



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Charlie Parker

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Second Session

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2010

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House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2010

Sixty-first General Assembly

Second Session

9:00 A.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.

We'll start with the daily routine.

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Finance.

HON. GRAHAM STEELE: Mr. Speaker, I wish to take a few minutes today to speak about a very important issue that will be on the agenda of the federal, provincial and territorial Finance Ministers when we meet later this month in Alberta. The issue is the retirement income adequacy. To put it simply, the issue is whether enough people are putting aside enough savings to look after themselves at a reasonable standard of living in their retirement.

I wish to bring to the attention of the House the issue and the possible actions being contemplated by the federal-provincial-territorial Finance Ministers under the leadership of federal Finance Minister Jim Flaherty. I hope, if possible, to attract support from the Opposition Parties for the general direction in which the Finance Ministers are heading, as Nova Scotia's voice will be stronger if we have a unified position on the national stage.

The main problem that the Finance Ministers have identified is inadequate rates of income replacement for those with what we might call "mid-range incomes," roughly those between \$30,000 and \$100,000 per year. We are fortunate in this country to have a Canada Pension Plan that is strong and well funded. It is a great Canadian achievement; it is actuarially sound for at least the next 75 years, but it is designed to replace only 25 per cent of pre-retirement income and there is a maximum limit per year. The other pillars of the retirement income system, namely the Guaranteed Income Supplement, Old Age Security system, and private savings such as RRSPs and workplace pensions, fill the gap for some people, but far from all.

The federal-provincial-territorial Finance Ministers were asked to develop ideas about how to strengthen Canada's retirement income system. A great deal of research has been done, consultations have been held, including here in Nova Scotia, and options have been developed.

There are three parts to the response of the Finance Ministers: first, there is pension innovation, which is an invitation to the private and public sectors to develop new solutions to a complex world of a mobile workforce and the modern tendency to hold many jobs over the course of one's working life; second, there is financial literacy, which is an initiative to ensure that Canadians understand the financial instruments and financial options already available to them - there is a federal Task Force on Financial Literacy that is expected to report within the coming months; and third, Mr. Speaker, and the one I want to focus on today, is the possibility of improvements to the Canada Pension Plan.

All provinces and territories, except Alberta, have agreed in principle to the desirability of a modest, phased-in, and fully funded increase to the Canada Pension Plan. The support for this principle comes from across the country and across the political spectrum. We want to build on the existing success of the CPP, which provides secure income to millions of Canadians while achieving a very low cost of administration.

We are all conscious of the need to go carefully. When contemplating improvements to something as large and important and complex as the Canada Pension Plan, it is important - indeed it is essential, Mr. Speaker - to get it right. I would like to thank every person and organization who responded to our government's discussion paper on pension reform for their thoughtful contributions to this question.

[9:15 a.m.]

As a group of Finance Ministers, we recognize that many Canadians, more than any of us would like, are or will be grappling with the realization that after years of hard work they just do not have enough saved for a comfortable retirement. We also recognize that too many Canadians who should be saving now are putting it off or are simply unable to put money aside for the future.

As a group, the federal, provincial and territorial Finance Ministers will be meeting very shortly and we will continue to fill in the details of what it means to have a modest, phased-in and fully-funded improvement to the Canada Pension Plan. We do this, Mr. Speaker, because retirement income adequacy will help to ensure that everyone can retire with dignity. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

MR. LEO GLAVINE: First of all, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Minister of Finance for providing a copy of his statement to our caucus, to have an opportunity to look at the direction and the content of this statement around a very important part of Canada's way of dealing with retirement income, the Canada Pension Plan.

We took a very bold step in our last election platform when we said we would establish a province-wide Nova Scotia public pension plan. This would allow employers, regardless of size, to offer their employees a pension plan. Employees not covered by a company pension plan will also have access to one. This will provide confidence and security.

We all know that this has come about and we, in our offices, know very well that there are many of our constituents who find it extremely difficult to live on \$11,000 to \$12,000 a month, if you are single (Interruption) Sorry, I meant a year, thank you - we were here way too late last night - yes, \$11,000 to \$12,000 a year and, of course, double that for a couple who have no other source of retirement income.

We know those challenges that are there before us. In fact, with our neighbours to the south, in the United States you can no longer get the government Old Age Security in its full extent until you are 66 years old and are now looking at raising that to 69 years of age. We know that longevity, the ongoing costs of basic life necessities, have put enormous challenges toward our retirement community. As the minister said in his final comment, to retire and live in dignity in the senior years should be the golden years of people's lives. We know they are not so much that because of some inadequacies of retirement savings not done in a planned manner or the inability to have retirement income put away.

There's one part of the statement that we will need to, I think, proceed on with enormous caution. All provinces and territories, except Alberta, have agreed in principle to the desirability of a modest, phased-in, fully-funded increase to the Canada Pension Plan. The support of this principle comes from across the country and across the political spectrum. We know that substantial increases are of great concern and that's the precautionary note that we would bring in response here. In Nova Scotia we have the highest, or second highest, tax regime in the country, and therefore any additional requirements around taxation - we certainly need to proceed with caution.

With those few comments, we recognize the importance of today's statement to be a partner across the country in discussing and presenting new alternatives to greater security for those who will retire in the future in our country. Thank you Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, in the early 1980s the savings rate for Canadians was hovering around 18 per cent. People valued the saving, they understood the importance of it, but we also went through periods of high interest rates and that would have been a motivator for people to want to save. We're in a much different environment today, and if we look at society in North America, the savings rate has actually plunged into the negatives because people are financing things. Perhaps they're living beyond their means, but this is just a reality.

Why is this happening? Well, as I mentioned, it could be because interest rates are very low. There's not a lot of incentive, perhaps, for people to invest in the traditional bond and GIC means. I think we also have a change in society. We had a whole generation who grew up during the Depression. They went through tough times. They went through a period where investments that seemed safe didn't turn out to be safe. It had a tremendous effect on people and I've seen it amongst some of our older Nova Scotians, some of our seniors. If you look at their patterns of expenditure, they've been very conservative because they lost trust in the world financial system. They lost trust in institutions they had trusted to be able to provide them with returns on their savings. Times change and people forget about those times. People growing up today aren't familiar with that.

We can see why people have lost faith in the markets once again. We've seen a housing market collapse in the United States that caused a collapse in the stock market. There have been a lot of people in this province who were nearing retirement and had their savings significantly depleted and wondered why, how can this happen? Some of them have had to work extra years to make up for that and they've not been able to retire when they'd like to retire, so we can see why people have lost faith. The reality of this - and the age that we're living in right now - highlights the importance and the value of the Canada Pension Plan.

I can think of somebody else who this is going to help. This is a group of people I thought about when I was actually running for office - seasonal workers. All of our areas have seasonal workers. I worry about these people, because in a lot of cases I don't think they realize the challenges they're going to face when they go to retire. If they've not been paying into the Canada Pension Plan, if they've only been working, say, two or three months of the year, that means they're only paying in two to three months worth of Canada Pension Plan premiums and they're going to get a corresponding amount when they retire.

If this Canada Pension Plan is enhanced, I believe that's going to be good for seasonal workers because it provides some greater motivation to find employment throughout the entire year. They're going to know that the amount that they're paying into the Canada Pension Plan is going to provide them with meaningful income in their retirement. That's also good for small business, because businesses, as we know, sometimes struggle to find employees. Having a pension system that's going to reward employees for working year round is going to be good for business as well.

We also see - and I've just highlighted the challenges people have faced with recent stock market decline - people having to make personal decisions about their investments versus the Canada Pension Plan, which makes those decisions for people, and there's benefit to that.

The Canada Pension Plan forms a basis for retirement income for Canadians and we're supportive of the efforts of our province and our federal government to improve this income for Canadians. We do know that these decisions will affect the cost structures for employers and we recognize the need for employers to be included in the decision-making process. This government and our federal government have our support to continue working on enhancement of the Canada Pension Plan.

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Energy.

RESOLUTION NO. 2877

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

Whereas new energy regulations announced on October 15, 2010 will help stabilize electricity costs for Nova Scotians while promoting a greener, more sustainable province for generations to come; and

Whereas new regulations enable the province to increase the amount of renewable energy electricity produced in communities across Nova Scotia to help government achieve the goals it set in the province's new Renewable Electricity Plan; and

Whereas these greener, local projects will help to create good jobs, provide a better future for Nova Scotians and reduce our overall dependence on imported carbon-based sources;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House recognize the outstanding leadership our government has taken on this important initiative.

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

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

Is it agreed?

I hear several Noes.

The notice is tabled.

The honourable Minister of Health.

RESOLUTION NO. 2878

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

Whereas the IWK Health Centre has a distinct and special culture that focuses on providing wonderful care for children, women, youth and families; and

Whereas the staff and volunteers of the IWK Health Centre work diligently to support the centre's vision of healthy families, the best care; and

Whereas it is due to the dedication of the IWK's staff and volunteers that it was named a special category winner in Canada's Most Admired Corporate Culture Program;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House join me in congratulating the IWK Health Centre on being name in Canada's Most Admired Corporate Culture Program and commend their ongoing dedication to providing better health care for Nova Scotians.

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

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

Is it agreed?

I hear several Noes.

The notice is tabled.

The honourable Minister of African Nova Scotian Affairs.

RESOLUTION NO. 2879

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

Whereas the United Nations has declared 2011 the International Year for People of African Descent and has encouraged its member states to do their part in honouring this special year; and

Whereas the goal of this year is to strengthen national actions and regional and international co-operation for the benefit of persons of African descent and to promote a greater knowledge of and respect for our diverse heritage and culture; and

Whereas people of African descent make up the largest minority population in Nova Scotia and have greatly contributed to the success of this province;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House join me in recognizing 2011 as International Year for People of African Descent and encourage all Nova Scotians to join the celebrations of culture and history that are being planned across the province.

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

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

Is it agreed?

I hear several Noes.

The notice is tabled.

The honourable Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations.

RESOLUTION NO. 2880

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

Whereas on October 18, 2010 the Premier and Halifax Mayor Peter Kelly joined local businesses to commit to sharing knowledge about creating cost-effective, energy-efficient communities; and

Whereas signed a memorandum of understanding that pledges support for the use of Quality Urban Energy Systems of Tomorrow (QUEST) principles in the development of a subdivision in Bedford West; and

Whereas this is in keeping with Halifax Regional Municipality Council's commitment to reduce corporate greenhouse gas emissions by 20 per cent from 2002 levels, this undertaking supports our efforts and will help us reach our objectives;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House recognize the exceptional guidance of our government and Mayor Peter Kelly have taken on the memorandum of understanding which supports Quality Urban Energy Systems of Tomorrow and a commitment to sharing knowledge for cost effective and energy efficient communities.

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

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

Is it agreed?

I hear several Noes.

The notice is tabled.

The honourable Minister of Agriculture.

RESOLUTION NO. 2881

HON. JOHN MACDONELL: 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 elected Beth Densmore of East Noel as its 105th president at its annual general meeting on November 26th; and

Whereas Beth Densmore has shown passion and leadership in agriculture for many years, serving the Hants County Federation of Agriculture for six years, the last two as its president; and

Whereas Beth Densmore has made history as the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture's first female president;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House congratulate Beth Densmore upon her election as the 105th president of the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture, as well as the first female president, and wish her the best as she assumes her role at agriculture leadership in this province.

MR. SPEAKER: The notice is tabled.

[9:30 a.m.]

The honourable Minister of Health.

RESOLUTION NO. 2882

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

Whereas Canstruction is a competition to design and build creative and original structures out of cans of food and is a unique fundraiser for Feed Nova Scotia; and

Whereas this year the infrastructure management section of the Department of Health led a multi-departmental Canstruction team with members from Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal, Community Services, Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations, and Fisheries and Aquaculture; and

Whereas this year's Canstruction structure featured over 2,300 cans of food with their labels carefully arranged to read "Turn the Page on Hunger" and won Feed Nova Scotia's Best Use of Labels Award;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House congratulate the 2010 Canstruction teams for helping to make life better for families across the province and wish them luck in the international Canstruction competition to be held later this year.

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

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

Is it agreed?

I hear several Noes.

The notice is tabled.

The honourable Minister of Tourism, Culture and Heritage.

RESOLUTION NO. 2883

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

Whereas the Tourism Industry Association of Nova Scotia is truly passionate in its efforts to support the tourism industry under the leadership of Chair Danny Bartlett and President Darlene Grant Fiander; and

Whereas the association members work tirelessly to maintain and improve the positive experience of tourists to Nova Scotia destinations; and

Whereas TIANS should be congratulated on their recent annual tourism summit - the Power of Tourism, one of the largest tourism industry conferences in the country, bringing together over 500 delegates from across Nova Scotia;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House congratulate TIANS on their efforts to enhance and build the province's tourism industry, and wish them 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?

I hear several Noes.

The notice is tabled.

The honourable Minister of Agriculture.

RESOLUTION NO. 2884

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

Whereas the Baddeck Valley Community Fair celebrated 80 years of operations this year, making it the longest running and only remaining community fair in Victoria County; and

Whereas the Baddeck Valley Community Fair has been a showcase for 4-H rural youth since its inception in 1932; and

Whereas the rural leaders and youth involved in the 4-H Program and the Baddeck Valley Community Fair are interconnected by a sense of community tradition that is being fostered in a new generation of Nova Scotians;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House congratulate the organizers of the Baddeck Valley Community Fair on its milestone 80th Anniversary and wish the community it serves many more years of success celebrating agriculture in action.

MR. SPEAKER: The notice is tabled.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

NOTICES OF MOTION

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

RESOLUTION NO. 2885

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 Scotians expected the government's emergency room strategy to improve the quality of emergency care, reduce overcrowding, and decrease wait times; and

Whereas Nova Scotians expected a detailed plan to make emergency services accessible 24/7, no matter where they live; and

Whereas the NDP's idea of a plan is to re-announce lofty goals and ask the district health authorities to come up with the details;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House recognize that the real NDP plan for emergency services is to download the tough decisions on somebody else, rather than to tackle the challenges of emergency health care head on.

MR. SPEAKER: The notice is tabled.

The honourable Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal.

RESOLUTION NO. 2886

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

Whereas Angela McCarthy of Sir John A. Macdonald High School was one of the 2010 recipients of the Pengrowth-Nova Scotia Energy Scholarship and will have an opportunity to pursue a career in the energy sector after receiving a scholarship from this industry-government partnership; and

Whereas families and businesses will benefit from the years of clean energy and more stable prices under an agreement announced in Newfoundland and Labrador on November 18, 2010, which will create more jobs; and

Whereas Nova Scotia has a strong and growing energy industry and programs like this are helping to make life better, providing good jobs. These young minds are the future of our energy strategy in Nova Scotia;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House congratulate Angela McCarthy for demonstrating commitment toward pursuing a career in the energy sector in Nova Scotia and for all the future effort that we put forward in helping create a more sustainable province.

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 Cape Breton West.

RESOLUTION NO. 2887

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

Whereas earlier this year Cape Breton West resident Becky Hooper went on a trip of a lifetime to the Australian Centenary Event to commemorate 100 years of Girl Guides; and

Whereas Becky was joined on the trip by four other young women from New Brunswick, Quebec, and Newfoundland and Labrador; and

Whereas Becky's excellent essay was the reason she was one of only five girls chosen for such an exciting trip;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly recognize Becky Hooper on her significant accomplishment and wish her every future success within the Girl Guide movement and all her future endeavours.

MR. SPEAKER: The notice is tabled.

The honourable member for Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage.

RESOLUTION NO. 2888

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

Whereas the Home Depot Canada Foundation, in partnership with Habitat for Humanity and the Boys and Girls Club of Canada, announced the recipients of its Sustainable Housing and Growing Greener Communities grant programs; and

Whereas the Cole Harbour Boys and Girls Club was one of five clubs across the country to receive a \$10,000 Growing Greener Communities grant; and

Whereas the Cole Harbour Boys and Girls Club intends to use that money to establish an environmental awareness program for children between eight and 12 years of age;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly congratulate the Cole Harbour Boys and Girls Club on receiving the Sustainable Housing and Growing Greener Communities grant and recognize the club's efforts to help our young Nova Scotians be more aware of the impact their actions have on our environment.

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 Inverness.

RESOLUTION NO. 2889

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

Whereas December 8th marks the 30th Anniversary of John Lennon's death outside his New York City home; and

Whereas John Lennon put to music the experiences and feelings of people around the world, with songs like "No Reply," "I'll Be Back," "In My Life," "All You Need Is Love," and "Starting Over"; and

Whereas John Lennon's voice lives on in his recordings, some of the most iconic pop songs of all time;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly recognize the passing of John Lennon and acknowledge the impact his music continues to have on the people of our province.

MR. SPEAKER: The notice is tabled.

