



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Gordon Gosse

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Third Session

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 6, 2011

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House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, WEDNESDAY, APRIL 6, 2011

Sixty-first General Assembly

Third Session

2:00 P.M.

SPEAKER

Hon. Gordon Gosse

DEPUTY SPEAKERS

Ms. Becky Kent, Mr. Leo Glavine, Mr. Alfie MacLeod

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. Good afternoon. The late debate was chosen earlier and the late debate tonight will be:

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly recognize and congratulate this government for honouring its commitment to making life better for families in Nova Scotia.

It was submitted by the honourable member for Pictou East.

SPEAKER'S RULING: Correct format address for members in the House.

Before we begin the daily routine, I would like to revisit a point of order that I mentioned yesterday after Question Period. In debate, which includes Question Period, members are not to refer to other members as "you" or use "your" in reference to other members. For example, a question should ask the minister about his decision - it should not be phrased so as to ask you about your decision. This is basic parliamentary courtesy and it will be upheld in this Chamber. All comments and questions directed to other members are to be addressed through the Chair and should be phrased in the third person.

I'm going to have the Chief Clerk prepare and circulate a procedure note on this to the House Leaders and Deputy House Leaders so that all members would be able to have an explanation of the proper parliamentary procedure. In the meantime I suggest that any members who have prepared questions for today's Question Period go through them looking for the use of the words "you" and "your" so that we can change them before we arrive at Question Period. Thank you for your attention in this matter.

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Education.

HON. RAMONA JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, before I begin my statement, may I make an introduction?

MR. SPEAKER: Most certainly.

MS. JENNEX: Thank you. I'd like to bring everyone's attention to the gallery, and here today we have Dr. Leblanc from the IWK Health Centre - he is a pediatrician and researcher at Dalhousie Medical School; Alexis Allen, president of the Nova Scotia Teachers Union - I don't see one of our guests here today - Vic Fleury, president of the Nova Scotia School Boards Association; Ken Meech, executive director of the Nova Scotia School Boards Association; Natalie Aucoin, executive director, Fédération des parents acadiens de la Nouvelle-Écosse; Meagan MacDonald from the Canadian Mental Health Association, Nova Scotia Division; Rola AbiHanna, guidance consultant, Student Services Division at the Department of Education; and Julian Young, coordinator of Injury Prevention and Control, Health and Wellness.

These are just a few of the many partners involved in the continuing effort to fight bullying and when children are at home on their computers. I would like to thank all of our partners for their ongoing support, and I appreciate your attendance here today. (Applause)

Mr. Speaker, the Department of Education takes bullying in all forms very seriously. As the Minister of Education and the Minister of Youth, I feel I must speak out to defend the young people who are being victimized by cyber-bullying, both on the Internet and mobile devices. The events of the past week are a stark reminder that we, as Nova Scotians, as a caring society that puts family above all else, have much more to do to

safeguard our children. Nobody wants their child to be a victim of bullying. Children need to be safe and protected at school and at home.

Mr. Speaker, we all know that on-line bullying can have devastating and long-term effects on a child. It also has a devastating impact on parents who, of course, have no higher priority, no greater calling but to love and protect their children. Imagine their heartbreak to find out that their child is being quietly victimized in their own home by the way of a flickering bit of text on a computer screen, hurtful and indelible on the psyche of a young mind.

Social media and the Internet have opened up exciting new ways to communicate but for all of the benefits of a digital age, it also has dangers. Bullying is not new but social media has certainly given bullies a new and troubling effective tool to cause harm and emotional trauma. All someone has to do is sit down at a computer, type in the slanderous message and press “send”. It’s easy, fast and reaches a large amount of viewers but, most importantly, it can be completely anonymous.

I think we can all agree that anonymous slander is cowardly, yet that does not stop people from doing it. Together we need to teach our children about the consequences bullying can have on the other side of the connection. It may seem harmless on the keyboard but, as we have all seen, it can be tremendously damaging on a screen.

The Department of Education and school boards all have policies in place, Mr. Speaker, to address bullying and to promote good behaviour in our schools but more must be done, I believe. We have to stay vigilant and continue to adapt our policies and practices, as well as our resources, to adequately address a constantly evolving issue. Cyber-bullying is an increasingly relevant issue for our schools but it is complex and so much of it occurs outside of the classroom.

This is a societal problem that requires a societal response; we all have a role to play. If we don’t address this problem as a society, then our children will continue to be victimized. All of us, as adults, need to set a good example for our children, to promote a civil society and respect for each other. The fight against cyber-bullying will largely be won through an asset-based approach, like positive youth development, social and emotional learning, and creating healthy on-line and off-line environments.

Mr. Speaker, my department is ready to take a leadership role on this issue. The government cannot stop all bullying with a change in policies, we recognize that, but we have an obligation to bring people together to find solutions that help children and families to be, and remain, safe from bullying. Today I would like to announce that we are creating a task force that will recommend solutions to deal with on-line bullying. We will be inviting our key stakeholders - Justice, Health and Wellness, school boards, education

partners, the RCMP, mental health professionals and health professionals, parents, students, teachers, and others - to participate.

Work will begin right away with the first meeting in May. The terms of reference are being developed now, and among them the goal of the task force will be to consider these issues: the extent to which cyber-bullying is occurring amongst school-age children and youth; strengthening provincial and school policy around on-line bullying, including proactive strategies and consequences for bullies; guidelines to help school administrators address on-line abuse; legislative change; raising awareness; and identifying resources that will better support students to develop digital literacy skills.

The Media Awareness Network recently launched a digital literacy tool for secondary students, called MyWorld. It has been approved for high school classrooms. Now, this is one example, Mr. Speaker, of an interactive resource that could be considered to help teens develop critical thinking skills and learn how to manage the risks and challenges of their on-line lives.

Mr. Speaker, the department and boards have done a great deal of work addressing the complexities that surround bullying. For example, school boards have restricted student access to social media sites during school hours as well as prohibiting the use of cellphones during class times. The department highlighted on-line bullying in the provincial school code of conduct and we are addressing issues of violence in our health education curriculum. We are also using various approaches to improve behaviour such as positive effective behavioural supports, known as PEBS, and comprehensive guidance and counselling.

On behalf of the province, I extend my sincere thanks to school boards for all their work to reduce bullying in our schools. Our immediate plan is to discuss with school mental health professionals, lawmakers, school boards, principals, parents, and all Nova Scotians as to how we can build on what is already being done. The task force needs to hear from Nova Scotians to make sure we are making the right decisions. In the Fall of 2011 the Department of Education will consult with the public, especially young people, using a variety of tools, including the department's Web site and a Facebook page. The information gathered from the public and our partners must be closely examined before we can consider making changes to legislation.

Mr. Speaker, the member for Hammonds Plains-Upper Sackville, the ministerial assistant responsible for youth, has been a leader on this issue. He will lead eight focus groups with young people around the province to build a better and clearer understanding of their concerns and their issues and to hone the thinking of the task force in developing a response. Our goal is to have a report with recommendations in my hands by December 2011.

Mr. Speaker, as the Minister of Youth, I call upon Nova Scotians to be leaders in the fight against bullying. The Department of Education and the province will do its part to fight cyber-bullying. It is up to all of us to help prevent further suffering. We owe it to our children to do everything that we can to protect them and keep them safe. Thank you. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester North.

HON. KAREN CASEY: Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the minister for speaking to me on Monday about her statement and for sending a copy to the office this morning, I appreciate that. I would also like to thank her for taking the lead on this issue and as we know, and as the minister has stated, this is a social issue, it is not an education issue. But education and the school environment appears to be the place where we have collectively young people who are coming together and who are playing out some of their emotions, some of their feelings, and some of their responses to what has happened out in the community.

We, Mr. Speaker, as you know, have students in our schools five out of the 24 hours. The other 19 hours is where the community, the parents, and others need to come together to try to help address the problem and, as we know, it is a problem. We recognize that boards and schools have done a lot in the past and in the recent past if you think back to 2007 when we had the two boys - David Shepherd and Travis Price - who were the boys who stood up to bullying. The Pink Shirt Day developed out of that. An anti-bullying day was introduced across the province in all of our schools and those activities are things that provide awareness for the problem that exists.

What I see and what I hear in the minister's statement and what I believe the minister wants out of the task force is not only awareness but solutions, because I think we do know it exists. Our challenge is, how do we work with the youth themselves, the parents, the community, and the educators to look for and implement solutions? We know that this cannot continue and we know that someone has to step up to the plate. So I want to thank the minister in her capacity as Minister of Youth for taking on the leadership and for laying out for us, and for all Nova Scotians today, what she expects to happen as a result of the task force, the consultation, the broad range of people who will be involved in the consultation and the timeline. I think that's important. We can talk about a task force and we can talk about what we hope will happen, but sometimes those things go on and on and on and we know that this cannot.

We have had some tragedies; we understand they have been perhaps directly and maybe indirectly related to some kind of cyber-bullying. We don't have time; parents don't have any more time. They need to know there will be some concrete efforts that come out of this. Setting a timeline, the minister has asked that the results of the task force consultations be in her hands and I commend her for that.

That is reassuring to all of us that something will happen, something constructive will happen. I'm going to take my seat but I do want to say congratulations. As a caucus we are fully in support of the minister's statement, of the minister's plan, and we will do whatever we can to try to make our youth safe in Nova Scotia. Thank you. (Applause)

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

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by thanking the minister for speaking to us on Monday about this issue and also for providing us with a copy of her comments today.

I am not the Education Critic for my Party, that is the member for Argyle, but clearly this is an issue of pressing and tragic importance that reaches beyond departments, beyond rural and urban, it affects all towns and villages and the cities of our province. Most recently, I know too well from the Town of Parrsboro where we had one of the more recent examples of a tragedy as the result of bullying and cyber-bullying, the family there is one I've come to know over the last little while. I think one of the hardest things any of us could do as an elected representative, as an MLA - hard for me - is to see something like this happen in our own area, or indeed anywhere in Nova Scotia.

I just wanted to rise in my place today in support of the minister and the actions that she is going to take because we can only imagine how a child must feel when they are a victim of bullying and cyber-bullying, where there is no escape, where their parents feel helpless to solve the problem, where teachers and principals feel helpless at times to solve the problem because it has now moved from the physical world into the cyber world.

Often in a small town, the community, knowing the individuals involved although they're anonymous on-line, feels helpless. For that child to sense that there is no one that can help them out must be a terrible, horrible, tragic feeling indeed. This is why it is so important and so urgent that the minister carry on with her work. I want her to know that she has our full support as she does so.

I would only ask that the task force go about its work seeking real, meaningful policy solutions that give real teeth to communities to intervene; real teeth to principals and teachers and others in our schools; real teeth to the police and the RCMP, or whomever may need to intervene on behalf of a child; and that the task force, when it does its work, comes forward with new policy recommendations that are solid, meaningful, and harsh when necessary on the bullies themselves, as may well need to be the case; and that has a role both for the parents of the victim and also for the parents of the bullies. It takes everybody to address a situation as serious as this when a child is involved who is looking for someone to help.

I would also add, just before I take my place, that in too many cases a child has shown signs of depression as the result of bullying, and his or her parents have sought help from our mental health system. We know that the lineups can be long and there are not enough resources to intervene immediately. Surely we have to find a way to get immediate help through Mental Health, to parents and most importantly to the children themselves in their time of greatest need and greatest crisis. So I encourage the minister and her task force to go about their work with those comments in mind. I thank the minister and I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, nothing is more important to Nova Scotians than health care. Every one of us has had experience with the health care system, and we never underestimate the importance and the value it holds in our lives.

Today, Mr. Speaker, the Premier and I were proud to be in Parrsboro for what I consider to be one of the most important announcements I've made as Minister of Health and Wellness, the announcement of the first Collaborative Emergency Centre in our province. (Applause)

As the Premier said this morning, we have heard countless stories from people about how scared they were that their small community hospital would close and people told me that they hoped if they had an emergency it would not be at night or on the weekend when they would rush to their hospital and find a closed door.

Mr. Speaker, last year the Parrsboro emergency was closed for 525 hours. It was closed 1,277 hours in the previous year, and some patients had to wait two to three weeks to see a primary care physician. Today that community knows that these unpredictable closures and long waits for medical appointments are ending.

Parrsboro is home to our first Collaborative Emergency Centre which brings together emergency departments and local family practices working as a team to provide health care to Nova Scotians.

Specifically a Collaborative Emergency Centre will provide:

- Access to primary health care by a team of professionals - including doctors and nurse practitioners for extended hours, seven days per week;
- Same-day or next-day access to appointments as needed. In many cases this will enable symptoms to be caught early, which may prevent emergencies or a health crisis from developing;

- Advanced access to care, which means that appointments will be left open each day for patients with more urgent needs; and
- 24/7 access to emergency care. In Parrsboro, overnight care will be provided by a paramedic, supported by physician oversight. Other CECs yet to be announced may be staffed by paramedics or other health care providers, again with physician oversight.

The CEC will benefit the community in a number of ways. For example, community doctors will not have to staff the ER at night; therefore, they will be available to see patients for longer hours in the daytime.

Mr. Speaker, a number of communities from across Nova Scotia already have embraced collaborative practices, and both community members and health care providers speak positively about the results. For instance, Dr. Karen Fewer from Musquodoboit is happy that her patients now benefit from same-day access to primary care. Kimberly Newton, a nurse practitioner in Tatamagouche has mentioned to me how the collaborative care practice in her community has decreased visits to the ER, and Sandy MacLachlan from Musquodoboit has told me how much she appreciates the collaborative practice in her community and how it enables her to get her prescriptions filled faster.

Mr. Speaker, Collaborative Emergency Centres are part of the province's Better Care Sooner plan. The plan is based on the recommendations of Dr. John Ross who said the emergency department is a canary in a coal mine, alerting people to the troubles that are putting the entire health care system at risk, and I agree with Dr. Ross.

When I launched the Better Care Sooner plan in December in Musquodoboit, I said that needed to change. I am here today to tell you and members of this Assembly that change is already taking place. Since last Fall, we have seen almost 1,200 patients headed for the emergency rooms diverted to the new Rapid Assessment Unit at our busiest ER in Halifax, getting them better care sooner.

We are hiring four nurse practitioners this year to work in nursing homes in four districts across the province. We have also started hiring paramedics to work at nursing homes so Nova Scotia's highly-trained paramedics will be able to treat seniors in the place they live rather than making the frail and elderly wait in ambulances at the ER. We have trained advanced-care paramedics to immediately give life-saving drugs to Nova Scotians having heart attacks rather than waiting until they arrive at the hospital to receive this care. The province launched a public awareness campaign so people across this province know they can call a nurse 24 hours a day and receive professional advice on the phone.

The CEC in Parrsboro will begin operation in July of this year. This will give the people working there and the community the time to get ready. I look forward to opening more collaborative emergency centres later this year as more communities get ready.

I would like to end my statement by thanking officials with the Cumberland District Health Authority and staff in Parrsboro at the hospital, the nurses, doctors, dieticians, paramedics, physiotherapists, and other health care professionals who are embracing this new way to deliver health care. They know better than most that changes are needed to ensure that their patients get the best care possible. These people have already started working to make the necessary changes by providing them with collaborative practice. Now it will be extended to include emergency care. They are leaders in health care in Nova Scotia and I want to recognize them for that. We will work through this journey together to improve health care across this province to deliver better care sooner, stability and peace of mind. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS. DIANA WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the minister for providing us with an advance copy of her remarks, as well, today. I trust she had a good day in Parrsboro, which is a place close to my heart; it's a place I spend time in the summers and have family from.

First and foremost, again, our caucus believes that there has been a great deal of hard work done on the part of the Cumberland District Health Authority and that the service that was available in Parrsboro has already been a collaborative practice model. I believe the minister had said previously in public statements that as this emergency model rolls out - the Collaborative Emergency Centre model - that she would be looking for communities that were already well advanced in terms of a collaborative model and had already taken steps in that regard.

I think Parrsboro is a good model and that really this is an incremental step to the changes on the emergency side because they do already have a nurse practitioner in Parrsboro. Although the minister referred to long waits for the doctor, there has been a drop in an ability to go to the community health centre and see a nurse practitioner during the day on a daily basis and on a timely basis. I think Parrsboro has been a model that way and I know there are others in the province as well.

We understand this to be a furthering of the recommendations of the Ross Report, which was released last Fall. We feel that the Ross Report was certainly comprehensive but the two main things that are drawn together there are things that we already knew here, and so do Nova Scotians, and that is that too many people use the ER as a portal to get primary health care and secondly, that our health care professionals are not working to their full

scope of practice. Today's announcement is all about connecting those dots and ensuring access into the health care system.

I note with interest that the centre is due to open July 1st and, having said that Parrsboro is already well advanced, I am not sure what the delay is really for. I trust that the residents of Parrsboro can be assured that until the time that the centre opens, all efforts will be made to continue to have the ER open 24/7. Until that replacement comes, it's important to the people of that area to have that assurance.

Again, let's be clear, Mr. Speaker, the government promised in the last election that emergency rooms would be available, staffed and open 24/7. Recently the budget announced that as well there would be four collaborative emergency room centres open across the province and I would have hoped that today we might have heard where the other centres will be.

Across the province there are a lot of communities that are anxious about what the changes are, whether their community will be seen to be one that is far enough advanced on this model that perhaps they will be included this year. I think that the minister has, in previous statements, provided updates. I would hope that we'll hear soon when we might be able to identify the other three communities that are waiting and again, in the meantime, continue to ensure that emergency rooms do remain open 24/7 because, after all, that is the promise made by the government in the last election. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle.

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, I, too, would like to start off by thanking the minister for making her remarks available to us in anticipation of this response. Today's unveiling of the collaborative emergency centres is a far cry from what was promised to Nova Scotians by this government in the election campaign that brought them to government, which, of course, was to keep all ERs open 24/7.

The thoughtful recommendations of Dr. Ross, however, deserve practical steps forward. The fact is that numbers will tell the story of collaborative care centres. Do we believe that Nova Scotian doctors will see more patients? No. Do we believe that Nova Scotians will forget what they were promised by this government? No, they won't.

We believe that this is not what was promised to Nova Scotians by this government, but a practical step forward based on the recommendation held in Dr. John Ross' report.

There are unanswered questions that will become apparent over time. Will Nova Scotians find themselves in front of a paramedic when they need to see a doctor? Will this program increase the hours of doctor access or will it decrease them? Nova Scotians will soon decide for themselves if the collaborative care centres work for them, improving

emergency care is a primary goal of these efforts and allowing the recommendations of the Dr. Ross Report is a first good step towards enhancing the system that we currently have.

I know it will be over time that we will have the opportunity to see the success or the checkered success of this. (Interruption) Well, you never know, right? I know the Premier is egging me on here a little bit, but any move forward in trying to fix some of these very structural problems I think is a good move forward and I thank the minister for her comments on this today. Thank you very much.

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Premier.

HON. DARRELL DEXTER (The Premier): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If I may, I have a few introductions I'd like to make in your gallery, if I may?

