



House of Assembly  
Nova Scotia

## DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Gordon Gosse

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Third Session

THURSDAY, APRIL 21, 2011

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House of Assembly  
*Nova Scotia*

**HALIFAX, THURSDAY, APRIL 21, 2011**

**Sixty-first General Assembly**

**Third Session**

**10:00 A.M.**

**SPEAKER**

Hon. Gordon Gosse

**DEPUTY SPEAKERS**

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

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. Before we begin the daily routine, I would like to recognize the honourable Minister of Health and Wellness on an introduction.

The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I would like to make an introduction. In the east gallery from the IWK - and I will ask our guests to rise - I would like to introduce Robin England, patient and family centre care co-ordinator of the Quality and Patient Safety Team with the IWK Health Centre and also Alex Slate, the IWK Youth Advisory Council member. They are part of the IWK Health Centre's Youth Advisory Council which brings together patients at the IWK, their families, friends and IWK staff to discuss youth patient care. I thank them for joining us this morning and ask members to give them a warm welcome. (Applause)

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

We'll begin the daily routine.

**PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS**

**PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES**

**TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS**

**STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS**

**GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION**

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Premier.

HON. DARRELL DEXTER (The Premier): Mr. Speaker, with your indulgence, I'd like the opportunity to make an introduction in the gallery, if I may.

MR. SPEAKER: Most certainly.

THE PREMIER: In the east gallery we are joined this morning by a few employees of Citco Fund Services, the world's largest hedge fund administration company, which has offices just next door in the Bank of Montreal building on George Street. As many members on both sides of the House know, Citco was among the first financial services companies to set up shop in Halifax, and has grown to employ 185 Nova Scotians. Today I'd like to introduce you to four members of that growing team.

We have Katie Murphy, VP of Operations at Citco in Halifax - Katie is a P.E.I. native and a U.P.E.I. graduate, an ex-pat who moved to Nova Scotia from the Cayman Islands to join the Citco team; also this morning in the gallery is James Jackson, VP of Accounting for Citco - James is a British CMA, originally from London, England, who now calls our province home; I'd also like to welcome Trudy Schuuhof-Simon, Manager of Operations at Citco Fund Services - Trudy holds a Masters in International Finance and an ACCA Designation, and she is another new Nova Scotian, joining the Citco team, and our province, from Trinidad; and, finally, we have Gavin Vieyra, Senior Operations Analyst at Citco Fund Services - Gavin is a recent MBA graduate from Saint Mary's University and has been a member of the Citco team for three years.

I would ask the House to welcome them to be with us today. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Premier.

**RESOLUTION NO. 769**

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

Whereas Citco Fund Services is the world's leading hedge fund administrator, operating in 70 countries worldwide and is an anchor in Nova Scotia's growing financial services sector; and

Whereas since 2006 Citco has created 185 new high-paying jobs in Nova Scotia and, today, through Nova Scotia Business Inc. the province announced its continued support for this important employer through to 2017, helping to secure as many as 200 additional good jobs for Nova Scotians; and

Whereas creating more high-paying jobs is an important part of the province's jobsHere plan to grow the economy;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulate the staff of Citco Fund Services on today's announcement of plans for the further expansion of its Halifax operations, and wish the company and its employees all the best in the future.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

**INTRODUCTION OF BILLS**

**Bill No. 36 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 2 of the Acts of 1991. The Energy-efficient Appliances Act. (Hon. Charlie Parker)**

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

The honourable member for Yarmouth.

MR. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce a bill entitled an Act to Amend Yarmouth North United Baptist Church to Yarmouth North Baptist Church - I think that's the name of the bill. (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: I'm sorry but we can't introduce that bill at this time, until the bill is actually tabled and signed. (Interruption) Well, I'll give the honourable member a good A for effort in that.

**Bill No. 37 - Entitled an Act to Establish Joseph Howe Day. (Ms. Diana Whalen)**

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

#### **NOTICES OF MOTION**

#### **ORDERS OF THE DAY**

#### **ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS**

MR. SPEAKER: It is now 10:16 a.m. and we will finish at 11:16 a.m.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

#### **PREM. - NSP ELECTRICITY TAX: FREEZE - LEGISLATE**

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Yesterday Nova Scotia Power announced a massive increase in power rates. In Opposition, the Premier said it was the job of government to do something about increased power rates. The Premier's electricity tax, a tax he opposed in Opposition, is also increasing. The savings the Premier likes to boast about from his HST cut have long been wiped out, in no small part by his own electricity tax.

The government has an option though, Mr. Speaker, it can help protect our businesses and residences by legislating a freeze on the NDP electricity tax. So my question to the Premier is, will the Premier legislate a freeze to the DSM charge he imposed on Nova Scotians?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I suppose that, you know, hoping that the Opposition putting in prefaces that clearly are baseless would stop, but apparently not. As you know, the Utility and Review Board was the organization that heard the representations with respect to the demand side management charge. They're the ones who decided what it was, and what it wouldn't be for that matter.

Mr. Speaker, I guess the question for the Leader of the Official Opposition is just simply, do you oppose conservation measures which will decrease the usage and therefore the costs of energy for consumers in the province?

