



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Gordon Gosse

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Third Session

TUESDAY, MAY 3, 2011

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House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, TUESDAY, MAY 3, 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.

The topic for the late debate has been chosen:

Therefore be it resolved that the NDP Government oppose any proposed power rate increases, freeze the Demand-Side Management charge on energy bills, and instruct the Utility and Review Board to conduct a performance audit on Nova Scotia Power.

It was submitted by the honourable member for Richmond.

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester-Musquodoboit Valley.

MR. GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to present a petition on behalf of the proprietors of five privately-owned seniors' homes in Colchester County. The text of the petition is in the form of an address to the House and the summary sentence of that address is as follows:

“We, the Business men and Women who own and operate these Homes for Seniors wish to petition the Government of this Province to improve the Wait Times for Long-Term Care Beds in the Province by Licensing, Reclassifying our small homes and setting new standards for these homes based on Seniors needs for health and safety.”

Mr. Speaker, I have affixed my signature to this petition also.

MR. SPEAKER: The petition is tabled.

The honourable member for Preston.

HON. KEITH COLWELL: Mr. Speaker, I would like to present a petition. The petition to save Early French Immersion at Bell Park Academic Centre reads as follows:

“This petition is in support of the longevity of the French and English programming at Bell Park Academic Centre . . . We, the undersigned, are concerned citizens who urge the Halifax Regional School Board to act now to support the Early French Immersion Program at Bell Park Academic Centre.”

This is signed by 169 members of the community and I have also affixed my signature.

MR. SPEAKER: The petition is tabled.

The honourable member for Cape Breton West.

MR. ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce a petition entitled Petition to Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations:

“We the undersigned property taxpayers of Cape Breton met on 01 May, 2011 at the Community Recreation Centre, in Marion Bridge to discuss the effects of the removal of the CAP . . . The unanimous decision from the meeting was that the CAP in its present form be kept in place until the issues that resulted in initiating the CAP in the first place are resolved and until an acceptable fair, equitable and uniform process of property taxation and assessment be put in place.”

Mr. Speaker, there are 108 names on that petition and I have affixed my name as well.

MR. SPEAKER: The petition is tabled.

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Labour and Advanced Education.

RESOLUTION NO. 998

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

Whereas May is designated Sexual Assault Awareness Month in Nova Scotia, which exists to raise consciousness among individuals and communities about the need to take action against sexual violence; and

Whereas all Nova Scotians need to be concerned about the shocking prevalence of sexual assault in our province that in 2009 resulted in 701 incidents reported to police and many, many more that went unreported; and

Whereas sex without consent is a crime and government will continue to work with its partners to increase awareness, education, and prevention so that sexual assault may be completely eradicated;

Therefore be it resolved that this government recognize that all Nova Scotians are entitled to a safe place to live, free from sexual violence and exploitation, and that raising awareness of the serious nature of these crimes, especially how we may all participate in stopping or preventing it from happening, is central to the purpose of Sexual Assault Awareness Month.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Education.

HON. RAMONA JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, may I make an introduction before I read this resolution?

MR. SPEAKER: Most certainly.

MS. JENNEX: Thank you very much. Joining us today in the east gallery is Shelley Richardson of Kids Help Phone. She's the regional director, Community Fundraising and Corporate Development for the Atlantic Provinces.

I had the pleasure of being with Shelley at the Walk for Kids Help Phone event in Dartmouth which, as everyone knows, kicked off Mental Health Awareness Week, so I would like to thank her personally for all her hard work. I would also like her to have the warm welcome of the House this afternoon. (Applause)

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

The honourable Minister of Education.

RESOLUTION NO. 999

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

Whereas on Sunday, May 1st, 1,000 people, many of them youth, gathered at Shubie Park in Dartmouth and communities across Nova Scotia for the 10th Annual Walk for Kids Help Phone and raised close to \$100,000; and

Whereas this year's Walk for Kids Help Phone theme was Walk So Kids Can Talk, Breaking the Silence on Mental Health, to eliminate the stigma surrounding mental health and raise awareness among children and parents who are afraid to reach out for help; and

Whereas Kids Help Phone counsellors answer calls and on-line questions from youth, including victims of bullying and cyber-bullying, and provide the immediate help and hope that young people need and deserve 24 hours a day, 365 days a year;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of the House of Assembly thank the counsellors and the volunteers of Kids Help Phone whose mission is to improve the well-being of children and youth in Nova Scotia and across Canada.

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. 1000

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

Whereas May 1st marks the beginning of Gaelic Awareness Month, celebrated throughout the province every May since 1996; and

Whereas the mandate of the Office of Gaelic Affairs is to assist Nova Scotians in the acquisition and use of Gaelic so the culture, wisdom, heritage, and traditions of Gaels are valued, practised, and passed on to future generations; and

Whereas vibrant and empowered Gaelic language and cultural communities contribute to Nova Scotia's diversity, economy, social capital, and sustainable competitiveness;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House recognize May as Gaelic Awareness Month where respect and support is extended to Gaelic language and Gaelic expression - a valuable, renewable, and sustainable asset that makes Nova Scotia such a wonderful place to live and work in and visit.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Premier.

RESOLUTION NO. 1001

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

Whereas Nova Scotians and Canadians tuned in as federal election results were announced across the country; and

Whereas all candidates and their campaign teams worked hard during an exhausting six-week campaign; and

Whereas when the final ballots were counted, Prime Minister Stephen Harper won a majority government and the NDP, led by Jack Layton, became the Official Opposition for the first time in Canadian history;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly congratulate Prime Minister Harper and Mr. Layton on their victories, congratulate the elected and re-elected Members of Parliament for Nova Scotia, and welcome the opportunity to work with the re-elected federal government in the best interest of Nova Scotians.

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

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

Is it agreed?

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. 52 - Entitled an Act Respecting the Administration of Government.
(Hon. Frank Corbett)

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

NOTICES OF MOTION

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

RESOLUTION NO. 1002

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

Whereas the Nictaux Hospital Auxiliary for years has played an integral role in the health care system at Soldier's Memorial Hospital by supporting and serving the needs of the hospital along with its patients and visitors; and

Whereas on May 14, 2011, the ladies auxiliary will mark 50 years of service; and

Whereas they will mark this grand achievement with an open house tea with friends, community and health care partners;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House join me in congratulating the Nictaux Hospital Auxiliary on their milestone event and wish them continued success with their service to their community.

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

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

Is it agreed?

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. 1003

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

Whereas the people of Canada have chosen to re-elect Prime Minister Harper and his Conservative team with a stable majority government that is committed to working with the provincial governments and the new parliamentary Opposition alignment to build a better 21st Century Canada; and

Whereas Nova Scotians voted to re-elect 10 of their sitting MPs and one new member; and

Whereas 46 dedicated Nova Scotian men and women offered themselves as candidates for election to the House of Commons yesterday from all Parties;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House congratulate Prime Minister Harper, all of those elected to Parliament yesterday, and all of those who stood for office, for their strong commitment to their country and the courage they displayed in offering to help guide Canada through the coming years.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Community Services.

RESOLUTION NO. 1004

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

Whereas the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture sponsored a contest for budding photographers for a spot in the 2011 *Anglers' Handbook*; and

Whereas about 125 photos were entered in the 2010 Fishin' Nova Scotia contest whereby anglers were invited to submit their best photos from sport fishing experiences in the following categories: species, young anglers, general, family, and scenic; and

Whereas Gregory Stevens of Chester competed in the "general" category and was successful in having the winning entry;

Therefore be it resolved that members of this House of Assembly extend congratulations to Gregory Stevens for competing in the 2010 Fishin' Nova Scotia contest and winning a spot in the 2011 *Anglers' Handbook* in the "general" category.

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. 1005

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

Whereas January 2011 marked the 25th Anniversary of the Greenwood Military Family Resource Centre and is now staffed with over 20 people offering programs and services to military families at 14 Wing Greenwood; and

Whereas the Greenwood Military Family Resource Centre Deployment Services are available to Canadian Forces families who experience a "family separation" as a result of operational commitments and these services enhance the ability of CF members to be ready for duty; and

Whereas the Greenwood Military Family Resource Centre is proud to be part of a strong military family community and is a not-for-profit charitable organization governed by a volunteer board of directors made up of a minimum of 51 per cent military spouses with the goal of promoting the health and social well-being of individuals, families, and communities who share the unique experience of military life;

Therefore be it resolved that members of the House of Assembly congratulate the Greenwood Military Family Resource Centre on 25 years of outstanding commitment and commend their staff for their constant care to families, especially during the 10-year Afghanistan mission.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Cape Breton West.

RESOLUTION NO. 1006

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

Whereas Jonathan MacInnis from East Bay, Cape Breton, began playing the piano when he was 6 years old and singing at the age of 12; and

Whereas Jonathan released his first CD when he was only 14 years old; and

Whereas Jonathan is releasing his new CD entitled *Tonight*;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Jonathan on the release of his new CD and wish him the best in his music career as it blossoms across the stage.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island.

RESOLUTION NO. 1007

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

Whereas the second annual Haliwards were held on April 2, 2011 in Halifax to recognize individuals or groups for their extraordinary contributions to the community; and

Whereas five years ago Jessica Bowden founded *Teens Now Talk* magazine, the only teen publication in the Maritimes written by youth, for youth, which allows teenagers to freely express themselves through poetry, columns, reviews and photos; and

Whereas Jessica Bowden was among those honoured at this year's Haliwards ceremony;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulate Jessica Bowden on her Haliward and commitment to giving teens a voice in print throughout the Maritimes with *Teens Now Talk* magazine.

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 Richmond.

RESOLUTION NO. 1008

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

Whereas Petit-de-Grat resident Jessica Boudreau made history when she became the first female from Isle Madame to compete in the 115th Boston Marathon held on April 18, 2011; and

Whereas the 45-year-old dental hygienist started running seven years ago and trained for the last 18 months, which included running 26 to 32 kilometres a day; and

Whereas with her personal motto of “I’ve never run to compete, I run to complete,” Jessica completed the 40-kilometre Boston Marathon in a time of 4:11:04;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this Nova Scotia House of Assembly join me along with Jessica Boudreau’s family, friends, and the entire community of Isle Madame in recognizing her historic run at the Boston Marathon and tremendous personal achievement.

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. 1009

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

Whereas Steven Hubbard, a native of Wedgeport, was a full-time law student at Dalhousie University when on April 5, 2010, he was the victim of a serious accident on the Cobequid Pass which left him paralyzed from the waist down; and

Whereas with courage and determination he began looking at a career with the Canadian Coast Guard as a radio officer for Maritime Traffic and was accepted in their program at the Coast Guard College in Sydney in October 2010; and

Whereas Steven Hubbard proudly received his diploma on March 25, 2011, and has begun his work term in Saint John, New Brunswick;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating Steven Hubbard on obtaining his diploma, commend him for not allowing his handicap to keep him from achieving his goals and wish him continued success in the future.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Queens.

RESOLUTION NO. 1010

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

Whereas music plays such an important role in the education and growth of our youth; and

Whereas music festivals promote and encourage growth in music through local festivals in competitive and non-competitive classes like the 65th Queens County Music Festival recently held in Liverpool, Nova Scotia; and

Whereas the Queens County Music Festival recognized outstanding performances by presenting 21 trophies and 21 scholarships to very deserving young artists;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly recognize and congratulate all trophy and scholarship winners at the 2011 Queens County Music Festival.

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. 1011

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

Whereas Cyril and Hilma Lovett opened Lovett's General Store on May 24, 1946 in Westphal, offering groceries, paints, brushes, as well as feed for animals in the area that was then a rural community serviced by a two-lane dirt road, adding gas pumps in 1951, which were open on a 24-hour basis for all first responder vehicles; and

Whereas Cyril died in 1969 and Hilma, with the aid of her son Peter, carried on the business, and as well, Hilma donated to many charities and persons knocking on their door and was nominated Scout of the Year in 1970 because of all her charitable work with the Scouts; and

Whereas Hilma died in 1999 at the age of 93 and Peter still runs the store from the same location and although there are no longer gas pumps, he still sells a varied array of items, including fishing and hunting licences;

Therefore be it resolved that members of this House of Assembly recognize the lives of Cyril, Hilma and Peter Lovett and the significant contribution they have made to 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 Hants West.

RESOLUTION NO. 1012

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

Whereas for many years the Royal Canadian Legion has sponsored the Annual Literary and Poster Contest that is open to all Canadian school children; and

Whereas Leah Haldane, a student at Windsor Elementary School in Windsor, took second place in the Junior Poem division at the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 9 in Windsor; and

Whereas the primary goal of the contest is to foster the tradition of remembrance amongst Canadians by instilling in youth the importance of recognizing our veterans and the sacrifices that were made and are still being made today;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Leah on her award-winning poem and wish her all the best in future literary competitions.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Lunenburg.

RESOLUTION NO. 1013

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

Whereas the Nova Scotia Business Inc. Export Achievement Award will be held on May 9, 2011 at the World Trade Centre to recognize some of the province's top exporters; and

Whereas HEKA Electronics Incorporated, located in Mahone Bay, has designed and manufactured sophisticated instrumentation and software for the biomedical and industrial research application for over 40 years; and

Whereas HEKA Electronics Incorporated is one of 10 companies from across Nova Scotia that has been recognized in their communities for excellence and exporting;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly recognize HEKA Electronics Incorporated, of Mahone Bay, for their Export Achievement Award from Nova Scotia Business Inc. and wish them luck in being Nova Scotia Exporter of the Year on May 9th.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Inverness.

RESOLUTION NO. 1014

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

Whereas Les Amis du Plein Air and a group of dedicated members formed a special walking group for Cheticamp and surrounding area; and

Whereas the group was started in hopes that a few people would get together to walk outdoors and enjoy nature, without the fear of wild animals; and

Whereas the group has attracted large turnouts, with as many as 40 people dedicated to the weekly hike;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly recognize the efforts made by directors Gayle Bourgeois, Sandra LeFort, Denise Bourgeois and Betty Deveau to support healthy, active lifestyles within their community.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Guysborough-Sheet Harbour.

RESOLUTION NO. 1015

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

Whereas on Saturday, April 16th, an open house was held to celebrate the establishment of a new business in the community of Guysborough; and

Whereas Pepperlane Manor B&B is now open to serve the needs of the community, the travelling public and tourists visiting our area; and

Whereas owners Greg and Elaine Shanks look forward to welcoming visitors to the Guysborough area and providing them with a comfortable and pleasant place to stay;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly congratulate Greg and Elaine Shanks on the opening of Pepperlane Manor B&B and wish them every success in this new business venture.

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. 1016

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

Whereas Amanda Dainow of Burlington recently completed her certification in Herbal Medicine from the International College of Herbal Medicine in New Zealand; and

Whereas Amanda Dainow has also completed certification in natural animal care;
and

Whereas Amanda has also completed over 700 hours of clinical training in the Annapolis Valley often offering her services free of charge to enable those who are economically depressed to have full access to herbal medicine;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly not only recognize Amanda Dainow on her completion of the 4-year program but wish her well with her future endeavours of practising herbal medicine in Nova Scotia.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Victoria-The Lakes

RESOLUTION NO. 1017

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

Whereas in many small rural communities across Nova Scotia, family run “General Stores” have slowly diminished after playing an important role within their community;
and

Whereas Grant’s Store in Ross Ferry, owned by the Grant family for over 50 years, had closed its doors in the Fall of 2008 and the community - in particular Jean Ferguson and Eric Whyte - felt that Robert and Lloyd Grant and their families before them brought something special to the neighbourhood; and

Whereas Jean and Eric, along with several community volunteers, stepped forward and decided to bring back the legacy of Grant’s Store and the contributions of the Grant family by reopening the business;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Jean and Eric and community volunteers for ensuring Grant's Store remains an integral part of Ross Ferry and surrounding communities.

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. 1018

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

Whereas Kendra Slawter, a 14-year-old East Preston youth, is a student at Graham Creighton Junior High School who has served on the school community student council; and

Whereas Kendra is also chairman of the Sick Committee at the East Preston United Baptist church and volunteers at the East Preston Day Care Centre, cuts grass for seniors and maintains the church nursery as well as being involved in the afterschool living and healthy living programs; and

Whereas Kendra was presented with the 2010 Human Rights Award during International Human Rights Day;

Therefore be it resolved that members of the House of Assembly recognize the significant contributions that Kendra has made to her community.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party.

RESOLUTION NO. 1019

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

Whereas Mr. Don Bureaux, who first joined the Nova Scotia Community College in 2004, was recently appointed the college's new president after an extensive national search for the best candidate; and

Whereas Mr. Bureaux's professional background with more than 20 years of experience in adult learning combined with his in-depth knowledge of the Nova Scotia Community College earned him the top spot; and

Whereas the Nova Scotia Community College is instrumental in building Nova Scotia's economy and the quality of life for Nova Scotians through education and innovation;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Mr. Bureaux on his new appointment and wish him continued success as he leads NSCC through this new and exciting chapter.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Cape Breton West.

RESOLUTION NO. 1020

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

Whereas volunteers of all ages strengthen our Nova Scotia communities by generously giving their time and talents to members of their communities; and

Whereas Cyril MacDonald of Albert Bridge, Cape Breton, is a recipient of the Youth Volunteer Award for 2011 presented recently by the Cape Breton Regional Municipality; and

Whereas Cyril is a Grade 12 student at Riverview High School who has been involved in numerous volunteer activities at school and also in many other organizations within his community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Cyril on this award, thank him for his contributions to the community, and wish him every success in his future endeavours.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Hants West.

RESOLUTION NO. 1021

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

Whereas for many years the Royal Canadian Legion has sponsored an Annual Literacy and Poster Contest that is open to all Canadian school children; and

Whereas Nick Parker, a student at Dr. Arthur Hines Elementary School in Summerville, Hants County, took first place in the Junior Poem division at the Royal Canadian Legion Branch No. 9 in Windsor; and

Whereas the primary goal of the contest is to foster the tradition of remembrance amongst Canadians by instilling in youth the importance of recognizing our veterans and the sacrifices that were made and are still being made today;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly congratulate Nick on his award-winning poem and wish him all the best in future literary competitions.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Argyle.

RESOLUTION NO. 1022

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

Whereas birthdays are an occasion for family and friends to gather together to celebrate the life of an individual; and

Whereas on April 28, 2011, Rodolphe Léon (Léo) d'Entremont celebrated his 100th birthday; and

Whereas to have reached 100 years of age and still be active and able to share with your loved ones all the remarkable memories gathered over your lifetime is a wonderful reason to celebrate;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating Léo d'Entremont on reaching this remarkable milestone in his life and wish him many more happy birthdays.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Inverness.

RESOLUTION NO. 1023

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

Whereas the 2011 Port Hawkesbury Relay for Life has a new honorary chairman, Kevin Bourgeois; and

Whereas Kevin brings leadership as a member of the top fundraising team since 2007 and the top individual fundraiser; and

Whereas he will be the voice to get more people involved to raise more money for a cause which remembers his father and a close childhood friend;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly recognize the hard work and dedication of Kevin Bourgeois and wish him every success as new honorary chairman.

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. 1024

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 Cape Breton Farmers Exhibition at Northside Downs is gearing up for another busy summer season which will include everything from harness racing to face painting and pony rides to the Cape Breton Western Riders Association; and

Whereas in total, there will be 36 regular racing dates according to race secretary Collie Sparling, with the opening of the season scheduled for April 30th; and

Whereas this year the Cape Breton Exhibition Complex is presently undergoing significant upgrades that are scheduled to be completed in the coming weeks with Thursday, May 19th planned as a special day with a variety of activities including the North Sydney Garden Club holding their annual plant sale;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly compliment Northside Raceway secretary Collie Sparling, members of the Cape Breton Western Riders Association, the North Sydney Garden Club, the Cape Breton Farmers' Exhibition, and all volunteers who are working to ensure the exhibition and raceway has an excellent season in 2011.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

Order, please. Before I go to Oral Questions put by Members, it was brought to my attention that the petition tabled by the member for Preston is not addressed to the House or to the government, it is addressed to the Halifax Regional School Board. I will return the petition to the honourable member.

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

MR. SPEAKER: Question Period will begin at 12:41 p.m. and will end at 1:41 p.m.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

PREM. - SCH. BDS: CUTS - WORKFORCE EFFECTS

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. In last year's Speech from the Throne, the government said:

"We must also deal with a looming labour shortage. Nova Scotia is the first province in Canada to have more seniors than youth. Soon more people will be leaving the labour workforce than entering it. That simply cannot be allowed to happen. We need skilled workers. We need healthy and safe workplaces. We need innovative thinking."

My question to the Premier is, how can Nova Scotians have a skilled workforce when funding cuts to school boards are taking place?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, as I've said to the Leader of the Official Opposition in the past, the per-pupil funding for students in our province this year is up. In fact, the overall education budget is up as well.

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, the budget just passed shows that funding to public education is going down in the Province of Nova Scotia. The Premier also said:

"Past governments did not see this coming, or they thought the workforce problem would somehow take care of itself. My government promised that education and training would be its answer to the impending workforce shortage."

University tuition is going up 3 per cent across the province, professional programs and international students are hearing of increases from 6, 10 and 14 per cent. My question to the Premier is, how does the Premier expect to address Nova Scotia's workforce shortage by limiting access to university?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, we're doing the opposite. I would just go back and correct the member opposite. He knows that in addition to what he has said, the number of students in our schools is also declining so that the amount of money per student that is being spent in the public school education is actually going up. That means more support for students in the classroom.

In addition, students who are going to universities and community colleges now are able to take advantage of the Graduate Retention Rebate. They will be able to take advantage of the debt cap that we have created, the new support for students. In addition to that we have put in an additional \$30 million to support students in our universities and community colleges.

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, in the spirit of correcting, what I said here was that there was a cut in funding to public education. I think if the Premier reads his own budget, he will understand that is actually true. Quite simply, the Premier doesn't have a plan for public education. As a matter of fact, he contracted that out and before hearing from Ben Levin, the person the province had contracted out to build a plan on how we go forward in public education, they decided to cut core funding to education.

The Premier has cut teachers, literacy programs, math programs, supports for the most vulnerable youth, teaching assistants, library supports, university funding and the university disability specialist - the list goes on. My question to the Premier is, will the Premier tell this House what he is slashing in education programs before telling us what education outcomes he believes our school system should be providing?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, this is simply not true. The reality is, the per-pupil funding is actually going up. When the number of students who are in our public schools declines, obviously that affects the number of teachers who are required in other areas. This government does not make those decisions. We give the money to the school boards, they decide on their priorities.

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

PREM.: CONVENTION CTR. PROJ. - GOV'T. SUPPORT

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, last year after a very lengthy review and much debate, the government announced its support for the convention centre project in Halifax. Since then, many developer deadlines have come and gone. Now we're waiting for the federal government to do its review. The Premier had indicated that we needed to go through an election before the federal government could respond and here we are today. My question through you to the Premier is, will his government today reaffirm their support for the convention centre project and share with us when he will take that support to Ottawa to get that job done?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, nothing has changed with respect to the government's support for this project. What I can indicate is that we have had a very good relationship with Mr. MacKay. There is one thing that we will have to wait for, though. I believe that the federal government will have to appoint their Cabinet in order to be able to understand exactly who is going to be in charge of which portfolios and we will have to wait until that is done.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, the Premier may be content to wait for yet some other event before he gets going, but 60 per cent of Nova Scotians have already indicated their support for this project as per the CRA poll that I tabled in this House a few weeks ago. It is good to know that the government continues to support this project, the NDP Government here, but the key missing element remains the lack of support by the NDP Members of Parliament for our area.

My question to the Premier is, will he address that key missing piece by communicating directly with his Members of Parliament from this area, the support that his government has and get them engaged in bringing this important project to Halifax?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I'm tempted to say that the polls are closed now. We're not just waiting for some other event. This is not waiting for some mystical thing to happen down the road. You literally have to wait until the federal government appoints a Cabinet. Somebody has to have charge of the file; somebody has to be empowered on behalf of the federal Crown to make the decision. We're just going to wait until that is done.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, in his first answer, the Premier bragged about his great relationship with the federal minister for our province. Secondly, he says he'll have to wait to see who is going to be in the Cabinet for Nova Scotia. There is no need to wait. This is an important project. Yesterday's event was exactly what we were waiting for, to get over with, so we could get on with the job of bringing that project home to Nova Scotians, but it is not at any cost. Will the Premier assure this House that his government will express their support, but it will not be funded at the expense of other projects like our highways and roads funding?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, the federal government has control over the envelopes of funding. Last year we had one of the most prodigious road paving budgets in the history of the province. I anticipate that the federal government will have their own priorities, of course. We'll be working with them to ensure that what happens is in the best interests of the entire province.

I look forward to the opportunity to continue to work with Mr. MacKay, if it turns out he continues to be the federal minister in Nova Scotia. Whichever other MPs are involved in those decisions, we'll work with them but I intend to work with all of the MPs in Nova Scotia who are elected from any of the Parties. We are simply advancing the interests of the Province of Nova Scotia and I will work with anybody to get that done.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Richmond.

JUSTICE: BUDGET CUTS - POLICE RESOURCES

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, this NDP Government has eliminated bail supervision and has cut funding for 15 ankle bracelets used for electronic monitoring of offenders. Both initiatives were meant to help ensure offenders respected the conditions of their court imposed restrictions. At the same time, bail supervision and ankle bracelets allowed police officers to focus on making our streets safe and fighting crime, but due to the cut in funding to the tune of \$322,000 for these programs, the responsibility for bail supervision, house arrest and probation will now fall to our over-worked police officers.

My question to the Minister of Justice is, has his department done an analysis on the police resources which will have to be diverted away from investigation and crime prevention in order to pick up the slack left by this NDP cut?

HON. ROSS LANDRY: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question. As I stated in the estimates, where he draws his details from, is that this government has maintained the officer on the street program and has not cut a cent from there to date. In regard to the bracelets, we're very confident that the present system is working and that it will continue to work and that the police, if there's an incident that comes up, will respond in accordance.

MR. SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, the whole idea behind having probation officers following up on bail, probation and house arrest was in order to remove that as a responsibility for the police, so that they could focus on fighting crime and making our streets safer. This government has now decided at a time when we're seeing increasingly violent crime in our province, that they should cut that funding and put that burden now on our police officers, rather than being on the streets, trying to prevent crime from taking place.

My question to the minister is, can you tell Nova Scotians how many hours will police now have to spend checking up on offenders who were previously supervised by probation officers?

MR. LANDRY: Well, Mr. Speaker, in regard to the bail supervision, what is interesting about that program is that it was under-utilized and we were spending money and putting money into a program that wasn't reaching its capacity. Therefore, dollars are being re-diverted, to work smarter and wiser. So there are limited dollars, we have to be prudent in how we spend them but we have to be effective in how we spend them and that's the difference between this side and his side of the fence.

MR. SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, the minister has said, you do the crime, you do the time but his actions speak louder than words. When we see the Minister of Justice turn around and cut funding which would have alleviated some of the pressures on police officers, he is certainly sending the wrong message. The idea behind having the ankle bracelets and probation officers check up on offenders is to make sure that they are honouring the court-imposed restrictions placed on them. To now have that burden being turned onto police officers means that instead of fighting crime and making our streets safer, police officers are now going to have to accept that extra responsibility.

My final question to the minister is, how can you explain how putting this extra burden on police officers is going to make our streets safer and prevent crime from taking place in Nova Scotia?

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

the Chair and using the word “you” is unparliamentary. So I will ask the member to rephrase the question and any other questions he may ask later. Thank you.

MR. SAMSON: My question to the minister is, how can his government justify putting added responsibilities on our police officers at a time when there is increasing violence in our province?

MR. LANDRY: Mr. Speaker, what’s interesting here are some of the words that my colleague has used, he’s using the word “assumption” and we know when we break that word down what it could end up saying on the word. He is also creating an atmosphere of fear rather than logic, he’s not placing in it. He makes the assumption that the police are not able to do their job or that this is over-burdening.

We have examined the situation. The Nova Scotia taxpayer wants us to spend their money wisely, we’re putting the money in a more prudent way. As I said earlier, we haven’t cut the officers on the street, we’ve enhanced the delivery of service in this province by our investment and, Mr. Speaker, I’m very pleased with the way we are approaching this issue.

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

**JUSTICE: CRIME PREVENTION CUTS
- MIN. EXPLAIN**

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, this NDP Government has gone to great lengths in this Spring session in attempting to block the Official Opposition’s efforts to examine the Department of Justice’s budget. Now we know why.

The Minister of Justice has supplied us with data which shows a 55 per cent cut to crime prevention programs for the next fiscal year. This NDP Government has decided that this would be a good time in Nova Scotia to cut \$475,000 from crime prevention initiatives to make our streets safer. My question to the minister is, with the recent surge in violent crime, murders, gun violence and a rash of stabbings, why would the minister cut crime prevention by 55 per cent?