MR. SPEAKER: Please feel free.

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, joining us today are the following: Major Todd, representing Lieutenant Colonel Hale of the 1st Battalion Nova Scotia Highlanders; Regimental Sergeant Major Forbes of the 1st Battalion of Nova Scotia Highlanders; Corporal Silvea of the 1st Battalion Nova Scotia Highlanders; Private MacKenzie of the 1st Battalion Nova Scotia Highlanders; Sergeant Taylor of the Cape Breton Highlanders and Pipe Major Campbell of the Cape Breton Highlanders. (Applause)

Before I begin, Mr. Speaker, I'd also, of course, like to congratulate you on your recent appointment as a honorary member of the Cape Breton Highlanders. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Premier.

RESOLUTION NO. 184

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

Whereas both the 1st Battalion of the Nova Scotia Highlanders and the newly renamed Cape Breton Highlanders are celebrating 140 years of highland military tradition in Nova Scotia; and

Whereas the Nova Scotia and Cape Breton Highlanders have a long and renowned history dating back to the formation of the Cumberland Provisional and the Victoria Provisional Battalions of Infantry in 1871 and served valiantly in such battles as Ypres,

Passchendaele, Vimy, the Normandy landing, the Gothic line, Calais and numerous other battles for which they received battle honours; and

Whereas this tradition continues with the men and women of the Nova Scotia Highlanders and the Cape Breton Highlanders as they carry out their duties in the service of Canada both here at home when called upon to assist in the Juan cleanup, the Manitoba floods and in places around the world like Afghanistan, the former Yugoslavia, Haiti and Sierra Leone;

Therefore be it resolved that this House recognize and celebrate the 140th Anniversary of the creation of the units that would become the North Nova Scotia Highlanders, the Cape Breton and the Pictou Highlanders and as well recognize the commitment of the current members of the Nova Scotia Highlanders and Cape Breton Highlanders who continue to carry on this proud tradition both at home and around the world. Siol Na Fear Fearail.

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. (Applause)

The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

RESOLUTION NO. 185

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

Whereas as part of a continuous quality improvement process that occurs every three years, more than 2,500 standards were thoroughly reviewed at the Pictou County Health Authority; and

Whereas the Pictou County Health Authority received commendation in a number of areas including programming, quality safety programs, innovative staff and a strong connection to the community; and

Whereas by evaluating the quality of care that the Pictou County Health Authority delivers, they are able to measure both their clinical and operational performance;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House join me in congratulating the Pictou County Health Authority in achieving a 95 per cent compliance rate on the onsite portion of its 2011 Accreditation Canada Survey.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage.

RESOLUTION NO. 186

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

Whereas Nova Scotia's rich Scottish heritage contributes to our province's unique and diverse culture which makes us one of the best places to visit, do business and build a life; and

Whereas April 6th is the day when the people of Scottish heritage are encouraged to celebrate the contributions made by their culture and their proud legacy as part of Tartan Day; and

Whereas Nova Scotia was the first to proclaim Tartan Day in 1987 as an annual way to acknowledge and celebrate the pivotal role played by Scottish culture and traditions in world history;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House and all Nova Scotians be encouraged to celebrate and embrace our Scottish heritage on this day and throughout the year.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Halifax Clayton Park.

MS. DIANA WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, may I make an introduction?

MR. SPEAKER: Please do so.

MS. WHALEN: Thank you very much. I would just like to draw the attention of the members of the House to the west gallery where we are joined by many young people, parents, and advocates for juvenile diabetes and the Diabetes Association. There are many of them so I'm not going to name everybody, but I would like to ask if they would rise and receive the warm welcome of the House. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: We welcome all the guests to our gallery and we hope they enjoy today's proceedings.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 11 - Entitled an Act to Support Diabetic Persons in Nova Scotia. (Ms. Diana Whalen)

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

NOTICES OF MOTION

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

RESOLUTION NO. 187

HON. MANNING MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the member for Annapolis, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas on April 4th the Premier waved his magic wand and produced a \$447 million surplus for the last fiscal year - a number which was miscalculated by a mere \$669 million; and

Whereas yesterday the Minister of Finance tabled a budget document titled *Budget Assumptions and Schedules*, the same title given to the document last year that turned a \$222 million deficit into a \$447 million surplus; and

Whereas this government stands by the necessity of its HST increase, and has since increased user fees and announced it will download \$50 million onto property owners in this province;

Therefore be it resolved that as a result of government's recent budget announcements and actions, both past and present, the *Budget Assumptions and Schedules* document be renamed Budget Inventions and Fabrications.

MR. SPEAKER: The notice is tabled.

Before the next notice of motion, I would like to also introduce in my gallery, Private Williams of the Cape Breton Highlanders as he's in the gallery also. (Applause)

The honourable member for Victoria-The Lakes.

RESOLUTION NO. 188

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

Whereas April 6th is International Tartan Day, a celebration of Scottish heritage; and

Whereas Tartan Day in Canada originated in 1986 with a proposal from the Federation of Scottish Clans in Nova Scotia to promote Scottish heritage by the most visual means; and

Whereas on April 6th, all people in New Scotland are Scots at heart and celebrate the many contributions Scottish people have made to our province;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly mark International Tartan Day on April 6th and remember the many ways Scottish heritage has contributed to our great province.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Justice.

RESOLUTION NO. 189

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

Whereas February 3rd marked the opening ceremonies for the 2011 Special Olympics Winter Games in Pictou County; and

Whereas the Special Olympics Winter Games are a great opportunity for athletes to gather in competitive sport, enjoy each other's company and, for some athletes, to travel to a new location; and

Whereas the Games could not have come to Pictou County without the hard work and dedication of many volunteers, as this was only the second time in the 40-year history of the Games that they have been held by a community;

Therefore be it resolved that members of this House of Assembly congratulate all the athletes on a job well done and wish the community of Pictou County great success hosting the 2011 Special Olympics Winter Games.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

RESOLUTION NO. 190

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

Whereas yesterday the Minister of Finance proudly proclaimed the government was behaving in a fiscally responsible manner and freezing spending in a way that pleased Nova Scotians; and

Whereas this government happily increased taxes and user fees to fund their spending increases of 9 per cent and 7 per cent in their first two budgets, 6 per cent in this year's budget and close to half of departments have increased spending this year; and

Whereas in light of this government's inability to accurately measure, crunch numbers and produce estimates that resulted in the real number being more than \$600 million off the mark;

Therefore be it resolved that members of the House of Assembly recognize that the budget and the numbers and projections contained therein are as real as the Finance Minister's new shoes.

MR. SPEAKER: The notice is tabled.

The honourable member for Argyle.

RESOLUTION NO. 191

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

Whereas the Lower Churchill agreement between Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador provides all of Atlantic Canada with a significant environmental and economic development opportunity; and

Whereas this agreement has gained the support of all Parties in this House; and

Whereas this agreement was put at risk when federal Liberal Leader Michael Ignatieff said he would find a way to "wheel this power through Quebec" and promise an "activist federal role" to do so, which would cut Nova Scotia out of the loop on either Muskrat Falls development or future development such as Gull Island;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly demand that Mr. Ignatieff apologize for his reckless campaign comments that fail to recognize the enormous value of this historic agreement between Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador.

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 Labour and Advanced Education.

RESOLUTION NO. 192

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

Whereas the Dartmouth Curling Club was formed in 1936 and early members curled on natural ice in the annex of the old molasses factory on Lower Canal St. and the Dartmouth Lakes before building its distinctive circular-roofed facility nearly 65 years ago on land purchased from Starr Manufacturing for \$3,000; and

Whereas this Club has a long tradition of winning and hosting provincial championships, including hosting the successful 2011 Nova Scotia Men's Molson Provincial Championships, February 2nd to 6th; and

Whereas this club, currently celebrating their 75th Anniversary, has over 500 current members and its proven volunteer vitality and organizational strength has led it to be one of the very few Canadian curling clubs to have a waiting list;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly congratulate the Dartmouth Curling Club as it celebrates its 75th Anniversary throughout 2011 and recognize its many contributions to the recreational, sporting and social traditions of the Dartmouth area.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Inverness.

RESOLUTION NO. 193

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

Whereas Elizabeth Beaton, a well-known piano player and grandmother of our former Premier, Rodney MacDonald, passed away last week at the age of 92; and

Whereas Mrs. Beaton accompanied her husband, the late fiddle player Donald Angus Beaton, at thousands of concerts, weddings and public gatherings; and

Whereas Mr. and Mrs. Beaton's recording, *The Beatons of Mabou*, is a recognized standard of the Mabou coal mines fiddling tradition;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly remember the important contributions of Mrs. Elizabeth Beaton, the contribution she has made to the culture of this province and send our most sincere condolences to her friends and family.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal.

RESOLUTION NO. 194

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

Whereas Halifax Regional School Board principal Kevin Power has been selected as one of Canada's outstanding principals by the Learning Partnership, a Toronto-based national charitable group; and

Whereas Mr. Power is currently the principal of École Beechville-Lakeside-Timberlea, a Primary to Grade 5 school with an enrolment of 730 students; and

Whereas throughout his career as principal, Kevin has demonstrated leadership and commitment;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia Legislature congratulate Kevin Power on his selection as one of Canada's outstanding school principals.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Community Services.

RESOLUTION NO. 195

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

Whereas in the Fall of 2010 Janice Cossar, formerly of Ingraport, was inducted into the Nova Scotia Sport Hall of Fame; and

Whereas Ms. Cossar is a multi-sport athlete who excelled at varsity soccer, field hockey, ice hockey, ringette, softball and basketball; and

Whereas Ms. Cossar continues to be involved in sports such as cycling and hiking and gives back to the sports community by coaching and conducting clinics;

Therefore be it resolved that that the members of this House of Assembly congratulate Janice Cossar on being inducted into the Nova Scotia Sport Hall of Fame and wish her all the best in the years to come.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Education.

RESOLUTION NO. 196

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

Whereas the New Minas Volunteer Fire Department held its annual banquet and awards presentation on December 11, 2010; and

Whereas when a firefighter receives a call to attend a fire or accident, he or she is never sure if they will return home safe or unharmed from the callout; and

Whereas at the banquet and awards presentation Sam Milne was recognized for 50 years of service, Donald Morine for 30 years of service, Donald Zwicker for 30 years of service and Fire Chief James Redmond for 25 years of service;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulate Sam Milne, Donald Morine, Donald Zwicker and James Redmond for their support of the fire department and their community of New Minas.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Agriculture.

RESOLUTION NO. 197

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 co-operative movement began in Nova Scotia in Stellarton in 1861; and

Whereas farmers and shoppers in Hants East have enjoyed the benefits of the co-operative stores in Milford for many years; and

Whereas the Corridor Co-op Country Store was recently presented with an Achievement Award from Co-op Atlantic for best financial improvement;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulate the management and staff at Corridor Co-op Country Store on their award and wish them success in the future.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

RESOLUTION NO. 198

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

Whereas Cape Sable Island, Nova Scotia youth Brendan Nickerson was a member of the Nova Scotia men's hockey team that competed at the 2011 Canada Winter Games hosted by Halifax, from February 11-27, 2011; and

Whereas Brendan Nickerson, at 14 years of age, was the youngest player on the team, earning his spot on the roster as a defenceman during the team tryouts in the summer of 2010; and

Whereas Brendan Nickerson, who has only been playing hockey for five years, is excelling at the sport, playing at the AAA Bantam and Major Midget levels for the past two seasons;

Therefore be it resolved that the House of Assembly congratulate Brendan Nickerson, the youngest member of the Nova Scotia men's hockey team, for qualifying and competing at the 2011 Canada Games hosted by Halifax from February 11-27, 2011.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Natural Resources.

RESOLUTION NO. 199

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

Whereas one of the goals of the 4-H Program in Canada is to help develop and encourage leadership abilities in all its members; and

Whereas Sandy Sutherland of River John, Pictou County, is an active member of the River John 4-H Club and has been invited to attend the 4-H 39th Annual National Citizenship Seminar in Ottawa, April 8-14, 2011; and

Whereas Sandy Sutherland will be part of a group of 10 4-H members from Nova Scotia who will be representing this province at the 4-H 39th Annual National Citizenship Seminar;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the Nova Scotia Legislative Assembly congratulate Sandy Sutherland on being invited to participate in the National 4-H Seminar as an ambassador for River John, Nova Scotia, and his local club, and wish him success in his future projects.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island.

RESOLUTION NO. 200

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

Whereas John Walker is one of Canada's finest directors and cinematographers working in the documentary genre; and

Whereas his film *A Drummer's Dream* tells the story of a rare and unique assembly of some of the greatest drummers in the world who share their knowledge with 40 students for an incredible week of music and camaraderie; and

Whereas *A Drummer's Dream* was recently awarded Best Performing Arts Film at the 24th Annual Festival International de Programmes Audiovisuels in Biarritz, France, won a Top 10 Audience Favourite Award at the Hot Docs Canadian International

Documentary Film Festival, and was one of the Top 10 Canadian Films at the Vancouver International Film Festival;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulate director John Walker for his critical success with *A Drummer's Dream* and for his outstanding contributions to the world of documentary filmmaking.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Queens.

RESOLUTION NO. 201

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

Whereas the Grades 7, 8 and 9 students of North Queens Community School were involved in an interdisciplinary unit covering English, math, science, and social studies; and

Whereas the interdisciplinary unit focused on entrepreneurship, advertising, technology, budgeting, and written languages, both French and English; and

Whereas students were recognized for Most Innovative Product, Highest Profit, Advertising, Outstanding Sales Approach, Logo, Booth, and Marketing Presentation;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia House of Assembly congratulate and recognize the Grades 7, 8 and 9 students of North Queens Community School for their successful involvement in the interdisciplinary unit at their school.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Antigonish.

RESOLUTION NO. 202

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

Whereas the Ordre de la Pléiade, an international honour bestowed by the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie, recognizes individuals who have distinguished themselves serving the ideals of the francophonie community; and

Whereas the Nova Scotia section of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie appointed 10 Nova Scotians to the Grade de Chevalier on March 23rd; and

Whereas May Bouchard of Pomquet, Antigonish County, was one of this year's inductees to the Ordre de la Pléiade for her dedication to her community and to Acadian culture;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of the House of Assembly congratulate May Bouchard for her commitment to the development of the Acadian and francophone community in Nova Scotia.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Pictou East.

RESOLUTION NO. 203

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

Whereas Donald Keddy was a young hockey player who lost his battle with cancer at the age of 18; and

Whereas the Donald Keddy Memorial Hockey Tournament has been a very successful annual fundraiser; and

Whereas the tournament, organized by Bookie MacDonald, has been raising awareness regarding the reality of cancer and raising funds in support of Nova Scotia cancer programs;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the Nova Scotia Legislative Assembly congratulate Bookie MacDonald for his commitment to organizing this event over the past 27 years.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Cumberland North.

RESOLUTION NO. 204

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

Whereas Cumberland North prides itself on working toward greener communities;
and

Whereas LED Roadway Lighting Ltd. provides a great number of employment opportunities for constituents of Cumberland North and thus contributes to a strengthened economy; and

Whereas LED Roadway Lighting Ltd. recently received substantial funding and plans to use this funding to simultaneously expand the use of its environmentally conscious lighting technology and to create more employment opportunities for the constituents of Cumberland North;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulate LED Roadway Lighting Ltd. on receiving project funding and thank them for their efforts in promoting a sustainable environment and a sustainable economy.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Hammonds Plains-Upper Sackville.

RESOLUTION NO. 205

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

Whereas Brittany Haverstock of Hammonds Plains is a junior and sociology major at the University of Wisconsin, where she also plays university hockey; and

Whereas she has achieved many athletic goals including assisting Canada's Under-22 team win silver at the 2009 MLP Cup in Ravensburg, Germany; and

Whereas on March 3, 2011, Brittany Haverstock was named to the All-WCHA Third Team, a highly regarded position that requires students to have completed a year of eligibility at their post-secondary institution while maintaining at least a 3.0 GPA;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of the House of Assembly congratulate Brittany Haverstock of Hammonds Plains and the University of Wisconsin Badgers on being awarded a position on the All-WCHA Third Team and wish her and her teammates the best of luck in the upcoming season.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Kings North.

RESOLUTION NO. 206

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

Whereas the staff of the Port Williams Elementary School, including Lee Ann Baird, Kim Christie, Holly Sheffield, Cathy Woodford, Heather Crouse, and Kathy Reimer have a reputation for positive and effective work with autistic children; and

Whereas the Provincial Autism Centre has created an award, named in honour of Sheelagh Nolan, who worked to ensure that specialized and appropriate support for autistic children is available in Nova Scotia schools; and

Whereas parents of autistic children at Port Williams Elementary School, who are pleased with their children's academic and social progress and grateful to teachers and the staff of the school, have nominated several teachers for the Provincial Autism Centre's Award;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia House of Assembly congratulate Lee Ann Baird, Kim Christie, Holly Sheffield, Cathy Woodford, Heather Crouse, Kathy Reimer, and all the staff of the Port Williams Elementary School for being recognized with the Provincial Autism Centre's 2010 Sheelagh Nolan Award for Excellence in Teaching.

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. 207

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

Whereas the *Guinness Book of World Records* is considered to be the ultimate authority on record-breaking achievements; and

Whereas Nova Scotia elementary students set out to break the world record for the most snow angels made simultaneously - a record of 8,962 snow angels was set on February 17, 2007 in North Dakota; and

Whereas on February 10, 2011 at 1:00 p.m. in Nova Scotia, elementary students made 22,022 snow angels at over 130 locations across the province including Bayview Community School, Centre Consolidated School, Lunenburg Academy and New Germany Elementary School, making Nova Scotia a contender for the new world record;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly recognize the participation of Bayview, Centre, Lunenburg and New Germany schools as part of the 130 schools across Nova Scotia that took part in the Snow Angel Challenge on February 10th to set the new world record.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Justice.

RESOLUTION NO. 208

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

Whereas on Friday, March 4th, Anse MacDonald travelled to Halifax to accept the Frank Baldwin Award from Basketball Nova Scotia for his contributions as a builder of the sport; and

Whereas it started in 1976 when Anse was asked to assist with raising funds for the midget basketball team his son played on, and over the next eight years Anse raised funds for the New Glasgow Junior High Panthers program, founded the Reid's Carpet Junior High Tournament, and started a men's summer league which is still running strong; and

Whereas Anse also founded the New Glasgow High School Classic Basketball Tournament, helped organize a trip for the New Glasgow High School Panthers to attend a Celtics game in 1991, and over the years was instrumental in arranging for three local teams to participate in the prestigious week-long Coal Bowl Tournament in New Waterford, to name a few;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly recognize and congratulate Anse MacDonald for all of the hard work and his years of dedication to basketball in the Pictou County area.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal.

