



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Gordon Gosse

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Third Session

THURSDAY, APRIL 28, 2011

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House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, THURSDAY, APRIL 28, 2011

Sixty-first General Assembly

Third Session

12:00 NOON

SPEAKER

Hon. Gordon Gosse

DEPUTY SPEAKERS

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

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. We will begin the daily routine.

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

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GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Deputy Premier.

RESOLUTION NO. 884

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Premier, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas every day Nova Scotians go to work to provide for themselves and their families; and

Whereas tragically, last year, 23 individuals did not make it home to see their loved ones; and

Whereas today marks the National Day of Mourning, where we remember those who have fallen at work;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House take the time to reflect on the losses these 23 families have felt, and renew their commitment to promoting and strengthening a culture of safety in all workplaces.

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.

In my haste to get started today, I forgot the motion for late debate this evening and now I will read the motion submitted by the honourable member for Victoria-The Lakes:

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly condemn the Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations for dismantling the MOU signed in 2007 and taking the municipal-provincial relations in this province a major step backward.

That is for late debate this evening.

The honourable Minister of Justice.

HON. ROSS LANDRY: Mr. Speaker, before I read my resolution I'd like to make an introduction, with your permission.

MR. SPEAKER: Most certainly.

MR. LANDRY: I am pleased to rise today to introduce some of the committed men and women who work in our Correctional Services. These are highly trained, professional individuals who work closely with some of our most troubled citizens. With us today are: Sean Kelly and David Bungay, directors of Correctional Services; Rocky Partridge; Chris Dixon; Renee Jones; Laurie Ossinger; Paul Dorrington; Vanya Trimper; Chris Collett; and Tammy Robertson.

I see one or two others up there who are not on my list, so I'd ask that all of you please rise and receive the warm welcome of our House. (Applause)

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

The honourable Minister of Justice.

RESOLUTION NO. 885

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

Whereas it is important to recognize the hard work of hundreds of Nova Scotians who work in the field of corrections to help maintain a just, peaceful and safe society; and

Whereas Correctional Services probation officers, youth workers, correctional officers, support and management staff, community partners and volunteers administer and operate community- and custody-based programs and services for adult offenders and young persons; and

Whereas May 1st to May 7th has been proclaimed Correctional Services Week in Nova Scotia to recognize those who work in this challenging field who are highly trained and skilled in working with some of our most troubled citizens;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House recognize May 1-7, 2011, as Correctional Services Week in the province and all of those who work in this important field.

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 Labour and Advanced Education.

RESOLUTION NO. 886

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

Whereas today marks the National Day of Mourning, a time to reflect on the importance of safety in the workplace and remember those who have been lost; and

Whereas all deaths and injuries on the job are preventable through our shared efforts; and

Whereas the Workers' Compensation Board has indicated in its latest report that serious workplace injuries are at their lowest level in 15 years;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House agree to continue to work with our safety partners to foster the positive trend of declining workplace incident rates with the ultimate goal of eliminating injuries and deaths completely.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, before I do my resolution, I would like your permission to make an introduction, please.

MR. SPEAKER: Most certainly.

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, today in the gallery we have a number of guests with us. We have prostate cancer survivors and staff from Prostate Cancer Canada, and I would ask our guests to rise as I call out their names: Peter MacDonald, Tony Lugar, Hal Richman, Bob MacFarland, Peter Vanier, Randy Skaling, George Beck, Maurice St. Onge, Jack Brill, Peter Mallette, Steve Jones, Helen Vassos, Rebecca von Goetz, Rocco Fazzolari, Charlene Criscione, Rosanna White, and Mike Kidd. I would ask the members of the House to join me in welcoming our guests here today. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: Again, we welcome all our guests to the gallery and hope you enjoy today's proceedings.

The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

RESOLUTION NO. 887

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

Whereas during his lifetime, one in six men will be diagnosed with prostate cancer, a disease that is considered the number one cancer killer of men in Nova Scotia; and

Whereas in late March, Prostate Cancer Canada in partnership with government, business and health stakeholders, joined together to fight against prostate cancer throughout Atlantic Canada and opened its first regional office in Atlantic Canada, which will bring together 15 regional prostate cancer support groups; and

Whereas this new office will serve as a focal point for survivors, volunteers and members of the community because we know that more than 90 per cent of prostate cancer cases are curable if detected and treated early;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House congratulate Prostate Cancer Canada on their new location, the important work they do and the importance that men receive a prostate exam in order to catch prostate cancer at its earliest stages.

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. 888

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

Whereas 75 years ago, on November 2, 1936, the Canadian Broadcasting Act replaced the Canadian Radio Broadcasting Commission with a Crown Corporation known as CBC/Radio-Canada; and

Whereas for three-quarters of a century CBC/Radio-Canada has contributed to society by focusing on the issues and stories important to people across our land and continuing to offer a wide range of public services to fulfill its mandate in an evolving environment; and

Whereas people across the country can celebrate CBC's anniversary throughout the year starting this Saturday, April 30th by telling remarkable stories on video and submitting them to the CBC for a chance to be part of a special documentary being made to mark the anniversary;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly congratulate CBC/Radio-Canada on their 75th Anniversary, for their ongoing commitment to providing our population with important and interesting programs and services.

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 Deputy Premier.

RESOLUTION NO. 889

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Premier, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas Prince William and Miss Catherine Middleton will celebrate love and commitment by being married on Friday, April 29, 2011; and

Whereas the marriage will take place in historic Westminster Abbey in front of family and friends, and Nova Scotians can send their best wishes to the royal couple on the government Web site; and

Whereas many Nova Scotians will be setting their alarms early tomorrow morning to watch and be part of this event that has captured the interest of the world;

Therefore be it resolved that the House extend its congratulations to Prince William and Miss Catherine Middleton and the royal family, and wish them a long and joyful life together as the future King and Queen.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

RESOLUTION NO. 890

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

Whereas the mission of the Make-A-Wish Foundation is to grant the wishes of children with life-threatening medical conditions to enrich their lives with hope, strength and joy; and

Whereas tomorrow, April 29th, is known as World Wish Day as it marks the 31st Anniversary of the first wish ever granted by the Make-A-Wish Foundation, which has since granted over 250,000 wishes around the world; and

Whereas selected metro restaurants are making a donation to the Make-A-Wish Foundation, Atlantic Provinces branch, for each dessert purchased tomorrow;

Therefore be it resolved that the House of Assembly congratulate the Make-A-Wish Foundation, in particular the Atlantic Provinces chapter, on this important work bringing hope and joy to the lives of so many sick children by supporting Make-A-Wish day.

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. 43 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 6 of the Acts of 2003. The Interior Designers Act. (Hon. Ross Landry)

Bill No. 44 - Entitled an Act Respecting the Creation of a Legislative Internship Program. (Ms. Diana Whalen)

Bill No. 45 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 27 of the Acts of 1998. The Wilderness Areas Protection Act. (Hon. Jamie Baillie)

Bill No. 46 - Entitled an Act to Provide for the Fair Treatment of Children. (Mr. Chuck Porter)

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

NOTICES OF MOTION

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

RESOLUTION NO. 891

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

Whereas today Nova Scotia joins the rest of Canada in more than 80 countries worldwide to recognize the National Day of Mourning and remember those who died, were injured or became ill at work; and

Whereas the National Day of Mourning was initiated by the Canadian Labour Congress in 1984 to acknowledge the ultimate sacrifice of workers; and

Whereas Nova Scotia had 23 workplace deaths in 2010 and we must do everything we can to prevent these tragedies from reoccurring;

Therefore be it resolved that this House remember those Nova Scotians who lost their lives on the job last year and reaffirm its commitment to promoting workplace safety.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party.

RESOLUTION NO. 892

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

Whereas on April 28th, the National Day of Mourning, we remember those hard-working Nova Scotians who lost their lives or were injured as a result of a workplace accident; and

Whereas far too often we are faced with the tragic reminders that more needs to be done to make sure Nova Scotians are safe and able to go home to their families each day after work; and

Whereas today also represents a day to thank the men and women who noticed something unsafe in their work area and took preventive measures to keep themselves and their co-workers out of harm's way;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House remember those honourable Nova Scotians who died or have been injured as a result of a workplace accident and join in encouraging preventive measures to eliminate workplace accidents altogether.

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. 893

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

Whereas as a result of the dramatic 4-3 game 7 overtime win by the Boston Bruins, the Montreal Canadiens hockey season is over; and

Whereas this Original Six rivalry is enjoyed by devoted fans supporting both teams; and

Whereas this year's edition of the Habs played our national game with the legendary passion they are famous for;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia Legislature congratulate the Montreal Canadiens on their season with best wishes of humility for their fans including the Premier, the Deputy Premier and the Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage until next season when they will receive another hockey lesson from the Stanley Cup-bound Boston Bruins.

Mr. Speaker, I ask for 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. 894

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

Whereas 24,600 Canadian men, 1,000 of whom live in Nova Scotia, were diagnosed with prostate cancer in 2010; and

Whereas Prostate Cancer Canada's vision is to be a global leader in the fight against prostate cancer through its efforts and support, built on the foundation of integrity, compassion and innovation; and

Whereas on March 22, 2011, Prostate Cancer Canada opened its first regional office in Halifax to serve as a focal point for survivors, volunteers and community members to meet, exchange information, support outreach programs designed to raise awareness, promote testing and increase research capacity;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly extend our best wishes to Peter Mallette who is the director of the Atlantic region for Prostate Cancer Canada and his staff, Michael Kydd, Carol Murray and Rosanna White and wish them all the best in their future endeavours.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party.

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to begin with a very brief introduction.

MR. SPEAKER: Most certainly.

MR. BAILLIE: I'd like to ask Mr. Jack Brill of Lower Sackville, who was introduced previously, to rise for a moment. I believe he's in the Speaker's Gallery with his wife, if she's with him still, I hope.

RESOLUTION NO. 895

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

Whereas Jack Brill of Lower Sackville, a prostate cancer survivor, was honoured this morning at the 10th Annual Wake Up Call breakfast as a local hero for his extraordinary dedication to the fight against that disease; and

Whereas Jack Brill has, over the decades, demonstrated time and time again his dedication not only to the fight against prostate cancer but also to many other community and health related projects including one I know personally, Anchor Industries in Lower Sackville as well as the building of a seniors' home in Lower Sackville, in addition to serving as a member of the former Halifax County Council; and

Whereas the Wake Up Call breakfast is the only Canada-wide breakfast series dedicated to both raising funds and honouring community leaders in the fight against prostate cancer;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Jack Brill on being named a local hero in the ongoing battle against prostate cancer and wish him continued success both in this cause and in the other community endeavours he so vigorously pursues to make life better for all of us.

Mr. Speaker, I ask for 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.

We welcome all of our guests to the gallery, and enjoy today proceedings - and congratulations, sir.

The honourable Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations.

RESOLUTION NO. 896

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 advancement of any community depends greatly on the level of volunteerism by its members; and

Whereas every year, municipalities across Nova Scotia recognize a volunteer who has contributed time and effort beyond the call of duty; and

Whereas on April 4, 2011, the Municipality of East Hants recognized Frank Horne as its Provincial Volunteer of the Year;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulate Frank Horne on being selected the Municipality of East Hants Provincial Volunteer of 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.

RESOLUTION NO. 897

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

Whereas the annual Wake-up Call breakfast is Canada's only countrywide breakfast dedicated to the fight against prostate cancer; and

Whereas this morning, the 10th Annual Halifax Wake-up Call breakfast was held at the World Trade Centre; and

Whereas this morning's event was particularly significant as it was the country's largest, and it was the first breakfast organized through Prostate Cancer Canada's newly minted office in Halifax;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the Legislature acknowledge the hard work and dedication of the Wake-up Call breakfast Co-Chairs, Jim Copeland and Valerie Corkum, and extend our best wishes and congratulations to the staff of Prostate Cancer Canada's Halifax office for a very successful event.

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 Hants West.

RESOLUTION NO. 898

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

Whereas the International Association of Administrative Professionals (IAAP) is a not-for-profit professional association for office professionals, with approximately 28,000 members and affiliates, and nearly 600 chapters worldwide; and

Whereas the mission of the IAAP is to enhance the success of career-minded administrative professionals by providing opportunities for growth through education, community building, and leadership development; and

Whereas the Evangeline Chapter of the IAAP became chartered in November 2004 in Kentville and will be holding their 7th Annual Administrative Professionals' Symposium at the Old Orchard Inn on Friday, April 29th, with educational seminars and fantastic networking opportunities;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate the members of the Evangeline Chapter of IAAP and wish them continued success.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Queens.

RESOLUTION NO. 899

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

Whereas Master Warrant Officer J. C. (Cam) Winters, with ties to Queens County, is just one of a handful of military members to receive the Order of Military Merit; and

Whereas this national honour is given to military members who have demonstrated exceptional service or performance in their duty; and

Whereas Master Warrant Officer Winters is stationed at 22 Wing Canadian Forces Base North Bay, in Ontario, home to the Canadian Aerospace Defense Sector;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia House of Assembly congratulate and recognize Master Warrant Officer J. C. (Cam) Winters on having received the Order of Military Merit.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Kings West

RESOLUTION NO. 900

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

Whereas Waterville resident Crystal Taylor-Beals has been in Toronto for over year waiting for a double lung transplant, which she received last Friday; and

Whereas Crystal Taylor-Beals has been a daily reminder to all Nova Scotians to get the word out that donors are desperately needed as only 15 per cent of lungs donated can be used, and Nova Scotians can be lifesavers simply by signing the organ donation card attached to our MSI cards; and

Whereas Crystal Taylor-Beals of Waterville, in the Annapolis Valley, has been responsible for reminding us promoting National Organ and Tissue Donor Awareness Week in Canada, celebrated last week, should be a continuous effort;

Therefore be it resolved that members of this House of Assembly recognize and applaud Crystal Taylor-Beals for her bravery and outstanding effort on behalf of all Nova Scotians awaiting transplants.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Victoria-The Lakes.

RESOLUTION NO. 901

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

Whereas the Hospice Palliative Care Society of Cape Breton County marks its 25th Anniversary by kicking off a campaign to encourage community members to support its efforts by becoming a friend of the Hospice; and

Whereas the society offers care and warmth to meet the many unique and special needs of patients and families facing life-threatening illnesses and raises money to purchase home-support items for patients who wish to remain at home; and

Whereas a new message will appear in the Cape Breton Post each day for 25 consecutive days, to give community members reasons to consider becoming a friend of Hospice;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly recognize the good work of the Hospice Palliative Care Society of Cape Breton County and join in supporting its 25th Anniversary fundraising campaign.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Cumberland North.

RESOLUTION NO. 902

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

Whereas in Cumberland County we are proud of our incredible community spirit; and

Whereas the youth of our area embody this spirit; and

Whereas in February 2011, 15-year old Shannon Benjamin of Upper Nappan donated \$500 of her allowance and Christmas money to the Lillian Allbon Animal Shelter; and

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly joins the residents of the Lillian Allbon Animal Shelter in a chorus of woofs and meows to congratulate Shannon Benjamin and salute her for her fine display of generosity and community service.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Colchester North.

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

MR. SPEAKER: Most certainly.

MS. CASEY: I would like to draw the members' attention to the gallery opposite, where we are joined today by some very important people in our education system. We are joined by provincial president Alexis Allen; Eric Boutilier, first vice-president; Alison MacPherson, second vice-president; Dave Jones, secretary-treasurer; and many other table officers. They are members of the executive of the Nova Scotia Teachers Union who are here to enjoy the proceedings of the House and to send a strong message that they care about kids. Thank you and welcome. (Applause)

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

The honourable member for Argyle.

RESOLUTION NO. 903

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: M. le Président, à une date ultérieure je demanderai l'adoption de la résolution suivante:

Attendu que la semaine nationale du bénévolat s'est déroulée du 10 au 16 avril 2011 avec le thème de cette année pour la campagne nationale de bénévoles: *Passion. Action. Impact*; et

Attendu que Conseil acadien de Par-en-Bas a choisi Peter Boudreau de Wedgeport comme bénévole de l'année ayant été président de la CAPEB en plus d' être un member actif du comité d'action du Centre communautaire à Tusket; et

Attendu que Peter a été activement impliqué dans de nombreuses organizations à travers sa communauté ainsi que de nombreuses autres associations à travers la province;

Par conséquent qu'il soit résolu que tous les members de cette Assemblée se joignent à moi pour féliciter Peter Boudreau pour avoir été choisie bénévole de l'année et le remercier de toujours démontrer la fierté de sa langue, la culture et du patrimoine acadien et lui souhaiter un succès continu dans toutes ses activités.

