommendations in the O'Neill report will blow the lid off tuition reduction initiatives, including a tuition freeze through the MOU with universities;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly strongly urge the NDP Government to work with universities and students to keep tuition at or below the national average.

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 Kings North.

RESOLUTION NO. 2567

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

Whereas David Hewitt is a resident of Kings County who makes multiple contributions to the spiritual, intellectual, environmental and political life of his community; and

Whereas Mr. Hewitt's life is a testament to his commitment to "putting his stubborn ounces" in the service of change and to the building of a better tomorrow; and

Whereas David Hewitt has been appointed the executive secretary of the Maritime Conference of the United Church of Canada where he will provide leadership, counsel and assistance to the United Church and its congregations throughout Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and Bermuda;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this Nova Scotia House of Assembly thank David Hewitt for his many contributions to making life better in Nova Scotia, congratulate him on being appointed the executive secretary of the Maritime Conference of the United Church of Canada and wish him every success as the United Church addresses the challenges - that of a future that matters to all of us.

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 Clare.

RESOLUTION NO. 2568

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

Whereas the Nova Scotia Golf Association named top golfers in the province for 2010; and

Whereas in recognition of her successful season, Mireille LeBlanc has been named Nova Scotia's Top Woman Golfer; and

Whereas Mireille won the top honour after winning the NSGA Women's Amateur Championships, the Jackie Frost Tournament, as well as the Yarmouth Field Day and River Hills Day Tournaments;

Therefore be it resolved that members of this House of Assembly congratulate Mireille LeBlanc for winning the 2010 Nova Scotia Golf Association Women's Player of the Year Award and wish her continued success in all future endeavours.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Cape Breton North.

RESOLUTION NO. 2569

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

Whereas this November, St. Stephen's Catholic Church in Florence celebrated three significant anniversaries: its 100th Anniversary as a mission, the 75th Anniversary of St. Stephen's Church and the 60th Anniversary of St. Stephen's Parish; and

Whereas Cecil Snow, chairman of the Parish Council, remembers with pride the rich history of this village church; and

Whereas a committee of dedicated people worked on this significant celebration for St. Stephen's, organizing events such as a mass of celebration, a variety concert, a display of memorabilia and old pictures for the community to view over a cup of Cape Breton tea along with spectacular hospitality;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in saluting the long service and impact of St. Stephen's Church in Florence and thank organizers of the celebrations for their hard work and dedication to the community.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Guysborough-Sheet Harbour.

RESOLUTION NO. 2570

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

Whereas the Guysborough County Regional Development Authority (GCRDA) applied for and received approval under the Nova Scotia Transit Research Incentive Program; and

Whereas the GCRDA will conduct a feasibility study for a new transit service, which could serve the needs of the residents in the Municipality of the District of Guysborough; and

Whereas such a program will greatly benefit disadvantaged citizens and the community as a whole;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly congratulate the GCRDA and wish them every success with their transit service study on behalf of the residents in the Municipality of the District of Guysborough.

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. 2571

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

Whereas the Hospice Society of Greater Halifax is a not-for-profit community-based organization working together with individuals and organizations in the Capital Health District to help people live fully and die well; and

Whereas the Society purchased an historic home, the Bedford Teachery on Spring Street, to house their offices and bereavement programs and to eventually provide a location for hospice care; and

Whereas many volunteers and donors have contributed to a major renovation of the first floor of this well-loved building;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House congratulate the volunteers and donors of the Hospice Society of Greater Halifax on completing the first floor, and wish them much success and no surprises as they continue with the second floor of renovations.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Victoria-The Lakes.

RESOLUTION NO. 2572

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

Whereas the Boularderie MammoWarriors Dragon Boat Team in 2009 raised over \$5,000 for the Cape Breton Dragon Boat Festival with proceeds going to the Cape Breton Regional Hospital; and

Whereas this year, the Boularderie MammoWarriors received an award at the 4th Annual Dragon Boat Festival for the team with the most spirit, as well as for collecting the most pledges raising \$6,392; and

Whereas proceeds raised during the festival were distributed among three areas including the Cancer Centre Expansion Project, Cancer Patient Fund, and Palliative Care Unit, and fundraising for next year has already begun;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate the members of the Boularderie MammoWarriors Dragon Boat Team for their diligent efforts to this very important cause and wish them the best in their fundraising efforts for 2010-11.

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

[2:30 p.m.]

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Finance.

RESOLUTION NO. 2573

HON. GRAHAM STEELE: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the honourable Minister of Health, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas Walter John Carson, known to many as Johnny Carson, was an active member of the Universalist Unitarian Church, a social activist and member of the NDP, and a skilled photographer with an eye for natural beauty and a constant interest in developing his art; and

Whereas John Carson did not permit his personal and medical challenges throughout his life prevent him from interacting with his various communities and pursuing his ideas and ideals; and

Whereas John Carson passed away in October at the early age of 51, and will be honoured by an exhibition of his photographs, entitled “Journey”, which opens at the Veith Street Gallery tonight, on Tuesday, November 30th;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly extend their sympathy for John Carson’s premature passing to his many friends and acquaintances, and express their appreciation of John Carson’s contributions to Nova Scotia throughout his often difficult life.

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. 2574

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

Whereas North Preston resident Rose Fraser is currently employed as a registered nurse and, because North Preston only has a doctor a few hours a week, she has voluntarily opened her home and her heart to those needing medical help in her community; and

Whereas recently Rose became the recipient of the Debbie Travis' All For One home makeover where materials, tools and money for food are provided and the community members do all the construction; and

Whereas the residents of her North Preston community turned out in vast numbers to pay tribute to Rose by working on her home;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House congratulate Rose Fraser for receiving this home makeover from Debbie Travis in gratitude for her excellent care and kindness she provides to her community.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Hants West.

RESOLUTION NO. 2575

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

Whereas the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture's Farm Environmental Stewardship Award promotes farmers who have made strides toward healthy soils, improved water quality, diverse landscapes, and vibrant communities; and

Whereas the Oulton family has been farming their land on Chester Road near Windsor for four generations and take pride in using sustainable agricultural and environmental practices in all aspects of the operation; and

Whereas the Oulton family was recently announced as one of three finalists to receive the Farm Environmental Stewardship Award for their dedication to good environmental stewardship and consideration of the environment when making business decisions;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly recognize and congratulate the Oulton family on their nomination for the Farm Environmental Stewardship Award and wish them all the best.

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 Premier.

RESOLUTION NO. 2576

HON. DARRELL DEXTER (The Premier): Mr. Speaker, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas the Rose and Kettle Tearoom is a local historical icon located in the Harris House on the grounds of the Cole Harbour Heritage Farm Museum on Cole Harbour Road; and

Whereas the tearoom uses fresh, local ingredients whenever possible, including vegetables from the museum garden and eggs from the barnyard hens; and

Whereas Harris House was built by the Settle family in the mid-19th Century and the verandah, added to the house in the 1920s, was transformed into a tearoom 20 years ago;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this Legislature thank the staff of the Rose and Kettle Tearoom for using and promoting fresh local products, and congratulate the establishment on its 20th Anniversary, and wish the tearoom continued success in the future.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Digby-Annapolis.

RESOLUTION NO. 2577

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

Whereas Tim Wilson, a Bear River filmmaker, tackled the sensitive subject of death in his documentary *Griefwalker*, which tells three stories plus his own personal experience with death; and

Whereas recently Tim has received the Canadian Hospice Palliative Care Association Media Award for his documentary; and

Whereas Tim hopes his documentary will allow people to look at one of the biggest concerns in their lives in a way that changes the way they feel about it and approach it;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of the House congratulate Tim Wilson on receiving the Media Award from the Canadian Hospice Palliative Care Association and wish him all the best in his future endeavours.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party.

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

Whereas Nova Scotia's economy is still suffering the effects of the recession; and

Whereas many hard-working Nova Scotians and their employers remain concerned about the security of their jobs; and

Whereas Bill No. 100 only serves to create greater uncertainty by rewriting labour-management relations;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House agree that in the future no bill be introduced in the Legislature . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. We're not allowed to have resolutions on a bill before the House so I'm going to rule that out of order. (Interruptions)

The honourable member for Yarmouth.

RESOLUTION NO. 2578

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

Whereas Tight Lines, a tourism-based company in Yarmouth County, owned and operated by Bill Curry, has been in existence as a proud family business and tradition for over 100 years; and

Whereas this business attracted the type of tourists that Nova Scotia needs - people who visit, stay, and spend money in the area for up to five or seven days at a time; and

Whereas on November 25, 2010 Tight Lines went out of business as a direct result of this NDP Government's decision to cut funding to the ferry, a decision Mr. Curry said, "makes me question the government's dedication to both tourism as a business, but also more broadly to the people of southwestern Nova Scotia.";

Therefore be it resolved that the members of the House of Assembly urge the NDP Government to recognize the Yarmouth-New England ferry as an economic driver for the province and act swiftly to support those businesses that are struggling to stay open because of the ferry loss.

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 Glace Bay.

RESOLUTION NO. 2579

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

Whereas the 14th Annual Panther Classic high school hockey tournament will take place this weekend beginning with the opening ceremony taking place at 7:00 p.m. on Thursday evening at the BAYplex in Glace Bay; and

Whereas the Panther Classic showcases the best high school hockey teams in this province with this year's complement consisting of the Glace Bay High Panthers, Sydney Academy Wildcats, Riverview Redmen, Memorial Marauders, CEC Cougars, Auburn Drive Eagles, Sackville Kingfishers and the J.L. Ilsley Judges; and

Whereas the Classic brings thousands of hockey fans, families and future hockey stars to the rink during the four-day tournament, creating an electric atmosphere for all who enter our state-of-the-art community facility;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House join me in congratulating head coach Ryan Boutilier, assistant coaches Kendall Murphy and Jordan MacDonald, principal Peter Campbell, the Glace Bay High School staff and the members of the 2010 Glace Bay Panthers for their effort in preparing this year's edition of the Panther Classic, and we wish that all participants play hard, respect each other, and respect the great game of hockey - Go Panthers, go.

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 Clayton Park.

RESOLUTION NO. 2580

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

Whereas on November 29th in Toronto, Chris Power, CEO of Capital Health, was inducted into Canada's Most Powerful Women: Top 100 Hall of Fame after being recognized by the Women's Executive Network for the third time; and

Whereas this year she was joined by her sister, Mary-Lou Donnelly, president of the Canadian Teachers' Federation and former president of the Nova Scotia Teachers Union; and

Whereas Chris and Mary-Lou are both remarkable Nova Scotian women who have advanced to the top ranks in their chosen professions and are a credit to our province;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House join me in congratulating both Chris Power and Mary-Lou Donnelly on being honoured at the 2010 Canada's Most Powerful Women Top 100 Awards in Toronto.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Cape Breton North.

RESOLUTION NO. 2581

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

Whereas the Northside Community Guest Home Foundation raised \$100,000 in campaign funds to help with the new 39-bed expansion known as Cara House; and

Whereas they set \$300,000 as their fundraising goal for additional equipment, furnishings and activity items and Annette Verschuren, president of Home Depot Canada, along with her family, have given a generous donation in memory of their mother, Annie; and

Whereas the new addition will increase the residents capacity from 105 to 144 and will increase the total number of full-time and part-time workers to 330;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating the Northside Community Guest Home Foundation for providing a superior environment for its residents.

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 West.

RESOLUTION NO. 2582

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

Whereas Justin Beck graduated from the Nova Scotia Agricultural College and has begun his career with crop and processing systems at the Lyndhurst Farms in Canning; and

Whereas Justin's love of farming began as a young boy on his parents' hog farm in North Kingston, he has developed his skills and leadership abilities with several organizations and has worked with the Nova Scotia Young Farmers Forum to develop more youth in farming; and

Whereas the Canadian Federation of Agriculture hosted a harvest banquet in Ottawa, where they recognized Justin Beck as the 2010 CFA Youth Leaders Award winner;

Therefore be it resolved that members of this House of Assembly congratulate Justin Beck for this distinguished award and wish him continued success in all future endeavours.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Bedford-Birch Cove.

RESOLUTION NO. 2583

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

Whereas the Canadian College of Acupuncture and Traditional Chinese Medicine is the first college in the Maritimes fully dedicated to teaching acupuncture and traditional Chinese medicine; and

Whereas the college, located in Bedford, offers a range of diploma and certificate courses in acupuncture and traditional Chinese medicine and strives to be amongst the best educators in this field in North America; and

Whereas the college held an open house November 27th to give the community a chance to learn more about its educational programs and also the services it offers through its student and professional clinics;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly congratulate the Canadian College of Acupuncture and Traditional Chinese Medicine for spreading these practices in the Maritimes and wish them success as they continue their education and treatment 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 Clare.

RESOLUTION NO. 2584

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

Whereas on August 21, 2010, Dr. Don Westby of Weymouth, along with his family and friends, participated in their annual 31-kilometre fundraising walk from the medical centre in Weymouth to the Tim Hortons in Meteghan; and

Whereas the first walk was with Dr. Westby's daughter, Erin, as a way to promote healthy living and to encourage physical activity, it was at Erin's suggestion that they use future walks to raise money for charity; and

Whereas the Westbys raised \$3,000 for Le Transportation de Clare Society which has recently expanded its services into Weymouth;

Therefore be it resolved that members of this House of Assembly congratulate Dr. Don Westby and his fellow walkers for the success of their fundraiser and wish them continued success as they encourage others to lead a healthy lifestyle.

[2:45 p.m.]

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 Digby-Annapolis.

RESOLUTION NO. 2585

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

Whereas Digby figure skater James Hazelton captured first place in the novice men's category at the 2011 BMO Nova Scotia sectionals competition held November 5th to November 7th in Dieppe, New Brunswick; and

Whereas the competition determines which skaters move on to the 2011 BMO Skate Canada Challenge from December 1st to December 5th in Mississauga, Ontario; and

Whereas James also competed in Octoberfest in Ontario last month, where he placed fourth overall;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House congratulate James on his skating success and wish him all the best in his future competitions.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Yarmouth.

RESOLUTION NO. 2586

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

Whereas Chez Bruno Café and Bistro provided high-quality gourmet cuisine to the community of Yarmouth; and

Whereas Chez Bruno Café and Bistro was a favourite dining destination for tourists visiting Yarmouth; and

Whereas Chez Bruno Café and Bistro had to close its doors in 2010 as a direct result of the NDP's decision to cut funding to the Yarmouth ferry;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly urge the government to recognize the Yarmouth-New England ferry as an economic driver for the province and act swiftly to support those businesses that are struggling to stay open because of the loss of the ferry.

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 Glace Bay.

RESOLUTION NO. 2587

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

Whereas there is a significant housing challenge in Glace Bay and all of Cape Breton, with close to 700 people awaiting adequate housing or paying significant amounts of their monthly incomes on rent; and

Whereas the Cape Breton Affordable Housing Renovation Partnership has developed a five-year business plan to reduce homelessness and increase the supply of affordable housing on the Island; and

Whereas the focus of the AHRP strategy is the common ground where the affordable housing demand and vacant properties intersect, creating a plan for the 800 abandoned units in our region;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House recognize the efforts of the Affordable Housing Renovation Partnership and encourage other community-minded groups to develop solutions and work with all three levels of government to solve the many social challenges we face 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.

ORDERS OF THE DAY**ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS**

MR. SPEAKER: As we go into Question Period, a couple of friendly reminders about not having electronic equipment on and, secondly, to direct all questions and answers through the Chair, please. Question Period will begin at 2:49 p.m. and will end at 3:49 p.m.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE ACT: REVIEW - REASONS

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, we all remember in 2003 when auto insurance rates were the number one issue on the mind of Nova Scotians. You will remember it was the number one issue of the election campaign in 2003. Today Nova Scotians are talking about the lack of jobs, lack of access to health care, lack of access to university, but not auto insurance. Today the government has launched a full review of the Automobile Insurance Act. My question for the Premier is, what is the real reason for conducting this review?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, the real reason is we made a commitment to do so during the campaign.

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, this government has a habit of creating a study or review to hide their true intentions. There's the O'Neill report, the Ross report, and of course, the Deloitte report and the Back to Balance consultation, which gave us a 2 per cent HST increase. The Minister of Finance has supported a public auto insurance system for years - as many members of that caucus have - and he hasn't hidden the fact. My question for the Premier is, does this review include the option of public auto insurance?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, it is designed to look at the existing auto insurance regime but it is not focused on public auto insurance.

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, the Premier said it's not focused on public auto insurance. I would ask the Premier to reassure all members of this House, and indeed all Nova Scotians, and make his views very clear to us here today. My question to the Premier is, will he assure members of this House and all Nova Scotians that public auto insurance is off the table?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, it is not part of this review.

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

LWD - LABOUR LAWS: CHANGES - PLANS

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, this is usually a government that over-consults. However, oddly, the pre-bill consultation paper on Bill No. 100, an Act to Establish a Unified Labour Board, didn't mention several key . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. As with resolutions, we can't ask questions on a bill before the House. If you can rephrase your question, I'll allow it.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, I have with me the consultation paper that was issued in July 2010, entitled Consolidation of Labour Relations Boards and Employment Tribunals in Nova Scotia, and I will table that consultation paper for the House. This consultation paper speaks only of creating a unified labour board and not of several other interesting provisions, such as the creation of a union-only labour-management review committee or successor rights for the government.

My question to the Premier is this, what other changes to the province's labour laws is your government planning, and can you assure the House today that there will be no other changes without proper consultation?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, ironically, what the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party is complaining about is the mechanism for consultation, which is the whole idea of that provision. More broadly, I suppose, the member opposite should remember that that was part of the 2009 campaign, which I think is probably the best consultation mechanism there is.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. Again, before the member asks his question, just a reminder that you cannot ask questions on a particular bill, but you can ask general questions, certainly.

The honourable Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, the consultation paper dated July 2010 did not mention all of the changes that the government was intending to make to the labour laws of the province. A true consultation is only effective if you don't deliberately omit some of the most egregious provisions that you're contemplating. This was done deliberately by this government to omit those items that it was considering. My question to the Premier is, do you agree with your minister's attempt to hide these ideas, or was she perhaps in the dark about them all along?

THE PREMIER: Pardon me, Mr. Speaker. We tried to hide them so much we put them in the bill.

MR. SPEAKER: I'm going to finish questioning on that particular one because I think it is getting close to the bill that's before the House.

The honourable member for Digby-Annapolis.

**PRINCESS OF ACADIA - REFURBISHMENT:
DISCUSSIONS - DETAILS**

MR. HAROLD THERIAULT: Mr. Speaker, I hope there's no bill before the House about the Digby ferry yet. The ferry service between Digby and Saint John generates \$40 million per year and is critical to the economic stability of Nova Scotia. Yesterday, the Premier announced he was seeking funding from the federal government to refurbish or replace one of the ferries between Caribou and Prince Edward Island. My question to the Premier is, did you discuss the refurbishment or replacement of the Princess of Acadia with the Premier of New Brunswick yesterday at the Atlantic Premiers meeting?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I can assure the member opposite that we continue to lobby for the funding of that service. It is a very important commercial one for the province and for the Province of New Brunswick. We understand that we are going to hear on the funding of this service soon.