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, the Premier opposed it three days before Nova Scotia voted in the last election but, like everything else, he changed his mind once he got into power. Not only will this rate increase affect residential customers but it could cripple business in Nova Scotia. The Premier should remember his cut of the HST in electricity did nothing to help businesses but his HST increase did a lot to hurt them. Paper mills like NewPage and Bowater will be hit with the largest power rate increases, up to 16 per cent for those businesses.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier's government is willing to sit by while businesses leave Nova Scotia. My question to the Premier is, why is the Premier allowing Nova Scotia Power to hurt businesses and hurt the economic recovery of Nova Scotia?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, again, the Leader of the Opposition in the face of rising corporate tax revenue, rising income tax revenue, rising revenue from retail sales, in spite of the fact that just seconds ago we introduced people from a company that's going to expand with 200 new jobs, he tries to pretend that this government is not working to make sure that young Nova Scotians are able to stay here.

That's our commitment, Mr. Speaker, we've set out an economic plan that's going to bring prosperity to this province.

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, Nova Scotians are being faced with 1,400 user fee increases. Nova Scotians have a 2 per cent increase on HST. Because of this government, every residential property tax owner in this province will have an increase in their property tax and what we have from this government is a Premier who's standing still while Nova Scotia Power is going to increase power rates for every Nova Scotian. Do what you were elected to do - create change, stand up for Nova Scotians - exactly what you said you would do.

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, this is a government that is moving forward on a program of change. For the first time in the history of this province we've seen the kind of across-the-board change. With respect to energy, we're bringing forward the Renewable Electricity Plan, a plan to get off of fossil fuels, to stop being hostage to the international fossil-fuel markets, and to make sure that long-term rates in this province are competitive and an advantage for businesses.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. I would like to remind all honourable members who are recognized by the Chair that they must direct all comments and questions through the Chair.

The honourable Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party.

**FIN. - MIN. QUESTIONS: PREM. - ANSWER**

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, it's nice to see you, sir. My question through you is to the Premier and all kidding aside, I ask this question with a great sense of frustration today, as I'm sure we are all feeling on this side this week. Earlier this week, Opposition members in attempting to do their job have asked a number of questions of the Minister of Finance. For example, he was asked about the loss of revenue from federal transfers, what they're doing about it. He refused to answer. He was asked about cost controls at our universities; he refused to answer. He was even asked a simple question - how many people work for the government today? - and he refused to answer.

This is a surprise to us because that particular member, when he was over here said, "Like all governments, when they were in Opposition . . . they had a certain idea . . . about the importance of freedom of information, but somehow in the migration of a few feet across the aisle those ideas have been lost."

Mr. Speaker, my question through you to the Premier is, will he answer the questions that his Minister of Finance refuses to? How many people work for the Government of Nova Scotia today?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I'm sure the Leader of the Opposition has had the opportunity to read through the Estimates Books. It sets out the number of FTEs every year that are in place for the government. This is an estimates question and the reality is that on any given day, the number of FTEs could be different. People come into the Public Service; people go out of the Public Service. That's a simple answer to being a government of a province the size of Nova Scotia.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, I see we're getting no further ahead than we did in the other place. The Minister of Finance said in this House, when he was on this side, ". . . I hope to be able to work on this pervasive, corrosive cynicism among the electorate that is born of governments that do not keep their promises, that is born of governments that do not appear to believe in the idea of freedom of information and the idea that letting citizens have information can actually improve government . . ."

Let me try my question again in a new way, in hopes that it will actually get an answer. Will the Premier tell this House how many paycheques that government cuts every pay period? How does it compare to the year before, and will he table it before the end of Question Period today?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure what it's relevant to at all, this question. The Estimates Books are published. Anyone can look at them. The information is there for anyone to see. Certainly the press routinely asks questions with respect to the number of FTEs the government has and we publish it. It's simply a matter of him having a look at the Estimates Books.



MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, as we have pointed out, in fairness on this side of the House, the Estimates Books show that the number of FTEs is going up by 620 this year. That government says that we can't rely on it because FTEs are not the same as paid staff. That is why I'm asking the question in this House, so we can get a straight answer, if this is a government that truly believes in being open and honest and transparent with the people. I'll ask one last time. How many people work for the government to date versus last year - will the Premier answer, yes or no?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, the number of FTEs in the province is going down. The reason why the estimates are from estimate to estimate is because you authorize a number of jobs at the beginning of the year. Over the course of the year (Interruptions) They've asked for an explanation, I'm trying to give them one. They say they want the information and then they won't be quiet long enough to hear it.

Over the course of the year, people leave employment. If that position is open for three months, then a quarter of an FTE comes off of the estimates and into the actual, so the actuals go down. The next year you authorize a certain number of positions, you compare estimates to estimates. That, I hope, is the answer that the member opposite is looking for.

**PREM. - CABINET: DECISION MAKING  
- EXCLUSION**

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, stakeholder and advocacy groups have told us that in order to deal with this government, they have to go through a small group of unelected political staffers before they can bring their concerns to Cabinet. My question to the Premier is, will the Premier explain to this House who these unelected staffers are and what their role is?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I have staff in my office, he has staff in his office. My office staff deal in the same manner that his office staff deal with people who come forward with concerns.

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, stakeholders and advocacy groups have called this so-called committee a "change secretariat", a small faction of unelected and unaccountable political staffers that have rendered Cabinet useless. There are several unelected people who are making decisions before they ever get to Cabinet. They are the gatekeepers. Government departments and officials first have to get past this group of unelected political staffers before any information can get to Cabinet.