RESOLUTION NO. 209

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

Whereas Donna Hopkinson is retiring from her all-encompassing role at Brookside Junior High School on Prospect Road; and

Whereas Donna allowed school board officials, teachers and principals, and this speaker in particular, to think that we actually ran Brookside Junior High when we all knew that Ms. Hopkinson made this school tick; and

Whereas Donna Hopkinson - school secretary, conscientious organizer, a tireless taskmaster and consummate professional - will be missed at Brookside Junior High;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia Legislature congratulate Donna Hopkinson on her retirement, with best wishes of many great years in the future.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Community Services.

RESOLUTION NO. 210

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

Whereas the Chester Special Olympics curling team competed in New Glasgow in the Nova Scotia Special Olympics Winter Games with 15 other teams; and

Whereas this team consists of Sean Giffin - skip, Mark Swinamer - mate; Krista Stokman - second, Floyd Thompson - lead, and spare Seppi Voegelé, and are coached by Robin Bond and Jim Stokman; and

Whereas all members of the team enjoyed their time in New Glasgow, meeting new friends and, most of all, doing what they love, curling - the team was successful in the tournament and came home with gold medals around their necks;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly congratulate the members of Team Giffin on their success at this tournament and in future tournaments, as they show us anything can be accomplished with a goal and if you fall short of that goal, as long as you have had fun and done your best, that is all that matters.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Education.

RESOLUTION NO. 211

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 Wednesday, May 11th, the Wolfville Area Inter-church Council (WAICC) will be celebrating 40 years of service to the Wolfville community; and

Whereas the Wolfville Area Inter-church Council has been responsible for building low-cost housing - Hearth Homes and Habitat Homes; and

Whereas the Wolfville Area Inter-church Council has established and operates the Wolfville Area Food Bank, clothing depot and used furniture exchange;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulate the Wolfville Area Inter-church Council for its contribution to the citizens of Wolfville and surrounding areas.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Environment.

RESOLUTION NO. 212

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

Whereas Shelburne musician/singer/songwriter Alex Buchanan celebrated the opening of his recording studio, HarbourTone Productions, with an open house on February 11-12, 2011; and

Whereas Alex Buchanan, who is a graduate of the Nova Scotia Community College Recording Arts Program, has been making a name for himself in the music industry since the age of 15 as a live sound engineer; and

Whereas Alex Buchanan, at 20 years of age, is a shining example of a Nova Scotia youth being able to pursue his lifelong dream of a career in the music industry in his hometown;

Therefore be it resolved that the House of Assembly congratulate Shelburne musician/singer/songwriter Alex Buchanan for opening his new recording studio, HarbourTone Productions, on February 11-12, 2011.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Natural Resources.

RESOLUTION NO. 213

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

Whereas one of the goals of the 4-H Program in Canada is to help develop and encourage leadership abilities in all its members; and

Whereas Kayla Graham of Rockfield, Pictou County is an active member of the Scotsburn 4-H Club and has been invited to attend the 4-H 39th Annual National Citizenship Seminar in Ottawa on April 8-14, 2011; and

Whereas Ms. Graham will be part of a group of 10 4-H members from Nova Scotia who will be representing this province at the 4-H 39th Annual National Citizenship Seminar;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the Nova Scotia Legislative Assembly congratulate Kayla Graham on being invited to participate in the National 4-H Seminar as an ambassador for Scotsburn, Nova Scotia and her club, and wish her success in her future projects.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island.

RESOLUTION NO. 214

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

Whereas Poets 4 Change is an arts for social change project that develops programs for youth to collaborate with spoken word and visual artists to help create poetry and art to benefit charitable organizations and connect with volunteers working in these organizations; and

Whereas over the past eight months a community of youth and adults have worked to create new poetry and visual art projects to be exhibited at the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia and sold or auctioned, with proceeds benefiting the Pakistan Flood Relief, Grandmothers to Grandmothers (the Stephen Lewis Foundation), Kids Help Phone and Leave Out Violence; and

Whereas this project is made possible by the 4C Foundation with support from the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia and Onelight Theatre, with youth facilitators Sophie Kaufman, Jillian Shields, Desiree Adams, and the leadership of project coordinator Shauntay Grant and the Poets 4 Change facilitation team;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulate Poets 4 Change youth facilitators Sophie Kaufman, Jillian Shields, Desiree Adams, and project facilitator Shauntay Grant for helping our spoken word artists and visual artists to use their considerable creative talents and energy to bring about and help support social change.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Queens.

RESOLUTION NO. 215

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

Whereas food banks have become a fixture in our communities and the students of South Queens Junior High recognized the need to help others and took on the challenge with a local high school to raise items for the food bank; and

Whereas each grade in the school worked together to raise donations by carolling outside the local post office and held many other activities; and

Whereas the school and students won the competition with the local high school by collecting 301 items, as well as financial donations, for the Queens County Food Bank;

Therefore be it resolved that the House of Assembly congratulate and recognize the students of South Queens Junior High for their fundraising efforts to assist the Queens County Food Bank.

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 Pictou East.

RESOLUTION NO. 216

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

Whereas the people of Plymouth, Pictou County, expressed concerns over their community centre sitting idle and decided to do something about it; and

Whereas several interested people in the Plymouth area, including municipal councillor Andy Thompson, understood the need for a centre that could cater to community meetings, events, and offer special programming for seniors and those with disabilities; and

Whereas the community has renovated a room for seniors' events, upgraded the main hall for community use, and built a gazebo allowing for outdoor entertainment and activities;

Therefore be it resolved that members of the Nova Scotia Legislative Assembly congratulate municipal councillor Andy Thompson, and the president and the board of

directors, for re-establishing the Plymouth Community Centre and for creating a stronger sense of community for the residents of Plymouth and area.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Antigonish.

RESOLUTION NO. 217

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 January 12, 2011, the Guysborough Antigonish Strait Health Authority, GASHA, was named one of Atlantic Canada's Top Employers for the second consecutive year by Mediacorp Inc.; and

Whereas maternity leave top-up payments, a designated meditation room and retirement planning assistance are among the factors which contributed to GASHA being selected as a Top Atlantic Canada Employer; and

Whereas GASHA CEO Kevin MacDonald cites the people who work there as the reason behind GASHA's success;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of the House congratulate GASHA on being named one of Atlantic Canada's Top Employers and thank GASHA staff, physicians and managers for their continued hard work and dedication.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Hammonds Plains-Upper Sackville.

RESOLUTION NO. 218

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

Whereas Hammonds Plains resident and Acadia University student Meaghan MacDougall is a member of the university's volleyball team for the first year; and

Whereas on March 4, 2011, Atlantic University Sport announced that Meaghan MacDougall was chosen to represent Acadia University on the ASU All-Rookie Team; and

Whereas she has shown strong performance this season on Acadia's women's volleyball team and is the only member from the university to be appointed by the ASU this season;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of the House of Assembly congratulate Hammonds Plains resident Meaghan MacDougall on being chosen to represent Acadia University on the Atlantic University Sport 2010/2011 All-Rookie Team.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Kings North.

RESOLUTION NO. 219

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

Whereas Brandon Whitney of Centreville has played on both high school and major midget hockey teams as a goaltender and was the only Annapolis Valley player on Team Atlantic in the 2011 World Under-17 Hockey Challenge; and

Whereas Team Atlantic won three of its five games and finished fifth overall in the 2011 Winnipeg Tournament, Team Atlantic's best standing since 2005; and

Whereas Brandon Whitney was named Team Atlantic's player of the game after stopping 30 out of 32 shots during the fifth-place game;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia House of Assembly congratulate Brandon Whitney and Team Atlantic's players, coaches and manager for their hard work and dedication throughout the year and on their excellent results in the 2011 World Under-17 Hockey Challenge.

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. 220

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

Whereas the South Shore Chapter of the Council of Canadians is presenting its second annual EarthDream Film Festival at the Mahone Bay Centre in Mahone Bay on April 8-10, 2011; and

Whereas the topic of this year's festival is peace, with films examining Canada's role in war and peace, including titles such as *Myths for Profit: Canada's Role in Industries of War and Peace*, *Voices in Wartime* and *Soldiers for Peace*; and

Whereas several guest speakers will participate in the festival, including Scott Taylor, speaking about his film *Afghanistan: Outside the Wire*, as well as a discussion hosted by well-known Halifax peace activist Tamara Lorincz;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly recognize the second annual EarthDream Film Festival hosted by the South Shore Chapter of the Council of Canadians at the Mahone Bay Centre.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS

MR. SPEAKER: It is now 3:30 p.m., we will finish Question Period at 5:00 p.m.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

GOV'T. (N.S.): PROJECTIONS - CREDIBILITY

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, Nova Scotians want to know what is going on at One Government Place. They want to know how their government can make a \$0.66 billion mistake with their tax money. They want to know why they are paying higher fees. Will their income get taxed at a higher rate? They want to know why this Premier says one thing and does another.

My question to the Premier is, with an HST hike in full effect, higher user fees and more and more of their income being taxed every year by the NDP, why should Nova Scotians believe any projections that the government puts on paper?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure what the point of that question was, but that's not unusual for questions from the Opposition. I just hope the Opposition will not be arguing against a budget that delivers an income tax cut for Nova Scotians and delivers a small business tax cut.

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, they increased spending in the first year of their mandate, they increased spending in the second year by 7 per cent. Mr. Speaker, despite the talking points, we're well on our way for our third year of increase in spending. My question to the Premier is how can Nova Scotians have any faith in the government's plan when history and evidence show that the NDP has a track record of manipulating targets to suit their own agenda?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, none of that is true. The problem with the Opposition is that although they get to ask questions every day, we do remember what they asked about yesterday or the day before or the day before that. This is an Opposition that complained bitterly about the reduction that we brought in, in expenses, and now says that we're spending too much.

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, this government hasn't brought in a single reduction. In year one it increased spending by 9 per cent, in year two by 7 per cent, and we're well on our way for increased spending next year. Every user fee in this province is going up and Nova Scotians are paying more tax because they're breaking another promise to eliminate bracket creep. My question to the Premier is, since yesterday the Minister of Finance doesn't seem to understand the role of the Auditor General when he stood behind him yesterday, I would like to ask the Premier, will he make the call to the Auditor General to have someone clarify his projections and make sure they're actually accurate?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, the opinion of the Auditor General is right here; I can point to it in the Budget Assumptions and Schedules. It supports what the Minister of Finance has said and further, the Opposition is wrong because in this budget, with the increase in the personal exemption, the people of Nova Scotia get a tax cut.

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

PREM.: DEBT REDUCTION - DETAILS

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. On Monday night in this House, the Premier was boasting about his surplus and how for the first time in several years there would be an actual outright reduction in the net debt of the province as there would be a payment of \$37.8 million against that debt. (Applause) I wouldn't clap yet. That didn't last long because just one day later his government tabled a budget which shows they will increase the debt in the upcoming year by 23 times that amount, by \$678.9 million, a rate of \$1.8 million per day for every day of the upcoming year. My question to

the Premier is how can he boast about a debt reduction that will only last for 20 days because of his new budget?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I think all Nova Scotians recognize that whenever you're able to pay down debt that is a good thing. We were very pleased we were able to do that last year. The Minister of Finance has said that it was through a series of things that included some good fortune with respect to year-end adjustments from the federal government but also from good management. That, of course, was last year.

This year the business of government has to continue. We have to continue to build schools; we have to continue to build roads; we have to continue to provide service to the people of Nova Scotia. If the Progressive Conservative Leader is suggesting that we should cancel all the construction of schools and roads in this province, I'd like to know where he thinks we should start.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, what I am suggesting is that the government should not do one thing on Monday and the opposite on Tuesday. That is what I am suggesting. In the budget, the Premier and his government showed that in the last two years since they took office, they've already added \$700 million to our total debt. It is going up, not down as they try to tell the people of Nova Scotia. Now they're going to add \$678.9 million more in one year. Surely that is the fastest accumulation of debt in that short a period of time as we have ever seen. (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. Order, please.

The honourable Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party with your question, please.

MR. BAILLIE: My question to the Premier is this, Mr. Speaker. Given \$1.4 billion in new debt in three short years, will the Premier finally admit the truth that his plan is not working and send his Finance Minister back to the drawing board?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, not only is the plan presented by the Minister of Finance working, in fact, it's working better than we perhaps had forecast. We had a very good year last year which meant that we were able to pay down some debt. We were able to pay off all the capital expenses for the year and this, of course, is a very good thing.

I said to the Leader yesterday that it amazes me when he talks about this debt because the debt that he's talking about is the debt that the members of his caucus ran on. It was what they were committed to over the last campaign. It is the one that they thumped their chests about, all around the Province of Nova Scotia. It is the one they entered into an agreement with the federal government on. It's hard to believe that they can stand up and say what they say about it today.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, that is the most bizarre defence of more debt that I have heard in a long time but we are making progress. We're making progress here today in Question Period because at least the Premier is admitting to his record of debt accumulation over the last three years and that is a first in this House. Sadly though, by the government's own estimates, which I only hold up this far because it's not a prop, it's the government's own estimates, by their own estimates to going out to the end of 2015, this record of debt is only going to continue to go up into the foreseeable future with no end in sight.

So, Mr. Speaker, my final question to the Premier is, will he table a new plan that finally stops running up the credit card before it's too late?

THE PREMIER: Well, Mr. Speaker, unlike the previous governments here, what we have done is we have put forward, in fact, the capital projects that we intend to invest in over the next year. We've also set out a road paving plan that demonstrates how we intend to go forward with that. Again, I would invite the member opposite, if he doesn't want a school built, if he doesn't want a road paved, if there are capital expenses that he thinks we shouldn't be undertaking, would he please send us a list of what those capital projects are because I will make sure they get wide publication.

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

GOV'T. (N.S.): FINANCES - TRANSPARENCY

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL: The Premier and the Finance Minister have been talking about how they've been holding the line on spending. However, if you look carefully at government, what government has actually been doing, Mr. Speaker, has been increasing spending in every year of their mandate. About half of the government departments are going to spend more this year than they did last year but the Finance Minister is trying to hide behind these increases through illusions and fabrications.

So my question to the Premier is, after hiking the HST and increasing 1,400 user fees, after leaking to the media that the Finance Minister made two-thirds of a billion dollar error on Monday night, why would the government continue to hide the true state of the finances from the people of Nova Scotia?

THE PREMIER: Well, Mr. Speaker, in fact, the things that the Leader of the Official Opposition says continues to be a fabrication but the reality is that expenses for the government are going to be flat this year. We have passed on to the DHAs, to the school boards, as he is well aware, what their budgets shall be for the upcoming year and we've told them that they have to absorb their own wage increases. He would know that the previous government, of course, negotiated rather substantial increases that continue to roll

out for many years afterwards. As I've said, these are essentially a millstone around the province's neck that was a gift from the former government.

MR. MCNEIL: The Premier knows that's not true, Mr. Speaker. Even after you factor in the shell game that this government has been playing with university spending, you see that there is a continual increase in spending last year, the year before, and this year under the budget that was presented in this House.

Mr. Speaker, that is not what this government is telling Nova Scotians. The Finance Minister has been spinning fantasies when in reality he isn't even accurate enough to catch two-thirds of a billion dollar mistake. My question to the Premier is, how can Nova Scotians trust a government that posted a surplus which was off the mark by two-thirds of a billion dollars one day, and they turn around and tell each Nova Scotian that they're going to have to continue to suffer with the HST and the user fee hikes his government has imposed?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, the economic panel and the advice that we got from the economic experts pointed out that this province was on the track for a \$1.4 billion deficit. We made a decision that we were going to deal with that in a way that made the most sense to all Nova Scotians, so we have. I have to say, we have had some fairly good level of co-operation and I would just point to the fact that the physicians in this province were gracious enough to put aside the contract that they had - a 4 per cent increase - and to take 1 per cent, which has been the rate for other labour negotiations across the province.

We haven't taken the slash-and-burn approach that was taken by the former Liberal Government. We haven't taken the same type of Bill No. 68 approach that was taken by the Progressive Conservatives. In fact, we've taken a rational, reasonable approach in order to be able to maintain services to the people of this province.

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, the real and accurate number is \$1.7 billion that the Minister of Finance has added to the debt of this province. The Premier continues to quote \$1.4 billion. That is a number that the government is using to mislead Nova Scotians so that they can increase the HST, so they can continue to tax and spend their way to re-election. The Minister of Finance has manipulated his projections, hoping that Nova Scotians would be silent while they continue to pay more as they increased 1,400 user fees the week before.

The NDP's plan is very clear: manipulate data, present fictional forecasts, tax Nova Scotians into submission, and all the while continue to tax and spend their way to re-election. My question to the Premier is, when will the Premier come clean and present Nova Scotians with the real financial picture that our province is faced with?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, as I've said before, the real picture is that personal income tax in this province will be lower for people this year as a result of an increase in

the personal exemption. Small business tax is going down. There was a surplus last year for only the seventh time in 50 years and estimates of expenses were lower the second year in a row, the first time in 23 years. Is that enough for the Leader of the Official Opposition?

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

PREM.: FEE INCREASES - JUSTIFICATION

MR. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, the NDP Government once again reached into the pockets of Nova Scotians last week with the decision to hike 1,400 user fees by 2 per cent. The nickel and dime Party has failed to provide any justification for the fee increases and have been unable to show us the exact costs for every input into each of these fees. User fees that generate anything more than cost recovery for government are not user fees at all; they're taxes on Nova Scotians. My question to the Minister of Finance is, you claim these increases reflect the cost of rising inflation, so what input costs, person hours, materials, et cetera have actually increased and by how much?

HON. GRAHAM STEELE: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to confirm to the House today that all the requirements of the Fees Act have been followed; all necessary notices have been filed. The notices were filed on the same day that the Order in Council was published. I think the real question here is this, is it the position of the Liberal Party that the increasing costs of government should be put on the general tax base or do they share our view, which is that the people using the services should pay for them?

MR. GLAVINE: Well, the reality is that they have placed an extra burden on the user fees more than the cost of delivery. In an April 2009 edition of the ChronicleHerald speaking on the issue of user fee increases, the then-Leader of the Opposition NDP - the current Premier - said he hadn't seen any explanation for the increases and is quoted as saying, the cost of the individual service might not have gone up, in fact, it's possible it may have gone down, so it's a tax.

Mr. Speaker, civil servants have agreed to only a 1 per cent wage increase, yet a GED certificate has been hiked by 2 per cent. This sounds like a tax to Nova Scotians and the Minister of Finance did what he knows best, he hiked yet another tax - the NDP making life more expensive for families. My question to the minister is, will he tell Nova Scotians the exact cost to produce a GED certificate, how much it went up, and why?

MR. STEELE: Mr. Speaker, I notice the member opposite is very carefully evading the real question here, and that question is that when you have something like a GED certificate, should the cost of that be paid for out of the general tax base so that everybody pays for it, or should it be paid for by the person who is actually receiving the GED certificate?