MR. THERIAULT: Mr. Speaker, there has been a ferry service between Digby and Saint John for over 200 years. The Princess of Acadia is now nearly 40 years old, is in need of funding from both the federal and provincial governments. It is a key transportation link and tourism source for this region. My question to the Premier is, when can the people of southwestern Nova Scotia expect real action and investment for this important transportation link?

THE PREMIER: Let me begin by thanking the honourable member for the question, first of all. Secondly, I want to tell him that I agree with every single word he said in that question and thirdly, I can tell him that we continue to ask the federal government to live up to its responsibility with respect to this important commercial link.

Again, I will tell the member I am told that we should be hearing, with respect to this service, in the not-too-distant future.

MR. THERIAULT: Mr. Speaker, he's going to agree with this one, too, so I'll just ask him the question. Will you commit today to the people of southwestern Nova Scotia that you will not sit by, and to ensure this vital transportation link remains operational? Will you make that commitment today to this House?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to assure the member opposite that I will do everything I can to ensure that service is kept appropriately funded. I want to point out that this is the jurisdiction of the federal government. I think the Premier of P.E.I. said it very well yesterday when he said, we don't get called upon to fund the Department of National Defence because it is a federal jurisdiction. This is the jurisdiction of the federal government as well. They ought to live up to their responsibility.

My understanding is I'd like to see a long-term contract. We've seen a series of shorter ones. I'd like to see a long-term contract, in the order of 15 years, as was done in the past, so that if commercial investments are going to be made by people who rely on it, they can do it, knowing that it is going to be out a considerable period of time. I will tell the member that I will continue to invest every bit of energy in making sure that service is funded.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

**YARMOUTH FERRY/P.E.I.-PICTOU FERRY:
FUNDING DISCUSSIONS - DETAILS**

MR. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Atlantic Premiers announced that they would be seeking a long-term subsidy from the federal government for the ferry service between Prince Edward Island and Pictou. This ferry service, according to the Halifax ChronicleHerald, generates \$12 million in economic activity for Nova Scotians. That's good and I'm happy that the Premier is championing this issue.

The Yarmouth ferry, which could profit Nova Scotians in the amount of \$22 million, based on recession data, did not receive support from the Premier or his colleagues. My question to the Premier is, why is he so willing to champion an economic investment that generates \$12 million, but not one that generates \$22 million?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I am prepared to do everything I can to ensure that these services are kept in play and are, of course, properly funded. The difference is quite a simple one, the jurisdiction for this - this is an inter-provincial working between two Canadian jurisdictions. The responsibility for that lies with the federal government. All I'm asking is that they live up to their responsibility.

MR. CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, we appreciate that, and I'm sure the people of Pictou appreciate this Premier championing their cause, and all the people of Yarmouth want is for him to champion theirs as well. This Premier has announced that they are going to seek long-term funding but the people of Yarmouth didn't even need that, they only asked for one year of assistance from the provincial government in order to allow them to start working on a plan for a sustainable ferry service. My question to the Premier is - I've asked him before - will he table the economic analysis that led him to cut the ferry in Yarmouth and ignore the concerns of southwestern Nova Scotians?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, we're not ignoring any of the concerns. In fact, on every opportunity that I've been to Yarmouth, I've talked with the Yarmouth Industrial Commission, I've talked with local businesses. I've made it perfectly clear to them that anything I can do that would be in the nature of assisting them with a sustainable ferry service, I would be happy to do.

[3:00 p.m.]

MR. CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that commitment but I would quote the Premier from the Herald today and I'll table the article where he says, "If they don't have an assurance that the service is going to be here over the long term, then it is highly unlikely that they are going to put at risk capital that they might otherwise invest in their businesses." He's right, but where was the Premier last year when the people of Yarmouth were saying the same thing? Where is he now when the people of Yarmouth and southwestern Nova Scotia need him? Will this Premier recognize the economic importance of the Yarmouth ferry and treat it like the investment that it is for the Province of Nova Scotia?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, as I said in the past, we want to see a sustainable ferry service. That one, the one that he refers to, cost millions of dollars over a number of years. There was no participation by the Government of Maine. They were the most substantial beneficiary from that service and one of the problems was - and is - that they have made it perfectly clear that they have no interest in further funding that service. We would like to see - and I said I met with the interests in Yarmouth when I was last there - whether or not they had been able to find a service that would both meet the needs of Yarmouth and would be sustainable for the government.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester-North.

EDUC. - PC GOV'T.: TUITION INITIATIVES - STATUS

HON. KAREN CASEY: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Minister of Education. In 2006, the Education Policy Institute reported that Nova Scotia was the least affordable jurisdiction in North America in which to pursue a university degree. As a government, we found this to be totally unacceptable and made tuition reduction a priority. Tuitions were frozen for three years with an MOU with universities, a tuition reduction initiative was begun to bring tuition to the national average by 2010, student assistance was redesigned to provide up-front bursaries to students. My question to the minister is, after two budgets and 18 months of government, will the minister advise us on the status of those initiatives?

HON. MARILYN MORE: Mr. Speaker, as everyone in the House recognizes, we're in the third year of the second MOU and there are a current series of meetings happening with the universities to find out where their cost pressures are, to understand their possible revenue sources. We've had a number of consultations, we're looking at analyzing the O'Neill report, we've had meetings with student organizations. This morning I just met again with the presidents from the various universities to get some input in reaction to some of these issues. We're taking very seriously our responsibility to create an affordable quality university system in Nova Scotia and just want to assure the honourable member that we will be pursuing that to the best of our ability within the current fiscal reality. Thank you.

MS. CASEY: The last MOU with the universities was signed in 2007-08. The steering committee included two seats for student association leaders. As recently as November 24th of this year, Mark Coffin, a student leader with ANSSA, in an e-mail to the Premier stated: Elected student representatives to whom I report have been waiting patiently for over a year to hear how we will be involved in the negotiations of the next MOU. Mr. Speaker, my question through you to the minister is, will you tell students here today if the steering committee has already met to begin those negotiations and, if so, which student representatives are sitting in the pre-existing seats?

MS. MORE: Mr. Speaker, we're not at the stage of deciding on the timeline of the participants and the process of the MOU. I fully expect it to be starting in the new year. We are still doing meetings with various institutions to better understand their unique and special pressures and opportunities. We certainly have valued the input from the student representatives in the past and we will make sure they are fully informed once those decisions are made. Thank you.

MS. CASEY: Mr. Speaker, informed and involved and pre-existing seats are two different messages and I would appreciate a clarification on that - will they be part of the pre-existing seats?

MS. MORE: I was trying to explain that those decisions have not been made as to who exactly is going to be at the table and who will be involved in the MOU process and the timeline and when they're going to be reporting back. Certainly we value the input - there are many different levels and many ways for everyone to have input into this process, so we will make sure that student voices are heard. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

AGRIC. - 10-YR. PLAN: AGRIC. INDUSTRIES - TARGETS

MR. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, late last week the NDP Government finally released their 10-year plan for agriculture in Nova Scotia. However, something was missing - an actual plan with actual targets. My question to the Minister of Agriculture is, why did your 10-year plan not clearly lay out targets to meet the needs of our agricultural industries?

HON. JOHN MACDONELL: Mr. Speaker, because the plan is designed to help the industry, not drag them along.

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, it took 18 months for the NDP Government to not deliver a strategy. Last week's so-called plan was a lot of words and no action - a common thread Nova Scotians now expect from the NDP Government.

Mr. Speaker, here's the drag for the NDP Government - farms and farmers in decline, gate receipts going down, debt going up, only 9 per cent of food consumption grown and processed locally. My question to the minister is, when can farmers and producers expect true financial investment from your government?

MR. MACDONELL: Mr. Speaker, I have to say that at the meeting I was at at the federation there was none of that doom and gloom that the member offers here today. I have to say that we have been there actually over the past 18 months for the industry, which they've really appreciated, and we intend to be there well into the future.

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, it's obvious that the minister and our caucus are hearing from a different farm community - not one in Nova Scotia, for sure. No targets, no benchmarks, only a pittance for investment can only equal one thing - no plan. My question to the minister is, will it take another 18 months before our agriculture industries see real investments into their operations?

MR. MACDONELL: Mr. Speaker, we're really pleased and proud to be able to help farmers who are interested in investing. We have a number of initiatives, the Farm Loan Board probably being the largest one. I want to remind the member opposite, as I indicated at the federation, we have a strategy in place for beef producers, we've invested \$5 million for the new agriculture innovation centre - and these are initiatives that the industry recognizes as necessary to move it forward and they are very pleased with where the government is going.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants West.

AGRIC.: 10-YR. PLAN - DETAILS

MR. CHUCK PORTER: Mr. Speaker, that last comment is interesting. I've been talking to farmers since last Friday and I have yet to hear that one.

Mr. Speaker, in the long awaited agriculture strategy the NDP Government said on Page 13 that the government can provide the necessary leadership to bring the industry to the next level. It's puzzling then that the minister delivered 18 pages of glossy platitudes rather than provide the real leadership he can see is required. I found a quote in Hansard from January 2007 that's more relevant now than it was then: "They have had no plan for agriculture in this province. If the Government of Nova Scotia does not intend to provide needed competitive supports required for agriculture, they should admit it now." That timely declaration is from the Minister of Agriculture.

Mr. Speaker, my question through you is for the Minister of Agriculture, what does your glossy booklet contain that will give Nova Scotia farmers any confidence that this government intends to provide the competitive supports farmers need, how much money will the government spend, and what goals do they hope to achieve?

HON. JOHN MACDONELL: Mr. Speaker, I have to say first of all that I think it's really unfortunate that the member opposite only started talking to the agricultural community last Friday. (Interruptions)

Mr. Speaker, the agricultural sector is the private sector and when those individual entrepreneurs are interested in coming to us, we'll be there for them.

MR. PORTER: Mr. Speaker, common sense dictates that farmers are experts in their industry whose advice and opinions should be sought when a long-term strategy is being developed. In a May 15, 2008 newspaper article that I'll table, the MLA for Hants East asked a question that deserves an answer and that I will ask him through you, Mr. Speaker, why has the Minister of Agriculture not sat down with all industry representatives to discuss the issues collectively because, Mr. Speaker, I've been talking to them since I've been the critic and I know their issues. (Interruptions)

MR. MACDONELL: Mr. Speaker (Interruption) Actually the honourable member for Argyle hit the nail on the head, I do know better. (Interruptions) The previous administration had a competitive transition working group working with the department and stakeholders in the industry. They shelved what they learned from that process. We used it in our 10-year plan.

MR. PORTER: It's interesting he still calls it a plan, Mr. Speaker - there's nothing in it and the agricultural community knows it. The strategy was billed by government as a document that would improve profitability and competitiveness in the agricultural sector - hardly. Will the Minister of Agriculture point to one recommendation, one sentence in that glossy booklet of his that isn't a hollow platitude and that will actually show farmers that the government has more than flowery and pretty words?

MR. MACDONELL: I can do better than that, Mr. Speaker. I can point to all the pages between the covers of that document.

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

EDUC.: HOGG FORMULA - ENROLMENT FORMULA

MS. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Education has said she is making cuts to public education because of declining enrollment. On November 24th the minister said during Question Period: "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."

My question to the Minister of Education is, will she acknowledge the Hogg formula already takes declining enrollment into consideration?

HON. MARILYN MORE: Mr. Speaker, the Hogg formula does have a two-year cushion to allow boards a chance to respond to declining enrollment. The government certainly recognizes that students don't leave classes in schools in large enough groups to be able to make immediate cost savings but there are other aspects to the Hogg formula that compensate for that.

[3:15 p.m.]

So the formula itself is one mechanism, but certainly it requires boards to continually review where the public money that is given to them, granted to them through the provincial government can be best spent. I think everyone in this House would recognize that we want to focus on quality education for young people and if there are efficiencies to make in terms of how we deliver that, that's what we need to be looking at. Thank you.

MS. REGAN: Mr. Speaker, this minister is requiring school boards to make cuts but she hasn't said there will be cuts at the departmental level. It's important the department do more than pass the buck to school boards. My question for the Minister of Education is, what has the Department of Education cut from non-school board budgets?

MS. MORE: Mr. Speaker, the Department of Education is well into a cost reduction exercise and is prepared to do its share in getting this province back to balance. I just want to remind the honourable member that we are in the very early stages of a dialogue with school boards as to possible efficiencies, cost savings, revenue generation that is part of the planning scenario that we've asked them to look at. It's still at the stage at the level of the staff at the department and staff of the school boards.

We will continue that dialogue in a way that's respectful of the mandate of school boards, but also recognizing that every level of government and every agency and commission and department in this province has a shared responsibility to be able to protect the larger issue here and that is the basic, essential programs and services for the citizens of this province. Thank you.

MS. REGAN: Mr. Speaker, the bottom line is that Nova Scotians don't want budget cuts to be on the backs of students. Investing in students is investing in the future. My question to the Minister of Education is, why is the minister cutting on the backs of students before making comparable cuts at the department level?

MS. MORE: Mr. Speaker, I can only repeat that the department is going through the same planning scenario as other departments in every aspect of government. Certainly, it's because we value the young people in this province - and we know there are fewer and fewer of them as years go by - that we have to make sure that the public money invested in education is spent in the best way possible. We can certainly learn from other jurisdictions,

from research and best practices as to where we can have the most positive impact. It's because we care about the youth and children of this province that we are doing this in a very careful way. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester North.

EDUC. - PROGS.: CUTS - EFFECT

HON. KAREN CASEY: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Minister of Education. School boards across this province have been asked to consider cuts up to 22 per cent of their budget over the next three years. School boards are telling us that the negative impact of those cuts could include increase in class size, cuts in transportation which could mean consolidation of routes, longer bus rides and lay-offs for drivers, fewer teachers in the classroom, reduced services for student support staff, reduction or elimination of math mentors, reduction or elimination of literacy initiatives, limited or no support for autism.

My question through you Mr. Speaker to the minister is, if this government is as serious about funding cuts of this magnitude, how can the minister stand there and assure parents that the quality and programs that we currently have will continue?

HON. MARILYN MORE: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to say that many boards in this province have taken on the stewardship of public money in a very serious way and have been realigning and adjusting and contracting their system in a way that focuses more resources, more funding on the programs and services and staff who directly deal with the young people in their schools. That's exactly what we're encouraging.

We're in the very early days of this discussion. As I've explained to members before, boards are in different positions. They have different priorities reflected in their school systems, and so even the planning exercise will reflect those differences. We haven't yet received the information back from the boards and it will be very interesting to see the results. We encourage them to continue with that analysis and make sure that the information they provide to us is as practical and progressive and constructive as possible so that we can move into the next stage of discussion. Thank you.

MS. CASEY: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to hear the minister speak about stewardship of public money and the important role that school boards play in that. However, let me share this: funding to school boards includes 82.3 per cent for salaries and benefits. Additional dollars are for targeted programs that the minister states school boards must deliver. This leaves very little latitude for boards, regardless of their dedication to stewardship of public money, to make those imposed cuts. My question through you to the minister is, recognizing that boards have less than 15 per cent of their budget that is discretionary, will the minister identify the priorities she would set, dollars for salaries and benefits or dollars for programs for kids?

MS. MORE: Mr. Speaker, I would say that this exercise would be much easier if it were just reflecting my own personal priorities and philosophical beliefs, but our government believes in consulting. We recognize the mandate of another elected level of government. We will make sure that they are fully engaged in this process as we move toward more tangible results. It's very much in the discussion stage and we will make sure that they have the ability and flexibility to make decisions, if they have to make them, and to whatever extent is decided. We all, boards and provincial government, value public education in this province. We realize that we need to have the most productive, healthiest, well-informed young people that we've ever had, and we will safeguard that.

MS. CASEY: Mr. Speaker, there are some members in this House who have been involved in the education system in our province for years, from teacher to principal and to other responsibilities. In fact, there's one sitting beside the member opposite. They know the effect a 22 per cent cut will have. They know that school boards are struggling with tough decisions and they are baffled by the unreasonable request that this minister has made of them, achieving 22 per cent cuts from a budget over which they only have 15 per cent discretionary decision-making. Salaries and benefits, targeted funding, cannot be touched by the school board without the direction of the minister. My question through you to the minister is, will the minister make her position clear? Does she support wage freezes, employee lay-offs, or cuts to education programs in order to achieve that 22 per cent?

MS. MORE: Mr. Speaker, while I value the input of my colleagues in the House who have had careers in the public education system, I only have to look at myself in the mirror. Many of you realize I was the first elected woman to a school board in this province. (Applause) I served on the Dartmouth District School Board for 10 years and chaired it for much of that time. I must say, the last few months have certainly reminded me very clearly of the days of going before city council, trying to argue the need in times of declining enrollment, why we were asking for more money.

I have been in the shoes of the school board members in this province and I understand only too well the challenge of the task that they've been asked to discuss with their staff. We will work together to resolve this and to work in the best interests of the children of this province. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clare.

**SNSMR: WEYMOUTH LAND REGISTRATION OFFICE
- MOVE EXPLAIN**

HON. WAYNE GAUDET: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations seems intent on moving the Weymouth Land Registration Office away from its current location. There has been an office in Weymouth for 225 years, specifically because it is already a central location for the residents of our county. Moving this office to Digby will force residents to drive over 90 kilometres in order to access service.

Mr. Speaker, it seems that the minister is determined to put the Land Registration Office further away from most residents of the county and the people are concerned. My first question to the minister is, why is the minister determined to move this office from its current and central location and force residents to drive up to 90 kilometres to access this service?

HON. RAMONA JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, I would like to start the answer to this question by saying that very soon we will have absolutely all of the information at the Land Registration Office available digitally, it is all on-line, so that's the first part of that question, that land registration offices are a valuable part of our heritage here in Nova Scotia. We are ensuring that we are keeping land registration offices, but times are changing and we need to consolidate our services. We are looking at making a consolidated office in the area.

I thank you for the question. Times are changing and we're doing the very best we can, making sure that we are providing services for Nova Scotians.

MR. GAUDET: Mr. Speaker, people don't have easy access to on-line services like the minister seems to think. Not only that but there are many services offered at the Land Registration Office which people may not know they need to access, without speaking with a real person, face to face in the office.

This minister talks about centralizing services, but yet wants to move the Land Registration Office away from its current and central location, putting services out of reach for many residents of Clare.

Mr. Speaker, there's no bus access for the people of Clare to get to the new location in Digby. This means that people from the community will now have to drive 90 kilometres on icy roads, spend more of their money on gas and the whole process will result in a larger carbon footprint for the region. Seniors and people on low and fixed incomes will suffer as a result of this move.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the minister is, will the minister halt her department's plan to move the Land Registration Office until she has a chance to hear from the seniors, the people living on low and fixed incomes, and from the public of Digby County?

MS. JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, it's unfortunate that this member didn't have a chance to talk with one of his caucus members because I did speak today- I had a very large group from the Weymouth and surrounding area in my office today.

Mr. Speaker, I would like you to know that I listened to each person very carefully and they also listened to me and the department around our reasons. I think we had a very robust discussion around this and at the end of the discussion they brought up some points that I want to examine a little bit further. So I've put a halt on the decision for at least 30 days, while I explore this a bit further.

MR. GAUDET: Mr. Speaker, that is certainly good news for the House. I hope that after 30 days the minister will certainly again put an extension on this review.