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

Whereas National Volunteer Week ran from April 10 to 16, 2011, with this year's theme for the national campaign of *Volunteers: Passion. Action. Impact*; and

Whereas Conseil Acadien de Par-en-Bas chose Peter Boudreau of Wedgeport as their volunteer of the year, having been president of the CAPEB as well as being an active member of the action committee of the community centre in Tusket; and

Whereas Peter has been actively involved in many organizations throughout his community, as well as many other associations across the province;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating Peter Boudreau on being chosen volunteer of the year, thank him for always demonstrating pride in his language, culture, and Acadian heritage, and wish him continued success in all of his pursuits.

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. 904

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

Whereas the Northeast Kings Education Centre Division 2 Girls Basketball team was ranked number one throughout the 2010-11 season; and

Whereas on February 19, 2011, the NKEC Titans Girls Basketball team, playing on their home court, continued an outstanding 2010-11 season by capturing their school's second straight Nova Scotia School Athletic Federation Western Region Division 2 Championship; and

Whereas the NKEC Titans Girls Basketball team advanced to the NSSAF Provincial Championship in Amherst and on March 5, 2011, the team captured the silver medal in a hard-fought final game of the season;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia House of Assembly congratulate the players, coaches, manager, and school for their hard work and dedication throughout the year, for bringing home their second straight NSSAF Western Regional Basketball Championship banner to Northeast Kings Educational Centre, and for its silver medal performance at the NSSAF Provincial Championship.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Preston.

RESOLUTION NO. 905

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

Whereas Amber Horton, a 13-year-old from Dartmouth, was awarded the All Star Defensive Player trophy in the provincial tournament this year after only her second year of playing hockey, and also winning the Most Valuable Player award in one of her games; and

Whereas Amber had also been playing ringette for four years and in the beginning was unable to skate, but improved so fast that one year later she was asked to join the Nova Scotia Provincial Ringette Team; and

Whereas Amber was the only player to ever make the provincial ringette team within 12 months of joining the sport;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly recognize the determination and progress made by Amber Horton and join me in wishing her every success for her future, both in sports and in her education.

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

MR. SPEAKER: Before I ask for waiver, I would remind all the honourable members here that she is the honourable member's granddaughter and he should be so proud of her. (Applause)

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. 906

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

Whereas Brenna MacNeil of Inverness launched a book entitled *twentythree* in February of this year; and

Whereas *twentythree* challenges readers to reflect on questions big and small, combining abstract photography and anonymous answers that stimulate new thoughts and ideas; and

Whereas the notion for this book came from her experiences in Korea where she created a special way to teach English by passing around pieces of paper with random questions written on them for feedback from her students;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly acknowledge the creativity of Brenna MacNeil and congratulate her on the launch of her book.

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.

MS. PAM BIRDSALL: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to make an introduction.

MR. SPEAKER: Most certainly.

MS. BIRDSALL: Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce the well-respected educator and principal of the New Germany Elementary School in my constituency, in the west gallery now - he was in the east gallery but now he has moved to the west gallery - Bill Bruhm. So I would like the House to give him a nice, warm welcome. (Applause)

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

The honourable member for Lunenburg.

RESOLUTION NO. 907

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

Whereas Dr. Alexander Steeves of Martin's Brook, Nova Scotia graduated from Dalhousie Medical School in 1971 and set up his practice in the Town of Mahone Bay; and

Whereas Dr. Steeves has played an active and important role in the community, managing a peak caseload of 4,000 patients, serving as the Mahone Nursing Home physician, helping to establish the Veterans Unit at Fishermen's Memorial Hospital in Lunenburg, and holding the position of director there for 25 years; and

Whereas after practising medicine for 40 years, Dr. Steeves retired at the end of March, stating that he will miss his patients as much as they will miss him;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly recognize the retirement of Dr. Alexander Steeves of Martin's Brook, and commend him for a lifetime of practice in the field of medicine, benefiting the community of Lunenburg, Mahone Bay and surrounding 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 Colchester North.

RESOLUTION NO. 908

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

Whereas rural Nova Scotians for many years have depended on the members of volunteer fire brigades to keep their families and properties safe from fire; and

Whereas fire department members in recent years have also taken on the role of first responders because the need for medical assistance has increased throughout the province; and

Whereas many additional responsibilities such as fundraising, training, first aid, recruitment and public relations are also part of the firefighter's commitment;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Vaughan Dickie for 50 years of continuous service as a volunteer firefighter with the Onslow Belmont Fire Brigade.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Hants West.

RESOLUTION NO. 909

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

Whereas dinner theatres are a form of entertainment that combines a meal with a stage play or musical, and adding a twist of mock murder mystery can make it that much more entertaining; and

Whereas Mary and Doug Schinold, owners of A Little Bit of Country restaurant in Garlands Crossing, Hants County, along with employees Ashley Frank, Troy Lang, Drew Kent and Laura Kent, have formed the amateur acting group called Destination Country,

which recently performed *Death at the Lodge* for a sell-out crowd to raise money for a local charity; and

Whereas proceeds from the group's March 26, 2011 performance went to the Hants Community Hospital Foundation, which focuses on bringing much-needed medical equipment to Windsor, and they plan future performances for other local charities;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly applaud the amateur actors of *A Little Bit of Country* restaurant on their ingenious and entertaining fundraising efforts, and wish them continued success.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Bedford-Birch Cove.

RESOLUTION NO. 910

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

Whereas Alex Normore, a freshman at St. Francis Xavier University, was named Canadian Interuniversity Sport women's hockey rookie of the year; and

Whereas the 18-year-old Bedford resident is the first St. Francis Xavier player to be named the nation's top freshman in women's hockey, having led all CIS rookies in points and assists and ranking second in goals; and

Whereas Alex finished third in the CIS scoring race and was also selected as a second team all-Canadian;

Therefore be it resolved that members of this House of Assembly congratulate Alex Normore on her outstanding achievement in women's interuniversity hockey and wish her success in all future endeavours in interuniversity sports.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Victoria-The Lakes.

RESOLUTION NO. 911

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

Whereas volunteer firefighters are local heroes who risk their own safety to protect the lives and property of their friends, neighbours, and community members; and

Whereas Shane MacFarlane is one of those everyday heroes who has volunteered with the Baddeck Volunteer Fire Department for an incredible 45 and a half years; and

Whereas brave and selfless volunteers like Mr. MacFarlane are the backbone of Nova Scotia's tight-knit communities who give their time and talents without expectation of reward or recognition;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly thank Shane MacFarlane for his many years of service to his community, and salute his dedication and bravery.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Digby-Annapolis.

RESOLUTION NO. 912

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

Whereas April 28th marks the four-year anniversary of the election of Stephen McNeil to the Leader of the Nova Scotia Liberal Party; and

Whereas Stephen has worked tirelessly to build a strong Liberal team with the door wide open for anyone to join who believes in doing what is right for the people of Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Stephen is committed to working with all who are interested in bringing forward constructive, common-sense solutions that are in the best interests of all Nova Scotians;

Therefore be it resolved that we join together to congratulate Stephen for his hard work and dedication to his family, to his friends, to his caucus, and to all Nova Scotians on the 4th Anniversary of his leadership.

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 Argyle.

RESOLUTION NO. 913

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: M. le Président, à une date ultérieure, je demanderai l'adoption de la résolution suivante:

Attendu que Brandon Doucette, une élève de 9^e année à l'École secondaire de Par-en-Bas, sera parmi 40 étudiants de la Nouvelle-Écosse à participer à une foire science nationale qui se tiendra à Toronto en mai; et

Attendu que Brandon a été choisi pour participer à une compétition à l'échelle provincial, à Truro et continuera sa participation à Halifax, le 5 à 7 mai pour le Team Nova Scotia Showcase qui est un événement annuel qui est décrite comme une expérience de construction d'éducation et de l'équipe; et

Attendu que le projet de Brandon a étudié le niveau de protéines dans les homards qui ont été stockés dans des caisses de homard ou de tubes;

Par conséquent qu'il soit résolu que tous les membres de cette Assemblée se joignent à moi pour féliciter Brandon Doucette d'être choisis pour participer à la foire nationale des sciences et lui souhaitons beaucoup de succès dans tous ses efforts scolaires.

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

Whereas Brandon Doucette, a Grade 9 student at École secondaire de Par-en-Bas, will be among 40 Nova Scotia students taking part in a national science fair being held in Toronto in May; and

Whereas Brandon was selected to attend a province-wide competition in Truro and will go on to participate in Halifax on May 5th to May 7th for the Team Nova Scotia Showcase that is an annual team-building event; and

Whereas Brandon's project studied the level of protein in lobsters that were stored in lobster crates or tubes;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating Brandon Doucette on being chosen to participate in the national science fair and wish him continued success in all his scholastic endeavours.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Preston.

RESOLUTION NO. 914

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

Whereas Joan Firth, born in Sandy Point, Shelburne County, now living in Lake Echo, taught school for 33 years, 32 of which were spent with elementary children at the Harbour View School in Dartmouth, as well as raising five children of her own - three girls and two boys; and

Whereas Joan has been a member of the St. David's United Church for many years, belonging to both the Emma P. group and the Thursday morning group, both associated with the church, as well as being an elder for more than six years; and

Whereas Joan is a member of the Lake Echo seniors, the Retired Teachers Association, and is a member of the group Grandmothers for Grandmothers, and has also worked at both the Metro Food Bank and the Lake Echo Community Food Bank for approximately 20 years;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly recognize the many contributions that Joan Firth has made not only to the community of Lake Echo, but to all 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 Yarmouth.

RESOLUTION NO. 915

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

Whereas on the weekend of April 9-10, 2011, the Basketball Nova Scotia Division 5 Provincial Tournament took place; and

Whereas the Yarmouth Boys Mini Vikings team consisting of Lucas MacIsaac, Michael Hiscock, Hudson Grimshaw-Surette, Walter van Buskirk, Harmon Grimshaw-Surette, Christian Lyons, Ian Walker, Skyler Baxter, Connor Trask, Jonathan Loppie, Matthew MacPherson, Ryan LeBlanc, and coaches Jim Surette, Brian Lyons and Matthew Trask participated in this eight-team tournament; and

Whereas the Yarmouth Mini Vikings captured the silver medal;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly congratulate the Yarmouth Mini Vikings on becoming provincial silver medallists and wish them every success in the future.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Yarmouth.

RESOLUTION NO. 916

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

Whereas the Major Midget Hockey League recently held its awards banquet and 15-year-old Ryan Graves of Yarmouth received the Scott Dee Memorial Award for being the top rookie defenceman; and

Whereas Mr. Graves was also recently named the South Shore Canadian Tire Mustangs Top Rookie, at the Mustangs closing banquet, having the seventh highest points total on his team; and

Whereas Mr. Graves was also a member of the under-16 Nova Scotia team in Canada Winter Games, in Halifax, and played as an affiliate with the Yarmouth Junior A Mariners;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of the House of Assembly congratulate Ryan Graves on these notable and impressive achievements and wish him continued success in what will surely be an exciting hockey career.

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: Question Period will begin at 1:07 p.m. and end at 2:07 p.m.

The honourable member for Colchester North.

EDUC.: MIN. - EDUCATORS' ADVICE

HON. KAREN CASEY: My question through you is for the Minister of Education. The Nova Scotia Teachers Union President and Table Officers are here today to tell the Minister of Education that cuts to the classroom in our public schools are unacceptable. First it was programs: Reading Recovery, Youth Pathways, Literacy Mentors, Math Mentors, but now, Mr. Speaker, it is teachers.

The Nova Scotia Teachers Union made it very clear that the Back to Balance strategy that government asked of school boards is decimating the system and the future of our students is severely jeopardized.

Teachers, Mr. Speaker, are the backbone of our school system. Boards predicted these cuts, they told the minister, and she did not listen. My question to the minister is this, why did the minister ignore the voice of educators who know best how the system works and who understand the negative impact of her decision?

HON. RAMONA JENNEX: I would like to share in the acknowledgement that I do definitely agree with the member opposite, the teachers are the backbone of our system. I also would like to now share, though, that I have to say that even though they are the backbone of the system, we need to have the children there for them to teach. We are in a situation of declining enrolment and we need to make sure that our numbers are appropriate to meet the needs of our students.

MS. CASEY: Mr. Speaker, the Halifax Regional School Board has announced that it will cut 44 probationary teachers. These teachers are just entering the school system. They are bright young teachers who are now learning that they are a target as a result of the minister's cuts.

On December 7, 2010 I expressed concerns that young teachers will not be able to find work in Nova Scotia but the Premier assured me and others that that is not going to happen. Well, Mr. Speaker, it is happening. So my question to the minister is this, how are these bright, young, talented graduates to be comforted when they are facing layoff notices from their board?

MS. JENNEX: We have bright, young teachers in our system and we are now in a process of going through staffing at the school boards and with the attrition and retirements that will be coming along, as the months roll along, I am very much looking forward to having our bright, young teachers being re-established back in our system.

MS. CASEY: Mr. Speaker, I think that is an admission by the minister that they are gone and she is looking to reinstate them. Well, it's quite clear that the Halifax Regional School Board is eliminating 44 probationary teachers - and this is in addition to attrition. In fact, across the province the number of teaching positions is being cut by 230 and that number is growing. Each year our universities graduate over 600 new teachers, many who want to stay in Nova Scotia, and we want them to stay.

My question to the minister is this, what does she have to say to the young graduates who will not be able to find work in Nova Scotia because of her decision?

MS. JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, unfortunately we have a situation of declining enrolment in Nova Scotia, and we know that over the next three years we're going to lose 7,000 more students and, unfortunately, when we lose students we do not need to be hiring the same amount of teachers. It will take time for attrition and retirement to balance out the system. But you know we have a place in our system for our bright and youngest teachers; therefore, I am looking forward to seeing them coming back into our system.

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

PREM.: BUDGET BALANCING - SCH. SYSTEM

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier. The Premier likes to point out that school funding has gone up over the past 10 years while enrolment has gone down, but he ignores the fact that the Hogg formula deals with that automatically. He ignores the fact that our schools are in a much better place today than they were 10 years ago, that we have programs today like Options and Opportunities, like math mentors and literacy mentors and, yes, like Reading Recovery. We have teachers who have the tools they need to do the job they do for our students.

Mr. Speaker, he also ignores the fact that we were starting from a very low base 10 years ago, when Nova Scotia had the lowest education funding per student in all of Canada. In fact, he only needed to ask his own Health Minister who said in 2001, in Hansard, that this province provides less money per student than any Canadian province except one, and any American state.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the Premier is this, of all the places he could have gone to balance the budget, why is he saving his sharpest knife for our school system?

HON. DARRELL DEXTER (The Premier): Well, Mr. Speaker, again that's not the case; in fact, per student funding in this province will go up this year, and it will go up quite significantly. The reality is that the overall public education budget will increase this year. We understand the value of education, but we also understand that as enrolment declines it will be necessary to ensure that the system is actually meeting the demand.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, only this government could say they're putting more money into education while teachers are being laid off and while real programs in the classroom are being cut. Perhaps he should have listened to his own Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal who said, in 2006, that parents expect a strong, properly-funded education system. They also expect the next Premier of Nova Scotia to commit to nothing less. And those are the words of the Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal Minister.

My question to the Premier is this, now that he is the Premier, why is he changing his tune, ignoring the advice of his own Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal and, indeed, committing to much less, not more, for our schools?

THE PREMIER: Well, Mr. Speaker, they were wise words when the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal said them, and they remain wise words today. He knows that he has a Premier who is committed to exactly that - more per student

funding; more overall funding in education. We are delivering a good quality education to the people of Nova Scotia.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, the Premier may hope that he still has the support of his Minister of Education. He may be the only one left, the way they are going with our school board cuts.

My question to the Premier is this, as a final supplementary. Everyone knows that the key to our future prosperity, to allowing our children to soar as high as they can go in our province, is through our education system, and that is what we entrust our teachers with, and so my question to the Premier is, why is he spending \$200 million on his bloated, bureaucratic, Economic Development Strategy, but then cutting the Education budget, which is the true and best form of economic development in our province?