In Opposition, we don't have any confidence in this Cabinet, but quite frankly it's the first time a Premier in the Province of Nova Scotia has shown no confidence in his own Cabinet. My question to the Premier is, why is the Premier running his government from the back rooms and shutting Cabinet out of the decision making?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I always knew that consistency was not the strong suit but just a few minutes ago the Leader of the Official Opposition stood up and called for change; he said, where's the change that people have been asking for? When he sees something that is clearly designed to allow a Cabinet to facilitate change, he's critical of it.

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, I don't think neutering Cabinet is the kind of change Nova Scotians are looking for. (Applause) Cabinet members have been shut out of the real decision making. Nova Scotians thought they were electing MLAs to a government, but the Premier has made certain that their votes don't count. My question to the Premier is, why is the Premier circumventing democracy in Nova Scotia by concentrating power amongst a small group of unelected friends?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, quite the opposite is true. What we have done is put together a team to implement the change that this government is all about and we didn't have to hire a fancy-pants consultant to figure out how to do it. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

### **HEALTH & WELLNESS: VALLEY ADDICTION MEETINGS - ATTENDEES**

MR. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. Last evening about 200 people attended a community meeting in Berwick. I can tell you these people were angry and emotional, they feel they have been abandoned by their own government. They were frustrated that government did not proactively address this issue a year and a half ago when the minister was made aware of the situation. Community members still have many questions. Will the minister commit today that Dr. Gould will be directed by government to meet with recovering addicts and front-line addiction counsellors when he reviews addictions services in the Valley?

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I am very concerned about the situation with drug addictions in the Valley and in other parts of our province and so is our government. That's why the Minister of Education attended the public meeting last night, that's why the MLA for Kings North, the former director of Addiction Services for the Valley was in attendance last evening. This is why we've asked the Medical Officer of Health for the Annapolis Valley District Health Authority . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness has the floor.

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. That's why I've asked the medical officer for the district health authority to become involved and he attended the public meeting last evening. I will have an opportunity to be briefed by him on his observations and involvement in that meeting last night.

MR. GLAVINE: Well, I'm not sure if we have that kind of assurance that front-line addiction counsellors have gotten that commitment from the minister.

Last evening much of the meeting was dedicated to the memory of those who have lost their loved ones to prescription drug addictions. One of the more touching stories was recalled by Linda Dorey who personally sought help for her son and was told they would have to wait. Harlan's family was told to wait for the 21-day program so he sought interim support at a walk-in clinic in Wolfville. In the days leading up to the end of his life he and his mother were told they would have to wait two months for methadone treatment at the walk-in clinic.

My question to the minister is, will the minister commit today that Dr. Gould's investigation will include a review of the practices of Mud Creek Medical Clinic in Wolfville, yes or no?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: What I've asked Dr. Gould to examine is all of the instances of death that are drug and alcohol related, and to analyze and discern if there are any patterns. Based on his investigation or examination we will then proceed. Until we have that information I'm not going to direct him to identify or look at any particular physician.

The Drug Monitoring Program every 56 days looks at the prescribing patterns of opiates and narcotics in our province and when they see that there are problems they contact physicians, they give them a period of time to respond. If the response doesn't come or it's inadequate they can report them to the licensing bodies, which they do, or to the police if there's a problem that requires criminal investigation.

MR. GLAVINE: I made one commitment to the people of the community meeting last evening, and echoed by Police Chief Mark Mander, that we would not let this issue go. While the Valley waits until Dr. Gould completes his investigation at the end of June and a provincial strategy on mental health and addictions is released later in the Fall, the reality is people are trying to access services today and are being told they have to wait.

As the minister is more than aware with her background, when an addict decides they want to turn the page, the window of opportunity to be successful depends very much on ability to access timely treatment. Amy Graves, who came to Province House to plead for help after the death of her brother Josh in March, has another brother who has been in turmoil since Josh's death. He has had two weeks of counselling, he is now in detox in Lunenburg, he wants in-patient treatment starting Monday; when he's released, who does the family call?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: We do have in the Valley 24-hour detox services and those services can see people immediately. We have an excess capacity in that unit so there is no wait time and people can, in fact, get right in to the 24-hour detox services.

I'm not saying that all services are in place and perfect, that's why we are ascertaining through Dr. Gould what is occurring, asking him to do an examination. Dr. Gould will not be waiting until the end of June to report, we anticipate we will have something back from Dr. Gould within two weeks. We will continue to work on this very serious problem and find solutions to it.

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

**PREM.: INTL. STUDENTS - FEE INCREASES**

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier. The Premier talks a lot about the importance of immigration to our province, particularly in rural areas that are facing outright population decline. He's promised an immigration strategy over and over and yet we're all still waiting. I think it's a well-known fact that our universities are a great source of potential immigration to our province. I say that because recently our largest university, Dalhousie, has announced an increase in tuition - 3 per cent, as approved by this government, for general students and a 10 per cent increase for international students. This is clearly contrary to the desire of Nova Scotians, to see more immigrants come and stay in our province, when we charge them more and more every year as a result of the decisions of his government.