HON. ROSS LANDRY: Once again, and it seems to be a consistent pattern of the Opposition, they don’t get their facts straight, they take pieces of information out and they run with it. It would be really nice if we could get a question that had a foundation to it and had some principle behind it.

The accusation that the member makes, that we cut 55 per cent from our budget, is the furthest from the truth. What was cut was from restorative justice, for example, some issues of where they had a grandfather clause. Is he suggesting that we continue the programs that are coming to an end and invest new money? We need to look at more

creative ways of how we invest our money and spend it wisely. I would really appreciate if he could get his facts straight.

MR. SAMSON: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'd be happy to provide this to the minister. It's "Department of Justice, Reductions approved by Treasury Board, Fiscal 2011-2012" advice to the Minister of Justice, where it says to "Reduce Grants - discretionary crime prevention, restorative justice" Reduction, \$475,000, Program Budget \$857,000, per cent of Reduction, 55.4 per cent. I wonder if the minister could tell us, what's not true about exactly what I read there from your own piece of paper that you provided in estimates?

MR. LANDRY: This government has not cut the core funding to crime prevention. Speaking with crime prevention is my focal point and to share with him, I spoke to an officer the other day - we have a conference that's with people from all across Canada here this week in the city and he is more than welcome to drop in. In fact, I'm giving a speech Thursday night, he can listen to that and see where we are going.

In regard to that matter the police officer shared with me, this was the first time that he knows, in his career, where we have a government that believes in working in a collaborative manner, bringing stakeholders together and putting forth our focus in dealing with the root causes of crime and moving those issues forward. So, Mr. Speaker, I stand on that comment.

MR. SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, the minister himself has indicated that his government cut \$475,000 from crime prevention initiatives. It's there in his budget, he's the one who supplied us with that information, a 55 per cent cut.

Mr. Speaker, this is going to be a cut to some of the programs which the minister announced on March 31, 2010, with funding for community programs, where he said "Empowering our youth and community partners is one of the keys to developing safe and healthy communities in Nova Scotia." The minister keeps telling us about a strategy and a plan; unfortunately, that appears to only exist in his head because he has refused to share it with Nova Scotians and share it with members of this House.

My question again is, when will this government finally present an anti-crime strategy to deal with the growing rate of violent crime here in Nova Scotia?

MR. LANDRY: I just want to read a couple of little things. The discretionary spending is \$200,000 which is remaining in the budget. The Department of Justice has invested approximately \$240,000 into our Lighthouses Programs that deal with youth, that deal with specific issues in the community. This is also the purpose of funding that goes to the Uniform Law Conference, the sexual assault project, Law Reform Commission, judicial institutions, some police events, and other types of things that we are investing in such as the Crime Prevention Conference that is happening here this week.

Mr. Speaker, the difficulty being on this side of the fence and trying to explain to some people who have a closed mind is that if something comes to an end, if it's grandfathered, but he's suggesting that the taxpayer of Nova Scotia just write blank cheques for things that might come in the future. I'd rather be on this side making the decisions in the best interest of the province.

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

PREM. - IMMIGRATION: CAP - LIFT

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, a moment ago I asked the Premier about the convention centre and he seems content to wait for his Protocol Office to give him permission to write to Ottawa and stand up for this project for Nova Scotians. Well, no one else in the country is waiting to get their list of priorities in to the newly elected government.

I'll try again on another urgent, important matter facing Nova Scotia and that is the issue of immigration, Mr. Speaker. Last Friday the government announced their new immigration strategy after two years of waiting. One of the things that they correctly identified as an issue that Nova Scotia faces is the cap on the number of provincial nominees that we can bring into our province every year.

This is not a new problem; this is a two-year-old cap. So my question to the Premier is, what has his government actually done - other than complain about it - in the last two years to try to lift that cap so we can get going on immigration?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, the very first thing we did was last year, for the first time, we actually hit the cap. (Applause) The very first time that the cap became relevant was when we hit it. So, of course, we're going to deal with the federal government as immediately as we can to demonstrate what we have said in our strategy.

It is about 10:00 a.m. the day after, in Alberta, so I'm not sure I can get him on the line but we'll give it a try.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, everyone agrees that the cap is too low, at 500 a year for a province of 940,000 people. To brag about hitting that cap is like bragging about batting 100 in the major leagues. The Premier is expected to do better than that. Now that we have a new, stable, four-year majority national government in place, my question to the Premier is, what is he going to do in the next six months to make sure that we get that cap lifted?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, it's amazing, the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party sits there with a group of people - those who are left - who couldn't hit a cap of 500, let alone any more. This government is committed to a comprehensive

immigration strategy, we intend to prosecute it with full vigour and ensure that we meet not only the cap targets, but we're going to use all the other streams to ensure we bring more immigrants to our province.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite has been the Premier for two years now. He has had lots of opportunity to work on this file. He's promised it three times and only on Friday did they produce their strategy, and still we're wondering what has been going on over there to deal with this issue for the last two years.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we have another problem related to immigration, and that is that our greatest single hope for immigration in the future, our universities, are charging a 10 per cent increase in their fee to international students. I know this Premier and this government love to charge more in fees, so my question to the Premier is, does he agree with that increase in fees for international students and, if so, how does that jibe with his own immigration strategy?

THE PREMIER: Well, Mr. Speaker, I can tell the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party that I have been very active on this file. In fact, I have met with agents who deal with international students from many parts of the country who come to Canada. What they tell me is this is not a question of the ability to pay, of those students who are coming to Canada, that's not the issue.

The issue for most of them is whether or not they can get a visa. The problem is if they need a visa to go to university in the United States, they can get one in two or three days. In Canada it takes months to be able to get a student visa to get into the country.

If there is a problem for international students, it resides with the federal government.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

ENERGY: NSP RATE INCREASES - MIN. OPPOSE

MR. ANDREW YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, well, just like user fees and HST and not addressing bracket creep, power rates are going up, so my question is for the Minister of Energy. When the member for Cole Harbour was in Opposition he said that these 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.

He was right then, but the same applies now, and yet the NDP seem willing to sit back and allow Nova Scotia Power to seek its seventh rate increase in 10 years and they seem willing to defer to the Utility and Review Board on whether it should happen, which is not at all what the NDP said in Opposition. In fact, the member for Fairview at the time

said it's hard for Nova Scotians to accept that their power rates are being set by a few big players in the system. Well, Mr. Speaker, we agree with that as well.

Mr. Speaker, will the honourable Minister of Energy state now, in the Legislature today, that he will oppose the planned rate increases by Nova Scotia Power?

HON. CHARLIE PARKER: Mr. Speaker, I thank the honourable member for the question. Yes, we're all concerned about electricity rates. We know it's a basic necessity of life here in our province and we, as a government, are doing a number of things. Certainly many energy efficiency programs are being implemented at this time. We're pursuing a number of renewables that take away from the expensive cost of coal, to bring the price of electricity down and, of course, this government brought the 8 per cent tax off electricity to make it easier for consumers in this province.

MR. YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, that was laughable that this government thinks it can continue taking the HST off electricity as a savings when they added 2 per cent to pay for it on almost every other item that people pay for. It's just disingenuous and they added another tax to electricity. It just doesn't make any sense and just like the Premier said in Opposition, when he said that increases like this will force many families out of their homes so they can no longer afford the heat, he was right then and it's right now. The fact of the matter is this government has increased the price of almost everything in this province.

So, Mr. Speaker, the NDP Government is doing nothing to stand up to this monopoly and they pass the buck constantly. It's a regulated monopoly. The NDP does not have to sit back and say their hands are tied, the government chooses to sit back and say their hands are tied. Will the minister order a performance audit of the operations of Nova Scotia Power prior to any planned rate hike?

MR. PARKER: Mr. Speaker, we as a province are working long and hard with Nova Scotia Power. We've asked them to look at their bottom line to see if there are any cost savings or efficiencies there to reduce the rate that they're asking for and, again, we're looking at renewable, we're looking at energy efficiencies. We've taken the HST off electricity and it would be good now if the federal government would do the same, which would take a 5 per cent reduction off power bills for Nova Scotians.

MR. YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, they started in the past couple of weeks deferring to the URB which they opposed in Opposition. Now they're deferring to the federal government to solve the problems. I mean what is this? This crowd over here in Opposition said that it was up to the government to do something every single time Nova Scotia Power went for a rate increase and now they want the URB to solve the problems for them.

So, Mr. Speaker, would the Minister of Energy kindly tell me what has changed in the NDP policy so drastically since it became government that, in fact, now they believe

it's up to the URB to do it and not government? In fact, to quote another member of the government, why should we trust you now?

MR. PARKER: Mr. Speaker, this government has some of the most aggressive renewable targets anywhere on this continent - 40 per cent renewables in electricity by the year 2020. So we're doing something about it. We're looking at all the possible sources of renewables and we will be working eventually to bring down rates for Nova Scotians. Through the Energy Efficiency Program there is a prudent investment there on the power bills that in the end will make it less expensive for power in this province.

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

**PREM. - SCH. BDS: FORMULA GRANTS
- DECREASE EXPLAIN**

MS. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, when asked about education cuts last week, the Premier said, "We haven't cut anything - nothing." Will the Premier please explain why then the formula grants to school boards decreased by nearly \$20 million?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I realize this is very difficult to understand but when the number of students go down, the funding goes down, but in this particular case the per-pupil funding, the actual amount of money per student, has increased. I hope that clarifies it for the member.

MS. REGAN: So, in fact, what we've done is cut funding to school boards despite the fact that the Premier said we haven't cut anything - nothing, and in fact I will table the part of the budget that indicates we did, in fact, cut monies to the school board. The Premier also said we've taken expensive programs, thrown them out and brought in new programming that meets the needs of students, yet after hearing of recent budget cuts, the president of the Nova Scotia School Boards Association, Vic Fleury said, "The challenge is going to be to do more with less."

Can the Premier please explain why the chair of the Nova Scotia School Boards Association is concerned about cuts when the Premier claims there haven't been any?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I assume the chairman of the Nova Scotia School Boards Association is doing his job, of course they want to try to protect their budget. No matter how much the decline in the number of students goes down, they're going to still want to have the same amount of money. I don't think that most Nova Scotians think that's a reasonable position for the school boards to take. The budgets of the boards have gone up dramatically while almost 30,000 students have come out of the system. Obviously the amount of money supplied has to address the demand that is there. I believe that is a position that the vast majority of Nova Scotians would agree with.

MS. REGAN: Mr. Speaker, the Premier says there have been no cuts but when we look in the budget we see the number goes down. Ergo, there have been cuts. The government refuses to take responsibility for massive cuts to our school system. It was the NDP Government's decision to cut Reading Recovery, not the school boards. It was the NDP Government's decision to cut math and literacy mentors, not the school boards. How can this Premier say his government has cut nothing when in fact these cuts have been directed by the Department of Education?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, this is an extraordinarily serious subject and I think it deserves an appropriate response because the reality of the world that we live in is that we have a shrinking demand among the number of students who are in the schools of Nova Scotia. What that means is that the amount of money we are putting into the classrooms per student is going up, not going down. It is up to the boards to make the decisions with respect to the program delivery with the money that we give them.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle.

**HEALTH & WELLNESS - TOBACCO STRATEGY:
INTRODUCTION - DELAY EXPLAIN**

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, I think on Thursday I started off with a question about the tobacco strategy and I'll start again and see if we can get to the end of it this time. Last week the Department of Health and Wellness finally unveiled its new 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 as just another expensive piece of literature like the new Gaming Strategy, the new agricultural 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, my question through you is, why did it take the government two years to introduce the new Tobacco Control Strategy?

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I was very pleased to announce our tobacco strategy last week and I was very pleased to get the endorsement of various groups such as the Cancer Society of Nova Scotia and Smoke-Free Nova Scotia as well as the district health authorities for the direction of that strategy.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: There was a 10 per cent reduction in smoking rates between 2000 and 2006. This was achieved through smart legislation, a balanced tax approach and public awareness. In this new strategy, the government has set some lofty goals for reducing smoking rates amongst teens and adults but it doesn't include an indication of new legislation, tax increases, fines or increased enforcement officers. Mr. Speaker, my first supplementary through you to the minister is, what tangible actions will be taken in order to reach these targets?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, as you very well know, this is year one of the strategy. We have been focused on youth and we have underway a social marketing campaign, the artifacts and the dinosaur have been travelling the province and they've been very well received.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, all I can say to that answer - because there was a little bit in there - is that I do hope that the Flyers win the next game just to get us over that hump.

Raising taxes on tobacco can be a deterrent for purchasing tobacco products, but it also can lead to increase in the black market for such products. My question through you to the Minister of Health and Wellness, is the government planning to raise taxes on tobacco products anytime throughout the duration of this strategy?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, one of the provisions in the Financial Measures (2011) Bill that passed second reading here yesterday, I believe, will allow a stamp to be placed on packaging to help us with the fight against contraband tobacco. The strategy is a complex strategy. It looks at a variety of measures that we will use to fight and combat the use of tobacco. Certainly we're always very interested in looking at the kinds of measures such as taxation of tobacco products that can contribute to a reduction in rates of smoking in the province, but it's a very comprehensive strategy and has many elements. There are still areas within the strategy that allow us to consult and to develop other measures over the course of the strategy, which is a five-year strategy.

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

LBR. & ADV. EDUC.: CBU TUITION INCREASE - EFFECTS

MS. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, yesterday it was reported that Cape Breton University will raise tuition by 3 per cent, joining a list of universities that will be forced to raise tuition fees this September. The President of Cape Breton University Student Union, Billy Crowley, spoke out against the CBU tuition hike. He said, "The goal of our institution has to be to make education accessible to each and every student that wants to go to university. When you increase tuition, you're already starting to limit that window. When you increase tuition that means that less students are going to be able to afford to go to any universities." My question for the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education is, do you agree with Billy Crowley's remarks that increasing tuition will limit the window to post-secondary education?

HON. MARILYN MORE: Mr. Speaker, certainly I agree that capping tuition increases is just one of a number of different initiatives that this government has taken to protect access to post-secondary education in this province.

MS. REGAN: Mr. Speaker, Billy Crowley also said, “We’re extremely disappointed by the lack of attention the government gives to what they call the future. They will often say that university students, college students and high school graduates are of course the future of our country, and yet Nova Scotia has some of the highest tuition in all of Canada.”

The government says it wants to keep young people in this province. It claims to be preparing for a shortage of young workers. We’ve already seen increases of up to 14 per cent for other university programs. My question to the minister is, how is increasing tuitions by 3 per cent to 14 per cent for many programs part of a strategy to attract and retain young people and immigrants?

MS. MORE: Mr. Speaker, certainly making post-secondary education accessible to not only young Nova Scotians and mature Nova Scotians, but also people from elsewhere in Canada and around the world is very important because a significant number of people who attend university in Nova Scotia stay behind to start their careers and raise their families. We have been a significant player in making sure that average university tuition for Nova Scotia students has come down below the national tuition average. We’re very proud of that and we have taken many measures to protect that rating.

We have to take a balanced point of view. We’ve invested, as a government, well over \$40 million this year to protect access to post-secondary university education. We take this very seriously. We have not only continued the bursary, we’ve put a debt cap on. We’ve improved the student assistance package. I would think that most Nova Scotians feel that we have certainly done due diligence in terms of supporting this sector. Thank you.

MS. REGAN: Mr. Speaker, apparently the students wouldn’t agree. We now know that fees for international students are increasing. We’ve already heard reports of some international students looking elsewhere for their education. These are the very people the Premier said we want to keep in Nova Scotia to help with immigration.

Mr. Speaker, how does allowing tuition fees to increase and not capping international student differentials support attempts to increase immigration to Nova Scotia?

MS. MORE: Mr. Speaker, certainly we recognize the importance of both attracting international students and encouraging them to stay and, as I said, start their careers and their families in Nova Scotia. What we did, we actually capped international tuition fees at three per cent for this year, but certainly universities are able to present a business case as to why the cost of delivering that program may require an exemption to that.

Whether or not there’s going to be a cap in future years will be part of our negotiations with universities during the current memorandum of understanding process.

We value international students but, at the same time, we recognize that Nova Scotians can only afford to pay so much towards university education, so we're trying to take a careful balance where we protect both interests. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Richmond.

**PREM.: TEMPORARY FOREIGN WORKERS
- RED TAPE EXPLAIN**

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, I want to raise some concerns regarding the government's new immigration strategy. It has come to our attention, we've heard that the government, very soon, intends to increase red tape on small businesses that have no other option but to access temporary foreign workers in order to fill positions they have not been able to fill locally.

It has come to our attention that small businesses will soon have to register every individual, temporary, foreign worker they employ resulting, clearly, in more paperwork for the small business owners.

I'm wondering if the Premier could explain why his government is creating more red tape for small businesses that use temporary foreign workers?

THE PREMIER: Actually, Mr. Speaker, the opposite is true. We're just concluding an agreement with the federal government that will actually streamline access to temporary foreign workers.

MR. SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, my question was very specific as to whether the government was going to require small business owners to register every temporary foreign worker who works for their enterprise. Clearly this is a concern about more red tape on small businesses at a time when all governments are trying to reduce the burden.

My question again is, will the Premier confirm - yes or no - whether his government is going to require small businesses to register every individual, temporary, foreign worker that is employed by them?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, when a worker comes here to work, it is necessary for the businesses that employ them, of course, to register who they are. That's about accountability and oversight. So the answer for the question is yes, but on balance, what we are doing is we are signing an agreement with the federal government to streamline all of the requirements that are necessary for businesses to get foreign workers. So on balance, it will be a much easier process for businesses.

MR. SAMSON: The concern raised with us is small business owners don't see this being any easier at all. They in fact see it being a bigger burden on them to have to formally register with the government every individual, temporary foreign worker. They've been

told as part of the strategy there will be some follow-up by the Department of Immigration with these specific workers. The concerns are that this is going to require more staff from the government to process all of these registrations and as well, the fear is that the government will put some type of user fee on them in registering these individual temporary foreign workers.

Will the Premier confirm today whether there will have to be any staff increases as a result of this or whether small business owners will face any fees in registering every individual temporary foreign worker that they employ?

THE PREMIER: Employers routinely account for the employees that they employ in their business. This is not something new, in fact, it's part of the responsibility of being an employer. What I can tell them is that there is a bill that is coming in relation to this and the details will be revealed soon, very soon.

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

EDUC. - AT-RISK YOUTH: SUPPORT - DETAILS

MR. ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, my question through you will be to the Minister of Education. This past week, a number of junior and senior high schools within the Cape Breton-Victoria Regional School Board were informed that funding for the community liaison officers would be cut.

Mr. Speaker, these easily-accessible police officers are in our schools, are mentors and leaders for the students facing on-line bullying, mental health concerns, substance abuse and family instability. Also last week we learned that Youth Pathways and Transitions program for at-risk students will be eliminated at the end of June.

Mr. Speaker my question through you to the minister is, what is this minister doing to support at-risk youth and the safety of our students in our schools?

HON. RAMONA JENNEX: Our government has the safety concerns of our students foremost in our minds. To answer the question that the honourable member raises, he has brought forward some information that I wasn't aware of so I will need to do some investigation, but I do know about the liaison officer situation.

I've been just informed that the funding for the liaison officers, which do an absolute tremendous job all across our province with the work that they do within our school systems, they were being paid for by the school board where every other school board in the province, that is paid for by the municipality, the police services themselves. We need to investigate this a bit further but I would just say that the service does provide a valuable service but the funding for this. It's very interesting that the funding has come through the school board for the liaison officer, that's an anomaly.

MR. MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, again to the minister this is \$158,000 that we are talking about. It is also money that is spent by the Cape Breton Regional Police Service, it has been shared in the past by the school board.

Mr. Speaker, the minister said in The ChronicleHerald last week, “. . . the bottom line is that the children in the classroom, their education will be protected.” Well in Cape Breton there are 62 teacher layoffs, 50 TA cuts, math mentor cuts, Reading Recovery cuts and now the community liaison cuts and the parents are worried about their children’s future.

Mr. Speaker, my question through you to the minister is, how will the department ensure that the students’ education and their safety are protected?

MS. JENNEX: I just want to say that not only is safety a concern with school liaison officers, the school liaison officers do a much broader job within our school systems so I really value the work that they do.

There is a department member, Constable Mark Smith I think his name is, I’m going to ask him to look into this situation. Safety is our highest priority and we will be working with the Cape Breton school board around this issue.

MR. MACLEOD: I want to thank the minister for that answer, I’m looking forward to her working with the department.

Mr. Speaker, CUPE Nova Scotia President Danny Cavanagh said last week in a release, “The provincial government . . . wanted any cuts to take place at the level of consultants and senior administration, the six-figure salaried positions that seem to have ballooned in our school board system over the last several years.” In Question Period on April 21st, the minister said, “. . . I trust that the impact will not be felt by the students in the classrooms.”

Mr. Speaker, my question through you to the minister is, what is the department going to do to ensure that school boards are cutting in the areas of administration and not front-line services for our students?

MS. JENNEX: Thank you very much. I’d like to make a correction - it was Constable Mark Young, not Constable Mark Smith.

We are going to make sure that the children of our province have the appropriate education in each and every classroom across Nova Scotia. The school boards were mandated to look at reductions in administration and also within consultants in the school boards. Unfortunately we have a situation, especially in the Cape Breton area, where we have declining enrolments and we are making sure that the funds that were made available to the school boards match the children who are enrolled in our school system. Unfortunately, I think it’s 700 students who are leaving the Cape Breton-Victoria Regional

School Board this year. It might be a higher number but I know we've lost over 2,500 students from our system this year.

We are making sure that the money we have provided the school boards is going to meet the needs of the children who are in our classrooms. The mandate is that they have to protect the children in our schools and they are going to receive the education they need and the education they deserve. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

ENERGY: FRACKING APPLICATIONS - MORATORIUM

MR. ANDREW YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Energy. We've been talking about the issue of fracking in this Legislature for quite a while now. The government did move one small step and said they would begin a study. However, the government still refuses to put a moratorium on new fracking permits until that review is complete.

Now in the past couple of weeks, moratoriums have been put in place while studies are done in South Africa, there was already one in Quebec, one to be put in place in Arkansas, parts of New York, parts of Pennsylvania, parts of Texas and the list goes on; most of those within the past couple of weeks. I can't fathom why Nova Scotia agrees there is merit in doing a study but apparently is one of the only jurisdictions doing the study but won't put a moratorium in place at the same time.

Mr. Speaker, in light of growing concerns on this issue, will the minister now agree to place a moratorium on new fracking applications until the study is complete?

HON. CHARLIE PARKER: Mr. Speaker, we certainly want to assure Nova Scotians that we're going to protect their environment and the last thing we want to see is any damage to the environment or any harm to drinking water and that's exactly why we've undertaken this review. We will look at the impacts on drinking water, on the environment, on soil, the landscape, drilling practices and so on. Actually we're asking Nova Scotians to come up with what they feel should be included in the scope.

It's open until the 6th of June, we'd love to hear from Nova Scotians on what they feel is most important that we do study. At this time there are no applications for drilling or hydraulic fracturing and we don't anticipate any during the period of our review.

MR. YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, the minister keeps repeating that there's no fracking applications expected, yet during repeated questioning in estimates he refused to say what he would do if an application was received. Last week PetroWorth, who is doing

some work in Lake Ainslie, was asked about this by the media. In their public comments, they publicly refused to rule out fracking this summer in the Lake Ainslie area.

Now the government has a two-year legacy of not releasing reports on time, so whether this one will come on time, who knows. Last week the South African Cabinet handled this issue of whether to have a moratorium, even though they expected no permits. They said despite there being little chance of application, a moratorium was warranted.

Mr. Speaker, when almost every other jurisdiction doing a study on fracking regulations appears to be putting a moratorium in place, why does the minister think Nova Scotia should be different?

MR. PARKER: Mr. Speaker, again as I mentioned, we have no applications at this time. These applications do take time to go through the processes. The PetroWorth application is before the Department of Environment, the Department of Energy, and at this point has not been approved but they are all individually judged and there are a lot of details that have to be looked at in an application.

Again, we're not going to approve any application for approval unless we're absolutely sure that it's safe, the environment is protected, drinking water is protected. Again I can assure you that we feel confident that no applications will be coming forward during the period of this review.

MR. YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, I'm sure that the residents in the Lake Ainslie area will be interested to know that that application is now before government, at least for drilling work. The minister was dragged to the table to do a study and yet he doesn't seem to want to change anything. In fact, the minister won't even allow the study that he talks about to be independent of government officials who have already shared their view with residents that fracking is safe.

Mr. Speaker, in Alberta last week we saw a \$30 million lawsuit filed over the issue of fracking. So in light of growing concerns, not only in Nova Scotia but in Texas, South Africa and all over North America and around the world, will the minister now ensure that the study is done independent of his government officials?

MR. PARKER: Mr. Speaker, we're trying to get the science right here. We're trying to get the facts, we're trying to get the possible information, and we're looking at best practices in other jurisdictions. Again, we're inviting Nova Scotians to ask what they feel should be included in the scope and we really have the best of both worlds here. We have our technical experts in the Department of Environment and the Department of Energy but we're also calling for any technical expertise outside of government that we will require. So in the end we'll get the very best practices that will apply to Nova Scotia. Residents will have that opportunity to have input again on the regulations before they become finalized.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

**NAT. RES. - FUR IND.: REGULATIONS
- TIME FRAME**

MR. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, on April 29, 2010, government announced a new bill to manage and develop the fur industry in Nova Scotia. This was an excellent initiative and one that we support but it has been nearly a year and we're still waiting on the regulations for this important industry. Producers want the regulations so they can operate their farms properly within government guidelines. My question for the Minister of Agriculture is, when will Nova Scotians see regulations for the fur industry?

HON. JOHN MACDONELL: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for the question. I have to say I'm certainly hoping that before the end of the month of June, I will have regulations from the province ready.

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, Nova Scotia is a major mink producer in Canada. Government has been late on countless reports and they're taking their time again on regulations for an industry now worth about \$100 million annually. Farmers need the guidelines from the province and citizens want strict rules around how mink farms are operated. My question to the minister is, what organizations did you consult with and how many public meetings did you hold for concerned citizens on this matter?

MR. MACDONELL: Mr. Speaker, I can get that number for the member. I want to make it clear to the member, and to all members of the House, when we introduced the legislation last year, my staff told me we would be three years getting the regulations and I told them, no, we would not, we would be a year. The community that has an interest in this wanted to participate in the drafting of the regulations and I made a commitment that they would be involved. To this point there have been a couple of meetings but not of any consequence I'll say. The staff is drafting those regulations and when they have the draft, then we're going to take it to the community for them to have a look and have some input into those regulations.

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, we know representatives from the fur industry have been helping government develop the regulations, along with interested stakeholders, but the information does not seem to be reaching the people concerned about mink farms in the area. My question to the minister is, what is government doing to alleviate the concerns about the industry practices?

MR. MACDONELL: Mr. Speaker, I know both the Department of Environment and the Department of Agriculture have been in touch with the community. This government, and I believe no government, would stand by and allow the environment to be polluted by anybody. Until we have those regulations drafted so that the industry knows what it is that they're supposed to be doing, the community can rest assured that, certainly,

with the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Environment we have no intention to allow anybody's environment to be compromised by any industrial or farming incidents that might possibly occur.

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

MR. KEITH BAIN: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism. Tourism in Victoria County is one of the main drivers of the economy.

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

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

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

PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 17.

Bill No. 17 - Fair Drug Pricing Act.

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

MS. DIANA WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to rise again and continue my debate on Bill No. 17, which is called the Fair Drug Pricing Act. It has been quite some time ago that we did have this debate; I believe it was April 19th. I was reviewing some of my comments from that day in Hansard.

The intent of this bill, I think it's important to begin there, which is to rein in the cost of generic drugs is something that we in the Liberal Party do support, wholeheartedly. There's no question - the minister laid it out well in her introductory comments - that the generic prices that we have here in this province have been high, high in relation to other provinces in Canada and Canada is high in relation to other countries in the world. It required an effort to look at what drives the cost of the generic drugs. We are a small market in Nova Scotia in terms of being less than one million people and what can we do here where we certainly are not large enough to drive the market? What can we do in a province the size of Nova Scotia to start to get a handle and rein in the cost of generic drugs?

I know that this is an area which affects every community in the province because there is not one community that doesn't rely on their pharmacist for an important role in the health care delivery in our province. There's no question that the debates we've been having here in the Legislature over the last year have focused on how we can have the pharmacist play a bigger role. How they - what we call here, the scope of practice - how we can extend that scope of practice, which means, how can we have them do more things that they have the training, knowledge and ability to do so that doctors - at the other end of the spectrum - can then focus on more serious illness, perhaps, or be able to devote more time to their patients. Right now, they don't have the time perhaps to spend with them because they're trying to serve so many people.