The honourable Minister of Energy.

RESOLUTION NO. 2890

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

Whereas in April of this year, Mr. Glenn Joudrey of Chester Basin celebrated his 84th birthday; and

Whereas on October 1, 1970, Mr. Joudrey started a new career and became a rural mail carrier for the Canada Post in Chester; and

Whereas Mr. Joudrey has now logged over 40 years of service to the residents of Robinson's Corner and Windsor Road, has no plans to stop, and has become a vital member of the Canada Post team in the Village of Chester;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly congratulate Mr. Glenn Joudrey on his service to the residents of Robinson's Corner and Windsor Road as he proves that neither wind, rain, snow, nor age will prevent the mail from getting through.

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 a No.

The notice is tabled.

The honourable Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations.

RESOLUTION NO. 2891

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

Whereas L'Arche Homefires opened in Wolfville in 1990 to provide services for adults with special needs; and

Whereas Applewicks, L'Arche Homefires' candlemaking workshop located on Gaspereau Avenue in Wolfville, celebrated its 20th Anniversary on November 20, 2010, with an open house and craft fair; and

Whereas Applewicks provides meaningful and valuable employment opportunities for adults with special needs such as making specially designed products, including candles and woven scarves, which are sold throughout Nova Scotia;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly recognize the valuable resource Applewicks provides for the L'Arche Homefires community and congratulate them on celebrating their 20th Anniversary on November 20, 2010.

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 a No.

The notice is tabled.

The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

RESOLUTION NO. 2892

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

Whereas this year marked Lloyd's Register's 250th Anniversary and to celebrate it created the LR250 initiative; and

Whereas Juanita Waller, a senior administrator in the company's Burnside office, decided to take up the challenge in leading a campaign in which employees were asked to give back to their communities through special projects; and

Whereas John MacNeil Elementary School was chosen by Lloyd's Register and received computers, an LED projector and screen, Lego and a Learning Tree which became the centrepiece of an outdoor classroom that includes benches, a garden, and a white board;

Therefore be it resolved that the House of Assembly recognize the efforts of Lloyd's Register and its employees for their commitment to give back to community.

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 a No.

The notice is tabled.

The honourable Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

RESOLUTION NO. 2893

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

Whereas Travis Bradley of Barrington Municipal High School was one of the 2010 recipients of the Pengrowth-Nova Scotia Energy Scholarship and will have an opportunity to pursue a career in the energy sector after receiving a scholarship from the industry-government partnership; and

Whereas the families and businesses will benefit from 35 years of clean energy and more stable prices on an agreement announced with Newfoundland and Labrador on November 18, 2010, that will create more job opportunities for all members of the energy sector; and

Whereas Nova Scotia has a strong and growing energy industry and programs like this will be helping to make life better for providing good jobs - these young minds are the future of the energy strategy in Nova Scotia;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House congratulate Travis Bradley for demonstrating commitment towards pursuing a career in the energy sector in Nova Scotia and for all the future efforts that will be put forward to help create a more sustainable province.

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 a No.

The notice is tabled.

The honourable member for Truro-Bible Hill.

RESOLUTION NO. 2894

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

Whereas the students of Cobequid Educational Centre were made aware of the lack of education in Southern Sudan by former native Jacob Deng, who visited the school and shared his experiences; and

Whereas the students and faculty took it upon themselves to fundraise in various ways for the Wings of Hope Charity; and

Whereas the Cobequid Educational Centre succeeded in raising over \$6,000 for the charity in order to help them build schoolhouses and provide opportunities for better education in Southern Sudan;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia Legislature congratulate Cobequid Educational Centre's students and faculty for their generosity in raising money so that children in Southern Sudan have better access to education.

[9:45 a.m.]

MR. SPEAKER: The notice is tabled.

The honourable Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

RESOLUTION NO. 2895

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

Whereas Aaron Nickerson of River Hills has been named Player of the Year by the Nova Scotia Golf Association (NSGA); and

Whereas Aaron posted five top 10 finishes in NSGA-sanctioned events for 235 points in the NSGA's point system, nudging Dundee's Leon Carter who finished with 205 points; and

Whereas Aaron has competed in many provincial championships across Nova Scotia and gets stiff competition from his own club members: Jody Swim, Ryan Dixon, and Darrell MacKenzie;

Therefore be it resolved that the House of Assembly offer congratulations to Aaron Nickerson of River Hills Golf Course, who was awarded the NSGA's Player of the Year award at a banquet in Dartmouth on October 24th.

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 Pictou East.

RESOLUTION NO. 2896

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

Whereas after months of uncertainty, on Sunday, December 5, 2010, the ship Hector, docked in Pictou Harbour, was opened to the public for the first time in 2010; and

Whereas the Hector Heritage Quay Society purchased the replica for a nominal fee from the Town of Pictou in an effort to shore up the historical reproduction; and

Whereas the society has worked and continues to work diligently to recruit volunteers and raise funds to be in a position to open the site from mid-May through October in 2011;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly congratulate the Hector Heritage Quay Society on its success in reopening the ship Hector and forward best wishes in the 2011 tourist season.

MR. SPEAKER: The notice is tabled.

The honourable member for Pictou East.

RESOLUTION NO. 2897

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

Whereas Jotham Blanchard, a former MLA in this Legislature, is the “Forgotten Patriot of Nova Scotia”; and

Whereas Jotham Blanchard was the editor of the Colonial Patriot, first printed on December 7, 1827, as the Pictou Patriot; and

Whereas our esteemed Joseph Howe credited Blanchard with greatly influencing his reform ideology;

Therefore be it resolved that all Members of the Nova Scotia Legislative Assembly reflect on the contributions of Jotham Blanchard to Nova Scotia through the many reforms he advocated both as newspaper editor and as MLA.

MR. SPEAKER: The notice is tabled.

The honourable member for Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage.

RESOLUTION NO. 2898

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

Whereas the junior firefighters of the Liverpool Fire Department play such an important role throughout the year in their community; and

Whereas during the Fall of 2010, the junior firefighters noticed that the Veterans Park in Liverpool was in pretty rough shape; and

Whereas along with cleaning up litter in the graveyards and parks throughout Liverpool, the junior firefighters completed the Veterans Park litter and overgrowth cleanup;

Therefore be it resolved that the House of Assembly recognize and thank the junior firefighters of the Liverpool Fire Department for taking on the cleanup of the Veterans Park.

MR. SPEAKER: The notice is tabled.

The honourable member for Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage.

RESOLUTION NO. 2899

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

Whereas the Poor's Farm, located within the Cole Harbour Heritage Park, was the location where destitute and mentally ill from the Halifax Hospital were sent to live and work between 1887 and 1929; and

Whereas through the efforts of the Cole Harbour Parks and Trails Association, local community volunteers, archaeologist Sarah Penney, and students from Saint Mary's University in Halifax, the exact location of the more than 10 buildings which made up Poor's Farm have been determined and artifacts such as buttons, porcelain fragments, and smoking pipe stems have been uncovered; and

Whereas the Cole Harbour Parks and Trails Association is the driving force behind the development of the Cole Harbour Heritage Park and are recent winners of the 2010 Friend of Archaeology Award;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly recognize the significance of unearthing artifacts from the 19th Century Poor's Farm site in Cole Harbour and commend the Cole Harbour Parks and Trails Association on winning the 2010 Friend of Archaeology Award from the Nova Scotia Archaeology Society.

MR. SPEAKER: The notice is tabled.

The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid.

RESOLUTION NO. 2900

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

Whereas Sarah MacDonald is a skillful swimmer with the Sackville Aquatics; and

Whereas Sarah recently swam in the 2010 Special Olympics Canada Summer Games held in London, Ontario; and

Whereas Sarah was a three-time medalist at these Summer Games, winning one gold and two bronze medals;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulate Sarah MacDonald of Sackville Aquatics on her success as a triple medalist at the 2010 Special Olympics Canada Summer Games.

MR. SPEAKER: The notice is tabled.

The honourable member for Cape Breton Nova.

RESOLUTION NO. 2901

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

Whereas for the first time, a Nova Scotia woman was named National President of the Canadian Council of the Blind; and

Whereas Sydney's Louise Gillis was the recipient of this prestigious appointment; and

Whereas Louise has been executive director for five years, lobbying tirelessly on behalf of people with vision loss;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Louise on being appointed National President of the Canadian Council of the Blind and for her dedication and commitment to the blind and visually impaired community.

MR. SPEAKER: The notice is tabled.

The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid.

RESOLUTION NO. 2902

MR. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas in 1810, the Golden Jubilee of King George II was celebrated with great ceremony in Nova Scotia; and

Whereas in the same year, local businessman John Pryor named his estate on the Northwest Arm, and the road it was located on, “Jubilee”; and

Whereas Jubilee Road is still one of the major thoroughfares crossing the Halifax peninsula from Camp Hill to the Northwest Arm, and 2010 marks its 200th Anniversary;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly recognize the Jubilee Road Bicentennial Committee for their work throughout the year to raise awareness and celebrate the rich history of this community, including an essay contest on the bicentennial that is being held at four local schools.

MR. SPEAKER: The notice is tabled.

The honourable member for Antigonish.

RESOLUTION NO. 2903

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

Whereas GASHA, the Guysborough Antigonish Strait Health Authority, was established in 2001 as one of the province’s nine district health authorities to improve community health care; and

Whereas on November 23, 2010, GASHA was named one of Nova Scotia's Top Employers for the third year in a row by MediaCorp Canada Inc.; and

Whereas the Top Employer Award recognizes organizations and companies that are leaders in their area for attracting and retaining employees;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of the House congratulate GASHA on being named one of Nova Scotia's Top Employers, and thank all GASHA employees for their hard work and continued dedication to providing quality health care throughout the Strait region.

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 Antigonish.

RESOLUTION NO. 2904

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

Whereas Pro Skateboards and Snowboards is a thriving local business offering sporting goods to help Nova Scotians maintain an active and healthy lifestyle; and

Whereas Pro Skateboards and Snowboards opened on Quinpool Road in 1986 and has served the local boards sports market in various Halifax locations since opening; and

Whereas Pro Skateboards and Snowboards has consolidated their operation in a newly-expanded storefront on Quinpool Road;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House welcome Pro Skateboards and Snowboards back to their Quinpool business roots, nearly 25 years after first opening their doors.

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 Eastern Shore.

RESOLUTION NO. 2905

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

Whereas Ralphie and Randy Bayers of Ship Harbour are twin brothers who are both competitive arm-wrestlers; and

Whereas both brothers competed and won medals at the Canadian Arm Wrestling Championship in Winnipeg in September; and

Whereas the Bayers brothers will be flying to Las Vegas this weekend and travelling to Mesquite, Nevada, for the World Arm Wrestling Championships;

Therefore be it resolved that this House congratulate twin brothers Ralphie and Randy Bayers on their success in arm wrestling and wish them well in the upcoming World Arm Wrestling championships.

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

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

Is it agreed?

I hear several Noes.

The notice is tabled.

The honourable member for Lunenburg West.

RESOLUTION NO. 2906

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

Whereas Gow's Home Hardware is a long-standing presence in the Town of Bridgewater, serving residents of Bridgewater and the surrounding area, dating back to a hardware business originally owned and founded by Robert Dawson in 1848; and

Whereas Gow's Home Hardware was recently awarded the Hardware Merchandising Magazine's Store of the Year Award for 2010, at the Outstanding Retailers Awards ceremony in Toronto; and

Whereas Mr. Peter Gow, the third generation owner of Gow's Home Hardware, represents the best kind of community entrepreneur, offering top-notch customer service and supporting many local and charitable organizations, including the Bridgewater Fire Department;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House congratulate Mr. Peter Gow and his staff on receiving the prestigious Hardware Merchandising Magazine's Store of the Year Award for 2010 for the second time and wish him and his staff success in the years that lie ahead.

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 Cumberland North.

RESOLUTION NO. 2907

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

Whereas the existing West Highlands Elementary School in Amherst was built in 1912, the same year as the sinking of the Titanic; and

Whereas the staff and students of West Highland school have excelled, despite structural and other deficiencies, and while the school is often undergoing repairs; and

Whereas a new school will be built, with a projected opening date of September 2013;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulates Principal Kevin Maplebeck and the staff and students for their performance under sub-optimal conditions and the upcoming construction of a new school in Amherst.

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 Hammonds Plains-Upper Sackville.

RESOLUTION NO. 2908

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

Whereas on October 15th Millwood Elementary School in Lower Sackville celebrated Sharon Black Reading Day; and

Whereas the day honoured the life of an incredible educator, the late Sharon Black, who previously taught at the school; and

Whereas this children's literacy awareness event had community members attend and participate by reading in groups with students for the morning;

Therefore be it resolved that members of the House of Assembly applaud the staff and students of Millwood Elementary School in Lower Sackville on hosting Sharon Black Reading Day and raising awareness for children's literacy in their community.

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

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

Is it agreed?

I hear a No.

The notice is tabled.

[10:00 a.m.]

The honourable member for Kings North.

RESOLUTION NO. 2909

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

Whereas Sheffield Mills farmer William Swetnam is a graduate of the Nova Scotia Agricultural College and highly respected for his wise counsel and many practical contributions to community life; and

Whereas Bill Swetnam has specialized in the poultry industry and is one of the founders of the Nova Scotia Turkey Marketing Board; and

Whereas the NSAC recently honoured Mr. Swetnam by presenting him with the Distinguished Alumni Award for his contributions to the agricultural industry, his expertise, and exhibited dedication of commitment and community leadership;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly congratulate William Swetnam on being the recipient of the Nova Scotia Agricultural College Distinguished Alumni Award, and thank him for his many years of service to our province and its institutions.

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 a No.

The notice is tabled.

The honourable member for Lunenburg.

RESOLUTION NO. 2910

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

Whereas Second Story Women's Centre servicing Lunenburg County works to enhance women's lives by providing services and education designed to promote personal growth, community awareness and social change; and

Whereas Second Story Women's Centre hosted its third annual women's art show at the old Post Office Centre in Lunenburg each Friday, Saturday and Sunday, ending on December 5th; and

Whereas the art exhibit, entitled Women Creating Change, encouraged women artists who work in any medium to take advantage of the opportunity to show their work, particularly those who have not exhibited their work before;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly recognize Second Story Women's Centre for providing an opportunity for women in Lunenburg County to exhibit their art and congratulate all women who participated in the exhibit, entitled Women Creating Change.

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 a No.

The notice is tabled.

It's becoming increasingly difficult to hear the honourable member who's speaking. I would just ask members to keep their conversations down or else take your conversations outside the Chamber.

The honourable member for Guysborough-Sheet Harbour.

RESOLUTION NO. 2911

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 Royal Canadian Army Cadets of Sherbrooke is a Bravo satellite of the North Nova Highlanders No. 185 Arras Cadet Corps in Antigonish under the command of Captain Russ Mayne, CD; and

Whereas on Wednesday, September 15th, the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 56 presented a Cadet Medal of Excellence; and

Whereas this honour was presented to Colin Feltmate of Indian Harbour Lake by the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 56 for outstanding cadet service, citizenship and comradeship;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly congratulate Colin Feltmate on demonstrating these attributes of leadership and citizenship and for setting an excellent example for his fellow cadets, and wish him every success in his future endeavours.

MR. SPEAKER: The notice is tabled.

The honourable member for Colchester-Musquodoboit Valley.

RESOLUTION NO. 2912

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

Whereas the Duke of Edinburgh Award is a program initiated by Prince Phillip in 1956 which encourages young people aged 14 to 25 to challenge themselves in the areas of community service, adventure, physical recreation and personal skills development; and

Whereas Morgan Erskine of Carrolls Corner, Halifax County, has completed the Bronze Standard of the Duke of Edinburgh Program with community service focused on leadership in the Scouting Movement and skills development focused on playing the tuba in the Musquodoboit Rural High School band; and

Whereas Morgan was presented with the Bronze Standard of the Duke of Edinburgh Award at the MRHS band Christmas concert on December 7, 2010;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia House of Assembly extend its congratulations to Morgan Erskine on her Duke of Edinburgh Award achievement and encourage her in the continuing development of her ability to lead.

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 a No.

The notice is tabled.

The honourable member for Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage.

RESOLUTION NO. 2913

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

Whereas Steve and Celine Burlock are the owners of The Health Basket, a health and wellness store located at 978 Cole Harbour Road in Cole Harbour; and

Whereas The Health Basket employs about a dozen people in Cole Harbour and the surrounding communities; and

Whereas this year The Health Basket is celebrating 15 years of assisting people on their journey towards wellness and health by offering a selection of quality products, supplements, vitamins and foods as well as alternative nutritional counselling and health and wellness practices;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House congratulate Steve and Celine Burlock on The Health Basket's 15th Anniversary in the community of Cole Harbour and wish them many more years of success in helping Nova Scotians lead healthier, happier lives.