The government actually gets to approve this increase and so my question to the Premier is, does he approve of the 10 per cent increase in international fees for international students coming to Nova Scotia, given that it will discourage immigration, something he says he is in favour of?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, as you would be aware, there was some \$30 million in federal funding that was in a trust that was being used to defray the cost of tuition in this province. That money came to an end last year. The federal government did not make a commitment to renew that fund so, unfortunately, the first thing that the Government of Nova Scotia had to do was to make the decision to put a \$30 million investment in to back-fill the loss of that money. That's a tragedy because that money could have been used to improve the conditions of students. Instead, we had to use it to back-fill the loss of federal money. We then added in additional money to make sure that the student aid program now in our province is on par with many in this country, and certainly better than some.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, once again we hear the Premier trying to blame others for decisions of his own government. He completely neglected to mention that they cut the grant to universities by 4 per cent. The effect of which at Dalhousie is very interesting because due to the provincial budget cuts, the Dalhousie University administration has decided to cut important services to students like a student psychologist, who helps students who have special needs at that particular university, all the while adding three new assistant vice-presidents to the administration of the university. More administration and fewer services is a common refrain coming to Nova Scotians from that government, and

now through them at Dalhousie University. My question to the Premier is, will he stand up for the students at Dalhousie and undo this great unfairness of more administration and fewer services at Dalhousie?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, as the honourable member knows, the governance at Dalhousie, through their board of governors and through the president's office, it's their responsibility. Every second time the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party stands up he calls for cuts, and then he calls for more spending. The reality is you can't have it both ways. The governance at Dalhousie will respond, I believe, adequately to the needs of its students. I would also say that everyone has to share in the responsibility of bringing us back to balance, that includes the university sector. They're aware of that. We've given them a budget that is sufficient to support the programming for the students there and I believe that they will competently administer those funds.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, yesterday in this House the Premier stood up and said he doesn't like to point fingers at others, but in this one question he's already pointed his finger at the federal government and now at the Board of Governors of Dalhousie University. I don't know how many fingers he has left because he's rapidly running out. The fact of the matter is (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party has the floor.

MR. BAILLIE: I'm afraid to say that I know the answer is eight, but in any event I know they'll be pointing somewhere soon enough. My question is, why did his government just hand over \$300 million to universities and ask for nothing on immigration or nothing on services for students in return?

THE PREMIER: Well, Mr. Speaker, I wasn't pointing any finger, I was just stating a fact. The governance of Dalhousie University is not an unknown fact for him, it just simply is what it is. The reality is literally, just a few minutes ago, in the audience stood young people from Trinidad, from Prince Edward Island, from London, and from India who came - one who came here to go to university at Saint Mary's and now is working here in this province for Citco, a financial hedge fund administrator.

The reality is we understand all too well the power of the universities to be able to bring and keep young people in this province and the more of them that we can get, the better off we will be and, of course, it is part of the Immigration Strategy.

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

**LBR. & ADV. EDUC.: PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES  
- SUPPORT SERVICES**

MS. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education. University students are being hit with fee increases all over the place. Tuition hikes of 6 per cent, 10 per cent, and 14 per cent mean that many students will be discouraged from enrolling in professional programs. There are residence fee hikes, student services fee hikes, and now we're learning that positions which support student learning will be cut. The learning disabilities specialist position at Dalhousie University will be eliminated. This position was important to ensuring students with disabilities have the support they need to be successful. My question to the minister is, does the minister believe that cutting support services for students with disabilities is acceptable?

HON. MARILYN MORE: Mr. Speaker, I just want to clarify that the support money for persons with disabilities attending our post-secondary institutions - both community colleges and universities - has not been decreased in any way; that money is in addition to the MOU formula-based distribution. I do want to say that certainly I think in response to taking a look at how all their services and programs are delivered that universities are looking at effective ways of delivering the services. So the same amount of money may be spent in different ways but it's meant to, and we have assurance from the university that the money will continue to, support students with disabilities to ensure that their access and success in university is as positive as possible.

MS. REGAN: Mr. Speaker, the end result of the cuts that this government has made is that the position is gone. University can be a daunting place for any student, but students with disabilities should have somewhere to turn if they need support. On March 16<sup>th</sup>, the parents of a Dalhousie University student wrote to the minister and explained how important the learning disability specialist was to their son and I'm tabling that letter. In their letter these parents wrote, "Without this position it would have been difficult, if not impossible, for our son to access many of the services because of his disability."

Mr. Speaker, in her answer, the minister did not even acknowledge the concerns the parents raised in their letter. Will the minister take responsibility for the cut the NDP made to universities and acknowledge that the learning disability specialist was cut as a result of this decrease?

MS. MORE: Mr. Speaker, I can only repeat that the Government of Nova Scotia, the taxpayers of this province, are providing \$180,000 for disability supports at Dalhousie University. That funding has not changed in any way. It may be how those services and supports delivered within the university setting may be changed and you know, that question might more appropriately be posed, I think, to the administration at Dalhousie. But in no way has the funding support for those students changed.

MS. REGAN: Mr. Speaker, as these parents pointed out in their letter, "We recognize the financial challenges faced by the province and the University, but surely we

should not be reducing services in the very area that will see us through these hard economic times; the education of our children, especially those who are most vulnerable.”

Will the minister take her own advice? Will she raise this issue with Dalhousie University and offer ways to support the retention of Dalhousie’s learning disability specialist?

MS. MORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The money has been made available, there has been no reduction. The university is an autonomous body and, like school boards and district health authorities and other third party deliverers in this province, government may not necessarily agree with decisions that these bodies made but we’ll fight to the death for their right to make those decisions. Thank you.