If we can put the emphasis on pharmacists doing more services then we can have a better functioning system and make up for, in some areas, the shortage of doctors, where it's difficult to get in to see your family doctor, it might take a couple of weeks. We heard in the Ross Report that in some communities it can take six weeks to get an appointment with your own family physician. The role of the pharmacist is going to be ever more important and we are trying to strengthen it and extend that role.

One of the bills that just passed through the Law Amendments Committee, Bill No. 13, looked at giving the pharmacy assistants, who are now going to be called pharmacy technicians - they are actually people with about a two-year training program - we're now going to regulate them, set out their training requirements and then actually give them a proper designation, a regulated professional status. This means they will do more work that the pharmacist might otherwise have done in order to allow the pharmacists to do these new activities.

The bill that was before us in the past said that pharmacists would now be allowed to offer injections, like vaccinations, for example. People traveling and needing to have special vaccinations could go to their local pharmacy rather than having to make appointments at health clinics or with their doctors; much more efficient and much better use of everyone's time and effort and more responsive, not only to the patient and the individual citizen but also helping so much to keep our health care system moving and efficient.

I know pharmacists have adopted that. A lot of them have done the extra training required because they did have to take a course in order to do that; they've done the professional development. Another area that we're looking at is allowing pharmacists to write prescriptions themselves and not have to phone the doctor for what are more routine prescriptions where people are on a medication - often medication for a lifetime for things like lowering cholesterol or controlling high blood pressure or taking medication for a thyroid that is in improper order. Those things you go on for a lifetime and so there's no need to see your doctor every time, you can just go back to the pharmacist. If we go forward with this, pharmacists will have a greater scope of practice.

All of these things are coming down the pipeline and will dramatically change the profession of a pharmacist, but what is before us today on Bill No. 17 is a bill that's looking at one component of their work and that is how we price and how we are going to make available generic drugs at a cheaper price. We know that the rationale for government is to lower the cost of our Pharmacare programs. This bill is aimed at the drugs that are going to be provided through Pharmacare, but we have to face the fact, of course, that this will lower the prices for all drug plans. If you're with a private provider, if you have Blue Cross or Great West Life or another provider, it's going to be fairly quickly that we will see them come in line and the same price will prevail because they will not maintain several different pricing levels. We know that from other provinces as well, so if the government controls it for the large part of the market that is served through Seniors' Pharmacare, through the Family Pharmacare program, under social assistance and so on, we will soon see that is the prevailing price for generic drugs. That is something that I know the pharmacists as well have supported.

All of us had seen a letter from PANS. I know it went to the Minister of Health and Wellness. PANS is the Pharmacy Association of Nova Scotia, for those members who haven't directly spoken to them. They've been lobbying on behalf of the members of their association and they represent the professional pharmacists. They've been speaking and consulting with government. I know that we were told last year that as a lead-up to the Fair Drug Pricing Act, which is before us, that consultation was sought, people were visited. They had quite a number of meetings that the minister referred to, speaking to pharmacists, speaking to the brand name drugs, to the pharmacy chains that exist, like Pharmasave, PharmaChoice, where individual pharmacists have grouped together in order to improve their buying power and their marketing power. They spoke to all of these groups to get a sense of what the impact would be of passing this bill and moving forward with this particular way of lowering our drug prices essentially.

It's important to note that this is about generic drugs, not about the name brand drugs at this point in time. Although in the bill, there is a clause that does relate to brand name drugs and that is a clause I believe that gives the minister the power to change the costs of brand name drugs in the future should the need arise. I think it has got more to do with that or the way that we are billed for the brand name drugs. I'm not sure - and perhaps it will become clear at the Law Amendments Committee or when we have an opportunity to hear from the minister again - whether this is definitely going to come into play immediately. My understanding is that for the brand name drugs, their prices - because they're covered under an exclusive right to the brand and the drug - are covered pricing that is granted by the federal government. We don't need to go into that area provincially because it's not within our jurisdiction, but the price that we reimburse, what you're reimbursing for the senior who might be getting their drugs under their plan is a price that includes transportation and possibly other costs. It is the acquisition costs that the pharmacy actually incurs.

I believe that in future the government intends to charge for only - or reimburse - the actual drug cost that was set by the federal government; it wouldn't cover the

transportation costs or any incidental costs that are also built into the cost that the pharmacy has to bear. So there may be an additional cost there to the pharmacist that they had previously been able to bill back, under the Pharmacare plan, and they won't be in future, they won't be able to build that into the drug cost. That's one possible concern down the road, again for pharmacies, and that is how they are going forward and how they are going to respond to a lot of commercial pressures that this bill does present.

I know that I was speaking of PANS, the Pharmacy Association of Nova Scotia, I know that all of their correspondence has begun with a firm commitment to helping the government move forward with lowering the price of generic drugs, and again, I think all of us need to bear that in mind and look at what the pharmacy association has been asking, that is really that we slow down the passage of this bill with the intent of firming up what the other conditions are that are changing for pharmacists.

I'll just go through them briefly for the members and for those who may not be aware. I spoke about the changing scope of practice that is coming; pharmacists are embracing that. I think it's going to make their profession more interesting to young people and I think it will expand their use of their own abilities and their studies.

What we don't know, Madam Speaker, is how we are going to reimburse the pharmacists who are now going to write prescriptions, are now going to sit down and consult with patients about what their needs are. They are going to order lab tests; that was also included in an earlier bill that we're examining. If they can order the lab tests, interpret those results and then adjust medication and write the prescriptions, they're taking on a lot of the functions of a doctor, today.

We want to know what would be the right kind of reimbursement to a pharmacist for doing that. I began my remarks this afternoon talking about the opportunity this presents because we need to be a more efficient medical system; we need doctors to be able to see the people who are most in need and to put their knowledge and background and experience where it can do the most good.

For a lot of routine prescriptions, as I said earlier, it's not necessary, really, to go see a doctor when you have another professional, and another health care professional, who can fill that void, but we need to figure out how we're going to pay them. That has not been decided yet. There is a working committee that is working with government, the pharmacists and the doctors - I think Doctors Nova Scotia is involved. They have a committee that has multi stakeholders at the table, trying to work out what would be reasonable and what that scope will be.

Before the pharmacists know what that is, we're changing the price and the reimbursement for the drugs that they are prescribing, not prescribing but dispensing right now, and that's going to change a major part of their business.

At the same time, we've given more scope to the pharmacy technicians, as I said below, who work with the pharmacists. With the passage which is coming forward in Bill No. 13, pharmacy technicians will now be able to actually dispense the drug, taking full responsibility themselves that the prescription has been properly filled. Freeing up the pharmacists for more and different work means that they will now have to pay those technicians more money because they've taken on significantly more responsibility. That's one of the changes; the scope of practice is another change.

The third one is the tariff that the individuals are going to receive for their dispensing of the drug. I think that's the main part of the tariff that we negotiate with pharmacists. In one of my letters that I received from a pharmacist in the province, they said that tariff hasn't been changed in about 20 years. I'm looking through my notes, I don't see exactly that letter here, but it has been years and years of not changing. It had gone up something like \$1 in 20 years.

The dispensing fee for pharmacists has been kept very static, very stable. That's been good for the Province of Nova Scotia as well and good for the people who, individually, are going to their pharmacies and having drugs prescribed and dispensed. It has helped us but it has been subsidized by other things in the system that will no longer be there. The fact that the subsidies that have helped pharmacists offer so many services on a basis where they didn't charge is going to be gone, their ability to do that is going to be gone when we change the whole means by which they are paid and by which they earn a living.

As we know, many pharmacists own their pharmacy. They're small-business people, they're retailers as well as professionals in the health care system. They employ a lot of people and I know that individually the members here in this House today can think of their own communities and know when you go into that little pharmacy in your area, how many people depend on that pharmacy for their livelihood, how much they offer back to the community, all of the things that they do that supports the communities where they are located.

If they're not going to be viable, if they're not going to be able to make a living, it is a business, you know, we may be in jeopardy of losing some of those pharmacies. Then instead of improving the delivery of health care in our province, we will have undermined the health care delivery in our province. I think a lot of the concern that we will hear as the bill is debated here, from my colleagues as well as others, will be around the concern about rural pharmacies where there is only one pharmacy in a community and where the doctors are not close by. It may be a distance away to get to a hospital or a doctor and that pharmacist in a rural community has played a really pivotal role - to lose a pharmacy in those areas would be devastating.

So I think that we will hear more about rural pharmacies and, Madam Speaker, when I was getting a briefing on the bill, it was mentioned that the Department of Health and Wellness recognized there would be pharmacies at risk. That was something that they

acknowledged, and there was a list prepared or an analysis done that identified where those pharmacies are, which communities would be the pharmacies that may be at risk, but that list hasn't been revealed to the Pharmacy Association or to us.

We asked for it here in Question Period one day, Madam Speaker, wanting to know if the analysis has been done, just where do you see the risk. Then it can be part of our public debate - how do we mitigate that risk, how widespread is it? I stand here today not knowing if there are perhaps 10 communities or are there 30 or 40, 50 pharmacies at risk. We don't know and neither do the pharmacists and they are very nervous, quite frankly, because of all these changes coming at them at once. What they would have liked to have seen is that we sat down together with them, the Department of Health and Wellness, the Minister of Health and Wellness, the pharmacists, the doctors, together, and worked out what they would be paid for the extra services they're going to provide, what is the tariff agreement that dispensing costs are going to be.

Many of us - I attended an event that they held recently, the Pharmacy Association, and had a chance to talk to pharmacists. I'm sure that I'm not the only MLA that attended that event that heard the figure of about \$15 being the actual true cost of dispensing a drug and yet the standing amount is about \$10.50, I think - I don't have it exact but it's in the \$10 range. (Interruption) Somebody may know it, I think I heard that. What I have here though, in terms of when it was increased, this is from one of the letters that we received. It says: Current dispensing fees are only a little more than \$1 more than they were 25 years ago - it says in brackets: Yes, 25 years - they certainly have gone down when you account for inflation.

Madam Speaker, one can only imagine what kind of inflation rate we've had in the last 25 years that would show how much that has been depressed by only rising by a single \$1 in 25 years. The pharmacists have accepted that, and as I said, because they have other means to make ends meet, other ways to keep viable, and what they want to do is know better what the financial footing is going to be going forward. How can we get there if we have no new tariff in place until July 1st? That's not very far away, we're in May right now. If this bill waited until we had the tariff agreement understood and a fee schedule set out for ordering tests and interpreting those tests and consulting with patients, which pharmacies will now be doing, if we knew those things, then the pharmacist could sit down and really see whether or not this is something they can accommodate and they can continue to be viable with.

Madam Speaker, I'm worried about some of the pharmacies in the city as well, quite frankly, because some pharmacies sell an awful lot of other products. They sell food products and they sell cosmetics. They sell health supplements and vitamins, and all kinds of other things that help supplement their income. A lot of them have equipment that they rent. If you need crutches, or you have somebody who's coming home from hospital and you need any kind of a special health aid, they rent or sell all of those things. That gives them more income.

In my riding there are two shops, they're the Medicine Shoppes. I'm sure some of you know that model of pharmacy. Those ones are very small pharmacies. They're almost a boutique in the sense that they are one-stop shops for pharmacy only. They don't sell magazines. They certainly don't sell pop and candy. They just sell health products and they just sell pharmaceuticals and so they give wonderful service, one-on-one. They're already set up beautifully for consultations and discussions with patients, but they don't have any other means to supplement their income if the amount of money that they're going to be given through the tariff or through the extra services don't cover their costs.

I think that we need to remember that, too, that we are fundamentally threatening the future of many businesses in this province. We may not lament it as much if it's in an area where there are other pharmacies, but frankly I don't think it's right that we would do that without sitting back and trying to work on all of the factors that are going to impact these small businesses. I think we need to look at all of them.

My background has been in business and as a business consultant, and I can see that when you have this many changes coming and hitting an industry or a profession all at once, you're creating a huge level of uncertainty. That is being reflected in fear and I know with many of the pharmacists that we spoke to, they've already begun to dramatically change the way that they operate in their own communities and they are very sorry to be doing that.

There was one pharmacist that we spoke to from Liverpool who, in fact, has a big store and he told us that this summer he has no university students coming on board to work with him. He has always hired three or four or even five students and he not only hired them for the summer and for Christmas, but he gave them bursaries. He said at the end of each summer he'd send them back to university with \$1,500 each as a special help for them to become well-educated and hopefully come back and work in their Town of Liverpool. It was a commitment to the young people that he did that, but he said this year with the uncertainty around where his business will be in the next few months and in the next year with all of the fundamental changes that are coming to change his industry, he feels he can't do that. He has to be prudent, he has to try to protect the jobs that he has with his regular staff and so he's hiring no students in that little town and that will be felt.

Another thing he has completely stopped is all of his advertising. Previously he would advertise a lot with the local weekly paper, with the local radio stations, and supporting in that way the communication and news services and so on that are local. He said, again, he can't afford that. That could be \$50,000 to \$100,000 lost to the local economy because he needs to husband his resources, hold on to his assets and hope that he can weather the storm that is coming ahead.

That's exactly how the pharmacists see this. They just see it as such a fundamental change to their way of business that they need to have more assurance from government about what those changes are going to be. That's a very simple message to all of us that if we treat this profession with respect, as it deserves, and sit down and try to iron out some of

the unknowns, some of those other factors, then the individuals are going to know better how they can adjust their business model and how they can go forward.

Madam Speaker, we've also heard from the CFIB which, as you all know, is the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. They've written in defence, really, of the pharmacists, again not because of the health profession, but because they are important businesses in every community in this province. Again, they're asking for the same level of respect. As we go forward to lower the cost of generic drugs in the province, what they're asking for is - let's sit down and look at all of it as one package, let's not try to pick off one item at a time, leaving the pharmacists and the communities, frankly, in a weaker position every time.

Again, the communities will be at risk if the pharmacist just says, that's it, it's not tenable, I can't do this anymore. That would be something that none of us would ever want to see happen because we know that all of our health care professionals are in short supply. We've talked a lot about the shortages of doctors here and how we need to educate more doctors. We don't seem to have the ability to do that and we don't have enough money in our Medical School, it seems, from the provincial government, to sponsor more students and help them get through that rigorous and lengthy process.

We know exactly how many doctors are going to be graduating from our local Medical School at Dalhousie and we know we know what kind of shortages are coming and we're going to know even more clearly when we get the physician resource plan, which has finally been announced.

The government only recently announced that they hired somebody to actually sit down and look at where the physicians are, when they're going to retire, whether they're staying in the province, and what our future needs are. When we see that in black in white, Madam Speaker, we're going to realize even more how we need to make use of nurse practitioners, pharmacists and every other health care professional that we've got. We need to extend their services. Our RNs are tremendously well trained, even without going that extra length of becoming nurse practitioners; we can extend their scope as well and have them do more, which we've been working on.

We know that every single player in the health care system and health professionals need to have their scope expanded. That's why today we are speaking of just one of them but we don't want to do anything that's going drive them to a point where they don't want to practise in the Province of Nova Scotia. We just want to make sure that there's an accommodation and a willingness to consult with the pharmacists that can help us get over this bumpy, short period of time.

Everything is coming very quickly, and as I said, if things work according to plan, Madam Speaker, the new tariff agreement with the pharmacists should be decided by July 1st and that's very soon. That is one of the fundamental pieces that we spoke about. It may

be a bit longer before we know what the outcome is of the negotiations or the committee that is looking at the reimbursement for the extra services that pharmacists are going to take on.

I think it's really a courtesy and necessary that we look at what the request is from the Pharmacy Association of Nova Scotia to just slow down that little bit to allow all the factors to be laid out at one time and a fair negotiation. That's really what we're saying. It is a fair negotiation, when you go in to the negotiation table, knowing all of the factors that are at play.

It is not really fair to call people in to negotiate things piecemeal. We would never do that with a union. We wouldn't expect them to negotiate their vacation in one sitting totally separate from pension agreements or totally separate from their actual remuneration salary agreements. We don't do that. We sit down with a whole package and we negotiate all of those; we have trade-offs, and give and take is what a negotiation should be.

I know with the professionals that we are talking about here today, the pharmacists, we know that they would sit down in good faith and do that because they fully support what the Minister of Health and Wellness is trying to do in reining in the prices of generic drugs. They understand that more and more drugs are on the formulary, more and more drugs are available because of the science and the research that we have both here and elsewhere. Those drugs are opening up a whole new world for people with chronic disease and illness. They are allowing people, who otherwise would probably be disabled or out of the workforce, to continue to work, to continue to live full lives, and be active in parts of their community and active volunteers.

As we lament the cost of drugs, we have to remember people are living longer but they are also living in a more healthy way. They are able to remain active and vital a lot longer, and I know for many people the reason for that is because of drugs that are allowing them to continue to manage chronic illness and continue to almost overcome it. Even though the disease isn't cured, the drugs allow them to overcome the debilitating effects and continue to be active.

So drug costs are going in one direction only and that is we're going to have more drugs on the market, and more people benefiting from those drugs, but the pressure the Health and Wellness Department felt is undeniable. We know that it is the fastest-growing component in our health care system right now. There is definitely a need for us to discuss it and look at it.

I believe when I was talking before I had mentioned the figure, and right now our Pharmacare plans cost us \$300 million, roughly, last year. We know that there is a very large cost, and a growing cost for seniors and for others, and we have to recognize why it's a benefit.

I think it's important to talk about the many things our pharmacists have taken on just as a matter of course for no reimbursement whatsoever. They routinely sit down with patients and people who come to their counter to talk about what's wrong, what hurts, what kind of rash does the person have, do they have an infection in their eye? People will come in for things like that and ask the pharmacist, what should I take or what's available here? Is there anything over the counter or what can you do to help me? They take the time to do that all day long. They don't think twice about it because that is what they're trained to do and that's what they want to do, to provide that kind of help and support.

I've often been told if you can't get in to see your doctor, go over to the pharmacy because you may find the answer right there. People have come to depend on them greatly for that. I know from speaking to pharmacists that they will go out of their way to make deliveries to people. All of us have seniors, some of them in isolated locations. It's very difficult sometimes for those people to get to the pharmacy and pick up their drugs. The pharmacists often offer a free delivery service to seniors and shut-ins or people who might be at home recovering from surgery - any number of reasons why they can't get out.

I spoke here before about people who are homeless or living in shelters or might otherwise be in our emergency rooms and our hospitals if it weren't for the pharmacist finding them and making sure they had their insulin for their diabetes, making sure they had the drugs that keep them out of the emergency room. That is not as uncommon as you might believe. I had the opportunity to speak to a number of the pharmacists when they had their gathering to talk to us. They spoke to all MLAs and they wanted us to understand their commitment to good health and supporting the health of Nova Scotians.

What they had been doing that's really gone unnoticed would be all of those free services that they provide. Free blood pressure checks, diabetes checks, blood glucose level checks - you can go in and have these things done on a regular weekly basis - foot care clinics, all kinds of things happening at your local pharmacy. They do that because they know that supports good health. Those things will be very difficult to maintain if we continue along this line.

One of the other points in this bill directly is that Bill No. 17, when they outline how we're going to decrease the costs of generic drugs, is very clear. The drugs will be priced based on the cost of its equivalent brand name product. As a drug's patent expires, it then goes to a generic version and the brand name is no longer protected and exclusive and generic drugs appear on the market. They have been averaging about 63 per cent of the cost of the brand name drug but that is high given the fact that the generic companies have had to do no research, they haven't had to invest in any kind of marketing for the product. They simply have been able to copy those molecules, repeat it in their factories and come up with the generic drug.

Very often the cost is very, very low for those individual drugs. The average price has been coming out at about 63 per cent of the price of the brand name where the company

has undertaken often billion dollar research programs to come up with some of these wonderful new drugs.

The bill's intent is to ultimately lower that to 35 per cent but starting at 45, then going to 40 and then going to 35 per cent. One of my points about that is just that when I first saw that I thought it was in a very speedy manner, I guess would be the way to put it, but we're looking at a decrease to 45 per cent immediately on July 1, 2011. Just six months later we're looking at it going down another 5 per cent to 40 per cent and then six months later, within that one year, we're down to 35 per cent. The generic price will be 35 per cent of the brand name price.

Although the goal is to get to 35 per cent, my suggestion is that we're going very quickly from what is now 63 per cent all the way down very fast over that one-year period to 35 per cent. In order for a business to adapt and to understand the impacts that are coming from all of the things that I've outlined to you, Madam Speaker, and to the members of the House, with all of these major forces that are coming at them, it's going to be very difficult to adjust prices three times like that; just bang, bang, bang through the year. They will not have time to assess what the impact is of the first change before they are right into the second. If things aren't going smoothly, it doesn't matter; they'll just be rolling right along to July 1, 2012 when we get to the targeted 35 per cent.

Madam Speaker, I would like to know how much time I have left.

MADAM SPEAKER: About seven minutes.

MS. WHALEN: Oh, very little time, I'm sorry to hear it's so little. Isn't that a shame, but I know others have some important points they want to raise as well.

Madam Speaker, I would like to raise, again, the issue of the rural pharmacies that are going to be at risk, and again going back to the fact that the Department of Health had actually recognized that problem, acknowledged that there will be some pharmacies at risk, and have identified where they are. None of us in the House know where those pharmacies are.

I think there is really, I would like to say, an obligation on the part of government to tell those pharmacies and to tell the communities where they feel there is a risk because the government already knows that the way they want to approach mitigating that risk is through the tariff agreement, which is coming down in July. If we're going to have a tariff agreement in place, and that agreement is going to acknowledge and compensate in some way for the insecurity in certain areas of the province and the fear or perhaps the very real possibility of losing a pharmacy in parts of the province, I think those communities have a right to be on alert, to be recognizing what that is, to be supportive of their pharmacies if they realize they are on that list.

I'm not speaking from any personal interest here because my community is well served in Clayton Park. We have many viable pharmacies, but I did mention that there are some that do not have all the other departments, like a Walmart, that are going to support the pharmacy if, in fact, it becomes unprofitable or just not able to make ends meet. At the end of the day these people have rent and staff and a store; they have buildings and maintenance; they have benefits for their staff; they have costs of transportation, education and everything that goes along with being an employer.

We can't ignore that. They're not operating in a public system like doctors are; they're not operating in a hospital. It's interesting as we change certain rules, we're not touching pharmacists who are in hospital settings because they are on salaries; it's a different arrangement. Right now we go to extensive efforts to educate and train our pharmacists and then they have to become self-employed and run a business. So there's nothing wrong with saying, how do we help them maintain that business and contribute to their communities?

I spoke about one community, the community of Liverpool, and their pharmacy was no longer hiring students this summer. They hoped to return to that again, as soon as they know whether they are viable, whether they can stay in business, but right now, in order to just keep the doors open, they feel they have to cut back every way possible. That means no students, no advertising, no sponsorships, Madam Speaker. You know, and all of us know, how much our community organizations rely on sponsorship to keep going - our ball teams, our hockey, our soccer, baseball, all of the other activities, the community events, the celebrations that we have, theatre festivals, all of that requires local business to step up and help sponsor.

In the small community of Liverpool, just to take that example, here you have one of their major employers saying no, I can't sponsor anymore, I'm sorry, I can't give to the hospital foundation drive or whatever good cause is going on in that area. I can't sponsor Privateer Days anymore because they just don't have the assurance that they'll be in business if they do. So like any small business, they've had to rein in their spending, curtail their spending, cut everything possible, in order to ensure that they are in business next year. That's not the way they want to do business, they want to be part of the community, they want to continue to support that community and they want to continue to offer the free services that they have done up to this point.

Madam Speaker, I think we owe a vote of thanks to the pharmacists for all that they have done over the years and I mention again it has not been because we've increased their dispensing fee because that has been fixed. For almost 25 years there has been a \$1 increase, less than 10 per cent, or roughly a 10 per cent increase over 25 years. No other business that I know of would still be operating with that kind of a decrease essentially given the cost of inflation.

We know again, Madam Speaker, 1,400 fees went up this year for the Province of Nova Scotia to compensate for the increased costs of delivering services. Now, why haven't we asked the pharmacists the same thing – what are your true costs of delivering and dispensing pharmaceuticals? Let's look at whether or not the province can actually come to a level where they can increase enough to give them the true cost. Because we have to find a model, where the pharmacists are going to be reimbursed fairly for their high level of education and high commitment to the community. Their strong willingness to work with government to control drug prices but also to play a significant role in the delivery of health care in this province.

So I hope that through the Law Amendments Committee process, Madam Speaker, we will hear more directly from the pharmacists and the Pharmacy Association of Nova Scotia and others. Maybe from the consumers as well, about what they would like to see, and I will certainly be listening at that point. Thank you very much.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle. (Interruption)

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Madam Speaker, I hear the Deputy Premier across the way there making a few comments and just for that, I'll go a little bit longer than I was planning on. (Interruptions) No, we won't start off in that kind of realm.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: I'm a bad example. (Laughter)

MR. D'ENTREMONT: Yes, you are the bad example, make sure we know that. (Laughter)

I'm very happy to stand today to speak a little bit on Bill No. 17, the Fair Drug Pricing Act, one that I think has gone through a lot of thought by this government and by the Department of Health and Wellness, one that, I remember a number of times during my time as minister this was discussed.

So it's good to see some of these things here today but, Madam Speaker, we can all agree, it doesn't matter which side of the House of Assembly that we stand upon, we believe that Nova Scotians are paying too much for prescription drugs. We spend well over \$300 million as a taxpayer for our Pharmacare Programs, whether that's the Seniors' Pharmacare Program, whether that's the Family Pharmacare Program, whether that's the Community Services program. So a fair amount of taxpayers' dollars, of course, go towards funding that. Yet as MLAs, I can say that a lot of times we get contacted by our constituents asking either about the things that Pharmacare doesn't cover and then if it's something that Pharmacare is not covering, nor can it cover, nor can it get an exception, then we find out about the cost. We find out about how expensive certain drugs, are certain therapies, certain inhalers and such that are tremendously expensive.

So, Madam Speaker, this bill does try to address some of those issues by going directly at the pharmacies across Nova Scotia and try to bring down the costs of generic

drugs. Now, we feel that with the increases in user fees, the increase in HST, that of course Nova Scotians need and deserve some relief from this government. There will be no doubt that this bill will mean savings to the Pharmacare Program. Unfortunately, those savings will not be passed on sufficiently to the people in need of medicine. They will pay the same premium. They will pay the same co-pay albeit on a lower base price.

Mr. Speaker, we all know that many seniors reach the maximum co-pay quite early in their year of \$382; this legislation doesn't change that. So, even though we're saying we're going to save money for seniors, the seniors themselves don't save a cent because they're going to max out at \$382. When the minister introduced the bill, the minister told reporters this legislation would save seniors about \$30 per prescription in the example that she was trying to portray but one pharmacist who wrote to us said he believed the minister was maybe misquoted. He said that most prescriptions don't even cost seniors \$30 when they are refilled, the average co-pay that most seniors pay is around \$15 to \$20.

According to this pharmacist, the NDP numbers just don't add up, not only from pharmacists - and I know the member for Halifax Clayton Park talked about PANS, the Pharmacy Association of Nova Scotia and the many letters that our caucuses are receiving, in opposition to what this bill really means.

There is little doubt that this bill will have a negative effect on many pharmacies and the pharmacists, the health care professionals who deliver services that many Nova Scotians want and value in some cases, services that they cannot do without.

What is a pharmacist? They are a trusted and valued health care professional, often the most successful health care professional in their community. They are always at the end of the phone to provide advice or reassurance. In some places they provide 24-hour-a-day services. I think many of them carry pagers, so even after hours you still have a number to call in case you either need a drug if you are coming out of an emergency room or a clinic, or you are worried about a loved one, a child, mother, father, and need some reassurance or need an over-the-counter drug that might help them through the evenings or through the night.

In the pharmacy the professionals are often the first point and the only point of contact with the health care system, when Nova Scotians are looking for advice on everything from a head cold to a colicky baby. Because of this legislation, many small rural pharmacies may not be able to offer these services anymore. I'll get more to the issue of dollars and cents in a few moments.

The pharmacists will have to choose between the hardships of depriving their neighbours, clients and other community members of needed services and the financial hardship of providing these services at a loss.

Madam Speaker, when we were at the Pharmacy Association reception the other evening I, too, had an opportunity to speak to the Liverpool Pharmasave owner, Mr. Reynolds. He was talking about the whole issue of the tariff or of the payment that they get for a dispensing fee. What happens is that the province pays, I think, somewhere near \$12 per prescription for those folks on the provincial plans. I think that's very similar to the private plans as well.

When you cost it all in, it costs about \$16 to actually produce that drug or provide that drug to many of his clients. He has made his decision to make some changes in his business and to make a decision not to invest heavily in his community, whether it is by supporting hockey teams, baseball teams, or even to the point of advertising in local papers and on local radio.

Mr. Speaker, in many towns, pharmacists are active community volunteers and financial contributors and, as I said, many local charities will be going without this year because of this. This legislation represents substantial changes to their business model in a relatively short time, certainly a shorter time than they were expecting. That's a key issue, too, I think many pharmacies, the Pharmacy Association, knew there were changes coming but they didn't realize that within a year they'd be losing that much of an amount to their business plan.