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 a No.

The notice is tabled.

The honourable Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal.

RESOLUTION NO. 2914

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

Whereas on October 13, 2010 Mr. Elmer Cross of Big Tancook Island celebrated his 80th birthday; and

Whereas every Wednesday and Friday during the hockey season, Mr. Cross packs up his gear and jumps on the Tancook Ferry to come to Chester to take part in the old timers hockey games; and

Whereas three years ago Mr. Cross required a heart valve replacement and instead of hanging up his blades and taking things easier, he became more determined than ever to stay active and continues to play old timers hockey;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly wish Mr. Elmer Cross continued good health as he proves that it's never too late to be active and support our communities.

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

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

Is it agreed?

I hear a No.

The notice is tabled.

The honourable member for Truro-Bible Hill.

RESOLUTION NO. 2915

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

Whereas the 12-hour Joy of Giving Food Drive was held in Truro on November 17th; and

Whereas Truro and the surrounding community donated a record breaking 49,457 pounds of food to help fill the shelves at the local food bank; and

Whereas the Truro Lions Club also donated \$10,000 to this annual food drive;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia Legislature congratulate Truro, the surrounding communities and the Truro Lions Club for their generosity in donating to the 12-hour Joy of Giving Food Drive and for helping others in need.

MR. SPEAKER: The notice is tabled.

The honourable member for Pictou East.

RESOLUTION NO. 2916

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

Whereas on Tuesday, November 30, 2010 New Glasgow businessman, Don Mingo, was awarded Tourism Sector Person of the Year at the 2010 Crystal Tourism Awards of Excellence Gala in Halifax; and

Whereas the Mingo family have owned and operated Maritimes Inns and Resorts chain since 1970; and

Whereas to qualify for this distinction, the award recipient must display innovation and creativity in sales, marketing and promotions, encouraging a training culture and continually strive to improve product and service, recognize and appreciate Nova Scotia's cultural diversity and actively use sustainable practices;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this Nova Scotia House of Assembly congratulate Don Mingo on receiving the Tourism Sector Person of the Year at the 2010 Crystal Tourism Awards.

MR. SPEAKER: The notice is tabled.

The honourable member for Cape Breton Nova.

RESOLUTION NO. 2917

MR. GORDON GOSSE: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the member for Queens, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas a book was recently launched, *The Mouse in the Music Room*, which is both a children's story and a lesson on the colour note system, a different way Milton author Kristen Lewis has used to approach learning music; and

Whereas the book was started seven years ago and was inspired when Kristen Lewis was part of a band in which the members all used the colour note system; and

Whereas children as young as three years old can play simple songs because there's no second guessing and it keeps children interested in music;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly recognize and congratulate Kristen Lewis, author of *The Mouse in the Music Room*, a children's story and a lesson on colour note system, and wish her good luck in all her 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?

I hear several Noes.

The notice is tabled.

The honourable member for Cape Breton Nova.

RESOLUTION NO. 2918

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

Whereas on November 12, 1905, the Knights of Columbus, Sydney Council No. 1060, renowned for its founding principles of charity, unity, and fraternity, was the first council formed in the Province of Nova Scotia; and

Whereas this collection of individuals, community stalwarts in their own right, from all walks of life, has been at the forefront in matters of civic, provincial, and national interests since its inception; and

Whereas recently the Knights of Columbus, Sydney Council, celebrated their 105th Anniversary;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate the Knights of Columbus, Sydney Council No. 1060, on the occasion of their 105th Anniversary and thank them for their dedication and commitment to their community.

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

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

Is it agreed?

I hear several Noes.

The notice is tabled.

The honourable member for Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage.

RESOLUTION NO. 2919

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

Whereas Nova Scotia has thousands of senior citizens who are vital, active, and engaged in their communities, sharing their experience and knowledge to better the lives of their family, friends, and neighbours; and

Whereas active seniors in the Eastern Passage-Cow Bay area have formed a Seniors Club which allows them to share their experiences, ideas, goals, and dreams, uniting together in their common bonds; and

Whereas the Eastern Passage-Cow Bay Seniors Club meets every Wednesday from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. at the Eastern Passage Lions Club and welcomes new members to come out to enjoy this camaraderie;

Therefore be it resolved that this Nova Scotia House of Assembly congratulate the members of the Eastern Passage-Cow Bay Seniors Club on the forming of their club and wish them much success on their future activities.

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 Sackville-Cobequid.

RESOLUTION NO. 2920

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

Whereas Robert Fullerton has been involved with the Lower Sackville Handyman Connection since 2002 and purchased the franchise in 2005; and

Whereas Handyman Connection serves all of Halifax Regional Municipality, working on more than 1,000 projects every year; and

Whereas this year Handyman Connection won the Consumers' Choice Awards Best Renovation Contractor in Halifax and received the award earlier this month;

Therefore be it resolved that this House congratulate Robert Fullerton and all the staff at the Lower Sackville Handyman Connection on winning this year's Consumers' Choice Awards Best Renovation Contractor in Halifax.

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

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

Is it agreed?

I hear several Noes.

The notice is tabled.

The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid.

RESOLUTION NO. 2921

MR. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas Kristen Roe is an employee of the IWK Health Centre in Halifax and a constituent of Halifax Citadel-Sable Island; and

Whereas in 2008 Kristen swam a double crossing of the Northumberland Strait and used this swim to raise \$80,000 for the Stephen Lewis Foundation and Farmers Helping Farmers; and

Whereas this past July Kristen became the first Nova Scotian to successfully swim across the English channel and attempt to raise \$100,000 for the Stephen Lewis Foundation and the Nova Scotia Gambia Association and build awareness about the tremendous work that both organizations are undertaking in tackling the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Africa;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly acknowledge and congratulate Kristen on all her hard work and efforts to raise awareness and inspire actions against HIV and AIDS locally and globally.

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.

[10:15 a.m.]

The honourable member for Antigonish.

RESOLUTION NO. 2922

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

Whereas on November 7, 2010, the St. F.X Women's X-Women beat the Concordia Stingers 17-12 in overtime to capture the Canadian Inter-university Sport women's rugby title; and

Whereas St. FX fullback Magali Harvey was named an All-Star and the Championship MVP, and two other St. FX players were named Championship All-Stars; and

Whereas Coach Mike Cavanagh has led the X-Women to 13 consecutive AUS championships and the November 7th championship win is the second national title for the X-Women in the past five years;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House congratulate the St. FX Women's Rugby Team on their national championship win and wish them 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?

I hear several Noes.

The notice is tabled.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition on an introduction.

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to draw the attention of the House to the west gallery where we have with us today Doris Cross. Doris is one of the oldest residents on Big Tancook Island. At 88, Doris is not only still able to be in her own home, but despite her two canes she manages to keep the grass clipped and put her entire winter supply of firewood in her basement by herself, tends to the furnace and does all her own chores. When there is a community event, she is the first to arrive with a goodly supply of her famous cooking. Now, I thought I came from a large family but Doris is the youngest child of 21 children. (Applause) She has three older siblings still living and she says maybe there wasn't always a lot to eat but there was never a lack of love from our parents.

With her in the gallery today is her cousin, Sylvester Atkinson. Sylvester is the former Mayor of Middleton. Sylvester is also the cousin of the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party's wife Sandra. He has the honour of being a teacher to the honourable Sterling Belliveau in junior high school. I would ask the House to give both of them a warm welcome as they came today to see the proceedings.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, we certainly welcome our special guests here this morning and hope they enjoy the proceedings here in the House.

The honourable member for Antigonish.

RESOLUTION NO. 2923

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

Whereas the employees and many volunteers of Feed Nova Scotia, Parker Street Furniture Bank, United Way and Salvation Army, along with many local organizations work tirelessly throughout the Fall and December to ensure that they have adequate resources to assist families in need over the holidays; and

Whereas many individual organizations like the CBC and others hold their own food drives to support these initiatives; and

Whereas those of us in a position to donate food or money to Feed Nova Scotia or any other similar organizations around the province often support them very generously;

Therefore be it resolved that the House commends the dedicated employees and volunteers at Feed Nova Scotia and other helping organizations and their thousands of donors for the amazing work that they do at this time of year.

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 Eastern Shore.

RESOLUTION NO. 2924

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

Whereas the Eastern Shore District High School, located in Musquodoboit Harbour has a proud history that stretches back to 1965; and

Whereas the Eastern Shore District High School offers quality academic and other programming from Grades 10 through 12 to students from communities such as Oyster Pond, Lake Echo, Porter's Lake and Chezzetcook; and

Whereas the Eastern Shore District High School boasts an athletic program that includes hockey, volleyball, badminton, wrestling, rugby and soccer, all honoured to carry the name Schooners;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly congratulate the students, faculty, staff and families of the Eastern Shore District High School who come together to create a quality learning environment and wish them continuing success in all of their important social, athletic and academic endeavours.

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

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

Is it agreed?

I hear several Noes.

The notice is tabled.

The honourable member for Lunenburg West.

RESOLUTION NO. 2925

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

Whereas the Nodding Group is a Bridgewater company that offers products and services such as solar and conventional heating, ventilation and air-conditioning, commercial ship repair and crane services; and

Whereas at the Lunenburg-Queens Business Excellence Awards held in October at the Atlantica Hotel and Marina Oak Island in Western Shore, the Nodding Group received the Entrepreneurial Award; and

Whereas on receiving the award, Mr. David Nodding noted that the company desires to have a positive influence when it comes to community and environmental needs;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the Legislative Assembly congratulate the Nodding Group on receiving the Entrepreneurial Award at the Lunenburg-Queens Business Excellence Awards, acknowledge their contribution to the business community and the environment, and wish them success in their future business endeavours.

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 a No.

The notice is tabled.

The honourable member for Cumberland North.

RESOLUTION NO. 2926

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

Whereas Paul Harrison and the executive of the L.A. Animal Shelter held the 23rd Annual Telethon of Love on Sunday, December 5th, at the Amherst Lions Club; and

Whereas they raised \$12,488 in a four hour period; and

Whereas all money raised will support animals in Cumberland County;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulate the executive of the L.A. Animal Shelter for their altruistic volunteer efforts in support of abandoned pets and animals in need.

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 a No.

The notice is tabled.

The honourable member for Hammonds Plains-Upper Sackville.

RESOLUTION NO. 2927

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

Whereas Enterprise Rent-A-Car sponsors a program they call Hometown Heroes Program; and

Whereas industry partners such as insurance companies and auto body shops are invited to a special luncheon on December 9th at which the partners themselves select six charities which will be honoured with a gift of \$1,000 from Enterprise Rent-A-Car; and

Whereas the Hometown Heros Program has been in place through Enterprise Rent-A-Car for a number of years;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly recognizes the leadership and generosity shown by Enterprise Rent-A-Car through their Hometown Heroes Program.

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 a No.

The notice is tabled.

The honourable member for Kings North.

RESOLUTION NO. 2928

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

Whereas Kings County resident Patricia Bishop is a graduate of the Nova Scotia Agricultural College (NSAC) and a respected and well-known agricultural entrepreneur; and

Whereas Ms. Bishop and her family have made TapRoot Farm a model for community-shared agriculture, earning her and husband Josh Oulton the title of Atlantic Canada's Outstanding Young Farmers for 2010; and

Whereas NSAC recently named Patricia Bishop the recipient of its Young Alumni Achievement Award for her contributions to agriculture;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly congratulate Patricia Bishop on being the winner of the Nova Scotia Agricultural College Young Alumni Achievement Award and thank her for her commitment to the industry and for her creative and entrepreneurial investment in agriculture.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Lunenburg.

RESOLUTION NO. 2929

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

Whereas High Liner Foods Inc. of Lunenburg, a leading North American processor and marketer of superior quality seafood, announced on November 29, 2010 that the company has made a commitment to source all of its seafood from certified sustainable or responsible fisheries and aquaculture farms by the end of 2013; and

Whereas this commitment from High Liner Foods Inc. will require wild-caught seafood and farmed products to come from fisheries and aquaculture farms that are certified as sustainable, or require those suppliers not yet certified to be on a clear, defined path towards sustainability; and

Whereas High Liner Foods will collaborate with its NGO partner, the Sustainable Fisheries Partnership, to achieve the goal of doing business only with suppliers who share their vision of sourcing seafood responsibly with the dedication to environmental stewardship to ensure that natural resources are available for generations to follow;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly recognize Highliner Food Inc. of Lunenburg and their commitment to responsible, sustainable seafood sourcing and their dedication to environmental stewardship.

Mr. Speaker, I request waiver of notice.

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

Is it agreed?

I hear several Noes.

The notice is tabled.

The honourable member for Guysborough-Sheet Harbour.

RESOLUTION NO. 2930

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 Halifax Regional Municipality held a ceremony on October 6, 2010, to honour firefighters for their exemplary service; and

Whereas firefighters, especially volunteer firefighters, dedicate many hours of selfless service to their communities and neighbours; and

Whereas Edward Anthony Probert received his 20-year Federal Exemplary Service Medal, as well as his 25-year Provincial Long Service Medal at the October 6th ceremony;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly thank Anthony Probert for his 25-plus years of service to his community and neighbours and wish him every success in his future endeavours.

The notice is tabled.

The honourable member for Colchester-Musquodoboit Valley.

RESOLUTION NO. 2931

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

Whereas the Musquodoboit Valley Memorial Hospital has recently introduced important innovations in its model of care, including same day appointment scheduling and the re-ordering of emergency department hours; and

Whereas these innovations were recognized by Dr. John Ross in his report, *The Patient Journey Through Emergency Care*, as pointing towards a sustainable framework for patient care in community hospitals in rural Nova Scotian; and

Whereas the Musquodoboit Valley Memorial Hospital and Musquodoboit Family Practice on December 7, 2010, were pleased to host the launch of Better Care Sooner, the government's response to and acceptance of the recommendations of the Ross report;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia House of Assembly affirms the innovative and committed approach to patient care being developed at the Musquodoboit Valley Memorial Hospital and joins with the people of Musquodoboit in looking forward to the development of the collaborative Emergency Centre in Middle Musquodoboit.

Mr. Speaker, I request waiver of notice.

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

Is it agreed?

I hear several Noes.

The notice is tabled.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, further to the notice that I have given you, I rise in accordance with Rule 43 and move that the business of the House be set aside for the purpose of discussing a definite matter of urgent public importance, funding cuts to P-12 education. School boards across this province have been asked to plan for a 22 per cent reduction in their budgets.

As school boards go through this planning exercise, it is becoming increasingly apparent that these cuts will directly impact students and the quality of education from one end of this province to the other. In addition to this challenge, no clear direction has been provided as to the status of targeted funding for programs such as autism, Options and Opportunities and math mentors.

Mr. Speaker, members of this Legislature have been asking questions since questions to this government since the proposed cuts have been announced. School boards, parents and students are becoming increasingly concerned and they have waited long enough. There is no more urgent topic and no better time to discuss the impact of these cuts.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, honourable member. I have received the more than two hours notice of the matter, as required under Rule 43(2) and under Rule 43(4) I am required to decide whether the matter is proper to be discussed. Since receiving the request late yesterday afternoon, I have certainly wrestled with this issue, trying to decide what is the right thing to do.

The night was short, as it was, probably a little shorter because I was thinking about it through the night. I asked my Clerk to do a little research on the issue and try to come up with a definition of what “emergency” actually means.

[10:30 a.m.]

As members will know, there have been several requests for emergency debates in my time as Speaker and I’ve granted each of those requests based on the requirements set out under Rule 43. In each case one of the matters I must consider in deciding is whether the business of the House be set aside to discuss a matter of urgent public importance, as set out in Rule 43(4A), “. . . have regard to the probability of the matter being debated by the House within a reasonable time by other means.”

Members have just heard from the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition requesting that the government look at this issue - or a request from the government by the school boards to - a planning exercise of a 22 per cent reduction of their budgets and the cuts that might have on Primary to Grade 12 education. As referenced by the member, he is referring to the Options and Opportunities Program, the autism programs, the math mentors, and so on.

In carrying out this function under Rule 43, the Speaker must have regard to whether there are already any items on the order paper dealing with the same subject under which it could be raised in debate during a reasonable period of time. I've looked at the order paper and there is on the order paper Resolution No. 2490. I'm not going to read it word for word, but it covers many of the issues that the honourable member has raised here around the 22 per cent reduction, around the other formula, and the programs that are already referenced.

Not only is this resolution already on the order paper for debate, it has already been debated in this House on December 1st. I have a copy of that here with me and it's available to any members who may wish to have a look at it. Throughout that debate - and it's several pages - it talks about the 22 per cent reduction, it talks about the Options and Opportunities Program, autism programs, math mentors - all of those were debated on December 1st.