THE PREMIER: Well, Mr. Speaker, perhaps the member opposite is confused. I just said on two occasions that, in fact, the per pupil funding in this province is going up. The overall Education budget is larger than it was in the past and the reality is that we have a significant decline in this province in the number of pupils in our schools. It does mean that the system has to respond to the demand that is there. I think that's a perfectly understandable position. I think most people in Nova Scotia understand that we are, in fact, providing students in this province with a very high-quality education.

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

NSP - RATEPAYERS: PREM. - PROTECT

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, the Premier has said no to freezing the DSM charge on power bills. He has said no to having a performance audit of Nova Scotia Power's operations. He has said no to ensuring government officials at the rate hearing oppose any rate increases.

Mr. Speaker, the only people the Premier hasn't said no to is Nova Scotia Power. So my question to the Premier is, when is he going to start saying no to Nova Scotia Power and standing up for Nova Scotia ratepayers?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, as usual, I'll have to start off by correcting the member opposite. I didn't say no to any of those things. In fact, what I've said is that we are going to be there to intervene, to ask the questions, to make sure that the rate case that is being made by Nova Scotia Power is, in fact, an appropriate one in order to protect the interests of the people of Nova Scotia. It is the people of Nova Scotia that this government stands up for.

MR. MCNEIL: Well, then the first thing he should do, Mr. Speaker, is order a performance audit on Nova Scotia Power before they go back into the pockets of Nova Scotians.

Mr. Speaker, this is a quote from our Premier on May 28, 2008, “[Power bill] increases will make life less affordable for every family in the province. And these increases will affect jobs, as Nova Scotia industries struggle to remain competitive.”

My question to the Premier is, what has changed to make NDP support higher power rates?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of ridiculous things said in this Chamber but that has got to be right at the top. We do not support higher power rates, quite the opposite. It is why this government took the HST off home energy, in order to make people’s lives more affordable. That’s why we brought in the Nova Scotia Renewable Energy Strategy, so that we could make sure that the province gets away from the international fossil fuel market, so that we can have stable, predictable, long-term rates.

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, speaking of being ridiculous, listen to the Premier. He talks about removing the HST off home electricity, it is this government that added the DSM charge. Some people refer to it as the NDP electricity tax. It is this government that has increased the HST on every other thing that Nova Scotians do by 2 per cent. It is this government that has increased 1,400 user fees and, I might add, they increased them outside of the Legislature, not in this place where we could debate the merits of the increases.

My question to the Premier is, why does the NDP Government remain silent as power rates are going up and making life less affordable for Nova Scotians?

THE PREMIER: Again, Mr. Speaker, virtually none of that is true. The reality is it is this government that has been bringing in things like taking the HST off not only home energy but children’s clothing, shoes, a variety of other items as well. It is the reality that this government is the one that is responding to the needs of the people of Nova Scotia. That’s why we have the Renewable Electricity Plan, to ensure that we soften electricity rates by smoothing them out over a long period of time. Unfortunately, it was the Opposition Parties that voted in favour of higher electricity rates for Nova Scotians.

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

PREM.: HIGH GAS PRICES - RELIEF

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, gas is already at \$1.37 a litre in Halifax, \$1.38 and \$1.39 in other parts of our province, and today Nova Scotians are bracing themselves for another hike at the pumps. So my question for the Premier is, what relief is the Premier going to give Nova Scotians from the high gas prices?

THE PREMIER: Well, Mr. Speaker, as you know, gasoline prices are dictated by the international markets, that's not something that is within the control of this province or, for that matter, any province. The simple fact of the matter is that we understand these things are very difficult for people. That's why we brought in things like the Affordable Living Tax Credit, in order to help those people who have the most trouble making ends meet.

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, the tax that is charged on a litre of gasoline is in the control of this government. Every time that the price of gas goes up one cent a litre, the government takes an additional \$1.5 million. We charge tax on a tax in this province.

The Premier called the practice of putting a tax on a tax an immoral tax. Now that he is in a position to do something about this, he is remaining silent and will not fix it, so my question to the Premier, when will the Premier put an end to what even he calls an immoral tax?

THE PREMIER: Well, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite might have noticed that we already took the HST off a number of things and we would, quite frankly, love to be able to do more. Unfortunately, we were left with a debt that was continuing to grow; unfortunately, it will be a very large deficit this year so we're not in a position to do that now but you can be assured that is among the things that we would like to be able to do.

MR. MCNEIL: The only person in the province who gets excited when the price of gas goes up is the Minister of Finance. That's because he knows that he has been able to dig deeper into the pockets of Nova Scotians. Fixing the tax on tax will give Nova Scotians a bit of relief; as a matter of fact, it will give them 3.8 cents a litre by stopping the tax on tax. More importantly, it is just simply the right thing to do.

My question to the Premier, why is the Premier against making life more affordable for Nova Scotians by not removing the tax on tax?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, we're doing everything we can in order to meet the needs that we see and find in our society today. That's why we brought in the Disability Tax Credit and the Affordable Living Tax Credit. That's why we took the HST off home energy, and it's why we took the HST off things like diapers and children's clothing and those kinds of items. It is why we made the single largest investment in a decade in our most vulnerable Nova Scotians. There is a range of things that this government has done in order to try and meet what is a very real need. We would love to be able to do more and when we have the financial resources to do so, we will do so.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle.

**EDUC. - BUDGET CUTS: TEACHERS
- EFFECTS**

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, today we have 22 members of the Nova Scotia Teachers Union observing in the gallery. We have 22 people who represent hundreds more, who are worried about their jobs and about the negative effects that this government's actions have had on classrooms across the province. This week 44 teachers in HRM and 14 teachers in Cape Breton got layoff notices.

The minister says this is business as usual, part of a typical budgeting process but 22 people in the gallery say she is wrong, that this is not business as usual. They say the last time that the budget process resulted in teacher layoffs was well over a decade ago.

My question is, would the minister admit today that the budget cuts imposed by her government will result in fewer teachers in the system and will have serious negative effects on our children?

HON. RAMONA JENNEX: I would like to assure the member opposite that the child's education in the classroom and their experience in school is protected. That is what the school boards are now doing - they are in the process of making sure that we are balancing our system appropriately. Unfortunately, we've lost a lot of our children out of our system. We're making sure that there are programs and that the education they receive in the classroom is protected. The ratio is now the lowest - the student-teacher ratio - in a generation, 1 to 15. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, this government seems determined to create chaos in the school system, threatening double-digit cuts, getting rid of Reading Recovery and now minimizing the impact the loss of valuable teachers will have on students. The NSTU estimates over 230 teachers will be removed from the system in the coming year. Is the loss of that number of teachers business as usual for the minister or will she act now to minimize job loss and maximize the educational opportunities for our students?

MS. JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, the school boards are doing their due diligence around making sure that the appropriate number of our teachers who are going to be in our system meet the needs of the children who are in our system.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, the last supplementary that I'll do is a very simple one. Will the minister guarantee that class sizes will not increase significantly as a result of NDP education budget cuts?

MS. JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, I know that our school boards are going to be making sure that the appropriate number of students are in the classes. We do have caps on our younger grades and we've given them the ability to increase them no more than two. I

would like to assure everyone here that the school boards are staffing appropriately to the numbers and the needs of our students. Thank you very much.

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

**HEALTH & WELLNESS - CAPITAL DHA: STRIKE
- CONTINGENCY PLANS**

MS. DIANA WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. As the minister is aware, Capital Health nurses represented by the NSGEU voted 94 per cent in favour of strike action. While conciliation begins today, and is scheduled to go until next Tuesday, it's clear by the decisive vote that nurses are not happy with the NDP Government's initial offer. Equally concerned are the patients utilizing health care services in our province's largest district health authority. My question to the Minister of Health and Wellness is, has the minister spoken directly to the Capital District Health Authority about contingency plans in the event of a strike?

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, through you to the member. Nurses at the Capital District Authority - indeed, throughout all of our district health authorities - are a vital component; they're the backbone of our health care system. They are here in the Capital District in collective bargaining, as the member has said. Certainly, I'm very hopeful that negotiations will proceed to an amicable settlement.

MS. WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, I think we're all hopeful that will work out, but the question is, should conciliation fail, the countdown begins, and planning needs to be happening now, not later. This minister can lay the responsibility on the doorstep of Capital Health, but at the end of the day, it is the Minister of Health who is ultimately responsible for the well-being of patients. My question to the minister is, will the minister please indicate whether she is satisfied that contingency plans at Capital Health will protect patients in the event of a strike?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, we work very closely in the Department of Health and Wellness with our district health authorities, through the collective bargaining process, to ensure that we're well-prepared in the event that there is any labour disruption, but as I said, the parties are in bargaining and we're encouraging the parties to reach an amicable settlement at the bargaining table.

MS. WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, there are two parties negotiating, as far as I can tell, and they are far apart in their demands. Nurses working in mental health, public health, critical care, transplants, corrections, occupational health, nurse educators and rehabilitation have said to government, we don't like your offer. Patients who rely on the invaluable services provided by nurses in those areas are wondering who will provide care in the event of a strike. My question to the minister is, will the minister table in this House, before the end of business today, a copy of the contingency plan should these nurses actually strike?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I'll just reiterate what I said earlier, that district health authorities, including Capital Health, during labour negotiations are prepared to look at the services they need to provide and maintain in the event of a labour disruption. Labour unions, as part of their collective agreements, have provisions that will provide for essential services.

As this process unfolds, Mr. Speaker, we will be encouraging the parties to reach an amicable solution at the bargaining table so we won't have to go to the extent of having contingency plans arranged.

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

**LBR. & ADV. EDUC.: VOL. FIREFIGHTERS
- RECRUITMENT/RETENTION PLANS**

MR. KEITH BAIN: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education. This morning in The ChronicleHerald, we learned of a man who had been injured in the woods while using a chainsaw. A local councillor said the Meaghers Grant-Elderbank Fire Department that services the area has seen its rank of volunteer members plummet from 40 in 1996 to just three members. Volunteer firefighters are critical to the safety of our communities but they need support from all levels of government. In this case, more than one call was made to 911 but it took more than an hour before the man was reached.

Mr. Speaker, my question through you to the minister is, what is this government's plan to recruit and retain volunteer firefighters so there are volunteers available to respond to such horrible accidents?

HON. MARILYN MORE: The government certainly takes that situation very seriously. The health and safety of our residents is something that is very important to all of us in this Chamber. As we have discussed previously, volunteer fire departments are facing many of the challenges that are facing the voluntary sector organizations throughout Nova Scotia and quite frankly throughout Canada.

We have been working very closely with volunteer fire departments in terms of developing a training and retention plan. We've invested considerable money into infrastructure and we will continue to discuss with them the day-to-day needs they have when a lot of their volunteers are elsewhere, not working in the community that they serve in the volunteer fire departments.

MR. BAIN: Mr. Speaker, the councillor also said that the Halifax Regional Municipality Fire Department is putting too many demands on the volunteers and people

won't do it anymore. The dangerously inadequate enrolment of one volunteer fire station almost cost a man his life.

Mr. Speaker, my question through you to the minister is, will the minister table the report today that she received more than a year ago from the Fire Service Association of Nova Scotia on their recommendations for recruitment and retention?

MS. MORE: I've certainly referred to the report because I know that there are ongoing discussions happening between various government departments and voluntary fire services. I don't know the status of the report, it's something I can certainly check into because we've been taking the recommendations very seriously and having ongoing discussions. So that is something I can check with my officials about and get back to the member in short time.

MR. BAIN: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for that. Towns across Nova Scotia have significant turnover in volunteer firefighters, especially in rural areas. This is an issue that we can't keep ignoring. My final question through you to the minister is, what incentives will this government provide to existing firefighters and potential firefighters to ensure our rural communities stay safe?

MS. MORE: Certainly we do have tax incentives for fire service volunteers and fire halls but as we all realize in this Chamber it's not those incentives that encourage and retain people in volunteer fire departments. Unfortunately, like many community organizations, the volunteer fire services are facing the reality of changing demographics in Nova Scotia. We take this very seriously, we are working closely with them and we'll certainly do our best to make sure we have the highest standard of protection of our citizens across the province. Thank you.

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

**LBR. & ADV. EDUC. - ESTIMATES: QUESTIONS
- PREVENTION**

MS. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, there are many important issues in the Department of Labour and Advanced Education. Recruitment of volunteer firefighters, as we just heard, occupational health and safety, tuition hikes of 3 per cent, 6 per cent, 10 per cent, 14 per cent, cuts to a disability specialist position at Dalhousie University, residence fee hikes, student services fee hikes, MOU negotiations - the list goes on. My question for the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education is, why is government preventing questions to the minister's department during budget estimates?

MS. MORE: Mr. Speaker, I look forward to an opportunity to talk about the many challenges and assets that we're moving on in terms of the Department of Labour and Advanced Education. We're doing some wonderful work and I always appreciate an

opportunity either during Question Period or during estimates or in committees to celebrate the many successes we've had in moving forward on many of those issues. Thank you.

MS. REGAN: Mr. Speaker, since this government is preventing me from asking questions on Labour and Advanced Education during estimates, I'd like to ask the minister about university tuition increases. On April 19th the minister said a letter went out to universities outlining how they must justify any tuition increases. What rationale are universities expected to provide to the department before they announce any increases?

MS. MORE: Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure if the question was around tuition increases or fee increases, but perhaps I can just briefly mention both. We've cut tuition increases to 3 per cent except for the professions of medicine, law and dentistry. With international students, there is a 3 per cent cap unless the university feels that it is able to justify an increase in the cost of delivering that service, they're able to present that rationale to the department.

In terms of fees, there's a certain protocol that they're required to use as governed by the previous memorandum of understanding and the fee increases are something that are part of the upcoming MOU negotiations for further years.

We feel we've put sufficient protection in place for students for the coming year and we will sit down and negotiate increases into the future with the universities themselves. Thank you.

MS. REGAN: Mr. Speaker, because the minister is not sure what was said on April 19th, she said, "A letter just went out - it may actually have been early this week or late last week, from the deputy minister - clarifying the notice and the rationale that universities are expected to provide to the department before they announce any increases."

My previous question had dealt with tuition increases. My question to the minister is, can the minister please tell this House whether the universities have provided this rationale and whether it complies with the department's letter?

MS. MORE: Mr. Speaker, I had earlier, I believe last week, tabled the direct letter from me to the university presidents and I will now table the second letter, the one from the deputy minister just reminding them of the protocols and the procedures in place around fees and tuitions. None of the increases that require approval or prior notice to the department has officially gone through without that notice or prior approval. We are still waiting, there has been a lot of speculation about increases that have not materialized but I have to say that nothing has happened formally that shouldn't have happened.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

**FIN. - OPPOSITION QUESTIONS: GOV'T.
- RESPOND**

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance. (Interruptions)

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

The honourable member for Inverness has the floor.

MR. MACMASTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This side of the Legislature has a role to play for Nova Scotians, to question government with the aim to make things better. In estimates, the Minister of Finance said to me, you raise good questions but I can't answer them here. Last week when our Leader here asked the Premier questions in Question Period, the same questions, the Premier said, these questions are better asked in estimates. So they agree they're good questions, they just don't want to answer them.

What's wrong, Mr. Speaker, with giving Nova Scotians transparency about the costs of the user fees they pay, about telling Nova Scotians the actual number of people who work in government, today, and the need to prepare now for possible changes to the 2014 federal transfer arrangements?

HON. GRAHAM STEELE: Mr. Speaker, it's hard, I think, to understand where the question is going. We're nearing the end of a process of 40 hours of budget debate in this Chamber, 40 hours in the other Chamber. It so happened, when the member for Inverness was asking me questions, he was all over the place asking me questions that had little to do with the estimates of Finance and all I did was ask the member to ask questions that were within the scope of the estimates that I was actually there to defend.

I don't think that's unreasonable and he, like any member of the House, Mr. Speaker, like any member of this caucus as well, is free to ask any question that they choose, whether in Question Period or (Interruption) That's what this House is for.

MR. MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, I can tell you one vision that this minister struggles with and that is building a competitive tax environment in Nova Scotia. So it is not just this Opposition, on this side of the House, that faces the indifference of this government - 63 mayors, wardens and councillors were here, two weeks ago, because they said it did matter to them when this NDP Government broke their agreement for cost-sharing of services.