Many of these rural pharmacies are facing uncertain futures. We've heard some pharmacists - some of the members in this caucus will be speaking to their local pharmacies - that have been saying they're holding off on expansions or they are holding off on opening new locations or they are holding off on hiring new staff.

I'm going to read a little bit from a letter that I received from my local pharmacist. Genny Prouty and Craig Prouty own the Pharmasave in West Pubnico, after buying it a couple of years ago from Ted D'Eon, who ran that pharmacy for a really long time. Many of the members opposite would remember Ingrid D'Eon, who did work for your caucus for some time, well her father owned this pharmacy at one time. Genny and Craig picked it up a couple of years ago, a substantial investment to purchase this facility and to continue to provide the excellent service that it was providing to the Pubnico area - not only the Pubnico area but we have the East Pubnicos, I would probably guess that some people drive in from even the Shelburne County line and quite a large area that it does serve.

Genny writes, "To start off with, I've found some numbers to relate to these cuts in generic prices. It's just a rough estimate using data correlation [sic] from last years [sic] sales. But it gives an idea of what would happen if the gov't follows through on this and does not introduce new compensation for other tasks/services." I'll talk about the tariff agreement and those tasks and services later on.

"These numbers are only for Pharmacare recipients and does not take into account any other plans or cash customers. For me that represents about 48 % of my business. At 45% of brand, my 6 month loss would be \$35,000, at 40% of brand it would be \$42,000 for

the next 6 months and at 35% it would be \$100,000/year after that.” That’s a substantial loss on a very small change. It seems to be a very small change, a very small adaptation to the way pharmacies treat these kinds of drugs.

She goes on to say, “Small independent [sic] rural pharmacies rely heavily on the pharmacy department to bring in revenue. We do not have a large client base to have ‘supermarket’ type front stores. With this type of loss of revenue, . . . It would mean cutbacks in staff (front store and dispensary), leading to decrease in store hours and providing only the services which we are paid to do (dispensing drugs and counselling on that drug) Over the years we have provided many ‘free’ services . . . such as drug deliveries, explaining to seniors how the Pharmacare program works and helping them decipher forms, OTC counselling where the patient may walk out without ever buying a thing, triage for the ER dep’t, blister packaging at a greatly reduced rate, disease management counselling. This does not include any of the new services that pharmacists may be able to provide. Of course, in the end this will lead to a decrease in access to Health Care, especially in rural areas.” As soon as I’m done I will table that as well.

So Genny is looking at a very uncertain future when it goes to the business that she just purchased along with her husband. If you look at the 35 per cent and she looks at losing \$100,000 of possible revenue, it puts her in a very uncertain place of whether the business model that she has invested in, the one that she is depending on over a number of years to pay the mortgage, pay the business loans, to purchase her facility. I sympathize with her because the issue is that we really haven’t gotten a straight idea on what the further compensation is going to be for pharmacists.

Madam Speaker, we talk about the tariff agreement. The tariff agreement, of course, is the listing of services that pharmacies provide to Nova Scotians and that they are paid for. That goes in to the dispensing issue but also another slate of services that they are to provide and in the future to continue to provide.

Last year in this House of Assembly we passed another piece of legislation that expanded the scope of practice of pharmacists, one that I supported, one that our Party supported because we hear a lot from pharmacists of things they should be able to do. Those are things like med reviews, to look at the full slate of drugs that a patient is looking at to make adjustments to those, to continue very simple drug therapies such as Warfarin and those kinds of things, extend a blood pressure medication, some very routine things. As well as at this point doing more counselling and doing injections. We definitely brought on more services for pharmacies so that Nova Scotians could get better care sooner so that they could receive the services closer to home.

When you’re talking to some of the pharmacists, they feel that in order to offer counselling, in order to allow injections, for instance, many of them have to put some infrastructure in place in those pharmacies, such as extra rooms in order to provide these services. Not only are we asking them to do a little more, we’re asking them to invest more

in their businesses and right now there's the uncertainty of how much they're actually going to be paid for many of these services. There is no agreement in place and pharmacies are unable to make any long-term plans.

One Cape Breton pharmacy has put his plans to expand his Whitney Pier pharmacy on hold until he gets some level of certainty that a fair and equitable funding arrangement has been negotiated with the government. Last year this government, as I said, introduced amendments to the Pharmacy Act that allowed pharmacists to expand their scope of service. Like I said, as much as we support those services, we didn't expect pharmacists - nor did the pharmacists expect - to perform these services for free.

Why are we talking about this issue when the tariff agreement isn't done yet? Why couldn't these two things sort of flow together so it creates that issue of certainty. Like I said, on the face of the bill, saving Nova Scotians money on drugs is a good thing, but ultimately if we don't know if pharmacies are going to be available to them, it sort of defeats the whole purpose of this issue.

Obviously these measures are going to de-stabilize many small pharmacies. This piecemeal approach was the wrong way to go. Government should have presented a comprehensive package that lets pharmacists predict where their business might be in 12 to 18 months. There's an old joke that goes, I've got some good news and I've got some bad news. Well, the government has delivered the bad news to pharmacists, but it hasn't given any hints yet about the good news and that's the tariff agreement and the fee schedules for these expanded services. All of these components should have been handled together as one comprehensive unit, just as Nova Scotia's pharmacists wanted.

I understand the Pharmacy Association has already contacted the minister about their concerns and of course I'll leave them to speak for themselves. However, I will say that several members of our caucus have heard from pharmacists who are very worried about the de-stabilizing effect that this legislation will have on business. Our primary concern is the needs of Nova Scotians so when we hear that rural pharmacies fear for their business and will no longer be viable, we worry that this legislation will deprive people of those valued services.

We worry that some people will have to travel great distances in order to get the medicines they need. Earlier I talked about Genny and Craig Prouty and their pharmacy. Now, they're 45 kilometres from the nearest pharmacy so if they end up closing, it defeats the whole issue of saving money because people are, of course, going to have to travel that 45 kilometres - 90 kilometres return - pay the high fuel cost and the taxes that go with that, so there is really no savings to Nova Scotians. There is really only savings to the government.

We also feel that as they lose some of these local pharmacies or rural pharmacies, they'll no longer have the benefit or the advice they receive from those local pharmacists. Many of the local pharmacies are run by individuals who have been at it for many years

and have the experience of knowing those individuals. You know, Mrs. Jones takes this drug or she takes this drug and he knows the interactions and lifestyle that she leads.

In many of the larger pharmacies I think that doesn't happen quite as readily as it does in some of these small places. In some areas on-call pharmacies are the only medical professional available after hours. We're worried this bill will mean that important and valuable services will no longer be financially viable for pharmacists. Surely this is not the intent of Better Care Sooner.

I read with interest the response the good member for Kings South wrote to Valley pharmacists. In her letter she told pharmacists that government values the important and trusted role the community pharmacies play and is looking carefully at any potential impact changes might have on rural pharmacies. Pharmacists are telling them that the impact will be fewer pharmacies, fewer services, shorter hours and in some cases, closed pharmacies.

Our caucus would like the government to slow down a little bit, take a step back, consider the real impact of Bill No. 17 and the effect it will have on Nova Scotians who rely on the services that pharmacies provide. We look forward to hearing the presentations at the Law Amendments Committee as they come along. We did have that opportunity to sit and chat with many pharmacists the other night at the Pharmacy Association meeting. It does concern us when you hear people say: My business model doesn't work anymore. What I was able to do, or how I was able to provide it, will not work under this model.

The added point is, who gets the savings? If you're seeing fairer drug prices, most Nova Scotians would think, great, that means I'm going to get a bit of a break on my drug prices. Really, this doesn't happen, not under this bill. Yes, there's a \$6 million savings on a \$300 million program. You know, \$6 million may be reinvested in the expanded scope of services, we don't know that, that hasn't been provided to us yet, whether that's going to be happening.

Will the pharmacists be happy with the new tariff agreement as it comes along, as it's negotiated with them? That's a long and drawn-out process too. Many times we talk about not negotiating things on the floor of the Legislature, not negotiating in the media, but, ultimately, I think the pharmacists are concerned that they're not being heard or they're not being understood that what you're asking us to do, in this expanded scope of services, is a lot. Like I said, there are infrastructure issues that many of these smaller pharmacies are unable to do without some substantial construction when it comes to the counselling offices, the counselling areas that they're able to do this, and the added time.

Just the other day when we talked about pharmacy technicians, (Interruptions) an introduction? Oh, sure.

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please. I apologize for the interruption. The honourable Minister of Community Services on an introduction.

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: Thank you Madam Speaker and thank you to the honourable member for allowing me this opportunity to make this introduction. I'm extremely pleased today, it's an honour for me to introduce to the House, in the east gallery, we have some very special guests that are here from Zwýndrecht - I don't think I did the "drecht" right, they were trying to get me to practise that kind of "drecht", it doesn't come out well but at least I gave it a try - in the Netherlands. They represent Develstein College and they're here for an exchange program with Forest Heights Community School, which is located in Chester Basin, in my constituency. There are 39 participants, we have four chaperones today; two are from the Chester area, Connie Bird and Shannon Broome, if they could stand to be recognized along with two chaperones from the Netherlands, Sam De Bruijn and Frans De Wilde. If we could offer them a big round of applause to welcome them to our beautiful province. (Applause)

MADAM SPEAKER: I certainly welcome each and every one of you to the gallery today and any visitors that we have here today, I'm not sure if they're mixed in amongst you or not, but welcome.

The honourable member for Argyle.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: Madam Speaker, I thought the minister was really interested in what I was saying but really she was looking for some time to introduce. Many times when we sit in the House and there's somebody behind us, we really don't know they're there. So welcome to the Nova Scotia Legislature and I hope I don't bore you too much in our discussion here today but ultimately this is one that's important to Nova Scotians as we look at better health care services to Nova Scotians.

Like I was saying, it's the issue of who has got the fair drug price. Let's not be fooled that this means lower drug prices for Nova Scotians as I started off this discussion. When you go to the pharmacy and you don't have any insurance, whether that be private or one of the provincial plans, this will not save you a cent. You hope what will happen is that some of those prices will get dragged down because of competition along the way but there is really no guarantee because it doesn't get at that. Actually what it might end up doing is it might increase it a little bit because the pharmacists are going to have to offset the loss that they're going to be incurring in order to pay the bills.

I go back to Genny and Craig who run the Pharmasave in West Pubnico, it's a beautiful facility, it provides everything that a pharmacy should provide. It has a nice little section for items for your home, or some home decorating. I mean it's amazing what some of these pharmacies do in order to make some money to continue the service to their community.

So, Madam Speaker, what we would hate to see is to lose those valuable pieces of infrastructure or to truly jeopardize the business model that many of these pharmacies work under. I know some of the members will talk a little bit about the CFIB and their concern because they've been hearing from their members as well, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, and they're concerned that this bill will have too harsh an effect on those businesses. I know many of the members in this House, whether it's the Minister of Agriculture, or the Minister of Education, the member for Pictou East, will have local pharmacies that I'm sure are knocking on their doors saying, what the heck is going on and how are we going to be able to fix it?

The tariff agreement, of course, is exactly where we should be fixing it. Maybe if we can do anything in this House, it is to slow it down just a little bit and make sure that all the pieces are in place so that the business models of many of these local pharmacies are protected. Again, the \$6 million savings I think that the minister has talked about over the last number of weeks, I think is a good start and good savings. It will provide some relief to the budget, to the Pharmacare budget in Nova Scotia, but then again, like I said, it's a \$300 million investment and \$6 million is a very small number. If there's any way that we could slow it down and maybe save \$4 million, let's say by making some of those adjustments and make sure that we don't go to 35 per cent of brand immediately. Maybe we take that first step a little slower, move that off so that over time it's a little, you know, it's an easier pill to swallow. I hate to use something like that, but local pharmacies would look at that as being a bit of a win because, Madam Speaker, this is about better health care services.

At the end of the day it's about the patient in our communities, it's about the constituents that we represent. If they're going to be less served because of a decision of government, then I think we all need to stop and relook at many of these issues. So with that, I look forward to seeing this continue along its way through our Legislative process. I do look forward to seeing the comments from community members, pharmacists, during our Law Amendments Committee process, where I know there will be many people coming in to present to that, to really hear their input. I know the e-mails are one thing but to truly hear it from pharmacists I think is another and I think that's going to be very important in all of us making a decision on whether this is the right direction to go or not.

We think at this point that this isn't the right direction, it's maybe a good start, maybe a step forward but unless it truly saves money and makes it better for a patient to receive drugs or a better drug system, then it's not doing its work. It's not doing the right thing and we would look forward to it actually being - look at the Nova Scotia flag, that's great. I'm not supposed to acknowledge anything that is happening out there but it's good to have people visiting our Legislature.

With that I thank you very much for the opportunity to speak on Bill No. 17. I look forward to the other comments that will be going on this evening. I look forward to the process, thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester North.

HON. KAREN CASEY: Madam Speaker, I'm pleased to rise in my place today and to speak about the impact that Bill No. 17 can have, both positive and negative, because I think we owe it to the bill to give it a fair understanding and a fair analysis. There certainly are good intentions in Bill No. 17 and I want to acknowledge that right away. It's hard to oppose a bill that is going to give fair drug prices, it's hard to oppose a bill that is going to address the cost of generic drugs, so in principle it is a good bill.

One of the concerns I'm hearing from pharmacists in my area has to do with the haste in getting the bill passed, before the Fair Tariff Agreement has been finalized. They don't understand why we cannot wait for that detail and for that negotiation to be completed. It's almost like asking them to support something that is void of detail. It's asking them to trust that this will work out to their benefit.

As people in the House know, and I know that many other members do the same as I do and that is represent a very rural part of the province, we don't have the luxury in some of those rural communities of choices as to which pharmacy we may go to. In many rural communities we don't even have a pharmacy, so when you do get an entrepreneur who is willing, in many cases, to borrow money, take the risk, establish a pharmacy in a rural part of the province - you know profit margin is not high. They don't have the volume of people coming through their doors but they do it, in many cases, because they believe in small rural communities.

In the case of Colchester North in particular, there are two pharmacies that are pretty rural. They are a long distance from a community or a centre where there would be choices. If you go into the Town of Truro you have many pharmacies. You have the large chain stores which all have their own pharmacy and whichever one of those chain stores it might be, Madam Speaker, people have a choice. So when they're close to that centre, that's fine, but when you get out into the rural and remote parts of Colchester North, you don't have that choice.

As I said, when a druggist, a pharmacist, decides that he wants to establish a small community pharmacy in one of those remote areas, it's a huge investment. The pharmacists I've been hearing from who have done that are nervous. They've had to borrow money, they've had to go without taking a salary out of the revenue at the pharmacy, and so the uncertainty of this is what is concerning them.

One of the things that they have opted to do, which I believe speaks highly of their commitment to rural Nova Scotia, to Nova Scotians in general and perhaps to seniors, is that in their facility they have opened, they have opted to provide a whole menu of services, again, services to the people who live in those rural communities, services that otherwise those residents may not be able to benefit from because of the distance they would have to drive.

I will speak particularly about my community in Bass River, which is midpoint between Truro and Parrsboro; you have about a 45-minute drive either way. As seniors or as residents in that community want to enjoy some of the benefits of expanded services in those pharmacies, they have to make the decision to drive. In many cases they make the decision that they will not drive, so they are denied the opportunity to take advantage of some of those services. The small pharmacy that is located there is trying to provide those services as a service to the residents so that they will have access to health programs, to programs that will contribute to their wellness, and those services are what gels the community and they are gelling around the local pharmacy.

I've asked the pharmacist to give me lists of some of those services that they are able to provide - this is above and beyond the prescription - but my point is if they are not able to maintain the drug store for the purpose of giving prescription drugs, then all of the other services will be lost.

For example, there is after-hour emergency, on call; if someone needs some medication, and it's after hours they have an opportunity, through the local pharmacy, setup to get that after-hour, emergency, on-call service. Many of these smaller pharmacies are able to provide blood glucose monitoring; they provide blood pressure monitoring and they do the blood collection.

Again these are services that help to contribute to the wellness of our population. But if you are 45 minutes to an hour away from a centre, chances of you loading into the car or getting a driver to drive you, if you're a senior, to have your blood pressure checked or to give blood for testing in the lab, you may not do it. The fear that the pharmacists have is that if they're not able to survive because of the unknowns within Bill No. 17, then to all of these services they will have to say to the community, sorry I have to close my doors, I can't continue.

We have counsellors who come to the rural pharmacies and they provide education on diabetes; they have foot care clinics and we know that many seniors go to foot care clinics if they're in their own community. The strength of having these services available is one of the reasons why the pharmacists in my communities have said to me, will the government please look at the services that our community has because we have chosen to locate here and will they be fair with us and will they allow us to know the details around the Fair Tariff Agreement before they push through the bill?

I've heard the member from the Third Party talk about people coming before the Law Amendments Committee and people having an opportunity to speak. We know that there will be people there. We know they have concerns and they have asked us on their behalf to do that.

Along with the services that are provided in these rural pharmacies and clinics are employment opportunities. For example, if you have someone who comes in to do blood

collection maybe two days a week, maybe one morning a week, whatever the schedule will be, in order to deliver that service, someone has to be employed. Maybe it's a technician or a nurse who would travel around from one small pharmacy to another, or it may be somebody local. It may be a nurse or a technician who comes in and gets a few hours of work in their own community; they don't have to incur expenses to drive to Parrsboro or Truro, but they do have an opportunity. It's the same with dieticians. Maybe one morning a week they have sessions on wellness and healthy eating and they have a dietician who comes in and who has these sessions, which are, again, designed for wellness and preventive kinds of health care.

We know that we have children who, unfortunately, have asthma. We have adults who have asthma. We need to make sure that they understand their illness and that they are aware of the risks and they're aware of the lifestyle that they should be living and they become more in control of their illness, or their disease. That all comes about through these small community meetings where the dietician or the nurse or the counsellor comes in and has an opportunity to help educate; that doesn't happen if you have to get in your vehicle and drive one hour one way, if you have to hire a driver to drive you one hour one way. Those are the services that will be lost in our rural communities if we are putting rural pharmacists in a position where they cannot survive.

All of the detail that rural pharmacists, in particular, are asking for can be, and I believe will be, decided and it will be made public and it will be, I believe, positive, but in the absence of that information, they're saying, we want the government to wait. We are not opposed to Bill No. 17; our caucus is not opposed to Bill No. 17, but we are opposed to pushing it through, in haste, without the detail that will either give these rural pharmacists the reassurance that, yes, I am going to be able to survive, I am going to be able to continue to provide services and supports to this rural community or they will decide, no, sorry, I can't do it, but let them have the detail, let them make an informed decision. All of that will, I believe, come out, as it should, as we move through Bill No. 17, but let us not do it in haste. Pharmacists are not sure of the expanded scope of practice for them.

There are so many unknowns that are coming together here that are causing anxiety and on behalf of those pharmacists, I want to make sure that the members of government are aware of these, that they understand the serious impact that it can have, not just for the pharmacist, but for all of the people in those rural communities who benefit from having a local pharmacy in their own community. We want to protect those. You know, I understood that in questioning of the minister that the suggestion was made that some rural pharmacies have been protected, but they're out there wondering - who? Am I one of the ones protected or am I not? Again, it's that bit of information that would help provide that reassurance. That reassurance, if it's there - and if you know that you're a rural pharmacist in Tatamagouche and you know that there has been some consideration given to the fact that you're a small pharmacy in a small community and that you're going to be protected, you're sort of on the protected list, that is a huge amount of comfort for that pharmacist, for that pharmacy owner.

So we would like to know, and they would like to know, if there is a protected list and if they're on it, and if there is, what is the big secret? Why not share it? Why not let people know that, yes, and we've looked at these, we've identified these, we're going to work with these rural pharmacists, and I have every bit of confidence, Madam Speaker, that the minister will do that, and I would hope that the minister will identify and will knock on those doors and say you're on the list as being identified as a rural pharmacy that we want to protect, and then talk to them about that level of protection. So I would be asking the minister if that has happened and if it has, wonderful. If it hasn't, I would be asking that it would happen because right now they are anxious. They are worried and they are wondering.

As we all know, in the absence of information, people think the worst. So let's not cause undue anxiety and worry. Let's give them the information. Let's make them part of the decision-making. Let's get their input and let's strengthen Bill No. 17 by allowing that to happen. It is a good bill. It has the potential to help Nova Scotians and I don't want the minister to forget that many of the Nova Scotians who benefit from the small rural pharmacies will be without service if that small pharmacy owner is not able to survive. We have taken two departments and put them together into Health and Wellness and the minister who's responsible for both certainly sees the connection between those two and I think the health of rural communities is very much a part of what she understands to be contributing to preventive rather than reactive health services.

So let's make sure that our communities are not left out, that those who have those services are able to keep them, and they're being provided now through the local pharmacy. So let's make sure, Madam Speaker, that the local pharmacy is able to survive and continue to be the centre, the focal point in that community for health and wellness.

Madam Speaker, as I said earlier, our caucus supports Bill No. 17 but we do have those unanswered questions and on behalf of the pharmacies in my area, in Colchester North, and I believe similar pharmacies around rural Nova Scotia, Colchester North is one example, but around Nova Scotia there are similar pharmacies and they in turn are asking the same thing. So with those comments, I will take my place and look forward to hearing from other members as we move through Bill No. 17.

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

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Madam Speaker, it's my pleasure to rise to speak to Bill No. 17, the Fair Drug Pricing Act, today. I used the title of the bill because, once again, we're presented with a bill in this House that sounds good on the surface, a bill that the government has brought in and claimed that consultation with all affected parties has been done, that nobody has any issues, that all of the wrinkles have been worked out, and that it's going to be all good for all involved. We went through this exact scenario in the last session with Bill No. 100 only to find after the bill made it to second reading in the House

that, in fact, a pretty significant portion of the population had not been involved in the consultations and, in fact, had serious problems with the bill.

In the case of Bill No. 100, those of us on this side of the House were swamped with letters, e-mails and calls from a wide variety of Nova Scotians, in that case employers, particularly non-unionized employers, which is the vast majority, and now here we are the very next session, Madam Speaker, and it appears that the government has not learned its lesson. They present Bill No. 17, another bill that has an innocent sounding title and has been presented with the same claims about consultation, yet here we are in second reading and again, those of us on this side of the House are swamped with letters and calls and e-mails from Nova Scotia's independent pharmacists who were not involved in the consultations leading up to the bill, who were left out of the drafting and the pre-work that is normally done, who were given an enormously short period of time to respond to the government's own discussion papers and so on and now are panicked, like employers were in the case of Bill No. 100, that major financial change will happen to their industry that will leave them out in the cold.

I say that, Madam Speaker, because we learned the lesson the last time and now here we are, living through it again. After all, the government claims to have consulted widely, and maybe wisely, but that also turned out not to be the case because surely, if you are truly consulting, the Pharmacy Association of Nova Scotia would have been one of the people that was consulted.

Yet they are at the forefront, on behalf of our independent pharmacists, calling for the government to slow down, to hold up and to wait for the rest of the story to happen when it comes to restructuring of our pharmacies. Surely the pharmacists themselves, the independent pharmacists that are scattered around our province would have been involved in the discussion. Yet we are hearing from them, both as Opposition members and as MLAs from our own riding, surely they would have been involved.

Madam Speaker, the pharmacists of Nova Scotia play a very important part in the delivery of health care services, something that has not been recognized appropriately in Bill No. 17, or in the run-up to Bill No. 17. As an example, some of the pharmacies in my own riding of Cumberland South where we have, for example, Ross Anderson's Pharmacy, in Springhill. They are a vital part of health care delivery in the Town of Springhill. Not only do they dispense prescription drugs, which every pharmacy does, but they provide a lot of other services.

The fact of the matter is that at All Saints, the ER, is open sometimes and it is closed at other times. Where do government members think that residents of Springhill - and I use Springhill as an example but also other places - where do they think residents go when they have a headache or when they are dizzy or when they have a sore stomach or chest pain? Often they go to their local pharmacy and it is actually the pharmacists who provide that first level of service and of triage, identifying where that resident needs to go in our health system, in our emergency health system, for treatment. That is a service that is provided

without any cost to the government, to the health system. The pharmacists do it because they are able and they are there and, under the old model, they could afford to.

In Ross Anderson's Pharmacy in Springhill, the owner, Mr. Anderson, purchased a blood pressure machine, at his own expense, to put in the pharmacy. These are expensive machines and they are quite a new and interesting technology because they are hooked up via the Internet to local family doctors. You don't need to make an appointment and go to the clinic or to your family doctor and go through the official channels to have your blood pressure done; you can go to the pharmacy and do it on the spot. Then that machine transmits the results, via the Internet, to your family doctor.

You are much better served, you are much more quickly served and you are much less expensively served, in that way. It's a great example of things that pharmacies in rural Nova Scotia are doing on behalf of citizens that is a great savings to the health system and is an improved service.

I'll give you another example. I'll use Mr. Anderson's pharmacy in Springhill again, the same is true either way of the Pharmasave in Oxford as it is in the same drug store in Parrsboro. Drugs are delivered, home delivery still happens in Nova Scotia in a surprising number of rural pharmacies. In Springhill we have the High-Crest Springhill Nursing Home, average age 81, average number of prescriptions 12 - home delivery from the local pharmacy. Is there a cost recovery program for that? No. Is there a fee provided to the pharmacist for that? No. It's a service that a pharmacist is able to provide under the old model of service that is now at threat under the new model of service.

This is something that has not been captured in the discussion papers or in the bill briefings or in the discussions on introduction of the bill leading up to the introduction of the bill here at the House of Assembly. That's a real shame. If we're going to make fundamental changes to the business model of an industry as important as our pharmacies are, then surely we should take the whole picture into account.

I think that is exactly what pharmacists are telling us. Their business model that has sustained pharmacies around the province for many years is about a lot more than the price of generic drugs. Bringing down and capping the price of generic drugs is a worthwhile objective. No one has argued that shouldn't happen but it is not the whole story. It is only part of the story.

The NDP Government rushed to implement step one and in doing so has put at risk a significant number of our rural pharmacies. (Interruptions) The musical accompaniment, I think, just reinforces my point that is a happy part of the plan. You cannot only do the happy part, there has to be a comprehensive plan. Our pharmacists are telling us that if we're going to cap the prices they are paid for generic drugs then we have to also look at the tariff agreement, the fees they're paid for dispensing and other services that pharmacists currently provide, and to conclude an agreement on an expanded scope of

services and what the fees will be for those so that pharmacists know the whole picture for their industry.

The fact of the matter is no pharmacist can plan for next year, for the future, for long-term growth or expansion or new investment in their industry or in their town while there is so much uncertainty about where the business model is going. It's a great unfairness to impose on our independent pharmacists that the government will tell them half the story and that they're then supposed to just trust that the other half will fall into place at a later date.

The fact of the matter is, if Bill No. 17 goes forward in its current form, in the absence of any progress on these other matters, the average-sized independent pharmacist will be out somewhere between \$125,000 to \$150,000 a year in income. These are not our numbers, these are the numbers of the pharmacists themselves looking at their own business and calculating what this means for them. That is why they're asking that the government slow down, that we do the whole package at once, in addition to capping generic drug prices that the government conclude a new tariff agreement and conclude an expanded scope of a service agreement so that pharmacists have the whole picture.

That's all they are asking for is the whole picture. What person would make an investment in the future of their business with only half the story? If we want to have a positive and growing and dynamic business climate in our province, then we can't go cherry-picking these industries and treating them this way. Pharmacies are just the latest example, Bill No. 100 was the last example. At some point the government is going to do serious and long-term damage to the investment climate of our province.

The irony of this is, who will benefit by the passage of Bill No. 17 in its current form? Not the small, independent Nova Scotian-owned pharmacies that are actually under a threat as a result of Bill No. 17. It's the big-box pharmacies, it's the Wal-Mart pharmacies of the province that have grown in recent years that will be able to sustain the period of uncertainty. It's the Wal-Marts of the world that will thrive because of Bill No. 17 at the expense of the little-guy pharmacy.

How ironic that an NDP Government, elected supposedly to help small business, supposedly to be on the side of the little guy, is actually bringing forward a bill that does the opposite.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. I was wondering if the member for Hammonds Plains-Upper Sackville could make an introduction.

The honourable member for Hammonds Plains-Upper Sackville.

MR. MAT WHYNOTT: Mr. Speaker, it gives me pleasure to rise today to introduce Lydia MacDonell who is a former Page here but also the daughter of the Minister of Agriculture, if everybody could give her a round of applause please. (Applause)

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

MR. BAILLIE: I, too, extend my greetings to all visitors in the gallery here this afternoon.

As I was saying, how ironic that the government actually, now that they are safely in government, brings forward a bill that is detrimental to the interest of small, independent businesses and favourable to the larger pharmacy businesses of our province, like Wal-Mart.