While the issue has certainly continued to garner attention, there has been discussion and speculation by many, and it is an important issue, no question, but overall I do not believe there have been any emergency developments since December 1st that would change to put it in the category of an emergency. Unlike the other subjects that have been raised with me as (Interruptions) If you'll let me finish, please. With me and the request for the emergency debate, this one does not meet the test set under Rule 43.

Accordingly, I have no choice under Rule 43 of our Rules and Forms of Procedure. Leave will not be granted to set aside the business of the House to discuss this matter. As I said, I have copies of that Hansard here with me if any member wants to look at it. So, honourable members, that is my ruling based on a difficult decision. I've wrestled with it throughout the night and this morning, but that is the conclusion that I have come to.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, with all due respect, that resolution was debated; as you said, it was put in this House. But as you would well know, yesterday school boards from across this province met with the Deputy Premier, met with members of this government, met with our caucus, met with members of the Progressive Conservative caucus, and laid out the impacts of the cuts very clearly. There is no more important matter before this House than the impact that this will have on public education in the Province of Nova Scotia.

The men and women across this province who are standing in front of students today are concerned about whether or not they will be able to provide the programs that they have today. Why would you rule against the most important issue facing the Province of Nova Scotia today? There was more information put in front of this House yesterday, and if you had been here you would understand what happened in this House yesterday and you could have heard from school board members across Nova Scotia.

MR. SPEAKER: I appreciate your concern. I have wrestled with this issue in the hours since I received it late yesterday afternoon. Based on the Hansard record, the information, my Clerk's advice, and other information I have gathered, I have made my ruling. That is my decision.

The honourable Opposition House Leader.

HON. MANNING MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I informed you yesterday that this motion was coming today. I also informed you that we were agreeing to set aside our motions today on Opposition Day, our resolutions, in order to debate this very important subject that is before the House and before all Nova Scotians - namely, the 22 per cent cut in education costs, which will destroy the education system in this province if it's allowed to happen.

Mr. Speaker, if you don't think that's an emergency, if you don't think that a 22 per cent cut in education possibly coming through this NDP Government - then you shouldn't be in that Chair, I'm telling you right now, Mr. Speaker. (Interruptions) Mr. Speaker, I've been House Leader of this Party for the last 10 years and this is the worst decision that was ever made by a Speaker of this House. It's a "homer decision" and all you've done is tried to save your job for another little while. Instead of being over in Rhode Island, spending the taxpayers' money . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please.

MR. MANNING MACDONALD: . . . you should have been here sitting in the Speaker's Chair where you belong. Tell that decision to the children of this province. Tell that decision to the folks (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. Order, please! Enough is enough, the decision has been made and I hope you'll be able to accept my decision. (Interruptions) Order, order. (Interruptions) Enough is enough! I order you to sit down. (Interruptions) You have the right to disagree, but it's not going to be (Interruptions) Order, order. I've made my decision and that's it.

We're going to move on in our government business. (Interruptions) Order, order. (Interruptions)

MR. MANNING MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, shame on you! (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Enough, enough! You've had your say and I've made my decision based on the facts I had. We're going to go on to a (Interruptions)

MR. MANNING MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, for the children of this province, I ask that you change your decision . . .

MR. SPEAKER: I've made my decision and, honourable member, under Rule 28, I'm going to ask you to withdraw those comments.

MR. MANNING MACDONALD: No, I won't, Mr. Speaker. I'm making these comments (Interruptions)

I will not retract those statements (Interruptions) One Government Place made that decision, not you. (Interruptions) Mr. Speaker, shame on you.

MR. SPEAKER: Honourable member, I'm going to ask you to retract those statements. For the second time, I'll ask you to retract those statements.

MR. MANNING MACDONALD: I'm not retracting them. (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: For the third and final time, I'm going to ask you to retract those statements. (Interruptions) If you don't withdraw those remarks, I'm going to name you. (Interruptions) You haven't withdrawn them, so I'm going to name you as a member. The honourable member for Cape Breton South, Manning MacDonald, I'm going to ask you a final time to withdraw those comments.

MR. MANNING MACDONALD: I will not withdraw them. I told you four times already (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: You're flouting the authority of this Chair and I'm going to ask you to leave the Chamber.

MR. MANNING MACDONALD: I will, thank you very much. (Interruptions)

[The honourable member for Cape Breton South left the Chamber.]

MR. SPEAKER: We'll move on to the business of the day.

The honourable member for Cape Breton North.

HON. CECIL CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, I've witnessed a lot in this House since you've taken this Chair. I wasn't here the day when the motion came forward with regard to confidence in your serving in that Chair - having been one who was given the privilege of this House to sit in that Chair, and recognize the balance of the issues of the day. Quite frankly, for you to go and scrape through the order paper and try to find some other matter dealing with education when yesterday, before all caucuses, the representatives of the school board brought what is a pending crisis to public education forward to you - for you to go

through and find technical matters to dismiss this for emergency debate, Mr. Speaker, I believe, is not consistent with this House and your role and functions of the House, to go and try to find some excuse.

If the government members or the Cabinet have told you it's just not up for debate because they're already embattled, but for you not to uphold a tradition of this House to allow matters of an urgent nature before Nova Scotians - and as of yesterday, Mr. Speaker, we were, as all three Parties, advised of an impending crisis in public education in this province, and for you to sit there and to ignore that request and to throw a member out for having his right to speak on behalf of the concerns affecting all Nova Scotians, the people of this province, that is wrong, and I would ask you to reconsider your bad decision. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: I thank you for your consideration and I will certainly take under advisement what you've said, but I've made my decision at this time.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS

MR. SPEAKER: Question Period will begin at 10:41 a.m. and end at 12:11 p.m.

The honourable member for Richmond.

JUSTICE - BURNSIDE FACILITY: MIN. - CONTROL

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, CBC News obtained a report following the suicide of an inmate at the Burnside facility - I've risen in my place on various occasions to express concerns regarding the state of that facility and the safety of the men and women who work as prison guards in that very facility - and the report describes veteran guards shaken by filthy prison cells, chaotic behaviour of inmates, and a lack of leadership for staff. Yesterday a defence lawyer requested that his client not be sent to the Burnside facility due to fears for his own client's safety. My question to the Minister of Justice is, when will the minister finally get control over the Burnside correctional facility?

HON. ROSS LANDRY: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question. I won't talk on any specific cases with regard to that matter, but I am very pleased to say that there have been a number of changes that have occurred within the Burnside centre such as more clear lines of reporting, an additional number of captains put in place so that leadership is in there, policies and procedures to ensure safety and security of everyone in the facility have been upgraded. There is zero tolerance to violence; we've hired more officers; we've relocated the director to that facility; we've provided protective vests for the staff; and we've hired a contracting company that deals with contaminants. Especially in this day and age,

with the viruses and other types of diseases that are in the fluids today, we need special care, and so that has been implemented. I'm very confident in the establishment there. It is a jail.

MR. SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, yes, the same jail that the minister referred to those inside of it as clients just a few weeks ago.

Nova Scotians expect criminals to serve their full sentences. While we have a Minister of Justice who says his motto is "you do the crime, you do the time," under his watch he has gone from letting criminals free to keeping another in jail beyond his sentence. We have already seen counsel for Fenwick MacIntosh request extra credit for time served due to the conditions that his client had to put up with at the Burnside facility. Fortunately, in that case, the judge did not accept that request.

My question to the Minister of Justice is, what steps will he take to ensure that judges in Nova Scotia are not giving criminals extra credit due to the conditions at the Burnside correctional facility?

MR. LANDRY: Mr. Speaker, the judges in this province are free to make decisions as they so wish, and I'm not going to interfere with that in any manner as the Attorney General.

As for the interior of the jail, I want people in Nova Scotia to realize, and I'm sure most Nova Scotians do, that it is a jail and sometimes the clientele that are in there - and I do refer to them as clients. I respect each and every Nova Scotian, no matter whether they are incarcerated or whether they're walking down the street or whether they're my neighbour. I think it's very important from a government, we respect all Nova Scotians. (Applause)

[10:45 a.m.]

MR. SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, the NDP calls them "clients" and the Liberals call them "criminals" and that's the way they should be treated, not given extra credit because of the conditions at the Burnside facility. The easy answer the minister could have given is that he was going to instruct Crown Attorneys in this province to fight against any attempts to give extra credit to criminals due to the conditions at Burnside, now that would have been leadership. For him to stand and say, I'm not going to interfere with judges' decisions, well that was the easy way out and that's a complete lack of leadership, no surprise from what we've heard.

Mr. Speaker, the 2009-10 Annual Report from the Ombudsman showed that one-third of the complaints came from our jails and our court system. Interestingly, one of the complaints involved a screaming, naked, adult female offender who was yelling obscenities throughout the night and removing her clothing. What is interesting about that complaint is that the female offender was being housed in the youth wing of the Cape Breton Correctional

facility. My question to the Minister of Justice is, what are female offenders doing in the youth wing of the Cape Breton Correctional Facility?

MR. LANDRY: Thank you very much for the question. He has outlined a number of things in there. First, I'll deal with the issue of client versus criminal. It's a matter of semantics in some people's minds, but showing respect to all Nova Scotians I think is a critical, important matter, no matter who they are. (Applause)

The second thing, Mr. Speaker, is that I am very pleased to see that for over a month no one has been released on a temporary absence from that institution. That's a significant difference from previous administrations. Even when the Liberals were in, the numbers were higher than they are today, so that's a key point.

The third point I wish to make is that he should go back and see the period in which the Ombudsman had reviewed the institution and that this government, this minister and his department have taken positive, concrete steps to improve the quality of the system. We will continue to make improvements, despite the gaps and difficulties we assumed when we took office.

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

LWD: STAKEHOLDERS - CONSULTATION

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Yesterday we saw this government's unique version of consultation. If you are a union, you are promised a new and special relationship by the NDP Government, but if you are a Nova Scotia business, particularly a small business, you are summoned to a meeting by a minister and the Premier's chief of staff for a lecture on why you are wrong.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier himself has said that good policy comes from respectful and fair consultation, not from one-sided dialogue. My question for the Premier, in light of yesterday's lecture by his chief of staff to Nova Scotia's small businesses, will he stop his labour agenda, get back to the drawing board and truly consult with all interested stakeholders on an equal basis, not favour some and lecture others?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, what I can tell the member opposite is that this morning I had the pleasure of meeting with the members of the Premier's Council, for the purpose of talking about economic issues in the province. I can report that they are pleased with the progress we are making on the economic agenda for the province.

Mr. Speaker, I want to take the opportunity again - I know I've had it before but I'd like to take the opportunity again - to thank all the members of the Premier's Council on the Economy. Of course it is very important that we have a co-operative, collaborative effort to make sure that we strengthen our economy.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, that's great that the Premier met with his handpicked group of advisors. But the fact of the matter is that at the meeting yesterday there was perhaps a ray of sunlight in that the minister and the Premier's Chief of Staff, the person who may well really be running this government, indicated that they are open to accepting recommendations from the business community, including the small businesses of the province, on this government's labour policy. So my question is, will the Premier follow his chief of staff's lead? Is he committed to accepting the recommendations that are coming forward from that group that they met yesterday?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I know it's the opinion of the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party that chiefs of staff always run the government and, therefore, I am sure that he has no problem taking responsibility for all the decisions that were made in the Hamm Government. (Interruptions)

MR. BAILLIE: I would tell you that would be far easier than taking credit for the decisions of that government over there, which is what his chief of staff has to do. But this is not a time for joking around, Mr. Speaker, because in the fragile economic state that we're in today it is crucial that we maintain the right balance between labour and management so that Nova Scotia can move forward. That is what is at stake as this government pursues its pro-union agenda.

So my question to the Premier is this, will he commit to the recommendations that he got yesterday, from those business leaders, before this session ends and, if not, will he set aside that agenda until it can be properly thought through?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, our agenda is a balanced one. It is one that is well represented by the legislation before this House and I hope that means that what the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party just said is that he will vote in favour of the bill before the House.

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

HEALTH: EHS - COSTS

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Premier and Minister of Health released a plan for emergency health service. A component of the plan is to expand the use of paramedics and urge people to use 911 more often. As Dr. John Ross stated in his original report to government, the cost of ambulance care to patients is a real barrier for people using this service. So my question to the Premier is, how will he remove that barrier?

THE PREMIER: Well, Mr. Speaker, among other things, we intend to look at the way that the fee structure is now but, more than that, we also have looked at how we can go about putting in place a medical shuttle service that will allow people to be transferred from

facility to facility so that (a) you're not incurring the kind of fee that you see in ambulances and (b) you're not taking ambulances off the road to do what could be routine transfers.

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, currently the cost that is charged to someone using an ambulance for 911 is almost \$135, \$168 if you have a challenge with mobility such as the use of a wheelchair, and we know that this fee is a barrier. The Province of New Brunswick tried to address this by eliminating the fee and I'm sure the Premier and this government know that they've had to reverse that decision to make changes to that. Yet we know in many cases, calling 911 can make a huge difference in the outcome for patients, especially in rural areas, and Dr. Ross confirmed this in his report. So again I'll ask the Premier, what is your plan for making EHS more affordable and, therefore, more available to those who need it most?

THE PREMIER: I want to point out what I've already said, Mr. Speaker, but I think it's important that we preface it by saying this. In an emergency, the last thing a person should have to worry about is a fee. We want to ensure that people use the service to get the care that they need. So we're going to review the ambulance fee policy that's currently in place. We're going to try to build into the system as much flexibility as possible.

It is one of those pieces to the overall plan and, as you know, Mr. Speaker, Dr. Ross' recommendations in the report that came forward yesterday are multi-faceted and this is one piece, an important piece, of course.

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, I agree with the Premier that no one should be not calling 911 because of the fee but, quite frankly, Dr. Ross has laid out very clearly in his report, which he was very thoughtful in his recommendations that he made to government, that the cost of using EHS is a real barrier for many Nova Scotians and many Nova Scotians are refusing to call because of the cost. I think we all agree in this House that EHS service in the Province of Nova Scotia is world class. I think we would all agree that we need to use the full scope of practice of our paramedics. This government plan is to advance the use of paramedics and in some cases to divert patients from local ERs or to provide care in the patient's home.

My question to the Premier is, can you do this within the envelope you already budgeted for EHS or will patients be expected to pick up the tab for the home visit by an ambulance?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, first of all, this issue is a little bit more complex than the member paints it to be, of course, for ambulance services. Many people have private insurers who actually pay the cost of the ambulance service. What we are looking for is a way to accommodate the problem that the member legitimately brings up, and at the same time accommodate the fact that there is a cost to this service. Although we certainly want to benefit those people who need it, we don't think the private insurers are among those.

We want to ensure that we're not bringing another cost onto government which now is being paid through private insurance.

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

HEALTH - ERs: HOURS - COMMITMENT

MS. DIANA WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health. Last election campaign promises pertaining to 24/7 emergency rooms flowed freely. A clear promise was made to keep emergency rooms open 24/7. At the same time a commitment to expand the hours of Cobequid so it would become a 24/7 facility was also made and it was highlighted in campaign materials circulated by the honourable members from Sackville-Cobequid and Hammonds Plains-Upper Sackville. My question to the minister is, given that this is the only site-specific promise in the NDP election checklist, why did you make it in the first place?

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, the honourable member brings to the floor a very important question about a facility that is a very important facility in the Capital District Health Authority. It is a facility that is underutilized in many respects. It is a facility that could be contributing more to the health care of residents in the local area in which it's located. Dr. Ross has indicated that facility is a facility where the ER hours could easily be expanded to accommodate the pressures that are on that facility. We are actively pursuing that suggestion.

MS. WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, this government has a history of making promises that they have no intention of keeping. Not raising taxes, balancing the budget and not increasing the debt come quickly to mind. The people of Sackville and surrounding areas however read the local campaign literature that said 24/7 - not expanded hours - 24/7, and I'll table that as a matter of fact, it's in this little tiny brochure that came out and it's in very small print but it says 24/7. People in the Sackville area believed that campaign promise. They read the leaflet, and it says that, and they believed it. My question to the minister is, did you ever intend to keep the Cobequid 24/7 promise?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, we are keeping our campaign promises. We are keeping our campaign promises with respect to health care. We have eliminated security deposits in nursing homes. We have implemented an out-of-province travel fund for people who need health care. And we are keeping ERs in this province open. (Applause)

MS. WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, I think the out-of-province travel coverage came actually in the previous government. It's convenient to take them all. (Applause)

[11:00 a.m.]

MR. SPEAKER: Order, order please.

The honourable member for Halifax Clayton Park.