In an ideal world there would be no user fees; there would be no taxes. We would be able to offer a first-class health care system, a first-class education system at no cost to anybody, but in the real world, where we do all live, there are costs, Mr. Speaker, and for those matters we decided it was better for the cost to be borne by the people actually using the service rather than doing what the Liberals would do, which is add the cost to the general tax base.

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, we had expected this Finance Minister would do a comprehensive tax review, and he would know exactly where to place taxes in this province.

Mr. Speaker, only two years ago the Premier stood in this House and said “they call them user fees but they’re taxes, that’s what they are.” Yet on Friday afternoon, outside of the House, with no debate and while the federal government was about to fall on a non-confidence vote he sent notice that the NDP was going to make life more expensive for Nova Scotians and hike 1,400 fees.

Most disappointing is that no one over on that side of the House can tell Nova Scotians exactly how much it costs to deliver any of these services. My question to the Finance Minister is, will you table in the House today how much each fee costs to deliver, the breakdown of these costs, and how much each input increased - or do you expect us to trust you?

MR. STEELE: Mr. Speaker, as I said in a previous answer, all required notices have been filed.

There is another point the member made that I do want to address, and that is the timing of their release. The Order in Council was signed at about noon on the particular day to which the member refers, and the government news release went out within the following two hours.

It is disrespectful to Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor to notify the public, Mr. Speaker, before the Order in Council is signed. (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Order. Order please. The honourable Minister of Finance has the floor.

MR. STEELE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an absolute convention of government that government news releases do not go out before the Order in Council is signed by Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor. They may not respect that tradition, but we do.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

FIN.: CIVIL SERV. REDUCTION - DETAILS

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker my question is for the Minister of Finance. Now, a year ago he said we will reduce the civil service by 10 per cent by 2013. At the time estimates showed that there were 10,813 civil service positions, so he was promising to reduce about 1,000 positions. How did the minister manage to reduce the number of positions by about 650 people in the past fiscal year just ended?

HON. GRAHAM STEELE: Mr. Speaker, I refer that to the Minister of the Public Service Commission.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, they were not reduced. If they would take the time and read the documents that were presented to them they would realize what the actual numbers are - do the actual, not the estimates. Thank you.

MR. MACMASTER: Well, Mr. Speaker, (Interruptions)

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

MR. MACMASTER: You know, Mr. Speaker, I'm glad the minister has raised that point. If the Liberals would please be quiet and share the House with other members, we would be able to conduct Question Period. (Interruptions) (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: Order.

MR. MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, it would be nice if the Liberals would let the boys from Inverness speak in this House. The point I am trying to make today is that this government's numbers are all over the place, one minute they are up, the next minute they are down. Now their numbers show that they were decreasing the FTE count and the numbers are up and down much like their surplus they reported the other night, there was about a \$700 million difference.

Now this year it is indicated within the estimates that the positions are up again by about 600. This would indicate no progress on the government's commitment. Can the minister provide this House with some reassurance that he is on track with the government's commitment?

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. Questions about the budget are not allowed, so I would ask the honourable member to rise on his third and final supplementary.

MR. MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, those are the numbers and the numbers don't lie.

AN HON. MEMBER: The Premier (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. I'm sorry, but the Premier doesn't tell the Speaker anything in this Legislature. The Premier does not tell this Speaker anything. If you don't like it, there's the door. If you don't like it, there's the door.

The honourable member for Inverness has the floor, on your final supplementary.

MR. MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, I'll move on with my question. Thank you.

A couple of weeks ago the Public Service Commission told us at the Public Accounts Committee that approximately 600 people leave government each year on their own accord, through retirements, through taking a job elsewhere, so none of these people is actually hurt by lost employment.

The minister has said that his government can operate a civil service with 1,000 fewer people by 2013. The numbers show that this government has made no progress towards that commitment. When will the minister give Nova Scotians something more than words and how about some numbers, where estimates actually match actuals, to show that they are doing something about reducing the costs of government?

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, I'd rather wait until tomorrow, I'll correct myself today. I should have used estimates instead of actuals and I apologize.

It's in the budget documents and if you want to read them they are there, clearly. It started off with 10,935, going to 10,813 and down to . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please, it's in the budget, please. I would ask the honourable member to sit down. Thank you.

The honourable member for Colchester North.

EDUC.: READING RECOVERY PROG. - DISCONTINUATION

HON. KAREN CASEY: You're not going to tell me to sit down, are you? Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Minister of Education. Reading Recovery is a highly-structured, research-based program designed to assist early readers. The early intervention program was introduced into schools in Nova Scotia with the support of the Department of Education in 1995. It has proven to be a huge success in the public schools.

My question to the minister is this, will the minister share with classroom teachers and parents and all members of this House, who advised that Reading Recovery should be discontinued?

HON. RAMONA JENNEX: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much for the question. This was a budget item that was put on the table, along with many other things for me to consider, when we were building the budget. Even though it ended up in a budget decision, it was advice from different experts in the field that it would be much better to be able to offer a program that was more encompassing, more flexible and more equitable. So even though it ended up in the budget, the decision is actually so that we can meet the needs of more of our children in the province and making sure that we catch them earlier and support them as they travel through their school.

MS. CASEY: Mr. Speaker, I am interested to hear the minister say that it was a budget item. I am also interested to hear that originally it was a \$7 million item that was going to be a savings to the province; they are now talking that the new program will be \$5 million. That's a \$2 million difference and in a huge Education budget, what is \$2 million when the lives and the progress of kids are on the line?

My question to the minister is this, what experts? Who were the experts who did give the minister that advice?

MS. JENNEX: Thank for the question. In all due respect, that is a question that I don't feel that I should be answering, in terms of the information that was given to me is irrelevant, in that I have a great deep understanding of the program and having the experience of watching children in the program. I have nothing against the program per se but the problem is it was not equitable, not flexible, very rigid. We were leaving children out and this government wants to meet the needs of more children. That is the reason why we are changing the program. (Interruptions) Mr. Speaker, I would like to be able to finish this.

MR. SPEAKER: Go ahead.

MS. JENNEX: We're changing the program so that we're going to have another approach. Catching children early can carry them through with the support they need. This program was a piece of literacy. We wanted to make it a bigger piece to capture more of our children who need support.

MS. CASEY: Mr. Speaker, we know that over 23,000 Grade 1 students have benefited from this intense one-on-one early intervention program. In fact, out of 153 reading programs, as the minister would know, research recently in the U.S., Reading Recovery was identified as the best. So my question to the minister is this, will the replacement program be able to stand up to the test of being the best out of 153 others?

MS. JENNEX: One research place placed it as number one. There are other research organizations that would not agree with that. So I guess it's depending on which research you're looking at. Reading Recovery is a program that I'm not going to argue with

but, unfortunately, it does not meet the needs of the children that we have. We have more children who are falling outside of what Reading Recovery is able to pick up on and, unfortunately, the evidence that we have in place, provincially 57 per cent of those children that had Reading Recovery, by the time they made it to Grade 3, are not meeting the expectations that we would like for them to have. We need a program that is going to capture more people and is going to be more successful. This is an approach that we are going to be putting in place, the framework, and within the coming weeks we'll be able to share with Nova Scotians.

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

SNSMR: TOWNS TASK FORCE - TIME FRAME

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations. As the minister may know, or actually he may not know, I shouldn't assume, the Atlantic Mayors' Congress is meeting in Halifax today. He may not know that because they may not have told him, because I don't think they're speaking to that minister right now, to be honest, after what he did to them a few weeks ago. (Interruptions) But they are meeting here in Halifax, even if he's not there, even if they didn't tell him. I'm sure his ears are burning because I suspect they're talking about the minister and what he did to our towns and municipalities a few weeks ago.

Mr. Speaker, my question is this, in 2009 the minister at that time, the NDP minister, promised and announced a towns task force to deal with the long-term sustainability of our towns. Well, now in April 2011, we're still waiting for that towns task force.

MR. SPEAKER: Question, please.

MR. BAILLIE: My question to the minister is this, is this towns task force, which has not yet met on such an important matter, another example of an NDP broken promise, or is he afraid to meet with them, after what he did to our towns a few weeks ago?

HON. JOHN MACDONELL: Mr. Speaker, I want the member opposite to be aware that I've had very good correspondence, dialogue and consultation with the UNSM and with municipalities and actually have started my tour around the province to meet the wardens, mayors and municipal units. The towns task force is still a go, I must say, actually, some municipalities have contributed to that. It's our commitment to see that through and I think many of the municipalities are very keen to that initiative. We intend to follow through with our previous commitment to do that.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, I'm sad to say this, but only in the NDP fantasy land is a task force that has not met in two years considered to be still a go. Having said that, the

minister said at the time that he broke his agreement with the municipalities, “we are not going to download our financial problems onto municipalities.”

I have to tell you, Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister, that municipal officials, including Annapolis County Warden Reg Ritchie, would beg to disagree. Mr. Ritchie told the Annapolis County Spectator, “It’s not fair our residents have to pay the price for the province’s downloading of costs.” Of course, the warden is correct so my question to the minister is this, why does this government continue to force its financial hardships onto the backs of others, including in this case, our municipalities?

MR. MACDONELL: Mr. Speaker, within days of me becoming Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations, I met with the president of the UNSM. His comment to me was, we expect some things will change. They were looking at the world as we saw it, that we were asking for commitments from education and other sectors. I did make one commitment to him that if it was possible to give the one-year notice before we made any change that might negatively impact municipalities financially, which was the thing he said, can we keep the one year notice? I said as much as possible for me to do that, I would try to do that.

That was the one thing that I committed to do with him. Not only is that the one thing I delivered, but we delivered much more to the municipalities. Thank you.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, this has been a very productive Question Period. We’re actually learning some things from the government today. One of the things that I think we’ve just learned from the minister is you should never say to an NDP minister, we expect some things to change because you can be sure you’re about to get your pockets picked if that’s what you say to a minister of this government. It’s our municipalities that have learned that lesson in this case.

My final question to the minister is this, will he agree that as property taxes go up, as they inevitably will as a result of his actions as minister, that this amounts to another hidden NDP tax increase in the wings?

MR. MACDONELL: Mr. Speaker, I have to say that the municipalities have been quite reasonable on this. The member opposite should remember yesterday’s Question Period. I would have thought it was quite productive since I indicated the clause in the MOU that showed that the municipalities had agreed that if the province could not meet that financial commitment that they wouldn’t have to. It was based on appropriation.

The province signed an MOU, not an IOU. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester North.

EDUC.: READING RECOVERY PROG. - REPLACEMENT

HON. KAREN CASEY: Mr. Speaker, before I ask my question, could I ask the minister to table the documents that she referred to regarding other research that included Reading Recovery?

Mr. Speaker, my question through you to the Minister of Education is this, teachers from across this province have been asked to work with the minister to develop a replacement for Reading Recovery. My question to the minister is this, will this replacement be both research- and evidence-based?

HON. RAMONA JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, yes.

MS. CASEY: Mr. Speaker, programs like Reading Recovery and other literacy intervention programs have taken years to develop - to research, to develop, to pilot, to implement and to assess. We're now five months away from the opening of school in September 2011. Teachers have been working to develop a program that will replace Reading Recovery. My question to the minister is this, will the minister please explain how she plans to research, develop, pilot, implement and assess a new program before September?

MS. JENNEX: I think that I would like to just clarify that Reading Recovery is a program; it is one piece of a balanced literacy initiative. Now, what I would like to say in not using the word 'program' is we're looking at a new approach. I know that the member opposite knows that the staff within the Department of Education has the expertise to make the recommendations without any consultation. We could have been able to put something in place quite quickly, but one of the things that this province has is diversity among our school boards. Also, this government is very clear that we want to collaborate with our partners. So instead of the department putting another approach in place to encompass reaching more children to have success with literacy, we asked members - their lead teachers from the different school boards - to come together so that we could make sure that we were planning an approach that would be going out into the school boards based on best practice, research, evidence-based.

I have to say that the members that came in from across the province to work were ending up with an approach that is going to be a better approach than we've ever had because it is something that we worked on together.

MS. CASEY: Mr. Speaker, I do understand Reading Recovery fairly well. I do understand that there are experts at the department. I do understand that there are teachers in the classroom who know a lot about literacy programs and I do understand they've been called in and they're extremely frustrated. In my correspondence to the minister - I wrote to the minister on February 24th, I will table that letter - and the minister responded to my

correspondence, I appreciate that. I asked the minister - and my quote was: would she reconsider the decision to discontinue Reading Recovery until such time as a replacement program that produces the same results or better can be found?

My question to the minister is this, what comfort do parents and teachers have that a program that is pulled together in less than five months, ready for implementation, will give the same outcomes as Reading Recovery or any research evidence-based program?

MS. JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, I must say that I am looking forward to a program that is going to meet more than 43 per cent of the children that have had success with Reading Recovery and those were a few children, the lowest 20 per cent of the Grade 1 classroom. We're looking at broadening that out to capture children early so that they have success with literacy. Having the ability to be a good reader is a key component of being successful in life and we want to make sure that we're getting our children early and that we're able to support them throughout. Reading Recovery was not meeting enough of the needs of the children that we have in our school.

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

EDUC.: HOLY ANGELS HS - STUDENT PLACEMENT

MR. KEITH BAIN: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Minister of Education. We know that the last-ditch efforts to save Holy Angels High School have fallen on deaf ears. It is unfortunate that this government has chosen other priorities in the Spring budget like growing the size of bureaucracy, rather than saving Holy Angels High School and its specialized programs that were so important to the students who chose to go there. Now, as the students, teachers and parents prepare to close this chapter and transition to new schools, they need clarity in order to start to heal from the turmoil and chaos they've been put through. My question to the Minister of Education is, what will the minister do to ease the anxiety of parents and students and what process will be used to determine which students get to go to which high schools?

HON. RAMONA JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, with respect to the member opposite, that's not a question that I can answer. That is a question that if he would be able to ask the school board and I'm quite sure that they will be able to give him great comfort in the transition that they're putting in place for our 200 young women that will be transitioning back within their community schools. I wouldn't be able to answer that but I know that the school board is working on making sure that goes as possible.

MR. BAIN: Mr. Speaker, you would think that the department would be anxious to know that their children were looked after as well.

The students at Holy Angels chose to travel from communities all around Cape Breton Island to the all-girls school for its program, culture and learning environment. Now they are fearful that their right to choose which high school they wanted to attend will be taken away. Sources say that one high school principal in the area has been very vocal that all students from Holy Angels High should be required to go to his school. Some people involved feel the principal sees this as an opportunity to raise his student numbers, rather than what is best for these girls.

Mr. Speaker, my question through you to the minister is, will the minister put the students' interests first and encourage the school board to allow the students to choose which school they want to attend?

MS. JENNEX: Thank you very much. I want to say that all students in our province are important to this government and to this minister. There are processes in place at the school board that I will not interfere with. It is up to the school board to make those decisions and I know they will make good decisions with each of the students.

MR. BAIN: Mr. Speaker, again it proved that this government has left the girls at Holy Angels hanging out to dry. Some of the teachers at Holy Angels High are fearful that they will not find work for the Fall. It is especially concerning for those who have been teaching highly specialized programs that are the modern design of the traditional teaching practices pioneered by the sisters over a century ago.

My final supplementary, Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister is what will be done to help teachers find meaningful employment in their specialized teaching fields so they are not just another percentage point on a growing unemployment rate in Cape Breton?

MS. JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, I'm finding it a little unfair for the member opposite to ask me questions which need to be directed to the school board. I know the school board would be able to answer those questions. The school board has processes in place and the collective agreement will kick in.

I want to say that the students at that school will have a very good education and a good experience in other schools. Unfortunately the sisters decided that they were not going to lease the building anymore and we have to respect their decision. I feel very badly that some of our young people in Cape Breton will have a little bit of a disruption in their schooling but we did everything we could. We have to be respectful of the process and we have to be respectful of the decision that the sisters made.

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

**EDUC. - HOLY ANGELS HS: PURCHASE DECISION -
RECONSIDER**

HON. MANNING MACDONALD: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My question today is also for the Minister of Education and it involves the same topic that the previous member brought to the minister. This particular question does not involve the school board, it involves the Government of Nova Scotia.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP Government has not stepped in to buy Holy Angels High School. This school is known for the high academic achievements of its students and is the only public school of its kind east of Montreal.

The Premier, in his place in this House, killed any thought of the government buying Holy Angels High School and keeping it open. Instead, what we are witnessing now is the spectacle of parents in Sydney and area running around the community, trying to get a private citizen, any private citizen, to buy the school so it can be retained by the school board as an all-girls high school. How shameful is that, Mr. Speaker, in a public school system where the parents of these children who are going to that school have to go around the community trying to get a private sector person to buy a school?

My question to the minister is, will you reconsider your decision to buy Holy Angels?

HON. RAMONA JENNEX: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, no.

MR. BAIN: Well, at least, Mr. Speaker, she didn't blame the school board, the blame rests with the government. The government has chosen to abandon Holy Angels, the only all-girls high school. The government could have bought that school for \$750,000 and after the Finance Minister and the Premier, standing in their place here in the last few days and telling Nova Scotians what a wonderful surplus we had, they can't find \$750,000 to keep the girls in Holy Angels High School in a school of their own. That, to me, is shameful. That tells me that this government is not concerning itself with the provision of quality education in an all-girls high school in Sydney. My question again to the Minister of Education - why has your government decided to abandon the all-girls Holy Angels High School in Sydney?

MS. JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, I want to say that this government did work with the school board and they looked at many options around Holy Angels High School. I know that there was a committee struck and that the deputy met with them on a number of occasions and we offered extra money around the lease situation, but the school board, they're the ones that decide which schools are presented to the government for our capital plan and this is not a blame game. We have got to realize that we have to respect those young women as they go into our different schools to support them and let us stop talking

about something that we have now no control over. We need to respect the Sisters and the decision that they've made.

MR. MANNING MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, it has got nothing to do with the decision of the Sisters, not the least the school. It's got everything to do with the government abandoning the concept of an all-girls high school east of Montreal, a public school, that's what this is all about. It's not a school board problem. The demise of Holy Angels High School is the responsibility of this government. This government has caused the demise of Holy Angels High School because of its refusal to buy the school.

You know, Madam Minister, that the school board cannot buy capital assets. It has to be the government of the day to purchase those assets. I'm asking you again, for the people of Cape Breton who depend on Holy Angels High School to keep operating to the people who want to keep going in that school of excellence, will you change your mind and buy that school for \$750,000 and keep those students in an all-girls high school in Sydney?

MS. JENNEX: The young women of Holy Angels High School have had enough turmoil and they know that the decision has been made and the school board is already making plans around where they're being relocated. Really, we need to be able to support the young women as they make their transition to make sure that they're successful in that transition. This issue is something that we need to move on and make sure that we are providing education for those girls in other schools in their communities, thank you.