Now, Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Now that he has made the announcement for them in Amherst last week, impacting their budgets once again, will the Premier share with the municipalities the business plan to spend \$100 million to convert street lights to LED so they can prepare, so the municipalities can prepare, for the impact that it's going to have on their budgets?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question because I appreciate the opportunity to give the answer. The reality is that the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities came to the Government of Nova Scotia, they made a presentation to the government asking to move over to LED lights because they said this would have a significant positive impact on their bottom line. Had the member been at the announcement that was made in Amherst, the Mayor of Amherst said he expected this to save his small municipality about \$85,000 and maybe as much as \$2 million over the life of the change.

MR. SPEAKER: I would just like to remind all members that the questions in the supplementary are supposed to be somewhat to the same subject matter in the first supplementary and second supplementary.

MR. MACMASTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and the theme today is indifference. That's what the connection is to it all. (Interruptions)

Mr. Speaker, it's interesting because the Premier gives one answer but there are 63 mayors, wardens and councillors around this province who feel differently about the MOU. I know when I spoke with them about the LED issue last week, they said, yes, it is something we wanted, but why did the Premier go off and make the announcement without even telling us he was going to do it, and without even telling us about the business plan behind it, because it is going to impact their budgets.

I also want to point out, Mr. Speaker, on this theme of indifference, this government's indifference to Nova Scotians, because they had told people they wouldn't raise taxes. They promised they wouldn't raise the HST and they did that, too. My final question is to the Minister of the Public Service Commission.

Mr. Speaker, no targets have been provided to Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations or our largest department, the Department of Health and Wellness, because I've asked both ministers, in estimates and here in Question Period, about the number of FTEs in their departments for the coming year. There have been no targets for this government's promise to reduce the number of FTEs by 1,000. This government's actions show its indifference to their promise to live within their means.

My question is, will this government hold true on its commitment to make government smaller and more affordable or will this promise be broken, too?

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, unlike the previous speaker and his previous administration, we're not going to be cutting nurses and, as the previous government before them, firing nurses and getting them ready (Interruption)

Mr. Speaker, the member already had his question, I will try to give my answer. My answer is quite simple, we will reduce by 10 per cent, as we said. We don't break promises,

we deliver promises. We'll make this province great. This will be a great province and we know it and we'll know it particularly after May 2nd, we'll see who is crowing over there.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

**JUSTICE - KENTVILLE POLICE CHIEF: CONTACT
- LACK EXPLAIN**

MR. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice. Fifteen months ago the Minister of Justice was made aware of the latest death in the Valley by a letter sent to him from the Kentville Chief of Police, Chief Mark Mander. As indicated in the letter, this was just one of many. Chief Mander has indicated to me that there have been as many as 22 drug-related deaths investigated by the Kentville Police Department since 2005, a number which can be confirmed by the medical examiner.

My question to the minister is, why wouldn't the Minister of Justice pick up the phone, put pen to paper, make any contact at all with Chief Mander on this issue, when it was brought to his attention 16 months ago?

HON. ROSS LANDRY: Mr. Speaker, I really appreciate the question. It is just another example of the Opposition's inability to get the facts and understand what is really going on.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to say that our department, immediately upon receiving that letter, had responded and communicated with the Department of Health and Wellness and correspondence went out within two weeks of that. In addition, my department has been in contact with Mr. Mander on many occasions since then. We take this matter seriously; the health of each and every Nova Scotian is important. The safety of each Nova Scotian is important to us and as recently as yesterday, my department was speaking with Mr. Mander on that very issue.

On an issue of speaking to him in regard to that, I had the pleasure of sitting next to Mr. Mander on numerous occasions. At no time was that raised as a serious matter, beyond the action that we were already taking. Obviously he was comfortable with the communications going on, so I'd appreciate it if the member on the other side would get his facts straight.

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, the minister can talk about the facts that this government is taking this issue very seriously. Unfortunately, they failed to take action when it counted 16 months ago. Chief Mander highlighted the fact that their intelligence showed that the prescribed opiate painkillers were not imported but are being obtained locally by people selling pills from prescriptions.

This past Monday, following a police raid, two individuals were arrested for possession of prescription medications, the second in three days, and most notably methadone, which is supposed to be a highly-regulated substance.

My question to the Minister of Health and Wellness is, could the minister tell this House how is it possible that quantities of highly-regulated methadone, which is supposed to be administered by trained health care professionals, makes its way onto the street for potential sale?

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, the honourable member raises a question that is important to this government. We have four methadone treatment clinics around the province. Methadone is a substance that needs to be monitored very carefully and very closely, as well as the other opiates and narcotics that are legally prescribed. That's why we have the Prescription Monitoring Program.

Mr. Speaker, that monitoring program is a leader in the country, in terms of the work that it does. We work very closely with them and I met with them two days ago, in fact, and we continue to look at the ways that we can strengthen the work they do. Thank you.

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, Dr. Gould's preliminary report is expected on May 9th. Several families are calling for a treatment program today. This report should have been done when action was requested by Chief Mander 16 months ago. Things have deteriorated since that time and urgent action is needed now. My question to the Minister of Health and Wellness is, in the meantime will the minister support individuals seeking long-term treatment now, who are not able to access it in Middleton, with a placement at Crosbie House or other treatment centres until a concrete plan is implemented.

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to report to the members of this House that Addiction Services in the Annapolis Valley - in fact, all of our district health authorities - are meeting or exceeding the provincial wait-time standards for withdrawal management and detox. As well, in other programs, 9 out of 10 clients are seen within 21 days. We do move patients from one district to another if there is a need to have someone enter a program immediately and there isn't a bed in their area, but what additional services might be required is a question that I will contemplate when I get the report from Dr. Gould, expected by May 9th.

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

**JUSTICE: SEXUAL ASSAULTS
- REDUCTION PLANS**

MS. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, before I begin, I would like to make clear I would have preferred to ask these questions during budget estimates, however, we were denied the opportunity when the government skipped over Justice in the Red Room. According to Statistics Canada, Nova Scotia has the highest rate of sexual assaults in the country. Could the Minister of Justice please outline what steps he has taken to reduce those rates?

HON. ROSS LANDRY: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question. Assaults of any type are unacceptable in our society. I have the utmost confidence that our police, in each and every case, when it's reported, it gets investigated. One of the difficulties with these types of offenses is the non-reporting and bringing the issue forward. There's also the issue of people who become victims and I think as a government and as the Department of Justice and as the Minister of Justice, we're looking at how we can focus more on the needs of the victim. We don't want to re-victimize people within the system.

It is a sensitive issue, it is an issue that I take seriously and that type of harm or crime in society really casts a strong sign of injustice in the society, so we have to work in a collaborative manner with all stakeholders to address that. I am committed 100 per cent to the safety of each and every Nova Scotian and any crime of that nature is unacceptable.

MS. REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I didn't hear any concrete steps there. Nova Scotia has the lowest charge rate in sexual assault cases. Can the Minister of Justice please identify what steps he and his government have taken to increase those charge rates?

MR. LANDRY: In the Department of Justice, crime prevention is probably the most important step that we can take. We're increasing in those areas. On the issue, specifically, in dealing with charges, once again I encourage people to come forward with their complaints. I think one of the barriers in that is how the victim feels. In that regard, we have to find processes and ways.

That's why, for example, we set up our courts - the domestic violence court in Cape Breton. We're looking at the mental health courts because it's not just a straight crime that is being committed there. There are many different forms of how that crime gets committed and in what conditions and so we have to look at the totality of the system. I want to stress, without question, that this minister, this government and the Department of Justice are committed to looking at the safety and the well-being of each Nova Scotian.

MS. REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I commend the government for setting up the domestic violence court; however, not all cases of sexual assault involve domestic violence. Nova Scotia has the lowest rate of conviction in sexual assault cases in the country. Can the

Minister of Justice please outline what steps he's taking to make sure those who are guilty of sexual assault are actually convicted?

MR. LANDRY: Mr. Speaker, I think the word "justice" is the key word here. I have the utmost respect for the quality of our judicial appointees and people who sit on the bench; I have the utmost respect for our prosecutors and for our police officers. It is also that I believe that from the Justice Department, we're in constant contact with all stakeholders in looking at ways to ensure that our processes and delivery of the justice system is the best possible system that we can provide. I have confidence in this system - there are gaps and we are working very diligently to address any gaps within our system.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants West.

**HEALTH & WELLNESS - HANTS COMMUN. HOSP.:
SATELLITE DIALYSIS - FUNDING**

MR. CHUCK PORTER: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Minister of Health and Wellness. During the recent estimates debate on the Health budget, the minister explained that additional funding was being put forward for kidney dialysis treatment in the Capital District Health Authority. I asked the minister about the potential for a satellite dialysis station at the Hants Community Hospital in Windsor, and the minister's explanation from the draft Hansard is that it was something which could be looked at. My question today is why was the minister not more forthcoming as to the real plans for this additional funding?

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, as the honourable member would know, we're in the process of reviewing the business plans that have been submitted from the district health authorities. In addition, we look at the work that has been done in the department with respect to satellite clinics and where they are most needed around the province. We have identified gaps in service delivery in parts of Nova Scotia, and we will be making our decisions about where the priority areas are to invest the new resources that are in this year's Health budget for expanded kidney dialysis services when we've reached our conclusions of the DHA reviews.

MR. PORTER: Mr. Speaker, the minister was clearly not forthcoming with the hard facts because later that afternoon officials at the Capital District Health Authority were contacted and they explained the funding was being used to hire additional nurses only - approximately 20 more to work in the kidney dialysis unit in Halifax and Dartmouth.

Besides Halifax and Dartmouth, the Capital District Health Authority does stretch to the Guysborough County line, just past Sheet Harbour, and to the Kings County line as you head toward the Valley, which includes the Hants Community Hospital. When you consider the terrible winter storms and weather which people must drive through and the

cost of gas now going up, my question is, why does kidney dialysis for the Capital District have to be here in the Halifax central region?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, we have dialysis in all of our DHAs, and we have some satellite programs in some of the DHAs as well. We know we have areas of the province where we have a growing population of individuals who require dialysis and that in some of those areas the distances for which people have to travel to get this life-maintaining service is substantial.

What we are doing is looking at how we can best provide services for people within the envelope of financial resources that we have, and we also will be exploring home dialysis, which can be very effective for many people and it is also a form of dialysis that can improve the quality of life for some people. There are a variety of options that we're looking at, Mr. Speaker.

MR. PORTER: Mr. Speaker, I have a couple of ideas about that myself. I would ask the minister if she is prepared to review the expenditure for kidney dialysis in the Capital District Health Authority for the 2011-12 year and look into a satellite operation for the Hants Community Hospital in Windsor?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, as I indicated to the member, we're looking at the need for dialysis services province-wide. Certainly as we review the need, I would assume that because Windsor is in the province, it will be given some consideration.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

CCH: MY-PLAY CARD SYSTEM - IMPLEMENTATION

MR. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, this government has decided to take what could have been an important initiative and remove any potential benefits for harm reduction and research into VLT use and addiction. The My-Play cards could have been useful; however, the Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage has decided against all the research which is available to offer a My-Play and a My-Play light.

My question to the minister, why did the minister turn his back on the potential gains for both research and harm potential, by building this massive loophole in the overall My-Play card system?

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, thank you for that question because it brings to light an important issue. I think it's important to recognize the steps we're taking, as a government, when we released the Gaming Strategy. We're going to be the first jurisdiction in North America to implement a card system, a My-Play system here in Nova Scotia and I think that's important.

There are benefits to the card system and early studies have indicated that the benefits will be there for those individuals who find themselves at risk for gaming here in the province. I think it's something that we should be proud of, as a government, to ensure that Nova Scotians are being looked after when we talk about gaming and responsible gaming tools; I think the My-Play system will do just that. It will be a responsible gaming tool that all Nova Scotians can benefit from when we implement it next year.

MR. GLAVINE: Well, Mr. Speaker, the minister needs to pay more due diligence to the Focal Research Consultants final report which was very clear. Mandatory player registration is required for the system to be functionally effective but what the minister fails to acknowledge is that there are some serious holes in his My-Play light idea.

By giving out a card that you don't have to sign up for and which you can return to the bartender once you're done or tossed in the garbage, you are unable to undertake any tracking. Additionally, Mr. Speaker, the minister indicates that these cards will not be used on machines in casinos. That means that the province will still have no reliable data on gambling and what is worse, this is no longer a tool for any gambler who simply tosses the card away.

My question to the minister is, why would the minister propose such a flawed, two-tiered system?

MR. WILSON: Mr. Speaker, that's definitely a difference of opinion. We believe that this system will be to the benefit of Nova Scotians. We've seen it across other jurisdictions and the studies have shown that going to a mandatory My-Play card system is the right decision to make. One thing we're doing, that we ensured when we made this decision, is not only taking into account the well-being of Nova Scotians but also ensuring that we continue to support industries here in Nova Scotia. The My-Play system that we're going to implement in Nova Scotia was developed by a Nova Scotia company. I think that's important to recognize, that not only were we taking the health and well-being of Nova Scotians at stake, but we're ensuring that we support local business here in the province.

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I will table for the minister the Focal Research Consultants report, Page 101, for maybe a second read. This flawed My-Play light system fails when it comes to gathering baseline information on behaviour and it fails when it comes to the ability of gamblers to set realistic safeguards. What this flawed My-Play light card accomplishes is imposing an additional task on an already busy bartender and additional resentment from an already bitter gambler. It may be good public relations, but it is bad policy, plain and simple.

My question to the minister is, will the minister reconsider his flawed, My-Play light card, and move forward the single, full enrolment card?

MR. WILSON: The benefit for all Nova Scotians will be recognized when this program is implemented next year. One of the things we wanted to ensure is that retailers across the province have the time to educate themselves, their staff, but most importantly Nova Scotians who are going to be required to use a My-Play card when it comes to VLTs in Nova Scotia.

I believe the information and the tools within the My-Play system will benefit Nova Scotians. It will give them the opportunity to ensure they've tracked their gaming, Mr. Speaker, that they can set limits and I think it's a great first step for our government. As we know in the past, it was the Liberal Government that introduced VLTs in the province. We're bringing forward initiatives like My-Play system that will benefit Nova Scotians and we're very proud of that.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle.

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Yesterday the Department of Health finally unveiled its Tobacco Control Strategy and anything with the goal of reducing smoking in Nova Scotia is a positive step forward. However I was disappointed to see the document announced is just another expensive piece of literature like the Gaming Strategy, the new agriculture strategy and many other strategies that this government has introduced.

Considering this document is just a recycled, updated version of what our government produced in 2001, Mr. Speaker, my question through you to the minister is, why did it take two years to introduce the new Tobacco Control Strategy?

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: I want to first thank the honourable . . .

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

HON. MANNING MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The Minister responsible for Part I of the Gaming Control Act, during Question Period, made reference to the fact that it was the Liberal Government that introduced VLTs into Nova Scotia. Maybe the minister wants to correct that because it was not the Liberal Government, it was the previous Progressive Conservative Government that introduced VLTs into the province.

MR. SPEAKER: I will take that under advisement and get back to the House as soon as possible. I'll have my staff do the research on it.

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 honourable member for Hants West.

MR. CHUCK PORTER: I am pleased to have the opportunity today to take a few minutes to speak going into Supply and I want to talk about a few different things, namely families in this province of Nova Scotia. We saw the documentation this government put forward nearly two years ago now, 21-plus months ago, regarding how they were supposed to be the better deal for today's families.

We quickly learned that wasn't the case, in a number of areas. We've heard debates on the energy costs and the power issues in this House and I want to talk a little bit about that today. We've dealt with it every day, this issue, and they've done nothing but make it worse by increasing taxes. It doesn't do a thing to help these people who are already struggling, struggling hard, can't pay the bills. Where are they going? They're coming into our offices. I get them all the time, Mr. Speaker, people coming into the office saying, I've got my disconnection notice how am I supposed to pay this bill? And we have to intervene and try to assist them.

Fortunately we have a good working relationship with Nova Scotia Power and their customer service people and we're able to make that happen. But the same thing they are reminded of is that government is doing nothing to help us with our energy costs and our power bills except more taxes. They may say they took this off or that off, there are still taxes that they are paying out of every dollar, Mr. Speaker, that have increased since this government has come to power.

Now, yesterday we heard the Minister of Energy speak about electricity costs and how they've got all these wonderful ideas. They're not talking reality here, they're not telling people that the cost of energy - they talk about renewables; they talk about natural gas. There's the Minister of Energy with natural gas sitting on his doorstep in Pictou County, why isn't it running through Pictou County? Why isn't the hospital connected? Why isn't Nova Scotia Power, down at the Trenton plant, connected?