MS. WHALEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Dr. John Ross has done his job. He brought forward a series of recommendations, and yesterday the Premier and Health Minister accepted every single one of them. Dr. Ross recommended that the Cobequid Community Health Centre should not become a 24/7 facility - that's clear. My question to the minister is, yes or no, minister, will you now admit once and for all that the Cobequid Community Health Centre will never be open 24/7?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I want to put firmly on the record that it was this government that introduced the travel policy for people who require health care in Nova Scotia. (Applause)

Mr. Speaker, with respect to Dr. Ross, Dr. Ross did not say that the Cobequid Community Health Centre should not open. He said in his report that it could easily have extended hours and we are actively looking at that right now.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle.

HEALTH - ERs: HOURS - DECISION

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Premier. Yesterday the Premier and his Minister of Health unveiled yet another glossy report which they claim will deal with the chronic problem of ER closures in Nova Scotia. What the people of Nova Scotia want is action on this government's fundamental campaign pledge, not more reports and studies. My question to the Premier is, is this announcement your government's formal decision of victory that emergency rooms across Nova Scotia will remain open?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, for 10 years the former government had an opportunity to deal with the crisis that was emerging in emergency rooms and they didn't. Yesterday what they saw was a government that kept its campaign promises, that brought in a respected emergency room doctor as an ER adviser who provided a set of recommendations, who provided the first set of emergency room standards in the country, and a plan to deal with the problem.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, in his campaign in the 2009 election, the Premier promised to keep all emergency rooms open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. His government broke this promise in its earliest days in office. Nova Scotians are rightly

concerned about the state of health care in this province, and through its inaction to date the government has done little to alleviate those fears.

Mr. Speaker, my question through you to the Premier is, after a string of broken promises, particularly in keeping ERs open 24/7, and 18 months of inaction on this important file, why should Nova Scotians believe you now?

THE PREMIER: First of all, Mr. Speaker, we said throughout the campaign that you were not going to be able to solve all of the myriad of problems that the former government had created overnight.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, the reason why we had in our campaign literature that we would bring in an emergency room advisor was to do exactly what Dr. Ross did, which is examine the system, come up with good recommendations as the foundation for a plan, bring forward the plan so that people could actually have a look at it and have an opportunity to be part of it, and then implement the plan, which is what we are doing.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, Marilla Stephenson in today's ChronicleHerald wrote in regard to the plan, "... Nova Scotians in some rural communities will still be waving goodbye to emergency room service overnight in their small local hospitals." I'll table that.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the Premier, what rural emergency rooms will be losing their services overnight and why are they less deserving of care than those in other centres?

THE PREMIER: Well, Mr. Speaker, I haven't seen or read the column that you refer to. I'm happy to have a look at it. The reality is, and I want to be crystal-clear about it, when it comes to the emergency rooms, the lights will be on, the doors will be open, and the emergency service needed by those communities will be delivered.

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

MS. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to make an introduction.

MR. SPEAKER: No, I'm sorry, not during Question Period, but we'll take your question.

EDUC. - BUDGET CUTS: SCHOOL CLOSURES - LIST

MS. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, yesterday members from across the province discussed the devastating impact of the Premier's proposed 22 per cent cut to school boards. This cut would amount to a closure of over 70 schools. Does the Premier have a list of schools he feels can be cut and will he share it with us?

AN HON. MEMBER: Are we allowed to ask that question?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, what the member opposite knows, but never says is that the planning exercise that we've asked school boards to go through is to ensure that we are getting the most value out of the money that we put into the school system and help recognize the fact that when our budgets are constricted everyone has to play a part in closing the gap between revenues and expenses. The 22 per cent that she keeps talking about, of course, is not this year or next year. It's over the balance of a three-year period and it is designed to also account for future increases that were planned with respect to the system. The exercise that we've gone through with the school boards, I believe, was a very reasonable one. It allows the school boards to take some leadership in this very important undertaking.

MS. REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I guess that accounts for the Premier referring to the numbers that came out yesterday as useless rhetoric. How that is allowing school boards to take leadership, I'm not quite clear. The board also said the following may be cut: Options and Opportunities, co-op education, reading recovery, support for French Immersion, increased guidance services, increased support for students of African descent and First Nations, math and literacy mentors, and funding for smaller class sizes at the lower elementary level. Perhaps the Premier would like to tell us and tell Vic Fleury of the Nova Scotia School Boards Associations which one of those programs he's going to cut.

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, of course we always welcome the school board administrators to meet with the ministers. We think that's an important part of consultation. They know that they have a responsibility to deliver the best possible services to the students of this province. We have asked them to take their part in this important undertaking. This is simply a matter that the previous government left us with a very large gap between the revenues that come into the province and the expenses that we have. I have never heard the member opposite tell us what she believes should be cut in order to balance the budget. (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable member for Bedford-Birch Cove on your final supplementary.

MS. REGAN: Mr. Speaker, it's a little difficult to give you that when you won't debate it. (Applause) The board has made the impacts of these cuts very clear, yet the Premier still insists these cuts will come from board administration. Talk about useless rhetoric. This government doesn't seem to understand that you can't get a 22 per cent budget cut looking at 4 per cent or 5 per cent of the budget. Will the Premier name just one thing he is prepared to cut, other than board administration?

THE PREMIER: First of all, I would remind the member opposite that her very resolution on this matter was debated in the last Opposition Day, on December 1st. In fact, we're perfectly willing to debate it, but as I said, I've never heard - in fact, I've never heard

any of them on the other side talk about how you close the extraordinary gap between revenue and expenses that was created by the members opposite. (Interruptions)

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

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to make it absolutely clear that the first place that boards should look is at their administrative costs, the first place.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester North.

PREM. - EDUC.: ADMIN. CUTS - RESULTS

HON. KAREN CASEY: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Premier. Members of the Nova Scotia School Boards Association, including Vic Fleury and Ken Meech, who are here today, including board chairs and superintendents, were appalled by the lack of understanding demonstrated yesterday when they met with the Deputy Premier, the Minister of Education, and the Deputy Minister of Education. In addition, it became blatantly obvious during the Premier's responses in Question Period that he must not understand value or appreciate the strength and importance of a public education system in this province.

The Premier suggested that cuts should be made in administration but he was told that board governance and regional management only accounts for up to five per cent. My question to the Premier is, will the Premier use this opportunity to explain to educators, parents and Nova Scotians how he can justify a 22 per cent cut over three years, knowing that taking every administrator out of the system will only give him five per cent?

THE PREMIER: Well, Mr. Speaker, just as we've seen the growth of this budget over the years, we've seen the growth in administrative costs as well. I will say again, it is absolutely the place where every parent in this province expects school boards to start, and that's with administration.

MS. CASEY: Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge that we have other members of NSSBA who have joined us because they recognize the seriousness of this cut, this proposed cut. School boards realize the cut will eliminate support programs and their resources that are now provided for students with special learning needs in our classrooms. Class sizes will increase, student support workers will be gone, the intense interventions that are provided will now have to be delivered by classroom teachers who will not be able to do that.

Through the department's own policy on inclusion, Mr. Speaker, these students are accommodated in our regular classrooms. My question to the Premier is, what direction will you be giving school boards and staff regarding the current inclusion policy, so that students

with special needs will continue to receive the appropriate programming, the appropriate supports, in the appropriate setting, that is within our classrooms and public schools?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, unlike previous governments, instead of me telling them simply that this amount of money or that amount of money was going to be cut from a budget, we have taken a completely different approach. We went out to the school boards and we said, it's up to you to provide leadership to make sure that we get where we need to be.

I have faith in the leadership of our school boards, Mr. Speaker, and I expect them to come back with an answer.

MS. CASEY: Mr. Speaker, it is very telling when every mistake that this government makes, they want to blame on somebody else. It's also very telling, when the three pillars on which they have . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order, order. If we're going to have Question Period, we have to have quiet on both sides of the House.

MS. CASEY: It's very obvious, Mr. Speaker, when the three pillars on which this government intends to move this province forward do not include education, let me remind him of that.

In response to questions in the House last week, the Premier stated that funding to support autism would be protected, but students in public schools have a variety of learning needs and I would expect that the Premier would know that. They have a variety of challenges and the programs that were put in place by the previous government were there to support those students.

On the one hand, the Premier is telling school boards the decision is theirs and on the other hand, he is making the decisions himself. So, Mr. Speaker, my question to the Premier is, if the decision about autism is yours to make, as a Premier, will you commit today to protecting the funding for autism, for all other programs, for all other necessary supports, for all other students with special needs in our public schools?

[11:15 a.m.]

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, just so that the record is clear, learning innovation and competitiveness are the foundation of building our economy and we recognize that. That is the focus of our economic strategy in this province. Perhaps the member should read it.

Secondly, what we are asking the school boards to do is to look at the fact that while the student enrolment has dropped by 20 per cent and funding has gone up by 40 per cent, they need to know that they need to help meet the budget targets.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Richmond.

EDUC. - STRAIT REG. SCH. BD.: CUTS - DETAILS

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, the Strait Regional School Board has the lowest student population of any board, yet covers the largest geographic area of any school board in Nova Scotia. Its number one cost is busing, as students have to travel great distances in the Counties of Inverness, Richmond, Guysborough and Antigonish, in order to get to school.

The communities of the quad-counties have gone through very difficult times with school closures and school amalgamations. The Strait Regional School Board has been cut to the bone already. My question to the Premier is, where do you expect the Strait Regional School Board to find 22 per cent savings in the next three years?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I expect all of the school boards in every region of the province to understand that we have now a system, a budgetary position, which is unsustainable. That must be clear to everyone. We are simply asking that everyone do their part in order to help close the gap between the revenues and expenses in this province. I think it is a fair request. It was done respectfully. It was a request that went forward to the School Boards Association where we asked them to take the leadership with respect to this very important matter.

MR. SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, because of government cuts the Strait Regional School Board has already had to lay off teacher assistants, has already had to lay off teachers, and has had to eliminate numbers of programs. The concern for parents of the Strait Regional School Board is that their students should have the same access to education and to programs as to what is available here in the HRM, or in other parts of the province.

Currently many of our students are forced to take distance education because of an inability to provide those courses in the classroom. Again, the member for Antigonish and the member for Guysborough-Sheet Harbour would know that the Strait board has been cut to the bone and asking our students to travel any further to go to class is simply unacceptable. Again, in this case, I ask the Premier, will you tell the parents and the members of the Strait Regional School Board where you expect them to cut to save 22 per cent in the next three years?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I guess the member opposite didn't hear what I said the first time, so I'll say it again. We entered into what I considered to be a very respectful process, one in which we sat down with administrators, one where we said look, here is what is necessary for us to get to in order to bring the books of the province back into balance. Mr. Speaker, you can't have it both ways, if you want to have a balanced budget, if you want to recognize the economic challenges of the province, then you have to be prepared to actually deal with it and that's what we've done. We have asked . . .

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

THE PREMIER: . . . this issue, it is important that they take leadership on the issue.

MR. SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, what's important is that students in Nova Scotia, regardless of where they live, receive the same quality education, regardless of where they are. The Hogg report found that due to the challenges faced by the Strait Regional School Board, that they should receive additional funding to ensure that programming and services were kept up. As I have said before, they have been cut to the bone, so rather than the Premier saying they need to show leadership, they're now looking to the Premier asking for him to show leadership to tell them what schools do we close, what buses will no longer run, what teachers will no longer work? Maybe the Premier can look to the member for Guysborough-Sheet Harbour and the member for Antigonish for some answers on that question.

Where we're at now is that they cannot find 22 per cent in savings over the next three years. My final supplementary to the Premier is, when will you show leadership and finally take action to ensure that our students at the Strait Regional School Board continue to receive a top quality education?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, it's always amusing to follow the contradictions of the member for Richmond. He says on the one hand that they've been cut and on the other hand they've been given additional money. The reality is that the responsibility of delivering an appropriate service, one that will serve all students in this province, come from the leadership of the school boards. We have engaged them in order to ensure that continues to happen.

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

PREM. - EDUC.: INCLUSION POLICY - COMMITMENT

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier. Yesterday in this House when we were discussing the 22 per cent cuts to education, the Premier indicated to anyone who would listen that it would be very tough on administration. Well now we know where his heart lies when it comes to the public education system of the province. He's concerned that it will be tough on education. It begs the question, what about the students? What about the teachers and students who are left to pick up the pieces when this government's policy gets implemented? Some of those students struggle every day, need extra help. That is why, for all these years, the province has had a policy of inclusion to make sure that students that struggle get the help they need, that they get the education they need alongside their fellow students.

But that policy costs money, it requires teachers' assistants and so given the gutting that we're facing today, my question to the Premier is, is this government committed to the policy of inclusion for our students who struggle the most - yes or no?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, the policy of the province with respect to these services is not going to change. What we expect is that the school boards would be in a position to take a leadership on allowing us to deliver the services these students need. That's what we said.

I know that in the previous government, their answer was simply to shovel the money out the door, without any care. (Interruptions)

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

THE PREMIER: Because of the decisions that were made by the former government, because of what was left with us which was an extraordinary gap between revenue and expenses, we are asking all sectors to take their part in reducing the cost of government.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, that answer is getting very tired. Obviously the Premier thinks he's still a member of the Opposition, casting aspersions on past decisions. The fact of the matter is he is the Premier, it's his responsibility, he is making these decisions, he is the one that can say yes or no to inclusion, or not. Fortunately there are also a number of gifted students in our province. There is a program for them, the IB program, the International Baccalaureate program which, for those students who we most want to excel and succeed and make Nova Scotia a great place, we give them additional support. My question to the Premier is, does the government still support the IB program or not and if so, fund it - yes or no?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, the problem for the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party is that it is the fact that the decisions that they made in the past are affecting the future of this province. We are committed to this simple result. They made a mess, we're going to fix it.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, the Premier may well be concerned about how tough it will be on administration to deal with these cuts. We've talked about the students who need the most help, whether they're struggling with the policy of inclusion or whether they're gifted and eligible for the IB Program. The vast majority are everyday students in between who study hard, who want to get ahead, who want to graduate and find a good job here and what is this government telling them - 73 fewer schools, 3,400 fewer jobs, fewer buses, fewer services.

My question to the Premier is, what does he have to say to them? Which schools are going to close? Which teachers are they going to lay off, so that those students can make their own decisions?

THE PREMIER: Well, the first thing I'd tell them is not to listen to the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party, that's what I would tell those students. The reality is that we are working with the school boards. We've made it clear to them what the objectives of the government are with respect to school board budgets. We've made it clear that the path of the former government was not sustainable for the province and the reality is that we need to get that under control and we're going to do it.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford-Birch Cove. (Interruptions) Order, please. The honourable member for Bedford-Birch Cove has the floor.

PREM. - EDUC. CUTS: STAFF - NOTIFICATION

MS. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, yesterday, among the information that the Nova Scotia School Boards Association shared with us were the Expenditure Management Initiative, 22 per cent reduction exercise job losses in each board. I'd just like to point out that Halifax Region School Board is expected to see a decline of 27.43 per cent in its staff. I'm wondering, what does the Premier say to those staffers and to the students who will be affected by those cuts?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I'll say to everyone that we want to make sure that the educational services in the province that are appropriate to the individuals, to the students, are delivered and we expect the school boards to do that.

MS. REGAN: Mr. Speaker, over at Chignecto Central Regional School Board, staff there will face a 24.75 per cent cut. I'm wondering, what does the Premier say to those staffers and the students who are taught by them, who are helped by them, what are you saying to them?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, as I've said before and I believe was said earlier today in the publication of the ChronicleHerald, when Bill Black, a former leadership candidate for the Progressive Conservative Party said, we owe it to our children to make sure that we are able to rein in the spending for primary and secondary education. The reality is that while the school population has shrunk by 20 per cent, our increases in educational spending have gone up by 40 per cent. It should be obvious that we need to be able to make sure that the approach is a balanced one to education and that they play a part in helping getting the fiscal situation of the province back to balance.

MS. REGAN: Mr. Speaker, when we look at Cape Breton-Victoria Regional School Board, the information that the school boards shared with us yesterday indicates that they will face a 22.19 per cent reduction in staff. What does the Premier say to those staffers and to the students who are taught and helped by them?

[11:30 a.m.]

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I'm just going to reiterate, perhaps the member opposite thinks this can go on forever, that we can just continue to expand budgets while the actual student population shrinks. The reality is that the demand is lower, Mr. Speaker, and when the demand is lower, the system has to respond to the demand. We're simply asking school boards to take the leadership in helping address this serious situation.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle.

COM. SERV.: MINISTERIAL ADVISORY GROUP - RE-FORM

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, it's obvious we're not going to get any answers about the cuts to education, so maybe I'll try something on Community Services when it refers to child care, which is children who need nurturing even more.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the Acting Minister of Community Services, yesterday in the Committee on Community Services we heard from the Private Licensed Administrators Association and the Non-Profit Directors Association about pressing needs within the child care sector. Specifically, the child care operators spoke about the need to re-engage the working group.