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

HEALTH & WELLNESS: MS LIBERATION TREATMENT - TRIALS

MS. DIANA WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. As the minister may recall, last Fall, the Minister of Health and Wellness, along with her provincial counterparts urged the federal government to fund clinical trials for the MS liberation treatment. To date, the federal government has failed to act. As a result, we have a patchwork of activity happening across the country. Saskatchewan is funding their own clinical trial. New Brunswick provides support for patients travelling out of country for treatment. Newfoundland funded MRIs for patients travelling abroad and tracking patients. Yesterday, Manitoba joined the cause by announcing it will be joining Saskatchewan in funding clinical trials. My question to the minister is, can the minister update the House as to what discussions she has had with her counterparts with regard to participation in MS clinical trials?

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, currently in this country, there are no clinical trials underway in any province. However, there are seven pieces of research happening throughout North America. An expert scientific panel put together by the

federal government under the auspices of CIHI are watching very carefully and monitoring. This research, from the seven projects, is the research that will form the basis of whether or not clinical trials will proceed and on what basis. We're awaiting the outcome of the results of those seven studies.

MS. WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, in the absence of leadership at the federal level, provinces are stepping up to the plate to assist MS patients in their respective jurisdictions. Nova Scotia MS patients deserve the same consideration from their own government. The Manitoba NDP Government announced yesterday they will fund a clinical trial in their province. They've put \$5 million aside to start that and they've also invited other provinces to join in on a multi-site research proposal on MS liberation treatment. My question to the minister is, will this NDP Government consider the request being issued by the NDP Government in Manitoba and join in a multi-site clinical trial for the MS liberation treatment?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, we have said and I will say again here today that when the scientific and medical experts recommend that clinical trials proceed, our province will certainly be happy to participate in them.

MS. WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, this government talks about evidence - good solid evidence in medicine is gathered by participating in a clinical trial. Last Fall, the Premier stated in the House that he is prepared to participate in national clinical trials; I will table that while we're here. Premier Selinger of Manitoba's call yesterday was the beginning of what will no doubt become a national clinical trial. My question this time is to the Premier. Is the Premier willing to stand by his words last Fall, and ensure Nova Scotians participate in a clinical trial for MS liberation treatment?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I said what I meant and I mean what I say.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston.

SNSMR: PROPERTY TAXES - INCREASES

HON. KEITH COLWELL: Mr. Speaker, my questions today will be for the Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations. To quote a former Opposition critic who now sits as Finance Minister, "... this government is obsessed with appearances rather than realities . . ." That was stated in Hansard, April 23, 2001. That statement has never been more appropriate than it is today.

This is a government that writes fiction as an excuse to hike taxes. This is a government which tries to rewrite history in order to justify reneging on agreements. This government has tried to use clever wordsmithing to cover up their true intentions. My

question is, how much more property taxes will Nova Scotians be forced to pay now that you're downloading responsibilities on the municipal councils?

HON. JOHN MACDONELL: Mr. Speaker, a couple of things there. We're not downloading on municipalities, we're stopping the uploading to the province. The Opposition doesn't have to like the answer but they could listen to it. The municipalities have been budgeting these costs into their budgets over the past few years so there will be no increase in taxes for Nova Scotians. (Applause)

MR. COLWELL: Mr. Speaker, I trust the minister is going to guarantee that and if there is a tax increase that he will cover them. Somehow or another I don't believe that. Not only is this government failing to address the problems throughout the municipalities in Nova Scotia, they're going to download provincial commitments onto these communities and to these people. This minister knows full well that he stood against provincial downloading when he was in Opposition yet here we are again, another broken NDP promise and another NDP tax hike on the horizon.

When Nova Scotia property taxes go up and the NDP does exactly what the Finance Minister tried to do yesterday – wash his hands and claim, not me. My question is to the minister, when property taxes go up across the province because of the recklessness, will you and the Finance Minister apologize to Nova Scotians for yet another NDP broken promise and tax hike?

MR. MACDONELL: Mr. Speaker, this government didn't break any promises and I certainly know this minister hasn't. The member opposite, if he remembers Question Period yesterday and looks in Hansard, he will see that there was a clause in the MOU that said the agreement was based on appropriation, which I'm thinking he would understand. It means that if the government could not afford it, that was an out clause really for the government in this regard.

Mr. Speaker, he would know from the finances left to us by the previous administration that entered into the agreement, it was not a sustainable agreement. I cannot guarantee to the member that municipalities will not raise taxes but what I can tell him is they will not raise taxes because of any change in the MOU.

MR. COLWELL: Well, Mr. Speaker, all municipalities will be impacted when the province downloads its responsibilities as they're doing now. The NDP might be able to invent surpluses one day and invent deficits the next day but Nova Scotians know that their taxes are going up, 2 per cent higher GST, 1,400 higher user fees, more and more income being taxed at a higher and higher rate due to bracket creep. Nova Scotians can expect higher property taxes thanks to the NDP.

My question is, how is downloading your commitments onto the municipalities a better deal for anyone in Nova Scotia other than the Minister of Finance?

MR. MACDONELL: Mr. Speaker, well, I'll try to make a couple of points which I'm pretty sure will resonate with the member. The government is not downloading onto the municipalities; it is stopping the uploading to the government. The municipalities are actually better off under these adjustments than they were prior to the MOU, perhaps not as well off as they might have hoped if the MOU had been completed, but they're better off than they were prior to the MOU.

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

**LBR. & ADV. EDUC.: GRAD./PROFESSIONAL STUDENTS
- ASSISTANCE**

MS. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, yesterday the government announced changes to the Student Assistance Plan and that was a good thing. (Applause) But, and you knew that was coming, there's no indication that the government is going to help students who want to pursue a second degree or a professional or a graduate degree. So my question is to the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education - what new assistance are you giving graduate or professional students?

HON. MARILYN MORE: Mr. Speaker, I was very pleased to meet with student leaders yesterday and also at an event last evening. Their almost unanimous reaction to the investment of the government into making university education more affordable was very, very positive and we are very pleased to move that forward. As everyone in this House recognizes, a university education is a great investment and it continues to pay off through an individual's lifetime. Certainly there are some programs and degrees that enable students to earn more in their future careers. Certainly we needed to start and focus on those who, we wanted to make it affordable for those who had most need and that's what we have accomplished to an improved extent and we're very, very excited about this breakthrough.

MS. REGAN: Mr. Speaker, this is not the only way the government is neglecting students who are continuing their studies. Undergraduate tuition will be limited to increases of not more than 3 per cent but it appears tuition and professional programs will be able to rise with no limits. So my question is, why?

MS. MORE: Mr. Speaker, we took a very balanced, measured approach. We replaced the \$30 million that was required to continue the bursary for students in this province. We capped tuition at 3 per cent and we improved significantly the student assistance package. I think students got a very good break and they certainly realize that. Can we do more in the future? Hopefully, but my heavens, in this fiscal reality, making

these improvements was a tremendous break for everyone and we're very pleased to be able to support the youth of our province.

MS. REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I take from the minister's comments that what we're going to do is penalize our brightest and our best, the kids who are going on to do masters degrees and professional degrees, by not giving them any assurance as to what their tuition is going to be. They don't know where their tuition is going at this point they only know it's going to go up.

Mr. Speaker, the people who want to pursue professional or graduate degrees will improve our economy for the better. You know that educated workforce that we all keep hearing about. Students should not be limited to one degree based on socio-economic status. Will the minister commit to treating all students fairly and reconsider her approach to professional and graduate students?

MS. MORE: Mr. Speaker, our first priority is giving university students or the citizens of Nova Scotia, the opportunity to at least get their first degree in an affordable manner and we've certainly done that. With the graduate and professional programs, certainly the citizens of this province subsidized those programs considerably, that is a tremendous contribution from the citizens. We need to make sure we have a sustainable and quality education system in our post-secondary system, and this approach is one way to maintain that sustainability. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle.

**EDUC. - READING RECOVERY PROG.: LITERACY RATES
- EFFECT**

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Thank you very much Mr. Speaker. According to the 2009 Programme of International Student Assessment that was released December 7, 2010, 15 year-olds in Nova Scotia were ranked 13th in the world of reading. A significant achievement since they were assessed 10 years ago. The study measured the students from 65 countries and included the 10 Canadian provinces.

Mr. Speaker, my question through you to the Minister of Education. Can she explain why she is willing to risk the significant progress and achievements made in literacy in our province by eliminating the Reading Recovery Program, without a clear strategy or goals, on how she plans to keep children at the lowest literacy rates from falling through the cracks?

HON. RAMONA JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, thank you for reminding people in Nova Scotia how well we are doing with our education system. It's a world class system and all Nova Scotians should be very proud of that.

I want to say that the reason that Reading Recovery is being replaced with a new approach is that we need to make sure that we meet the needs of more children, so we are going to be making sure that we are going to be having early intervention. We need to catch our children early if they need support learning how to read. Therefore Mr. Speaker the lowest 20 percent of a class in Reading Recovery that would be picked up, those are very few numbers, we're looking at making sure that we are going to be able to have even better scores because we are picking up kids younger and earlier.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, we know the research-based Reading Recovery Program has been around since the 1970's. The program is ranked number one out of 153 reading programs in the U.S. and has proven to be very successful in bridging the literacy gap between a classrooms most struggling students and their peers.

Through you to the minister, how in five months will you research, develop, test, train, and implement a new reading program that can even come close to Reading Recovery? What the real cost of the program including the loss of human capital already invested in the Reading Recovery Program?

MS. JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, the approach that we are taking is to make sure that we are using the best practices in terms of literacy development. We have over 600 trained Reading Recovery teachers in the province of Nova Scotia who know those best practices. Learning how to read comes with a lot of research, we know what children need to be successful in reading. I am looking forward to, in another couple of weeks, to be able to share with my members opposite the approach that we are taking. Thank you.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: Well I thank the minister for that answer and wanting to provide information to us. She said she wants to expand the program to include students from Grade 1 to Grade 3 and that different boards have different needs (Interruption) from Primary to Grade 3, thank you.

How does she plan to monitor this piecemeal program if it is going to be different in different boards and it is going to be a broader piece, to make sure that students are not falling farther behind and ending up with IPPs, or Individual Program Plans, which close doors on them when they get to higher grades and will further cost the government in the future when it could have been prevented in the first place?

MS. JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, I want to remind the member opposite - who I know has a deep understanding of Reading Recovery - that Reading Recovery was only meeting the needs of a very few students, the lowest 20 per cent of a Grade 1 class and not all of that 20 per cent. We are now able to prove that only 43 per cent of the children, by the time they get to Grade 3, are attaining the goals that we want them to have, so we are going to make sure that this program gets children early.

Evidence-based, research-based tells us that earlier is better. We don't want to wait until Grade 1 to catch a few, we want to get in early and catch more children so we can support them with their reading so they can be successful. Thank you very much for the question, member opposite.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

ENERGY: ELECTRICITY RATES - DETAILS

MR. ANDREW YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Energy. I'm sure the minister is aware that the current residential electricity price is 11.8 cents a kilowatt hour and, of course, to that we add the base rate and the NDP electricity tax. We all know that power rates will continue to rise with the reliance on fossil fuels and the costs associated with the renewable. Would the minister please tell this House what price he believes Nova Scotians should expect electricity prices to level off at?

HON. CHARLIE PARKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the honourable member for the question. In Nova Scotia we are on the leading edge of some renewable electricity initiatives but the rates, actually, are set by the Utility and Review Board, so actually the URB is meeting right this week on the COMFIT program, as the honourable member would know, so really that's their responsibility and only time will tell what rates they set.

MR. YOUNGER: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm surprised to hear the Minister of Energy say that it's not his responsibility since the Premier and the Minister of Finance, in Opposition, repeatedly said it was the government's responsibility to ensure fair power rates for Nova Scotians.

The Minister of Energy mentioned the COMFIT hearing and let me just speak to that briefly. We all agree that renewable energy is part of the solution, however, he is constantly deferring to the Utility and Review Board, just as this government is. As he noted, one such deferral goes on today with the feed and tariff hearings, a program which excludes solar and geothermal because the NDP said it would be too expensive, and yet we have rates proposed at that hearing today which are six times what Nova Scotians pay for electricity now.

Mr. Speaker, the legislation on the feed-in tariff does not allow the board to consider affordability or even the economics of various projects. Does the minister still support the review board setting feed-in tariff rates at levels which could prove unaffordable to Nova Scotia residents and businesses?

MR. PARKER: Mr. Speaker, the URB has a job to do, that's certainly true. They have the expertise, they bring in knowledgeable experts to help them determine their rates,

but really the COMFIT is all about communities. COMFIT - Community-Based Feed-in Tariff is what it stands for - allows farmers groups, municipalities, small businesses and community groups to get involved and it helps create jobs in our local communities and the spinoff, whether it's tidal, in-stream, wind or whatever process they are moving forward.

There's a lot of potential in it, it's going to help stabilize energy prices over time and we're saying let the URB fully investigate it and bring in the proper rates.

MR. YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, I might congratulate the minister for his early learning of avoiding and not answering the questions that are embarrassing for his government, as he has done so ably today.

Mr. Speaker, he says community, I wonder how many people in his Party consider Lockheed Martin and some of those large ones as community, because they obviously qualify. The URB has stated, and the Chair of the URB has stated, that they can only consider the items that this government has put before them and only consider those conditions, so because the NDP didn't include affordability or economics in it, they can't consider it.

The now-Premier said in Opposition, and I quote: Increases will make life less affordable for every family in the province and these increases will affect jobs as Nova Scotia industry struggled to remain competitive. That hasn't changed. My question is, given that what we now see at the Utility and Review Board hearings and the fact that the NDP legislation did not factor in affordability and project economics, will the Minister of Energy tell us why his government no longer cares about affordability or competitiveness?

MR. PARKER: Mr. Speaker, the COMFIT Program is really for small community groups to develop energy projects in the province. If larger companies like Lockheed Martin want to investigate some of the IPP Program, as the honourable member should be aware - really, we're all about bringing the best possible rates on electricity to Nova Scotians, a cleaner, greener energy and a more stable future. That's why we took the HST off of electricity to begin with.

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

HEALTH & WELLNESS - DIABETES: MANAGEMENT - DETAILS

MS. DIANA WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. Earlier this week, the Canadian Diabetes Association issued another warning call to government that diabetes is at epidemic proportions and failing to respond will impact future generations and severely threaten the sustainability of our health care system. Nova Scotia is definitely being swept up in this epidemic. The report, titled

Canada at the Tipping Point - Charting a New Path, indicates that Nova Scotia ranks close to the top when it comes to diabetes' prevalence but very near the bottom when it comes to approving drugs and devices to better manage the disease.

I think we would all agree that making improvements so we can reverse these rankings will not only benefit those with diabetes, it will go a long way to curbing the rising costs of health care. My question to the minister is, what plan does the minister have to ensure Nova Scotia does a better job at managing diabetes?

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for an excellent question. Our Better Care Sooner plan will contribute to improvements in chronic disease management. That's the whole point of having good primary care teams available in the communities, readily accessible to people, so that they can get to see them before conditions deteriorate to the point that they need more intense interventions in acute care settings.

Additionally, it is our plan - and the member will have seen this in the budget - to have chronic disease management work done in this year. Some money has been allocated for that and, of course, our childhood obesity strategy will be looking at the health of children who are increasingly confronted with the disease of diabetes.

MS. WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, to the minister, I think that it is important that under the Chronic Disease Management plan, the incidence of diabetes be looked at specifically and the benefit of the insulin pumps be looked at. I think that that's a key component.

It is estimated that the hospitalization costs related to diabetes in Nova Scotia cost our health care system \$38 million a year and the total cost of managing diabetes is much higher. If we're able to prevent hospitalizations through better disease management, we're going to save the health care system money. My question to the minister is, can the minister please confirm whether she has been made aware of any plans in her own department to fund insulin pumps, starting with children under the age of 18?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I know we'll have an opportunity to debate this further with a bit more detail following Question Period and I'm looking forward to participating in that. There are many things that we can do to improve the management of diabetes and we will be looking at all of those various components as we work on the childhood obesity strategy and I will be happy to share those initiatives with members when we have fully developed those initiatives.

MS. WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, the minister is talking about the childhood obesity strategy and that is one measure of prevention but we're talking about management of the disease. Not all diabetics have any problem with obesity. So we have to be careful not to lump those two things together.

Mr. Speaker, in Nova Scotia we have a Diabetic Care Program which provides a network of diabetic care centres across the province and would provide an excellent platform for implementing an insulin pump program. In fact, we're in an enviable position compared to other provinces in this regard. So my question to the minister is, when will the minister commit to the creation of a diabetic management plan in Nova Scotia which would include the provision of insulin pumps?

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. I would remind all members during Question Period that all electronic devices are to be turned off at all times and I would appreciate it if everybody would adhere to those rules, please. Thank you.

The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, with respect to insulin pumps, Nova Scotia is one of probably five or six provinces that do not provide coverage for insulin pumps. Right now a very small number of our provinces, our larger provinces have some coverage, but they don't have universal coverage. They have small programs and we certainly are monitoring the impact in those provinces of those programs. If the honourable member has any information that indicates that there are cost savings, that it does result in fewer hospitalizations, I would be very interested in seeing that information. Because as of yet my understanding is that information has not been generated by the provinces that, in fact, do have the insulin pumps.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Glace Bay.

ENERGY - BAYPLEX: GEOTHERMAL PROJ. - FUND

MR. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Energy. As you know, the BAYplex Recreation Centre in Glace Bay is the home base of my community. For some time now representatives of the BAYplex have been lobbying all levels of government for funding for its geothermal energy retrofit project. The federal government has committed its share of funding. The municipality has also committed to a portion of the funding. So my question to the minister is, will the provincial government commit to funding the BAYplex geothermal project?

HON. CHARLIE PARKER: Mr. Speaker, I thank the honourable member for the question. I do believe I received a letter from you within the recent past asking about this project. Every year our program under Efficiency Nova Scotia looks at a number of rinks and other projects around the province and each zone was managed at that time. This year I think it was HRM and Hants County that were in the program and another year it will be another area of the province. So, you know, it will be considered in due course.

MR. MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, this project is much more than a simple rink project, it has many other angles and points that I think have to be taken into account. It's certainly a pioneering initiative that could serve as a benchmark for geothermal capabilities in this province and everything hinges on the provincial government's commitment financially. Since the NDP had told Nova Scotians this week that they have the skill and intelligence to run a surplus of \$447 million, I think the people of Glace Bay would love this skill and intelligence applied to our community project. So my question to the Minister of Energy is, given the great financial windfall the government has spent the last few days talking about, would the minister support my argument that a project involving renewable energies in a struggling economic region should land high on the government's priority list?

MR. PARKER: Mr. Speaker, certainly we're all interested in saving dollars and renewable energy is the cleaner, greener way to go. We've got a number of good programs originally under Conserve Nova Scotia, but as April 1st now under Efficiency Nova Scotia. As that new entity moves forward, there will be a number of new initiatives looked at and certainly your geothermal project in Glace Bay sounds interesting. I'd certainly be interested in getting more information on it.