AN HON. MEMBER: We're working on it.

MR. PORTER: We're working on it. They've been working on it since they came into government. That's all we ever hear, we're working on it, or soon. That's what we hear. That's what we hear, they're working on it. Well, Nova Scotians have come to realize they're not really working on anything except just getting through day to day. They're doing nothing to help out the families here in Nova Scotia.

Times have been difficult; we've been through the recession, and it's not over by far. We're trying to make life somewhat reasonable in this province, trying to make sure people get fed, they get housed, and every day we're learning more and more about how that's becoming a great difficulty.

I was at a meeting last Wednesday night, a shelter meeting, the second one in my community in as many months, I guess. People wouldn't believe the homeless people who are around. They're migrating out of other places, we understand that too, and we have some who have been around the area for some time, but the numbers are growing. People are hungry. There are food banks, which are struggling. There are churches, there's Harvest House that was offering - and doing a great job, I might add - offering up meals through the week, volunteers who are looking after some of these people who are struggling. People are ending up homeless for obvious reasons, Mr. Speaker. They may lose their job, all kinds of different reasons of how you get to be homeless in this province, and we're seeing the realities of that in my area.

We talked yesterday, we heard a bit about the minister's promises to make life better and we're working on it, we're working on it. He was criticized for not going to some conference. Well, you don't necessarily need to go to some conference if you're coming back and you're not bringing anything back with you anyway, don't bother wasting the taxpayers' money. That's my opinion on that and I'm sure it's theirs too. We've got a lot of other places for that money to go.

Mr. Speaker, we talked about how the transmission of energy couldn't be done, the cost that would be associated. We talked about the monopoly of Nova Scotia Power and I've talked about this before. There's a huge monopoly and we know monopolies don't work. It makes life difficult for Nova Scotians when there's a monopoly. Competition is a good thing. Why aren't we thinking about incentives that would increase alternative energy sources, make it valuable for individuals, for example, or small businesses, to put up those windmills or find geothermal, or whatever it might be for an alternative green source where they can save money? That doesn't seem to be the direction that anybody is going right now, but it could be a very valuable one. All we hear is we're working on it.

We talked about why we couldn't do it. Well, Nova Scotia Power, here we are again, they've got all the control; they own the grid, what a mistake. They own the grid and they have to have a piece of the pie every time somebody is generating electricity.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we need to come up with new and innovative ways to figure this out. One problem, the grid is however many years old now, and there has been no real work

done to it in the last, probably 30 years or more, except for where it has fallen down, and when the hurricane blew through and it knocked over a tower here and there, there had to be, obviously, necessary work done. That's not enough to keep it going, especially when you're transferring hundreds of millions of dollars, annually, over into parent companies. It just doesn't seem reasonable that they're not investing in Nova Scotia.

There are a lot of things that could be done, Mr. Speaker, and when we fail, for whatever reason to do that, we're supposed to be looking out for what is best for Nova Scotians. Every government does the same thing. We stand and we talk about what's good for Nova Scotians. Nova Scotians will tell you that no government has ever served them well when it comes to looking after the people who are hungry. Well, maybe some have and maybe some haven't, but we're certainly not seeing it today.

Mr. Speaker, we talk about small electricity markets. It was interesting, yesterday the minister said we're just too small in Nova Scotia to make it worthwhile. That's a pretty poor excuse. It doesn't matter how big or how small we are. If we're small, you would think it would be cheaper to look after that. Maybe the Minister of Finance could offer them a few ideas, and maybe some dollars, and how to spend them wisely. He's supposedly a wise man when it comes to crunching numbers and he likes to be credited, I can see him, he likes to hear that the wise - well, let's put some of that wise-dollar sense to work. Let's figure out why - why does it matter how big or small our province is? Our province has remained consistently pretty close to the same number of people for quite a number of years.

We keep hearing about out-migration, out-migration - well, if you looked at the numbers, I think you'll see that they're fairly close. They've not changed a whole lot and those people who go, come back. They do come back, Mr. Speaker, a lot of them. They may go for a year, two years, 15 years, but they tend to migrate back home at some point. That's not unusual at all. So we have to figure out where we're going. There's no direction. Government says, oh, we have a new direction, a better deal for today's families - not even close, not even close, nowhere near. People are moving away for reasons and then they're coming home because they've worked, they've made their money; they can retire and they don't have to worry.

Mr. Speaker, where are our children going to go? Will there be jobs? Those are the questions that they have. If you listen to any of the interviews that take place on why people leave, it's generally about jobs because there aren't any. The government keeps saying that we're going to promote and we're going to have numbers of jobs, I heard somewhere between 2,000 and 4,000 when one of the honourable members for Yarmouth, I think, was asking and I know I asked as well during the estimates, how many jobs? We keep hearing about jobsHere, jobsHere, jobsHere - my question is, jobs where? It just does not seem to be happening. We're hearing about jobs going away, maybe that should have been the statement - jobs leaving on that nice, fancy, glossy cost-for-gloss that I referred to earlier.

We've made no great investments in much of anything. We haven't responded to the farming needs, there's been no huge investments, I hear about \$500,000. I've said this before, but agriculture folks are still scratching their head wondering where that's going. There doesn't seem to be any real want or desire to put out what the real true facts are. People are standing by waiting to hear what the real facts are. They want to see action, they want things to improve in this province and they're not.

Here we are in the midst - it's just about over I should say, I was going to say the midst of the campaign. The campaign is coming to a close. People are so disenchanted with where governments in general are, where politicians are, they're saying they're not going to vote - although it's impressive to see that the early turnout for voting has been in large numbers, which is a good thing.

Polling, well you can put some faith in polls but we see where that gets you in the past, that won't hold true. Generally never does. I hear the member for Hants East over there who's an NDP-er and that's fine too, at least he does stand for something, he believes in some partisanship. By the same token, that's part of what's wrong with the country in general is the partisan politics that we do have. If all members came together - you can laugh about that in some ways but you know if all members came together both in this House and the federal House, they might actually get something done if they weren't bickering and fighting over the partisan issues all the time.

What's supposed to matter are the people we represent. Not whether we're Liberals or Green representatives or whatever we are. I think that most people if you really sat down and thought about it, even as politicians, we'd find we're a bit of everything. Not one Party has all the right answers, we've heard that many times.

Madam Speaker, I see you've joined for the afternoon.

We have to figure out where we're going here. There's been nothing really done and people just want to know and this election has brought home again the ideals. Well, what is it that interests you? What are the issues that you're faced with when they talk about casting their ballot and they hear all the different Parties? We listen to the media - the media plays a huge role in all of these elections, it played a huge role in the last provincial election here and I guess it always has, but even more so with the social ability to network, with the Twitter and the Facebook, advancements in Web sites and e-mails and all of those types of things encouraging people maybe how they should vote.

People want to know, what is it that you will do for me? That's what it comes down to, jobs are one of the biggest things, the economy is a big thing. We know who's standing up and talking about jobs and the economy, there's only one Leader that's been doing that and we're confident that he'll go back in as the Prime Minister of this country when it comes right down to it. There's no doubt about that.

What is interesting though is the change that we do see in the last week, the honourable member mentioned polls. If you have any faith or maybe they're just of interest to you, you'll look at polls, what people are thinking. How much will polls change the philosophy of how people think? Will they go and vote because they want to be part of - you know, they don't want to be on a winning team, they want their vote to count. Or are they really looking at the issues that are present in this country today and in our provinces. Maybe they are, maybe they're not. I'd like to think that they are and they're casting their ballots wisely.

It's important that they pay attention to what the Leaders are saying and what the Parties are saying, not necessarily what the media is saying, or wishing for, or making up as it goes along. There are all kinds of scenarios that are being put forward by pollsters, who's where just depends on the poll that you look at. The only poll that really matters will be the ballot day on May 2nd. That's what's going to matter when we're going forward in this country.

We talked about a lot of different things. When will the next election be in this province? Not soon enough when you're talking to people in the coffee shops these days. Not soon enough. They talked about the one year notice given by the Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations and his government for one year. These people in the coffee shops are saying we're giving them our notice already as well. They can't wait. They can't wait for the next attempt, the next opportunity to go to the polls. There'll be a huge turnout that day too, I'm sure.

It doesn't matter who you talk to and, you know, these are people who have supported Parties, a variety of different Parties over the years, including the NDP, who are very frustrated. There were great promises made and we talk about promises being broken all the time. Well, the reality is that promises do get broken. When you're standing on the doorsteps, telling people, and you've got a beautiful brochure that says we promise we're not going to raise taxes, you're not even here a month and you're talking, we're going to raise taxes.

People remember certain things. There's a lot of stuff that goes by that they don't remember, that they'll forget. That's the goal of elected officials sometimes and governments especially, to say, well, we didn't do that or we didn't really say that or whatever it might be. People aren't stupid; they will remember, they're smart. The young people today are paying attention. As much as we think that they're maybe not going to the polls, they're frustrated; that's why they're not going to the polls. They say that there's no one there worth voting for sometimes. They're just so disenchanted with it all. We need to find a way to get them back and that's about being honest with people. When we deliver a message and say that we're going to do this and we're not going to do that, we should stand by that message. This government has not done that. They failed to do that.

There are a number of things with regard to the energy costs and we did talk about that a bit earlier and I want to get back to that before I close. Nova Scotia Power, which we allow to do pretty much whatever they want, to increase their rates whenever they feel like it, it doesn't really matter what Nova Scotians think because the government says, oh, that's an arm's-length organization from the government. My question is, why doesn't the government shorten the arm? It's time they were doing that and getting involved in where this is going, because pretty soon people aren't going to be able to afford to have any power. But they're going to say, no, pass the buck, that's the URB's issue, that's not the government's issue.

The government doesn't believe in standing up for the people in this province and saying anything against Nova Scotia Power because who supports - we know where that is. We know who is behind that. That's quite obvious actually, isn't it? Nova Scotia Power does whatever they bloody well want because they can, because government will not stand up and do anything. They'll stand back and say, no, arm's length, arm's length, that's what that is, arm's length. Get involved, shorten the arm, cut the arm off, as far as I'm concerned, get involved in it. Start making decisions that matter, start being involved. That's what people elected you to do, to be involved and not arm's length away from all the decisions, not arm's length away from the people in this province, involved in what is going on in this province. This Party, this government is not involved at all in what's going on in the real homes of people in this province.

With that, Mr. Speaker, thank you very much, I'll take my seat.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

MR. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, it's an honour to stand in my place and discuss an issue that is of increasing importance to people in Yarmouth. Most people on the side opposite think I'm going to be talking about a ferry, but today I'm not. (Interruptions) Don't think I'm finished, there will be plenty of time to discuss that ferry on another day. Today I want to talk about another burning issue in my constituency of Yarmouth. I know it's an issue in rural areas across this province and, indeed, across the country and that is the doctor shortage that we're currently facing. (Interruptions) The only reason I'm smiling is because, obviously, the members opposite are saying funny things. The issue in Yarmouth isn't funny, it is serious.

I tabled a petition during the last session of the Legislature. Over 2,200 people signed this petition from Yarmouth County alone, people who didn't have a family doctor. On a daily basis, I have people come into my office, I have phone calls to my constituency office - as I'm sure many members do across this province - from people in our communities who are scared, they're fearful, because they don't believe that they have access to the medical services that they need and, in fact, deserve. Seniors who are forced to go to outpatients to have their prescriptions renewed and wait up to 14, sometimes 18 hours, I've heard of seniors waiting in our ER rooms just to have their prescriptions filled. Single parents with children who don't have a family doctor don't know where to turn.

Individuals with health concerns, sicknesses, no family doctor; this is very stressful on our community, as I'm sure it is in other communities that are dealing with this issue.

Access to quality health care is an essential cornerstone to life in Canada and Nova Scotia. I believe that as a province this government needs to step up to the plate and act immediately to address this crisis, because I do believe, indeed, it is a crisis.

The issue we have is not just that people were without family physicians, but there is also the issue of the additional strain that is put on our ER system because people are forced to go to emergency rooms to deal with issues that aren't emergencies - they should be dealt with by a family physician and they shouldn't be taking up time in our emergency rooms because we are understaffed in our emergency rooms right now. In fact, earlier this month emergency room physicians appeared before the municipal council in Yarmouth to address issues surrounding wait times, these wait times I just mentioned a few moments ago, for patients at the Yarmouth Regional Hospital.

The Yarmouth Regional Hospital isn't unlike other hospitals dealing with patients in ERs, dealing with people whose conditions aren't considered an emergency. There have been some shocking statements made by our local physicians - and I'm not putting the blame on our physicians or the local folks who are out trying to recruit family doctors on a daily basis, because they're doing their job with the resources they have, they're doing the best they can and they are serving our community to the best of their ability - I just want to bring your attention, Mr. Speaker, to some startling comments that are being made by our physicians out in the field, ER physicians in Yarmouth who said:

Right now we are barely able to staff our emergency department with one doctor.

I dread the day that we're not going to be able to have a shift covered.

We've come ever so close, all it would take is for someone to get hurt or sick, we may be approaching that time this summer.

We may be approaching a time in Yarmouth when our ER is closed because we don't have staff able to work the facility, and that's a scary thing for many people, many people who, for generations, have depended on an ER system when they are faced with an emergency, when their child is sick, suffering from a fever, violently ill, a senior who has suffered a dangerous fall. These are things that can happen on a daily basis, without warning, and we are in a position in Yarmouth where, because of staffing shortages, our emergency room could close.

Yarmouth is a regional hospital, we're not just servicing people in Yarmouth alone or Yarmouth County, we're servicing the tri-counties. People from all over the tri-counties, from Digby, Shelburne, and Yarmouth, use this facility and our physicians are telling us that, because of a doctor shortage, we risk losing that facility being open for people. That's a scary thought for many.

There are different issues here, but one of the fundamental issues is this shortage of family physicians, with more and more people being forced to access emergency care when, in fact, they are not dealing with emergencies. What we're looking for, as a caucus and what I'm looking for as the MLA for Yarmouth, is for this government to step up and help the situation immediately, because it is, indeed, a crisis.

We have provincial incentive programs that are in place to recruit and retain family physicians that are over a decade old, that haven't been reviewed, that haven't been changed - there has been no assessment to see if they are competitive with other jurisdictions, and the evidence will show that because of the lack of family physicians in this jurisdiction that we're not being competitive. Why aren't we reviewing those incentive programs, reviewing all the incentive programs being used across this country, and see what we can do as a province to be competitive in terms of recruiting and retaining and training family physicians, an idea that the Liberal Party has put forward that hasn't been grabbed onto by this government? We think it's a good idea, and it's fine if the folks on the opposite side of the House want to grab this idea - we don't care who uses our ideas, as long as the ideas that are good get implemented.

We think we should start training our own physicians here in Nova Scotia and creating incentives for Nova Scotians to become family physicians and to go back and work in high-need areas. The Minister of Agriculture mentioned Dalhousie Medical School. Well, this past year Dalhousie Medical School gave, I believe, 10 of its seats to Saudi Arabia. Those could have been seats for Nova Scotians, for our own people here in this province, to train and go back to work in high-need areas like Yarmouth, like Shelburne, like Digby, like Cape Breton, and that didn't happen.

We're suggesting that this government look at funding 20 Nova Scotian students a year, funding their tuition to go to med school, covering their tuition as long as when they come out they're prepared to be a family doctor and work in a high-need rural area. Do this for five years - we've costed this, I believe it's a \$6 million investment to get 100 new Nova Scotian doctors working and servicing people in Nova Scotia.

All I hear is groaning over there, and it's surprising because the federal Leader of the NDP - Jack Layton - who is going around promising doctors all over the country, I'm sure he would like this idea too.

MR. LEONARD PREYRA: Don't let the facts get in the way of a good story.

MR. CHURCHILL: Being a good Liberal, I would be happy to pitch this idea to Jack Layton as well.

MR. PREYRA: That's an oxymoron for you.

MR. CHURCHILL: I don't think the member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island wants me to get started on morons here today - I'm just kidding (Laughter) But this is an issue . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. That word is very unparliamentary. I don't know if the member is aware of that, but I would ask the honourable . . .

MR. CHURCHILL: I was just repeating a word I heard across the House and I didn't call anybody that word. I just . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. I'm not the one to be arguing with. You can make a point of order, or whatever else, but I'm just going to remind you that calling somebody a moron is very unparliamentary, and I would ask you to rescind that remark.