Mr. Speaker, there has been a registry in Weymouth since 1785. This is an established office and one that is already accessible to all the residents of Digby County. It seems as if the minister did not even consider any other options before making this decision.

My question to the minister is, what other options did the minister consider before making her decision to consider moving the Weymouth Land Registration Office to Digby?

[3:30 p.m.]

MS. JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, I'm hoping that my second answer was sufficient, but I would like to also clarify the fact that we did look at Weymouth and that area. We did look at the population. We looked at the centralized service. We even looked at that building to be able to relocate the Access Centre, but it didn't meet the specifications.

As I said, I'm going to go back and have another look at the population and I'm going to look at the map and make sure that all citizens have access to Access Nova Scotia. Land Registration Offices are important, but because of the changing times, people are not accessing that service as much in a face-to-face way - but as I said, I'm going to review that and my department is very good at providing me with all of that information - which they had before, but I am looking again.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

NAT. RES.: COYOTE BOUNTY - RESULTS

MR. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, in April 2010 the NDP Government had a knee-jerk reaction when it announced its coyote pelt incentive program. Desperate to find a scientific foothold, the NDP latched on to an article - an article, not a document or a scientific report - right out of Disneyland in California, that no one in the scientific community supports. It has been proven that when a bounty is put in place, coyotes produce larger litters and reproduce more often and their populations rebound extremely quickly. My question to the Minister of Natural Resources is, what plan does the department have if this bounty causes a huge increase in the coyote population in the next few years?

HON. JOHN MACDONELL: Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure about the report the member is referring to. The one that I would use was peer review. The question around population - this pelt incentive is not designed to reduce the population significantly, so we don't expect it will grow significantly after that.

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, the report the minister referenced was not peer accepted. This program is costing Nova Scotians money and will have little or no effect on the number of coyotes in our province. In his book, *Eastern Coyotes*, Gerry Parker analyzed every state and province that has had a cull - not a single report of success. As well, the reports that pelts are being brought in from other provinces to collect the incentive, and government has no mechanism in place to stop this illegal activity.

Mr. Speaker, this program is a hasty response to a minor problem without an end date. My question for the minister is, how long will your government continue to cull and what is the budget for the coyote pelt incentive program?

MR. MACDONELL: Mr. Speaker, I'm going to try to make a point to the member opposite and to all members. There have been a number of serious aggressive incidents between coyotes and people. This incentive is not about livestock. It's not about protecting sheep or any other animals. It's about protecting people. I would have to say that I am one of the people who has said in the past that bounties don't work, and that was in regard to population control. You can find that somewhere, I'm sure. You could find it in Hansard after today. There is some evidence that leg-hold traps will cause a behavioural change in the animals left in the population that will make them more wary of people, and that is what we were hoping is going to happen.

Now, I would say that there is no risk to the population of coyotes, per se, because they are not in danger - we have lots of them - but there is a worry about people, and in particular I am worried about children. I'm putting people ahead of coyotes in this regard. (Applause)

I have some experience with coyotes; I chased one out of my field about a month ago. The issues around what would appear to be odd behaviour for these animals, that is something that, whether we can account for that or not, exists. So as much as it's possible to try to change that behaviour, that's what this project is about. It's not about population control - we take about 2,000 coyotes every year without the incentive, Mr. Speaker.

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, in 1982 the Progressive Conservative Government initiated a pelt program and cancelled it five years later. The reason, while it may be desirable to change behaviour, it simply drives up the population - the population went up from 82 to 87 during the five years of the program.

A cull on coyotes simply doesn't work, and the leg trap desire to change behaviour doesn't as well. There were numerous other methods such as better public education, removal of food sources, that the NDP Government could have used to help reduce the volume of contact humans are having with coyotes, so my question to the minister is, will the department now put those alternatives in place, consider using alternative methods before next Fall when the anticipated bounty will start again?

MR. MACDONELL: Mr. Speaker, what the member seems to miss is that the program we put forward was a four-part program - the pelt incentive was one part of it; an education program, we had a number of trappers that we selected who would be available, and they had to be people who were available at a moment's notice; and we hired a human and animal conflict person, but they won't just work on coyote conflict, it will be bears, deer and whatever. Those components have all been in place for some time. We're not sure that this program will continue for another year - we'll re-evaluate it in the Spring and we'll make a determination at that time.

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

SNSMR: MUN. CAP ASSESSMENT - CONSULTATION DEADLINE

MR. ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations.

Two days ago a meeting was held, in Grand Mira, over concerns relating to the municipal CAP assessment. The local committee was expecting 30 people to show up, yet more than 200 people showed up, a strong indicator of how the communities feel about this issue. They are concerned, scared, and very worried about their property taxes increasing and, the worse-case scenario, about being driven from their homes.

I believe there is a need to have more dialogue and discussion around the municipal CAP assessment before any plan is officially adopted by the government. My question to the minister is, will you consider extending the deadline for consultation around the municipal cap assessment so that they may do what is right for those deeply concerned about the outcome of this review?

HON. RAMONA JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for the question. Nova Scotians are wanting protection against any dramatic increases of taxation and that is why the CAP program was put in place a number of years ago. We've undertaken a review and so it's in the forefront of many people's minds and this is the time that we've been asking people to contact the government - actually, the deadline for applications or for feedback is today so I do hear what the honourable member is saying. He's asking for an increase in that time, and I want to make the honourable member feel comfortable that this process is now just actually going to begin with all of the review of all of the literature, with all of the feedback, and we're meeting - the property evaluations - with the UNSM and with the municipalities. We're not going to be making any sudden changes without appropriate research and listening to all of the stakeholders in this.

MR. MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the minister for that answer. The true issue here is that this thing has sort of been flying under the radar screen and a lot of people who are going to be affected by this didn't really understand what was taking place and just lately it has been coming to light - most of the homeowners who are around the Mira River

are saying that they were surprised to find out that this consultation process would be closed today.

The question still is, similar to what you've done for the good people of Weymouth, would you consider extending this period of time so that people who have, for whatever reason, not made representation, have an opportunity to make representation to your government?

MS. JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, I'm not going to extend the timeline because people in this province, if they have feedback that they need to give me on the CAP, they can definitely contact my office. We'll be meeting in the new year around all of these decisions so therefore we don't need to - the applications and the way we had it on-line are closing down, but people, please feel free to send a letter to me and I will definitely consider anything anyone has to say on this review.

MR. MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, again back to the minister. The position of the MLA of course is we're in favour of the CAP program because it was our government, we put it in place. We put that in place, and that is why I'm here today making sure that it stays in place, if we can. (Interruption)

The Premier is saying I should talk to my councillor. The Premier should realize that we represent the people of Nova Scotia, not just the councillors, and it's the people of Nova Scotia who want to have an extension of time so that their opinion can be heard. If the Premier is such a fair individual, which I believe he is, he . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order. Order, please. Your question please?

MR. MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, you're right. I got caught up in the rabbit tracks. (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Order. Order. The honorable member for Cape Breton West has the floor.

MR. MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, the long and the short of it is the minister has said that she's willing to listen to people longer. We would ask, would you consider meeting with a group from this group that met on Sunday, in Halifax, so they can express to you their concerns prior to the new year?

MS. JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, you've heard me on this floor say that I'm willing to meet with groups in Nova Scotia. I know that this CAP review is very sensitive and it's not that I don't want to meet with people, but if I met with this group I know there are many other groups.

I would appreciate spending some time with the honourable member to hear what that group had to say, and their feelings, and hearing from the group, and that would save the opportunity for another time on another issue that I would be willing to meet with people.

I want to stand here and say that this is a program that is under review. We are listening to everyone. We're listening to the municipalities, we're listening to businesses, we're listening to the citizens of Nova Scotia and we are going to be making the right decisions for Nova Scotians.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston.

SNSMR: SUBURBAN PRIORITIES TEAM - ISSUES

HON. KEITH COLWELL: Mr. Speaker, last week the Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations announced the creation of her very own Suburban Priorities Team. This group of NDP backbenchers has missed the point altogether. Our caucus has already brought some real concerns to this government such as safe neighbourhoods, access to health care, quality of education, public transit, access to clean water, violence on the streets, taxation issues, and the struggle to do business in a province that has forgotten about economic development.

With all these important issues, the backbench team came up with fantastic things like clotheslines, yielding to buses, and solar panels. Will the minister tell Nova Scotians when she plans to address the pressing concerns that will have real effects on Nova Scotians?

[3:45 p.m.]

MS. JENNEX: I'm trying to tease the question out of that. If you don't mind, could I have a more succinct question?

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston, can you rephrase your question?

MR. COLWELL: Mr. Speaker, the question was pretty obvious. The question was, what real effects are the minister and the government going to provide to Nova Scotians, instead of these frivolous activities that the backbenchers are involved with?

MS. JENNEX: I'm not making light, I just really didn't understand the question and thank you very much, I think I understand the essence of what you want me to answer. Our team is exploring all options and issues that are coming before them, to make life better for people in the suburbs. We are looking at areas that are growing very quickly and dramatically, so if the honourable member would like to meet with me we could go over the issues. We can take those forward (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Order. Order, please.

MS. JENNEX: When answering a question, I am making sure that I am answering in an honest way. We want to work together to make sure that we provide the best possible opportunities for Nova Scotians. If he has issues that we can work on, I would like to see that and we'll definitely bring that to the team.

MR. COLWELL: Mr. Speaker, I indeed have many questions I will address with the minister, but in the meantime this team has done nothing more but make up work, a make-work project for restless backbenchers. Public transit is an issue that all municipalities are struggling with. HRM has the lowest per capita funding for transit in the whole country, but the suburban backbenchers have set their own priorities, yielding to buses.

Mr. Speaker, Nova Scotians need real action from this government and not make-work projects for restless backbenchers. Will the minister put together other make-work projects for restless NDP backbenchers such as a rural priorities team or an urban priorities team?

MS. JENNEX: One of the things I like to pride myself on is listening and taking action. It was brought to my attention a number of months ago that we have towns in the province - well it is obvious that some of our towns are struggling, and it was brought to my attention that we really need to focus on things that we can do to support our towns.

I'd like to say that I announced at the UNSM conference that we have struck a Towns Task Force, and they are working through the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities. We have a chairman, and we are working to make sure that we can find ways that we can explore issues that small towns and towns in Nova Scotia have, so that they remain viable.

Many towns have similar issues and some towns have issues that are completely unrelated to others. It is not going to be a one-size-fits-all, that's why we need a Towns Task Force, to find out the best things we can do for small towns and towns in Nova Scotia. (Applause)

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

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, would you please call the order of business, Public Bills for Second Reading.

PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 114.

Bill No. 114 - Anti-idling Act.

MR. SPEAKER: I believe the honourable member for Argyle was speaking, and I'll have to check on your time.

The honourable member for Argyle.

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, I will not be taking the full hour, but I will try to reiterate what I was talking about last night in regard to Bill No. 114, the Anti-idling Act. Really what I was trying to get to last night is sort of the spin of this bill, of it not actually doing what it should be doing. Anti-idling can go into a whole bunch of different aspects, whether it is the idling of buses, whether it's the idling of trucks, whether it's idling as you're sitting at Tim Hortons waiting for your coffee, there should be things that we should grab onto, things with more meat that we can sink our teeth into. It's very important that we truly rethink this one, one that we can really support as being a true anti-idling bill.

Mr. Speaker, in The ChronicleHerald this morning (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. There's a bit too much chatter in the Chamber. I would ask members if they have private conversations, take them outside, please, it's hard to hear the member who's speaking.

The honourable member for Argyle.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again, there was an article in The ChronicleHerald this morning, in the opinion section, and I thought it was very apropos, very to the point of what we were trying to convey last night. I know the Liberal Party was trying to convey it, we conveyed it, that there are much more important things to be talking about than the anti-idling bill that is before the House and, like I said, if it was a more substantial bill then, of course, it would warrant the discussion and it would warrant the support of all members of this House.

Mr. Speaker, I thought it was very good and really the end of it - and I'll table this as soon as I'm done with it - I mean there are a number of really good things, but the final comment in it really says, "If governments really wanted to grab the idling problem by the horns, they would ban drive-thrus. But then again, they'd be marched out of office." So what it really says is that there needs to be some substantial issues - and as soon as I finish reading it, I'll table it - there should really be more substantial things than what we're talking about

in this bill, this bill is simply doing things that are already being done by government, whether it be our school boards, whether it be government organizations or departments.

Mr. Speaker, the Chignecto-Central Regional School Board, for example, has invested in a pre-warming system for its fleet of buses, ensuring that the diesel engines aren't kept running until they reach their optimal temperature. As for idling in school zones, the Environment Minister, and I can't say the name, couldn't pinpoint a single school where this was allowed.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think it's the minister who doesn't quite understand the fullness, or the lack of fullness in his bill, nor does he understand that, really, we should be bringing something of a lot more substance forward to this. The article in *The ChronicleHerald* also says, "Not only is this initiative toothless, it is largely useless." Those aren't my words, these are words of the editorial board at *The ChronicleHerald*. "Its intended targets, for the most part, either have their own anti-idling policies or are moving in that direction."

Mr. Speaker, we could be spending time on talking about *The Cat* that is now idling somewhere else in this world rather than at the wharf in Yarmouth, supporting the tourist industry in southwestern Nova Scotia. We could talk about the non-idling cars that are sitting in people's driveways who no longer have employment since this government has been in power. We could be talking about a whole bunch of other things that are important to Nova Scotians, but this government decided that this was an important part of its legislative agenda and, therefore, has a bill that does nothing. Previously we had bills in this House that really said nothing as well and we have taken it to task that these are bills that could have, should have, would have, come forward in a different manner, should have come forward in an energy bill, you know, put two or three of these together and you would have had something.

Mr. Speaker singly, a clothesline bill; or singly, an anti-idling bill; or singly - gosh, I know the member for Richmond was talking the other day of the two clauses and 60-word bill that was before the House, we could have put a justice piece into it but, you know, that is not the road that this government took when it came to its legislative agenda. It's throwing little, tiny pieces of legislation forward to the House for discussion, thinking that maybe we as Opposition Parties would roll over and not discuss them, but we as Opposition Parties have the right to bring these things forward, to question why they are here, not just the proposal that is before us.

Why is Bill No. 114 here? I can answer that really quickly. The reason it's here is because there was nothing else to talk about. The creativity that had been touted by this government, by this Party, during the last election has not shown its face, it has not shown up. There is no creativity here.

What this really looks like is that either the department, or the member for Halifax Chebucto - or I don't know who - said this might be a good idea, let's put it forward without any real thought of how it's going to be received by the Legislature or how it's going to be

received by Nova Scotians. By the admittance of this editorial in The ChronicleHerald, it really has absolutely no merit. So it's not just us thinking that, there are other Nova Scotians who have this very same thought.

We have a lot of things to discuss in this House as we roll around, and I do sit on the Law Amendments Committee and I'm going to have to find my way over there, because we will be talking about a number of other bills that are important to this House, to make sure that we have the right answers.

I think what I'm going to do is look forward to seeing this bill move on. I don't think there is any way that we can necessarily stop the moving of this bill. It's going to eventually have the majority rule by the governing NDP Government, they do have the majority of seats in this House, so regardless of what our vote is going to be on this one, it is going to pass its way forward to the Committee on Law Amendments.

I'm going to look forward to seeing it again in the Committee on Law Amendments and seeing it discussed. Maybe we can bring some good amendments to this, one that is going to give it some more teeth, it's going to give it some more meat, rather than just the fine words, the little words that are felt in it. We should be talking about it. I know the member for Cape Breton North talked a lot about Holy Angels in his dissertation on that. Those are the things we should be talking about, not Bill No. 114. We should be talking about The Cat ferry. We should be talking about all these other things except Bill No. 114.

I know the member for Cape Breton North would really love to go again. I think he expressed it so well in his speech last night. He had a great smile but he was impassioned on his support of - not the bill, because the bill is nothing. He was talking to the people of his constituency and what their thoughts were of Bill No. 114, of his area and what it is for Bill No. 114 and what people will be saying back in his community of Bill No. 114.

I don't know, maybe the Minister of Finance doesn't understand Cape Breton, but I look at Cape Breton as being a unified place. Maybe we have a number of different MLAs but, boy, gosh, they work well together and they're all in one area, so I know the Minister of Finance is throwing some rabbit tracks before me, but I'm more than happy to talk to them and take my time because I know I probably still have a good half-hour to 40 minutes to discuss this.

So, Mr. Speaker - M. le Président, je suis plus qu'acceptant de faire un discours en français, si j'ai besoin, mais sur celui-ci, je n'ai pas besoin de faire une discussion sur le projet de Loi No. 114.

I'll save the rest for you, Mr. Speaker, because I know you'd have to follow the Minister of Finance in this particular case to ensure - and that would be a wonderful discussion, as well, to talk in the House about simultaneous translation when we're able to do it.

Bill No. 114, our feeling is that it doesn't have a lot to offer and we should be talking about more important things. (Interruption) It doesn't have anything to offer at all.

Mr. Speaker, I'll take my seat because I've got time to spend in the Law Amendments Committee.

[4:00 p.m.]

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

MS. DIANA WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, I was pleased to say a few words today on Bill No. 114, which seems to be a bill that requires a policy, it says on the - for the Government of Nova Scotia and public passenger vehicles.

When we looked at this bill, again, this is something that did not require a piece of legislation here in the House. One of the recent bills that I had spoken on, very similar to that, was the Police Act changes coming under the Department of Justice, which really called for a small, little policy change from the Department of Justice directive to the police forces of Nova Scotia. Again, something that could have been done easily within the powers of the Justice Minister, to simply send a note to the police departments and say, this is a directive from my office. Here again we have an entire bill that even says in its title that it's a bill to require an anti-idling policy. It's almost ludicrous, really, that we're at a point where we're looking at ideas and changes to our province that are so trifling.

Now idling is not trifling, and that's something you could deal with without any hours of debate, without putting it through three readings, without going to the Law Amendments Committee, because there is widespread support among the public that we curb idling, that we not add to greenhouse gases, that we not waste government resources in terms of wasted gas and so on from our fleets sitting around idling and disturbing neighbourhoods with the noise and the pollution. We accept that, that of course the public knows it's the wrong thing to do. As has been pointed out, schools in particular have taken a lead on this, but schools across the province have made anti-idling rules on their own properties and around the school for over the last 10 years.

We had a letter, actually received today, from a school in the Valley, from a teacher who said that 10 years ago they had addressed this issue at their school. We know there's been a movement afoot that was begun by a young girl in the metro area who started one, which is the car-free idling zones around schools. Almost every school I can think of has adopted that, right up to the school board level, when it became so popular that they agreed that absolutely, you should not be sitting in front of a school idling and basically creating pollution and foul air for the kids in that school. In fact, in the past sometimes cars would idle right near the intake valves where clean air is supposed to be brought into the school and, of course, create health and safety issues within that school for the students and the teachers and staff.

This is something that is well established and well accepted by the public, so we have no problem with the idea that you want to curb idling. Of course the government should have a stance and should have - years ago, in fact - told the operators of their fleet and the operators of government-owned vehicles that we don't tolerate idling and that they are to curb that, to make sure there is a time limit on how long they can run their buses or their trucks and so on. We know there are many vehicles operated by the Province of Nova Scotia, so that should have been done.