MR. MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, the BAYplex geothermal retrofit is certainly in line with the government's mandate. It capitalizes on a renewable resource; it allows the government to maximize federal investment; it supports and promotes healthy active lifestyles and recreation; it allows a community non-profit organization to become sustainable as this project pays for itself in 10 years. It's a small investment relative to the return and it shows the community that the provincial government has not forgotten about them. My question to the minister is, I just listed seven reasons why the government should support the BAYplex geothermal project. Please tell me one reason why the government shouldn't.

MR. PARKER: Mr. Speaker, again, your project sounds interesting and Efficiency Nova Scotia, as you know, is an arm's-length organization to government. I'd certainly be interested in getting more information personally, but I also suggest that you bring it directly to Efficiency Nova Scotia.

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

CCH: ART FUNDING - REDUCTION

MR. KEITH BAIN: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage. The Premier, with great fanfare, has created this new department and the minister has announced plans to create Arts Nova Scotia, which has been well received across the province. My question through you is, when the minister met

with the arts community to reveal these plans, did he bother to tell them he was about to cut arts funding for the second time in two years?

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member opposite for the question today. Of course, I'm not going to get into details about numbers on the budget because it is my first question and I don't want you, as Speaker, to have me take my place. (Interruption)

The creation of the Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage broadens the focus of protecting and celebrating the diverse Nova Scotia culture and heritage that we have in the province and especially the arts community. I was proud to have the Premier with me on the announcement back in February of our five-point plan, our Arts and Culture Plan, and I can tell the member opposite that this information was well received by the arts community throughout Nova Scotia. I look forward to working with them to unfold that five-point plan in the coming months.

MR. BAIN: Mr. Speaker, we value the rich heritage of this province and we value the cultural industry that is worth \$1.4 billion to the Nova Scotian economy, so it outraged us when the government cut funding for culture last year by 10.5 per cent, revealing it doesn't appreciate our heritage or understand our economy. Now they've lopped off another 1.3 per cent for the coming fiscal year. My question through you to the minister is why is this government one day courting the arts community with new organizations and the next day punishing them with funding cuts?

MR. WILSON: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his second question about this important issue. One of the things that we have taken, I think it's a loud message that we have vindicated Nova Scotia, how important we feel this sector is to Nova Scotia. By the creation of this new department, we're going to ensure that the creative economy has a positive effect on the economy of Nova Scotia.

The creative economy is so important, especially in rural communities, and it doesn't have to take place in our major cities like Halifax or Sydney. It happens all over the province, in the ridings of the members opposite, in the ridings of Yarmouth and Sydney, all across this province. We're going to work with the sector to ensure that they have the support to continue to increase and support the creative economy here in Nova Scotia.

MR. BAIN: Mr. Speaker, this government has been paying too much attention to the administration side of this department and not enough to actually developing the artistic community here. Last year we had an expensive consultation exercise; this year we had the creation of all these new departments and agencies. But the needs of artists, art organizations, creative businesses are being ignored. Arts funding here is such a small item, \$9.2 million and government is such a massive industry worth \$1.4 billion that these

cuts make no economic sense. My final question is, will the minister promise to pay more attention to artists than to bureaucratic structures?

MR. WILSON: Mr. Speaker, I can tell the honourable member across the way that in my short three months of overseeing this department I've spent a lot more and have addressed many more issues than the previous government. We'll be able to stand on our track record. We know what the former government has done to the arts community over the years. We're working with them, not working against them.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

NAT. RES.: COYOTE BOUNTY - EFFECTIVENESS

MR. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, we're running short on time, so let's move along. My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources.

Scientists from around the world tried to explain to this government that a bounty on coyotes wouldn't work to effectively reduce contact between their population and ours. I guess we'll have to ask the minister, now that the bounty has ended, did it work?

HON. CHARLIE PARKER: Mr. Speaker, I thank the honourable member for the question. Our coyote program was multi-faceted - it included education, hiring trappers to pursue aggressive animals, the Pelt Incentive Program, and it basically is an outreach in several directions. Basically it tried to make the animals more wary of the human population. Really, the season for licensed fur trappers only ended on March 31st and it's a little early yet to see those results, but as they come in we'll assess and monitor what happened and decide from there.

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, the minister knows full well what effect the bounty will have on numbers is only temporary. The best example of this is the fact that we tried this in the 1980s and it didn't work. The Liberal caucus tried to explain this to the previous minister for the last year, so maybe we'll try with the new minister. My question is, will the bounty on coyotes be extended and start again in 2011?

MR. PARKER: Mr. Speaker, this is actually not a bounty - a bounty is year-round, open to anybody and everybody to go after an animal. This is a targeted program, it's called a pelt incentive. It was only by licensed trappers, no one else could go after the animals, and it was only during the season from mid-October to the end of March. It's too early yet to know whether the program worked, but it will be evaluated as the results come in.

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, you know the NDP sanitized a cull, that is what we had. I understand the anxiety and caution people feel about coyotes close to residential population, but this is not a new phenomenon. The NDP Government recklessly had a

knee-jerk reaction to a situation and can't prove to us whether or not the bounty worked. My question to the minister is, when will you show the House the figures on the coyote bounty from last year?

MR. PARKER: Mr. Speaker, again, as the results are available, we'll make them available to all Nova Scotians, including here in the House. It's really part of our incentive to find a way to keep Nova Scotians safer, not to have aggressive animals in our communities that are harmful to children or teenagers or adults. The pelt incentive was part of that, but so was the education program, so is hiring licensed trappers to deal with aggressive animals - we also hired a biologist, a specialist in the field, to provide advice. Safety is the number one issue.

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

OPPOSITION MEMBERS' BUSINESS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Opposition House Leader.

HON. MANNING MACDONALD: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Would you please call the order of business, Motions Other Than Government Motions.

MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Opposition House Leader.

HON. MANNING MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Resolution No. 134

Res. No. 134, re Diabetes: Action Plan - Support - notice given Apr. 4/11 - (Ms. D. Whalen)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Clayton Park

MS. DIANA WHALEN: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today, on behalf of the Liberal caucus, to discuss Resolution No. 134. I would like to read the operative clause in that resolution and that is:

"Therefore be it resolved that all members of the Legislature recognize the devastating impact of diabetes on individuals and our health care system and call on government to follow the lead of New Brunswick by outlining a diabetic action plan in our province starting with funding for insulin pumps."

Madam Speaker, as you know, today we had a question in Question Period about insulin pumps and the minister was able to answer and say that she is looking for evidence that insulin pumps save money, or that insulin pumps are effective in stopping or decreasing hospitalization and emergency room visits.

I would suggest that in the last couple of days the minister has received many letters and e-mails from Nova Scotians who have told us their stories - I know I've received them and the Health Critic for the Progressive Conservative Party as well has been receiving these letters. People are telling us of their personal experience with the pumps.

I have heard from a number of families where they can actually tell you their visits to emergency rooms are down; their security in managing the disease is up; their lifestyle is improved; and their children are able to have a fuller, more confident experience at school and in the community because they have that confidence of knowing that they have an insulin pump that is helping them - not doing everything, but helping them to manage the disease more effectively.

So I think it's important that we acknowledge the efforts of Nova Scotians to explain to us what it means to live with diabetes and what it means, in the long run, to the province as well.

The facts, of course, were in the report I mentioned that was just released by the Canadian Diabetes Association. It was called *At the Tipping Point*, the tipping point on diabetes. In that report they laid out what the current effects are, really, of not managing the disease properly. Number one, I thought in terms of importance to Nova Scotia, was that we are close to the very bottom when it comes to managing the disease through medications, devices, and supplies. We are also near the very top when it comes to the incidence or prevalence of diabetes in this province.

Now I think it's important during this debate to note that the side effects of failing to properly manage the disease include heart attacks, stroke, kidney failure, blindness, non-traumatic limb amputation, and depression. Those costs are significant to every province in this country, but particularly here in Nova Scotia where the numbers are high. The cost to treat these side effects, Madam Speaker, is much higher than the cost to government to try and prevent them in the first place, by giving Nova Scotians all of the available tools that they can have to manage the disease successfully.

Let's be very clear, Madam Speaker, that having access to insulin pumps is an investment for the province; it's an investment in good health; and it's an investment in the Nova Scotians themselves and their families who are struggling to look after this disease, knowing full well what the costs will be if they don't. They understand the implications and they're working hard to manage that disease.

I've been struck by the depth of - I guess how strongly this affects families. I had a chance last year to talk to a young woman whose son was just diagnosed with diabetes, just as he was entering Primary. Her description of their sleepless nights and having to get up and check their blood levels at a regular time, and their constant vigilance, their charting and recording every bit of food and exercise and always testing - it's a very overpowering thing, especially for a family newly diagnosed, and where they have a child just diagnosed, they have a huge adjustment to make.

I can tell you, they look to the technology around insulin pumps as a way to help them manage and a way to bring back a level of normalcy into their lives. I think that's very important for us not to forget, but again I go back to the savings - and if we can help those people, all people, manage the disease better we know we are going to prevent some very serious complications in the future.

Last year, or the year before, at the diabetes dinner that the MLAs were invited to a young man in his 30s was speaking and talking about the difficulty - in fact the age that seems to be the most difficult managing is early adulthood, and that's when young people leave home and they are at university or away working and they no longer have their parents helping them to manage it, and it's a time that often the disease goes out of control.

There is a lot for us to learn about how and why insulin pumps would help a great deal and we've heard people like George Canyon talking and lobbying, an advocate on behalf of diabetics because he's also someone who has benefited from being able to afford an insulin pump.

We're here today really to call on the government to look at the passage of Bill No. 11. Call it for debate, we'd like to see that it is given the attention that it deserves, so that we can discuss here in the province whether or not this is a component of the good management of diabetes in Nova Scotia - and we believe it is.

New Brunswick, referenced in our resolution today, the Government of New Brunswick despite having a \$446 million deficit, that budget this year - they just tabled that a week or so ago, and I think it's important to all members of the House - in their budget under the category of Managing Spending Growth they see the introduction of insulin pumps, their funding of insulin pumps, as a way to manage spending growth. So they've made the connection, they've connected the dots between providing insulin pumps to the people who need it and can't afford it or don't have private coverage, and have seen that they will ultimately have a reduction in spending needs in the health care area.

So I think that's very important - they have actually included this as an investment in the Comprehensive Diabetes Strategy and they are focusing, they say in the New Brunswick budget, on prevention, deduction, and management of the disease, including the funding of insulin pumps.

We took a lot of comfort and a lot of excitement to see New Brunswick, our neighbouring province, take that step, Madam Speaker. New Brunswick is now joining Newfoundland in the funding of insulin pumps. Statistics here in Nova Scotia, Madam Speaker, speak to the need and they speak very loudly - over 87,000 Nova Scotians have been diagnosed with diabetes.

And I'd like at this point just to mention briefly about the obesity strategy that the minister mentioned during Question Period, and just make it very clear that that strategy does not affect the type 1 diabetics that we're talking about here that are really the candidates for the insulin pumps. That is a type 2 diabetic, it's a very different disease and I don't think that it does a good service to the people who are struck with type 1 diabetes to suggest that an obesity management would be an answer, so I would just like to make that point.

The prevalence rate, to go back to some of the statistics in our province, of this disease has increased in excess of 20 per cent in the last five years here in Nova Scotia, and type 1 diabetes rates are rising 3 per cent to 5 per cent every year across the country.

Sadly, the greatest rise is occurring in children age five to nine. For young children, the diagnosis of type 1 diabetes requires constant monitoring - as I said, a real interruption to lifestyle. I have the figures on how many needles - it says on average 1,460 needles a year, 2,190 pokes to the finger a year to test blood sugars. It's very, very intrusive, Madam Speaker.

As I said the cost to individuals is very high and I hope the minister will look very, very squarely at the cost to individuals who can't afford this because it's the lucky ones who have it in their health plans or have the personal means or can make the personal sacrifices to find the money.

It's an expensive proposition for an individual to make, and yet we are seeing families making tremendous sacrifices in order to be able to shoulder that financial burden and be able to get an insulin pump for their children.

What we'd like to suggest and even call on the government to look at is if you would call Bill No. 11, which was introduced today, and even consider amending it. If you don't want to pass a bill that would suggest that we look at insulin pumps and have them funded, perhaps we can start in some steps, some baby steps or some gradual phasing-in that would start with children and start with those families that have no coverage for insulin pumps. If we could even do it that way, the cost would be greatly mitigated and this year alone we're looking at costs (Interruption) Yes?

MADAM SPEAKER: The member's time has elapsed.

MS. WHALEN: Thank you very much. I look forward to the other speakers.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: I thank the honourable member for bringing forward this particular item to the floor this evening for an opportunity to talk about, I think, an issue that is of great importance to all members in this House. I would imagine that all of the members here know someone living with diabetes, and in the debate we had last time on this topic I indicated that I certainly, in my own family, have people who are living with diabetes, and indeed children with type 1 diabetes, and I've known very many people in our community - and I related the story about a young, single mom who did a field placement in my constituency office, my MLA office.

I want to reiterate the admiration that I have particularly for families with children with type 1 diabetes and the challenges that they face, particularly around the diagnosis, when that first occurs, and then all of the milestones in the lives of their children, you know, as they go to perhaps a daycare centre, as they enter the school system, as they become young adults and all of the challenges that that posed in their teenage years. So I do very much recognize the added demands that living with diabetes will place on parents and on a family as they parent and as they support their children through the various stages of life.

According to the Diabetes Care Program of Nova Scotia, we have 10 per cent of the adult population in Nova Scotia living with diabetes and this percentage increases to 25 per cent of adults over the age of 75 - one in four. It indeed places a very heavy burden on our population and on our health care system and on the networks, the support networks. There currently are estimated 750 children and youth with diabetes under the age of 19 in Nova Scotia, of which 35 per cent are currently using pump therapy to manage their diabetes. I recognize, and I think we all recognize, that insulin pumps are being used more and more for children with type 1 diabetes, and honourable members know that these devices are used to administer insulin.

I had an opportunity after the new year to meet with George Canyon, whom I'm sure we're all great fans of, in terms of not only his music, but what a great ambassador he is for our province and, as he said to me and the Premier, although he resides in another province he considers Nova Scotia his home and he never misses an opportunity to make sure that people he meets know that. (Applause) As you know, he is an ambassador for the Juvenile Diabetes Foundation. We met with him and a representative from the manufacturer of insulin pumps to talk about the benefits that he has experienced as an individual who lives with diabetes, and what a great advantage it has been to him in terms of improving his lifestyle and helping him manage his disease. So I very much appreciated that opportunity.

Nova Scotia is one of six provinces - perhaps five provinces now with New Brunswick looking at covering insulin pumps. I'm not entirely sure of how extensive their program is, but it's certainly something I will look into. Perhaps we can learn from them, particularly if they are initiating a program with a view to having it help them, not only in terms of managing the disease, but improving the financial impact on their health care system. That is certainly something that I will explore more fully.

Staff in the Department of Health and Wellness and the Diabetes Care Program of Nova Scotia have been exploring insulin pump coverage and they have completed a scan to determine the type and level of financial assistance being provided in other provinces. The program has consulted with stakeholders, including clinicians, subject matter experts, and patient families. We do look very carefully at research on the clinical and the cost effectiveness of insulin pump therapy. As yet, no decisions have been made, but certainly when decisions are made they will be made on the basis of the clinical evidence.

In these times, health care dollars are scarce and because of the limited dollars available, we want to make sure that we are spending our money wisely, that we are getting a real benefit from the investments that we make in our health care system. I understand that, certainly for a certain group of patients with type 1 diabetes, there is a clinical value to having insulin pumps and they can be cost effective. So if the evidence is there, then this is the type of information that we are interested in learning about and making decisions based on.

I want to acknowledge the EMILY Fund, a registered Nova Scotia charity. I want all members of this House to be aware of this fund, if you're not already aware of this fund. It provides one-time financial assistance for children from our province, and from P.E.I. as well, who could benefit from the use of an insulin pump but could not otherwise afford it. I had correspondence from a spokesperson for this fund and it is quite phenomenal the amount of money that they've not only raised, but they've distributed in terms of helping children with type 1 diabetes get access to insulin pumps who otherwise would not have had access because their parents would not perhaps have had the means or a plan. This fund is there and they have helped a very significant number of children in our province get access to insulin pumps.

I want to say, though, that insulin pumps are only a small answer to a large and complex health care issue. In Nova Scotia we have worked with health care partners to develop other answers and we will continue to do that. We are near the top in Canada for rates of diabetes and we have to do more on the prevention side as well as on the management side. I'm pleased that the budget that was tabled yesterday does, in fact, have measures to deal with better management, as well as moving in the direction of providing us with more opportunities to prevent this disease.

With those few remarks, I know that we could discuss this for a much longer time and perhaps we'll have an opportunity to do that in the future. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle.

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Thank you. It's my pleasure to stand and speak for a few moments on the resolution I brought forward today during Opposition Day, Resolution No. 134. I want to thank a number of individuals in the gallery today who are sitting very attentively, listening very closely to the comments made by all members in this House and understanding the importance of diabetic care in this province. But there's the issue that this is just an Opposition resolution that really has no binding impact upon the decisions of government. It is still the NDP Government that we see before us today that have to make a decision of one way or another on how they're going to move forward in supporting issues like insulin pumps for Nova Scotians.

By any measure diabetes is a significant and growing problem for Nova Scotians and for government. Nova Scotia has the second oldest population, the lowest median family income, the third highest rates for overweight and obesity. You might say that we have the perfect storm for diabetes. Our pre-diabetes prevalence is one of the highest in Canada - all of these risk factors may contribute to diabetes prevalence in the province that is higher than the national average.

There are 87,000 Nova Scotians estimated to have diabetes in 2010 and that number is expected to balloon to 125,000 by 2020. The Diabetes Care Program annual report tells us that 4,000 Nova Scotians were diagnosed with diabetes in 2009-10 alone. The estimated cost of diabetes last year was \$383 million - this is astounding - a figure that is expected to grow to \$483 million over the next 10 years if it's left unchecked. That's a \$100 million increase over 10 years, a huge financial problem for the Department of Health and Wellness.

People in Nova Scotia living with diabetes also face significant financial hardship. A Bedford woman was quoted in the Canadian Diabetes Association's recently released study, entitled *Diabetes: Canada at the Tipping Point - Charting a new path*, as saying, "There have been too many times when I have cut back on my daily testing because I cannot afford to buy testing strips. If I didn't have to test less [due to costs], I'd be happier and better able to manage my condition."

Nova Scotians with diabetes should not have to make the difficult choice that the Bedford woman says she is forced to make - a choice between financial security and good health. While we in this caucus should not usually urge the government to spend money, making the investment suggested by the Diabetes Association may now lead to significant savings in the future. By helping Nova Scotians with diabetes better manage their disease now, savings can be achieved by reducing the \$36 million that is now being spent on the

hospitalization of people with diabetes - I'll repeat that, \$36 million is being spent on the hospitalization of people with diabetes. That's a huge number, because of things getting out of hand with that disease. It's time for this government to act decisively to improve the health of thousands of Nova Scotians now and save the health care system hundreds of thousands of dollars in the future.