MR. CHURCHILL: I appreciate that and I believe calling someone a moron would be completely unparliamentary, but I will remind the Speaker that I did not call anybody a moron.

MR. SPEAKER: Okay, that's the end of it; that is the end of it. Now, that's my ruling and it's the last time I'm going to tell you today or you'll be leaving the Chamber for the rest of the day. Go ahead.

MR. CHURCHILL: I'll rescind my previous comment, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

MR. CHURCHILL: My apologies to the House - and I blame the member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island for bringing that up. (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. Order, please. I will remind the honourable member that there's nobody to be blamed for incidents that go on here. Everything comes through the Speaker's Chair and I'll ask the honourable member to please get on with your debate. It's an excellent topic, continue on the subject matter, and don't get into that part of the unparliamentary issue.

MR. CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, thank you, and I am happy to get back to this topic, and I'm sorry for the sidetrack there.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

MR. CHURCHILL: Just kidding around, and we'll move on.

There are many challenges facing our efforts to recruit and retain family physicians, many locally - a lack of places of worship for foreign doctors, places to purchase food and, of course, educational opportunities for young people, for children. Another thing that I urge this government to consider while we're talking about this crisis with the doctor shortage here in Nova Scotia is the effect that their educational cuts are going to have on our ability to recruit doctors. This is one of the reasons why doctors choose to come to areas - the educational opportunities for their young people.

We have seen drastic cuts from this government when it comes to education, cuts that have eliminated teaching positions, eliminated consultants who support students with special needs, and that will have a continual impact on the classroom. Those are the facts, and they can say, well, enrolment is down. Sure, enrolment is down, we all know that. The Hogg formula takes that into consideration and even looking at the fact that enrolment is down, that still doesn't change the facts that you need to hire bus drivers - whether there's one person in a rural area or five, or 20, that bus needs to go pick them up. It doesn't change the fact that you need teachers to staff the classroom, to teach. Dropping enrolment doesn't change the fact that you need people to work in your cafeteria to make food for our students, and it doesn't change the fact that you need janitors in our schools to clean and do that important work.

The fact that enrolment goes down actually doesn't change the cost to education all that much, but you don't hear that from that side of the House. You just hear enrolment is going down and that means we need to drop our spending. There is no recognition on that side of the House that when spending has gone up for education, it was for targeted purposes to increase results and outcomes in our education system.

Here we are, with a Party that championed education in Opposition - I remember that because I was a student leader - that is now doing the exact opposite of what they said they were going to do. They are cutting education; they are impacting the classroom and this is actually going to hurt our efforts to recruit and retain family physicians.

I don't know if there is any recognition on that side of the House of the interconnectedness of these issues. It's a shame because we're going to move forward with these, we have to, we have a majority government that can do whatever it wants; it doesn't listen much to the Opposition, they can do whatever they want. They are going to move these educational cuts forward, they are going to move forward without looking at reviewing our incentive programs to recruit and retain family physicians, and they are not looking at training more Nova Scotians to become family doctors.

These are major problems, Mr. Speaker, and ones that I urge the members opposite to address as they move forward with their government and their agenda. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is carried.

We will now take a short recess to allow the minister to get his staff into the Chamber so we can start on the Committee of the Whole House on Supply.

[2:36 p.m. The House recessed.]

[2:40 p.m. The House resolved itself into a CWH on Supply with Deputy Speaker Ms. Becky Kent in the Chair.]

[5:57 p.m. CWH on Supply rose and the House reconvened. Mr. Speaker, Hon. Gordon Gosse, resumed the Chair.]

MR. SPEAKER: The Chairman of the Committee of the Whole House on Supply reports:

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

MR. SPEAKER: Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

We have reached the moment of interruption. The adjournment motion was submitted by the honourable member for Victoria-The Lakes:

“Therefore be it resolved that all Members of this House of Assembly condemn the Minister for Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations for dismantling the MOU signed in 2007 and taking municipal-provincial relations in this province a major step backward.”

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION UNDER RULE 5(5)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

SNSMR - MOU: DISMANTLING - MIN. CONDEMN

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, the resolution that we're debating - you've just read it, I had an opportunity to speak on this matter last night. If anybody is at home watching and they want to go back to last night's proceedings, they can do so on the Internet and go onto the government Web site. I'm not so sure that I can add a whole lot

new this evening, but I will for the benefit of the members try to expand upon my remarks last night.

I do note in the resolution that there's this very strong word, to "condemn" the minister, and it is a strong word. I wouldn't go so far as to condemn him because when I think about that, I think about condemning people to death. I don't think we need to go to that length (Interruption) but I can inflict a speech on you, yes.

This resolution we're debating tonight and we debated it last night - we're really looking at the state of relations between the municipalities and the province. This government has come to office and they've talked about how terrible things were before and what a mess they were left with. I just can't help but think about all the balanced budgets that were put together and all the complaining that they did on this side of the House when the government made the decisions that were necessary to balance those budgets. They didn't want any of those decisions to happen, but then, now in office, they say they were left with a mess.

I just find that inconsistent, Mr. Speaker, but at the end of the day, we are where we are, and we do have a deficit. We did have a surprise surplus, last year, because of the increased HST revenue and increased personal income tax which is one of the biggest revenue items for our province. The HST increase in revenue is because the government raised people's taxes - the sales tax for Nova Scotians. The reason we had an increase in personal income tax is because of inflation, primarily. It was about 2 per cent last year, I think it was 1.8-something per cent, and our inflation last year was - sorry, that was the inflation and our personal income tax revenue grew by about the same amount.

So I could imagine that it must have been very embarrassing for the Finance Minister - after all his talk about the state of the finances and the deficit - to all of a sudden have to turn around and report a surplus, right before he had to produce yet another deficit budget the next day on Budget Day. I know a lot of Nova Scotians are probably wondering, you know, what's the basis for these numbers?

Mr. Speaker, we do know that this year we have a deficit, or at least it's projected, and maybe we'll get another surprise surplus - who knows, we'll find out next year around this time. We look at the municipalities and I'm a believer that government should be consistent with one another and a government's credibility rests with its ability to be consistent with people and fair. People lose faith in a government when their government treats some people one way and maybe treats themselves a different way. This government has changed - if I may be so kind to use the term "changed" - the agreement with the municipalities and as a result they are going to experience less than projected revenues, because they're depending on the province to share the wealth that we bring in. That's no different than the federal government sharing its wealth from the federal taxes that are raised right across the country.

Mr. Speaker, I mean that's what makes Canada, Canada, because we have provinces like Alberta - and I always think about Alberta because they are such a wealthy province and we see evidence of that because many Nova Scotians go there to work. But a province like that is really contributing to our country because all those revenues that they're generating in that province, some of them are finding their way here because we need that support and that's what makes a country a country. We try to look after the strong, try to look after the not-so-strong.

If we're prepared to agree with that in Nova Scotia and say, well, yes, we appreciate what the federal government is doing for us and we're going to be going through negotiations with them leading into 2014 when all the social transfers, the health transfers and the equalization transfers which represent - I know federal revenues represent about 36 per cent of our revenue, so \$1 in every \$3 we take in to pay for the services in this province comes from the federal government. Those numbers could change in 2014 and beyond. We know the federal government, after going through the recession and supporting our economy here and right across the country with a stimulus program, they're going to be cutting back on their expenditure and well they should, Mr. Speaker, because if a government kept on at that rate, they could pour too much money into the economy too quickly, we could have inflation.

I know some of the members in the Legislature remember the early 1980s, when we had really high inflation. Interest rates were up over 22 per cent and if you owned a house in 1982-83 - can you imagine if the interest on your mortgage right now, every month it was up, say, four to five times what it is. So, the government is wise to start backing off, the federal government, to back off on that stimulus.

Getting back to this resolution, Mr. Speaker . . .

MR. LEONARD PREYRA: It's okay for them to back off but not for us?

MR. MACMASTER: Well, actually the member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island raised a good question - that it's okay for the federal government to back off but not us - but there's a big difference between the broader Canadian economy and the Nova Scotian economy. Our Nova Scotian economy is very defensive. Revenues from royalties in this province are less than 2 per cent whereas in Alberta they're over 25 per cent. So their economy is much more cyclical; it ebbs and flows more significantly with the economy.

Here in our province, because we have a defensive economy, we need to be more careful because we don't have any windfalls on the horizon that are going to act as a saviour for us and for our finances. We should be conservative, Mr. Speaker, if I may say, and in all seriousness, if we expect the federal government to be good to us now, and we accept the argument that we want them to maintain what they are providing us, why shouldn't our province treat our municipalities the same way? That's the case I would

make. This is about fairness. We saw mayors, wardens and councillors galvanized when they came together to represent all municipalities in a very strong voice here a couple of weeks ago. They feel that they've been poorly treated by the province, by changing this agreement.

Mr. Speaker, if it's good enough between us and the federal government, to be maintaining our agreements, then I think it should be good enough for our municipalities, that our province also maintain cost-sharing service agreements with them. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. JOHN MACDONELL: Mr. Speaker, can you tell me how much time, or when my time is up?

MR. SPEAKER: Your time would be up at 6:18 p.m. - well, 10 minutes would be 6:17 p.m.

MR. MACDONELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I'll try to be brief and hit the high notes. I want to thank the member opposite for his kind entrance into the debate, shielding me from the word "condemn". I appreciate that.

I want to say to members opposite, because I can only hope that there are people out there watching this debate who may have a different impression of changes to the MOU than I have, and I'll try to expand as to the reality of what those changes mean. It gives me an opportunity to address some comments made last night after I was done speaking that I really was hoping for an opportunity to address, so now I have it.

My colleague across the way, Mr. Speaker, talked about what makes a country a country and sticking to agreements and whatever. What I seem to find everyday when this issue comes up for debate, people say honour the agreement but they fail to recognize - or actually I think they just fail to admit, I think they recognize it but it doesn't make much of an argument for them when they have to indicate it. The people who signed this agreement, the previous Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations from the previous Progressive Conservative Government, and the previous President of the UNSM - when they signed that memorandum of understanding, they signed it with the clear knowledge that there was a clause that said if the province can't afford this agreement, they can move out of this agreement.

If you are going to honour the MOU, then you have to say, honour all of the MOU. I find it confusing, I think, that they want the government to honour all the clauses of the MOU but that one. The previous administration, which was a Progressive Conservative administration, saw that this may be a problem, that their revenue may not be able to

sustain them taking on these costs, and that's what it was. It was the government to take on more costs that the municipalities presently were doing.

Now I want to give a little history lesson - I'm going to table another copy of the MOU with those signatures and that clause, but I want to give a little history, Mr. Speaker. The condition under which the municipalities operated, where they funded corrections to the tune of \$17.4 million and housing, \$7 million to \$7.5 million, which was really picking up the deficits in the housing authority, that's what that money was, and to contribute about 14 per cent or 15 per cent of the Department of Education's budget - that was as a result of a service exchange from a previous Liberal Government. In 1995, the Liberal Government entered into a service exchange with the municipalities that was supposed to be revenue neutral. In other words, the municipalities were covering some services that became deemed to be provincial services. They took on a change of those services, with the government, with the idea that they would not be negatively impacted financially, and that was also the condition of the province. There was an exchange of service, but as long as neither party was negatively impacted, they were willing to do that.

From 1995 onward, the municipalities covered housing, corrections and education in the way that I described a minute or so ago; that continued in 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007 when they signed the MOU and 2008 when they entered the MOU, 2009 and 2010. In 2010 was the first phase-out of part of corrections, so about \$3.5 million the province picked up.

In this year, the province picked up about another \$3.5 million, and half of housing, so about \$3 million in housing. The rate for education is going to stay at the 2010 level, but the CPI capping will be removed. Also with corrections, it has been indexed to CPI, and that's going to be removed, so instead of \$3.5 million, they get about another \$400,000 bump to the municipalities. As far as paying for the Auditor General that the members have indicated, which is part of the agreement, that loss of CPI indexing, the \$400,000 - the cost of that Auditor General is about \$100,000. There's a quarter of the bump of CPI that the municipalities are going to get to have to cover that cost so they're not being hard done by.

If you look at the change to the municipalities, when they entered the MOU in 2008 - I guess is when you could say it would start - but they will have about a \$4 million reduction for their commitments. In other words, they have a benefit of about \$4 million just on the corrections. They're not going to get as much of those costs taken back up by the province, but they've been covering those costs. The argument that taxpayers will have to pay more - well, I need to know, are those members saying that municipalities will double-tax their taxpayers, because they've been taxing them for those services. As a matter of fact, this year in the HRM, they didn't reduce them, they're getting a benefit. They didn't reduce the taxes to their citizens.

One of my colleagues just said he heard on the news that the HRM, next year, is considering a tax break. They're not considering raising taxes, so all of this foofaraw around taxes going up as a result of changes (Interruptions) All of this talk of taxes are going to go up, well, number one, they shouldn't because the contributions for the municipalities to contribute has gone down, starting in the 2012-13 year to \$14 million, it will stay there for corrections, so there's no reason for taxes to go up if what they're paying is going down.

The members opposite, I have to say - and the member for Preston who I expect will get up and talk about people losing their homes - that has been a reality from the previous Liberal Government who entered into this agreement. If they were going to lose their homes, they would have been losing their homes since 1995, and I expect that in some cases, that's a worry for all municipalities, but they have mechanisms to deal with that. It's certainly not going to be as a result of any changes to this MOU. If there is anything, then municipal taxpayers should get a reduction in taxes, not an increase in taxes, because they're contributing less than they did when they entered the MOU.

I have to say that this is fairly simple math and I would think that for those who would say the municipalities were blindsided, I want to reiterate what I said last night. I met with the president of the UNSM, Mayor MacLean, he indicated to me, we know there's going to be changes. He recognized what was happening with school boards and DHAs. He recognized the situation the province was in and he said we would like to have one year's notice and we delivered one year's notice.

There was a problem, actually, trying to get there, because there wasn't a lot a time on this, because of the budgeting process, which is kind of confidential, you tend not to put that in The ChronicleHerald ahead of time, the issues around trying to determine what the impact on municipalities would be and how we could mitigate that. So by the time we determined that, we were right up against the time limit to give one year's notice.

So we didn't have all kinds of time for back and forth on this, so in order to give them the one year's notice, we had to move as quickly and as expeditiously as we could. Minimize the impact on municipalities, which I think we did, it should result in a reduction in taxes for municipal taxpayers or a windfall for the municipalities, a little bit.

So I think that I totally reject the notion that the changes to the MOU that we've instituted are going to cause an increase in taxes and that we didn't give good notice on this. To give the municipalities a year, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston.

HON. KEITH COLWELL: I've listened with great interest to the minister's comments in this regard regarding the MOU and not costing taxpayers money. I can tell you, if you do the math on it, and I understood the minister could count, he counted all the years up from one date there about something, I don't know what it was about.

Anyway, these tax increases won't happen this year, they will not happen next year, they'll happen in the following year and as time goes on the tax increases are going to get worse and worse. This is not coming from me, this is coming from the municipalities and the minister has got a short memory. I can remember the municipalities marching on Province House, I can remember, I've been here a long time, a lot longer than that minister and I can never ever remember the municipalities ever marching on Province House before. United, united because this is going to cause some big financial problems.

As this issue unfolds, and as I said the other day, I'm going to continue to remind this government as time moves forward and they move close to an election, that all the members over there who laugh about this and joke about it and say oh no it won't, it won't put property taxes up. Well they are going to find out it will put property taxes up and when it does put property taxes up, we're going to remind people of Nova Scotia that it was this NDP Government, these people here, that decided to cancel this MOU and stop the process.

The minister also said they are going to hire an Auditor General for all the municipalities, all the municipalities, for \$100,000. Now there's something wrong with that number. To hire an Auditor General, someone that has the credentials to do this, number one, and the staff that goes with it, I'm just using the minister's own numbers, there's no possible way that you're going to hire somebody for \$100,000, there's not. The minister wants to really give us some better information. I'm really interested to see how you came up with \$100,000 because it's impossible. It's absolutely impossible to do that.

When you look at this whole thing and anyone who is paying attention here this evening or watching this process, wants to be very careful and they want to talk to their municipal councillor. Don't talk to me, talk to your municipal councillor, ask him or her what's going to happen to their tax rate? I've been talking to them, I've been talking to the mayors and I've been getting more and more information from them all the time and it's a scary situation.