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

**EDUC. - C.B.-VICTORIA SCH. BD.: CUTS  
- MIN. AWARENESS**

MR. KEITH BAIN: Mr. Speaker, my question, through you, is to the Minister of Education. As we all know, you can’t get a decent job to look after your family if you don’t have a decent education. Cape Bretoners and all Nova Scotians have come to see our first-class education system as the key to success. It is worrisome when you see school boards being put in a position where they feel they have no choice but to lay off teachers. Unfortunately, the cuts this government imposed on school boards have done just that in the Cape Breton-Victoria Regional School Board.

This sort of news is upsetting to many local families who understand the important role teachers play in the success of their children. The Cape Breton-Victoria Regional School Board began its restraint initiative by finding savings in administration and then through attrition of teaching staff, but it wasn’t enough. Unfortunately, they feel they have no choice but to let 15 teachers go and, since seniority is the name of the game, it will be 15 young, dynamic, energetic teachers who get the axe.

Mr. Speaker, my question through you to the Minister of Education is simply, was the minister aware of the Cape Breton-Victoria Regional School Board’s decision to reduce the number of classroom teachers it employs and what support or advice has she made available to the school board?

HON. MARILYN MORE: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much for the question. All school boards are in that process right now of making sure that their staff is made aware of their positions next year. This is a very interesting time because this happens every year and I understand that every year at this time this does happen, but I have to say that there’s a great deal of anxiety and I respect that. Teachers are the backbone of our system and they are the most important part of our education system.

To answer the question, am I aware, I'm not aware of all the staffing around the province and I'm not aware of all of the staffing with CBRM but I do recognize that all school boards are going through this process right now. It's very stressful and if any of the school boards need any support and any help with this, I hope they do contact the office and we'll support them through their decision making. Thank you.

MR. BAIN: Mr. Speaker, even after it looked at every line in its budget, the board was still forced to look at the elimination of 50 teacher assistants and 15 teachers. These cuts will have a devastating effect on the education of students within the board.

Mr. Speaker, my question through you to the minister is, before directing the Cape Breton-Victoria Regional School Board to trim their budgets by 2.4 per cent, did the minister believe there was enough amount of fat to be cut, without the loss of classroom teachers?

MS. MORE: Mr. Speaker, our province is seeing decreasing enrolment and it's really important that we make sure our funding matches the actual students who are in our schools. The information that the member opposite asked me, am I aware of how this could be done, the information we do recognize is that through retirement and attrition, we should be able to make sure that the system is rebalanced in that manner.

In every different situation this is probably going to take until the end of the summer to actually see what is happening with each board because of the way that the contracts are laid out, so the answer to the question is that I recognize that this is a very difficult time and based on the information that I did receive, I recognize it is going to be a messy process, but by the end of the summer we should have the dust settled and things should be settled out. Thank you.

MR. BAIN: Mr. Speaker, there is a formula to look after staffing for declining enrolment. Even after that formula was put in place it meant the layoff of 22 teachers, but the total number of teachers being laid off would be 45. The minister has said numerous times in this House that budget cuts to education would not affect the classroom. Now we see that's not correct. My question to the minister is, how does the Minister of Education really believe there are no other alternative money-saving efforts that the Cape Breton-Victoria Regional School Board could undertake rather than laying off frontline workers and if there is, would the minister commit to sitting down with the Cape Breton-Victoria Regional School Board to help them find the required savings without the loss of this front-line staff?

MS. JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, there were two questions in that and I would like to be able to respond to both of them. I would like everyone here to recognize the fact that the Department of Education will definitely work with any of our school boards with any of the issues they are having around staffing. We've made that offer and we're very firm on being able to, with our belief, that we're able to work through this process respectfully.



The second issue I'd like to bring up is that I have to ask everyone in this House to recognize that this happens every year that we have staffing because of our collective agreements. Every year there are these layoffs and then by the end of the summer people end up back in the system. If we continue to fearmonger and use these numbers in inappropriate ways, we're going to create anxiety. The bottom line here is that we're going to make sure the education of our children is protected and they are going to be able to receive the services that they deserve and need. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

### **EDUC.: SCH. CLOSURES - EXPLAIN**

MR. ANDREW YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Education. In April of last year the Finance Minister said in response to questions in this House: the Opposition may be willing to close hospitals, they may be willing to close schools, they may be willing to lay off nurses, they may be willing to lay off teachers, but we are not.

Now we know the cuts from the NDP Government have caused many school boards to look at more schools for review. The Strait board is currently reviewing three schools, the Tri-County recently decided to review four schools after three schools were already identified for review. These boards have little choice but to close schools after the deep education cuts made by this government. Would the Minister of Education explain why she is not living up to the commitment of the Finance Minister and is instead forcing schools to close?

HON. RAMONA JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, this government is not forcing anything. There is a process in place for school review and I would like to also say that the honourable member opposite is using the term closures. This is a review process, it's up to the board to hear from the community and to make sure the appropriate use of schools is in place and it is the process. I'm sure that the community in all of the areas that he mentioned will be involved in that process. Thank you.

MR. YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, based on that answer, I'm sure the minister will live up to the Finance Minister's commitment and step in and ensure that none of them close after the review is complete. The Tri-County board has said it will lay off approximately 25 full- and part-time teachers as a direct result of the NDP Government's cuts. The Cape Breton-Victoria board announced government cuts that will force more than 62 people to the unemployment line, including the 15 permanent positions that the previous member already spoke about. We know other boards are planning to announce layoffs in the coming weeks. Will the Minister of Education explain why she is not living up to the commitment of the Finance Minister and is instead sending teachers to the unemployment line?