In addition to the multitude of independent pharmacists who are writing in telling us their business has been put at risk, the CFIB has made a very significant presentation, I'm sure to all Parties, expressing their concerns, yet again, it's like an annual event now where the CFIB is compelled to write and present to all Parties their concerns about where this government is going with regard to the treatment of small independent business.

Whether it's the labour laws of the last session or now picking specifically on independent pharmacies, surely we can get to a better day where the government is more careful at the way it goes about making substantial changes to a particular industry or sector. It begs the question of why rush in with part one, the cap on generic prices, months before dealing with a tariff agreement or before there is an expanded scope of service which would give pharmacists the whole picture. Why do that?

I have to conclude, Mr. Speaker, that the government's motivation, solely and only, is that it save the government money, even if it's at the industry's expense, because the only beneficiary of it doing only step one is the government itself. The ones that are harmed, the independent pharmacists, have to wait. Beyond them, the customers, the clients of those pharmacies are put at risk. The services that I listed out earlier that are provided at no cost by independent pharmacies are put at risk: the blood pressure check, the early intervention triage, the home deliveries to seniors are all put at risk.

Beyond that, as rural pharmacies are faced with decisions on whether to continue to operate or to close, the thought that a senior in Springhill may need to go to Amherst, or a senior in Parrsboro may need to go to Amherst, which is a 45-minute drive, to fill their prescription, or from Oxford to Truro, a half-hour drive to fill a prescription is an unfair hardship.

What does that person do, a senior or otherwise, on a Sunday when the ER is closed and they have chest pain or a headache? Suddenly that pharmacy is not there for them either, because it's not there at all or because it can no longer afford to have an appropriate number of pharmacists available. I wonder if the government included those kinds of scenarios in their calculation of how much they were going to save. After all, it would only be prudent for a government that wants to truly balance the books to ensure that they don't

inadvertently create a greater expense somewhere else, which is surely where we're going with this bill in its current form.

I wonder if the government thought through that, although Wal-Mart may well be a very profitable company and may well have a profitable pharmacy business going in Nova Scotia that those profits don't stay in this province. They go elsewhere. Many of the larger chains may be making the profit and they may well be able to sustain a longer term period of uncertainty, but those profits don't stay in Nova Scotia, they go elsewhere. The earnings of our independent pharmacists, our rural pharmacists, our small-business pharmacists, every cent of them stay here in our province. I will say this next part I'm sure to the joy of the NDP, where they can tax them.

I wonder if they thought that through when they proposed to do only Bill No. 17 and not the whole picture for our pharmacists, or the jobs those pharmacists provide, often in places where jobs are hard to come by, jobs in places like Oxford and Springhill and Parrsboro and 100 other communities where they have an independent pharmacist, a small-business person. Maybe that pharmacist can afford to employ two pharmacists now, or three, because often the owner himself or herself is a pharmacist and also works behind the counter.

How great is that, when you need to spend more than a few minutes with a customer - as is often the case - that you can leave the counter knowing there's another pharmacist there to deal with your other customers? How sad will it be if this bill goes through in its current form? Even if the pharmacy stays, it has to lose a pharmacy technician, or a pharmacist, it could go down to one. That's a real reduction in service for the residents but it's also a loss of jobs in places where every job counts. Of course, those people earn an income, and I'll say this, I know to the joy of the NDP, they can tax that income. But they can't if it's not there. I wonder if they included that in their calculation of how much they would save, along with the income tax, because a truly prudent approach to reform of the industry would have included those things.

Then, of course, Mr. Speaker, there is the tremendous cost that will be added to the delivery of our health care system, particularly in rural Nova Scotia, if we can no longer rely on the pharmacist or the pharmacy, who has been a big part of health care delivery in the past, to continue to be a part of health care delivery in the future. Are we going to be shuttling seniors by ambulance to emergency rooms in far-flung places because there was no pharmacist to see them when no one else was available? Are we going to somehow come up with a program to deliver drugs to seniors who are in long-term care facilities because the pharmacist can no longer afford to do it? Are we going to tell all those Nova Scotians who are getting their blood pressure done at the pharmacy and having it sent automatically to their doctor that they're going to have to go back to making an appointment. Go in to see their doctor and have it done there, then wait weeks for the results which is both more costly and a lesser level of service.

These are the things that it's pretty clear were not included in the government's calculations when they pulled out their calculator and saw how much they could save on generic drug costs. It would be nice, Mr. Speaker, if the world were so simple that you can just pass a bill that from this point forward generic costs will be x and think nothing else will happen but that's not the world that we live in. It is irresponsible to not think through - through consultation, to meaningful real actual consultation - all of the ramifications of government's actions.

So here we are with this blunt instrument of Bill No. 17 and, once again, it falls to Opposition members to pick up the pieces, as panic sets in, in yet another industry in our province and I think it's too bad because it doesn't have to be this way. As this pattern continues on, who knows who will be next? The investment climate of the province, the job-friendly nature that Nova Scotia should have, is put at risk not just in pharmacies but across the spectrum of our economy. Surely that is a step backward when all Nova Scotians are looking to us to ensure that we take a step forward.

So I say all that, not to say that we should throw out Bill No. 17. I say all that only to say that there is a lot more work to do to get it right. To marry up the other elements of this industry, the tariff agreement and the scope of service agreement with Bill No. 17 so that industry has a chance to see the whole picture. So that they can lift the veil of secrecy over the other elements of the government's plan for the industry and they can make wise investment decisions. Hopefully, if the government does it right, they can make decisions to increase their investment, to increase the services that are provided to Nova Scotians, to increase the ability of citizens in rural parts of the province, or in parts of the province that are serviced only by one independent pharmacy. Hopefully, they'll make decisions that will allow better days to come but Bill No. 17 is not a step in that direction. It is yet the latest example of a step in the opposite direction - half thought through, half the calculation done, half the work done, half the consultation done, and it's the patients and the employees and the pharmacists themselves who are left to pay the price of a half-done job.

For that reason, Mr. Speaker, I will just conclude my remarks on Bill No. 17 by adding my voice to those others who are urging the government to do the right thing by our pharmacists and their patients and slow down this process, to hold the bill here in second reading, until such time as they can do the rest of the job and get on with that tariff agreement and conclude it and get on with that scope of service agreement and conclude it so we can bring a truly well thought out and complete and comprehensive and fair package for pharmacists to make the best decisions they can about their own business and their own service with. Thank you.

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

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, I too am pleased to rise to speak a little bit on Bill No. 17, the Fair Drug Price Act. After listening to some of the debate and I know the wishes of the minister is to have this bill go forward, with everyone who has stood up,

I'll add my voice - on the idea and the principle of this bill, we all agree on. So there's an opportunity for this House to find our way forward, to find that we move and set this piece of legislation going forward, to ensure that Nova Scotians have access to fair drug prices and generic drug prices.

One of the interesting things and I think what's been the untold part of this story and what we're talking about and often times it's being talked about, is the rebate that has come from generic drug companies that are coming into pharmacies. I believe previous governments have negotiated the tariff agreement - that's the fee piece, quite frankly, in layman's terms - that when they've negotiated that, they've always negotiated the idea that the unspoken word was, that this rebate was there, which would help offset the cost of delivering a particular service and for filling a prescription.

I think pharmacists - the ones that I've spoken to - have been in agreement with what the government is attempting to do here in terms of moving away from that and towards fair drug prices, but there are a couple of pieces in here that I think need to be discussed. One of the things is that this will not be cheaper, particularly for seniors. What it means is that the co-pay will run out a few months later, but they will still be paying the equivalent to what they are today in the course of that 12 month period. They shouldn't expect to see some big savings in terms of how much they are paying in terms of their yearly drug costs, in the prescriptions that are being handed to them, by the local pharmacists.

When I look at this, in the absence of having this conversation around the fair drug prices in isolation, moving it away from the tariff agreement, which I spoke about at the beginning - really is in many ways, this is only going to really affect independent pharmacies. It will affect, yes, the corporate ones, but they have other ways to absorb that loss. They have other ways to respond in a more timely fashion because their business model is different than what we are seeing in many independent stores. When I was looking at them and we were debating it, I was actually looking at it as an urban/rural issue, but it isn't that way, quite frankly. It comes down on the lines of corporate and independent business people, the independent people across this province, many of whom have built a business model based on a tariff agreement that - not just the previous one - the parameters that have been built around successive tariff agreements that have been signed by governments. The fact that this change may come in relatively quickly is concerning.

In fairness to the Minister of Health and Wellness and in fairness to the government, I know, it's my understanding that this tariff arrangement and agreement had actually been postponed a couple of times, through agreement - not with just government, but I think agreement with all Parties, saying we need time to move away from that. I think when this bill was originally being talked about and originally being drafted to be presented, I think in fairness, I believe government believed that the tariff arrangement would have been dealt with, so that when we had seen it, we would have seen the package. Unfortunately, for whatever reason, that didn't happen, so I think it's important that when we look backwards at what was trying to be accomplished by government and industry,

was that the tariff agreement would be negotiated and this Bill No. 17 around fair drug prices would come in.

I think with all that in mind, it's important to recognize that the businesses in our province, the independent businesses in this province, were looking at that and saying, we could respond and we could then negotiate in and around what we looked at as the parameters of Bill No. 17. I think it's important that as we go forward, in part of Bill No. 17 there is a clause that would allow that to take effect on July 1 of this year.

Mr. Speaker, I would encourage government, particularly in the spirit to which they began this negotiation and conversation with the independent drug stores across our province, pharmacy owners across our province, that they actually move away from the implementation date of July 1 and move more towards implementing the changes after they've signed a tariff agreement with drug stores and pharmacies across our province. It simply is the fair thing for everyone.

It wouldn't be holding up this piece of legislation, it wouldn't be changing this piece of legislation, it would just affect the implementation timeline and I think, as I said earlier, speak to what I believe the intent of government was at the very beginning, that was to be able to deal with the tariff arrangement and also deal with fair drug prices at once. I believe if the two previous attempts around the tariff agreement had not been extended, we would be having a different debate here today, quite frankly, one that I think would take on a much different spirit.

When I began my remarks, I talked about how every member who stood up said they believe in the intent of Bill No. 17. Their concerns are particularly around tariff arrangements with pharmacies and the other piece around the scope of practice, which would also be negotiated in that tariff arrangement on how we fund those.

Mr. Speaker, I don't have to tell you, you know the importance of the independent pharmacies in communities across this province and you recognize they are much more than a place where you get your prescription filled. All of us have had an experience of walking into our local drug store, asking our pharmacist for some medical advice, asking for them to look at, potentially, what could they prescribe to us, not a prescription but on their shelf, in terms of dealing with colds.

I know my wife and I as young parents would rely on the pharmacists, particularly as one of our children was asthmatic, we would rely on the pharmacist to, quite frankly, give us some comfort. They did all of that as part of doing their business. They did so in a pleasant way. It's that kind of service, Mr. Speaker, that I think you get from an independent pharmacy, an independent drug store that is trying to provide a business which is providing a compliment of services.

When you more move into the corporate model of the pharmacies that you would see in some of the large operations, it strictly is writing a prescription. It is simply filling out the prescription the doctor has given you and those other services that are provided quite willingly and openly by pharmacists from one end of this province to the other, are not there in these corporate stores when, in actual fact, they make such a difference in many of our communities across Nova Scotia.

It was mentioned in this House, we've received many letters from pharmacists across the province and independent business people. I was struck by one that I received from pharmacists in Dartmouth. They own a couple of stores, one in Dartmouth and a number of the ministers and members on the other side would know them and the one in Eastern Passage. The pharmacist who signed it was a gentleman by the name of Kerry Murphy. It was a very thoughtful letter that he laid out and he explained very much about how they are not opposed to Bill No. 17 but what the impact it would have on his operation.

Quite interesting, what I think is unique about Mr. Murphy is that he is not only a pharmacist but he actually graduated with an MBA in business. He talks about the implementation date and what impact this will have on the three stores, independent stores that they own on that side of the harbour, Mr. Speaker. He talked about some of the services that they provide free of charge now and how he wonders about the uncertainty of what will happen around the tariff arrangement and what will happen around the issue of this piece of legislation affecting some of the income flow that's coming into their operation now. How do they recover that?

He went on to talk about the fact that as pharmacists they're being asked to expand their scope of practice, all of which they've embraced and want to embrace, but he said the economy in this is what's interesting, is you're saying on one hand we're going to affect your revenue flow to a point where you as a business owner have to make some very tough decisions and yet we're going to ask you to do more. So he says, as a business owner, we have to - if we've got retiring pharmacists, we're not going to replace them. We've laid off a number of other people. So if you're asking me to come in and now ask the one pharmacist I have working per shift to take on more responsibility and to do a wider scope of practice, it's going to be impossible because the one pharmacist that I have working is going to have to be dedicated to the pharmacy itself.

The other aspect that he talked about, if we widen our scope of practice and you're asking me and other pharmacists across the province to take on additional responsibility in terms of counselling and all that, we may need to do store renovations. How do we do that when our revenue flow has been affected and we don't know down the line what the tariff agreement will be?

When you hear of those very reasonable, logical steps and questions, I think it is in a sense where we should probably step back and say- and really not look at the legislation in the sense of if anyone is opposed to it because everyone who has stood up so far says that in principle they agree. I think that if we look at the implementation date and when that

should be, it would only make sense to me, as I know was the intent of government and the spirit of government when they started negotiating this tariff arrangement - it had been postponed twice - that they were hoping to have the tariff arrangement finished before we began to debate this bill.

So a very simple change in this piece of legislation would be changing the implementation date from July 1st until we actually have in place the tariff agreement with pharmacists and how we will deliver that expanded scope of practice - all very reasonable. I think everyone would support that and agree with that. I think, particularly in many communities, it would provide some comfort that these will not be done in isolation and for the business owners it would provide some certainty on what they would have to do to make some changes.

It has been brought to our attention that in other provinces, when they brought in this Bill No. 17, it has been implemented over a number of years. I still believe we can implement it here somewhat in the timeline that government would like to have it introduced but I think we need to just step back and do that after we negotiate that tariff arrangement with the pharmacists and pharmacies across Nova Scotia.

I can tell you one of the things that's happening in my own constituency, Mr. Speaker, is I have a number of pharmacists, one in Annapolis Royal, one in Bridgetown, Lawrencetown and the one in Middleton, all of whom go above and beyond in terms of delivering services to the people of my constituency, people of the surrounding areas, from blood pressure to monitoring different - how drugs will counteract with the previous (Interruption)

Diabetics, thank you, Mr. Speaker, all kinds of advice that's given and I want to talk specifically about one which is the one in Lawrencetown. It's a small community that I represent, it's a village, part of the County of Annapolis. It has a strong and proud agricultural history. The Annapolis County Exhibition is there. It's one of the largest exhibitions still that thrives in this province. The two focal points of the community, quite frankly, are the fire department which if they have a function at the fire hall, the entire community comes out and supports it because it is such an important part of their community. I think if you live in that community, you feel a real sense of responsibility that you need to belong to the fire department because of the great service it provides.

The other one is its pharmacy which has provided - it's a small pharmacy. It's one that Canada Post has moved in part of its operation and closed the post office. Lawrencetown has had its banks closed so there's a banking machine that was in there. All of these are provided inside of the pharmacy.

Without the pharmacist knowing and without the group that owns this, private entrepreneurs who own this pharmacy, without them knowing what the tariff agreement is

going to look like, how the changes will impact on that store, it will, without hesitation, close. It's a real shame that that would happen.

Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day business people have to make decisions about their operations and everyone understands that. In this case I believe it would only be fair for us in this House to ask them to make that decision with the entire understanding of what that implementation of service is going to look like, what the tariff agreement will look like as we change the generic drug pricing in this province. I think it's only fair to ask them to make that decision after they have seen the total package and how that will affect their operation.

Mr. Speaker, as I stated to you earlier, they offer tremendous services to our communities. I don't believe that what they're asking is outrageous. I believe it is fair and they recognize government has to respond, and we support them responding, but we would prefer they responded to all of these issues at once so that when we go forward, we're not back in this House next session screaming about changes that happened to a tariff agreement which affected - that's why drug stores closed in particular parts of our province.

One of the things that has been quite compelling to me is when I've spoken to pharmacists not only in my riding but across Nova Scotia is their general involvement in that local community. I know the community that I grew up in, played hockey in, went to school in, and played basketball and other sports in that community, we, quite frankly, relied on the pharmacy in Bridgetown to support those organizations. Tom Lycett, and his son, Kirk, and his wife, Michele, have the pharmacy in Bridgetown. They have been a tremendous support to minor sport organizations and really have allowed an opportunity for many young people in our community to participate who otherwise wouldn't, because of their financial contribution.

All of that stuff becomes - you have to start questioning, well, what happens to my business at the point here, how much of this can I do? Valley Drug Mart, which is part of - they own the one in Middleton in my constituency, they own Lawrencetown Pharmacy that I talked about, and they own one in the riding of the member for Kings West. They had a van for many years that transported people here for medical appointments, dialysis, emergency, or specialists' appointments, and that was all being funded by the pharmacy. Those are just a couple of examples. I mean you can go down every program of every - whether it's a sporting event, whether it's the band concert, regardless of what it is in any one of the communities that I represent, you can guarantee that you'll find an ad that is put in there by one of the pharmacies because they want to try to give back.

What I think they're asking for is a sense of an opportunity here as we move toward changing to the generic drug model to also talk about how the scope of practice will impact them, what government expects from them in terms of how they deliver that and the tariff arrangement, and what we can expect to pay and what they can expect to receive for the services they deliver.

It only would make sense and I think each of us in this House would recognize that we look at that in its totality and we look at it in complete - and then each business person then could make their own decision in terms of what their business model will look like as they move forward to cope with it.

Again, as I say, we stood in this House and we talked about and supported the arrangements that were there and I do think it's important that the implementation piece of Bill No. 17 gets looked at. I think we need to recognize that when we implement that, pharmacists need to know the other two components, which are the scope of practice and the tariff arrangements. Then, as I said earlier, they will make their decisions.

Mr. Speaker, I'll wrap up with this thought - I'll go back to what I said earlier. I believe it was the intent of the department, the minister and government to have the tariff agreement dealt with by now. There had been some changes to those meetings extended - I'm not blaming any one particular person; I think it was an agreement on all parties involved that they would extend those. I think it was the intent of government to have that particular piece dealt with before we began to debate Bill No. 17.

Since we haven't got that, I think we ought to look at the implementation date of Bill No. 17 and we'll implement Bill No. 17 when we have secured a proper tariff arrangement with pharmacists and also have arranged their full scope of practice and how they will be remunerated for the variety of services they provide. It would then provide some comfort, I believe, to many stores across this province, the small-business owners. I believe it would allow many seniors across this province who, in my constituency for sure, rely heavily on these pharmacists to provide them with some support and access to health care.

As we go forward we're going to continue to listen to this debate. We're looking forward to the Law Amendments Committee and obviously we will talk about the implementation date during the Law Amendments Committee and I'm sure we'll talk about it again in this House with the minister.

With those few remarks I will take my place.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants West.

MR. CHUCK PORTER: Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to have a few minutes today to speak about Bill No. 17 and some of the issues we're hearing throughout the day. There seems to be a regular theme and it's surrounding the tariff agreement and the importance of that.

I remember with my local pharmacists, with one of my local pharmacists - now, I should clarify I'm fortunate I have one at the Superstore and one at the Sobeys in Windsor; I have a Lawtons which is also there; and of course I have a Pharmasave which is there, a

more private-type industry that has been there for many years. That's in Windsor. In Hantsport I have a Pharmasave which is in jeopardy and concerned about this. It does affect all of them, not just one. The business models will change. They understand that. Hantsport, I think they also understand that even with the tariff agreement, they want to have the best deal they can possibly have on the price of medications for Nova Scotians and their clients. That's important to them and I have never ever heard any one of them say otherwise. They're obviously very concerned.

I met with the Triders, who own the Pharmasave downtown as one example, who clearly state the issue of not having the tariff agreement in place, not knowing what the new business model will mean, except it's going to cost them \$125,000 to \$150,000 which will have to come from somewhere. In all likelihood that will mean job losses for employees, and we're not sure to what degree yet, but it will be significant enough. That one store - although we have four in Windsor, all very good pharmacies and all busy in their own right, all serve their own clientele, which is the case with most pharmacies. They tend to have their regulars and that's how they do business, and it's the continuity that goes along with that and the consistency of how they treat individuals and get to know their files.

It's a family business, actually. They do an awful lot for individuals and their clients but they're concerned about the model and the effect it will have on business. The last thing any of these pharmacies want to do - like I said, they want the best price for the consumer, they don't want to take away any of the services they offer. They know what they're doing is important. We know what they're doing is an important aspect of the everyday person. The need is huge.

At Trider's Pharmasave there on Gerrish Street, I think there are four or five pharmacists who work out of that store, maybe more, but there are a number of other employees as well. This store does a bit of everything, like most pharmacies. They sell everything from prescription medications to the non-prescribed meds, over the counter, pop and milk and all those other commodities that people use every day, to newspapers and you name it. There is a need and that's how they help survive in business and how they make a living and how they keep people employed, which is the most important part and I think that all of these stores are similar in nature.

Obviously, the bigger chains, like the Sobeys and the Superstores, who have pharmacies, now sell the advantage of having a pharmacy and the draw that it actually creates, when it comes to business itself. An increase in sales, it's all good, as far as the business side goes and obviously with that many pharmacies locally, for me, there is a need, because we service a fairly large area.

Again, it's not about not wanting to provide the service, it's about just the opposite. That tariff agreement is obviously an issue, they want to take the time, they want to consult, they want to sit down and work through how this will affect them. They need to, obviously, financially, be sustainable, surviving in the long term, thereby, obviously reassuring staff

that there will be no issues and, obviously, our communities in providing the service that they are asked to provide.

I know like most, and I've heard it mentioned here today, and just again, I'll refer to Trider's Pharmacy there in Windsor, on Gerrish Street. It has the blood pressure cuff, and they do a number of other things and clinics and a whole bunch of other things. They don't just offer advice on the medications that are prescribed. You go up and you get your prescription back after you give them your little thing there, from the doctor, and they fill it, and they give you all this documentation. They don't just hand it to you and say there you go. They take the time to explain it. There is certainly a huge role that needs to be played and it's an important role. The pharmacists are, well, much more educated on the individual drugs, as opposed to the physicians and even they'll tell you that.

It's a vital role that they play, we have no room for error. It's a huge responsibility, being a pharmacist, but they do it, they take the time. They spend the time that is necessary that you understand what it is that you're getting. Over and above that, they take the time, if you pick something up off the shelf, and it's an allergy med perhaps or something, a pain med or whatever it might be, and any questions, I know that all of our pharmacies locally, and I'm sure across the province, are all the same. They take the time to explain any of the questions and answers that you may have, side effects et cetera. They work hard to sell you, you know, what you want versus maybe the generic brand. They are always trying to do their brand, we know that, because it will save the consumer money, that's a great thing.

We can't say enough about what it is they do and, as I've said, we're talking about the expanded scope of practice. We're asking them for lots, we expect lots but we're not really appearing, at least, to want to sit down and negotiate a deal that they think will be fair. I know that they are going to be here, they are going to be at Law Amendments and they are going to give you a detailed analysis of each of their individual stores and probably what it means to them and the importance of having them in the smaller and rural communities.

Now, the store in Hantsport, if that were to have issues, and it's probably close to the same size as the one in Windsor, it might be a little bit smaller but if it is, it's not much and it serves quite a large area. To have reduced hours of operation or to close, the worst case scenario, I can tell you that people would not be happy. Having their doctor right there in Hantsport, fortunately we have her, writing prescriptions and then just going next door, basically, in getting them filled. It's a convenience factor there, where they would have to, in all likelihood, drive to Windsor, or to New Minas or Wolfville, or one of the other towns to have them filled. In this day and age and the way things are, with the cost of fuel, there are lots of things there that would not be, certainly wanted by the public.

Mr. Speaker, we have to be concerned about where this may end up. I know that they are concerned. I know that they are writing all of us. I'm sure that you've got letters as well, I know other members have got a lot of e-mails and I know that I have. I'm sure we all

have, explaining their position and again they stress that it's not about the price of drugs. They want fair pricing as well, but they need to be compensated appropriately.

The deal that they have is one that's been in place for, I think, quite a while. I don't know how many years, but quite a while. It works. They'll tell you that it works but it could always be better. I think they will agree with that and it's important that we're sitting down and we're listening and I hope through Law Amendments Committee that we take the time to do just that.

I want to talk a little bit about a couple of the e-mails that I did receive. Certainly we got the ones from the CFIB. Everybody's got those. We've got the ones from PANS, but it's important to talk about our local pharmacies here and what it does mean in rural Nova Scotia and we all have them.

The Triders had written me a letter and I'm not sure who else this went to. Maybe it went to the government and the minister, I'm sure that it probably did. They're stating their concern with regard to this bill that has been presented, Bill No. 17, and I'm just going to read a bit of it here: With very little time and transition to a new business model, what does that mean? Does that mean fewer pharmacists? Pharmacists are being asked to do more and now with far less. Perhaps they are or will be. These changes have been introduced unilaterally without including all the pieces of the puzzle. Generic price cuts, drug price cuts have been announced without any communication on the new tariff agreement, nor remuneration for expanded pharmacy service. Providing information on one component at a time creates great financial uncertainty.

That's the business model that they're concerned about. Obviously they need to have a long-term plan. They're like any business. You sit down at the beginning of the year and you think about your budget in the years ahead, which of course includes all of your incoming and outgoing revenue and expenses, but also along with that is the staff, which is important to all of these business owners.

The last thing people want to hear about are job losses right now. Government talks about creating jobs. I know through the estimates last week I had the opportunity to talk to the Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism and there was a projection of 2,000, 4,000, 5,000, which is all great, but nothing was certain. Right now what we do know is these jobs are pretty steady. They've been there for years and although nothing is ever certain, there is a bit of a comfort zone with these types of positions.

At the Windsor Pharmasave, which is the one owned by the Triders, Christian and Jason Trider, there are 30 people from our local community who work in this facility. They support - and we've heard this before - there's not much they don't support. Local events, sporting teams, the school sponsorships and so on and so forth - they support all of that, as do, I think, almost all of our stores, trying to help in the community, not unlike what we do when we have the opportunity. I know that we get behind our community organizations and our kids and school organizations and so on as often as we can. They provide really

great health care to the citizens of Windsor and West Hants and I'm focused strictly on the Pharmasave right now, but I'll say that with all four that I have in Windsor, that I'm fortunate to have there, we have great pharmacists in each of them, as well as the one in Hantsport.

This is just one example, but they're all doing the same thing and people count on them. There are people who can't quite read, their eyes aren't good. They're just doing anything and everything they can do by way of a good customer service and any disruption in that, any loss in that would be disastrous.

They're clearly stating here that they're proud to be leaders in the community and providing health care to people in the Windsor-West Hants area. They're accessible at all hours of the day and night, holidays, et cetera. They're doing a fine job, but without the funding, they're going to be forced to offer fewer services. We're not sure yet what that means, but they certainly won't be expanding the role that they've been asked to be able to take part in as pharmacists.

Will they be able to aid in the greater expanded scope of health care in general? I know that government is always trying to figure out with all entities and all aspects of the health care industry, whether it is police or fire or paramedics, in this case, by way of health care, pharmacists have a role to play in that just like the RNs and the doctors and the nurse practitioners do. It all goes hand-in-hand and it's important that there is a clear understanding by government from the group of pharmacists that are being affected, here in Nova Scotia, by this bill. They don't want to be jeopardized in any way and it's important that they be able to provide their service.

There are a great number of e-mails here. There is a pharmacy owner here. I have one from Kerry Murphy, Operations Manager, 23 years experience. He's got an accounts payable clerk - this is at Moffatt's Pharmacy over in Eastern Passage - an accounting clerk, again, many years of working in this business. Pharmacist hours will be reduced, he states here. Delivery will be outsourced. Accounting department will be further reduced. Front store hours in Eastern Passage will be reduced. Pharmacists retiring will not be replaced. The part-time pharmacist position will be eliminated and, again, that's just one.

I know we've heard a lot about this today and we'll hear more about it in the future, Mr. Speaker, but I can tell you something that comes to mind locally. Margaret Rooney works for the Triders at the Windsor Pharmasave store. When the Windsor Elms was moving, back a few months ago, to their new location, Margaret was there with every one of their clients, as were the other pharmacists from the drug stores that were representative of the clients of the Windsor Elms. There are 108 of them there and I think it's probably fair to say, given that it's the Windsor Elms, a good majority of them, probably 95 per cent or plus, are on some kind of medication there and are very well served by our local pharmacies.

She was there and I remember her being there, carting out individual drugs, taking care of all of their needs, totally outside the scope of what they would do on a regular day but it's the kind of service you get in a community that is pretty tight-knit, like Windsor and West Hants. All of our rural communities are the same, I think, and I'm sure it's that way probably pretty much in any community that you go to around the province - I guess I'd like to think across the country. We're just that kind of people.