The very fact that we are here having any debate and any discussion from each Party speaking about how they feel on this bill, it just really does fly in the face of good governance, Mr. Speaker, because good governance would have been that you saw a problem and you made a policy change and it was enacted, just acted upon. You don't need to come here for something like this because this is already accepted by the public and accepted by members of the Opposition. This is a very immaterial bill, as it stands.

As it stands, according to this bill, it's not even that there is a policy available now. It gives you another year to come up with a new policy that you put in place for all of your fleets. I guess it will cover a few that are in the private sector, if they are running transit vehicles and things like that. So there are a little bit of other groups that will be captured in this.

As the previous member who was just speaking - the member for Argyle - actually drew our attention to today's editorial in the newspaper, which does in fact say this is unnecessary and not very important. In fact, the title of that is "Redundant Legislation." That's a little bit nicer than my saying it is ludicrous or it is trifling, but it is redundant because it is very tiny and it is something that one of those ministers over there could have easily ordered. I don't know which one, but one of the ministers has the power to do that - probably Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal, because he covers Environment as well and he has lots of cars in his fleet, lots of trucks on the road.

We feel that in so many ways the legislation before us in this session - and I am referring directly to Bill No. 114 - that so many of these bills are of a very minor nature and that the issues before us on the environmental front or on air pollution, on the husbanding of our resources - you know if you idle a car, you use up a tremendous amount of gas and those vehicles have to be filled up again. We know that causes greenhouse gases. We know it's a declining resource. We know the cost of petroleum is rising. There are at least those three wonderful reasons to curb idling right there.

Yet here we are with a bill that isn't addressing a major overhaul of anything. It's such a tiny part of the concerns before us and could have been dealt with much more expeditiously. That's really what we're saying. Where ministers have powers that are granted in their Acts they should be using those powers and not bringing a lot of legislation here which takes our eye off the bigger issues that are before us. I think that having a Suburban Priorities Team that is going to work on issues, as we seem to have, is just dandy,

but the issues that have come from that team - if in fact this is one of them - are not exclusive to suburbs or cities or rural Nova Scotia, they're important to everybody.

They're certainly important in the heart of the city just as much as they are in the outlying areas of any one of our towns and cities. It seems to me that we're off track here in this session of the Legislature. I know that we will be able to add up a list of these bills that have been one and two clauses, that once you get past the definitions - I thought this one was actually a little longer because it did actually go for one line onto the second page. But when you look at it, it's all definitions.

The large part of it is just defining exactly what is a public passenger vehicle and what does a tour bus mean and so on. That can run into a few words. We were actually able to get beyond the first page, barely. There is so little meat on the bones here that it invites members of the Opposition to go into flights of fancy, as I understand we had a bit of last night, to speak about many other issues that are far more pressing to us in our communities.

What I'd like to see is that this would have been done - that we would have had an announcement that it was done - not that we would go through a legislative process that isn't necessary. I'll go so far as to suggest that what we're seeing here today in this whole session with these minor bills is really a government that spent so much time in Opposition with little one-clause bills, making their small points through the only tool they had available. They were very adept at using the few tools they had available in Opposition. One of those tools is a Private Member's Bill. That's a way for us to say, you're not acting on something and we'd like you to look at it.

That's why in Opposition we might add small bills forward that are of a single nature. We don't have the resources in Opposition to do all of the full-blown work that would be involved in overhauling a complete Act. We might pick a tiny or a small piece of it and say, that's something we think you should address. I've done that on a number of occasions with residential tenancies and other issues where I didn't have the resources to say how we would overhaul the entire Residential Tenancies Act, but I knew there were problems with it and that we needed to address them. I brought up the problems that had come up in my community about them.

When you're in government and you have entire departments at your disposal and a large number of policy and legal people and researchers, you have the resources to do substantive bills. Over here in Opposition, we're looking for those bills. We want to see where the brain trust is, where the ideas are, how you're going to mould or change this province; it's not obvious from the now-lengthening list of small and almost immaterial suggestions coming from government.

Frankly, I'm disappointed, and I know there are a lot of Nova Scotians who are disappointed by those kinds of behaviour, that the government, who have now had more than a year to get settled and understand your resources and understand the power of your ministries and staff, are still bringing forward such small and insignificant ideas that you

should have taken the pen and written a letter and sent out the directive to the people under you and it would have been done. These are not things that Opposition are going to object to, clearly. Again, the minister is over there often saying in Question Period, well call me and we'll work with you, have a meeting, give us a call, your job in Opposition is to call the ministers. Well, by the same token, you can call us. You would know there's no objection to a law that would create a policy that hopefully would decrease idling in our province. There's nothing that is going to be objectionable in this Bill No. 114.

If you were concerned about it needing this legislative authority, I think that could have been determined very quickly, that it could be done with our blessing and the Opposition would have said, that's good, go ahead do it and the sooner the better. That's what I would have said and I know our Environment Critic would have said, do it. It's a good thing companies are ahead of us, bus companies are ahead of us. As the editorial said today in the paper, Metro Transit already had a policy to tell their drivers not to idle for more than three minutes. The actual riders on Metro Transit have been known to report drivers who are idling beyond that.

I know in my neighbourhood there's some controversy around where they're going to place the next bus terminal. They're replacing the Lacewood terminal, they want more room. The controversy has been around putting it too close to residential homes and apartments because of the air quality. One of the complaints has been the fact that those big buses will be in there idling and fouling the air around there. This is close particularly to apartment buildings, the site that's being looked at now and that means a lot of people could be impacted.

My point is that we know that Metro Transit's answer was, we have an anti-idling policy so don't worry, we're going to still put it near your apartments and homes but we will be cognizant of the impact of idling and we've told our drivers they're not to idle for any length of time. It was mentioned again in the editorial today that the Chignecto-Central Regional School Board put in a policy. They, in fact, invested in a pre-warming system for its fleet of buses so that the buses would not have to idle, each individually idling for a long time to warm up. They put money behind their suggestion.

Really, when we're talking about idling, as I said, we should give hats off to the school boards and the individual schools and the students that have made this an issue around the province. I think they've done a tremendous job in educating their families, educating their parents.

I would also say we should look as well to Kings County that brought in not only an anti-idling but actually had some restrictions on drive-throughs. I know they're a smaller county. It would have affected some businesses but I think that they took it a step further. Although one of our previous speakers from the Progressive Conservative caucus suggested it would be almost a sacrilege to look at drive-throughs, I think Nova Scotians are further ahead than many members of the Legislature. I think that a lot of people, although they use drive-throughs, would understand why it is not healthy. It's a waste of resources, it's bad for

the environment, it's bad for greenhouse gases, it's bad for our waistlines. If I can go back to my Health portfolio - which I am the critic for - we need to be active, we need to move and sitting in our cars and going through drive-throughs is not the way we're going to achieve that.

I would suggest that we need as many measures as we can that keep people moving around and using our faculties because if we don't keep ourselves fit, we know darn well the health system can't afford the coming cost of aging Nova Scotians and the large number of seniors that are coming along that are not getting adequate amounts of exercise. Just last night in my community, I had a town hall meeting on wellness. I think this subject of Bill No. 114 would have fit in very nicely in that town hall meeting because we were talking about ways to keep people a little bit more active, a little bit more fit and we talked a lot about the opportunities in our own neighbourhoods. In Clayton Park we're very lucky that we have the new Canada Games Centre about to open. But a lot of the discussion was centred around the Heart and Stroke Foundation who talked about simply getting out and walking and using our faculties and our abilities before you lose them.

[4:15 p.m.]

I think that there is something to be said for the councillors of Kings County who took a very bold move. At least when you put a bold move on the table, there's something to discuss but with this Bill No. 114 there is nothing bold or interesting that really deserves a great deal of debate.

Of course, the members in government will know that when you put a bill before us, it does invite us to speak on other areas that we think are very important, both to say that we support elements of a bill, but also to point out related elements that are not being acted on, or things that have been missed. An omission is something we're seeing a lot of when we're looking at one-clause bills and bills with very little meat in them, quite frankly.

I'm quite sure that anybody who has been around the Legislature for long would attest that I don't think we've seen another session with such small bills, one-clause bills, moving their way through. They can't even be called housekeeping. We are used to a lot of housekeeping bills. I know when the Tories were in a minority situation, for the first six years that I sat in the House, Mr. Speaker, we did see a lot of that because again, in a minority situation, you don't want to have a lot of controversy and you're trying very hard to steer a course that's not going to topple your government. So there were definitely many years of cautious legislation in an attempt to get more support and to make little small changes that would cause nobody any problems. That was really what we were seeing for that period of time - a cautious, steady-as-she-goes government.

Now we have a majority government and we're seeing bills that don't even need to be legislation. This has got to be nothing more than a number count. I'm just looking forward to that press release that comes out from the government, patting yourselves on the back for passing a whole bunch of bills that didn't even need to be brought here, that you

could have done in any month of the year, on your own, through your ministries and also announce them and counted them as a success. Bill No. 114, if we ever get that policy - hopefully it won't take until next October - but if we get the policy in place, I'm sure that will be a positive thing for our province.

I would just say to you, why don't we have a policy already? It's the job of the departments to do that. It's the job of government to see that we're acting responsibly and that your fleet of vehicles is being run as economically and in as healthy a way as possible, so why are we even here today, allowing this to take time as it works its way through the Legislature? Why isn't somebody, right now, writing that policy? Why isn't it out there in the public and in the hands of the people who are running your vehicles and fleets? That's really what I think, Mr. Speaker. I think that this is, in many ways, just vexatious, almost, taking the time of the Legislature to look at bills that do not have the substance that should be here in front of the Legislature, that are not going to change the course of our success as a province.

The thing that we're looking for is, where are the changes that are going to strengthen our province? Why aren't we debating those kinds of things that are going to make us a stronger, more prosperous province to live in? That is exactly what I know all of us have come here for, to try and make a difference. I think that these things are things that any minister would be responsible for and should have had in place to begin with.

Mr. Speaker, I think there are other ways the government could be helping, in terms of the environment and in terms of the fleet of vehicles they have. I had taken the opportunity of writing to the Minister of Finance about one idea that I think has more merit and would probably relate to the use of vehicles and how much cost there is involved in that, in both the ownership and the operation of vehicles. That idea was the CareShareHFX, which has been recognized several times. It is a new company in the last couple of years. The owner and entrepreneur who started that has been recognized here by - I won't say his name - by the member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island and by myself.

Last year the woman who started that company, Pam Cooley, won a Halifax Business Award as the best startup company. She has been recognized this year by the Canadian Progress Club as one of the Women of Excellence Award recipients for this year and again for her work, which is both environmental and entrepreneurial. She took an idea that has been successful in other cities, like Vancouver, and American cities of Seattle and so on, and has brought that idea to Nova Scotia.

Her difficulty is that the Government of Nova Scotia, when we tender for vehicles that we want to use in our fleets, like we will be having a policy for in Bill No. 114 - those vehicle tenders are to either purchase new vehicles or they are to rent vehicles, so we have car rental contracts and I guess, I think they go on a list, a preferred list, of companies we would go to, but we don't have a category that would address a company that's new and innovative like CarShareHFX.

I don't know if you're aware of it, about what that exactly is about, but that is an organization that a group like Capital Health, for example, could join and then their employees are able to go and access a vehicle that's parked nearby in a handy location and they share it with other users. You book the use of that vehicle and you pay an annual fee to belong and an hourly fee to use it, but you don't pay insurance, you don't pay the gasoline costs, you don't pay maintenance or repairs. It's ready to roll when you step into it. I think there would be a real benefit to the Province of Nova Scotia, at least in some of our uses and in some of our departments, to be a part of that, a supporter really, to join that. Because it's a membership-based concept, we should be members.

I think it's a financial issue as much as it is an environmental issue and that's why I wrote to the Minister of Finance because he is the neighbouring MLA to my riding. I knew that he would appreciate the benefit of this because I believe he was the first of our members to have a hybrid and to recognize the value of social responsibility when it comes to driving and the kind of cars we drive. So, Mr. Speaker, I felt he would be receptive not only on an environmental level but also on a financial level because if this can save the Province of Nova Scotia money, that's a pretty significant thing.

Now, right now this anti-idling bill, this may save us some money but why aren't we already doing it? The money we would be saving here would be the gas that's going up, just burning up and causing greenhouse gases, not carrying anybody anywhere and there is a cost to that. So this should have been done already if we're serious about saving money. The Minister of Finance might look at how else we can save money by perhaps decreasing our fleet and making use of what is an innovative concept that has taken root in other cities with the support of municipal, provincial, and other levels of government that can actually subscribe to it and become members and support it.

I don't believe that we are doing that here in Nova Scotia. Now, it has been some months since I spoke to the owner of CarShareHFX so maybe things have loosened up. Perhaps there has been a little bit more receptiveness but I do know that the tendering process was a problem and it's because there is no category in which they can sort of add their name and say, include us, consider us in that. I noticed the Minister of Environment is very interested in this too and I can see why - I hope that you received the correspondence from the Minister of Finance because I was told that it was sent to you instead. I believe it's of interest to both ministries, I honestly do, and I think that we could all play a role by looking at where our fleets could be minimized, or decreased, and how we could just even give this a try.

Now, that would be something innovative if we could help some new concept in car ownership go forward in our province I know that there would be a demand for that in my own riding and that people would want to subscribe to that. In my riding we have high density and a lot of people living in a fairly close area to each other, and I know there would be enough people who would subscribe to that, that we could actually support some of those cars in Clayton Park. We have the most highly densely populated riding in the entire province in the Clayton Park area but when I approached the owner of CarShareHFX, I was

told they have to get a good founding and a good foothold in their current area which is the peninsula. That's certainly in the backyard of where most of our government business is taking place.

So, Mr. Speaker, I only mention that because that would have a more material impact in this province and, again, it doesn't require a bill. I would like to caution the government, they don't need a bill to do this. They just need a will to sit down and pay attention, just pay attention to some of the opportunities that are there that are small. Not everything that is small is immaterial. Sometimes it can be small and significant. I'm saying why don't you look at those things, why don't you try to champion those things rather than being about 10 years behind the school boards of the province, and individual boards certainly. The Valley board, I said, had schools that were 10 years ahead of us on this measure. Rather than being a follower and way behind the trend, why not get out ahead of some of these things, show us some of that zeal that might have been a little more evident when you were here in Opposition. I think the zeal has gone out of you. It's gone. (Interruption) It's idling. That's right.

We are looking for something with a little bit more substance, that we could say, yes, we're on a track where Nova Scotia's doing some new things, supporting and partnering with innovative entrepreneurs, people who are willing to take a chance on our province. Where the government could make a difference is by maybe changing some of those habits you have around the size of the fleet, the type of vehicles we're running, why we own the vehicles we own, and looking to see whether there's a way to substitute that or reduce that. That would be part of decreasing the government's footprint as well.

I would say let's see some of those bigger ideas coming forward. In the meantime, I can be pretty sure - I guess I shouldn't presume, but I can't imagine a bill like Bill No. 114 is going to create much interest at the Law Amendments Committee. But again, nobody objects to Bill No. 114. We just think, why haven't you already done it? Why is it here before us today? The idea of curbing idling anywhere with our public vehicles, our transit vehicles and so on, should have already been done. As we can see from today's editorial in The ChronicleHerald, they found the examples of where it already is done.

I would just say that this is, again, a bill that is very, very much behind and slow to react to public action. I don't really see why we have before us a bill that is going to take time as it works its way through. I just want to remind the government that this will be included in our list of bills that are not going to make any real difference in Nova Scotia. Thank you very much.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Digby-Annapolis on an introduction.

MR. HAROLD THERIAULT: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Halifax Clayton Park too. I didn't want to disturb her, she was on quite a roll there, it was good.

I'd like to bring the members' attention to the west gallery. There's a person up there who has put up with me for 38 years. I don't know whether you'd want to give her a warm welcome or your deepest sympathy, but I would like for you all to meet my wife and give her wonderful applause. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. We always welcome family members here, always glad to see them, for sure.

The honourable member for Kings West.

MR. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I'm sure the honourable member for Digby-Annapolis had his wife come to town, the first lobsters are on the dock by now - maybe we're looking forward to lobsters here later today.

Anyway, I'm pleased to stand and speak to Bill No. 114. As we know, it's an easy bill to support, but it's unfortunate in many ways that we have to take time in the House to deal with a bill. We have areas of the province that are literally miles ahead when it comes to anti-idling. We have school boards that have had this policy now. As a school administrator, I was actually asked 10 years ago - 10 years ago we had anti-idling at our school. Sometimes I would be asked by the bus director for the board to just step outside occasionally, run a check and make sure all the buses are turned off while they're waiting for students.

This is a bill that has less and less relevance to today. In fact, what the Minister of Environment should have really been doing is sending out good, solid, educational information to all the boards that perhaps don't practice as strongly as AVRSB, to companies that have large numbers of employees, to the whole range of government departments. This would have been a real good directive coming from the Minister of Environment.

[4:30 p.m.]

I was hoping for more significant announcements from the NDP around environmental issues. In fact, it was just on the weekend that I heard from a constituent of the member for Kings North. He said, much as I've said so far, that this should have been a directive, this should have simply been a common-sense theme that should be constantly there, constantly reminded and, of course, I was delighted to see that yes, for 18 months the NDP Government has been on idle because he did sign-off "ex-NDP'er", so he is very dissatisfied with the way the environmental issues have been handled by this government. In fact we know the Town of Wolfville, Kings County generally, in fact Councillor Wayne Atwater has talked about this, he has led a charge even at Tim Hortons.

Now Tim Hortons is a place where it's hard to get people not to idle their vehicles but it's amazing, with a little promotion, get out there in the newspaper, get in the media about the benefits of not idling your car, in relation to a cleaner local environment - but again, the savings, and the minister is right, there are savings here on fuel, in fact there are

savings in terms of reduction of carbon into the atmosphere, the things that all citizens need to be cognizant of.

This is one of those areas that I think from time to time we miss a golden opportunity to put a simple little statement to promote anti-idling in the Nova Scotia Power bills. You know the Nova Scotia Power bill goes out to 455,000 people each month or every other month, depending on the program that you are enrolled in. There's a great opportunity to promote real, significant advances, whether it is on idling, energy conservation. I like to see that kind of thing done, it can be done once a year, or a couple of times a year, to get a central message out.

Now I was hoping that in the first 18 months of the NDP term that we'd see something significant around public transit, because again, I know, in the Annapolis Valley, the kind of advances that Kings Transit has made. They have done a marvellous job in running the service from the eastern part of the county, in fact down into Digby County. I know how significant it is for the call centre in Cornwallis, rather than have another 50 vehicles going in there every day, Kings Transit pulls in. They make several runs a day, because of the staggered nature of the shifts that go on at that plant.

Now transit can improve right across Nova Scotia but we know, in fact we're hearing there has been some slippage here in the HRM. This is an area where again, with a few initiatives from government, we can see some uptake and increase ridership, keep some of the vehicles off the road so they won't even have to worry about not idling.

As an educator, I'd like to see a stronger educative piece around this issue with young Nova Scotians. Through our education system, there are ways to get this message out that can be cemented for the next generation, when you have roughly 133,000 students in our system to find ways that we can speak to them about the importance of not idling a vehicle. I think those messages become imprinted, they become part of the way they will exercise, especially those who are in senior high because really now from Grade 10 on, there are students with their licences and they can start good practices in their communities.