MS. JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, I just want to remind members that we have declining enrolments in this province and that we are making sure that our teacher complement matches our students who are enrolled in our schools. This is a process that's in place and I would like to also repeat again that this happens every year. It's because of the way the collective agreements go through that every year there are lay-offs and teachers find their way back in the system. People are in the system right now who will be retiring and they might not have let their school board know that, but this will settle out and, again, this is the process that's in place and we need to work together with the school boards. Thank you.

MR. YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, these are not retirements. These are lay-offs of permanent teaching positions. The question wasn't about declining enrolment. One year ago, the Minister of Finance made a commitment in this House that no schools would close and no teachers would be laid off by this government and yet that is exactly what's happening. He knew what the enrolment numbers were, he knew the state of the finances then, yet teachers are being laid off and schools are closing in Nova Scotia because of this government. Would the minister explain what has changed in just 12 months to lead the Minister of Finance to now insist on balancing the books of the province on the backs of students?

MS. JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, I just would like people to recognize that we're not balancing the books on the backs of our students. We are providing more funding per student than ever before in this province. (Applause) We have to recognize that we have to right-size our system. We have schools that need to be reviewed and there is a process for that and the school boards are identifying those schools. This process takes a full year, communities will be involved. Through attrition and retirement, the dust will settle by the end of the summer and at this time - yes and every year there are going to be lay-offs and people will find their way back in the system. Again, I want to say that our priority is the child in the classroom and we're going to make sure that child's education is protected.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

**HEALTH & WELLNESS - CAPITAL DHA: ANL. REPT.  
- TABLING**

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, my question today is for the Minister of Health. The Health Authorities Act states that the minister shall table copies of the respective health authority's annual reports in this House of Assembly within 15 days of September 1<sup>st</sup> annually. If the House is not sitting, they are tabled within 15 days of when the House does sit. Can the minister tell Nova Scotians today why the 2009 Capital District Health Authority Annual Report has yet to be tabled here in this Legislature?

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I'm a little puzzled by the question. I remember quite clearly, I think in the last session that particular annual report was waved around by a member who is no longer here, but who was a member of that

caucus. I believe as part of that process in Question Period, it was in fact tabled because it was the subject of a question.

MR. MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, we did check with the Legislative Library, because I like to know my details and we were told that this report was not tabled in this Legislature. Perhaps there's a difference of opinion here and I'm sure we'll find out what the truth is at the end of the day and if I stand to be corrected, so be it. The question that I would ask in follow-up is, how can we expect good management of the dollars Nova Scotians invest in our health care system if we here in the Legislature don't care enough to review this report each year?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, with all due respect, a former member of that caucus complained bitterly about the cost of printing and publishing that report in Question Period last year. That report was tabled as a result of that exchange and I can't for the life of me understand what the member is now complaining about.

MR. MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, we're going to get to the bottom of this by the end of the day and I'm sorry that that member is not here with us because he's busy trying to win the election in Sydney-Victoria on May 2<sup>nd</sup>.

I will change questions here a little bit. Good fiscal responsibility is the responsibility of every minister of this government. Let us look at the Department of Health, the largest department in government and we're not talking about nurses, we're not talking about doctors here. Has the Minister of Health received any direction from the Minister of the Public Service Commission to participate in this government's talked-about commitment to eliminate 1,000 positions from government to save money in the next three years before the next provincial election?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, all I can say is that as Minister of Health and Wellness, I'm working very hard to deliver better care sooner to the people of Nova Scotia. I'm doing it in a very fiscally responsible way and in fact, we have been able to develop better health care, expand programs and we've done that by at the same time being extraordinarily fiscally conservative in our approach. I would think that is something that the honourable member would be applauding.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester North.

### **EDUC.: CUTS - CLASSROOM IMPACT**

HON. KAREN CASEY: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Minister of Education. Concerns are being expressed daily now across the province about the loss of services and supports for students as the result of the Minister of Education's position that funding to support public schools should be cut. Although the minister has stated on many occasions that there will be no impact on the classroom, we all know that that is impossible.

Just this week Cape Breton-Victoria Regional School Board announced that there will be 50 fewer educational assistants providing support to our students. Can the minister explain how this cut of 50 support people in one board can occur without having an impact on the classroom?

HON. RAMONA JENNEX: The boards have to be accountable for their decisions and I recognize that they are making those decisions based on the best information that they have. I'm trusting the school boards that, based on the information I'm receiving, they've made good decisions on that so I trust that the impact will not be felt by the students in the classroom.

MS. CASEY: Mr. Speaker, the reason the boards are making those decisions is because this minister believed that she needed to find some money to help the Minister of Finance. My question through you is, EAs provide support to students while they're engaged in the classroom and for some it's one-on-one and for some it's one with a small group. But in any case the loss of 50 EAs takes supports away from well over 50 students in the classroom.

Not only is it the Opposition who are speaking out it is the president of the NSTU who in a release yesterday said, and I will table it, “. . . students will be the ones most affected . . . Of course this will affect the quality of education” She had hoped that the Minister of Education would make good on her earlier promise this year to protect children and learning in the classroom.

My question to the minister is, will the minister explain to the parents of those students who now will not have an EA for support, who will provide the necessary supports they need to be successful?

MS. JENNEX: The board is responsible for making those decisions to make sure that the needs of students are met. Mr. Speaker, the honourable member mentioned about being fiscally responsible to help the Minister of Finance. We're helping the people in Nova Scotia, we need to make sure that our province is strong.