These services are valuable. Margaret is there for the better part of all day cleaning up rooms and gathering up medications, making sure they were all organized, which is a huge deal. There were charts and drugs that had to be accurately moved to the new facility in Falmouth and then set back up appropriately and secured in the right cabinets in the new facility and all those sorts of things, that there were no errors and that nobody missed their drugs throughout the course of that day.

Again, that's just one example of the kind of input that local pharmacies provide. It's absolutely phenomenal what they're doing out there. Those are the kinds of things that will go away. That could have just as easily been done, they could have hired a taxi or a cab company and walked in and gathered it all up and took the risk. But they are not interested in providing the risk, they are interested in mitigating the risk and being there to support these individuals in any number of circumstances. The one I just gave you was a great example of how they are there.

Why are they there? The answer is simple - it is because they care about their customers, they care about their patients, a very important piece of the load.

Mr. Speaker, I could go on and on about the different letters and I'm looking at my notes here and they're coming in from all parts of the province, everywhere, and they all have a similar tone and points being made. Again, I know when I met with my local pharmacist, these guys are professionals. They are all very well-spoken, they are all very knowledgeable, it just goes along with that job. They certainly know what it is they are talking about.

The agreement is, in fact, the most important piece to them and they see that, along with new legislation that as being one and the same and it should all come in at the same time. All they are saying is, take the time that needs to be given to this very important piece of legislation, don't rush it through. It's vital that we get it right the first time, but they have to know, they have to have the financial security, they have to understand and want to be part of this. They have to have the financial security by way of a business model that is going to work and not going to put them out of business and not going to see any risks at all, any staff lost.

I think they are wide open to come in and discussing just about anything and I think they are going to hear it all through the Law Amendments Committee and I hope that there are many. I'm not sure how many are lined up to come but I'm betting there's probably quite a few and the stories will likely be very similar. I'm not sure where the result of that

will go, I hope there are some amendments, if necessary, to be made in this, or maybe the bill is parked for a while, until it is done and we bring it back later in the Fall. I'm not sure where it will end up but I know that we want it to take the time that it needs, to be given the important time that it needs, Mr. Speaker, and not rush in any way.

There's no reason to rush it, the pharmacists will be the first to tell you there is absolutely no reason to rush. Yes, there are some savings, government says a saving of \$6 million, but at the end of the day when you start thinking about this and you start thinking about the seniors and those on other programs who are covered by this, there is still the \$424 that the senior is going to pay when they go to the drug store. It may just take a little longer to do so and the co-pays are just going to take a little longer to reach your levels but you're still paying that.

Now I understand, Mr. Speaker, that being able to purchase the drugs, government being able to purchase drugs cheaper is a good thing and there's something to be said for that. There's nothing wrong with being able to purchase your drugs cheaper and that does, in turn, save the taxpayer the \$6 million that you are referring to here. It does, in turn, reflect that overall number. Nothing wrong with that, I think that's a fine thing, that's just great. Anytime you can get a better deal on buying your drugs, I think that the cost of drugs is absolutely phenomenal what we pay, you know, I understand the patterns and the abilities that these drugs create. They're clot-busting drugs and they're just miracle drugs, or whatever you want to call them, and cancer drugs, but the price of these - I'm not sure how you price a drug, I've never looked that deep into it but sometimes I scratch my head when I see the price of a prescription and it's a very small amount and you're looking at a couple hundred dollars.

People cannot afford to pay that so there's a lot of value in going down the road of saving taxpayers, clients and customers money when it comes to their drugs. I support that 100 per cent. I support drug companies being able to provide drugs at a much better cost as well. There's nothing wrong with that. I'm not sure how we would get there but I'm sure it's all part of this agreement somehow, whether it's newly developed drugs or the generics. I know there's a whole science to how they make it into generics and the patterns, and over a period of years, if you don't understand it fully, it can be convoluted, complicated, whatever word you want to make it type of thing. Again, I want to stress that the pharmacist, and all of us I believe, you know, there's great value in a better price for your drugs.

There's no real savings at the gate though when you're purchasing, you're still getting charged that co-pay, or you're still getting up to the \$424 or \$482, or whatever it is the seniors are paying, and it's just going to take a little longer to get there. That doesn't really ease the burden on the front end of that. Government sees savings of \$6 million which, you know, either that reduces and brings us back to the balanced budget that we want or it's invested in other types of programs in the health care system, I don't know where they'll go with it. There's value in that, there's no question about it, but I don't know

how we would consider implementing anything with such a serious nature and such a nature that has to be understood clearly by the professionals who work in that industry and there's only one way to do that, and that is to get the input from the pharmacist community.

They're there and I know that they're going to offer it as we move forward into the Law Amendments Committee. I know that we'll be looking forward to that, Mr. Speaker, as this bill moves across, and I know that it will move across, but I do hope, I want to stress again that if government gives it the time that it needs, listens clearly - not just to us in the Opposition talking about our individual pharmacies, but to the pharmacists themselves when they do come in to present - the importance that will come out of that, and being reasonable when it comes to trying to negotiate something that will work for both sides and that it's good all around for Nova Scotians.

Mr. Speaker, with that, I will say thank you very much for the opportunity to speak to this bill this afternoon and I'll take my seat.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

MR. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I'm certainly pleased to continue the debate today on Bill No. 17 which is the Fair Drug Pricing Act. Well, from the outset I do need to say and I make one point very, very strongly and that is we do not disagree with the spirit of this legislation. In fact, if we take a look at the history of what government has been paying for generic drugs over a considerable period of time, no one would disagree with the fact that we have been paying perhaps excessively.

We in the Liberal caucus believe that we have been paying too much for some time. Pharmacists, as well, at the end of the day bear the direct brunt of this bill and they don't disagree with the fact that we've been paying too much for generic drugs and Nova Scotians do not disagree with this.

I guess it's the unknown consequences of this bill that causes all of us here in our caucus to pause and say, are we going about this process in the fairest way possible, are we really putting the cart before the horse? That's really the sum and substance of why many of us in Opposition have stood in our places to make comments about Bill No. 17. When we look at the title of the bill, it speaks volumes, it's actually quite ironic. The bill is called the Fair Drug Pricing Act, but you certainly haven't been fair to smaller pharmacies and the pharmacists in bringing forward this bill. I guess this is really the major concern that we are hearing from one end of the province to the other.

You haven't been fair to them in that you have asked them to accept your conditions without telling them what they will get in return. The government has laid their cards out on the table and asked smaller, independently owned pharmacies - primarily in rural Nova Scotia but not exclusively - to play a card game with their hands tied behind their back. This is where we believe you have not been fair and upfront with pharmacists.

We cannot blame pharmacists across the province of being suspicious and this, again, is one of the underlying themes of the letters, the e-mails, and the correspondence and conversations that many of us have had over the past number of months. Recently, when the Pharmacy Association of Nova Scotia held a reception with MLAs, this was the hot topic. Many of them, especially, took time to tell us of the many ways in which they support their communities. I'm very familiar with the three pharmacies in my riding, one mentioned earlier today by the Leader of the Official Opposition: the Valley Drug Mart, which has a store in Kingston; Chisholm's Pharmacy in Aylesford; and Wilson's Pharmasave in Berwick.

I'm very, very much aware - and have been since I first came to the Valley 40 years ago as a student at Acadia - very, very familiar with what those pharmacies and their owners and their staff do in our communities. Through my time in speaking to Bill No. 17, I will speak to some of those services.

Well, going back and taking a look at why pharmacists are suspicious. Firstly, tariff negotiations, on agreement by both parties, were postponed on two separate occasions. Pharmacists asked to be able to sit at the negotiating table, having some idea, any ideas, as to where government was heading with regard to the legislation around fair drug prices. Red flags are now being raised by pharmacies and pharmacists, because they have been left with a government that says trust us, let us just pass this bill. We will then negotiate what we want to pay to utilize your services as part of the health care system and let the chips fall where they may.

Of course, pharmacists have been very pleased that the scope of practice has been expanded. People with the training, the background, the years of experience, in fact, it was well received by pharmacists across the province that they could become greater providers of a range of health care services, especially in terms of any kind of pandemic that could break out as we have seen in the past. Their medical backgrounds, professionalism and expertise could be drawn upon, to be part of dealing, perhaps, on that front line, with the kind of abilities that they have been trained for.

Government was hoping that, if you did not share with pharmacists their plans before going into tariff negotiations, pharmacists would keep them quiet during the bill debate process. After all, we felt it would be difficult for them to speak out if you were in the driver's seat during the negotiation process. People of Nova Scotia deserve better than that. Smaller, independently-owned pharmacies deserve better than that.

None of us in this House would be struggling with this bill if more information was forthcoming in terms of the impact at the end of the day. Pharmacists have been very, very clear in making the point that if their dispensing fees - the kind of practice that they're now engaged in in rural communities does need adequate compensation - if that is jeopardized, then there is that possibility that in 50 small communities, pharmacies would have to weigh

their option on remaining as a vital business, reducing their services and definitely not able to support their communities in the manner in which they have outlined to us.

The ChronicleHerald stated just a few days ago in their editorial that they agree with the goal of reducing the price government pays for generic drugs and the editorial stated that that goal should be applauded. We in the Liberal caucus applaud the goal, as does the Pharmacy Association, as pointed out in the editorial, but as the editorial rightly stated, it would seem that other important changes to help replace lost revenues should be in place when generic drug process begins this July. Right now no one knows if that will be the case.

Other jurisdictions have addressed this issue by laying all of their cards on the table. They claim savings and at the same time reinvested these saving in the same announcement in stabilizing rural, independently-owned pharmacies, investing and expanding the scope of practice and investing in new drug approvals.

With this government we are left with the dilemma as to whether there is a commitment to ensure pharmacies are treated fairly and people truly benefit through limited savings, through new drug approvals or the ability to utilize different services performed by pharmacists all at their local pharmacy.

So far the only thing government has talked about is savings to government as a result of passing this bill. They have failed to tell us, they have failed to tell pharmacists, and most importantly they have failed to tell Nova Scotians what they will do with these savings. Are savings going to be reinvested in new drugs to be added to the Seniors' and Family Pharmacare formularies? Are savings going to be used to reduce premiums and co-pays to the Seniors' Pharmacare Program? After all, despite what government is saying, it's not all that clear as to where seniors will be seeing savings at the end of the day as the result of Bill 17.

Government has been telling seniors all along that they will save money. Well, for those who max out on their co-pay on an annual basis, they may save a little bit of money each time they go to the drug store, but their co-pay maximum remains the same. Instead of maxing out on their co-pay in July they may max out in August or September, they will still max out at \$382. Government is the main beneficiary when this happens.

In this particular case government will not start paying the full cost until August as opposed to July, once again saving them money, not necessarily the senior. Are savings going to be used to revamp the Family Pharmacare Program, for the working poor have been very difficult to assess? Are savings going to be used to negotiate a fair agreement with pharmacists and ensure they were able to adjust a new model of business or are we going to see a reduction in the number of pharmacies serving rural Nova Scotia? Will seniors in rural Nova Scotia have to travel further to access their prescription if a reduction in rural pharmacies occurs?

Explain how this saves for seniors and other residents living in rural Nova Scotia if they have to drive further than they did before the implementation of Bill No. 17, or will savings simply be transferred to the Minister of Finance.

When you deal with a bill of this magnitude in silos as opposed to an entire package, then certain parties are left to wonder what the end outcome will be. When government first commenced discussions on first introducing this bill, they talked about all their savings, they talked about bulk purchasing of drugs, they talked about addressing the prescribing practices of physicians. We hear very little about these plans, further proof that government is more content to address the problem of high drugs in isolation rather than as an entire package.

Fortunately, Mr. Speaker, we - and indeed others - have lost confidence in believing that these issues will be addressed and will be consequences of this bill. By government admitting in the bill briefing that we have the highest number of pharmacies per capita in Canada, they are indirectly admitting that a loss of pharmacies would not be a bad thing. They are admitting that they will be a loss of jobs in rural Nova Scotia. Government needs to prove that the addition of this line, in media briefings, was nothing more than background information and not softening people in media for what is to come, bringing the number of pharmacies down to the national level. After all, not unlike physicians, we have a large concentration of pharmacies in HRM, but when you get to rural communities and you begin to lose access, the impact is far greater. You can't blame anyone for wondering whether government intends to address the unintended consequences or are they just softening Nova Scotians for the impact such a bill has the potential to unleash.

The one way we can all be sure is for government to reveal what it intends to do with the savings associated with this bill now. Before its effective date, negotiate a fair tariff agreement; deal with the expanded scope of practice before the bill comes into effect. That's an overview of what some of the implications are of Bill No. 17 and, as we know, more than the Pharmacy Association, in fact, and individual pharmacists have made us aware of potential impacts if this bill goes through and is implemented before the tariff agreement comes forward.

One of the services, for example, that the pharmacy in my community of Kingston, Nova Scotia has directly supported for almost a quarter of a century and now has passed the direct work over to Trans-County Transportation, was a shuttle service to Halifax and especially for cancer patients going to the Dickson Building. This has just been an invaluable service to our community and to those without the ability to afford transportation and without a vehicle. It has certainly made a difference in the lives of so many.

Just in the past few days I was talking with one of the pharmacists - an owner of the three pharmacies in the western part of Kings and eastern Annapolis, they have pharmacies

in Lawrencetown, Middleton and Kingston - about the prescription drug issue and the role that they play, for example, in the methadone treatment program. Through that conversation in particular, I was able to get a sense of the role of the pharmacist well beyond the dispensing of a prescription drug or in this case, a treatment for opiate addiction. It so happens that it is administered in all three of their pharmacies. Even though Lawrencetown is a very small community, they do serve clients there as well as a considerable number in Middleton and Kingston.

One of the practices that they adhere to - even with some clients who have been coming for some time - is that they provide no carries from their pharmacies. They, in fact, highly regulate and monitor the administering of methadone and witness this particular treatment every single day, seven days a week. They also, with those clients, have gone to their homes when they have been ill so that they don't go through withdrawal and the challenges associated with it.

The other part, as we know with many of the addicted, there are many social issues, there are many other problems they have in their lives. The pharmacists of these three particular pharmacies, they spend a lot of time with these clients, helping them to sort out some of their other life issues.

In my community the value of the pharmacists - and very often these are people who work 10-, 12-hour days - goes well beyond just dispensing medications. They are very involved with the lives of many of the people who come to their pharmacies, especially those on a methadone program who come every day, seven days a week, 365 days a year, and the kind of counselling they have provided.

They brought to me several letters of testimony and letters that I think have also been passed on to Dr. Gould, because of the issue that we are currently dealing with. They are actually providing a service that other providers, what counsellors and what others should be doing on a continuous, regular basis. We seem to have a gap in that kind of service provision and pharmacies have taken on that role. Again, they see a responsibility to the community to do this and see, in fact, if some of the lives of these people can be changed. It's a little bit of a sidebar story but it speaks volumes about what pharmacists do in our communities.

One of the letters that I had and I wanted to read some parts into the record and I can also table this, it comes from Tim Van Zoost at Chisholm's Pharmacy. He outlined, I guess, sort of the road of the past 10 years and what they've seen is again some of the erosion of their ability to maintain a very strong business. The proposed legislation, changes to the price of generic pharmaceuticals, can unknowingly cause significant financial distress in the sustainability of our pharmacy in the community of Aylesford; it has been a pharmacy there for 79 years.

He's very, very concerned in a small community, again, if this Bill No. 17 unfolds with some unintended consequences. He would like to think that they have served the

community well by providing readily available pharmaceutical and health care services within our present defined scope of practice. This is probably what many of us have discovered again over the past decade in our pharmacies, what they offer in a range of services for babies, all the way to our seniors population, and many times providing a service that a busy family physician is perhaps not able to deliver on a front-line, almost weekly or monthly kind of basis.

The new legislation, if implemented in its present form, without a negotiated offsetting fee and compensation schedule - including fees for our new scope of practice work load - may very well financially de-stabilize our business and its ability to operate with its present set of services. It could, depending on the severity of the reduction, total financial compensation package for our services, jeopardize our long-term viability and ultimately our existence.

I was provided, of course without any kind of names associated with purchase of pharmaceuticals, a look at the margins on some of the more common pharmaceuticals that go through their particular drug store. I was amazed at the current small margins that exist for many of the prescriptions that do go out the door. To the greater cause beyond our personal bottom line, the community would lose not only its pharmacy but also one of its integral elements in the delivery of health services for Nova Scotians.

I could be more definitive in the impact of this legislation if the present government and Department of Health and Wellness would provide more quantitative information on their new generic price reduction initiative, along with guidance for their new funding model, as we now have to negotiate a new contract after the fact. One cannot change the generic pricing model in isolation of other funding proposals.

He offered some of the data that they're currently working with and I guess there's a range of a couple of models that he refers to. They have heard of one generic pricing under one model would take \$58 million from our industry and that could translate to \$200,000 per store, which would be catastrophic. They've heard of an \$18 million reduction and that model would lose about \$70,000 in operating income per store. So without definitive information, they are looking at models that they've heard about, perhaps through unofficial sources, but ones that they obviously have great concern about.

He said, I must comment that the savings indicated for seniors, and I've already alluded to that this afternoon, again will not be as presented. It's just a delay in reaching the amount of \$282 that the seniors' premium requires. Also, corporate chains will not close up but rather get to benefit from even a loss of some stores in rural Nova Scotia. So he's really presenting a case of the negative impacts that in fact could happen if Bill No. 17 is passed before the tariff agreement is concluded. CFIB have also entered into this discussion and have made some very strong points around pharmacies and the business that they provide in rural Nova Scotia. Many of them have 15, 20, 25 employees, full and part-time, and if

any one of these are lost in our small rural communities, it has a very significant business and employment impact.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, as I look at this bill and if it does impact on losing pharmacies, it would be our seniors whom I would have the greatest concern for. Younger people, again, are working in other communities. They're more mobile and they're able to access pharmacies outside of their local community. The small rural pharmacy really does take that time to give the extra special service and consulting that has become a very accepted and almost an expected service in our communities and as well as good pharmacists, good business people, they have offered counselling and even service that is highly regarded.

As we know, the number of doctors in rural Nova Scotia has diminished. Many are without a family doctor and the pharmacist has become that professional medical person who now many people have a great deal of confidence in, a strong professional relationship to give them good medical advice when they need it.

The Liberal caucus, the CFIB, the Pharmacy Association of Nova Scotia and pharmacists are really all on the same page. They agree that, absolutely, government needs to get a handle on generic drugs, they just need to do so like other jurisdictions in this country have done, but if a tariff agreement is negotiated that reflects the realities, and it is still our hope, perhaps through the Law Amendments Committee, we will be able to get this desired goal for pharmacists and for all Nova Scotians. Thank you.

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

MR. KEITH BAIN: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise in my place this afternoon to speak briefly on Bill No. 17. We all know that Nova Scotians are paying too much for prescription drugs and any measure that might come forward to lessen the burden on Nova Scotians is a good thing. There is no doubt that this bill will mean savings to the Pharmacare Program but, unfortunately, it doesn't save money for the people that are taking those drugs. They will still continue to pay the same premium and the same co-pay, albeit at a lower base price. We know that many seniors reach the maximum co-pay of \$382 a year and this legislation will not change that.

There's little doubt that this bill will have a negative effect on many pharmacists, and especially the rural pharmacies within our area. Pharmacists are trusted and valued health care professionals, often the most accessible health professionals in the community. Because of this legislation, many small, rural pharmacies may not be able to offer services. Pharmacists will have to choose between the hardship of depriving their neighbours, clients and other community members of needed services and the financial hardship of providing these services at a loss. Because, in many small rural areas, pharmacists are active community volunteers and financial contributors.

Our caucus has already heard that several pharmacists will no longer be able to sponsor local children's sports teams or support local charity events because of Bill No. 17. This legislation represents substantial changes to their business model in a relatively short period of time, certainly a lot shorter time than they were expecting. Small rural pharmacies are facing a very uncertain future. Just this past Saturday, I had the opportunity to speak to Graham MacKenzie, the owner of Stone's Pharmasave in Baddeck. Graham told me that when you walk into the store - it has been completely renovated - he said, had he known that this bill would be coming forward, as it is presented, he probably wouldn't have put out that money to do the renovations.

I think when you have to look at the hardships that are going to be placed on our citizens, especially in the outlying rural areas of our province - I know especially in Victoria-The Lakes. Victoria-The Lakes does have two pharmacies, one in Baddeck and one in Neils Harbour. I think it's important to note that if either or both of those drug stores were to close - I'm going to use Neils Harbour as a prime example - first of all, you would have to travel, the nearest drug store for somebody in Neils Harbour or Baddeck, to get their drugs, would have to be North Sydney or Port Hawkesbury. So you can see the vital role that these pharmacies play.

Can you imagine leaving Neils Harbour to drive to Shoppers Drug Mart in North Sydney, driving for two hours to pick up your prescription and driving two hours home? I think you certainly have to take that into consideration.

Mr. Speaker, I mentioned Graham's expansion and we were made aware of other pharmacies throughout the province that had expansion in mind but are holding off until they see what is going to be happening with this bill. Last year the government introduced amendments to the Pharmacy Act that allowed pharmacists to expand their scope of practice and provide practical medical health services quickly and efficiently to the people who depend on it. We are happy to support that measure, Mr. Speaker, but we didn't expect the pharmacists to perform the services for free. The existing tariff agreement between Nova Scotia pharmacists and the government expires on June 30th, two short months away.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, there is no agreement yet in place and pharmacists are unable to make long-term plans. So obviously these measures are going to destabilize small pharmacies. It is the consensus within our caucus that this piecemeal approach was the wrong way to go. Government should have presented a comprehensive package that let pharmacists predict where their businesses might be in 12 months time or 18 months time. All three of these components should have been handled together, as one comprehensive unit, just as Nova Scotia pharmacists wanted. I understand that the Pharmacy Association has already contacted the minister about their concerns and at the Law Amendments Committee I'm sure we will have the opportunity to hear them speak for themselves.

Mr. Speaker, I will say that several members of our caucus have heard from pharmacists who are very worried about their business and I just refer to two in my

constituency. Our primary concern is the needs of Nova Scotians, so when they hear that rural pharmacies fear their businesses might close or be no longer viable, we worry that this legislation will deprive those citizens of valued service.

I already mentioned that we worry about the great distances that many of our constituents will have to travel to get the medicine they need, or that they won't benefit from the advice that their pharmacist can give them on some of their everyday needs. We're worried, Mr. Speaker, that this bill will mean that important and valuable service will no longer be financially viable for pharmacists.

Mr. Speaker, pharmacists are telling us what the impact will be - fewer pharmacists, fewer services, shorter hours and, in some cases, closed pharmacies. Our caucus would like the government to slow down, take a step back and consider the real impact of Bill No. 17 and the impact it will have on Nova Scotians and on the pharmacies that serve those Nova Scotians. With that, Mr. Speaker, we look forward to hearing the presentations at the Law Amendments Committee. Thank you.

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

The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to close debate on Bill No. 17, the Fair Drug Pricing Act. I want to thank all of the members who participated in the second reading debate. I've listened very carefully to your critique, I've heard some very constructive suggestions, some not so constructive, and I will certainly take those under advisement. I look forward to hearing from people at the Law Amendments Committee.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 17. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. CLARRIE MACKINNON: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 21.

Bill No. 21 – Public Archives Act.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage.

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 21, An Act to Amend Chapter 24 of the Acts of 1998, the Public Archives Act, be now read a second time.

Mr. Speaker, the Public Archives of Nova Scotia plays an important role in preserving Nova Scotia's documentary heritage. The public documents in its care tell the story of how our province has developed into a rich and diverse culture. Through photographs, government documents, public records, films and audio clips, the Public Archives brings to life our unique experiences.

Mr. Speaker, it is a valuable resource for academics exploring our past. The patient work of our archivists ensures the important pieces of Nova Scotia history continue to benefit our understanding of who we are and where we come from, and where we're going. The Public Archives helps Nova Scotians uncover pieces of their family histories. Digital and hard copy records open the book on a cherished memory or bring to life a story of our ancestors.

With resources such as Routes to Your Roots, supported by the work of the Public Archives, a past family connection could be the jumping off point for visitors to enjoy the adventure of a trip to Nova Scotia. These contributions made by the Public Archives help to make life better for Nova Scotia families as they encourage lifelong learning and economic activity.

The work of the Public Archives is enhanced by advice received from the board of trustees. Their commitment to supporting the work of the Archives ensures best practices are followed and the public enjoys high quality service. As part of our commitment to maintaining the high level of service, government is proposing some administrative changes to the Public Service Act that brings Nova Scotia in line with the practice in other provinces and streamlines the recruitment of the provincial archivist.

Mr. Speaker, after consultation with the Chief Justice of Nova Scotia, we are introducing a change to the Act that will no longer require the Chief Justice to sit as a member and serve as chair of the board of trustees of the Public Archives. Nova Scotia is the only jurisdiction in the country to have this requirement. Given that the role of the board of trustees is advisory, we agree with the Chief Justice that this requirement is not necessary.

The amendment to the Act being introduced today would have the board chair selected from among the members of the board and appointed by Order in Council. This change will affect the best practice in archives administration from across the country and ensure the board of trustees continues to provide effective guidance to the Public Archives of Nova Scotia. Government is also acting to streamline the recruitment of senior staff members at the Public Archives. With the amendment to the Act being introduced today, the position of provincial archivist would become a civil servant. That means recruitment for the position would be done according to the requirement of the Civil Service Act. It will no longer require an Order in Council.

Mr. Speaker, we are also introducing several amendments to the Public Archives Act that will correct the reference made to officials and fix the reference to the department responsible for the Public Archives here in the province. These changes to the Act are administrative. They ensure that the Public Archives will continue to play a leading role in preserving access to our documentary heritage and that we are following best practices for archives administration, as the rest of the country has also done.

Mr. Speaker, Nova Scotia will continue to enjoy a high level of service from the Public Archives as we move forward. So with those few words, I'll take my place.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Digby-Annapolis.

MR. HAROLD THERIAULT: Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to stand to speak on Bill No. 21, the Public Archives Act. I fully agree with the minister. Anyway, Nova Scotia has a rich history and preserving it is a smart thing to do and a great thing for this entire province because every year the Public Archives assists thousands of researchers and general interest visitors in finding out more about themselves, their families, their communities and this entire province.

This is a good bill and a sensible move forward by this province and we appreciate it. We believe it is going to be great for the province. Modernizing the work of the government is something that we believe in and that all Nova Scotians should believe in. With that, Mr. Speaker, we offer our full support to this bill and thank the minister for bringing this forward and we look forward to it going to the Law Amendments Committee. With that, I'll take my seat. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. KEITH BAIN: Mr. Speaker, I, too, am pleased to rise to speak to Bill No. 21. Our caucus does, as well, support this legislation. We agree that it does make sense that the rules and regulations under which our Archives operate should be the same as those across our country.

Mr. Speaker, in today's world the Chief Justice of Nova Scotia I think has enough to do without making sure that he's the chairman of the committee. The only thing, we do have a concern, although it makes sense that the Public Archivist be a civil servant, we're wondering if this will be taken from the existing Civil Service pool or whether it will be the hiring of another civil servant. Again, that is a concern that we have.

We'd like to take note of the vital role the Public Archives play in preserving our history and enabling storytellers to keep that history alive and relevant. The Archives also preserve records that are useful to all kinds of researchers - historical, scientific, literary, sociological and so on, in understanding the impact of what has gone on before on today's or tomorrow's activities.

Mr. Speaker, with those few words we look forward to this bill proceeding to the Law Amendments Committee. Thank you.

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

The honourable Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage.

HON. DAVID WILSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the members opposite for their comments on this bill, so it is a pleasure to close debate on Bill No. 21.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 21, the Public Archives Act. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

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

The Acting Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. CLARRIE MACKINNON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the demotion. Would you please call Bill No. 23.

Bill No. 23 – Public Procurement Act.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism.

HON. PERCY PARIS: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 23, the Public Procurement Act, now be read a second time.

Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise in this Assembly to speak with you about the Public Procurement Bill. This initiative is part of jobsHere, the plan to grow our economy. We estimate that Nova Scotia's public sector procured more than \$2 billion last year. It's our job to ensure this money is being spent wisely. To do this, we need all public sector entities working together efficiently. We need common guidelines and best practices in order to get the most of each procurement dollar that we spend.

Mr. Speaker, the new bill will replace the Government Purchases Act, which no longer fits the government's procurement objectives. The bill will enable the development of a new procurement governance structure, including a Chief Procurement Officer for the province. A Procurement Advisory Group will be struck and will provide advice and recommendations to the Chief Procurement Officer in areas such as: identifying

efficiencies and cost savings; finding strategies for minimizing risk; standardization of public sector entities, policies and their practices; identifying strategic opportunities; and ensuring local vendors have a chance to participate fairly in the procurement process.