I think some of real opportunity around this particular issue, while it may be seen by some as not that significant, I see it as significant but I see it as not needing a bill to come before the Legislature. In fact, we can promote good policy out of our departments without having to bring it to the Legislature.

Here we are talking about reducing idling in Nova Scotia at all kinds of sites and yet we're going to allow a constant level of mercury emissions for the next four years, all done, of course, in the name of saying we're going to keep power rates down. Well, you know, 7.5 per cent increase coming in January doesn't sound like we've achieved very much in that regard. We're also going to get the mercury emissions spewing from Point Aconi and Lingan. Again, this is not what a traditional NDP Government would be working towards. This is not the kind of environmental goals that I often heard expounded when they were on this side of the House.

This bill really comes at, I think, a very poor time as well. It's a little better than the Clothesline Bill because that was done as an act of appeasement, but at the same time we have some monumental issues in our province that we should be addressing here in the House. When you get a report like one of the ones we had last week, which talked about 14,000 children in Nova Scotia who live in poverty, we should be really literally going around asking all 52 members, what are some measures that can be taken to reduce poverty with that many children in our province? It's a huge issue. I know what poverty does to children. I had them there in front of me for almost 30 years.

We haven't made the kind of strides that we had expected from this government. Before they took government, in fact, I was in rallies with many of my NDP friends in the Valley as part of a public awareness, a public education, especially in Berwick where we've had a very strong movement for about 12 years now with the Feed My Lambs program. That's the kind of thing that we're not seeing translated now on the larger stage, some good initiatives that take place at the local level.

I think when we look at a time when jobs aren't being lost by five or 10, they're being lost by 100, 200, 300 and so forth, I think the idling bill is pretty small stuff - a small important step, but pretty small in relation to the kind of major issues that we face here in our province.

I think there are probably a couple of others who may like to speak to this bill and perhaps the minister will decide on doing more on public policy. This bill will, of course, pass through the Legislature, but again, without a strong education component, it's not going to have the real value that the intent is here, and there are already great models that exist across Nova Scotia. We need to look at the model communities, the model school boards, the model industries, the model businesses, and say we're going to have them as the leaders to institute a province-wide anti-idling program.

With those few words, Mr. Speaker, I will take my place.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston.

HON. KEITH COLWELL: Mr. Speaker, I'm going to be very brief with my remarks on this topic. It's a very important topic, and like my honourable colleagues have said before me, this is not an issue that really had to come to the Legislature in the form of a bill. The Premier and his Cabinet could very easily issue a directive to all government employees to not idle their vehicles. It's that simple. It could be done any day, and we'll move it forward and put some penalties in place for staff who don't follow through, but I don't think penalties would be necessary. I think that the staff and the employees who work for the civil service are very aware of the environment and, indeed, with even a suggestion from the government that that's policy and we would like to move forward, that they would do that. I have great faith in the civil service we have in this province and I know they have the best interests of Nova Scotians at heart.

It's so simple to change this. We've spent a lot of time debating a bill here that really doesn't do anything. It's another bill to rack up the count for the NDP, to make sure they get more bills than I don't know who, but they rack these bills up and indeed, it's a bill. If they're going to put legislation in place, make it a law for everybody so you don't idle and hopefully people will stop idling their vehicles more and more.

I know at a recent traffic stop at a construction site here this summer, I was stopped for quite awhile while the traffic was moving from the other direction. I immediately shut my vehicle off, as I do all the time at a site like that, but I noticed all the cars ahead of me and behind me that I could see did the same thing, and did it almost as soon as they stopped. I think that's an indication of where Nova Scotians are thinking and moving forward and I would encourage anyone out there to shut their vehicle off if they possibly can and stop the emissions that are coming out of the vehicles and also save energy in the province and the greenhouse gas problem.

So with those few words, I will take my place. Hopefully, the government will bring more substantive legislation forward in the future, things that really will help the Nova Scotia economy and our environment.

MR. SPEAKER: If I recognize the minister it will be to close the debate.

The honourable Minister of Environment.

HON. STERLING BELLIVEAU: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank all the members opposite for their engagement in this particular topic and I want to move second reading of Bill No. 114.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 114. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

Ordered that this bill be referred to the Committee on Law Amendments.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 115.

Bill No. 115 - Public Sector Compensation Disclosure Act.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Finance.

HON. GRAHAM STEELE: Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of Bill No. 115, the Public Sector Compensation Disclosure Act.

[4:45 p.m.]

Mr. Speaker, we have made a commitment to be more open and accountable about the operations of government. We have followed through on that commitment. In this sitting alone, we have introduced a new Auditor General Act and a new Conflict of Interest Act, as well as the Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing Act that was introduced yesterday and the amendments to the Lobbyists' Registration Act introduced today.

This bill, the Public Sector Compensation Disclosure Act fits with this theme. Bill No. 115 is very similar to legislation already in place in Ontario, Manitoba and British Columbia. The purpose of this legislation is to expand reporting about compensation paid by the public sector. This will make it easier, much easier for taxpayers to see where their money is going and to judge for themselves whether the compensation is reasonable.

A sensible conversation about public sector compensation levels requires, as a first step, that the compensation levels be disclosed. As the House will know, a detailed annual listing of the salaries and expenses of government employees has for many years been made public as Volume 3 of the Public Accounts. As Clause 8 of this bill makes clear, that disclosure will continue. Everything in this bill is in addition to the disclosure that already occurs in the Public Accounts.

This legislation requires at least 100 additional public sector bodies to report annually if they pay compensation of \$100,000 or more to anyone who works for them or who otherwise receives compensation from them directly or indirectly and in any form.

There are three parts to the definition of public sector body that will be covered by this bill. The first part includes any body that is within the Government Reporting Entity, which in happy jargon of the Department of Finance is known as the GRE, as defined by the Finance Act. The full list of bodies that is included in the GRE is in Schedule 10 of Volume 1 of the Public Accounts. It includes, among others, all school boards and all district health authorities. That list is available on-line and of course I'd be happy to provide a hard copy to any member who wishes to see it.

The second part of the definition includes, any person, organization or body designated by regulation. This allows the list of entities to be flexible and to grow or contract as circumstances require without requiring a statutory amendment. I can inform the House that it is the intention of the government to enact such a regulation to cover universities and colleges. They are not part of the government reporting entity so if they are to be included - and it is the government's intention that they will be included - it must be done by way of regulation.

The third part of the definition includes non-profit organizations that receive a substantial amount of funding from the government.

Since the bill was tabled last Friday, there have been some questions and perhaps a little bit of incorrect or ambiguous information in the media about whether this legislation applies to payments to physicians. It is to be expected that there might be some uncertainty on this point because payments to physicians is a complicated subject. That is because there are several different sources of possible compensation to physicians and any given physician may receive compensation from one or a few or all of these sources.

I would note in passing that in Manitoba, their law applies only to fee-for-service payments. In Ontario, the law applies only to physicians who are direct employees. In British Columbia, the law applies to all payments to physicians. Because of the possible uncertainty, I wish to inform the House of the government's intention on this point. The bill as written will apply to any physician who is directly employed by a public sector body such as the Department of Health or a district health authority or who, under any other arrangement, receives direct payment from a public sector body. Once the regulation is passed to include universities, as I have previously discussed, the disclosure will also include compensation from a university, the most obvious of such compensation being from the Dalhousie Medical School.

Mr. Speaker, fee-for-service payments are not currently automatically covered by the bill but the regulation-making authority is intentionally broad enough to permit disclosure of such payments in future, if the appropriate regulation is enacted. In fact, the regulation-making authority is intentionally broad enough to include compensation paid under any Statute or regulation, to ensure the disclosure is as thorough as possible and the taxpayers can see where their money is going.

Mr. Speaker, I turn now from who is covered to what is covered. The overall threshold we have selected for disclosure is \$100,000, the same threshold as Ontario. I think most people would agree that public interest is focused on the upper end of the salary scale. The current threshold of \$25,000 in Volume 3 of the Public Accounts was set many years ago and is probably too low. I want to reiterate that we are not going to change the Public Accounts threshold but for purposes of this Act, a higher threshold was in order. The challenge is to select a threshold that provides meaningful disclosure without adding an unmanageable or unreasonable administrative burden that outweighs the benefits of disclosure. That is why we have selected \$100,000.

The first mandatory report under this Act will be for the 2011-12 fiscal year. Each public sector body must produce its report within six months of the fiscal year end. In other words, the very latest report under this Act will be on September 30, 2012, and then every September 30th after that. However, some bodies will be ready to report before the statutory deadline and Clause 3 makes clear that they are free to publish the report whenever they are ready and we encourage them to do so.

Clause 4 lays out how the information is to be published. The statement required by this new law must be included in the audited financial statements or in another statement prepared for purposes of this Act and certified correct by the entity's auditor. This statement must then be posted to a publicly available Web site.

We know there is a tremendous variety of organizational structures and payment arrangements in the broader public sector, and so some time will be needed to work out exactly how this new reporting regime will work, for at least some of the entities captured by this legislation. There is plenty of time to consult with all public bodies on exactly what their new obligations will be and we are happy to do that.

The essential point, Mr. Speaker, is that this bill represents definite government policy, and so any discussion with public sector bodies will be about how we implement it, not whether we implement it. More information about compensation means more transparency and more accountability. We know that these new disclosure rules will work because they, or some close variation of them, are already in place in Ontario, Manitoba and British Columbia. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

MR. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak on Bill No. 115, the Public Sector Compensation Disclosure Act. As has already been mentioned in a number of circles, it is a good step forward towards greater transparency as it will allow disclosure of compensation of salaries where public money is spent.

Now the deficiency that I can see right off with this bill is that it does not include the expenses. There are some expenses that will be included, but it doesn't require every item that could be in an expense account. Bonuses are often separated from a base salary, and these are the two areas that we know, both in the public and private sectors, have created a number of problems, as we have seen examples in both the private and public sectors over the last few years when we don't have full disclosure coming in this particular area. So it is my hope that the Committee on Law Amendments will provide an opportunity for us to take a look at this.

One of the areas that the minister has talked about is that it will not include fee-for-service physicians and, in my view, it should not. It should not include fee-for-service physicians. As we know, they have a whole range of expenses that the gross salary does no accounting for. I'm pleased that, at this point, the fee-for-service physicians are not included and, as I said, should not be included. However, it allows the minister to define them in coverage of this bill at a later date, at least that's the way we read into this bill as it is currently written.

Other provinces, as has been pointed out - Ontario, Manitoba, and B.C. - have moved forward on this legislation. They have used different thresholds for disclosing the amount of compensation that their public sector employees receive.

The bill does outline some of the compensation areas such as overtime, retirements, severance payment, lump sum payments, vacation payouts - the list goes as far as even payments for memberships in recreational clubs or organizations, however not covering the totality of expenses that could be incurred by a public sector employee.

During the course of this bill moving through the legislative process, I do look forward to hearing from those most affected - that, of course, will be when this bill moves on to the Committee on Law Amendments and, with that, I take my place.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, I will start out by saying that we in this corner of the House see no reason why we wouldn't pass this bill. I look at the private sector, and if you have shares in a company you often get mailed the copy of the annual report to shareholders, and you get knowledge of what the board of directors and in some cases what management is making in terms of salary and bonus and stock options. In the case of these organizations we're talking about today, the shareholder is the general public because we all have a stake in these organizations and they all receive government funding.

We see no reason why we wouldn't be supportive of this. Transparency is a good thing. I think it will also help to ensure that the taxpayers' dollars are respected in these organizations and that there are not exorbitant salaries or bonuses being paid out.

From what we have seen of this, it appears fine. I know my honourable colleague had just referenced that not all forms of compensation are included under the legislation, but perhaps the minister could clarify that in his closing comments.

I will not take too much more time than that. I think the goal here is to ensure that organizations that are receiving public funds are respecting the dollars they have and not paying out exorbitant amounts. We are supportive of that and, with that, I will take my seat.

[5:00 p.m.]

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

MR. ANDREW YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, I certainly generally echo my colleagues, the two previous speakers and the minister, largely on this, on the importance of this and in supporting it, but I did want to raise some questions that I'm hopeful the minister will be able to answer, if not today, then as this process goes forward.

I think we all support the idea of greater transparency. I think we've seen an example in the past couple of weeks where such disclosure is important, but there are certainly some questions, one of them is around the \$100,000 mark. I heard the media claim that the minister suggested that it may put an undue burden on some organizations to have to report

salaries and compensation lower than that. I'm not sure if that's what he said, but that is what he was reported as having said.

However, I think there may be merit in looking at the possibility of matching the Civil Service Regulations. One of the reasons for that is because by putting the amount at \$100,000, does that inadvertently say that we think that \$100,000 is too high a salary or an obscene salary just by virtue of it being that magical six-figure salary, whereas by having it as the Civil Service Act, at \$25,000 or some other number, then really we're saying in principle that if it's public money then there should be public disclosure.

I'm not sure, maybe \$100,000 is the right place to start, but I'm not convinced that there's a different burden if you have to go through and calculate the cost of payments and living benefits, long-term incentive plans. By the time an organization has gone through and calculated all those, they are probably going to have to calculate the value of those for all employees anyway, to know which ones will find their total compensation over \$100,000. I just wonder how much extra work that would be.

The minister has also talked about organizations that don't have a Web site and it makes me wonder why the province wouldn't simply make space available on - maybe it's the Department of Finance's Web site, as the repository for such information. As a model I would point toward Revenue Canada's Web site for non-profits, where you can search for any non-profit organization and they have to list their top 10 salaries of the organization, regardless of how much it is - even if the top salaries are \$10,000 a year, they actually have to list those. That's often a very interesting site to go through because it details, obviously for charitable tax purposes, the amounts that are defined. I think we need to understand why it is that we are doing this and whether the limits are in the correct place for that.

Mr. Speaker, one of the things the minister talked about in his remarks was the possibility of non-profit organizations which receive a large amount of public financing. I'm inclined on the surface, having not heard anybody object to this, that it sounds like a reasonable idea that such organizations would be defined by regulation as public sector bodies and have to report. I think what troubles me is that we are looking at a bill where we don't have the regulations or draft regulations, so it is not clear how that is going to be defined.

That is where it is very challenging for me. I think there is merit in having many of these non-profit organizations report - just as the charitable ones have to do for Revenue Canada purposes on the federal Web site. I think that having more understanding as we go through this process, and certainly before it passes third reading, of where the minister intends to go in terms of non-profit organizations would be useful not only to us but also for non-profit organizations that are wondering whether they are going to be covered by this bill.

Likewise, it often comes back to municipalities. I think we all know there are certain municipalities in the province that are reluctant to disclose any salaries of any value, other than the elected officials, and that has been an issue in the past few months in particular in a couple of regions of the province where the public wants to know.

I assume that - I haven't read the definition in the Finance Act for a government reporting entity, I think is the "e" on the end of that, but I would be interested to know from the minister whether municipalities and school boards would automatically be included as a government reporting entity for the purpose of this bill. I think if they're not, then they should and the minister should also make the commitment that like universities, municipalities and school boards would equally be covered by this bill. I have to believe that's probably the intent of the minister but I would like some confirmation on that as well.

The final issue I would like to address is the one of doctors. I thank the minister for clarity on the issue of doctors and what his intent is - what I think we would like to know is, especially fee-for-service doctors, and I'll say right up front my brother is a family physician in Truro. I know that the fee-for-service payments they get also go toward covering the overhead, the rent, the receptionist, all kinds of things, so it's not all salary. Sometimes what we can have happen in the reporting of any compensation is if that compensation also includes the overhead costs, then the salary or the compensation could actually look much higher than it really is.

So for organizations like that, and particularly fee-for-service doctors, I'm interested to know if the minister has thought about how he would address that issue so that a doctor - it may show that he's getting \$300,000 or \$400,000 in fee-for-service payments but, in fact, his take-home pay may be under \$100,000 in some communities by the time he has paid the overhead costs and so forth. Likewise on that, there are many doctors who have moved towards incorporation and the question is whether an incorporated physician is considered an individual for the purpose of the reporting here or whether they're considered a business.

I realize that it may be semantics at that point, at this point that may be grey areas, but I would like some confidence from the minister that those issues have been thought of and that there is a plan going forward. With that, Mr. Speaker, I'm certainly supportive of this moving through second reading. I hope as the process moves forward that the minister will be able to give some more detail on some of those semantic issues that I think could actually impact in the way this bill is reported.

MR. SPEAKER: If I recognize the minister it will be to close the debate.

The honourable Minister of Finance.

HON. GRAHAM STEELE: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank all members for their interventions. I will study Hansard to see if there are questions I can answer or ideas that I can bring forward and, of course, as always, I look forward to any interventions at the Law

Amendments Committee. Thank you to all members for engaging in the debate and with that, I would move second reading of Bill No. 115.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion before the House is for second reading of Bill No. 115. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

Ordered that this bill be referred to the Committee on Law Amendments.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 118.

Bill No. 118 - Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing Act.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of the Public Service Commission.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, I'm rising today to move second reading of Bill No. 118.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to give my friends opposite a choice. I can either read this prepared statement or I can sit down and we can debate the bill. I don't know what their pleasure is or I can bore you with my boring speech.

MR. SPEAKER: Are you ready for the question? (Laughter)

MR. CORBETT: Okay, Mr. Speaker, I'm in full sail now, but just stop me at any time when you're really bored.

Mr. Speaker, earlier this week I was pleased to introduce this new piece of legislation that will bring more accountability to this government. I expect all members of the House of Assembly will be pleased to hear that this legislation would also benefit all provincial government employees. I was truly thankful that Mr. Dwight Bishop, the Ombudsman for our province, was kind enough to take time from his hectic schedule to attend this very important bill briefing. I would like to take a moment to thank Mr. Bishop and his staff for their time and indeed guidance and input on this bill, a bill that my colleagues and I have been strong advocates of for quite some time, because we know how important it is for employees to feel safe reporting a workplace incident or wrongdoing.

The bill is about providing a supportive, respectful environment for government employees. It's critical for our employees to know they can freely come forward with concerns about potential wrongdoings. Government is working hand in hand with civil servants and their representatives to make this happen. The bill is a great step forward in this

process. When I introduced this bill I was asked if I was worried it would generate a lot of complaints. My answer, quite simply, is no. I'm not worried about that.

This legislation is being introduced to ensure that if there is a wrongdoing - and I stress the word "if" - that employees are protected should they feel the need to come forward. Since June 2009, my colleagues and I have been keeping our promise of putting the Legislature back to work. One of the best ways to ensure that government is open and accountable for its actions is to create a climate where those who report wrongdoings are free from reprisal. We don't want people to be afraid to speak up. We want employees to feel safe. A clear process is needed to protect people. That's why we introduced this piece of legislation. It will ensure employees can bring forward wrongdoing in a safe environment and it will ensure that employees are protected if such situations occur - and again, I emphasize "if."

We are working to ensure employees are confident in three things if they come forward with potential wrongdoing: we want them to know that their complaint will be taken seriously, it will be investigated fairly, and it will be responded to appropriately. The Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing Act applies to all provincial government employees. It means no reprisal can be taken against the provincial government employee who reports a potential wrongdoing under this bill. It means that deputy ministers will prepare an annual report of disclosures from their departments and make it available to the public. It also means that our Ombudsman will table an annual report of disclosures in this very House, on this very floor. He will also be permitted to report directly to the public on a matter that he deems to be in the public's interest - just as important as it is to protect the individual who is being complained about if the allegations turn out to be false.