What I would also like to say right now, Mr. Speaker, is that the honourable member has suggested where cuts can be made, and I'd like to table this, and she was saying that maybe we should be looking at cutting French Immersion and also looking at special needs across the province.

MS. CASEY: Mr. Speaker, I can tell this House that I don't make a comment that I can't stand up and support. I would also like to say that the reason boards are going through this difficult exercise is because of the actions of one person - and that was this minister.

EAs are assigned based on needs. An autistic child who has had the support of an EA has shown great progress in Grade Primary and, as his parents say, his progress has been “off the chart”. They have just learned the EA who has been providing support to their

child has received her layoff notice. The needs of the young autistic boy have not changed, but the supports that this minister is allowing him to have are gone.

Does the minister expect that classroom teachers who are already challenged with the diverse composition within their class, is she expecting the classroom teacher (Interruption) I'm in my question, Mr. Speaker - does she expect the classroom teacher to take on the responsibility of providing specialized support for students who will no longer have an EA?

MS. JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, I can't respond to that question because it's an extremely premature question. We don't know what is going to be happening for programming for those children next year - this is a broad question. Now I can't be talking about every situation across the province because we don't know if this case (Interruptions) May I answer the question, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker, I'm hearing of a situation that I don't know the facts around, but I know that the board is making decisions to make sure that the needs of our students are met. I trust the boards to be able to do that. If they have any concerns with their staffing, they can contact the department and we'll work through this process.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester North on a new question.

### **EDUC. - REBALANCING: CUTS - EFFECT**

HON. KAREN CASEY: Mr. Speaker, the concerns that school boards have were brought to the minister and they were ignored, so I don't think we can blame the school boards.

In response to a question on Thursday, the Minister of Education said that we need to make sure that we rebalance and make sure our system is meeting the needs of our students. My question to the minister is, How is the minister rebalancing our education system when she is cutting, like the South Shore board, by 4 per cent?

HON. RAMONA JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, we have to recognize that we have been funding a system for children who are not there. We are funding our children more now with this budget than we have ever been able to before. We are making sure that money per student has been increased, we're making sure that the system meets the needs of the students.

We have to make sure that we are fiscally responsible, but we have to make sure that our children are well educated in this province. This is an opportunity for boards to make sure that we are meeting the needs of our students. It's a time that we are going to be rightsizing the system.

MS. CASEY: Mr. Speaker, I find it a bit appalling to think that we would say we're funding children who are not there. The programs that we have are for the children who are there. (Applause)

Mr. Speaker, the minister says we need to make sure our system is meeting the needs of our students, and she is right - we need to. One area of focus is literacy - literacy at an early age. Historically literacy rates in the South Shore have been relatively low when compared to other regions, so my question through you to the minister is, how will the literacy needs of students in the South Shore be met, with 50 per cent less funding for literacy mentors?

MS. JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, we have very good teachers with excellent training in the Province of Nova Scotia. And we also have, because we have many who have expert training - and I would just like to echo that many of those very well-trained teachers actually sit in this Chamber here, but I would like to say that we have very good teachers in this province with excellent training.

We are going to be making sure that all the support systems that teachers need will be met. We have a new framework that will be introduced very shortly. And I would like to say that the member opposite is absolutely correct, we need to make sure that our literacy levels are met - sorry, I said that wrong - that we make sure that the literacy of our students, the needs are met, and we were recognizing that we're going to meet the needs of our students sooner because we need to pick them up in Primary to support them as they travel through the system.

MS. CASEY: Mr. Speaker, I couldn't agree more with the minister - we have very good teachers, they have excellent training, and what we're asking them to do is do more with less. (Applause)

Mr. Speaker, my question through you to the minister is, with the cuts of the transfer of literacy measures being cut by 50 per cent and the loss of Reading Recovery and the loss of teacher assistant supports for students in our classroom, will the minister please explain what support she's talking about that we are adding to this program?

MS. JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, we are making sure that our school boards are making good decisions based on the needs of our students in our schools. We do have declining enrolment and we need to recognize that as a province we need to fund for the children who are there. This government is very cognizant of the fact that we need to meet the needs of our students, and we are doing that.

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

**LBR. & ADV. EDUC.: STUDENT ASSISTANCE  
- UNMET NEEDS**

MR. KEITH BAIN: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education. This year's budget announced several changes to the Nova Scotia student assistance program, but there's one issue that was not adequately addressed that has student groups very concerned, and that issue was called unmet need. Unmet need is the difference between a student's assessed financial need and the funding provided by government financial assistance. According to the Alliance of Nova Scotia Student Associations, there are 2,275 students with an unmet need currently attending universities or colleges in Nova Scotia. Students believe that the increase of \$340 to the level of maximum assistance will force many students to make some difficult decisions.

So, Mr. Speaker, my question through you to the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education is, if this government is committed to targeting the assistance to those who need it most, how does the minister plan to address the unmet need gap facing students next year?

HON. MARILYN MORE: Mr. Speaker, certainly helping the most vulnerable students to have access to an affordable post-secondary education has been the focus of our attempts. Well over \$40 million has been invested in universities in terms of helping students with tuition and bursaries. This has had a direct impact on as many students as possible. We think this has been very progressive and certainly shows the priority of this government in terms of supporting students for post-secondary education.