A lot of these municipalities have budgeted for the benefit of the MOU and buying new capital equipment or doing other things, other ones are just concerned that it's going to cost them more money as time goes on. Regardless of what their story is and how it's working, it's going to put the tax rate up and as the tax rate goes up and you couple that with an HST increase of 2 per cent on every single thing you buy, everything you buy, that puts a burden on the economy. The 1,400 services and fees that we have to pay have been increased and the minister himself told me in committee - I asked him how much it would cost to do this, there has to be a proper accounting for this. I asked the minister twice and he said it was downloaded because the Minister of Finance and the Department of Finance told him he had to do it.

That doesn't seem to make much sense. If you're going to go by cost, it has to be real cost. Some departments might have been up 20 per cent, some might have been down 3 per cent. But on the whole thing, it should have been by cost. We have very capable civil servants in this province and they should be able to tell us what the costs are. Then it makes me wonder if the Department of Finance told the minister that they had to change all these, increase all these fees for services, just because they're going to do it and because the consumer price index - we don't really know what it costs but we're going to do it anyway.

How can we believe the minister and this government when they tell us it's not going to put property taxes up? On the other side of that, we listen to the councillors and the mayors and all the municipalities and towns and other areas of this province who are saying just the opposite - the people who have to control their budgets. There's something wrong with the whole picture here.

I think over the next two or three years we're going to see that the councillors and the councils and the mayors are correct. They're correct. Fortunately, by that time, this government will no longer be here, there will be a new government - whether it's this government over here, a lot smaller, or another government here. Regardless, the decision has been made and I have a feeling from what I'm hearing from the communities, this government will be gone.

A lot of the members over there laugh, but I can tell you, when you're laughing about this, the people remember that you're in the House laughing about their property taxes increasing. They'll remember that the cancellation of this MOU was one of the reasons their property taxes went up. As their property taxes go up - they haven't gone up yet but they will in another two or three years, just in time for an election - the municipalities will be reminding the people in their communities that this is the case. As this moves forward, we see how this unfolds in the communities over time. As costs go up more and more - even when the GST went up, it cost the municipalities more, it cost them more so it put a financial burden on them - every time there's a financial burden.

I was talking to two of the mayors about the LED lighting. They think it's a wonderful idea, they suggested the thing, but it should be over a long period of time. If they don't have the time to put it in place and balance it and budget for it, it's actually not going to be a very big benefit. By the time you put all the labour and all the work into changing these lights in a rapid manner, it's going to actually cost the municipalities more. That's coming from them, that's not coming from me. Those are the people who cost this and decide what they're going to do.

That's another financial burden on the municipalities. Any time there's a financial burden on the municipalities, there's going to be a tax hike. That's the way it works, that's simply the way it works. Every time that happens - I still can't believe this Auditor General for \$100,000. I want an explanation from the minister sometime as to how he came up with \$100,000. You put an Auditor General who's going to go in and audit all the municipalities

except HRM, which I understand is getting their own - all the other ones, it's impossible to do it for \$100,000.

Then, at the same time, Property Valuation Services was downloaded on the municipalities as part of this MOU. I remember, I was on council at that time in Halifax Regional Municipality here, it cost us \$14 million. Now the Halifax Regional Municipality could afford to do that and they did absorb it and they did do it. In conjunction with that, we're supposed to have the MOU continue and the other costs go away, which would have been a fantastic benefit to the municipalities because the province can download on the municipalities but the municipalities cannot upload on the province.

The minister keeps talking about one taxpayer. There are two taxpayers in this province - I have to keep reminding him about this, he keeps forgetting. There are people who own property, who pay property tax, and those people also pay income tax and HST and all the other taxes, but there are a great number of people in this province who don't own properties and don't pay property taxes. Indeed, those individuals are paying double or triple or quadruple in taxes for those services that they get from the municipalities, than someone who doesn't own properties.

When you look at this and see the number of property owners in this province and the burden on the property owners, it's getting harder and harder to bear. The minister sort of made a joke or a comment about - I wouldn't say it's a joke because it's a real fact - that people are losing properties. Just check the newspapers and see what is happening with people's properties. That problem is going to get worse and worse.

This situation where the property taxes are going to increase because of this MOU, is going to mean there are more people losing their properties. We've got people - I had a call from a couple the other day who have lived in their home their whole lives, they have a reasonably good pension and they've come to the conclusion that they're going to have to sell their home because they can no longer pay the taxes, pay the upkeep on the property and the heating bill. I'll go on about gasoline here in a minute, about the costs added on that and the double tax and the triple tax the province has on that. They can't afford to pay all these bills anymore and keep their home. They worked their whole lives to buy this home.

That is going to be repeated over and over again in this province and as people get into retirement, it's going to be more and more difficult for people to keep their homes. I think that's a tragedy for Nova Scotians.

As we go forward with this, I'm going to be interested to see what the minister comes up with next. We passed this \$100,000 for an Auditor General, which I've got to see to believe. Thank you very much.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. I'd like to thank all the honourable members in the Legislature tonight for an excellent debate.

The honourable Acting Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. MAT WHYNOTT: 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.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is carried.

We will now take a short recess to allow the minister and his staff to come back into the main Chamber and set up for Committee of the Whole House on Supply. Thank you.

[6:27 p.m. The House recessed.]

[6:30 p.m. The House resolved itself into a Committee of the Whole House on Supply with Deputy Speaker Ms. Becky Kent in the Chair.]

[7:15 p.m. CWH on Supply rose and the House reconvened. Mr. Speaker, Hon. Gordon Gosse, resumed the Chair.]

MR. SPEAKER: 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.

MR. SPEAKER: Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

The honourable Government House Leader.

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

PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 27.

Bill No. 27 - Financial Measures (2011) Act.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity this evening to offer some commentary on this bill. I'll aim to be brief. I just have a few comments to make on it.

I guess I'd like to start out by saying that this Finance Minister will be known as the one with softening fiscal resolve. I know this government has said that for the first time in 23 years they've spent within the budget, but what they failed to say is they did so with \$400 million more out of the pockets of Nova Scotians. I'm speaking about the HST increase - something they promised they wouldn't do, but they did.

We spoke about it a little bit earlier this evening, about how we were in such terrible financial shape but yet we had a surprise. The day before this year's budget was tabled, just days ago, all of a sudden this government had a surplus. We know that surplus came because Nova Scotians had been taxed more - Nova Scotians were taxed more this past year.

If we're looking at anything that Nova Scotia should take away from this Financial Measures (2011) Bill and some of the things in it, two things stand out for me. One is the increase in user fees. We had a bill in this session, Mr. Speaker, where we looked at asking the government to balance its budget again and that would be part of the Financial Measures Bill, but we don't see that as part of this one.

Now I just want to comment a bit. We talked about the municipalities the last two evenings, and I had a municipal councillor come to me and say - and they made this observation - they observed that this NDP Government is balancing the budget on the revenue side, except when there is a chance on the expense side that they can pawn the expense off on another level of government.

Those aren't my words, Mr. Speaker, but they are the words of somebody who confided in me and I confirmed it for him. Those are pretty strong words, but they show that other people are noticing. We look at the Financial Measures (2011) Bill - in this case we're seeing that one of the clauses had exactly to do with the MOU, to enable this government to change - if I may be so kind as to use the word "change" - their agreement with municipalities. That was one of the significant features of this piece of legislation.

Mr. Speaker, we saw 63 mayors, wardens, and councillors come to this Legislature and march down the street. I actually took the opportunity to go up and greet them and I walked down with them because I wanted to get a better feel for what they were feeling. I smile across at the honourable member opposite, but I know that they weren't feeling very good about it, they were all unified, and that's something in this bill that we can't support in good conscience, because we know if we did, it would be like James Bond.

Mr. Speaker, it's something we can't support in this legislation because we know that the municipalities are not supportive of it and we would be doing them a disservice if we stood here in the Legislature and said that we were going to vote for this bill, the changes to the Financial Measures (2011) Act. (Interruption)

Actually, the honourable member mentioned something about a tax rate, but another feature of this piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker, is a 2 per cent user fee increase.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: What's the justification for that?

MR. MACMASTER: That's a good point that my honourable colleague, the member for Richmond says, what is the justification for that?

It's ironic, when this government was in Opposition, they railed against the government for the need for transparency and they wanted people to know what the basis for user fees was. Now I gave the Minister of Finance a chance to answer a question in Question Period about this, and he chose not to answer it. I quoted him, his very words, when he was in Opposition, saying that people should know why they're paying what they're paying. And I agree with the Minister of Finance on that - the old Minister of Finance, when was sitting back here.

The reason that I agree with that position, Mr. Speaker, is I think in government, for the good of government for Nova Scotians, we should be taking it seriously about everything we spend money on in government, for Nova Scotians, because that shows a sign of respect for the dollars that people pay in their taxes when they are going to the gas pump, when they're going to the corner store, when they're going to buy their groceries, when they're paying their income tax - it's that time of year again. Those dollars are coming in here. We shouldn't just say, well, we're going to raise user fees by 2 per cent because we need to. Inflation was 2 per cent last year. Well, I can buy that, but we don't even know what some of the services in government truly cost Nova Scotians, we tack a fee onto it.

In the private sector, if you go to Wal-Mart to buy a toaster, you know that you're getting it for the cheapest price possible. If you go to Rona, if you go to Canadian Tire, if you go to any business, you know you're getting it for the cheapest price. Do you know why, Mr. Speaker? Because of competition, that goes for anything you buy in the free market, because there is a force there that provides value to consumers.

I can't imagine how anybody on the opposite side of the House could argue with that. Why would you argue with trying to bring a good to market for the best price possible, so that it is more affordable? Because I have heard this government talk about the importance of affordability - why don't we apply that philosophy to user fees, why don't we make them as affordable as we can? The first step in doing that is identifying how much things cost in government, but instead we have very loose - actually little concern for that. We ask the question, why not provide some transparency to the fees, show what the costs

are? And they don't want to answer the question - it was a worthy question for them to ask in Opposition, but suddenly things have changed.

Mr. Speaker, I know we talk a lot about the history in this House. I'm standing here tonight saying these words - please hold me to them if I have the good fortune of sitting on that side of the House, because I will be consistent. If I call for something over here and I get the chance to deliver it over there, I'm going to deliver it - and I would encourage these members to think about that. They have power that we don't have, and that's an opportunity to make things better.

There's a reason for everything, Mr. Speaker, and there's a reason perhaps why we won't be in third place come the next election. (Interruptions)

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

MR. MACMASTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So those are two things: the changing of the MOU - and some might say the MOU is broken - and the other thing is the increase in the user fees. Those are the two things that really stand out in this bill. There are other things that, in my mind, are minor. We do see a decrease in the small business tax - there is something we agree on. That was something that we were looking at doing; we had it in our last budget. So good on the government for doing that - I give you credit for that and I hope that that trend continues. We need to do everything we can in this province to make (Interruption)

Well, how can we vote - and this is the sad thing, Mr. Speaker, we have to vote against this bill because of the other measures that are in it. We can't pick out clauses that we want to support. That's the sad part of it, and I guess that's what this government would call a democracy. (Interruption)

So, Mr. Speaker, you know, again, I think about tax cuts and I really think it's laughable that this government sits across from us, after having raised the HST - I had a little note in my local papers a few weeks before this happened and I said did you know that this government looks like they're going to raise your HST by 2 per cent - just because I had a feeling. I was seeing what was going on and, sure enough, you would swear I was psychic but, no, I just know what an NDP Government does. They spend money and they need to tax people more, and that's what we've seen.

AN HON. MEMBER: Why were you complaining about it earlier?

MR. MACMASTER: Well, the surplus is caused by the extra tax, so that's nothing to brag about, Mr. Speaker, and this government is bragging about the surplus, but they

know the reason they have it is because they pulled more money out of the pockets of Nova Scotians.

AN HON. MEMBER: Do you want us to balance the books?

MR. MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, we've been calling for this government to balance the books. (Interruptions)

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

MR. MACMASTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let's look at one of the areas, one of the small areas where this government has said they made a difference on cost control. Because what is cost control? It's about making the government more affordable for Nova Scotians, and that's something that we should be trying to do. The more affordable government is . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: What would you cut?

MR. MACMASTER: I love these comments about what would you cut, as if to say government can never change. That's exactly what these members were complaining about, that they wanted change.

Nova Scotians thought they voted for change; they're not getting it. They're listening to members that complained about one thing when they were in Opposition then got in government and didn't do anything. I've had NDP supporters come into my office, and my office is open to everybody, and I have to sympathize with them. They were sold a bill of goods by these members, and now that they're in government they're not getting them. Mr. Speaker, I'd call that breaking promises.

Let's look at one area where they've talked about how they've controlled expenditure in government. In the government's press release there was \$133 million, which is about a 1 per cent reduction. You know what I find interesting, we've talked about the FTE numbers and if you look at the 700 or so number that's off in the estimates, you're probably looking at somewhere between \$50 million and \$70 million where the government is able to say we've saved that money. But you know what, Mr. Speaker? Immediately that's back in the books for next year, so that's not a savings.

If we look back into the 1990s when our Liberal colleagues were trying to make government smaller, they had two decisions - and this is interesting, I hope the members listen to this. I've talked to some people who were involved at the time and they had a tough battle on their hands. I know Dr. John Savage, God rest his soul, he tried to make a difference and I know that there was even a conflict between him and a member of his caucus about patronage and he was trying to change things. He didn't last for an exceptionally long period, he wasn't necessarily rewarded for what he was trying to do but

one decision he had, he could either do a wage freeze or he could reduce the number of people working in government.

At the time - and I can't speak for him or the members of their Cabinet - I know they chose, instead of cutting back on people, they decided, let's try to roll back the wages. It upset a lot of people but they were trying to control the cost to government. You know what happens, Mr. Speaker, the wages would go right back up. That's no different than this issue because unless you're going to make a change that's permanent it's just going to come back and hit the government again the next year.

If we look at the \$130 million savings, really you take out \$50 million to \$70 million, you're really only looking at closer to maybe \$50 million savings, then you're getting down to half a percentage point. I don't see in a form of half a percentage point any significant effort to really control the cost of government.

When the members ask what should we cut, and I talk about FTEs and we know that about 600 or 700, right from the Public Service Commission, leave government every year of their own volition, which means they're not losing their job, they are moving on to another job, there's an opportunity.

We're not talking about nurses and we're not talking about teachers because I know that's what they always come back to me with and they try to make it uncomfortable for me. Mr. Speaker, I'm trying to help them. I know when the Progressive Conservatives were in government and trying to balance a budget, these members did nothing to help them. They might say they don't like the mess but they voted for a lot of those budgets, especially the ones in recent years. In minority government they were the ones who voted for a lot of those measures and I have no doubt that they were negotiating, perhaps in the very rooms around the Chamber here, to add things into the budget. A government in a minority situation, sometimes for the sake of doing what it's trying to do, has to sometimes commit to those, has to compromise.

We talk about Pharmacare, well there was another vision of my predecessor, Rodney MacDonald, when he talked about providing Pharmacare for Nova Scotian families. My point, Mr. Speaker, is I think this government could be doing more from a cost control perspective. I don't think that necessarily means people are going to get hurt, a half per cent real true reduction in the operating statement of the government is not significant and I think that they could be doing more. Why do it? It makes government more affordable.

There's something I want to do. We often hear what a mess was created by all the Parties before, but I did a little analysis because I enjoy numbers and this is a document that I'm happy to table. Now I've combined figures here to simplify a little bit, but since the members often combine our figures on this side of the Legislature, I think we can combine

it for the sake of these numbers. In the course of 47 years in office, this side of the Legislature combined for debt and in two years of office, our NDP Government has combined for debt over those two years. It's interesting, according to the Department of Finance's own statements from the time they took office until now, they've added 6 per cent in two short years. So 6 per cent of our \$13 billion debt was created by that bunch over there.

What's interesting (Interruptions) Well, they're right here and I'm happy to table this. I'll make copies for everybody so they'll remember this fact.

If we delve a little bit further and look at the numbers, the NDP has averaged \$384 million in debt added per year in office. That is approximately 1.5 times the average debt added by any other government per year since deficit budget started. They can no longer say "That bunch over there," because they've been 1.5 times creating debt in this province. I'm happy to table that.