The working group was originally comprised of two members of the Private Licensed Administrators Association, two members from the Non-Profit Directors Association, the Director of Early Childhood and Development Services, and the deputy minister for the department. It addressed important issues to the department and to child care operators. The result was that issues were resolved very quickly.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the acting minister, knowing that the working group's original purpose has been fulfilled, will the minister commit to establishing a new Ministerial Advisory Committee to address child care issues in the province?

HON. RAMONA JENNEX: Thank you very much for the question. I very much appreciate meeting with the department today and am able to report here in the House that a new group is being formed to ensure that the sector has continued input into policy and program developments. The honourable member brings up a very important point, that these are very important issues, and we have this new group that will be formed with the minister shortly. Thank you.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, the value of having the working group brings frontline operators to have open and regular communications with the Department of Community Services, to address issues before problems arise. This government made a commitment to open and transparent government. This would be a step in that direction and would require no additional funding and would eliminate problems and miscommunication.

These child care operators struggle on many fronts and on these fronts it is staff retention. My question to the minister - the Progressive Conservative caucus is aware that the Department of Community Services will be cutting five per cent from their budget, as decreed by the Finance Minister. What assurances can you give that the slim resources that daycare operators have from now on, that their issue will not be forgotten?

MS. JENNEX: Thank you very much for that question. We recognize that there can be anxiety associated with the talk around reductions that this government needs to make to get back to balance, but rest assured that we will continue to support child care. Thank you.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, daycare operators have staff members who are working one and two jobs, in addition to being a dedicated early childhood educator. These hardworking early childhood educators are given the important task of caring for and helping develop our most precious resource, our children.

Given the high cost of child care, parents can ill afford to pay more for child care. My question through you to the minister, in yesterday's Community Services Committee we heard about the concerns, the issue of staff retention. Madam Minister, what is your government's plan to address this issue?

MS. JENNEX: Thank you very much for the question. This government is going to continue to support the child care sector with continual recruitment and retention programs. There is a grant system, the purpose of which is to provide the daycare providers with the ability to enhance their salaries and benefits. There was an additional \$2 million placed into that last year.

I just want to reassure people that we are continuing to support our child care sector and we also support the great work that our child care providers are providing for our children in this province. I would just like to make a point that all across Nova Scotia, we all need to value the work that our child care operators provide to our young children. I think there's a certain understanding in our society that they have been low-paid workers and we have to recognize the value of the service they are providing for us here in Nova Scotia.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

JUSTICE - MARCH AGAINST VIOLENCE - MIN. STANCE

MR. TREVOR ZINCK: Mr. Speaker, my question today is for the Minister of Justice. The Department of Justice's Web site, under the tab of crime prevention, suggests that it is a concerted effort of individuals, communities, businesses, police services and government agencies working together to address the root causes of crime, and I'll table that document.

Yesterday, Mr. Speaker, I presented Resolution No. 2847 that celebrated the fact that police officers, firefighters, community leaders and the residents of my community came together for the 11th year for the annual March Against Violence, but the minister and his government have seen fit not to support the efforts of my community or the resolution. So I'm wondering if the minister can explain to the House as to whether he supports the information on his Web site or his government's decision not to support the efforts of my community?

HON. ROSS LANDRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for that question. Absolutely, unequivocally, I support his community and will look forward to working in that community on any projects that are within our scope and our ability to deliver.

MR. ZINCK: Mr. Speaker, the Justice Web site also suggests that it's important to prevent crime before it occurs by working with community organizations that are involved in creating safer communities.

Mr. Speaker, the Youth Advocate Program targets kids in six different areas of HRM who are at risk: Bayers Road, Fairview, Uniacke Square, Spryfield, Woodside, Gaston Road, East Dartmouth and north end Dartmouth. The national Crime Prevention Centre provided \$1.9 million in funding, but the program and the cash will run out in March 2011, and I'm wondering if the minister can tell me if he supports the grassroots effort of the Youth Advocate Program and has he lobbied the federal minister for continuing funding?

MR. LANDRY: Thank you to the member for that question. I want to just point out that since coming into this job a year and a half ago, I take the matter of crime prevention and making a shift from being enforcement-driven. There are some philosophies out there saying more police, more charging, and dealing with crime in that manner. I agree with the member that there has to be more work done in the communities, that if we don't make a shift under the foundations that cause crime, we won't be able to address the issues overall.

It needs a collaborative effort. It needs the community involvement, and through that investment - we have the Lighthouse Program, we have a number of initiatives that we have invested money in those programs. He just needs to come forward. If he has a particular issue or need, he needs to have those groups organized and come forward and bring their ideas. We're looking for different ways to support our youth, to support our communities, to reduce crime at its root source rather than allowing individuals to grow up in crime and allow that whole process to continue and that cycle to be - we need to break the cycle.

MR. ZINCK: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the minister's answer but I know other former Ministers of Justice have met with the federal colleagues. So I'm hoping that he will take that opportunity up.

My final question, Mr. Speaker, I want to quote the minister from last Spring's Budget Debates, and it's pertinent to some of the issues that were raised today around education. I'll table this document as well.

The minister upon my questioning suggested that he strongly believes "... that we need to invest in earlier education. That we need to invest in parenting and in ensuring that young mothers have the nutrition and support to nurture the child in the early years. We need to go in that direction. That we need to ensure that a child has a learning opportunity and that their skills and their imagination can grow and develop." I would agree with the minister so I'll table that document.

Mr. Speaker, the Schools Plus project was created through our Kids are Worth It and the strategy for child and youth. Families in my community of Dartmouth North have benefited greatly from the outreach work done through the school board system but I know the program has been under review and I haven't yet heard if it's going to be continued. So I'm wondering if the minister is as concerned about those coming up in the 22 per cent cuts and that program not being continued?

MR. LANDRY: Mr. Speaker, I do want to touch on the issue of federal funding that he raises in there, our departments are always looking at what access we can to get the federal dollars, that we maximize our access to those dollars at all times, and I can reassure the member that we are focusing on that.

I stand by the statements that I made in the hearings earlier that he refers to in the documents that he tabled. I am committed to learning and I do realize and recognize that through learning and through opportunities for our youth to develop and reach their potential is a critical need for us to reduce crime and have a healthy, prosperous province and I'm committed to continuing with that in that vein.

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

PREM. - EDUC.: ANNAPOLIS SCHOOLS - CLOSURE INFO.

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, the constituency of Annapolis, which I represent, falls under the Annapolis Valley Regional School Board. For the past 18 months to two years, the members of that school board have been engaging every school community that I represent on how do we deal with the declining population and make sure that we provide school programs in a safe environment. They've reached out and community has responded in a positive way. The community has provided ideas to the school board on how they can best provide services to those communities. Those communities have accepted the recommendations put forward by the school which will mean, quite frankly, that some of the schools that I represent will close

The decision to cut 22 per cent from that school board has thrown all the good work of our school board out the door and has put those communities in turmoil. My question to the Premier is, will he tell this House which other schools in the constituency of Annapolis are going to close because of his reckless decision?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, unlike the member representing Annapolis, I don't believe those efforts were wasted at all. I continue to thank the school boards for their hard work and also, unlike the Leader of the Official Opposition, I actually have faith in his school board.

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, no member of this House has travelled this province and talked about the school board that he serves under and talked about it in a glowing way. I have a great relationship with the men and women who represent the communities that I represent on the Annapolis Valley Regional School Board. They did something that this government was unwilling to do, they stepped into the community and said to the community, this is our challenge and we want you to be part of it. What this government has done has said, quite frankly, to school boards, your budget is cut 22 per cent whether you like it or not.

Mr. Speaker, I want the Premier to stand up in this House and tell the members of the Annapolis Valley Regional School Board how he expects them to deliver quality education to the people of the Annapolis Valley with a 22 per cent cut?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, the exercise that the member for Annapolis just described is exactly the one we are engaged in. We went out to the school boards and said, this is the challenge we face, we want your help.

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, I've heard the Premier in this House suggest that they want to move people out of the boardrooms to the classroom. I suggest he gets out of the boardroom and gets into a classroom to understand what teachers are being faced with today. (Applause)

The reality is, and the Premier knows it, superintendents across this province are going to be making decisions on next year's school agenda in January. He's putting them through this silly exercise of cutting 22 per cent of their budgets. Mr. Speaker, every member of this House has a caucus budget. Imagine if we cut 22 per cent and said, you can't touch staffing. As long as I've been in this House, I have never seen so many political staffers sit in that gallery than under this government. If he wants the school board to make cuts, maybe he should look in his own office first.

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite knows, we've already gone through that, we're saving money on my office. I didn't have to hire a consultant to tell me how to run my office. (Interruptions)

I don't want to trivialize what is a very, very important subject. What we have done is, we have set out (Interruptions)

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

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, we have set out for all of the school boards the challenges that we face. We have asked them to be part of the solution.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

**EDUC. - ANNAPOLIS VALLEY REG. SCH. BD.:
PSB PLAN DELIVERY**

MR. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Education. It is already recognized that the AVRSB system is the lowest funded in the province. The Hogg report did not adjust all of the requirements of that particular board and for the past seven years they have cut. They have cut to the bone each and every year, in order to be able to deliver the plan in three years. When AVRSB cannot deliver the PSB plan, what will you have to say then?

[11:45 a.m.]

HON. MARILYN MORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to make something very clear. I don't think there is a member in this House who doesn't share the passion of the Opposition Parties about our children and public education in this province. The first summer that I became Minister of Education, I went around and visited all the school boards. I explained to them at that time that we were aware that we had a very severe imbalance between the revenues projected to come into our province and the rising cost of the expenditures and invited them to think outside the box. There has been a series of both informal and formal discussions since that time.

I agree that the information that's coming back at the end of this first formal stage of discussion between the department and school boards is serious and alarming, and we will certainly be looking at that as we proceed further in the dialogue with the school boards. We have not made any decisions. We are still in the stage of review. We wanted to know what the possible impacts would be. That information is gradually coming back. We will take a very responsible, thoughtful look at that information. It is much too early to be alarming students and parents and educators and staff around this province that decisions have been made. Thank you.

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, the minister knows well, as a former school board member, that decisions are made in January; they're not made in June. Yesterday, the minister spoke glowingly about Nova Scotia being 13th in the world PISA testing results on reading. This has been the effort and work of two decades to get Nova Scotia back to this

particular standing. It has taken Reading Recovery, and it has taken investment in resource rooms. I would like to ask the Premier, what is your plan? What will you say to parents whose children will no longer receive the individual help that they will need in reading?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I would say it's terribly irresponsible to tell parents that their children are not going to get the services they need. This is the responsibility of the school board. They take it seriously. They are hard-working people. They are there to make sure that the children in this province receive the services that they need. I would tell them to have faith in their boards.

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, as staff and school communities hear about the gutting of the public education system with a planned 22 per cent cut over three years, shock is starting to set in. Now we know that in Cabinet, this Minister of Education has been rolled over - she hasn't had a voice, it's obvious - but when will she communicate to parents the impact of reduced funding?

MS. MORE: Mr. Speaker, the government will be communicating through the boards with the public when decisions are starting to be made.

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

PREM. - EDUC. CUTS: C.B. - EFFECTS

MR. KEITH BAIN: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Premier. The Cape Breton-Victoria Regional School Board has been finding ways to cut things from their budget for years. I know that because I was a member of that board and its predecessor for 15 years. Those cuts were made in the most reasonable fashion possible in order to have the least impact on the students. Now boards are being asked to cut 22 per cent. You're also telling the students of Holy Angels High School, for example, that not only will you not have a school anymore, on top of that, you're going to have less services. My question to the Premier is, now that you've asked the boards to cut 22 per cent, what assurance can you give parents in Cape Breton that their children's education will not be affected?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I would tell them the services they need for their children will be provided by their board.

MR. BAIN: Mr. Speaker, cuts in any form harm the education of children. A 22 per cent cut over three years will not only have an immediate impact but will impact long into the future. I want to reference students who are attending schools in the North of Smokey area who rely on the services the school board provides that this Premier is asking the board to cut.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the Premier, what will you tell the parents in the North of Smokey area when they can no longer have the resource help or other special services that they already receive on a limited basis?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I'll reiterate. I realize they're going through every board and they started off by saying that cuts in any form would harm education. That's obviously not true. The reality is that while school board budgets have gone up by 40 per cent, demand has gone down by 20 per cent. The simple reality is that we have asked the boards to be part of the solution. We have faith in them.

MR. BAIN: Mr. Speaker, earlier in Question Period the Premier made the pathetic statement that the previous government's programs for kids were shovelling dollars out the door, shovelling dollars out the door. I want to ask the Premier, does he think that providing special services to students is shovelling dollars out the door?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, the list of expenditures made by the former government just in March alone is enough to cripple most provinces. Let me tell you something, we have asked the school boards to be part of the solution. Everybody in the province understands there is a huge gap between the revenues of the province and the expenses of the province. Everybody has to be part of the solution.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

PREM.: EDUC. - THRONE SPEECH PROMISE

MR. ANDREW YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, isn't it funny how quickly the Premier forgets his promises and his own words? He can blame the previous government, he can blame the previous, previous government, yet, in March of this year while he was already Premier, the Premier said in the Speech from the Throne, "My government promised that education and training would be its answer to the impending workforce shortage. It is keeping that promise. High school students are gaining more hands-on work experience through co-op programs and job placements." I will table that.

Those are exactly the programs that the Nova Scotia School Boards Association have suggested may be cut. Will the Premier tell me how he can say he is keeping his promise with the answer of a 22 per cent cut?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, everything that was in that document is true. We did keep those commitments. What we are asking school boards to do is not to be part of the problem, we're asking them to be part of the solution. We think that's their responsibility. I think they think that's their responsibility. I would hope that we will be able to work with them.

MR. YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, before yesterday, it was fine, perhaps, for the Premier to get up and say that the Opposition is just spouting rhetoric. The problem is that yesterday the Nova Scotia School Boards Association told us all what those cuts would mean. On March 23, 2006 this Premier said that schools are more than just educational facilities, they are the heart of many small rural communities.

Mr. Speaker, why has the Premier now decided it is appropriate to cut the heart out of rural communities?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, as you know, the administration of these services is done by the school boards. It is clear that we have a significant problem with the expenses of government, revenues do not match them. What the member is essentially saying is just add more to the debt, just have bigger deficits. Mr. Speaker, that is not the answer and that is not what we are going to do.

MR. YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, the Premier can talk all he wants about saving money and cutting expenses but then there's no problem in holding splashy media announcements, \$42,000 for an energy announcement, how many thousands yesterday to have video feeds as part of an ER announcement, when there were less expensive options. If he really wants to cut, he should start at home.

Mr. Speaker, on November 13, 2004, the Premier complained that school fundraising goes back a long way, he said, "That's money that should be used to pay for extra-curricular activities." He went on to say, "The fact is school fees for some families are just not affordable." So why is the Premier now creating a situation where those same school fees will increase, an increase to cover the basics of education?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I'll say again, over the last 10 years the budgets of school boards have climbed by more than 40 per cent, while the demand for services has shrunk by between 15 per cent and 20 per cent. We need to have the assistance of the school boards in order to be able to meet the desire of this government and I think the desire of all Nova Scotians, to actually balance the books of the province. We're simply asking that they do their part.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

HEALTH: CONTINUING CARE STRATEGY - DETAILS

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health. One of the growth industries we have in rural Nova Scotia is health care services for seniors. We have a success story in Inverness, we have a new hospital expansion and a new nursing home being constructed but yet the demand is still outpacing supply. I spoke with a health care professional who said that about one-third of the beds in the hospital are being used for nursing home purposes.

How does the department prepare for the needs of Nova Scotians who have reached a point in their life where they need help to live out their final years with us?

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I thank the honourable member for bringing a very important question here to the floor of the Legislature. We have a Continuing Care Strategy, we're in the first phase of that strategy. That is about building additional long-term care facilities and residential care facilities across the province. We have seen a number of these new facilities open but there are more under construction and we will be adding, we will see those beds added into the system in the new year.

MR. MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister. I do respect that it's not easy for a minister to have a direct impact on an individual. I want to raise the case of a gentleman who is a veteran, who needs our help. I know that Veterans Affairs used to have beds set up for veterans but they are starting to decommission those beds.

The bed that has been offered to this man is located about a two-hour drive away from his family and from his community. My question to the Minister of Health, is there anything we can offer to this man today to give his family a sense that there will be a better option for him soon?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I'd be happy to meet with the honourable member about the specific case that he is making reference to and have staff in my department look into what the alternatives and options are for this gentleman and his family.