I find it curious that this government's Speech from the Throne contained the promise of over a dozen strategies but there was no mention of a diabetic strategy even though the Diabetes Care Program is scheduled to expire in 2012. It makes you wonder about this government's priorities to make the choice to hike taxes and increase user fees in order to post an eleventh hour surplus. But they don't invest in the future of health of an increasingly large section of our population.

It's easy to contrast the actions of this government with the actions of the Government of New Brunswick, as mentioned by the member for Halifax Clayton Park. Despite tabling the budget that contained a \$448 million deficit, the New Brunswick Government understood the financial and human costs associated with doing nothing with regard to diabetes. Like Nova Scotia, the burden of diabetes was growing in New Brunswick. Like Nova Scotia, the New Brunswick diabetes cost model found that both the cost and prevalence of diabetes in the province were at dramatically high levels and, if left unchecked, would continue to rise over the next decade.

The difference between Nova Scotia's government and New Brunswick's government is that in New Brunswick they understand there is the cost of doing nothing, a cost in the form of more diagnosed cases of diabetes, sicker people with diabetes, more hospital stays, higher health care costs and, unfortunately, more deaths due to diabetes.

New Brunswick's government took the impact of diabetes seriously and made funding for insulin pumps and the other essential supplies available. That diabetes strategy also provides funds for monitoring education measures and is a comprehensive strategy that earned kudos from the Diabetes Association.

According to the Canadian Diabetes Association, insulin pumps are fast becoming a popular choice for people who want greater flexibility or an improvement in their blood glucose control. Many diabetes sufferers who use an insulin pump report a better quality of life compared with those who use other devices for administering insulin. Insulin pumps make it possible to deliver more precise amounts of insulin than using a syringe. In fact, there are many advantages to the use of insulin pumps. For many people, however, the cost of that pump, even with insurance coverage, puts the devices out of reach.

It is time for this government to deliver better care sooner to Nova Scotians with diabetes. It is time for this government to follow New Brunswick's lead, to take the impact of diabetes seriously and take real action to help those already living with diabetes and

prevent more people from getting diabetes. It's time for this government to make a plan to combat diabetes and tackle the mounting costs of diabetes on people and on the province's finances.

Madam Speaker, I do want to thank the many parents who have to spend so much time taking care of their children. I know, as a parent of two young boys, how much work that is. I can only fathom just a little bit, just understand a little bit, how it would be to take care of two children, let's say, with diabetes and to see maybe the impact of an insulin pump on how to allow them to be able to live a more normal life, a life that maybe has a few less needles involved in it. If you look at being able to test, you are testing eight, 10 times a day and you are injecting insulin four, five, six times a day in order to have a normal insulin level over those periods of time - that takes an incredible amount of work and dedication.

When you talk to individuals who have had type I diabetes for a very long period of time they talk about maybe having a normal life, a normal life that includes sports, a normal life that includes going for a sleepover, being able to really pay attention in school and being able to participate in the things that happen there, whether it is extracurricular or other, the many people that we have had the opportunity to talk to who have gotten that pump, they can call it a life-changing experience.

Madam Speaker, I've had the opportunity over the last couple of years to participate in the Junior Diabetes Research Foundation Ride for Life. I've had a tremendous time participating in it. I think last year we were the only caucus to mount a team and I'm hoping that with the interest that we've had in this Legislature, the work that we're trying to do and the work that the Junior Diabetes Research Foundation is trying to do, that we have a team from at least each caucus, if not having one - a couple from each caucus, if at all possible. I know we'd have a harder time doing that than most of the caucuses, but we'll definitely try to do our best.

Madam Speaker, this organization has done phenomenal things in moving the issue of diabetes forward and trying to find those supports not only for the children but for the families of those children, in trying to regulate and modernize and normalize their lives. I think it is time that this government takes a second look at the possibility of a new program, a program that at the very least provides some kind of insulin pump program, at least for children, who deserve to have that life that most of our children do have the opportunity to enjoy.

So, Madam Speaker, again, I want to thank everybody for bringing this. I thank the member for Halifax Clayton Park for bringing this resolution forward and I look forward to further discussions as bills and things go forward in this House.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

MR. LEO GLAVINE: Madam Speaker, I'm very pleased today to join in the debate on Resolution No. 134. This is first of all a topic - diabetes - that in one way or another has impacted on the lives of many of the MLAs and their families over the years. I know for myself, I became educated on diabetes, I guess probably 30-something years ago now, when my mother, at the age of 59, was found by my sister in a diabetic coma. She dramatically, of course, had to change the way she lived and first of all, of course, adjusting to two needles a day but she did take very good care of herself and my dear mother lived to be 89 but we did see the ravages of diabetes, as she had two amputations in her declining years.

So, you know, from that, coming here to the Legislature, over now four or five years, MLAs have had a wonderful opportunity to be educated about diabetes and the impact on Nova Scotia and the alarming rate that we have, but really importantly what stands out for me is the education on the insulin pump. I would challenge every member in the House to get out to the MLA diabetes dinner and evening. It's an outstanding education opportunity when families come as part of that evening and tell us about their experience with the pump, and families, of course, who cannot afford the pump and would love to have some assistance in what they are facing.

I perhaps was most touched on one of those evenings when a family from Cape Breton brought their three children to the dinner and, again, urging us to continue our fight with the previous government and with the current government to look at funding, to some degree, of insulin pumps. This family from Cape Breton had three children with diabetes and from the time that they left Cape Breton until they made it here for the dinner at the Prince George, they had to make two stops at emergency departments along the way with their children having readings that were now at the dangerous level. So, you know, it was a great opportunity to then hear what an insulin pump will do for a child and for a family.

Over the last few days as we talked about reintroducing this very important piece of legislation and as you can see today, this is very non-partisan. Members are paying attention to a very serious issue and we hope that all members of the House will, in fact, encourage the Minister of Health and Wellness and the department to take a serious look at bringing Bill No. 11, if they want to amend it, fine, but to start the coverage, at least for children under the age of 18.

I have one letter here from a Natalie Brown and she says about her son, Dylan, "Since having the insulin pump, the number of times we have had to go to the emergency room has lessened. His overall health has improved. His quality of life has improved and we have had less doctor visits. The health care system would definitely save money in both the short term and especially in the long term."

I also had an e-mail from Autumn Bell who, I don't think she's perhaps here today, but I know she's involved with the Halifax support group and work group on this issue, and

she gave the same account of her son when he started to use the pump and how dramatically they had to visit the IWK substantially less.

I want to recount one of those experiences where the before and after is very profoundly seen. I think perhaps one of my colleagues, the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal, having been in school administration, probably could identify with this, and perhaps other teachers here in the House as well, and that is having - especially in those early teen years, Grades 7, 8 and 9 - a severely diabetic child in the school and in those days without a school nurse, having to rely upon the guidance department to make sure that the child checked in at noon time to be tested before they had lunch.

I know as vice-principal, immediately when the child didn't report during that noon hour, my job was to hit the playground, hit the school areas to try to find this child because parents had alerted us that he was a child who would need to make sure that he had his insulin during that noon period.

Just as I was leaving school, the first child I had encountered with an insulin pump came into our school and what a dramatic difference it made in the lives of teachers and school administrators as it reduced a lot of our stress. To see that child go about his daily rounds in the school, no matter what the activity, no matter what the time of day, no worry on school trips and so forth, it is a tremendously transforming and liberating time in the child's life when they are introduced to the insulin pump.

We all know that government has tough choices to make, and the decision will take some time, perhaps, to see whether it has value or not, but government decided to buy a chip seal plant and we know we can talk about the safety of our roads; \$2.6 million on a chip seal plant, \$6 million on a paving plant, what a wonderful start to put that money into an insulin pump program to get us off the ground here in Nova Scotia. That's why we're calling on government to rethink this whole area.

One of the things that the minister did bring up in her time on this resolution today was she mentioned the EMILY fund. Currently we are told, according to the JDRF, the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation (Interruptions) There just isn't money in that fund, there are no dollars available to assist and in some ways, again, it's another appeal to charity. I'd rather look to what the Newfoundland and Labrador Government did. I'd like us to follow what the New Brunswick Government has recently done. They know that they have very serious financial challenges. This, again, must be seen as an investment because the insulin pump allows for greater control of type 1 diabetes and the kinds of impacts that it has on our health in the short term and especially in the long term.

When you consider that we're already at 87,000 Nova Scotians who have diabetes, and that number in just 10 years is going to move to 125,000, it is really a frightening thought. It is going to add another \$100 million to the care, from childhood to seniors. If we

take some steps now and get insulin pumps into the total program, as the minister alluded to, it is one of the measures, one of the tools that we should have.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable Opposition House Leader.

HON. MANNING MACDONALD: Madam Speaker, would you please call Resolution No. 8.

Res. No. 8, re Reading Recovery Prog. - Continue - notice given Apr. 1/11 - (Hon. K. Casey)

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester North.

HON. KAREN CASEY: Madam Speaker, it's my first time seeing you in the Chair so welcome and I will work hard to make sure I address you properly.

I want to speak to Resolution No. 8. In particular to the "Therefore be it resolved" and there are two key words in that that I want to focus on and they are, "continue" and "opportunity". Speaking about the Reading Recovery Program, those words are critical. In correspondence that I sent to the minister I asked her to reconsider her decision to "continue" Reading Recovery. The other key word is "opportunity". We know that in our public schools we currently have Reading Recovery across this province and I'm pleased to see the minister back to hear the comments on this resolution.

We have Reading Recovery in the province and I want to remind all members of the house that Reading Recovery is there, has been there for a reason. No program survives from 1995 until the present without statistics which support the fact that it was successful.

The minister would know as a classroom teacher, and others in the house, that there are many strategies that teachers use in order to help young students learn to read. Reading Recovery has been found to be one of the best, and in fact, out of 153 it was the best. But it is only one particular strategy, program, whatever language you want to use, that helps young readers learn to read.

We know that students present themselves in various states of readiness. We also know that early intervention is what will translate into success for students learning to read. So there's no need to stand and argue the merits of Reading Recovery. What we're questioning is the opportunities that have been taken away if this minister continues to follow through on her decision to discontinue Reading Recovery.

Many boards in the province have supplemented Reading Recovery with another literacy program, and that I think speaks to the fact that not all programs are designed for

all students. But Reading Recovery is research-based and it is focused on the lowest 20 per cent in a Grade 1 class.

Now the minister, I believe, made some of her decisions based on some statistics, and in the Reading Recovery Program students progress through a number of levels, but they only become a success statistic if they get to level 16. So there are many children who will not show up as a success statistic, but I would ask all members of this house, if a student comes in a reading level 5 and finishes at a reading level 15, if that's not called success I don't know what it is.

There are classroom teachers and there are parents who are excited about that amount of success, but if you are only looking at statistics, then little Johnny who went from level 5 to level 15 will not be counted as a success statistic in Reading Recovery.

So the people who are delivering the program, the parents who are involved or have children involved in that program cannot understand why the opportunity - and I'm going back to that "Therefore be it resolved" that helped their children move through various levels of reading success in Grade 1 are going to have the opportunity taken away from them.

And to think that a new program which can have equal or better than results in an early intervention, one-on-one program coming from who knows where...

MADAM SPEAKER: Order please. I would like to remind all members that it's not acceptable to refer to any member as being present or absent from the Chamber. Be mindful of that.

The honourable Minister of Education.

HON. RAMONA JENNEX: Madam Speaker, it's an honour to address you this afternoon. I'm pleased to rise today in response to this resolution. Having strong literacy skills is the foundation of success throughout life. We need to make sure our children have every opportunity to be successful.

Improving the reading and writing skills for more of our students in the early grades is this government's goal. That's why the Department of Education is phasing out Reading Recovery and introducing an early literacy framework that will support more struggling readers in more grades, not just some of the lowest 20 per cent in a single grade, Grade 1. This will be an example of what we mean when we say we are putting children and learning first.

Many people regard Reading Recovery as a good program but it does not help every child who needs intervention. My whole issue with this is that this program is not

equitable and this has always caused me great concern. There are children who have the same level of need and are at the same reading level as students in Reading Recovery but because of the limited number of spots available each year, they are left out.

Reading Recovery is a very structured prescriptive program that requires children to be taken out of the classroom for a minimal amount of 30 minutes a day over the course of approximately 20 weeks. Students get some excellent one-on-one intervention outside of the classroom but there is a trade off - missed hours of classroom time related to other areas of learning such as missed math, social studies, music and other happenings in the classroom.

I believe there is a better way, an alternate way, that will help more students receive the support they need as they learn to read and write. Our new approach, which we will announce very shortly, will focus on using early literacy teachers who have a particular expertise in literacy development and support. These teachers will work with small groups, primarily within the classroom, and will work closely with the classroom teachers to sustain support for these children. There will also be one-on-one work with students when required. The program will be evidenced-based and designed to be flexible to respond to the literacy development needs of our children.

Understandably, people may be confused about the conflicting information regarding the success of the Reading Recovery program. Sometimes children who start never finish because it is not working. Only the children who complete the program are captured in the data, which makes the success rate higher than is actually the case.

Our review of student performance in the provincial early literacy assessment shows that we are not getting the outcomes we want for our students. Only 43 per cent of Reading Recovery students are reading where we want them to be by the time they reach Grade 3. That translates into something I said earlier, that 57 per cent of the children captured in the data - those who successfully completed the program - are not at a reading level we want them to be in Grade 3. They do not capture the children that were in the program that were discontinued without success.

My commitment is an approach that is flexible and will meet the literacy needs of more children, beginning in September. Helping students learn and excel as readers and writers is critical to their lifelong success. As a former Grade 1 teacher, I understand the value of early literacy development but people don't need to be a Grade 1 teacher, or a former Grade 1 teacher, to understand. We all support children in their early literacy development.

This government is committed to working with school boards to implement an early literacy approach that will meet the needs of more students and we are going to have it begin in their Primary year. Work is well underway and we're very fortunate to have

many highly-trained teachers in this province who specialize in early literacy education. We have a framework in place and staff from both the department and boards, along with classroom and literacy teachers, are continuing to collaborate to work out the details. Good teaching, along with parental support, is the key to success as children learn to read and write.

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable member for Argyle.

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, it's a pleasure to stand and speak to this resolution as well, in regards to Reading Recovery. (Interruption) Thank you very much. The Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal just made a wonderful comment. I hope he pays that off with maybe a few extra roads in my riding.

Madame Speaker, Reading Recovery is one and I spoke about this before and I am going to read a little bit from my release of March 9th . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: You're quoting yourself?

MR. D'ENTREMONT: I'm quoting myself because I thought it was such a great quote that I thought I would do it. Madam Speaker, it's hard to believe that they are that interested in what I have to say. Nova Scotians must be asking themselves, is children literacy really the first place the NDP Government should be looking to cut spending?

When this first stated off we were looking at the cutting of a program that, from every bit of information that anybody had, was a relatively successful program in the people that it was touching. When we finally found the rest of the detail, it was that well, we're cutting the program but we're going to create a new one, for less money, that is going to see more kids. Okay, well I'm going to reserve comment on that, really until such time that we have a program to truly see and understand.

Madam Speaker, I have a child, who in Grade 1, went through the Reading Recovery Program, in the French program and I forget the exact name of the program under French but there you go, but it was Reading Recovery in the French program. Throughout his Grade 1, he spent half an hour a day working with the interventionists or the teacher who was doing the work. I did have the opportunity to participate in a number of the sessions with him.

I can tell you that Alec started off and Alec, my guy today, he is eight years old, he is now in Grade 3. I can say that he struggled with reading, he wasn't really that interested in it, which is a stark contrast from his brother André, who was reading early, who, by the time he was probably in Grade 1 or Grade 2 he was already reading English books, even

though he had only be instructed or taught in French. Alec was struggling along, he was getting that intervention and he did succeed in the course where he went from that level, that lower level to a Level 15, which did allow him to basically graduate from the program and move on.

To the minister's comment that many of these kids, as they move on in the system, might still get stuck along the way and there's nothing for them, truly there is nothing for them outside of producing an IPP, an Individual Program Plan, where they are going to have to be read certain instructions, certain tests and things like that. That is sort of where Alec got stuck, so it didn't necessarily serve him 100 per cent. It helped him but it didn't get him exactly where I think where we need him.

I can say that today, through the hard work of his school, his school teachers, the people around him, the resource teacher, that he is actually interested. He wants to go to the library, he wants to pick up books, he is getting things of a Level 23 or 24 now and actually succeeding in reading them. Alec's issue was not necessarily that he couldn't read, it was the fact that he couldn't put certain words together. He understood what they meant, he could read a book, somebody could read it to him, he would understand everything. He would be able to rename the characters, he would be able to rename the premise, it was everything. He had everything except for that being able to stand in front of you and say, the NDP are spending mmmmmmm-money, for example. That is where he was stuck, but today he is succeeding very well with it.

We are going to reserve our comment on what that new program is going to be because there are only five months to go. This is not a lot of time to be able to pull this together, to be able to be ready in September. I'm going to take the minister's word that she is going to have the department ready, the school boards are going to be ready, the school teachers are going to be ready. After that I think it will be our issue to say, it's working or it's not working, from the people who we talk to every day, who work in our school system, who teach our kids, who deserve every bit of service that they can have. Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak to this today.

MADAM SPEAKER: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL: Madam Speaker, again I'll join in with everyone in welcoming you to the Chair. It's my first time to have an opportunity to address the House in your presence, so congratulations on your appointment.

I want to speak to Resolution No. 8. I had the opportunity and privilege to travel across the province over the last number of months, talking to school boards, parents, students who have had the opportunity to participate in Reading Recovery, and hearing about the true value of the program. More importantly, listening to not only the parents but

the young Nova Scotians talking about the new lease on life they have around this Reading Recovery program.

Madam Chairman, I must confess, at the very beginning I can tell you there isn't a single school board, there isn't a single board representative or a single parent who would tell you that Reading Recovery answers all the challenges facing young Nova Scotians who have literacy challenges, but what they will all tell you is that it is the foundation that they build from to create programs. There are school boards across this province that have recognized that Reading Recovery was not addressing the needs of every student. They recognized that as some students bridged out of Grade 1 into Grade 2 and Grade 3 they still needed supports, but what those boards were doing was building programs around the foundation of Reading Recovery, a program that is evidence-based. There isn't a jurisdiction across North America that would tell you it is not effective, that it is not working.

Madam Speaker, when I had an opportunity in this very school board, in one school they talked about a large portion of their student population needed Reading Recovery, a large percentage, much more than 20 per cent. Well, what the school board has done is that they have reached into their supplementary funding, funding that they had set aside, and put extra funding into Reading Recovery to ensure that all the students were getting a chance to get the firsthand experience of the one-on-one success of Reading Recovery.

What is frightening parents and what I think is frightening communities and school board members across this province is that we are removing a program that actually has proven results, one that has been reviewed for the last 15 years in this province, has been reviewed in North America and Europe on its successes, and we're replacing it with the program that doesn't exist today.