You know what else? I want to make another point. (Interruptions) In folklore they say bad things come in threes. Well, I have a third point I'd like to make. When you consider that with the HST increase, there's about another \$400 million added into the provincial coffers to pay for government. If you actually said, no, we didn't do that, we didn't increase taxes like they had promised Nova Scotians, let's add another \$400 million, divide that by two, now you're getting more like this government is adding two times the amount of debt per year.

I am happy to table those numbers and I welcome comment on them because they're plain black and white - and in this case we're not talking about black, we're talking about red because this government is putting the province in the red. I'm happy for the members to look at those numbers. All I took was the amount of debt added since they came to office and compared it to the debt added by any other government that has had power in this province. That's a fair comparison and the numbers are there.

One thing that I do fear is that a lot of members on that side of the Legislature have been listening to their Minister of Finance and his analysis. If it's anything like what he was purporting around the province during his Back to Balance tour, it's nonsense. I think a lot of Nova Scotians (Interruptions) I think the simplest way to look at this is, when Nova Scotians were expecting a deficit and the next day, whoops, we've got \$600-and-some million more, that almost brings me to laughter here in the House. But then the next day there's another deficit. It's hard to follow. (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. I know the time is getting late and patience is running thin, but the honourable member for Inverness has the floor.

MR. MACMASTER: Let's look at what this Financial Measures (2011) Bill does not have. One of the things that it doesn't have is any notice of any measures that this government would take and this is something I've been talking about the last couple of

days. In 2014 there needs to be a new agreement established between the Government of Canada and the provinces. With 36 per cent of our revenues coming from the federal government, it's very, very important. (Interruption) I know the member opposite for Sackville-Cobequid is saying that Mr. Layton will take care when he becomes Prime Minister. In good spirits I would wish them well on Election Day next week, but I'm going to put my money on another man in that race.

This is an important thing that we need to be looking at now. I've asked the Minister of Finance this, and I tried to ask him in good spirits, with the sake of furthering dialogue because it's important - much like I did today with the Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism in estimates. He was quite congenial today and we had a good discussion. I think it was for the benefit of the area I represent. We got some ideas on the record, perhaps we built our relationship a little bit (Interruptions) The member is saying a little bit.

That's what I was trying to do with the Minister of Finance. I don't like always getting up here and giving him a hard time. Sometimes I would like to have a good discussion with him. One of the things that I was trying to uncover in estimates - this is a significant thing we have on the horizon, and it's going to affect the Budget Estimates as we go forward. There are things that maybe we could be doing today in our budget that could prepare us for a rainy day in the future.

I think it's reasonable. Any small change in those federal transfers has a big amplified effect on the budget because it's 36 per cent of the budget for our revenues. That's something I think we should be talking about, and since we couldn't talk about it in estimates, I'm going to talk about it here. That's something we could be talking about in this legislation.

I've talked about this one a little bit already, maybe I'll go back into it, and that's user fees. I mentioned, in the real world there's competition. People know that they're going to get the lowest price for what they buy because a whole bunch of things happen before that product hits the shelf or that service hits the Internet if you're buying it over the Internet. The least government can do is be (Interruption) Mr. Speaker, I know the member opposite is talking about exchange rates and I have to wrap my mind around it. I'm not quite sure what point he's making, but I'd be happy to address that when I continue my remarks in our next session. I have a sense, as I look at the clock on the wall, that I might not be able to cover all the material this evening.

Back to my point, people know when they go to buy something in the open market that they're getting something for the best price. The least government could do is be transparent about the costs that are run to provide a service in government. When somebody goes to Service Nova Scotia, maybe to get a marriage licence or a driver's licence - (Interruptions) no, no, unfortunately. Mr. Speaker, all these distractions - the least

we can do for Nova Scotians is show that we're trying to make sure the costs they pay for the service they get from the government are as low as they possibly can be.

The first step in doing that is knowing our costs. Maybe we need to improve IT systems in government. I'm not trying to put this just on this government - governments have to change at all times. I think this is something significant because you know what else it does? It changes people's mindset, because in any organization there's a culture. In government people don't have to provide a toaster and put it on the shelf for the best price because there's no other government to compete with.

I'm not saying there's anything wrong with that kind of - I shouldn't go so far as that. I think sometimes there is something wrong with that kind of thinking but I'm not faulting people in government for thinking that way. They come into an institution, this is the way things work and they're busy. That's why people in this Chamber, I think, have to be recognizing these things and try to advance them. What I'm talking about is advancing the idea that we need to build a culture in government where we're aware that every day when we come to work, we have to provide Nova Scotians with some value. Mr. Speaker, when I say that, I mean maybe there's ways on the cost side that we can reduce the cost of services and that's not just for the things that are implicated by user fees, that's for right across government.

Maybe instead of spending so much money - I know there are members from all around and I don't like to be picking on Halifax, I know there are members from all across, on all sides of the Legislature from other parts of the province - maybe there's ways that we can be saving on government in Halifax, so we can flow some more dollars out to things in rural parts of the province, areas of the province whose economies are not as durable as they are here. As the Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism said today, and rightly so, Halifax truly is the centre of Atlantic Canada. We have the biggest population base here, of any of the other cities and we probably can look at the airport traffic reports, so maybe we should give the Minister of Finance some credit for that comment. I'm not seeing him nod his head but he doesn't usually nod his head in favour of anything I say, Mr. Speaker.

The point I'm making, Mr. Speaker, is that the government can change and we should be open to change. The things that I'm talking about tonight, they're not out of reason and I think that the government should be open to these things.

Mr. Speaker, another thing that I want to mention is a vision for the economy and we talked about it a bit today. When I think about the economy and what government can do, I think the best thing government can do is let the business world take care of the economy, because if the government's job is to provide the environment for business, if the government is doing a good job of that, the economy will take care of itself.

We talk a lot in this Legislature, as well we should, about people who suffer, people who don't have work, and I'm hoping I have the statistic here - if not, I'm going to get to it

at another point, Mr. Speaker. I think this is something that all members would be interested in and if I don't have it - yes, I have it.

Mr. Speaker, we think about Nova Scotians who are suffering. You know, I walked down to the restaurant here not long ago and I saw a man walking on the street and I've seen him around the city on other occasions and I can tell that he's probably trying to find his way through life. I sense that he may not have a job - maybe he does, maybe he is doing just great, but I can tell you that when I was looking at him, I was thinking about how I'm pretty busy today but aren't I lucky to come in here to work for Nova Scotians. There are a lot of people who don't have that privilege. These are people that we talk about in here and we talk about trying to help them with their social programs, and well we should, but there's another way we can help those people and that's by building an economy where somebody like that man, if, in fact, he does not have work, has a better chance of gaining employment. I know the government is doing some things around training and that's important.

Mr. Speaker, I hope that we don't just give up on people and say well, we're going to try to provide them with some assistance here that doesn't really help to bring them out of the situation they are in. It might help them get by day to day, but I'd rather see people rise to the next level because I know that they'd feel better about themselves and I think we owe it in this world, because we all grow up in different ways - we owe it to people if we're lucky enough to have some privilege, to do everything we can to try to hand a little bit on to somebody else. I think that one of the ways that we can do this in government is to build an economy.

Here is the point I wanted to mention - did you know that the average person who is trying to find work, it takes them four to six months to find a job. That's a long time. Some people spend a lot longer than that trying to find work. Mr. Speaker, people out there, if they're living in an economy, if they were living in Alberta - now, we're not Alberta and we don't have their natural resources, but if you're living in Alberta, I bet you're not going to have to wait four to six months to get a job. I have all kinds of friends who are going back and forth, and some of them are pretty good at picking up work.

Mr. Speaker, that's something that we can be doing in this province by building a better economy. An economy that's vibrant, that's maybe more forgiving to business on the tax side, and we hear this debate on the federal scene right now, you know - why would the government cut corporate taxes? Well, let's think about seniors. There are a lot of seniors in this province whose income, a good portion of their income, comes from dividends from those corporations. (Interruptions)

I hope the members opposite aren't laughing at Nova Scotians who take the responsibility to save for themselves. (Interruptions) Well, maybe it's good that we're creating this difference in the House, Mr. Speaker, because what's wrong with making

Canadian business competitive so that people have jobs? (Interruptions) Get in the real world? I worked in that world, and I know a lot of Nova Scotians whose income depends on dividends. (Interruptions) Why should we penalize people in society for saving?

Mr. Speaker, we also see making companies in Canada more competitive. Is that such a bad thing? This government is not doing anything. We just only have to go speak to the small business community to hear of their disdain for this government. (Interruptions) I talked about something else today. I talked about indifference and I'm feeling the indifference once again.

You know, any Nova Scotian who opens up a savings account - and I think about the tax free savings accounts that the federal government has put together. This is a great initiative that's going to mean a lot, and I respect the members opposite if they don't respect this, but there are going to be a lot of young Nova Scotians today who, because they have that vehicle, are going to have a good retirement income. That's a smart decision as it rewards savers.

Mr. Speaker, let's get back to the topic at hand and that's building a competitive economy but, do you know what, I'm intrigued, and sometimes when you say something in the Legislature, you strike a nerve. I think I struck a nerve with the hate that some of these members have for the idea of a company. (Interruptions) I could see, and you hear it, those bad corporations. Do you know what? There are lots of Nova Scotians who are those corporations. (Interruptions)

Mr. Speaker, you know, I could see 100 years ago, when there was abuse, when there weren't protections in place for workers, because I've read books like *The Company Store* and they've opened my eyes to some of the things that went on and my own people worked in the coal mines but do you know what? There need not be such hate for corporations. Maybe if the members opposite had some respect for the people who take risks to create jobs, we could have a little more respect for this debate. (Interruptions)

Mr. Speaker, I'm glad that we're differing on this because we hope to try to bring some more sensible approach for Nova Scotians. There's nothing in this legislation that shows any kind of a vision, these changes, there's no vision for improving the economy here in Nova Scotia. This government is not doing its part and, you know, I've been handed a note from a colleague here and I think this is another good point to make. Since we're striking, we might as well strike at it a bit more. He has given me a note here, what about the corporation that leaves and takes 600 or 700 jobs with them and maybe they're going to a jurisdiction that's providing a more competitive environment. So why do they have such vehement opposition towards building a better economy?

AN HON. MEMBER: What are you talking about?

MR. MACMASTER: What am I talking about? I'm listening to all, I think anybody who's watching tonight is hearing all the noise in the background about how terrible it is

for Nova Scotia companies to have lower corporate taxes, you know, and I apologize if we've strayed off track a bit, but you know I guess we've highlighted something tonight in this Legislature and I guess I've struck a nerve. (Interruptions)

I think one of the things we have to realize, Mr. Speaker, is that people have choices of where they mark their X and people have different perceptions on how to help the person on the street. When I see that gentleman out on the street today, I think about the way I'd really like to help him is try to build a better economy for this province. I've worked in that world and, at the end of the day, if we can provide a better economy so that man has a chance to get work, then I think we'll be doing a good job.

And with that, I do have some further comments, but looking at the hour, with your permission, I would like to adjourn debate for this evening.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is to adjourn debate on Bill No. 27. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

Before I go to the honourable Government House Leader, I'd like to recognize the honourable Minister of Education on a quick introduction.

HON. RAMONA JENNEX: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I just would like to draw attention to the east gallery. Two of my children are here this evening with their friend Erica Steele, a long-time friend of our family. I'd like everyone to give her the warm welcome of the House. Thank you. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: We welcome all our guests to the gallery and hope you enjoyed tonight's proceedings.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, that concludes the government's business for today. We will meet tomorrow between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 9:00 p.m., and after the daily routine we will be going into Committee of the Whole House on Supply. After that we will, hopefully, have some votes, and if time permits we'll come back to the Financial Measures (2011) Bill and we'll have some more fun and games with Dick and Jane.

As I say, that concludes our business for the day and I move that the House do now rise.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion for adjournment has been made.

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

The motion is carried.

We will now rise, to sit tomorrow between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 9:00 p.m.

[The House adjourned at 7:57 p.m.]

NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3)**RESOLUTION NO. 917**

By: Mr. Andrew Younger (Dartmouth East)

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

Whereas Kay Stanfield of Dartmouth is a celebrated painter, papermaker, teacher and curator whose work has been exhibited throughout North America and Europe; and

Whereas Kay's artwork is known for its visual explorations of change, discovery and reflections upon the passage of time; and

Whereas Seaside Daylily 2, a watercolour by Kay has recently been recommended for purchase for the Nova Scotia Art Bank collection by a jury of her peers;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Kay on this accolade and acknowledge her significant contributions to the betterment of the arts and culture community in Nova Scotia.

RESOLUTION NO. 918

By: Mr. Harold Theriault (Digby-Annapolis)

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

Whereas International Adult Learners' Week was celebrated from April 2nd to April 9th; and

Whereas four out of 10 Canadians aged 16 to 66 struggle with low literacy; and

Whereas International Adult Learners' Week provides learners the chance to express their challenges and share their success stories while at the same time encouraging others;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House express their congratulations to all adult learners and wish them lifelong success.

RESOLUTION NO. 919

By: Mr. Keith Bain (Victoria-The Lakes)

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

Whereas volunteer firefighters are local heroes who risk their own safety to protect the lives and property of their friends, neighbours and community members; and

Whereas Reg Wyer is one of those everyday heroes who has volunteered with the Baddeck Volunteer Fire Department for an incredible 35 years; and

Whereas brave and selfless volunteers like Mr. Wyer are the backbone of Nova Scotia's tight-knit communities who give their time and talents without expectation of reward or recognition;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly thank Reg Wyer for his three and a half decades of service to his community and salute his dedication and bravery.

RESOLUTION NO. 920

By: Mr. Keith Bain (Victoria-The Lakes)

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

Whereas volunteer firefighters are local heroes who risk their own safety to protect the lives and property of their friends, neighbours and community members; and

Whereas Jim Bradley is one of those everyday heroes who has volunteered with the Baddeck Volunteer Fire Department for an incredible 30 years; and

Whereas brave and selfless volunteers like Mr. Bradley are the backbone of Nova Scotia's tight-knit communities who give their time and talents without expectation of reward or recognition;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly thank Jim Bradley for his three decades of service to his community and salute his dedication and bravery.

RESOLUTION NO. 921

By: Mr. Keith Bain (Victoria-The Lakes)

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

Whereas volunteer firefighters are local heroes who risk their own safety to protect the lives and property of their friends, neighbours and community members; and

Whereas Bobby Buchanan is one of those everyday heroes who has volunteered with the Baddeck Volunteer Fire Department for an incredible 45 years and five months; and

Whereas brave and selfless volunteers like Mr. Buchanan are the backbone of Nova Scotia's tight-knit communities who give their time and talents without expectation of reward or recognition;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly thank Bobby Buchanan for his four and a half decades of service to his community and salute his dedication and bravery.

RESOLUTION NO. 922

By: Mr. Leo Glavine (Kings West)

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

Whereas the Mennonites in Nova Scotia are most commonly known for their pleasant manners, hard-working lifestyles and friendly personalities; and

Whereas the Mennonites, particularly in the Annapolis Valley, play an important role in the agricultural sector, not only providing farm fresh products, but do so in an environmentally respectful manner; and

Whereas some of the Mennonites in Nova Scotia are preparing for yet another growing season that will continue to allow Nova Scotians to purchase high quality and local products for a fair price;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly not only recognize all farming Mennonites, but all farmers in the province and wish them a prosperous and lucrative growing season.

RESOLUTION NO. 923

By: Mr. Leo Glavine (Kings West)

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

Whereas Steve Dornan joined 420 Air Reserve Squadron at CFB Summerside in 1984 as a direct entry, Tracker Air-crewman as an Airborne Electronic Sensor Operator (AESOp) and then transferred to the regular force in 1987 as a private for one day, then promoted to Corporal at Summerside, P.E.I. and became the only Master Corporal to be employed as an AESOp Trade Instructor; and

Whereas Steve engaged in an exciting but dangerous assignment with the Air Command Intelligence Centre while serving in Sarajevo and Bosnia before being promoted to WO and appointed to Project Officer and Unit Senior AESOp as one of many career postings; and

Whereas Steve Dornan's ability and adaptability has been recognized over the course of his career which made him a strong choice to be deployed to Kabul, Afghanistan, and later to the NATO International Stabilization Force;

Therefore be it resolved that all Members of the House of Assembly congratulate Steve Dornan on his outstanding career in the Canadian Forces and wish him and Roseanne good health and happiness in retirement.