[12:00 noon]

MR. MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the honourable minister for offering that, and I will certainly make use of that opportunity. Seeing a loved one change residence is an emotional experience, even when a move is positive. Changes in life, such as moving, cause stress for people - it's the same as changing a relationship or jobs. I know the minister has mentioned there's some study being made of this right now, but what long-term measure is the department working on to address the growing demand for seniors' health care services in rural areas like Inverness County?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to tell members of this House that one of the pieces of the plan for better health care sooner in Nova Scotia is to have the Province of Nova Scotia adopt a comprehensive geriatric tool that will be used to do assessments of all people over the age of 75 coming into our health care system. This will result in an increase in the quality of the health care that's provided to elderly people. This is something that we will pursue with our geriatric specialists and it will make a significant difference in the journey through the health care system in Nova Scotia for seniors.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

PREM.: EDUC. CUTS - UNDER-REPRESENTED STUDENTS

MR. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, the Premier has talked a lot about his government's agenda for access in the province, but the Premier knows very well that when it comes to access for under-represented students in the post-secondary system, early outreach in our public system is paramount - even more important than any financial assistance that is out there for them. How will his cuts help his agenda for access and increase participation rights of under-represented students in this province?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, part of our agenda is to particularly reach out to those people who may have not completed high school, or have completed high school and went into the workforce but still have a great desire and great potential to increase their skills and their ability to earn a better living. We intend to reach into that population and pull them forward so that they can be a bigger part of the workforce in our province - that needs to be done through education.

MR. CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, the Premier knows that when it comes to access and increasing participation rates of under-represented students, those decisions are made primarily when they're at a very young age and they're made because of their experience in the public education system. When we are facing a changing demand in our workforce with a greater need for skilled workers, how will gutting our education system help fulfill the labour demand that we have in this province?

THE PREMIER: Well, Mr. Speaker, you know, every time a member stands up he or she prefaces what they say by saying something that is simply not true, which is that the requests of the government and the school boards to contain costs are somehow going to harm services to children in this province. The reality is we have asked the school boards to be partners with us. We've asked them to take what we think is their rightful leadership role in ensuring that we have a sustainable system in this province that we can afford - not just this year and next year, but for the years going forward - to continue to adequately fund public school education in this province.

MR. CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, I remember the days when this Premier valued students and treated them as people and not numerical obstacles in his balanced budget.

Mr. Speaker, with more special needs children entering our education system, how, amidst these cuts, will the Premier ensure that these children who are in the highest need in our education system have the support they need to be successful students and successful adults?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, of course we expect the boards to deliver service to these students; we expect that young people in our province will receive a quality education. We also expect that the boards will accept part of the responsibility to ensure that the province is able to continue to fund education years into the future, so we don't see what has happened in the past where there are teachers' wage rollbacks, where there are dramatic cuts made without any consultation whatsoever. We aren't taking that approach; in fact we're taking the opposite approach - we're going out to the boards and saying we have faith in you, help us meet the challenges that we have.

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

TIR: RT. 216 (ESKASONI) - UPGRADE PLAN

MR. ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal. Route 216 leads to the community of Eskasoni, a community of about 5,000 people, and along the road there are many other homes. Would the minister have his department look at the potential of having a three- to five-year plan to have this road upgraded as soon as possible?

HON. WILLIAM ESTABROOKS: Mr. Speaker, I'm well aware of the fact of course that you, as all members have, have received - and I haven't had the opportunity to table a copy of this yet, so I'm going to take this opportunity here in a moment. I was speaking this morning with staff, as I regularly do on Wednesday, and of course their first question was, I'm sure you're going to get a question when it comes to something to do with the Boston Bruins today, and I said, well, we'll see, because I'm aware that the member for Cape Breton West is particularly concerned about the road to Eskasoni. I would like to address his attention to the five-year plan and, if I may, I would like to point out that on Page 15, there is 7.4 kilometres planned for paving. The next year, 2012-13 of the paving project, hopefully we'll continue to be able to complete that project in those two years. That is on Pages 15 and 18 - and I'd like to table it at this time.

MR. MACLEOD: I'd like to thank the minister for that, and thank him for being so proactive in the answer.

The Mira River is an icon in Nova Scotia; it has been made famous around the world by the song, *Out on the Mira*, which was written by Allister MacGillivray, a native Cape Bretoner. I may actually have even sung that song on a couple of occasions myself. The roads on either side of the river are known as the Trout Brook Road, the Hillside Road, Grand Mira South, and Grand Mira North. People from all over the world come and travel these roads so they can visit the river and have a view. Some people use it as part of the Fleur-de-lis Trail and others use it as access to the Two Rivers Wildlife Park. I wonder, would the minister address the concerns of this scenic drive and have his department look at these roads, because they are so important for the residents and visitors alike?

MR. ESTABROOKS: Mr. Speaker, I'm fully aware of the glorious piece of geography around the Mira River. It's an important part of the tourist system in our province. I want the member to know that those roads are being assessed, whether they will be upgraded, or for more maintenance over the paving season ahead, I can assure him that those particular roads will be looked at as the paving season approaches.

MR. MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I want to say, again, thank you to the minister, because this is the way it's supposed to work.

Yesterday, in a response to a question from the member for Victoria-The Lakes, the minister said: "I was far from a geography expert but I have to compliment members such as the member for Cape Breton West who has a memorable road that I can never forget, the New Boston Road". I was pleased to hear the minister say that. My question to the minister is very simple, when can the people of this very memorable road expect to see it paved?

MR. ESTABROOKS: Thank you to the member opposite. Now as the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal, I want members of this House to know that on many occasions some of my predecessors have been accused and when I sat on that side I accused them of political bias. There was no doubt when it came to asphalt, when it came to chip sealing, I would say that certain roads are getting paved because of political bias.

Now I have members of my staff, I have members on this side of the House asking me if I am aware of a road named Bruins Boulevard. They are asking me if there is such a place as Bobby Orr Lane. I want the members opposite and on this side of the House to be aware of the fact that the New Boston Road is a road that I've talked to staff about. There are parts of that road, I am sure, that have been waiting far too long. In fact, I'm aware of the fact that the Chief Highway Engineer for the Province of Nova Scotia, Mr. Bruce Fitzner, at one time had his name and telephone number listed on a sign: If you want this road improved, call Bruce Fitzner.

Now I know that the member opposite probably had nothing to do with that but . . .

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

The honourable Deputy Opposition House Leader.

MR. ANDREW YOUNGER: Just before calling the resolution, I would ask that under Rule 43(1) and 43(2), which allows a member at any point during the daily routine to call for an emergency debate, when things have changed, and present you written notice, which I will do now, which is permitted under the Rules, to waive the two hours.

I would ask for unanimous consent of the House to have an emergency debate on education cuts at this time.

MR. SPEAKER: Is there unanimous consent?

I hear several Noes. It is not possible.

MS. DIANA WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to rise on a point of order about a question during Question Period when I asked about the Cobequid Centre and the government's promise to keep it open 24/7. I think the minister misleadingly referred to extended hours and I would like to just table the page from the report where it was very clear that the consultant's report says that a 2008 consultant's analysis of the centre did not support such a decision - that's the 24/7 decision.

To be very clear, when we're talking about extending the hours we're not extending to 24/7. The answer from Dr. Ross is that there may be a case for extending the hours to 11:00 p.m. or midnight. I think it's very important that the people of Nova Scotia and the people of that area who are served by the Cobequid Centre are very clear on what extending hours means.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The honourable Minister of Health.

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I take great exception to the honourable member's claim or allegation that I was misleading this House.

Mr. Speaker, the questioner asserted that Dr. Ross had said that this facility should not be open 24/7. There is nothing in this report where Dr. Ross said this facility should not be open 24/7. This report indicates that a consultant's report in 2008 made certain findings, and that is quite different than Dr. Ross making that assertion.

Dr. Ross went on to say that a reasonable case could be made at this time for extending the hours of that facility to 11:00 or midnight. I indicated that that is under active consideration in my department, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. I don't believe that's a point of order, I think it is a difference of opinion between two members. Good points but not a point of order

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, during Question Period the Minister of Health indicated that it was herself and her government that were responsible for providing funding for patients who had to travel out of province for care. The minister would be well aware that I stood in my place on a number of occasions advocating on behalf of a constituent who had to travel out of province. At the time I certainly did give credit to

the member for Argyle, who was then the Minister of Health, for approving funding at that time for patients to travel out of province.

While the minister may be correct in saying she established a program, the fact was there was funding that was provided for Nova Scotians who had to travel out of province prior to her arriving in that department. As I did then, I will do again now, the credit for that should be given to the person who did that and that was the former Minister of Health, the member for Argyle and we were certainly very appreciative of that. (Applause)

[12:15 p.m.]

MR. SPEAKER: That's not a point of order, but I thank the member for the information.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS' BUSINESS

MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Deputy Opposition House Leader.

MR. ANDREW YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Resolution No. 2480.

Res. No. 2480, re Lbr. Law - Consultation: Importance - LWD Min. Recognize - notice given Nov. 29/10 - (Ms. K. Regan)

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

MS. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise in my place today to discuss Resolution No. 2480. Just to make things easier for members of the House, I will read the operative clause:

"Therefore be it resolved that the Minister of Labour and Workforce Development recognize that in a time of economic instability, the importance of consultation and participation with all types of employers, pertaining to labour law in Nova Scotia, is more vital than ever for future economic prosperity."

What we are talking about today is, in fact, consultation. What we have seen surrounding Bill No. 100 is what happens when you don't consult or when you do half a consultation. Certainly, businesses were not surprised to see that various labour boards were being amalgamated, they had, in fact, been consulted on that. Certainly the title of the bill gave an indication that's what it was about.

But what they did not expect was to see a number of other clauses inserted surreptitiously into that bill changing what was the overall intent of the bill. Before the Committee on Law Amendments, we had 12 groups appearing as witnesses. All but two of those were concerned about the other insertions into the bill.

If the government had bothered to consult on this issue, they would have known that there were concerns around successor rights, around the clause dealing with that. They would have known that there were concerns about the proposed Labour-Management Review Committee. They would have known that there were concerns about the inclusion of a preamble to the Trade Union Act. They would have known that employers were upset because they were going to be forced to pay for justice when they were appealing a ruling.

These concerns would not have come as a surprise. They could possibly have been dealt with in advance. Instead, the result is we're treated to the Premier insulting the business community by calling them disingenuous.

Yesterday the Premier told the private sector, give us your suggestions. He invited the coalition to propose amendments as long as they didn't attempt to change the intent of the bill. So today we have received those amendments and what we want to know is, is the government going to accept these amendments or was this just a delaying tactic by the government? These amendments will make it very clear what the government's intent is and what it is not.

It will protect business groups. They will know exactly what this bill means. There would be an addition in Section 31 after the words, employees of Her Majesty, to include, if Her Majesty, in right of the province, stops providing a service and that operation is sold or transferred, except, and without, restricting the generality of the following, that Section 31 shall not apply to procurement and contracting of government services. That is the part that is added in.

When we deal with the Labour-Management Review Committee, the amendment makes it very clear that it shall not include any aspect of the acquisition of representational rights under the Trade Union Act. In terms of Bill No. 100, it should be amended to include around the Trade Union Act: The minister shall consult the public, including non-unionized employers and employees, in relation to labour relations, issues that affect all workplaces, including non-unionized employers and employees in the context of the committee's function.

As well, the proposed preamble to the bill, which clearly outlines the bill's legislative power, would be changed with the insertion of the following amendment: And whereas the Government of Nova Scotia by this preamble does not provide legislative purpose, legislative values, and assumptions, nor shall this preamble be considered by the Labour Board in its interpretation of this Act.

We could have risen yesterday, I guess, if the government had bothered to consult, if they'd been open and honest and accountable to the business community of the province, but they decided not to do that. Here again today we have seen another example of the issue of consultation.

I think it was last week that I tabled in this House a copy of a questionnaire that had been sent out by the Tri-County School Board asking parents what was it that they could live with in terms of cuts. At the time, the Minister of Education made it very clear that it was too early to consult and it was too upsetting for parents. Then again today, the minister said it's much too early to be alarming parents and students. You have to ask yourself, when is the right time to alarm parents and students? Do we wait until the final minute or the last day of school, and we should alarm them then?

I remember one year when our school bus to our neighbourhood was cut. It was cut on the last day of school and that meant that parents didn't have time to mobilize and that meant that parents really had no option. By letting parents know now what we're actually dealing with, by letting teachers and staff know now what we're actually dealing with, I think this is more appropriate. I think people need to know what we're actually dealing with, what this government intends for our education system.

The Nova Scotia School Boards Association just gave us a document, *Spend It Now or Pay it Later*, and what we know is that if we do not make investments in education, then we will pay down the road. It is right to involve parents in the consultation as we look at some of the issues facing the government - for example, should we eliminate Reading Recovery, literacy mentors, and individual support? Well, if we do that now, the fact is that the impact will be increased costs for adult literacy support, lower scores on international assessments, like we've just seen. In fact, what we do know is that here in this province, males are performing significantly higher than females. What happens if we get rid of math mentors, for example, for young women who need assistance in math?

We can look forward to lack of employability skills, compromised ability to access post-secondary programs, increased health and increased community services costs, increased poverty, and increased justice costs. If we decide to cut high school programs and courses and eliminate behaviour support and eliminate suspension support, well, that's great, because then we can just have increased suspensions, increased drop-outs, increased costs for justice, increased costs for community services, and a loss of a tax base for us. Just to be clear, when I said, "that's great," I was being sarcastic.

Reduce or eliminate community-based education - another option that parents will have the opportunity to consult on. That would be co-operative education elimination or reduction, skilled trades programs, and Options and Opportunities. What will that lead to? Inability for students to access community college, increased drop-outs, a decline in the number of tradespeople.

If we eliminate support for students who have medical needs, there is going to be an increased demand on critical care and emergency services and a reduced ability to keep students in school where they should be. If we eliminate IB, we will not meet the needs of highly motivated students and the students will leave the public system to attend private school. If we reduce the supports for students with special needs or we close alternate programs, we will reduce learning and achievement and we will see streaming of students in special education classes.

Mr. Speaker, I submit to you that consultation is a necessary part of our democracy, that businesses deserve to be consulted on issues that directly affect them, and parents and students deserve to be consulted on issues that directly affect them.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester North.

HON. KAREN CASEY: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today to speak to Resolution No. 2480 and, in particular, if I could read:

“Therefore be it resolved that the Minister of Labour and Workforce Development recognize that in a time of economic instability, the importance of consultation and participation with all types of employers, pertaining to labour law in Nova Scotia, is more vital than ever for future economic prosperity.”

I do, Mr. Speaker, want to speak to some of the key words in that “Therefore be it resolved” clause. In particular, I want to talk about economic instability and I want to talk about the current environment that we have in our province now which is what I consider to be harmony within the workforce. Harmony within the workforce includes our union and our non-unionized workers.

We should be proud, Mr. Speaker, that we do have a harmonious work environment because Nova Scotians depend on progress from that workforce and productivity from that workforce. What our fear is, is that Bill No. 100 has the potential to drive a wedge into that harmony. It has the potential to separate out 70 per cent of the workforce that are not unionized and the 30 per cent who are. If we look at a split, 70/30, 60/40, whatever you want to call it, it is a divide, it is a wedge, and it does have the potential to interfere with productivity in all of our workplaces.

We know, Mr. Speaker, that we cannot afford to have any lack of harmony, any conflict, within a working environment. We know that many, many small businesses in the province are working on our behalf to improve and to maintain economic stability. I think that needs to be the key. What can we do as a government to make sure that what we have now is maintained and our concern is that this bill has the potential to not do that.

I also want to refer, Mr. Speaker, to some other key words in that “Therefore be it resolved” phrase - two of them are consultation and participation. If you consider the

importance of consultation, we've heard the government speak about consultation. I think anybody who has been in a situation where they are making decisions recognizes that the quality of the decision is directly reflected by the amount of consultation that took place. Any decision maker who wants to make sure that they have answered the questions in their decision before they've ever been asked by the public brings the public in and they provide that consultation and they listen.

[12:30 p.m.]

Mr. Speaker, we have heard this government say they value consultation. We also know that consultation means to listen and as a result of that good decisions can be made. We had members from the Nova Scotia School Boards Association here yesterday speaking to all three caucuses and they wanted somebody to listen. They wanted the people who are making decisions about funding for education, which translates into a whole host of services - and we've heard them all in this House - they wanted somebody to listen as part of the consultation process.

Mr. Speaker, I think we recognize, and they do, that nobody listened. Nobody on the government side listened. If you truly value consultation, if you truly understand what it means, you know that it does mean to listen - to consult and listen, and to use the information that you gather to make the best decision possible.