The minister mentioned in her remarks that it's going to be evidence-based. Well, Madam Speaker, that's just simply impossible. It can't happen. What we've encouraged the minister to do, if she believes that Reading Recovery is not fulfilling what we believe the mandate is, if she believes there's a new program out there that they're going to create in five months, what they should be doing is running parallel programs and comparing them. Then at the end of the day the people in the Department of Education will be able to make the assessment based on evidence, not based on a feeling that they might have. If they reach out and actually talk to members of school boards across this province that are recognizing that in order to ensure every student gets an opportunity to meet their full potential - they are adding on to the Reading Recovery program. They are not replacing it, they are adding on to it.

Earlier in her remarks she talked about collaboration. Well, I would suggest that collaboration means you're working with somebody and if she wants to work with school boards that across this province almost unanimously have said they want to keep Reading

Recovery, I would encourage the minister to give them that opportunity. It's roughly \$3,000 in every board. If you want to add to that program, do an addition to it, that's wonderful. That's what boards are already doing. Work with them. Collaboration means you are working together. What has happened is we have unilaterally removed a successful program from the education system in this province. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please. The time has elapsed for this resolution.

The honourable Opposition House Leader.

HON. MANNING MACDONALD: Madam Speaker, that completes the Opposition Liberal business for today and I would defer to the Deputy Government House Leader to give us tomorrow's hours and business.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. CLARRIE MACKINNON: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the Opposition House Leader. Tomorrow after the daily routine and Question Period the government will be calling Bill No. 7, an Act Respecting the Administration of Justice. If time allows, there will be a resumption of the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne.

I now move that the House do rise to meet again at the hour of 2:00 p.m. tomorrow and the House hours will be from 2:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m.

MADAM SPEAKER: The motion is that the House now rise to meet again tomorrow between the hours of 2:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

We are now at the moment of interruption and at this point a motion has been submitted by the honourable member for Pictou East:

“Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly recognize and congratulate this government for honouring its commitment to making life better for families in Nova Scotia.”

ADJOURNMENT**MOTION UNDER RULE 5(5)**

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

GOV'T. (N.S.) - N.S. FAMILIES: LIFE - ENRICHMENT

MR. CLARRIE MACKINNON: Madam Speaker, what a pleasure it is for me to rise in the House and speak on the resolution before us tonight because for the last 20 months the lives of Nova Scotians have been made better. In very difficult times, the lives of Nova Scotians have been made better. In relationship to the last three days, the lives of Nova Scotians have been changed fundamentally for the better.

On Monday, the Premier went through a checklist, a checklist of the promises made in the election campaign and that checklist was very substantial. It was overshadowed somewhat by the fact that, at the same time, he announced a \$447 million surplus for last year and the fact that only seven times in the last 50 years have we been paying down the debt. I think that is a very substantive Monday evening.

On Tuesday, we had a budget delivered in this House that contained many new initiatives, also in difficult times, a lot of new initiatives. Today, we had the Minister of Health and Wellness come before us and talk about the establishment of the first of four Collaborative Emergency Centres in this province, in Parrsboro. That is a major accomplishment.

We have also dealt with so many issues in relationship to health, and I only have 10 minutes here to speak tonight, so I want to talk about a few things that are happening in Pictou County as well, but I'll intersperse what's happening across the province with what is happening in Pictou County. I do want to mention the fact that we will have additional nurse practitioners in this province, that the 811 nurse line is going to receive more funding and more importance.

I have had the opportunity for family members to comment to me on how good this service is because it has been used by family and friends and it has been a great service in this province. My constituency assistant used it on an occasion and got tremendous results as well. I want to deal with some of the issues in Pictou County as well that are of great importance and certainly helping the lives of Pictonians and I would be remiss if I didn't have a few comments about Pictou County. All three members from Pictou County were very excited yesterday to have in the budget \$2.6 million, which is only the start, and I sort of take exception with the headline in the local paper today "ER Funding Figure Less Than Expected".

This is a project that was estimated at over \$16 million and you can't begin and end the construction in one year. We know that this \$2.6 million is only the beginning of this project and that it will go through to completion and we will have that ER up and running in a reasonable period of time.

I want to comment on the minister. The minister was in that ER last summer, on a very hot day, and saw the need that existed. She personally was moved by the congestion that was there and the number of people who were on stretchers in the ER and so on. This is something that the three members from Pictou County have worked very, very hard to bring to fruition. I'm very proud that it was in the Speech From the Throne and that it was also in the budget.

Now jobsHere is something that I could talk about at great length as well. That's an initiative that is helping a lot of people around the Province of Nova Scotia. The thrust of jobsHere, learning the right skills for good jobs, \$28 million, we have many aspects of that but growing the economy through innovation, \$22.9 million, and helping businesses be more competitive globally, \$2.15 million. Those are just a few of the things contained in jobsHere; jobsHere are a very important aspect of life for Nova Scotians and I am proud to have had some input into that. I commend the Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism for the leadership that he has shown in relationship to jobsHere.

When I am talking about jobsHere, I have to talk about what happened in Trenton; one-third of the workforce at TrentonWorks lived in my constituency, over one-third lived in Pictou East. The press at the time talked about 300 jobs being lost, actually there were about 1,200 jobs that were lost. The 1,200 had been reduced to 900-and some, the 900-and some reduced to 600-and some and when the doors finally shut, 300 people were put out of work but, in reality, we were talking 1,200. What we have with Daewoo involved with the leadership of this government and taking 49 per cent ownership of that facility, we have a new life in that project in Pictou County, a new life, Madam Speaker.

I recently toured that facility and we had 30 to 40 welders going to be hired the next week to bring the workforce up to about 70 or more. We are on our way to 150 and that is only the beginning, as we manufacture the wind towers and moving on to the blades in the near future. I wish I had more time, thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: Order. Thank you very much.

The honourable member for Glace Bay.

MR. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Thank you Madam Speaker. Thanks so much for this opportunity to speak on this resolution. Making Life Better for Families is the theme so I just wanted to talk about what that means to me and it certainly means a lot to me.

I want to thank and recognize the member for Pictou East, I have a great deal of respect for him and I do believe he's in it for the right reasons. We disagree a lot politically but he's got the coolest voice of anyone I've ever heard so whenever he's talking I'm listening even if it doesn't make much sense, but anyway.

I do slightly disagree somewhat with the resolution and with the notion because this to me paints a picture of happy, warm, safe families all across the province and I certainly don't see that all the time in Glace Bay and happiness isn't the case for a lot of people and I just wanted to talk about a few of those examples.

Being the critic for Community Services and working with the minister on a lot of the deep issues that we have in this province, the reality is, and it's a sad thing that we see, people are just, they don't make ends meet, and it's every day and it's in every riding and again I always go back to Glace Bay but everywhere. These are issues and as a relatively rich country and a relatively rich province, the struggles we have put us in a lot better shape than other places in the world certainly, but we do have those issues and we need a plan.

Senior heating, drug and food costs are all rising of course, we know that. The Minister of Community Services talked about the \$15 monthly income for income assistance. That's not enough, I'm not saying it's not helpful, it is certainly a commitment, I know the minister went to bat for that at budget time and she did her best to increase that. But \$15 doesn't amount to a whole lot when it's in a single-parent household and what it buys these days with the rise in the cost of living it is certainly tough to see if that is going to make a deep impact.

The usage of food banks has risen in this province 33 per cent in the last two years. I just have some stats related to food banks that I think are important to have on the record; 50 per cent of food bank supply goes to people on income assistance, those ends don't meet. If you're on income assistance through Community Services and you're using the food bank then I think that's a pretty telltale sign that you don't have enough to get by and you have to rely on other sources, so you know, thank God for the food banks.

Twenty per cent of food bank usage is through people who have jobs, so there's your category and classification that we know as the working poor. They're working, probably for a medical or dental plan but at the end of the day they've got to go and get food from a public source because they can't pay for it, those ends don't meet.

Ten per cent are on pensions - 10 per cent of people who use food banks are on pensions, they are the golden years and the retirement years and yet it's going to get a can of beans or some dry wheat to make a meal, so it's tough.

Thirty per cent of those relying on food banks - this is certainly an extremely unfortunate part of the realities we live in - are children. If anyone and I know many of my

colleagues watched the movie *Four Feet Up* about the struggle with child poverty, this cycle with poverty, it's a very simplistic sort of model in terms of how people get trapped into it, but finding a path out is what the difficulty is.

There are tax credits that have been introduced but they don't make up for the HST hike or they don't make up for the home heating assistance that has been reduced, and that's just the reality.

The stats I listed do affect many families and while we come here and banter and we debate and we try to change the budget and do those things, this is an everyday thing. People right now, they can't watch the Legislature and they can't look at media reports because they are trying to figure out how to feed their family, how to clothe their kids for the next day, how to pay for the gas and keep the house warm. Very difficult things and the priority is survival and that's a tough thing to see that happens in this province.

I do want to just quickly mention, and I think it's important, the nature of it is political because it's always political but I want the government side and the member to know, I'll make you a guarantee that the user fee increases, I promise you, will hurt your support in this province. This is why, that is one of the touch points for people, that is where you pay a bill, you get a certificate, an application, something like that and that's where people see a contact with their provincial government.

People read every day and we follow these things because it's our job, but people go about their lives and they look and everybody in this room, all the members in this House hear: there are no doctors, we're closing schools, my husband, wife and family are out West. We've got tremendous problems with our roads, we have all these things that we can't deal with or, we're seen as not dealing with – jobs, HST increases – then all of a sudden when people go to pay for simple things, it's a couple of bucks more. I'm telling you, that couple of bucks more will certainly make a difference because people's trust and their respect are at a very low level. When they don't see the services increase and they see the fees increase, then they have a problem with it.

How am I doing for time? Good, perfect.

I quickly want to mention something that happened today that I think is going to affect people and affect families. It's in my backyard in the CBRM. I think what we have to understand, and I know the minister talked about the agreement and talked about sort of what was in the MOU, the reality is that this means \$3 million next year. I don't expect everybody to be following the line items for the CBRM budget, but I happen to and I have for a while – \$3 million is a significant number. As that increases over the next few years, it's certainly significant, it's something we have to worry about.

I truly believe - the mayor announced that he wouldn't increase property taxes this year, honest to God the reason why he won't increase them is because people just can't absorb any more. That's the reality. They just don't have the money. People in Glace Bay do not have the money to pay more taxes. That's just the truth. So the mayor can say, we're going to put a stop on taxes, but the reality is he has no choice. What does that mean? If you're not raising revenue, you're cutting expenditures so they're going to start to reduce services. That's a reality.

When the minister said today, we signed an MOU, not an IOU, I think that's going to grab people down home because they're going to see that with jobs not here yet, hopefully they will be here - I trust the member is right and that will have an impact across the province. Eighteen per cent unemployment in CBRM is alarming and a lot of people who are there who are working, they're there eight days a month then they go to Alberta. They make great money and they drive big trucks and they go to Alberta for eight days, what about the other 20, 21, 22 days of the month when their kids are going to school and the single parent is raising them, and they're off living in a camp in a trailer in Alberta? That's certainly no life.

I do also want to quickly mention because, to me, it is a provincial issue and the MLA for Yarmouth, my good friend, talks about it a lot and that is the Yarmouth ferry. I think that's important and I know there are obviously conflicting attitudes and opinions on this. The government sort of feels that the agreement that was there and the options that were available weren't valid, but 300 jobs, the largest hotel, major businesses, tourism plummeting are significant.

Now even the churches are involved to sort of help with some of the social aspects. I don't think families are jumping for joy in Yarmouth, I think the reality is and I've seen this through the media reports and through my friend and colleague here, the people of Yarmouth are not going away and they're not giving up on this issue. This is going to be an issue until the next election, it's going to be an issue after that and it's going to go on forever because this is their lifeline and they're not going to give up; certainly their MLA is not going to give up.

In closing, I just want to say that the bottom line in this game is that there are limited resources and the government has to make decisions and we'll never, obviously, agree, for philosophical reasons, for political reasons. You are the government, you're a majority government and you don't have to answer to us. But these things affect us all and to me, the people in Glace Bay, Yarmouth, Port Hawkesbury, Truro, they don't think things are great. They're worried about the future and the ends are not meeting.

Rather than saying, we are making things better for families, I think the government should say, we're doing our best to make things better, give us time and judge us based on

our decisions, as opposed to things are getting better and they're better already. A lot of people don't think things are better at this point and it's a dangerous message to send.

Finally, I just want to request of the government, please get the alders out of Digby because the member's driving me crazy. On that one, I'll take my seat, thank you. (Applause)

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Madam Speaker, I was touched by what the member for Pictou East was saying about Daewoo and the importance in the community and for replacing the employment that was lost from TrentonWorks. I think this is important that government - if there is going to be hope for rural Nova Scotia - remembers rural areas and the need to support hubs within our province because if the government can find a way to create a major employer, or support a major employer, there are a lot of other businesses that can feed off of that and build an economy in rural Nova Scotia. Of course that was supported by the Industrial Expansion Fund and we hope that continues to be a good investment and that the company is successful.

I was also noting what my colleague, the member for Glace Bay, said about the MOU with municipalities. We recently had a federal budget where the federal government had promised not to reduce funds coming to Nova Scotia, to protect the transfers that were coming to our province, but now municipalities this year are going to be faced with a challenge. They're going to receive less money because the MOU that had been set up and arranged is going to cost municipalities millions of dollars a year, across the province, to make up. They can't make up that money by going into a deficit position because under the Municipal Government Act, municipalities cannot enter deficit budgets, so it's going to lead to higher taxes for Nova Scotians.

The resolution says that we should congratulate the government for honouring their commitment to make life better for Nova Scotians. There is a decision right there that is probably going to lead to higher taxes for Nova Scotians in the form of property tax. We saw a surplus announced earlier this week by the government, trumpeting success, but this surplus was built on an HST tax increase and increased personal income taxes by way of inflation and by better than expected economic activity. So these are really not achievements of the government, to pat themselves on the back that they've achieved a surplus when it's coming from a tax increase, or increased taxes, because of the nature of what has gone on in the economy.

I think we really have to ask ourselves in this province, is life better under this government? We've had an HST increase; we have a billion more dollars in debt; user fees have gone up. To me, more importantly about the user fees, government has refused to be

transparent about the costs behind the fees. If we don't understand what the costs are, how can we work at lowering the cost and the cost of those fees for Nova Scotians?

We also notice that the size of government remains the same. One of the challenges with this province and why we have such an uncompetitive tax environment is because we have a big government. We need to start moving in the other direction.

Now, Dominion Bond Rating Service had made the observation that since this government had taken power, they noticed a softening fiscal resolve. Those were their words, not mine. That softening fiscal resolve has led to a change, not in the bond rating, but on the outlook for Nova Scotia bonds. That's a sign that the people who follow the world of money are noting that there is a change in Nova Scotia, that things aren't as good as they used to be. If this change continues, our rating for bonds, for Nova Scotia bonds, could decline and, as a result, the cost to borrow money for the Government of Nova Scotia will go up and taxpayers will be paying more, so we need to start reversing that softening fiscal resolve.

To put this into perspective, if we look at the deficit that the government has right now, it's about 3 per cent of the entire budget. If we go back to 1999, when John Hamm was our Premier, the deficit in this province was 10 per cent of the budget and within three years we had a balanced budget.

I don't think that this should be as challenging as it's made out to be. If there's a sincere desire to reduce spending in government, we can find ways to do it and we, as an Opposition Party, would be happy to try to help to find those ways and to make recommendations. One I've just made is looking at the size of government. We have over 600 people who leave government every year in this province; they take a job elsewhere; they may be retiring from government. The point being is that those people are leaving government on their own accord and if we look at reducing the size of government, it stands to reason that we can reduce some of those positions and yet we're not hurting anybody. We're not hurting anybody in the sense that we're taking employment away from them.

I think we need to look at the direction that we've gone in the last couple of years. With another \$1 billion of debt, the cost of that is approximately \$30 million a year. If we're looking at secondary roads in the province, that is lost opportunity to pave, probably about 120 kilometres of roads, at a rate of \$250,000 per kilometre. So in just two short years, yes, we've racked up that debt but we've also pulled away \$30 million that could have gone towards something else. That is money that is just going to go away in interest payments. There's no value for Nova Scotians in that.

Nova Scotians are also paying more tax now; we have an increase in the HST of 2 per cent. There is a lack of employment in this province, which I believe is partly due to the size of government and the need for higher taxes, which presses down on the private sector, discouraging the people in our economy who we need to be encouraging, by providing them with a good environment.

We look at Daewoo in Pictou County and the value of that operation. Companies like that look at our province and they look at other provinces and they look to find an environment where they are going to be treated favourably, because that takes some of the risk out of the equation for them. If they stand to make more profit, they can withstand losses in another side of their business. I think the government needs to do a better job of creating a more favourable environment here in this province, relative to other provinces and other states in the U.S., other parts of the world. We need to really look at trying to live better within our means so that we can create a lower tax environment.

Madam Speaker, we must look at, is this government honouring its commitment? We've seen them promise a balanced budget and no tax increases, yet we see a budget that is in a deficit position and we also saw an increase in the HST as one of the taxes increased by government.

Now, user fees went up but what is striking to me, and I've mentioned it already this week, I asked the Minister of Finance to provide a report to this Legislature so that Nova Scotians would know what caused the increase in the fees. One of our biggest problems in government is we don't look at government the same way an organization would that is competing in the private sector. The reason this is important is because in the private sector organizations have to compete against each other and people always know they're getting the best price, the lowest price, because competition made that happen.

With government we don't have that. Now, government can keep providing services but I think the least government can do is offer people an explanation of the costs behind services. It provides a benchmark, they allow us to reduce costs and that just isn't true in user fees, that is true right across government. It's something that no matter what Party is in power in this province, it's a responsibility that I think is worth taking on, to try to get a better handle on how government is spending its money, to question it. There's nothing wrong with questioning it. When we question things, we have an opportunity to make things better.

Madam Speaker, if this government is sincerely concerned about making life better for Nova Scotians, they will try to do more with less, to create economic conditions that support risk takers because these are the people, the entrepreneurs in our province, who create jobs.

Another thing I think we need to do in this province, and we need everybody's help to do this, is to create a culture of entrepreneurship. We have a province where a lot of people grew up working in homes where people were involved in the primary economy, natural resource-based. We don't have a lot of entrepreneurs in Nova Scotia relative to other provinces. That is something that I think would make a real difference, if we get young people exposed to entrepreneurship and the potential of owning their own business, because people taking chances is what is going to drive this economy forward.

We would recommend that this government get on with balancing the budget through spending restraint, to reduce the HST back to 13 per cent and to really look at making government smaller, a smaller piece of the pie, so that there is more pie left to feed the other sectors of our economy here in Nova Scotia. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you very much. I'd like to thank all members for participating in tonight's debate.

We now stand adjourned until tomorrow, at the hour of 2:00 p.m.

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