MR. BAIN: Mr. Speaker, according to ANSSA the average amount of unmet need for those who have it is more than \$3,000, so my question through you to the minister is, are unmet needs an issue this minister and her staff are investigating in order to ease the burden on the students most in need?

MS. MORE: We have put in place a very fair and balanced approach to gradually reduce the unmet need in this province. It's something that, because of the extent of the problem, has to be done in a progressive way over time. We've made a considerable start and we're very, very proud of that beginning.

MR. BAIN: Mr. Speaker, the debt cap introduced by this government does nothing for students who are now in school, so my question through you to the minister is, will the minister commit to meeting with ANSSA leaders to discuss their concerns and ideas about unmet need?

MS. MORE: Mr. Speaker, I don't have to commit to something that I've been doing on a regular basis. (Applause) I certainly value the input and advice and recommendations that I'm getting from the student leaders in this province. They do an excellent job of research and analysis. I value their opinion very much and I will continue to seek it out. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Glace Bay.

MR. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Education. In an earlier response, the minister said she didn't know what the cuts would look like. Well, here's a quick snapshot for Cape Breton - 144 positions: 44 classroom teachers, 50 teaching assistants, 14 positions for lunch/bus/grounds, 2.5 school secretaries, 9 cleaning positions, 2 janitors, a library technician, a clerical position, an adult education position, and a head bus driver. This is not fear-mongering, this is just fear. Will the minister please explain, how will this not affect the classrooms of Cape Breton?

HON. RAMONA JENNEX: Thank you very much . . .

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

I would now like to get permission from the House to revert to the order of business, Introduction of Bills.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

The honourable member for Yarmouth.

MR. ZACH CHURCHILL: Earlier you gave me an E for effort and now I give you an A for being accommodating.

#### **INTRODUCTION OF BILLS**

**Bill No. 38 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 110 of the Acts of 1961. An Act to Incorporate Yarmouth North United Baptist Church of Yarmouth, Nova Scotia. (Mr. Zach Churchill)**

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

The honourable Minister of Labour and Advanced Education on an introduction.

HON. MARILYN MORE: Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to make an introduction of folks in the east gallery, and I ask them to stand as I give their names: Bob Gillis and Hughie MacArthur. They are here as representatives of the Cape Breton Injured Workers Association. They do excellent work in our province and we are very pleased to welcome them to the Legislature here today. I ask members to give them a warm welcome. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Natural Resources on an introduction.



HON. CHARLIE PARKER: Mr. Speaker, it's not too often we get the privilege to have a visiting MLA from another province but today is one of those days. I am pleased to introduce in your gallery Sandra Morin, a member of the Official Opposition in the Province of Saskatchewan. She's an NDP MLA for the riding of Regina Walsh Acres, and is the Critic for Environment, Climate Change, Water, and the Uranium Development Partnership. I would ask Ms. Morin to stand and receive the warm welcome of the House. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: We welcome all our visitors to the Legislature and hope you enjoy today's proceedings.

### **GOVERNMENT BUSINESS**

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, would you please call the order of business, Government Motions.

### **GOVERNMENT MOTIONS**

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, I move that you do now leave the Chair and that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole House on Supply unto Her Majesty.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is carried.

We will now recess to allow the minister and her staff to enter.

[11:19 a.m. The House recessed.]

[11:25 a.m. The House resolved itself into a CWH on Supply with Deputy Speaker Ms. Becky Kent in the Chair.]

[3:35 p.m. CWH on Supply rose and the House reconvened with Deputy Speaker Ms. Becky Kent in the Chair.]

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please. The Chairman of the Committee of the Whole House on Supply reports:

THE CLERK: That the committee has met, has made considerable progress and begs leave to sit again.

MADAM SPEAKER: Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Madam Speaker, that completes the government's business for today. I move that the House do now rise to meet again on Tuesday, April 26<sup>th</sup> from the hours of 2:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. After daily routine and Question Period we will go into the Committee of the Whole House on Supply unto Her Majesty, and time permitting, we will call Public Bills for Second Reading, Bill Nos. 17, 21, 23, 25, 27, 30, 33 and 35.

Madam Speaker, I move the House do now rise.

MADAM SPEAKER: The motion is that the House now rise to meet again on Tuesday from the hours of 2:00 p.m. to 10:00 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.

[The House rose at 3:38 p.m.]

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**NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER 32(3)****RESOLUTION NO. 770**

By: Hon. Darrell Dexter (The Premier)

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

Whereas Ken Simpson worked on behalf of Nova Scotia's municipalities for 20 years as the executive director of the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities; and

Whereas Ken believed in hard work and collaboration and spear-headed in the initiative for the UNSM to meet regularly with political and administrative leaders, a practice still utilized today; and

Whereas Ken passed away after a long and brave battle with cancer;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House recognize the tremendous contribution Ken made to the municipalities and the people they represent and send our condolences to Ken's wife, Diane, and his sons, Alex and Adam.

**RESOLUTION NO. 771**

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

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

Whereas the eight-day festival of Passover is celebrated from the 15<sup>th</sup> through the 22<sup>nd</sup> of the Hebrew month of Nissan; and

Whereas one of the most significant Jewish holidays, Passover recalls and rejoices over the Israelites' redemption from slavery in Egypt; and

Whereas each year during this holiday families gather to retell the story of Passover and renew its message of hope, redemption and faith;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join our caucus in extending our best wishes to the Jewish community for a happy Passover.