Since 2004, when the Disclosure of Wrongdoing policy and regulations took effect, there have been about 80 complaints and inquiries. There have been three findings of wrongdoing in the last six years. Acts of wrongdoing include breaking the law related to one's job, misusing public funds, and committing an act that puts the life, health, and safety of the public or environment at risk.

Some may wonder why we are introducing legislation when we have a policy and regulations in place. The answer to that question is simple. Our legislation provides greater protection for employees and it shows that we are serious about keeping people safe in the workplace. For example, it puts in place an avenue for employees to approach an independent body should they experience any consequences after coming forward.

Our legislation also ensures that all investigations under the bill are fair to all involved. The legislation also provides the Ombudsman with the same powers he has under the Ombudsman Act.

We have long recognized the need to make changes and do things differently to protect government employees. Manitoba, Ontario, and New Brunswick are the only other provinces that have disclosure legislation in place and I am so very pleased for Nova Scotia to join them.

We are also confident that the Act to Promote Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing is key to maintaining an honest and accountable civil service, a civil service that honours the public service and its values. We're working to ensure Nova Scotians continue to be served by a professional and accountable civil service that is worthy of the public's interest and that these professionals have a clear process to bring forward wrongdoing. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston.

HON. KEITH COLWELL: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise and speak on Bill No. 118. I think it's an important bill. Instead of the Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing Act, I guess it's better known around other circles as the whistle-blower Act. When you look at the bill, it's very similar to the policy that's already in the Human Resources Management Manual, Policy 14.1, entitled Disclosure of Wrongdoing Policy.

[5:15 p.m.]

I have some issues with the present bill. I think the concept of the bill is really good, I think it will uncover some things that may be happening in the government that a Cabinet Minister may not know about or a deputy minister or even a director. They can then take corrective action and get it resolved and hopefully prevent the loss of funds or some other activities that may not be handled properly.

The problem with it is the way it has to be reported in the bill. It states under Policy 14.1 that a supervisor or a deputy head received a disclosure and a response is sent within 30 days to the employee. This same deputy or supervisor has 30 days to refer it to the Ombudsman. That's fine, but what happens if the supervisor or deputy head is the problem? Then you've got a problem.

I think that in a reporting system like this, it probably should be directly to the minister or the deputy minister and let them handle it in a very discreet way. One of the problems that people I've talked to, who have uncovered difficulties in their departments and are very concerned about issues, is they're afraid of being identified with the information. If they're identified with the information there's a possibility of repercussions with their job and their position and maybe promotions, as they go forward. That's a serious issue and I hope that the minister has considered this; I'm sure he has, and will make provisions in the bill that indeed that can't happen so it doesn't red circle an employee that is doing the best for the province and the people of Nova Scotia.

The other thing is, I recall certain questions in this House that the Premier was quite insistent that the district health authorities become part of government policy around the report of wrongdoing. I don't see this in the bill. Hopefully the DHAs will be in this process as well and I hope the minister will comment on this and see if he intends to put the DHAs in there.

Also, school boards - the same thing there and universities. We can remember, particularly in HRM, some really serious issues with the school board over the last few years and some quite aggressive action had to be taken by the former Minister of Education, which I commend her for. I think it's helped clean up some of the problems that were relevant at that time.

It's important the two biggest money spenders, I guess you want to call them, or the biggest departments in government, are on the list of things to be protected by this whistleblower policy or whatever the department eventually wants to call it as they move forward. I think it has to be in a way that the employee is protected, well protected and that they have job security at the end of it and a good situation that they can move forward in their careers and do the things that are best for the province. I look forward to the minister, maybe not tonight, but sometime in the future to elaborate on how he intends to do that.

With those few words, we will be supporting this bill. We think the principle of the bill is very good. We await to see the Committee on Law Amendments and what kind of information the minister can provide us with. Thank you.

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

HON. CECIL CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to stand in my place to speak to Bill No. 118, an Act to Promote Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing. Contrary to yesterday, I would say this is indicative of the type of legislation, the types of matters this House should be discussing. It was a Cape Bretoner, the Deputy Premier, that brought it forward and I want to thank the Deputy Premier because I do believe this is stewardship and leadership that deals with matters that are about public confidence, more importantly, the integrity of our Public Service and those who have to be held responsible and accountable for their actions on behalf of the taxpayers, but, more importantly, the voters of Nova Scotia.

By those basic directions, contrary to Bill No. 114 and last night's one-hour dissertation, this is going to be much shorter. It's the type of thing that we believe, if we're spending \$20,000 a day to have this House operate, these are the types of matters that Nova Scotians would want us to be talking about and Nova Scotians would want us to be dealing with, and we are, and that is a very positive reprieve from what we've been dealing with thus far with most bills.

I do want to say to the Deputy Premier and the Minister responsible for the Public Service Commission, the Progressive Conservative caucus supports this moving forward. If there are any interventions that require any amendments, everyone is open to this, because

this is not a particular matter to politicize, but it's one to strengthen the integrity of our system here in Nova Scotia.

With that I thank the minister for bringing it forward and thank the House for their indulgence.

MR. SPEAKER: If I recognize the minister it will be to close the debate.

The honourable Deputy Minister.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the member for Cape Breton North and the member for Preston for their interventions. I did hear what they had to say and I appreciate it. I move second reading of Bill No. 118.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 118. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

Ordered that this bill be referred to the Committee on Law Amendments.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 119.

Bill No. 119 - Residential Tenancies Act.

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

HON. RAMONA JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to move second reading of Bill No. 119, amendments to the Residential Tenancies Act. The Residential Tenancies Act provides a system where tenants and landlords can resolve their differences but sometimes landlords and tenants cannot come to a solution on their own.

Mr. Speaker, it has been far too long since changes were made to the Residential Tenancies Act and that is why we reviewed the Act and brought it up-to-date with the reality that landlords and tenants now face. We consulted with stakeholders and we listened to their concerns. These proposed changes will modernize the Act to reflect many of the changes in our society and how businesses operate.

This updated bill strikes a balance between the needs of landlords and tenants and brings Nova Scotia's legislation more in line with other Canadian provinces. Once these amendments are passed, landlords and tenants will have a residential tenancy system that will be more effective and more efficient. Perhaps one of the biggest proposed changes is

immediate tenure for all tenants in Nova Scotia. (Applause) It will mean that tenants and their families can stay in their apartments as long as they don't violate the conditions of their lease. We are also streamlining the process for landlords to collect rental arrears. The new amendments will also standardize and simplify the process for rent increases in land-lease communities, or what are called mobile home parks now, and extend full rights to fixed-term lease tenants.

Mr. Speaker, these amendments give Nova Scotia an updated, modern bill which reflects much of what we've heard from tenants and landlords, and balances their needs. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston.

HON. KEITH COLWELL: Mr. Speaker, it is with pleasure I rise to talk briefly on this bill and I want to thank the minister for bringing the bill forward. It is one of those bills that I think has been long overdue. I know in my area there have been some really serious issues around one trailer park in my riding that the minister may not be aware of but I can tell you that your staff is.

It has been an ongoing battle with the rent, continuous rent increases, appeals and the whole process. Indeed, no new service is put in place, it has been a real battle all the time. It is something that someday, if the minister has some time - and I appreciate your offer earlier today - I can explain to you a little bit of what is going on, just very briefly, because I wouldn't want to go through all the details. It would take us a very long time and I don't think that it is appropriate to waste the minister's time in that way, until such time as it might be necessary.

I think, at the brief review I had of this bill at this point, I think it looks very positive, quite balanced, and I know some of the landlords will be happy with the fact that it's 15 days to start action against someone who hasn't paid their rent. People think that they don't have to pay the rent, but the problem is the other tenants pay the rent to make up for the one that doesn't pay. The other tenants are the ones that suffer, not just the landlord, but the other tenants suffer. I think it's positive that they can do this and they can be sure that people are paying the rent, and indeed, it doesn't put rents up for everybody else in the whole area, which I think is very positive.

I think it appears on the surface to be quite a balanced bill and I know that the minister has best intentions with this bill. I'm not here to chastise your bill in any way at this point, but we'll wait to see what happens at the Law Amendments Committee and what comes forward there. Hopefully, if we have any questions, the minister will answer them, which I know you will, and move this forward. With those few words, I'll take my place. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to rise to speak on this bill. We look forward to hearing some more about it. We look forward to hearing - I sense there may be an active session during Law Amendments. I know there are a lot of these arrangements. I think there were 11,000 arrangements in the province - leasehold agreements, or agreements between tenants and landlords - and I'm hoping that this bill will improve the way those relationships co-exist.

I know there can be challenges sometimes between tenants and landlords, and I think anything that we do in this Legislature to improve the means by which those two communities can have a productive relationship is a good thing.

I will conclude my comments with that, and I look forward to watching what comes up in the Law Amendments Committee and for Third Reading for further comment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

MR. TREVOR ZINCK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the opening remarks the minister made, I'd have to concur - it's nice to see some changes coming. The government has seen fit to do an overall review. That being said, there's some good pieces in here that, obviously, the public would support as far as the immediate tenure. However, I can tell you in speaking with some landlords there was some concern around giving somebody immediate tenure rather than maybe waiting for a one-year period. A lot of landlords take chances on individuals who have had some troubled tenancy, but we do have organizations out there that have taken up the front to fight for those individuals, people like Halifax Help, to mediate with landlords. So I believe that the public will be very pleased with the immediate tenure.

There are a couple of pieces that I think will come up in the Law Amendments Committee from organizations and individuals who have been affected by issues that I know the minister is probably aware of - issues that we would have liked to have seen, and maybe I might have missed it, but around security deposits. It's one of the biggest things. Some of the Legal Aid lawyers have taken on the challenges in the tenancy courts and tenancy boards on behalf of tenants. Landlords pretty much just keep the security deposits now and a lot of times, the individual is frustrated at the list of demands that is given to them and just gives up on the battle. So I know the security deposits piece has been very, very important over the last two to three years for a lot of residents in apartment buildings or mobile home parks.

One of the other pieces that would have been interesting to see is around repairs. I know over the last number of years we have had a lot of owners come in from out of province and take up ownership of a lot of the units, and they bought into a lot of the more dilapidated apartment complexes. They've gone in and they've put a good front on, but like my mother used to always say, it's what's on the inside that counts. When a tenant isn't able to have repairs done in a timely fashion, the process is to apply, go to the tenancy board and fight the landlord, but a lot of time what happens is that tenant ends up being retaliated

against. Within a period of time, upon the renewal of their lease in the coming year, they're notified three to four months out that their tenancy is not going to be accepted.

[5:30 p.m.]

Now, that might be able to be fought with this tenure piece, but it's still an issue. I know other jurisdictions such as New Brunswick have made attempts and efforts to work with landlords and I know that the city - if a constituent comes into my office, Mr. Speaker, what I do is tell them to call HRM Bylaw. HRM Bylaw will go in, the fire marshals will go in, and they'll check out the units to make sure that it's adequate living spaces and then they'll put conditions on the landlord to, within time, have proper upkeep of the units.

It would have been nice to see a piece in this legislation, because I know the government has heard concerns over the last number of years in regard to that. Again, especially with some of these big multinational companies coming in, it's frustrating for tenants when they see their rents being increased \$50 to \$100 a year. I know the piece around rent control is a very touchy subject, but if you look at other jurisdictions, there's a percentage that's allowed by the landlords and provided through the government, that they are allowed to actually increase the rents.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, in this House I've spoken many times in relation to shelter allowances through the Department of Community Services not being adequate enough, especially when these rental increases go in. So it would have been nice to see the possibility of even a percentage allowed to a landlord to raise that. Maybe not strictly rent control, per se, but an adjusted or an allotted amount that they could actually increase in fairness.

Again, I think it's a good process to have the overall evaluation. I know we're supposed to look at it as Legislatures every year. I'm looking forward to hearing the demands and requests and concerns by residents at the Law Amendments Committee process. So with those words, I'll take my seat.

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

MS. DIANA WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, certainly it's a pleasure for me to speak on Residential Tenancies, Bill No. 119 and the amendments to that Act. It is a very important bill. In my riding of Halifax Clayton Park, I think I would be safe to say we have the highest percentage of tenants and multi-unit buildings. In my riding, out of about 13,000 households, 9,000 are in multi-unit buildings. I'm well over - it's about two-thirds of the households that I represent and the people that I represent, so I have over the years heard many issues around tenancy and around the safety of the buildings and so on.

A lot of the buildings in my area are very new. I'm fortunate in that respect, that there are primarily a lot of new construction and, therefore, there aren't the issues that often come up that we'll hear from the poverty advocates around derelict buildings or buildings needing

a lot of repair. Nevertheless, there are corners of the riding where that has occurred and I'm certainly very pleased to see some changes to the Act.

Again, my concern is balance and I'm sure the minister is thinking the same thing - how do we balance the rights of the landlord with those of tenants? The vast majority of tenants are wonderful, great people to have in there, who look after the building and who pay their rent, and it is home. One of the points I've always made is that when you're renting, that may be a choice you've made - not that you may or may not be able to afford a home, but many people will choose to be in an apartment. There are advantages to that and in our area many families live in apartments, which is probably a surprise to other members.

When they built the new school in Clayton Park West, they actually estimated very few children coming from all of Parkland Drive, which is many apartment buildings. They were completely wrong, and the school now has 800 kids coming when it was built for about 550. The reason is that there are a lot of two- and three-bedroom apartments in those buildings and families are living there because they like the area. They like the amenities in our area and they like the school. So we have attracted a lot of families there, so I see it very much that we do need to give people some security in where they live and we need to make sure that they have that built in.

I have a couple of specific points, and I'm going to let the minister know that I've looked at this bill, it's got a lot of legalese in it and I didn't have a briefing on that bill. Again, it requires going back to the original Act. I'm not the Critic for the Department of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations, and they should have invited me, because I just happen to be really interested in tenancy issues.

MR. SPEAKER: I wonder if the honourable member would allow an introduction.

MS. WHALEN: Absolutely, yes, thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

MS. MICHELE RAYMOND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and thank you for the indulgence of the member for Clayton Park. I'd just like to take a moment, because I'm very grateful that the Speaker has invited us to make our families welcome, to introduce to the House my daughter Bea, who is a student at the Nova Scotia Community College in the Tourism Management Program and has spent today working at the TIANS Summit. This is my daughter, Bea. Thank you very much. (Applause)

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

MS. WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure if that's the member's younger daughter or not. If it is, she may know my son because I think they went to school together at Fairview Junior High. That's a little bit of trivia for the members of the House.

I want to go back to this bill, Bill No. 119. The minister said that it's a major overhaul of the bill and I know there are issues that I hope are addressed in there and I'm going to raise some of them. A couple of them I don't see and one of them is this, a couple of years ago I myself had a bill before the House, a Private Member's Bill, which had basically two things we were aiming to accomplish. One was to decrease that security of tenure from the current five years, which is what it is.

I was just beginning my talk tonight by saying I see that as people make their home in an apartment, it really is their home as much as a house is ours. I wanted to make sure that people had some security living there and the way the Act is right now, with five years security of tenure, you don't have security. Up until five years, the landlord, with no reason whatsoever, can ask you to leave. It's not really an eviction, they just say, we're not going to be renewing your lease and they give you three months notice and they just say, we're not renewing it. If you say, well, why not? This is home and my kids go to the area school and it's so important for me to be here, they don't have to give you a reason. They can just simply say that under the law they don't have to give a reason and you're not welcome back after the end of the lease. I had complaints about that and people who felt that for no reason, for no just cause, they were being asked to leave.

The bill I had brought before the House had actually used one year as the security of tenure of time. That gave a landlord a year to get to know the tenant, to assess whether they pay on time and whether they're quiet and reliable and so on, and within that year, once that expired, the person had security of tenure. In my vision, we brought it from five years down to one year.

The minister's bill before us is immediate security of tenure and I really have no objections to that in terms of the tenant's viewpoint but, as I said, it's always a balance and the balance is, do landlords have a sufficient amount of time to determine? What will happen, possibly, is that we'll have more people being denied the apartment in the first place.

I'd like to mention to the Minister of Community Services, it's an issue for people who are living on community services or living close to the poverty line, because when they go to apply for apartments, they're routinely denied because this is the landlord's opportunity to say, do I feel comfortable with that person moving in? We're going to then have an investment in that person, because if it doesn't work out, it's going to be a lengthy period of time to go through the Residential Tenancies Board to have them leave if, in fact, you run into problems. They are taking a risk when they sign that initial tenancy lease, when they sign a lease with a new tenant.

I'm worried that if it's immediate tenure, it will make people even more cautious. It just will, automatically, make people more cautious about signing the lease. Therefore, I'm worried that more students, and more people who are living, perhaps, closer to the edge in terms of their means, may be denied a roof over their head in the first place. I have talked to people on social assistance who have applied for apartments here, there and everywhere

and are just not being accepted. It may be because they have a bad credit rating and it may be for a number of reasons.

I just raise that, we have to look for that balance so that we're not harming some of the people we hope to help. If the landlords know that you have a year to prove yourself and you know it as a tenant, that they have just one year and they're going to make up their mind whether they're going to renew and extend your lease. Then you have an incentive, as well, to do your best, to pay your bills on time and be a good tenant because you want to keep that home you're making in a community.

I'm just going to raise that because that may be something that comes back during the Law Amendments Committee and I, as well as other members of the House, will be there of course listening to see what comes up out of that.

I wanted to mention that when I brought in my bill I had looked at Ontario. They went through about an 18-month very public consultation. I know the minister has had some consultation with poverty groups, representing the tenants and with landlord groups, IPOANS, representing the property owners. I just want to mention that it was a very public process for the consultation done in Ontario right across the province. In an area like Clayton Park or Highfield Park or even downtown Halifax where we have a lot of apartment buildings, it would have been good if there had been an opportunity, even a public meeting where people could have come out to it and spoken.

One of the things I find, and I know other members will appreciate this, it's a very different dynamic when you represent an area that is more than 50 per cent apartments because some people are not as grounded or not as involved. They may be students, they may be people who have moved in - in my area a lot of them have moved in more recently, because of the age of the apartments. So it's a little bit harder to connect with them and to get their views and they don't belong to big organizations. The tenants in my area would not really fall under the category that would be represented by, say, Dalhousie Legal Aid. They may represent a few out there when there are disputes but by and large, they are not. It is not an issue of old buildings that are run down or that would have a lot of complaints.

What I'm just saying is that it's hard to get their attention sometimes for consulting and it would have been good if there had been a couple of open meetings where tenants might have had the opportunity to speak because they may raise issues that we are not aware of and that are different from those raised by the poverty advocates, so I mention that.

Now in Ontario, after their lengthy study that they did in consultation, they also changed the security of tenure. In fact, what I found interesting was that their bill actually has an itemization of the conditions or circumstances under which you can cancel the tenure, so they were very specific. Perhaps the minister says it's in there. I didn't see it flipping through and that's one of the things I was looking for: if they cause a lot of noise, if there's a lot of disruption, if there's damage to the property, if they don't pay their rent on time.