The procurement work each public entity does is invaluable, Mr. Speaker. We couldn't have a fair, open and transparent process, without the diligent work found within each of these entities. The new initiative enables each entity to continue to operate and be responsible for their individual procurement. We will also become more collaborative, so that we can leverage each other's knowledge to develop and adopt best practices.

Mr. Speaker, we are not looking to consolidate, we need our public entity partners to continue to be the experts in their areas of procurement. What we also need is a consistent approach to procurement. Having greater consistency will encourage innovative ideas and solutions and it will assist government in achieving some of the goals that are outlined in jobsHere.

These goals are: sustainable and efficient procurement; developing competitive and innovative companies; and preparing suppliers for global markets. A priority of jobsHere, the plan to grow our economy, is helping Nova Scotia businesses be more competitive globally. Mr. Speaker, through this initiative, there will be more opportunities for local businesses to develop the skills necessary to apply to the Public Sector Procurement. The current supplier development program will be enhanced to encourage more local businesses to participate in tendering opportunities. This experience will better prepare these businesses to also compete globally.

Core government departments and offices procure about 80 per cent from home. This money goes right back to our local economy. The new bill outlines a Nova Scotia preference for goods manufactured or produced right here in Nova Scotia. While respecting trade agreement obligations we can find ways to support local manufacturers and producers.

Mr. Speaker, this applies for purchases valued at below trade agreement thresholds, which is \$10,000 for government departments and \$25,000 for public sector groups. This shows our commitment to continue to support industries such as manufacturing, agriculture, fisheries, right here at home. Our suppliers will also be interested to know that the new Public Procurement Bill includes mandatory posting for tender notices, winning bidder and award amounts to the province's procurement web portal; also, mandatory supplier debriefing sessions, a common vendor complaint process, a code of ethics for public procurement professionals, and a move towards standard terms and conditions that are attached to tender opportunities.

I want you to know that during our consultations, feedback was extremely positive. We are hearing from the public sector entities, as well as the business associations we've spoken to, that this is the right time and we are headed in the right direction. Nova Scotians have trusted us to make the best decisions with each procurement dollar. This bill is our

commitment to ensure a systematic approach, across the board, to procurement by all public entities; Nova Scotia municipalities, universities, Nova Scotia Community College, school boards, health authorities, housing authorities, Crown Corporations and core government departments, boards, agencies and commissions will work together with our suppliers to keep this commitment on behalf of all Nova Scotians.

In closing, I would like to take a few seconds to mention the core staff at the Department of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism who are responsible for this bold initiative, headed by Rick Draper, Natalie McLean, Robert Salah, Barry Boutilier, Lynda Rankin, Kimberly Kay and certainly all of ERDT Procurement Services. With that, Mr. Speaker, I will take my place.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

MR. ANDREW YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, briefly on this bill, this is certainly something that appears, on balance, to be a positive step, consolidating and changing the procurement standards so that across the \$2 billion, or thereabouts, of procurement that the government takes, or participates in, that the standards be reasonably similar seems to be something that would make sense and would seem to be something that would potentially save money, but if not save money, make it easier for Nova Scotia businesses and other businesses where permitted through trade legislation anyway, to better access procurement opportunities with the government, and we hope that's the way it works out.

It is interesting to note that the bill does allow for a whole new structure around governance and much like the previous bill, sometimes you see these costs add up that you're not expecting in certain areas and so I think it's something that I would hope the minister will be very watchful over as to ensure that as that Procurement Advisory Group and the Chief Procurement Officer, that governance structure gets built that it doesn't become a little empire - a very expensive little empire - as we've seen happen in some other areas at times. I think that's something they have to be careful of.

I think that the debriefing sessions that are mandated in here for suppliers makes a lot of sense because it's a little bit ironic that we have this bill at the same time that the government is getting into the paving business. Had there been more supplier-debriefing sessions on that side of things, there may have been other options for the government to look at on that issue as well. In fact, it is interesting that many of the things that are proposed in this bill, which we certainly support, are things which could have actually addressed the issue on the paving side as well. It's too bad that the government didn't seek to move this forward first, see what options are there before taking the step of getting into a multi-million-dollar business.

There are - as I think the minister pointed out in his remarks - about 150 public entities, which come under this bill. I think that to some extent the minister would probably be well aware of this, that the devil will be in the details in terms of how this actually does

work out. There are bound to be some hiccups along the way and that's just the nature of the beast, but I hope that he and his department will be very careful watching that to ensure that there are as few as possible and this does move as slowly as possible.

In terms of local preference, maybe as we go forward through the process, I would certainly be interested to know - and other members of the House may be interested to know - I know there is a local preference ability of up to \$10,000, but I'm not quite sure how that meshes with some of the inter-provincial trade agreements and some of the trans-border trade agreements. I think it's a good idea; I'd just be interested to know how that pans out and how that works because obviously we want to support local suppliers wherever possible, but I also know that there are limitations in some of those agreements.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I'm hopeful that the minister may be able to provide some information on that as the process goes forward, whether just by tabling some information if he has it or if he knows it off the top of his head, he might want to provide that. With that, I'll take my place.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants West.

MR. CHUCK PORTER: Mr. Speaker, I'm glad to have a couple of minutes, I'll just be brief on this. I think, as well, that we agree that it's probably a good bill moving forward. The \$10,000 we just heard about by way of a local purchasing initiative and an ability to do so is good.

Obviously there are some concerns, one that we do as much as we can, I know it's about saving money and being efficient and I know we all agree with that, especially in this day and age, we need to do that. We also have to give consideration to local being Nova Scotia product local, not jumping to places like China and Mexico just because we can get it cheaper. We want the quality whether it's procuring uniforms for nurses.

I heard about a good example yesterday. In a recent contract signing with the NSNU, there's a clause in there that states a \$100 allotment for a nurse to purchase uniforms. In talking to a local supplier in downtown Windsor, she says you can't do that for \$100, they might break even, they're not going to make any money. She would still take the business if she could get it. It's about getting the opportunity.

I know I've spoken before about being able to get the opportunities. Moe's Place Music is an example as well. Long & McQuade seem to get the provincial contract for doing all the - if it's new violins or recorders and things like that going into the schools each year. They would love to have at least the opportunity to bid on it. If they know they're moving that kind of quantity they can supply for the local area. I hope some of those considerations are given and taken seriously. It's important to Nova Scotia right now obviously and to businesses in Nova Scotia that they get the opportunity to bid first. I know they want to be competitive, they want to be reasonable in every aspect they can, whether

supplying uniforms or supplying whatever. You name the product and there's plenty of them.

I look forward to hearing more on this and to see how it does make out in the Law Amendments Committee. I don't know if anyone will be in to speak to it or not but I look forward to seeing more details and how the policy and regulations around that will come out.

I said I would be brief and I have been and with that I say thank you and I take my seat.

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

The honourable Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism.

HON. PERCY PARIS: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in my place to close debate on Bill No. 23.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 23. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. CLARRIE MACKINNON: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 25.

Bill No. 25 - Occupational Health and Safety Act.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Labour and Advanced Education.

HON. MARILYN MORE: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to move second reading of Bill No. 25, an Act to Amend the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

As the minister responsible for the labour portfolio, there is likely nothing more important to me than making our workplaces safer and healthier. This is especially true as we recently recognized the International Day of Mourning on April 28th when we remembered men and women who did not come home from work. Every Nova Scotian should expect to return from work each day safe and sound.

Sadly that was not the case for 32 workers in 2009, for 23 workers in 2010 and for seven workers to date this year. I know I speak for everyone in this place when I say that we

mourn their loss and the impact of their passing for their families, friends, colleagues and community. Through a mix of education and enforcement efforts, our government is taking action that is intended to make Nova Scotia's workplaces safer and healthier.

This is not something that government can do on its own, although I do want to thank our 39 health and safety officers and occupational hygienists for all that they do to promote healthy, safe, workplaces. It is those inspectors who show up at offices, factories and other workplaces across the province, checking in to see that our occupational health and safety laws and regulations are being followed. Our inspectors are also on the scene when something goes awfully wrong and someone is injured, maimed or dies on the job. Those calls reinforce our inspectors' understanding of the importance of the work they do and the impact they have on workplaces.

I also want to thank our workplace safety and insurance system partners, including the Workers' Compensation Board, the Workers' Advisory Program and the Workers' Compensation Appeals Tribunal. Human Resources and Skills Development Canada is also an important partner in this endeavour. As well, we depend on employers and employees across the province to work together to make their workplaces safe.

Under the internal responsibility system, government, employers and workers alike share the responsibility of reducing the number of illnesses, injuries and deaths that occur in our workplaces every year. We have some good news - the numbers are moving in the right direction. According to the Workers' Compensation Board 2010 Annual Report, tabled on April 15th, the number of serious injuries in Nova Scotia workplaces is at its lowest level in 15 years. The number of new lost-time injuries reported to the WCB has dropped below 7,000 for the first time in 15 years. For every 1,000 workers in the province, there are 2.13 lost-time injuries per 100 workers reported. This is down 3.0 per cent just a few years ago, almost a 30 per cent improvement.

For the second year in a row, 95 per cent of workers who were away from work after an injury came back at their full, pre-injury earnings. It is always best when an injured worker can be back on the job, earning a living, putting a roof over his or her head and food on their table. In some instances a return to work is not possible. There were 23 workplace deaths in 2010, down from 32 in 2009. Today, halfway through the fourth month of the year, as I noted earlier, there have been seven deaths in Nova Scotia workplaces. Three were the result of heart attacks, two died from occupation-related illness, one fell and broke his hip and later died in hospital and one worker was hit while loading metal pipe.

Some deaths occurred in federal workplaces, some in federally-regulated workplaces. The bottom line is that they happened in a Nova Scotia workplace so that's why they are important to me, my department and my government. While we are making inroads and the numbers are decreasing, any work-related injury, illness or death in the workplace is one too many. If you think about it, working safely is very similar to driving safely. In both cases, government uses a mix of education and enforcement to change unsafe behaviours.

Over the years there have been a number of safety campaigns to get people to stop drinking and driving, to drive slower and less aggressively, to be more mindful of crosswalks and school zones and they have met with success. Similarly, the WCB has developed award-winning public awareness campaigns to make workplaces safer. Many of us will likely remember, Mr. Speaker, the ads of the bucket in the hallway, the over-used ladder and the protruding nail.

Over the years WCB has used some rather attention-grabbing ads to drive home the impact of workplace injuries, to make us sit up and take notice. There were some that really made us think twice, such as finding what looked like a grocery store cash register slip tucked in our newspaper. Who could resist the temptation to see what others were buying? When you examined the paper, it was actually an itemized list of the cost of workplace injuries.

I would like to share a story that happened earlier this year. Our director of investigations and his wife passed a construction site while they were shopping and he noticed some of the roofers were not wearing their fall-restraint harnesses properly. He called them down to the ground, wrote up some orders, and compelled them to attend a training session at the department. Unbeknownst to the roofers, he contacted Threads of Life, a national non-government agency that supports families touched by workplace tragedy. Threads of Life runs a speakers bureau and they arranged for a mother to come to the training session and speak to the roofers. Her son, also a roofer, was killed on the job a few years ago. It was an experience which brought tears to most eyes and by the end of the session the roofers got it. They also got a fine.

These fines were imposed as administrative penalties which we introduced in January of last year. Administrative penalties can be issued to employers and employees, reinforcing that each has a role to play in workplace safety. Penalties increase as one's responsibility in a workplace increases. So, for example, an employer would receive a larger penalty for the same offence than a supervisor or a self-employed worker. The supervisor or self-employed worker would receive a larger penalty than an employee. Penalties increase for repeat offences. If an inspector writes an order during the course of an inspection or investigation, that order is reviewed. The review also considers the individual's past health and safety record – if they have been convicted of an Occupational Health and Safety offence or received an earlier penalty and their level of responsibility and influence in the workplace.

During their first year of use, we reviewed 4,391 orders and issued 1,169 administrative penalties. About 26 per cent of the orders resulted in an administrative penalty. The monetary value of these administrative penalties is \$702,223.17. Unfortunately, money is sometimes the strongest motivator for change. We drive differently or less because it costs more to fill our gas tanks. With that in mind, and as we continue our education and prevention efforts, we believe it is time to increase our Occupational Health and Safety fines. The Province of Nova Scotia last changed its fine

limits in 1996, upping the maximum fine to \$250,000. The maximum fine imposed by the provincial courts to date has been \$125,000. Currently all Atlantic Provinces have the same fine structure as Nova Scotia.

Across Canada, maximum fines range from a low of \$15,000 in Quebec, where they use graduated fines, to \$1 million under the Canada Labour Code and in Alberta. The highest fine in Canada is in British Columbia for a second offence and it is \$1,238,000. Some provinces add jail time as a potential penalty. In Nova Scotia, one can serve up to two years in prison for violating the Occupational Health and Safety Act. To date, no one has been incarcerated for breaking the Occupational and Health and Safety Act. Across the country, jail time can vary from none in Quebec and British Columbia to 36 months in the Yukon which also uses graduated fines.

Last Fall, in an interview with the CBC that touched on fines, Norma Lee MacLeod asked a question that I found very difficult. Essentially, is a Nova Scotia life worth less than those in other jurisdictions? Absolutely not. Every life is a gift and every death is a loss. No one is worth more than another. I defy anyone to put a price tag on a life. Fines cannot bring back or replace a loved one who dies at work. Obviously, larger fines could have an impact on the business community. We are aware of that.

We have taken that into consideration, but at the same time, fines cannot occur unless someone has been injured or killed in the workplace. Such an incident would have several impacts on a business - down time, loss of expert staff, declining morale, loss of client goodwill, et cetera. Then of course there are the legal bills. An investment in safety pays greater dividends, I believe, than all of the potential costs associated with a serious workplace injury. Increasing fines will only make that more true.

Leading up to this bill, our department consulted with the Occupational Health and Safety Advisory Council, a group of men and women, equally representing employers and employees, which advises on health and safety matters. The council advised that we take the following actions: one, to establish a progressive fine system with a \$250,000 maximum fine for a first offence and a \$500,000 maximum fine for each subsequent offence. The maximum fine in all cases involving a fatality should be \$500,000.

Also, they recommended that we amend the Act, so that creative sentencing options would not be included in calculating the maximum fine. A third recommendation, the council agreed to work with the department on a review of the creative sentencing policy, to consider sentencing options that may benefit other players in the safety system. Finally, that all money received for a fine should be directed to a fund to support prevention initiatives.

All of these recommendations were accepted, save for the last one. All monies received from Occupational Health and Safety fines will go to general revenues, as this has been the past practice for many, many years. Money is allocated for educational programs through a trust fund called the Minister's Education Fund. The majority of education and

prevention programs are funded through the Workers' Compensation Board premiums. Education and prevention programming is not dependent on fines.

Bill No. 25 proposes that the fines remain at \$250,000 for a first offence and increase to \$500,000 for any additional offence that occurs within five years of the first offence. The maximum fine for any offence involving a workplace death, as I mentioned earlier, would be \$500,000. This would put us in line with other Canadian jurisdictions. Judges may continue to use creative sentencing in their decisions. Under creative sentencing, a judge can order a guilty party to contribute to an organization that supports injured workers or their families, or to perform community service intended to increase workplace health and safety. Penalties imposed under creative sentencing would be additional to the maximum fine under the proposed amendments.

In previous prosecutions the judges have made awards to the Minister's Education Fund which are used to support groups such as the Threads of Life, the organization I mentioned earlier in my comments. Now, there are some who may suggest that increasing fines would put too much financial burden on employers. That line of thought does not take into account the financial impact of workplace injuries for employers - finding replacement staff, training those workers, down time while the machinery is out of service for inspection and repair, legal fees associated with the prosecutions and such. Nor does it take into account the psychological and emotional impact that a workplace injury has on a firm's other workers, its clients and the community.

Employers can avoid those costs and fines by maintaining a safe workplace. Employers can avoid lost wages, pain and suffering, or worse, by maintaining a safe workplace. Families would be spared the agony and heartache associated with seeing a loved one killed or incapacitated.

I also heard a comment that the government should not be balancing the books on the backs of injured workers. Now, that comment surprised me on a few levels.

Firstly, the injured party is not the party being fined. Charges are laid and upon conviction, fines are imposed on the people and/or businesses that failed to live up to their responsibilities to establish and maintain a safe and healthy workplace.

Secondly, it sounds to me as though someone believes we look forward to receiving revenue from Occupational Health and Safety fines and nothing could be further from the truth. Every member of our government would be pleased, no, we would be thrilled, to see a decrease in revenue with regard to health and safety fines.

By increasing fines for those who break our health and safety laws, we are sending a strong message that reaffirms our intent to reduce injuries, illnesses and death at work. We believe this strongly enough to have one Crown prosecutor dedicated to regulatory offences, including occupational health and safety.

For the past five years, this dedicated prosecutor has taken the lead in major occupational health and safety prosecutions and acted as a resource to other Crown attorneys handling less complex cases. Right now, we have 24 prosecutions in the courts. In some cases, these follow the deaths of people in the workplace and in other cases, employees suffered severe injuries.

Our department is often asked why we don't charge offenders under the Criminal Code of Canada. After all, the ability to do so came in response to a recommendation in the Westray inquiry report. Our response is pragmatic. The Criminal Code of Canada demands that we prove the offender acted with intent, that they wilfully disregarded the law in order to save money, realize a greater profit et cetera.

Under the Occupational Health and Safety Act, we need to prove that the offence occurred, rather than to prove that the offender acted with intent. It is easier to get a conviction under the provincial law. I, for one, would prefer to see a conviction under the provincial law, rather than a not guilty verdict on the federal Statute.

Mr. Speaker, the goal of these proposed changes to the Occupational Health and Safety Act fines, we believe, will renew awareness about everyone's need to take an active role in making our respective workplaces healthier and safer. It will complement administrative penalties, which are levied for lesser offences under the Act, offences which do not warrant court prosecutions.

Mr. Speaker, these proposed changes reflect the practices of many other jurisdictions in Canada and go hand in hand with Labour and Advanced Education's other education and enforcement activities.

On that note, Mr. Speaker, I will take my place and listen intently to the other members gathered here today. (Applause)

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

HON. MANNING MACDONALD: I am tempted to be as brief as the minister in her introduction of this bill but I will restrain myself. On behalf of our critic, Mr. Speaker, we think this bill is worthy of going through the stages of the House and simply put, we will agree to have this go to the Law Amendments Committee and then we'll take a look at it at that time.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants West.

MR. CHUCK PORTER: I'm glad to have just a couple of minutes as well to speak to this bill. If I can hear myself here. This is an important topic and I can tell you, I was here last week for the ceremony here in the House but this past Sunday afternoon gone by, Barbara Beck and her girls, Deanna and Nicki, who lost their father a number of years ago in a workplace accident, held the first annual Steps of Life walk; 180 people joined them at

Smiley's Park, I was there myself. They raised \$9,000 to go toward families who have been affected by this and who still, to this day, over a number of years, have gotten no compensation. They struggle, as you can imagine, such an issue for an injury or, of course, even worse, a death in the workplace, what it does to a family. It changes their lives forever.

Some of these families are still battling workplaces and insurance companies and you name it, for compensation. It creates not only a huge emotional scar and hardships but certainly financial hardships.

The minister talked at length about fines and whose jurisdiction it was, whether it is provincial or federal Statutes, it doesn't matter. When a loved one has been lost and killed in a workplace accident, it doesn't matter whose Statute it falls under, those families are changed forever. We have to remember that first and foremost and it doesn't matter how much the fines are if you can't get them. There has to be something in place that is making it easier for families to access the required help they need, whether it is financial, whether it is emotional or whatever it might be, and they go through an awful lot, as we know, Mr. Speaker.

I look forward to hearing more on this bill and to see it through the Law Amendments Committee and back. I know there will be a lot more debate on it. This is a big issue in Nova Scotia. We talked about the number of deaths. It's unbelievable that we have that many workplace deaths in this province today. Education and awareness are the two key factors here; we have to continue to do that.

There is responsibility on everyone's part, as well. Most people want to stand up and say it's all the government's fault. We know that it isn't; we know that governments have a role to play; we know that the workplace has a role to play, both the employer and the employee; every day we have a role to play, regardless of where we are, to prevent these injuries and certainly to prevent the number of deaths. The year that goes by that we have zero is certainly the goal and we no longer have this issue.

Mr. Speaker, I want to just take those few minutes and for the record, I want to commend the Beck family for doing what they are doing out there, by way of educating the public and making them aware and certainly being part of that and all the people who joined them. With those few comments, for now, I'll say thank you very much and take my seat.

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

The honourable Minister of Labour and Advanced Education.

HON. MARILYN MORE: Mr. Speaker, I thank the honourable members for their comments and their support in moving this bill along to Law Amendments Committee. I would like to close debate on Bill No. 25. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 25. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. CLARRIE MACKINNON: Mr. Speaker, that concludes the government business for the day. I would request that you call on the House Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Opposition House Leader.

HON. MANNING MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, tomorrow the House will meet between the hours of 2:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. Following the daily routine and Question Period, we intend to call Resolution No. 930 and Resolution No. 944.

I move that the House do now rise until 2:00 p.m. tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is that the House now rise to meet again tomorrow at the hour of 2:00 p.m.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

Before I go to the moment of interruption, it was brought to my attention by my staff that they noticed a page that was included in a petition yesterday by the member for Richmond, on behalf of the member for Clare, was photocopied, which is not permitted under our practices.

I have directed that the one page be removed from the petition but the rest of the petition remains tabled.

We have now reached the moment of interruption. The subject of the Adjournment motion, as determined earlier in the day:

“Therefore be it resolved that the NDP Government oppose any proposed power rate increases, freeze the Demand-Side Management charge on energy bills, and instruct the Utility and Review Board to conduct a performance audit on Nova Scotia Power.”

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION UNDER RULE 5(5)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

NSP: RATE INCREASES - NDP GOV'T. OPPOSE

MR. ANDREW YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Richmond for submitting the topic for today's late debate. I think this is an important issue for people across Nova Scotia and certainly this seems to be an appropriate day to be discussing this, on the day that Emera has announced a 6.4 per cent increase over quarter one earnings for 2011 over 2010, so here we are discussing - and I might add that of the \$82.8 million in earnings they reported this morning, \$63.6 million comes from their Nova Scotia Power operations. That makes today's debate much more timely in terms of power rates.

I took some time to go back and look from 1983 through to January 1, 2011 to see what has happened to power rates over that time. Now, obviously we can expect there's always going to be some inflation, we understand that. The base charge - and here's where we get to the crux of the matter - on every bill in 1983 was \$6.64. It's now \$10.83, but it has been \$10.83 since 2002. The reason Nova Scotia Power has not gone back to the board to request an increase on that side is because that would allow Nova Scotia, it would allow the government, it would allow the Opposition, it would allow interveners to look at the actual operational costs of Nova Scotia Power.

Instead, what happened a number of years ago is Nova Scotia Power was able to split their rate increase applications into a number of areas so they have the base rate, they have the energy cost, and then they have automatic adjustments for the cost of fuel and under-estimation and over-estimation over time. That's where we get to the crux of the matter, because at the hearings that go on, Nova Scotia Power goes forward and what they apply for is they apply for fuel rate increases. Well the Utility and Review Board, under provincial legislation, can only consider whether the cost of fuel has gone up or not and if it has, then they are granted that increase.

There is no ability anymore, at a fuel rate hearing, to go back and look at the total operational costs of Nova Scotia Power. That's why we have proposed the idea of the

government ordering a performance audit on Nova Scotia Power. Now are they a private company? Of course they are, but they are also a monopoly. They're a regulated company under the laws of this province and there are other companies and institutions that are private and separate from government that have had audits ordered on them over the past number of years, and it's no different that this would be the case here because it's something that's in the public interest.

It should be proven, before Nova Scotia Power is granted any kind of rate increase, that they have achieved all operational efficiencies elsewhere. The government has already asked and demanded the same thing be done of the school boards, so why is Nova Scotia Power being held to a lesser standard than the school boards? That's something we need to be very concerned about. Indeed, it was the member for Halifax Fairview who said when he was in Opposition: It's hard for Nova Scotians to accept, I think, that their power rates are set by a few big players in the system. In that, he went on further to talk about the issue that it was the interveners for the large companies that appear at the hearings and the Utility and Review Board.

I have the utmost faith in the work of the Utility and Review Board, but they can only do their work under the guidelines set forward by the Department of Energy and by the government. They're limited by the bounds of the rules they are given by government. They don't get to go and just look at anything, which is why government has a role in this. Government has a role to say, we are going to audit and make sure that Nova Scotians are getting the very best value for their money. Recently, we also heard that as part of their upcoming hearings, Nova Scotia Power may also be seeking an increase on their return on equity. Well, what that means is that Nova Scotia Power is guaranteed a range of return for shareholders.

I can tell you right now, there is no stock in the portfolio of my entire RRSP that is guaranteed a rate of return automatically. I can't think of any other company in Nova Scotia that's guaranteed a rate of return. I mean can you imagine the corner store down the road being guaranteed a rate of return? They would love that but it doesn't happen and yet they're now looking to go and ask for an even greater return on that equity, and that's something that government needs to be very concerned about. It's up to government to take action on it. It's only government that can actually take action on that on behalf of consumers and on behalf of all Nova Scotians.

Now, in debates for the past two years, the government has repeatedly pointed out that they removed the HST from electricity. I will give them that. However, they also increased the HST by 2 per cent on most other items - not all items, granted, but most other items that you and I and other Nova Scotians buy each day. So that 8 per cent has not turned into a real savings at the door for most Nova Scotians at the end of the month. At the end of the month, most Nova Scotians are paying more. In addition, they are paying an amount for an efficiency tax which was added by this government, an efficiency tax which the Premier's chief of staff three days before the election said the NDP opposed, and yet in their first session in government introduced.

In the first year nobody noticed it because the fuel adjustment mechanism pretty well made it a wash. So what that meant is that there was half a cent added to the electrical charges as a result on January 1st of this year, just for that tax. That was in addition to the rate increases which have gone from 7.1 cents all the way now to almost 12 cents per kilowatt hour. Mr. Speaker, that's probably, if I do some quick math, about an 80 per cent increase over the past 20 years, an 80 per cent increase. We know there's more coming because some of the rate increases that they had applied for for January 1st have been deferred for the next couple of years, so they're slowly going to come in.

We also know that while it's true that the government has moved to increase the amount of renewables, those renewables will come with yet an additional cost. So the government should be trying to reduce the operational expenditures of Nova Scotia Power so that we can minimize the rate shock that will result from going to further renewables. Further renewables are good. They're good for the environment, they're good for price stability, but it doesn't change the fact that at the end of the day it is important to minimize that rate shock as much as possible.

There has been talk about Churchill Falls. Well, we know from Nova Scotia Power that they're looking at a landed price anywhere from 12 cents to 16 cents, plus distribution and overhead costs on top of that. So that's a further increase. Is it a stable price for the period of the contract? Yes, but it's a further increase which means we should be looking for as many savings on the operational side before that increase comes to reduce the increase. That's the message that we've been trying to get through to the government. Yet the government continues to talk about some price stability at some future point.

Today during Question Period, the minister said, and I'm not sure whether he misspoke or whether he meant this, we are going - and I had the exact quote written down here somewhere but I don't have it right now - we're going to see that prices drop. I'm not sure that anybody believes that prices are going to drop for electricity. What they want is to stop the increases, to see the increases come to an end and know in a public, audited way that they are getting the best value possible from Nova Scotia Power's operational costs. They know, the public knows now, if the price of coal goes up, or they have to have wind, that the fuel cost is going to go up but that doesn't mean that we can't be looking for expenditure savings on the other end.

I will tell you, when people wake up tomorrow morning and they read in the paper that there's a 6.4 per cent increase in net earnings this morning - and most of that, Premier, is from Nova Scotia Power, \$63.6 million of the \$82 million is from Nova Scotia Power - I guarantee you people are going to be livid when that's tied right to the fact that they're in the middle of another rate increase. The members on the government side know that people are mad about that. They knew they were mad when they were sitting on this side of the House and they need to join Nova Scotians in seeing that audited and seeing answers. Thank you very much.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Energy.

HON. CHARLIE PARKER: Mr. Speaker, it's certainly a pleasure for me to be able to rise here this evening and speak to the motion that was brought forward by the Official Opposition - I believe it was by the member for Richmond, although it's the member for Dartmouth East who has spoken on it. I understand that.

I just want to thank them for bringing forward the motion and for giving me an opportunity to provide information about how electricity rates are set here in our province. If I understand the motion correctly, the motion calls for our government to get directly and deeply involved in the setting of power rates in this province. As you know, that's not something that we can do. Under the long-standing policy and law, it's just not possible.