So we have members from the School Boards Association, we have teachers from around the province who are depending on us, in this House, to make good decisions. They cannot understand why the people who are in the position to make those decisions are not listening. So the consultation that is critical to any of those decision makings didn't take place in the labour bill, didn't take place in Bill No. 100, didn't talk to the people who could have valuable input, didn't talk to the small businesses - those people had to go before the Law Amendments Committee, and they did go before the Law Amendments Committee, and they made it very clear what their concerns were with that particular bill.

We have a lack of consultation. We have an education system that will pay dearly because this government did not consult and listen. And we have a harmony within the workplace - I will speak again, as I did on Bill No. 100, about the harmony that exists within the work environment in school boards and in schools across the province. You have unionized, non-unionized, contract workers, full time, part time, teachers, bus drivers, janitors, custodians, you have many people from many different aspects of employment. And it talks here about consultation and participation with all types - well, Mr. Speaker, we have a host of people with a variety of skill levels and making valuable contributions to the education system in our province who will be negatively impacted and who will not be able to continue to work in harmony.

We have the potential, if we're talking about another important word in that, "economic instability", we have, as you know, with a 22 per cent cut, over 2,000 teachers

alone who will be unemployed. We heard yesterday that we graduate 600 teachers every year. Over the three-year course of this 22 per cent exercise, 1,800 teachers will graduate, so add those two numbers together and what does that do for the economic stability in this province? That tells 3,000 or 4,000 teachers - young, just recently graduated or soon-to-graduate teachers - that there will be no jobs for them. They will not be able to stay in this province; they will not be able to make a contribution to the economy of this province.

It seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that decisions that are being made without the consultation with all people affected by the decision, as Bill No. 100 clearly indicated, that those decisions will have and can have a negative impact. This resolution says, “. . . that the Minister of Labour and Workforce Development recognize that in a time of economic instability, the importance of consultation and participation with all types of employers . . .” - and we know that school boards are one of those types of employers. It’s very frustrating for school boards to know that they are not being heard. They’ve laid it out, they have said, we cannot offer services to our students if the government is going to say to us, we’re cutting 22 per cent over three years.

You know when we’re talking about employers and we’re talking about harmony within a work environment and we’re talking about who is going to be negatively impacted, somehow government seems to have forgotten about the very people for which we are here - and those are the kids in our public schools, because many of those students will not be going to school in an environment where there is harmony. They’ll be going to school in an environment where there are teachers who are stressed because their class sizes have grown, and they will be asking teachers to provide intense interventions for students in the classrooms who have special needs. And if you think that a teacher is not going to be stressed because of a large class, because of the inclusion policy which says students with varying kinds of learning styles and in need of intense supports, if those are gone, you tell me how harmonious it’s going to be when those teachers go to work in those schools.

We’re talking about a very serious issue here. It’s the people in those classrooms who will be the movers and shakers in this province in the future, and if we don’t give them the education that they deserve, then we have failed the next generations of this province and economic instability will be the price.

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

HON. MARILYN MORE: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to Resolution No. 2480. I just want to make clear from the very beginning that it is certainly my approach to be the member of government, and our government’s approach, to allow the fullest engagement and consultation possible in areas where policy or legislation is going to impact on groups.

There are different forms of consultation. There are organized consultations such as my colleague, the Minister of Finance, organized to solicit thoughts and comments and suggestions about how we bring this province back to balance; and there are advisory bodies such as the Occupational Health and Safety Advisory Council, the Minimum Wage Review Committee, and the Premier's Economic Advisory Panel - there are many, many examples.

I am very fortunate in all three of my portfolios - Minister of Labour and Workforce Development, Minister of Education, and Minister of Volunteerism - to have had many, many meetings, both formal and informal consultations with the many stakeholders who are very interested and support the work of all those three portfolios.

There is also the consultation that happens at the department level, where staff consult with their colleagues and counterparts in other departments and in other jurisdictions across Canada, and they identify best practices in a wide range of topics and they ensure that Nova Scotians continue to enjoy the same level of protections as their counterparts in other provinces.

As I mentioned, there is informal and unsolicited consultation and, as other members of the House will recognize, every day we are approached by individuals and groups. They want to share a concern with us - they want to provide some insight on an issue, they want to suggest a solution on a given topic, and they want to mention their concerns or their priorities. I think it might be interesting sometime to have a little contest among the members of the Chamber just to see where the most unusual informal request was made.

I won't regale people with some of the unusual circumstances that I've been in where people have approached me to ask my advice or to give information, but let's say that I think people understand that when you're in public life, you're on call almost 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Certainly, I encourage people to approach me, whether I'm out walking my dog in the community, attending an event, getting groceries, or attending many of the meetings both in my constituency and here in the capital city, and I know that other members are just as open to receiving information and requests and meeting with their constituents and interested parties as well. Certainly we're well aware that a number of different opinions and suggestions can come in through e-mails, through fax, through letters, by telephone and, as I said, many face-to-face meetings.

Now, all of us in this Chamber fortunate enough to have the title "honourable" before their name are more aware of the volume of consultation that occurs in any minister's or Premier's office, and this is most welcome - we are a government of the people, we talk to citizens across this province every single day, and we welcome that kind of interest and familiarity and approachability. So regardless of our political stripe, Mr. Speaker, we all consult each and every day in ever so many ways.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I just want to ask a theoretical question here: I'm just wondering, with whom did the members opposite consult about Bill No. 100? And I'm not going to speak to the essence of the bill because I realize that that would be inappropriate during this particular time - it's not the topic of this debate. But I would like to talk a little bit about the process and about the issue of consultation as it refers to Bill No. 100 and our system of government.

Before Bill No. 100 was introduced, policy and labour services staff of my department offered a technical briefing about the bill. One Party sent one researcher. Now, Bill No. 100 was introduced in the House. Members received written copies of the bill and I held a bill briefing in the Red Chamber to share the details of Bill No. 100 with all Nova Scotians, and to respond to questions about the bill. Again, Mr. Speaker, consultation at work.

Now, the researcher who attended the technical briefing was there as was the member who acts as a Labour Critic at the bill briefing, and I was very pleased to see them there. However, I was dismayed as it's my understanding that one Party chose to send no one to the technical briefing, nor to the bill briefing, and it gave me some initial concern about how informed debate would be happening in this place on this topic.

Now, Mr. Speaker, as I noted in the news release: "The committee, the new Labour Board and other changes to several pieces of legislation is a major change in how employers, employees and their unions resolve their issues." As you know, the bill passed second reading without much debate - there were some questions about content and I advised those members to consult Hansard, because many of the answers were in the speech that I had just delivered.

Now, we all recognize that a key element of consultation is listening, Mr. Speaker. Second reading was on November 23rd, and almost a week later the Leader of the Third Party issued a news release announcing that his Party would oppose Bill No. 100, and that seemed strange in that it had not garnered much attention from that Party at second reading. That Party had not attended a technical briefing designed to help them understand the bill, nor the bill briefing, and they did not seek clarification from me or my department regarding the intent of the bill - something which the department and I would have been very happy to share, because if there's anything I'm an expert on in this bill, it is the intention of government in these amendments.

[12:45 p.m.]

So there seemed to be no interest in consultation in getting the facts, Mr. Speaker, at that point in time. Now, we would have been open to meeting with the members, with talking things through with them but, no, all Nova Scotians can see the outcome of the Opposition tactics, but back to the more general aspects of consultation in many ways. Certainly as a parent and a grandparent, we all can cite family experiences where we have

practised and honed our ability to consult with family members, with neighbours, with friends, members of our community. Certainly in our adult lives we consult with our employers, we consult with our colleagues, we consult with our customers, our clients.

Now in earlier careers, Mr. Speaker, I was an educator. My colleagues and I often consulted about approaches we could take to engage our students to the fullest, how we could help them get the most out of our lessons and the educational experience. Later on, after being the first woman elected to a school board in Nova Scotia, I was constantly consulting with other board members, with other educators, with parents and committee members, in an effort to provide the best possible educational environment for our students.

Those experiences and those practices, those approaches are still with me, as Minister of Education - I think you would only have to ask the school boards in this province how many opportunities they have had to meet with me and discuss issues of concern to them. My door is always open, they have taken advantage of it and I have been very, very pleased with the results. As I have said many times in this House, when reasonable people sit down and talk about an issue, you can usually resolve it in a reasonable way.

The voluntary sector is another portfolio of mine, Mr. Speaker. All of my portfolios are near and dear to my heart but the voluntary sector has always been a very special interest, long before I entered political life.

Life is consultation, Mr. Speaker. Our government supports consultation and it has to be limited to those who will be most impacted by the issue of concern. I will be pleased at a later time to talk a bit about the consultation around Bill No. 100, but it is all about learning how we can share with those around us, learning from each other and helping others to achieve positive outcomes in this province.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, our government has a deep appreciation for consultation and we practice it on a daily basis. We just want to say that it's a strong value of our government, we support it, we try to engage the citizens of Nova Scotia in everything we do and we thank you for this opportunity. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

MR. ANDREW YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, there is consultation and then there is meaningful consultation. Let me speak in particular to Bill No. 100 or Resolution 2480, which speaks to the consultation as it relates to labour laws. What we saw yesterday morning, I think it was at 10:00 a.m. or 11:00 a.m., after the bill in question had gone through the House, was more than halfway through the Committee of the Whole House on Bills, the government said to groups representing the non-unionized workforce in Nova Scotia, in fact representing the vast majority of it, that they would be open to considering amendments. This, knowing that there might be only two or three hours left of Committee

of the Whole House on Bills, which, of course, is the only time that amendments can be considered, on Thursday.

Instead, Mr. Speaker, the government - the Premier had called, just the day before, the business groups disingenuous but what, in fact, was disingenuous was not putting a hold on the debate of Bill No. 100, to allow those groups to get their amendments in, so that they could be appropriately considered during Committee of the Whole House on Bills debate.

Now we do have them and, interestingly enough, they are the exact same amendments, or amendments with the same effect that we have asked for and submitted to the Deputy Premier before the Law Amendments Committee, that we suggested in a letter to him might address the issues. I guess what we will find out is whether the consultation was real consultation or whether it was just a sham. I don't know which it's going to be. I honestly don't. We'll see. It will depend on what the government's response to this letter that was received today is.

The groups - which, incidentally, have now increased, it now includes the Nova Scotia Road Builders Association, as well as the groups that were on the list yesterday - have suggested a number of amendments. Those amendments, when you read them, are very reasonable and in fact, reflect exactly what the Premier claims the intent of the legislation is. So there would seem to be no reason to refuse these amendments. Obviously, I don't suspect the Progressive Conservatives have necessarily caucused them and we certainly haven't caucused them, but they seem eminently reasonable at this time on a very quick glance.

I'm sure that if the government, the Premier, and the minister have suggested that the things the business community are concerned about are not intended by the legislation - fine. If that's the case then these amendments, I'm sure, will be accepted. These amendments clarify exactly what the Premier has claimed in scrums outside.

We often wonder why - it has been asked in this House - there is confusion over it. Frankly, we had a Labour Department staff person say to the reporter for ALLnovascotia that - he asked the Premier about this yesterday in the scrum, and I stood there and I watched him ask the Premier to respond to the comment that it affected contracting out. The Premier and the minister, to their credit, say it doesn't. I want to reflect that it doesn't. There are others - supporters and those against this bill - who say it does, so in this letter they have suggested an amendment which would simply clarify that and would change nothing else. If that's the case, I'm sure that will be accepted by the government.

Likewise, it has been noted in remarks by the government that the preamble is also in the Labour Board Act and is really there not to have any legal effect but to set up the framework under which the Act was intended to be. If that's the case, the business groups have actually suggested that preamble remain with another whereas clause added just to ensure that there isn't something that happens.

It's interesting, I listened to the minister being interviewed by CBC Television last evening just outside the Chamber here, and she noted - I hope that I'm not misquoting her, because obviously I don't have her words in front of me - that the Trade Union Act deals with unionized workplaces, I believe is what she said. It does, but it also deals with the unionization of non-union workplaces. The business groups have also noted that issue and they have suggested a clause that would suggest that, fine, if the committee is not going to have representation of the groups that would be impacted by that, that consultation as it relates to the Trade Union Act should not include the acquisition of representational rights.

That gives the government two options, in my view. Either one would have the same effect, I think. One would be to accept the amendment as proposed, which says listen, if really the only intent here is to update the Trade Union Act and some of these other Acts as it relates to the actual unionized workplaces, then fine. The committee only has jurisdiction over those issues.

The other option is if the government would prefer that the committee be able to consult more broadly over all aspects of those Acts, which is also fair, then I think that it is fair that that committee include representatives from non-union workplaces, because the Trade Union Act does impact non-union employers and employees. It does deal with the issue of representational rights.

The minister talked about consultation, and I don't disagree that she has had an open door policy for different schools. She went to many of the school boards and talked to them, and I commend her for that. But when this all came out, as far as I am aware, she did not invite these organizations to come and meet with her. She did not say to her government, let's put a hold on the bill while I see if I can work this out.

It wasn't until the bill was rammed through the Law Amendments Committee and then well into Committee of the Whole before anybody in the government, in fact, went to speak with these groups, and what they went and said, if the media reports are correct, is that the bill is going through this session - we'll consider amendments that don't change what the bill means, but the bill is going through this session.

That's fine, Mr. Speaker, and we'll see whether these amendments are agreed to. If they are, and if the amendments are considered, I'm sure it will be an easier time. Otherwise, the minister well knows that there are a good 80 to 100 hours, perhaps more, that we can spend in third reading, discussing this, and we'll be here well into the week of Christmas just on this bill, which is fine - it doesn't matter to me, I live only 15 minutes away, so that's fine.

Mr. Speaker, the minister also, as far as I am aware, did not invite the Opposition Critics, the member for Bedford-Birch Cove or the member for Victoria-The Lakes, to come and meet with her and see if they could resolve the differences around this bill - and to my

knowledge, that still hasn't happened. The minister still has not met with the Opposition Critics about this bill to see whether there was some common ground.

You know, Mr. Speaker, there is not always going to be common ground. We were all elected here to represent folks, and I know there are small-business people in this province who are trying exceptionally hard to get their concerns across. It's a season where they are particularly busy, and we hope they are busy because of the state of the economy, but we're now starting to see these letters come in and they're worried that we're going to be at the end of this before anything happens.

Mr. Speaker, this is very troubling. Consultation has to mean something; consultation has to mean that you will actually listen to and consider the various voices - and going and having consultation toward the end of Committee of the Whole on a bill is not, in fact, meaningful consultation at all. So, Mr. Speaker, with those words we are coming to the end of the day. I will wrap up my comments at this time and would, in fact, adjourn debate on this motion.

MR. SPEAKER: That is the Opposition Business for the day.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, I thank the members for their debate today.

The hours for tomorrow will be noon until 10:00 p.m. We will be calling, in Committee of the Whole House on Bills, Bill Nos. 63 to 120 inclusive and, if we have time, Public Bills for Second Reading, Bill Nos. 88 to 128 inclusive.

I move that we do now rise, to meet tomorrow at the hours of 12:00 noon to 10:00 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is adjourn, to meet again tomorrow at the hour of 12:00 noon.

A recorded vote is being called for.

Ring the bells. Call in the members.

[1:00 p.m.]

[The Division bells were rung.]

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please.

Are the Whips satisfied?

A recorded vote has been called for. I will now ask the Clerk to take the vote.

[The Clerk calls the roll.]

[1:59 p.m.]

YEAS

NAYS

Mr. Landry
Ms. More
Mr. Corbett
Mr. Steele
Ms. Maureen MacDonald
Mr. Paris
Ms. Jennex
Mr. MacDonell
Mr. Belliveau
Ms. Zann
Mr. MacKinnon
Ms. Kent
Ms. Raymond
Mr. Smith
Mr. Prest
Mr. Ramey
Mr. Skabar
Mr. Whynott
Mr. Morton
Ms. Birdsall
Mr. Boudreau
Mr. Burrill
Mr. Gaudet
Mr. MacMaster
Mr. Clarke
Mr. MacLellan

THE CLERK: For, 26. Against, 0.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is carried.

We will now rise to sit between the hours tomorrow of 12:00 noon and 10:00 p.m.

We stand adjourned.

[The House rose at 2:01 p.m.]

NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3)**RESOLUTION NO. 2932**

By: Hon. Ramona Jennex (Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations)

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

Whereas the New Minas Lions Club celebrated its Charter Night on November 6, 2010; and

Whereas the New Minas Lions Club works to help those less fortunate in their community and lives up to the Lions motto, “We Serve”; and

Whereas the New Minas Lions Club works to raise money through initiatives such as a yearly food bank drive, a monthly country breakfast, Valley Lions Radio Bingo, selling 911 signs and photos with Santa;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulate the New Minas Lions Club for their efforts to help the less fortunate and on reaching this milestone in their club’s history and wish them the best of luck in the years ahead.