They actually had about eight items that would be cause for breaking a lease. I thought that was very important. I know even then that IPOANS was unhappy and IPOANS said, well, there could be another reason that is not there. I think if there is another reason beyond the ones that you itemize, which would obviously cover about 99 per cent of the cases, then there's always the avenue of going to the Residential Tenancies Board.

I think it's really important and I wanted to make sure that was in there. Again on the protection for the landlord's side that it's clear for both parties - the landlord and the tenant - that these are the conditions that would really make your tenure insecure, if you break any of these rules. That was very important to me.

I note that the bill covers mobile homes as well. Again, that security of tenure, when I introduced it a few years ago in my bill as a one-year security of tenure, that actually mirrored what was in the bill for mobile homes. I felt that if you lived in an apartment building you should have as much security of tenure as somebody in a mobile home. That's very important to me that they remain in lockstep because they weren't before; there was a difference, one year for a mobile home and five years for an apartment. I felt that was wrong.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there is a point that I think is really important and I don't know if it's in the bill either so I want to raise this.(Interruption)

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

MS. WHALEN: That's right. I'd like to have a deeper voice so everybody listens, but that's okay, that's a masculine thing.

Mr. Speaker, the issue I wanted to raise was around domestic violence and having domestic violence as a cause for a family, or a woman and her children, to leave an apartment. I don't know if that's there. I just mentioned the causes why a landlord would have the right to terminate the lease, but I believe it's important that if somebody has been the victim of domestic violence that they should be able to break the lease and leave that apartment. I think that is perfectly legitimate, because you may have to flee. We know that. We run transition houses and give some support to those transition houses.

[5:45 p.m.]

I know the Minister of Community Services would be very conscious of this, she's also the Minister responsible for the Advisory Council on the Status of Women and I think that we should make that a clause. It may occasionally be a man that's in that circumstance but I think, by and large, we would be talking about women and children and that would be a very good addition to this bill if it's not there now. I don't believe it is there now from a little discussion that I've had. If I'm wrong, that's good. I hope the minister will look at that.

Also, there is an issue that has come up in my riding around deposits. Actually, the instance that I heard of first, was a student who was looking at different apartments and was told by the landlord, give me a deposit and we'll hold that for you. She then went to a few other places and found one that was better for her, a different apartment and when she went back to get her deposit, it was no longer available. The landlord said, well, that deposit is mine now because I might have refused another person on the grounds of having taken the deposit.

Here's a student who is out \$350 or \$400, through no fault of her own, because nobody said if you give me that deposit, it's mine to keep. She didn't sign a lease so she thought she would get it back. I felt the same way. I think it could have happened to me too if I were looking for an apartment, because I would have thought that as long as I hadn't signed a contract, which is the lease, that I'd still be able to get the money back again.

She was quite shocked to find out she had lost that \$350, which, as you can imagine, is a real blow to a young woman who has just moved to the city and is trying to go to university. I was unable to help because the way the Act was worded, that was perfectly acceptable.

Again, I know the minister has the lawyers and the advisors in her department that could look and see whether that would be allowed under the current circumstance. I think that is wrong. If they are taking the deposit and that's the rule, then they must be required to make it absolutely clear that that's just as binding for that deposit, it's not a deposit, it's a gift really. They have to know they're giving that money to the landlord and if they don't come back and take the apartment, it's gone.

I would want to make sure that if it's going to be allowed that it's absolutely, perfectly clear to anybody who gives a deposit to a landlord. That did really concern me, because if you don't sign the lease, how can they really keep your money at the end of the day, but they are allowed to.

Another issue is holding of security deposits. The system at play in New Brunswick I think is superior to what we've had in place here. I don't know if, in the consultation, the New Brunswick system, which is called the Rentalsman system, was at all looked at, but the Rentalsman, which is like our director of Residential Tenancies, actually has the power to hold all the security deposits. When you make a security deposit, it isn't the landlord that gets to use that money as part of their working capital and just hang onto it and give it back to you at, sometimes at some considerable delay or not at all. The Rentalsman holds the security deposits for all the landlords and as long as the tenant has done what they're supposed to do, left a clean apartment that is in good shape, they get the money back. That is how it should be.

I've talked to numerous tenants who have to fight and really make their case that they're entitled to that money back. It's very easy for landlords to say something is amiss. When you put the Rentalsman in charge, as they do in New Brunswick, I think the onus is

on both parties to do a better job and really to be more fair to the tenant. If you've been a good tenant, you're not responsible for the wear and tear that's normal. If you've been a tenant for five years, it's normal that they might want to paint or do some small repairs before the next people come in, but that's not your fault, that's ordinary wear and tear.

Even in our own homes, we paint every five years or so. There's ordinary wear and tear and I don't think that should come out of a security deposit. I think there should be a very careful look at whether or not there's some grounds to do that to protect our tenants particularly and just take that fund and keep it separately, somehow through the province.

The Rentalsman also has the power to go in and do repairs in an apartment where there's something wrong, like broken windows, and doors that don't lock and leaky roofs. If the landlord won't address it, the Rentalsman can go in and do it and then charge the owner. That is not an issue for me in Clayton Park, has not been an issue, because as I said, we have excellent landlords and they are very responsible and they really value the portfolio of buildings they have. They look after them and they wouldn't allow that to occur.

But where it does, in the places where there are really rundown homes or apartment buildings that are operating, we need to be able to protect the tenants. In those instances I think there should be a power to go in and fix them. When I sat on City Council some years ago, I was on their Dangerous and Unightly Premises Committee. They changed the rule that they could go in, make repairs on those unsightly and dangerous premises, and charge the owner, so it's something that could be done. It was the same thing - if you have a boarded up, horrible looking building in your community, or it's just derelict, that's demoralizing and bad for property values everywhere, so they could move in on behalf of the other citizens, the other neighbours, fix it up - at least to a minimum standard - and charge the owner.

I'd like to think that if a person had rented an apartment and it had some of those security or health problems, if it has got water damage and so on, that needs to be addressed. If a landlord won't, where's our help in the Act for tenants? I would like to mention that too. Those were just two features of the New Brunswick Rentalsman system that I thought were superior to ours.

When I had brought in my bill a couple of years ago, I mentioned that it included the security of tenure, which was my primary concern, but in talking to landlords there was also, on their part, a great concern. Again, they seem sometimes to be very diametrically opposed in terms of what they each feel. Each party feels they've got a raw deal, that it's hard to be a landlord and the tenants feel it's hard to be a tenant. Sometimes it's hard to see where the common ground is, but I had in my bill, as well, suggested a change to the length of time it takes for a landlord, when they have just cause, to move on an eviction, or to move toward moving a tenant out who is doing something that is wrong, either not paying or destroying the building or any number of things.

The minister tells me the list of what would not be allowed is in the bill. I'm just having a hard time locating it. It's a reasonably sized bill. This bill is longer than the last one I was speaking on. I was complaining about small bills that were immaterial - this one is not, so I do like to acknowledge this one has a lot more meat on the bones, is a lot more important to Nova Scotians, and that's why there will be more discussion as we go forward. Right now, I'd just like to take my seat for today and look forward to the Committee on Law Amendments when I hope we'll hear, not only from landlords, but from tenants as well.

I don't know if there is any way the minister can make it known that there is an opportunity to speak to this bill because I'm afraid we'll only hear from that very organized group that represent people who live, perhaps, in derelict buildings or in slum kind of buildings. We talk about slum landlords, I don't know if that's a fair term. I know that doesn't represent the many people who live in Clayton Park. They live in good buildings but they still have concerns around things like deposits and some of the other conditions we've talked on today. I would really like to see if there was some way we could encourage them to come out and speak as well at the Committee on Law Amendments. With that, I hope the minister has made a note of the couple other points, particularly the domestic violence. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

MR. ANDREW YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, I'll try to be very brief as I understand there is some interest in the time at the moment. We've had a couple bills go through that got passed by second reading before some concerns were raised and then we're running into it at the Committee on Law Amendments or third reading. Just so the record shows, there are a number of very good things in this bill and I should commend the minister on addressing some of those things.

It would have been great to have a draft of this bill out on a Web site for public to comment on in advance because, already this morning, as people read about this, my phone is ringing off the hook back in the constituency office. It seemed like every hour I was getting an e-mail from my constituency assistant from somebody concerned with one part or another in this bill, some of them tenants and some of them landlords, often very small landlords who have had issues and are concerned. That's based on what they've read about it and that information may be accurate or may not be accurate.

I don't want to suggest there is something incorrect going on, but certainly when we deal with issues around tenure - and I know there are a number of small landlords in particular who have raised concerns, previously - that when you do have, let me say, a bad tenant, it is sometimes very difficult to get rid of those tenants and it's very difficult to get an eviction. There is concern that some of the provisions in this bill may make that even more difficult, while it rightly addresses some of the concerns that some tenants have, it may actually make some of the challenges that small landlords have even more difficult. A number of months ago I had one in my constituency office who actually was facing bankruptcy because of issues he had with tenants, not being able to get rid of them, trouble

getting to Residential Tenancies to get the order, and then having the order enforced and so forth.

So, Mr. Speaker, I just want to raise the issue that there certainly are questions being raised in the 24 hours or so since I think this bill was introduced yesterday, yes, but certainly there are questions being raised and those questions may be legitimate or not. But as we go forward, I hope we'll be able to put together those and see answers. Hopefully, some of those people will appear at the Law Amendments Committee to raise their concerns and we can understand whether they do need to be addressed. Hopefully, the minister will be open to those.

MR. SPEAKER: If I recognize the minister it will be to close the debate.

The honourable Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations.

HON. RAMONA JENNEX: I would like to thank the honourable members for their comments. I just would like to say one thing that wasn't mentioned, and it's not mentioned in the bill, and that is that staff will be writing a plain language bill to accompany this because the legalese part can be intimidating for folks. The honourable member mentioned that. So along with this and parallel, we will have a plain language bill that will go along with it so that it will be easier for Nova Scotians to understand. With that, I would close debate on Bill No. 119.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 119. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

Ordered that this bill be referred to the Committee on Law Amendments.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, before I call Bill No. 120, we're getting close to the moment of interruption, I'm going to ask for the indulgence of the House, if we go past the moment of interruption, we'll carry on with debate on the bill.

MR. SPEAKER: Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 120.

Bill No. 120 - Condominium Act.

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

HON. RAMONA JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of Bill No. 120.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion before the House is for second reading of Bill No. 120. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

Ordered that this bill be referred to the Committee on Law Amendments.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank all the speakers today who were here and responded to these bills. That concludes the government's business for today and I will now hand it over to the Deputy House Leader for the Liberal Party to give us the business for tomorrow. (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: We will just take a short breath.

MR. CORBETT: We'll just idle here for a minute.

MR. SPEAKER: We will just take a short breath while we're waiting for the Official Opposition House Leader to come in - a small recess, we'll just recess for two minutes.

[5:58 p.m. The House recessed.]

[5:59 p.m. The House reconvened.]

MR. SPEAKER: I will now call the House back to order.

The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

[6:00 p.m.]

MR. ANDREW YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, I apologize for the delay to the House; I had to get the numbers. Tomorrow we will be calling Resolution No. 2489 and Resolution No. 2490. I believe we will be meeting at noon tomorrow (Interruption) 1:00 p.m. until 5:00 p.m, but we could meet from noon until 5:00 p.m. if you want a longer Question Period. (Laughter)

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is that the House now rise to meet tomorrow between the hours of 1:00 p.m. and 5:00 p.m.

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. Tonight's debate was submitted by the honourable member for Bedford-Birch Cove:

"Therefore be it resolved that the Minister of Agriculture put in place a real strategy to address the needs and concerns of farmers in Nova Scotia."

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION UNDER RULE 5(5)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants West.

AGRIC.: STRATEGY - MIN. PROVIDE

MR. CHUCK PORTER: Mr. Speaker, it's an honour to be able to have a few minutes this evening to speak to one of the most important issues before us as a province and that is the agricultural industry. As some of us, I guess most of us are probably aware, a few of us attended last week the annual meeting of the Federation of Agriculture in Truro, a great turnout anxious to hear the good news - the good news that didn't come.

There was a presentation and I got an opportunity to speak, as did the Critic for the Liberal Party. As always, critics have that very great opportunity to speak with the farmers and to the farmers and so on, on the industry. Then the minister got up and the minister sounded nervous, Mr. Speaker. It was the first time in all the times I've heard him speak that there was a little bit of nerves in his voice that sounded rather peculiar.

I thought, wow, what's this about, and he talked about a whole variety of things before he got to the point. I'm not sure why and I was looking for my glossy copy of - I probably gave it to somebody, because there wasn't much in it. I even read it twice through, one time after the other, to make sure I didn't miss something. I read and I looked at some beautiful pictures - pictures of down in the Valley, pictures of up in Colchester, all kinds of pictures, a beautiful history lesson, a nice bit of geography in it as well.

Well that's all well and good but what I understood from talking to the people in Truro was they already knew all this, they knew about the history of agriculture in the province, they helped us. (Interruption) The minister hollers over to me, "They helped us." I don't know who "they" were, but the folks who I talked to weren't part of that "they" group.

Anyway, still through the weekend, meeting with some folks who still couldn't figure out where the rest of it was. Maybe there's more to come, maybe that was the first edition, I don't know. Maybe there's a second edition to come. The minister, I'm sure, will speak to that as the evening goes on here, in great detail.

I have no doubt in my mind that he will close this up with just a banger of a speech again, probably, the odd hollow platitude, that we like to use that language here and perhaps it will be more than what was in that report, other than the glossy words and the fine print and so on and so forth. (Interruption) I don't understand what that meant, Mr. Speaker, but I'll take that as directed to you. I'll direct my comments through you and I better not say the other piece I was going to talk about, prettier to look at.

Mr. Speaker, what is important is that we still seem to be missing a little something when it comes to the agricultural industry. I'm not sure why they waited and they waited. A year ago we were at this very same . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable member for Hants West has the floor. If there are conversations that need to take place . . .

MR. PORTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that, given this very important topic this evening. As I was saying, I was there a year ago and I've been at a couple of other meetings where the minister has been and we attend some of the local agriculture meetings and federation meetings and district ones and so on. It is the same story, it is - I hope to bring that, I hope to bring that, I hope to bring that. That was the language a year ago in Truro that was used, I hope to have something for us very soon by way of this 10-year strategy and here we are 18 months in, so now it's eight and a half years. I was teasing him about an eight-year strategy, I'll even credit him for now it's an eight and a half year strategy. By the looks of the strategy, it's a whole lot less than that. I hate to use the word "strategy" because it is not even a strategy. It talks about some great things that we should do but it doesn't say we will do.

I spoke in this House maybe a week or so ago and the minister will note that (Interruption) He's quoting me on something and I don't know what that was but anyway, it doesn't matter. The minister knows full well that there is a commitment. I stood in this House a week or so ago and I spoke to this very issue: a commitment from government is needed. There did not appear, and I said I read it through twice, I didn't see any financial commitment made by way of any specific part of the industry.

Now maybe I missed something in that, maybe the fine print. I know I wear glasses, Mr. Speaker, maybe they need to be stronger. Maybe I missed a line or two or five or 10 of them somewhere in it but I don't think so. From conversations I've had, I don't think I missed any lines. Like I said, I read it through just twice, back to back, and then again to make sure I didn't.

I said the other day, there's a lot of gloss in it. It's a nice report, it's a beautiful looking thing and it's all shiny, but it has no content. I asked at the time, I guess it was a ministerial statement of some degree perhaps, maybe not intended, but it was here on Friday morning. We're interested to know the cost, one, but more importantly, we could have taken the cost of that and we could have put it into the farm community in some way.

I spoke to a farmer there, a guy who is 77 years old - and I wish I could remember his name, but I can't - on Thursday afternoon. He was from Tatamagouche. He owned a lot of land, a lot of land. He's been trying to keep it because his daughter is at the Agricultural College, she wants to take over the family business, the family farm, and move into it. He has an old homestead that's run down and he tries to keep patching the roof.

But more importantly, with the land, he has seen this wonderful report that says we have lots of land, we need to keep it viable, we need to look after it. So he's cutting the bushes, he's got this machine, showed me pictures. He had a whole baggie full of pictures. Maybe he met with the minister and showed him, I don't know. Anyway, this fine gentleman showed me all these pictures and it showed his machine there, an old machine, got a Bush Hog on it and he's going around and he's Bush Hog-ing it off and he says he could do it for minimal cost, \$10 or \$20 an acre, where it cost maybe in around \$1,200 an acre once you let it grow up and you have to get an excavator in. His numbers, I'm not sure exactly what the fee would be, but considerably more if you had to hire somebody to come in and knock it all down with an excavator and then till it again, and so on and so forth.

He said, "I could do it for next to nothing. I went to the government and I asked them for money to do it." He went to the Farm Loan Board actually and he asked them for money, and he wasn't asking for a lot of money, that was the funny part. He wanted a little bit of money to help hold that land over to help him keep the bushes cut so that land would still be good to be plowed and so on and to be cultivated and used appropriately - as we keep saying that it's good for, and promoting and wanting to do in this province.

Yet, they said, no, we can't do that. Now, here he is, he's trying to look after everything - 77 years old and he is still out doing this himself. Incredible. But he's trying to keep this alive for his daughter, and maybe a granddaughter and a grandson in the future, who knows?

Again, it's all about the commitment. We talk the talk, but the report did not walk the walk. It pointed no details. (Interruption) The Holy Angels could probably write quite a report on the industry. I'm going to credit him, it was a good little history lesson. It was 18 pages and I know he's a former teacher, maybe he had some input in that now. I know others

are teachers in this House, maybe they'll have some input too. Again, it was a great little history lesson, but it did not commit to anything.

There was nothing in it that said what we are going to do. The farmers were curious and they said, what is it he's going to do? We've been hearing for 18 months. Well, I've been hearing for longer, when the honourable minister was the critic, well respected, I know that, because I talked to them and I know these people and I've known the minister for a long while. He's a sheep farmer, he has been around that business for quite some time, understands it fully, I think. He certainly knows the community, he knows all the people in it. He knows the business. And, they thought - I think they put a lot of faith in the minister - there were some answers because that was what was said, we have the answers, we know. It's always easy when you're on the Opposition side to criticize, I know that. It's a lot easier (Interruption) he's noticing, he says.

But I can remember being in this House, when I came here in 2006, and he was over here on the other side and he was critical. There was nothing that was done where it was not criticized - had all the ideas in the world. I just pulled out today in Question Period a couple of small tidbits of Hansard - there's all kinds of it, there's 11 years worth of Hansards there that I could probably go back through and just. . .

AN HON. MEMBER: You could fertilize a few fields with that.

MR. CHUCK PORTER: . . . fertilize a few fields with that, he said. Absolutely.

Anyway, maybe that's not - okay, time is getting short and that's too bad because I could probably ramble on for quite some time about this very important topic. Words of wisdom. He criticized, had all the answers, he gets elected as the government. He's a Minister of the Crown now, he's the Minister of Agriculture and the industry's excited. I talked to them, they're excited. There's a new minister. They're saying he is promising us some hope. This is what he's saying, we have some hope, we're going to fix this industry.

Well, we all know where it's been from there. It's gone downhill; commitments that were made by a previous government - which he'll always say were not commitments made by a previous government - that he didn't uphold, they never came to fruition. It just kept going and going, month after month after month. Now we all know, as does the farm community, over all these months, it's been a very slowly penned out piece of paper, one page a month, can you imagine how much time has been spent on one page a month.

I can't wait for the minister to tell us how many people worked on the one page a month. Let's tally it all up. Let's look at the cost for gloss. Let's look at the employment that went into creating this report. Let's look at the man-woman-people hours and we say no to a guy who's asking for a few hundred dollars to keep his fields in the state and look what we have lost. Here we are, 18 months in. I can't wait until next year's meeting when they say, what happened? They're going to go through and we've done this - well, we've done nothing. Well, I hope to have something. Maybe there will be an addendum, maybe there

will be something else. I don't know what the extra piece will be. There has got to be more to this report. There's nothing in it. There's got to be more.

I'm asking the minister tonight if he would tell us, where is the rest? Where is the meat and potatoes? What the farmers know, meat and potatoes - where is it? There is nothing in that report that talks to what we're going to do for the farming community in this province.

With that, unfortunately, I see my time has expired for this session. I look forward to, once again, having the opportunity to speak to this very important topic, and I thank the minister and others for being here this evening to listen to this debate.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

MR. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise on the NDP's agricultural policy and the late debate that we put forward today.

I guess perhaps sometimes when there's a lot of hype around a policy piece, a plan, a strategy that's coming out, the expectation is that it's going to be delivered, it's going to break from some of our past approaches, and there will be some newness and there will be a lift from a particular document. The anticipation, the expectation, an 18-month gestation period, and we really thought that there would be something substantial delivered.

Unfortunately, it didn't live up to the hype. It just never turned heads of the farm community that I spoke with, both at the AGM and since going back to the Valley. Kings County, as we know, is still critically important to the agriculture sector of the province. We were hoping to see some departure points, some targets set, some new initiatives, some dollars put forward, and of course, they didn't come with this particular announcement.

I know the minister wants a better outcome for agriculture, but this plan is not going to take us down that path. I think it's incumbent upon the minister and the Department of Agriculture to return to the farm community, to return to the people who can point some very strong directions. I'm not sure really, outside of the department itself, how much consultation really went into this. I did speak to five of the leaders who are part of the Agriculture Council. There may have been some minimal input from them, but the five who I spoke with certainly didn't see anything that they had ever suggested at their meetings show up in this particular document. So from those who could make, perhaps, the greatest assist with a real action plan, a real document, their work did not seem to be, or wasn't, in this report. No mention of real financial support for farmers, policies have no teeth, and a document with no real action plan.

I was really hoping that the start of the document would outline a true entrant program, a true initiative for young farmers - especially those who are in the business one to five years, both on the family farm and those now who have some new ideas to take forward - that there would be some very concrete measures. Other provinces have moved

ahead. Even little Prince Edward Island is looking after its next generation of farmers. It's cultivating that next generation in a very real, substantive manner, and that's what we need here in Nova Scotia.

As I said at the AGM, we have an outstanding institution in the Nova Scotia Agricultural College, and that's where we need to be talking to the graduates and how we can transition them from four years of education to farms and to new agricultural initiatives in this province.

[6:15 p.m.]

The minister knows very well what I'm talking about, because my neighbour, Justin Beck, is one of the bright lights in agriculture in Nova Scotia. He has some ideas that he wants to generate into profitability and if he's given the kind of assist that we should be, you know, he'll be a leader of the pack. Every time we invest in our young farmers, we will be investing in a strong agricultural future because we are at low ebb and it can be very measurable now to move forward.

When we brought out what was, I guess, the beginnings of what will be a much more detailed food policy over the next two years, and by setting that target, trying to raise the 64-item food basket from the current low of 13 cents, down from 17 cents just a decade ago, up to 20 cents - in other words, 20 cents in a 2020 vision - that can happen and because you don't have a lot of time, I want to clearly demonstrate how it can happen. Again, the minister is familiar with Meadowbrook Farm in the Berwick area. They have a modern farm market and, yes, it did get some assistance through a few programs along the way, transitioning from a traditional hog industry to the Meadowbrook Farm, and it's a model that we have to duplicate across the province because it's an integrated operation - 100 per cent Maritime products in the store, almost 100 per cent Nova Scotia produced products, but he does use Maritime beef.

So you're looking at the cheese from Fox Hill Cheese House, you're looking at the maple syrup from Cumberland County, you're looking at a host of vegetables from Sawler Farms just down the road - in other words, now, see what's happening? We're creating jobs. We're creating a need on those farms for more produce. If we start to duplicate that in our institutions, 20 per cent of everything from Nova Scotia in our hospitals, in our jails, in our universities, it can be done. The minister just needs to check in with Mount Allison, just down the road, of course, across the border, but we also have Mount Saint Vincent with a food policy and they're the leaders and they're the ones that are showing the way of how we can tap into using more Nova Scotia products.

So there's a benchmark. It's measurable. Are we making progress? Are we putting the demand on the farmer to produce more, because you can be sure the farmers can. We happen to have a belt in the Annapolis Valley of soils that compare with any in Canada. We have one of the three top soil regimes and we need to be using more of that acreage and putting it to producing high-quality food.

There's a day coming, Mr. Speaker, when I hope CFIA does real labelling in this country and we bring in a product from a Central American country where there are few restrictions on the kind of chemicals that can be used and the product can be brought in, put in a jar here, or in a container, and labelled "Made in Canada" or "Produced in Canada."

We're going to get a wake-up call one of these days when there's an analysis of what's in that food. That's where the wake-up call is going to come. Also, we know, peak oil and its impacts, those are the things that need to push us quicker to produce more of our own food in this province. I know that the local food movement is a big part of it and from that we will see, I think, an opportunity for exporting some of our products which we do now, you know, with our apples, our blueberries, our cranberries and so on, but I feel we've only just begun to create a local food economy. We could produce food in every county of Nova Scotia and that has to be the challenge that we give ourselves. It's incumbent upon every MLA and for what I call a real strategy that puts some dollars behind initiatives that can help us reach a greater level of production in the future.

When we take a look at Quebec, and while they are the leader of the pack with investing, whether it is young farmers, \$75 million just recently, we don't expect that in Nova Scotia but we can have a fraction of that. The same way for a number of other initiatives that I think will indeed bear good successes as we move forward, so we're hoping for an expansion on the beginning of the strategy. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Agriculture.

HON. JOHN MACDONELL: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Yarmouth for his applause as I stood up. Well look, like I say, my colleagues across the floor who have spoken, I know what it is like to be on the Opposition side. I'm not sure - I'm assuming they read the document so certainly if he wants to talk about Fox Hill, if he looks at the cover of our Homegrown Success, he will see that we identify Fox Hill.

The questions around targets, we are dealing with entrepreneurs, business people and as much as we might like to say we'd like to see 12 or 15 new sheep producers, or we might want to see new carrot producers, presently in the province we produce twice as much, actually three times as much carrot than we consume. So the idea that we're going to try to incent people to grow carrots, certainly we're not going to take them down the road of producing carrots for the domestic market, and the issues around what they have identified as their market possibilities. We want producers to be successful, whether they are young producers, old producers, whatever.

The gentleman identified by the member for Hants West, looking for support to keep the bushes down in his field, well I have to say I have to sympathize with him. I know what it would mean if you worked the land all your life and you think it is going to grow up into bushes and it's certainly cheaper to mow them. But, we're talking about taxpayers' dollars to keep those bushes down and that's not a business plan. So I think for us that's what we're talking about. Even the member for Hants West, and I quote him here, says our plan talks

about good things. Well, we think it really identifies a lot of good things and those good things are centered around the farming community and the initiative of the farming community. These are business entrepreneurs that we really hope, if they have good ideas, will come to us and we want to change the thinking so that we need people who are innovators.

The member for Kings West talked about Justin Beck, a really fine young man who is actually trying some new things that don't get tried here very often. They hadn't been tried when the hog industry was certainly crashing. It would have been nice to see the industry kind of shift to maybe think about high-moisture corn, which is where Justin Beck is going. I'm not sure that Justin has approached the department in any regard but certainly we'd like to take a look at what might be necessary in order to ensure some success.

I would say that's exactly what the plan is about, it's about innovators, it's about us trying to be there for innovators and help them along the way. I don't know that there's much point in saying well, we're going to try to have 12 new hog producers in the province. Because, first of all, there may not be 12 people interested in doing that, but someone like Justin actually might kind of blaze the trail and if he showed some success then that's something we can use as a model and maybe others would be interested.

One of the issues now is we've lost a major processor, so what is the capacity around the province to ramp that up? Even when the member for Kings West talks about Meadowbrook Farm, certainly there is a case in point where the Department of Agriculture has been there to be helpful to move that.

Yes, 18 months of work by people in my department - this did not have a big price tag; it was pretty much an in-house project. The consultation with the industry was actually fairly extensive, and the previous administration conducted that. The CTAG process, the Competitive Transition Analysis Group, spent over a year outlining concerns that they thought would be helpful for the industry, and I want to say that I think we've incorporated that into our plan.

I firmly believe that the key to our long-term sustainability is our ability to adapt to the changing marketplace. Our Premier announced jobsHere, Nova Scotia's plan to create good jobs and grow the economy. This is a plan for the entire province and for all sectors of the economy, and everyone has a part to play. We'll focus on opportunities in high-value sectors to connect Nova Scotia businesses with potential partners abroad and to attract new companies, and we will continue to develop our highly-trained workforce and encourage educated and skilled workers to relocate and establish themselves in the province. Creating secure jobs and a secure future for Nova Scotia is a shared responsibility - government, academic institutions, businesses, and workers need to work together to achieve this.

As part of the jobsHere strategy last week, I officially launched our plan and we think that this is a very good plan for Nova Scotia. It's the first time any government has actually developed a plan. I was at the federation meeting and I did not hear the angst or concern that

the members opposite have indicated. I have to say, as a relatively new minister in a new government, I felt quite well received by the industry. It's a plan that outlines a broad strategic approach to long-term growth of agriculture in the province, the bottom line being to help farmers generate greater profits, and we know those profits need to come from the marketplace and not from government.

The 10-year plan for agriculture is a plan to help those in the industry become more profitable and it's about doing everything within our reach to ensure Nova Scotia agriculture remains viable. We already have advantages that other jurisdictions do not. Next to Quebec, we have the most diversified agriculture market in the country. Nova Scotia agriculture has been a diverse sector and I have to say that its ability to innovate has been significant - I want to credit the Nova Scotia Agricultural College with doing that. We have one of the best-educated agricultural communities anywhere.

The members talk about seeing nothing. Well, I mentioned at the meeting about our grass-fed beef initiative, which we think offers great possibility for the industry, and we're going to work with cattle producers on genetic enhancement, something that they have been after - so my staff will work with them into the Spring to see what we can make that look like.

Luckily the blueberry industry has seen a return to better prices this year. I would say not out of the woods yet, but certainly hoping that next year that will continue with an incredible product. I have to mention Case Van Dyk when I talk about blueberries. This is an initiative that shows innovation, it shows tapping into a credible market and an incredible market and getting maximum value out of the value chain.

So research, innovation, the ability to compete, getting value out of the value chain, profitability - and if we're going to attract new farmers, whether young or not, agriculture is a business, and for them we need to have profits. That will address our land use issues, that will address keeping young people in the industry and, Mr. Speaker, the 10-year plan proposed by this government is about profitability, competitiveness, and innovation - that will secure a future for farmers in Nova Scotia.

MR. SPEAKER: I want to thank all members for their participation in tonight's debate.

The motion is carried.

The House is now adjourned until tomorrow at 1:00 p.m.

[The House rose at 6:30 p.m.]

NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3)**RESOLUTION NO. 2588**

By: Hon. Karen Casey (Colchester North)

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

Whereas Leadership Distinction Awards were presented at the Nova Scotia Agricultural College graduation banquet; and

Whereas the awards are designed to express the appreciation of the college for the devoted time, energy and talent to student affairs and athletics; and

Whereas the awards are presented to students who demonstrate strong character and superior ability in intellectual endeavours, athletic achievement and exhibit definite qualities of leadership;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Collette Wyllie from Debert, Colchester North, for being presented a silver distinction medal for leadership by the Nova Scotia Agricultural College.

RESOLUTION NO. 2589

By: Mr. Andrew Younger (Dartmouth East)

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

Whereas James “Jim” Hill started at CJCH TV when it opened in the early 1960s and rose through the ranks to become an award-winning producer and director; and

Whereas Jim was one of the two founding “daddies” of the Christmas Daddies Telethon and helped raise over \$27 million through the telethon work for which he was awarded the Order of Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Jim passed away on September 15, 2010, but his spirit will live on in this year’s 46th Christmas Daddies Telethon;

Therefore be it resolved that members of the House of Assembly recognize the work of James Hill and his contributions to Nova Scotia, and recognize his lasting legacy as this year’s Christmas Daddies Telethon celebrates its 46th year.

RESOLUTION NO. 2590

By: Ms. Vicki Conrad (Queens)

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

Whereas the Liverpool Regional High School Key Club has entered its 8th year of operation with 40 members entered into the program this year; and

Whereas the Key Club involvement of students helps them mature, become responsible, learn about giving and sharing, and learning about the spirit of community; and

Whereas the Key Club, connected to the Liverpool Regional High School, raises funds towards very worthwhile international programs, is starting a mentorship program at a local elementary school, and will continue working at Queens Manor and host a community breakfast once a month;

Therefore be it resolved that the House of Assembly recognize, thank and congratulate all members of the Liverpool Regional High School Key Club for all their wonderful fundraising and the support they provide in the community for younger students and seniors.

RESOLUTION NO. 2591

By: Ms. Vicki Conrad (Queens)

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

Whereas the Paramedic Long Service Award is based on years of service to Nova Scotia by paramedics and others who provide emergency health services; and

Whereas it is important that we take the time to recognize and thank these men and women for their hard work and dedication, and for the contribution they make to our health and public safety; and

Whereas Bruce Leaman of Liverpool, Queens County, received a medal in recognition of his years of service to Nova Scotia in the area of health;

Therefore be it resolved that the House of Assembly of Nova Scotia recognize and congratulate Bruce Leaman of Liverpool, Queens County, on having received the Paramedic Long Service Award recognizing his years of service as a paramedic.

RESOLUTION NO. 2592

By: Ms. Vicki Conrad (Queens)

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

Whereas the students at Dr. John C. Wickwire School in Liverpool, Queens County recently learned of the long, dangerous walk many African children must make daily to seek clean water; and

Whereas the students raised over \$1,000 for UNICEF to enable an African village to buy a water pump; and

Whereas in order to raise the money, a classroom would get a paper water drop for every \$5 raised.

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly recognize the students of Dr. John C. Wickwire School for having raised over \$1,000 for UNICEF in order to buy water pumps for an African village.

RESOLUTION NO. 2593

By: Ms. Vicki Conrad (Queens)

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

Whereas the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nova Scotia has a new president for 2010-11; and

Whereas Greg Simpson, Executive Vice President of Mersey Seafoods Ltd. will work with the institute to represent chartered accountants and students throughout Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Greg Simpson will also guide the profession as it helps to strengthen our regional economy.

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly of Nova Scotia recognize and congratulate Greg Simpson, Executive Vice President of Mersey Seafoods Ltd. on having become the President of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nova Scotia for 2010-11.

RESOLUTION NO. 2594

By: Ms. Vicki Conrad (Queens)

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

Whereas over the past 13 years a Well Woman clinic has been held at the Queens General Hospital each October; and

Whereas a collaborative effort between local female physicians, nurses, members from VON, Public Health, the Region of Queens, the Queens Community Health Board and South Shore Health as well as volunteers put the clinic together each year; and

Whereas the clinic offers screening for early detection of cervical cancer along with removing any barriers stopping women in Queens from living healthy lifestyles.

Therefore be it resolved that the House of Assembly of Nova Scotia recognize the efforts of the local female physicians, nurses, members from VON, Public Health, the Region of Queens, the Queens Community Health Board and South Shore Health as well as volunteers for putting together the Well Woman clinic in Queens County.

RESOLUTION NO. 2595

By: Ms. Vicki Conrad (Queens)

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

Whereas in 1972 the South Shore Public Libraries was formed to provide community libraries for the use of all residents; and

Whereas the new chief librarian, Troy Myers, is looking for a growth phase on the South Shore, looking to change the public view of what a library is and making the library a more central part of their community; and

Whereas a higher profile and a really strong relationship with their community will work toward the libraries being considered community centres.

Therefore be it resolved that the House of Assembly recognize the new Chief Librarian of the South Shore Public Libraries, Troy Myers, and wish him great success in his new role.

RESOLUTION NO. 2596

By: Ms. Vicki Conrad (Queens)

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

Whereas one Liverpool, Queens County resident has been working for years to ensure that the memories of past Queens County residents live on; and

Whereas Tim McDonald has been photographing and recording the inscriptions on gravestones throughout Queens County; and

Whereas Tim McDonald has been including pictures of the deceased, the obituary and any additional information he may have about the deceased, and all of this information will reside in the Thomas Raddall Research Centre in the Queens County Museum;

Therefore be it resolved that the House of Assembly recognize, thank and congratulate Tim McDonald for all of his work photographing, recording and bringing together information on past Queens County residents which will reside in the Queens County Museum.

RESOLUTION NO. 2597

By: Ms. Vicki Conrad (Queens)

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

Whereas Sergeant Chris Lohnes of East Berlin, Queens County, has just returned from duty in Afghanistan and has become a fundraiser for the Royal Canadian Legion, Branch 38, in Liverpool; and

Whereas when Sgt. Lohnes returned to Queens County he brought with him a wonderful, unique tea set; and

Whereas the tea set will serve six people and is made of fossilized marble which Sgt. Lohnes has donated to the Royal Canadian Legion to be used as a fundraiser;

Therefore be it resolved that the House of Assembly recognize and thank Sergeant Chris Lohnes of East Berlin, Queens County, for becoming the latest fundraiser for the Royal Canadian Legion, Branch 38 in Liverpool by donating a fossilized-marble six-person tea set.

RESOLUTION NO. 2598

By: Ms. Vicki Conrad (Queens)

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

Whereas the company of OLS (On Line Support) came to Queens County a few years ago, opening a customer support service which employs people who can share, grow and thrive during their career with the company; and

Whereas OLS takes pride in their employees and recognizes the successes of employees for their outstanding achievements with the Awards of Excellence every year; and

Whereas Sandra Parnell was recognized during the 2009 Awards of Excellence presentations as the Employee of the Year, Canada-wide;

Therefore be it resolved that the House of Assembly recognize and congratulate Sandra Parnell on having won the Canada-wide 2009 Award of Excellence for her outstanding achievement in winning the Employee of the Year.

RESOLUTION NO. 2599

By: Ms. Vicki Conrad (Queens)

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

Whereas the Terry Fox Run is an innovative, all-volunteer-led event, all-inclusive, non-competitive, with no corporate sponsorship, incentives or fundraising minimums and has been taking place for 30 years; and

Whereas Roberta Frail was recognized for being part of the Terry Fox Run in North Queens for all of those years; and

Whereas Roberta Frail has laced on her running shoes, brought in her pledge sheets and participated for each and every one of those years and was recognized recently with the presentation of a 30-Year Participant plaque;

Therefore be it resolved that the House of Assembly recognize Roberta Frail of North Queens for having participated for all of the 30 years of the Terry Fox Run.