Under governments of various stripes, whether Liberal or Progressive Conservative and now NDP, there has been support for an independent and open regulatory process for setting electricity rates. The Utility and Review Board Act gives the URB the mandate to administer the Public Utilities Act which provides the rules for regulating Nova Scotia Power. Through this framework, the URB has the mandate to approve electricity rates. The URB, as you would know, is an independent, quasi-judicial regulatory body, and by law and good public policy government has no direct role in approving electricity rates.

Indeed, to adopt the motion the member has put forward would mean gutting the purpose of the entire URB Act. It also means overturning a critical part of the mandate of the URB. Having said that, our government knows that electricity is a basic necessity of life and that we are very concerned about the effect proposed rate increases could have on Nova Scotia families.

That's why we are working hard on initiatives that will help stabilize electricity rates in our province. It's also why we removed the provincial portion of the HST from home electricity. It's also why we have one of the most aggressive renewable electricity plans in our country. It's why we are pursuing the Lower Churchill deal and why we are also pursuing tidal power in the Bay of Fundy.

One of the key steps to reducing electricity demand is to avoid costly new fossil-based generation and that's why we've allowed the demand-side management charges as approved by the URB. The demand-side management charge, which is on electricity bills, is used to fund the delivery of electricity conservation programs by Efficiency Nova Scotia. This typically amounts to approximately \$1 to \$3 on your monthly electricity bill. For the average consumer, that's a good investment in the future cost of electricity in this province.

As you would know, Efficiency Nova Scotia is independent of government and independent of Nova Scotia Power, and it works to develop programs that will help Nova Scotia businesses and individuals reduce their energy consumption and improve their

energy efficiency. Efforts are particularly focused on large users of electricity and also on low-income Nova Scotia families who can least afford to pay for it.

That is working. Between 2007 and 2010 demand has decreased by approximately 4 per cent here in our province. As well, there are people in Nova Scotia who are paying less for electricity than they were 10 years ago because of energy conservation programs and measures they have undertaken at home. We are taking actions to ensure electricity rates remain stable, and we are lowering greenhouse gas and mercury emissions as well.

We are undertaking an energy transformation in this province. We want to stop relying on costly, uncertain supplies of imported coal to generate our electricity. We have some very good alternatives. We have a wealth of natural resources in this province from our water, from our air and from our lands. Just a few short years ago, coal accounted for roughly 75 per cent of our electricity generation. We have now cut that figure down to approximately 65 per cent through the use of cleaner-burning natural gas and also through the addition of various renewables, as I mentioned.

By 2020, 40 per cent of our electricity will come from sources like wind, hydro, tidal and biomass. Another 20 per cent could come from natural gas, especially if prices remain low or remain competitive. Right now they are in the \$4 range or slightly over. That makes our energy situation more secure, it helps to keep electricity costs in check and it builds our local economies.

Last year our wind power capacity in the province more than doubled. We now have 160 wind turbines able to deliver power to the grid. Certainly in the area of the province that I come from there are two large wind farms - on Dalhousie Mountain and also the Shear Wind project in eastern Pictou County.

Mr. Speaker, we're taking a balanced approach to our energy needs here in Nova Scotia. We want an electricity system that works for all Nova Scotia residents and for every income level. Nova Scotians don't want to pay more for their power if they don't have to. We expect Nova Scotia Power to look long and hard at their proposed electricity rates, to sharpen their pencils to decrease or reduce any costs they have, or even to eliminate some.

We encourage Nova Scotia Power and stakeholders to work long and hard at this as well. We also believe the time has come for the federal government to end the practice of charging HST on one of the most important necessities of life, our electricity. That move alone would save approximately 5 per cent on electricity rates and would help offset any increases being proposed.

Mr. Speaker, in closing I just want to mention that our government will join with the consumer advocate and others, to ensure that any proposals put forward by Nova Scotia Power for rate increases get fully scrutinized in the public hearing process. We would encourage any and all interested parties and all Nova Scotians to do the same.

The URB has the mandate to set electricity rates in Nova Scotia and it is up to all of us to ensure that we voice our concerns and ask the right questions. However, we feel strongly, Mr. Speaker, that it is not the role of government to be setting electricity rates, nor conducting an audit of Nova Scotia Power operations, as the honourable member who spoke previously had mentioned.

We believe in full accountability on rates and we believe that the URB has full authority to scrutinize costs and require anything that would be covered by an audit.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I just want to thank the honourable member opposite for bringing up the discussion and for this opportunity to share our government's views on this topic. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants West.

MR. CHUCK PORTER: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to rise this evening for a few minutes and speak to a resolution that I certainly support and believe in. I want to thank the honourable member for bringing it forward. I want to thank the minister for that wonderfully-written speech by whoever wrote it. I can tell you that it had absolutely nothing to do with what we're talking about here, what the resolution speaks to. It doesn't speak to it at all. It doesn't address it. It's a nice speech, a great dream and that's what it is, nothing more at this point in time, from what I can see, and certainly from what has been done.

I do want to talk a little bit about the resolution myself. The minister speaks about encouraging Nova Scotia Power to sharpen their pencil. I would say, Mr. Speaker, that I would encourage them to dull it a little bit, maybe erase a little bit there. Their pencil is more than sharp enough. They are already gouging Nova Scotians and the government is standing by saying, this isn't our problem.

So let's see, the government regulates the URB but has no input in what the rates should be. That's the most confusing thing I've seen yet, and they don't want to be involved. This is a Party now that promised a better deal for today's families. They said we're going to go out and make life better. They have done nothing anywhere near that; they have actually made decisions that are worse. They've walked away from the issue, Mr. Speaker, that's what they've done, they walked away from it.

The government has done nothing to offset the costs of energy in this province. As I said, they've written a wonderful speech there but it speaks zero to what we're talking about.

The power bill, Mr. Speaker, and I'll table it - it's my power bill, I don't mind doing it when I'm through making a couple of points here. They talk about the charges on this thing. You look at your cost of energy, so there's a section that is your usage, then there are energy charges. There's a base charge of \$10.83 in my bill for the month. Then there's

another charge, energy efficiency programs, of \$9.25 and then, of course, the good old tax has to go on top of that before there's any kind of rebate given back. It never ends, and people are trying to read their bill and they can't figure out and they're asking, what's this for, and what's that for - they have no idea what it's for.

Here we see Nova Scotia Power today reporting record profits yet again; \$63 million plus and where's that going, Mr. Speaker? Well, I think read in the paper today about a wonderful project they're investing in now, down in the United States or God knows where else, but they're not investing in Nova Scotia, not even close.

I understand as well, we certainly believe in business and profit, you have to be competitive and you have to be making money to stay in business and I appreciate that very much but there does come a limit and time. This is a monopoly, Mr. Speaker, this is not just a private business. I spoke before on this issue and I'll say it again, I believe that competition is a good thing and one of the ways that we're going to get rates down is to create competition.

We have to get our hand involved in this. People expect their government to be involved in the regulation of the cost of energy. Now, on one hand the minister writes a wonderful speech over there and he talks about 2020 and he talks about the years ahead and wind and the wonderful power out there in the Minas Basin. Believe me, I know all about that. That's a great opportunity. There's cutting greenhouse gas emissions. Those are all wonderful things, wonderful thoughts and projections but there appears to be no plan to make that happen.

People also are of the opinion that green energy may not be expensive. I think anybody who's really paying attention knows that green energy costs money, these initiatives cost a lot of money, actually, to get started and to be involved. But it's the same old thing, when they see their money, their taxpaying dollars being invested in projects. It's one thing to invest in the projects and have this dream and wanting to do better. There is nothing wrong with having a greener energy source, certainly one that would be more reasonable and maybe slow the increased rates that we're seeing by way of Nova Scotia Power.

But Nova Scotia Power has a hand in it. We can't do anything without Nova Scotia Power having their hand in the pie. Taxpaying dollars are going in a roundabout way - call it how you want, but they appear to be going, at the very least, into Nova Scotia Power. But yet we have no control, the taxpayer - you and I, Mr. Speaker - the ratepayers have no control over the rates in the province. But our taxpaying dollars are going to initiatives that they have a say in, that they are profiting on. Talk about something being wrong - that's wrong.

There has to be a better way of doing business and it has to be around the regulation and the ability that government wants to be involved. They have to be involved, they have

to have a say on behalf of the taxpayer when it comes to managing our money, if we're going to spend taxpaying dollars investing in these projects.

Again, going down the green side is a good thing, clean green energy is fine, nothing wrong with that, I'm okay with that and I think most people are excited about opportunities that we have in this province for moving in that direction. We want to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, there is no question about that, we want to have a good environment. We're talking about sustainability for our kids and our grandkids and beyond that, long after we're gone.

Those are great ideas but you have to have a plan to be able to put them in place and you can't do it paying the kind of money that we are paying in this province to do it. You can't do it on the backs of every ratepayer, and two or three or four times a year coming up with ideas and reading about how Nova Scotia Power needs more because we have guaranteed investments. I wish I could buy shares in Nova Scotia Power, Mr. Speaker - perhaps that would be a conflict of interest, maybe, I don't know. It would certainly be a conflict of interest, I guess, but a guaranteed investment, where can I get that? As the other member spoke too, what a great idea, we'd all be doing very well.

Then you look at rates going up, and it's not just the shareholders. You look at these guys who are the bigwigs in these companies, the CEOs - they're not just making a few hundred thousand dollars, they are getting that in bonuses and more. We're talking millions of dollars a year going to salary on the backs of Nova Scotians because, oh, it's not good enough, we need a little rate, we got to live at this level way up here, Mr. Speaker. Forget about the gal I got in Windsor who's getting her power cut off today because she can't pay a bill, because she lost her job. That doesn't matter, no worries, don't matter, we'll cut her off and someone else will move into that apartment, we'll hook them up and we'll take their rate, no big deal. That's the appearance that people have.

Now, I know that we negotiate with Nova Scotia Power on behalf of our constituents all the time and I don't know about the rest of you members but I know that I do it regularly, unfortunately, too many times. We are able, sometimes, to work things out and sometimes we're not. It's important that we try to get them worked out, so they can live and have heat, power and not heating their apartments with their oven on. There are all kinds of things that are relative here but we have to find a way in Nova Scotia - the government has to step in and at some point say all right, enough is enough.

They talk about being arm's length, and I said it last week, cut the arm off and get involved. Is it taking it back in some way, that's okay, I think the people are anxiously waiting to see what government will do. Somebody has to stand up for the ratepayer and the everyday Joe and Jane who's out there trying to work and make a living and survive with a family.

We're not seeing that yet, Mr. Speaker, and this government promised that on the doorsteps when they were campaigning. People are still waiting and they're going to be

waiting a good long time if nothing changes - a couple more years at least anyway. I'm sure that they'll make up their minds then what they want to do and they'll reflect back when the time is right.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, I do support this motion. I think it is high time that we got involved and we do freeze the demand side piece of this, we do freeze and regulate. If we're going to get into regulations, then we can craft the regulations a little differently and say Nova Scotia Power can have an increase, sure, once every five years, or whatever the figure might be. There has got to be a way to be involved that's fair to all concerned and not on the backs of the Nova Scotia ratepayer. With that, thank you very much, and I'll take my seat.

MR. SPEAKER: I would like to thank all the members in the Chamber tonight for an excellent debate.

The motion for adjournment had been made earlier. The House will now rise to sit between the hours of 2:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. tomorrow, Wednesday, May 4th.

[The House rose at 6:11 p.m.]

NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3)**RESOLUTION NO. 1025**

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 9th; and

Whereas 4 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 members of this House express their congratulations to all adult learners and wish them life-long success.

RESOLUTION NO. 1026

By: Ms. Vicki Conrad (Queens)

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

Whereas music plays such an important role in the education and growth of our youth; and

Whereas music festivals promote and encourage the growth in music through local festivals in competitive and non-competitive classes like the 2011 Queens County Music Festival recently held in Liverpool, Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Alyssa Oickle won the C.D. Hemeon Rose Bowl and the Kinsmen Vocal Scholarship;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia House of Assembly recognize and congratulate Alyssa Oickle for having won the C.D. Hemeon Rose Bowl and the Kinsmen Vocal Scholarship during the 2011 Queens County Music Festival.

RESOLUTION NO. 1027

By: Ms. Vicki Conrad (Queens)

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

Whereas music plays such an important role in the education and growth of our youth; and

Whereas music festivals promote and encourage the growth in music through local festivals in competitive and non-competitive classes like the 2011 Queens County Music Festival recently held in Liverpool, Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Angus Stevens won a Maddie Keay Memorial Vocal Scholarship;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia House of Assembly recognize and congratulate Angus Stevens for having won a Maddie Keay Memorial Vocal Scholarship during the 2011 Queens County Music Festival.

RESOLUTION NO. 1028

By: Ms. Vicki Conrad (Queens)

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

Whereas music plays such an important role in the education and growth of our youth; and

Whereas music festivals promote and encourage the growth in music through local festivals in competitive and non-competitive classes like the 2011 Queens County Music Festival recently held in Liverpool, Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Anna Maria Nasrallah won the Kinette Club Memorial Vocal Scholarship;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia House of Assembly recognize and congratulate Anna Maria Nasrallah for having won the Kinette Club Memorial Vocal Scholarship during the 2011 Queens County Music Festival.

RESOLUTION NO. 1029

By: Ms. Vicki Conrad (Queens)

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

Whereas music plays such an important role in the education and growth of our youth; and

Whereas music festivals promote and encourage the growth in music through local festivals in competitive and non-competitive classes like the 2011 Queens County Music Festival recently held in Liverpool, Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Annalise Stevenson won the I.O.D.E. Cup (Junior Piano Solo), the Khattar Cup (Junior Piano Duet or Trio) and a Maddie Key Memorial Piano Scholarship;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia House of Assembly recognize and congratulate Annalise Stevenson for having won the I.O.D.E. Cup (Junior Piano Solo), the Khattar Cup (Junior Piano Duet or Trio) and a Maddie Key Memorial Piano Scholarship during the 2011 Queens County Music Festival.

RESOLUTION NO. 1030

By: Ms. Vicki Conrad (Queens)

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

Whereas music plays such an important role in the education and growth of our youth; and

Whereas music festivals promote and encourage the growth in music through local festivals in competitive and non-competitive classes like the 2011 Queens County Music Festival recently held in Liverpool, Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Bailey Selig won the Maddie Key Memorial Trophy (Senior Piano) and a Maddie Key Memorial Piano Scholarship;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia House of Assembly recognize and congratulate Bailey Selig for having won the Maddie Key Memorial Trophy (Senior Piano) and the Maddie Key Memorial Piano Scholarship during the 2011 Queens County Music Festival.

RESOLUTION NO. 1031

By: Ms. Vicki Conrad (Queens)

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

Whereas music plays such an important role in the education and growth of our youth; and

Whereas music festivals promote and encourage the growth in music through local festivals in competitive and non-competitive classes like the 2011 Queens County Music Festival recently held in Liverpool, Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Breah Himmelman won the Bowater Mersey Paper Company Cup (Senior Piano Solo) and a MacPherson's Deli/Sears Senior Vocal Scholarship;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia House of Assembly recognize and congratulate Breah Himmelman for having won the Bowater Mersey Paper Company Cup (Senior Piano Solo) and a MacPherson's Deli/Sears Senior Vocal Scholarship during the 2011 Queens County Music Festival.

RESOLUTION NO. 1032

By: Ms. Vicki Conrad (Queens)

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

Whereas music plays such an important role in the education and growth of our youth; and

Whereas music festivals promote and encourage the growth in music through local festivals in competitive and non-competitive classes like the 2011 Queens County Music Festival recently held in Liverpool, Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Brent Raddall won the Atlantic Superstore Trophy (Vocal Solo), a Lions Club Vocal Scholarship and the Kiwanis Vocal Scholarship;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia House of Assembly recognize and congratulate Brent Raddall for having won the Atlantic Superstore Trophy (Vocal Solo), a Lions Club Vocal Scholarship and the Kiwanis Vocal Scholarship during the 2011 Queens County Music Festival.

RESOLUTION NO. 1033

By: Ms. Vicki Conrad (Queens)

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

Whereas music plays such an important role in the education and growth of our youth; and

Whereas music festivals promote and encourage the growth in music through local festivals in competitive and non-competitive classes like the 2011 Queens County Music Festival recently held in Liverpool, Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Bryden McNamara won the Veinot's Footwear Limited Cup (Senior Vocal Solo), received a recommendation to compete at the Provincial Music Festival in Halifax, a Lions Club Vocal Scholarship and a MacPherson's Deli/Sears Senior Vocal Scholarship;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia House of Assembly recognize and congratulate Bryden McNamara won the Veinot's Footwear Limited Cup (Senior Vocal Solo), received a recommendation to compete at the Provincial Music Festival in Halifax, a Lions Club Vocal Scholarship and a MacPherson's Deli/Sears Senior Vocal Scholarship during the 2011 Queens County Music Festival.

RESOLUTION NO. 1034

By: Ms. Vicki Conrad (Queens)

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

Whereas music plays such an important role in the education and growth of our youth; and

Whereas music festivals promote and encourage the growth in music through local festivals in competitive and non-competitive classes like the 2011 Queens County Music Festival recently held in Liverpool, Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Cassidy Boone won the Bill Stitt Memorial Scholarship for Instrumental Soloist;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia House of Assembly recognize and congratulate Cassidy Boone for having won the Bill Stitt Memorial Scholarship for Instrumental Soloist during the 2011 Queens County Music Festival.

RESOLUTION NO. 1035

By: Ms. Vicki Conrad (Queens)

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

Whereas music plays such an important role in the education and growth of our youth; and

Whereas music festivals promote and encourage the growth in music through local festivals in competitive and non-competitive classes like the 2011 Queens County Music Festival recently held in Liverpool, Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Chloe Pitre won The Winds of Change Plaque (Senior Musical Theatre Solo), received a recommendation to compete at the Provincial Music Festival in Halifax, the Astor Theatre Society Senior Musical Theatre Solo Scholarship and the Clattco Construction Musical Theatre Scholarship;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia House of Assembly recognize and congratulate Chloe Pitre, who won The Winds of Change Plaque (Senior Musical Theatre Solo), received a recommendation to compete at the Provincial Music Festival in Halifax, the Astor Theatre Society Senior Musical Theatre Solo Scholarship and the Clattco Construction Musical Theatre Scholarship, during the 2011 Queens County Music Festival.

RESOLUTION NO. 1036

By: Ms. Vicki Conrad (Queens)

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

Whereas music plays such an important role in the education and growth of our youth; and

Whereas music festivals promote and encourage the growth in music through local festivals in competitive and non-competitive classes like the 2011 Queens County Music Festival recently held in Liverpool, Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Clair Amirault and Hannah Barnes won the RIC/JAC Irving Mainway Trophy (Vocal Duet or Trio);

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia House of Assembly recognize and congratulate Claire Amirault and Hannah Barnes for having won the RIC/JAC Irving Mainway Trophy (Vocal Duet or Trio), during the 2011 Queens County Music Festival.

RESOLUTION NO. 1037

By: Ms. Vicki Conrad (Queens)

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

Whereas music plays such an important role in the education and growth of our youth; and

Whereas music festivals promote and encourage the growth in music through local festivals in competitive and non-competitive classes like the 2011 Queens County Music Festival recently held in Liverpool, Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Deena El-Ziftawi won a legion Branch #38 Vocal Scholarship;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia House of Assembly recognize and congratulate Deena El-Ziftawi for having won a Legion Branch #38 Vocal Scholarship, during the 2011 Queens County Music Festival.

RESOLUTION NO. 1038

By: Ms. Vicki Conrad (Queens)

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

Whereas music plays such an important role in the education and growth of our youth; and

Whereas music festivals promote and encourage the growth in music through local festivals in competitive and non-competitive classes like the 2011 Queens County Music Festival recently held in Liverpool, Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Dr. John C. Wickwire Academy Junior and Senior Choirs won the Kiwanis Trophy (Elementary School Chorus);

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia House of Assembly recognizes and congratulates Dr. John C. Wickwire Academy Junior and Senior Choirs for having won the Kiwanis Trophy (Elementary School Chorus), during the 2011 Queens County Music Festival.

RESOLUTION NO. 1039

By: Ms. Vicki Conrad (Queens)

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

Whereas music plays such an important role in the education and growth of our youth; and

Whereas music festivals promote and encourage the growth in music through local festivals in competitive and non-competitive classes like the 2011 Queens County Music Festival recently held in Liverpool, Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Elizabeth Baker won the Queens County Music Festival Senior Piano Scholarship;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia House of Assembly recognizes and congratulates Elizabeth Baker for having won the Queens County Music Festival Senior Piano Scholarship, during the 2011 Queens County Music Festival.

RESOLUTION NO. 1040

By: Ms. Vicki Conrad (Queens)

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

Whereas music plays such an important role in the education and growth of our youth; and

Whereas music festivals promote and encourage the growth in music through local festivals in competitive and non-competitive classes like the 2011 Queens County Music Festival recently held in Liverpool, Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Elizabeth Baker, Samantha Scobey and Breah Himmelman won the Lions Cup (Senior Piano Duet or Trio);

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia House of Assembly recognize and congratulate Elizabeth Baker, Samantha Scobey and Breah Himmelman for having won the Lions Cup (Senior Duet or Trio), during the 2011 Queens County Music Festival.

RESOLUTION NO. 1041

By: Ms. Vicki Conrad (Queens)

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

Whereas music plays such an important role in the education and growth of our youth; and

Whereas music festivals promote and encourage the growth in music through local festivals in competitive and non-competitive classes like the 2011 Queens County Music Festival recently held in Liverpool, Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Ellen Raddall won the Brady's Home Building Centre Vocal Scholarship;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia House of Assembly recognize and congratulate Ellen Raddall for having won the Brady's Home Building Centre Vocal Scholarship, during the 2011 Queens County Music Festival.

RESOLUTION NO. 1042

By: Ms. Vicki Conrad (Queens)

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

Whereas music plays such an important role in the education and growth of our youth; and

Whereas music festivals promote and encourage the growth in music through local festivals in competitive and non-competitive classes like the 2011 Queens County Music Festival recently held in Liverpool, Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Georgia Williams won the Brady's Home Building Centre Piano Scholarship;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia House of Assembly recognize and congratulate Georgia Williams for having won the Brady's Home Building Centre Piano Scholarship, during the 2011 Queens County Music Festival.

RESOLUTION NO. 1043

By: Ms. Vicki Conrad (Queens)

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

Whereas music plays such an important role in the education and growth of our youth; and

Whereas music festivals promote and encourage the growth in music through local festivals in competitive and non-competitive classes like the 2011 Queens County Music Festival recently held in Liverpool, Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Grace Cowling won a Legion Branch #38 Vocal Scholarship;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia House of Assembly recognize and congratulate Grace Cowling for having won a Legion Branch #38 Vocal Scholarship, during the 2011 Queens County Music Festival.

RESOLUTION NO. 1044

By: Ms. Vicki Conrad (Queens)

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

Whereas music plays such an important role in the education and growth of our youth; and

Whereas music festivals promote and encourage the growth in music through local festivals in competitive and non-competitive classes like the 2011 Queens County Music Festival recently held in Liverpool, Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Hannah Barnes won a Maddie Keay Memorial Piano Scholarship;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia House of Assembly recognize and congratulate Hannah Barnes for having won a Maddie Keay Memorial Piano Scholarship, during the 2011 Queens County Music Festival.

RESOLUTION NO. 1045

By: Ms. Vicki Conrad (Queens)

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

Whereas music plays such an important role in the education and growth of our youth; and

Whereas music festivals promote and encourage the growth in music through local festivals in competitive and non-competitive classes like the 2011 Queens County Music Festival recently held in Liverpool, Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Hannah Blanchard won the Henneberry's Barber Shoppe Trophy (Instrumental Soloist), received a recommendation to compete at the Provincial Music Festival in Halifax and won the Fan-Attic Photos Scholarship;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia House of Assembly recognize and congratulate Hannah Blanchard for having won the Henneberry's Barber Shoppe Trophy (Instrumental Soloist), received a recommendation to compete at the Provincial Music Festival in Halifax and won the Fan-Attic Photos Scholarship during the 2011 Queens County Music Festival.

RESOLUTION NO. 1046

By: Ms. Vicki Conrad (Queens)

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

Whereas music plays such an important role in the education and growth of our youth; and

Whereas music festivals promote and encourage the growth in music through local festivals in competitive and non-competitive classes like the 2011 Queens County Music Festival recently held in Liverpool, Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Jane Gillis won a Lions Club Vocal Scholarship;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia House of Assembly recognize and congratulate Jane Gillis for having won a Lions Club Vocal Scholarship during the 2011 Queens County Music Festival.

RESOLUTION NO. 1047

By: Ms. Vicki Conrad (Queens)

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

Whereas music plays such an important role in the education and growth of our youth; and

Whereas music festivals promote and encourage the growth in music through local festivals in competitive and non-competitive classes like the 2011 Queens County Music Festival recently held in Liverpool, Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Jessica Boone, Leah Whynot and Nicole Drake won the Queens County Music Festival Trophy (Instrument Ensemble);

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia House of Assembly recognize and congratulate Jessica Boone, Leah Whynot and Nicole Drake for having won the Queens County Music Festival Trophy (Instrument Ensemble) during the 2011 Queens County Music Festival.

RESOLUTION NO. 1048

By: Ms. Vicki Conrad (Queens)

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

Whereas music plays such an important role in the education and growth of our youth; and

Whereas music festivals promote and encourage the growth in music through local festivals in competitive and non-competitive classes like the 2011 Queens County Music Festival recently held in Liverpool, Nova Scotia; and

Whereas John Orme won the Private Stock Studio Trophy (Folksong or Modern Ballad) and a MacPherson's Deli/Sears Senior Vocal Scholarship;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia House of Assembly recognize and congratulate John Orme for having won the Private Stock Studio Trophy (Folksong or Modern Ballad) and a MacPherson's Deli/Sears Senior Vocal Scholarship during the 2011 Queens County Music Festival.

RESOLUTION NO. 1049

By: Ms. Vicki Conrad (Queens)

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

Whereas music plays such an important role in the education and growth of our youth; and

Whereas music festivals promote and encourage the growth in music through local festivals in competitive and non-competitive classes like the 2011 Queens County Music Festival recently held in Liverpool, Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Jordan Haughn won the Khattar Cup (Junior Piano Duet or Trio) and the Music Festival Junior Piano Scholarship;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia House of Assembly recognize and congratulate Jordan Haughn for having won the Khattar Cup (Junior Piano Duet or Trio) and the Music Festival Junior Piano Scholarship during the 2011 Queens County Music Festival.

RESOLUTION NO. 1050

By: Ms. Vicki Conrad (Queens)

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

Whereas music plays such an important role in the education and growth of our youth; and

Whereas music festivals promote and encourage the growth in music through local festivals in competitive and non-competitive classes like the 2011 Queens County Music Festival recently held in Liverpool, Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Julian Somes won a Maddie Keay Memorial Vocal Scholarship;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia House of Assembly recognize and congratulate Julian Somes for having won a Maddie Keay Memorial Vocal Scholarship during the 2011 Queens County Music Festival.

RESOLUTION NO. 1051

By: Ms. Vicki Conrad (Queens)

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

Whereas music plays such an important role in the education and growth of our youth; and

Whereas music festivals promote and encourage the growth in music through local festivals in competitive and non-competitive classes like the 2011 Queens County Music Festival recently held in Liverpool, Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Kate Inglis won a Maddie Keay Memorial Vocal Scholarship;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia House of Assembly recognize and congratulate Kate Inglis for having won a Maddie Keay Memorial Vocal Scholarship during the 2011 Queens County Music Festival.

RESOLUTION NO. 1052

By: Ms. Vicki Conrad (Queens)

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

Whereas music plays such an important role in the education and growth of our youth; and

Whereas music festivals promote and encourage the growth in music through local festivals in competitive and non-competitive classes like the 2011 Queens County Music Festival recently held in Liverpool, Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Kinder Tailby won the Kinette Club Memorial Piano Scholarship;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia House of Assembly recognize and congratulate Kinder Tailby for having won the Kinette Club Memorial Piano Scholarship during the 2011 Queens County Music Festival.

RESOLUTION NO. 1053

By: Ms. Vicki Conrad (Queens)

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

Whereas music plays such an important role in the education and growth of our youth; and

Whereas music festivals promote and encourage the growth in music through local festivals in competitive and non-competitive classes like the 2011 Queens County Music Festival recently held in Liverpool, Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Kinsey Francis won a Maddie Keay Memorial Vocal Scholarship;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia House of Assembly recognize and congratulate Kinsey Francis for having won a Maddie Keay Memorial Vocal Scholarship during the 2011 Queens County Music Festival.

RESOLUTION NO. 1054

By: Ms. Vicki Conrad (Queens)

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

Whereas music plays such an important role in the education and growth of our youth; and

Whereas music festivals promote and encourage the growth in music through local festivals in competitive and non-competitive classes like the 2011 Queens County Music Festival recently held in Liverpool, Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Leah Whynot won a Maddie Keay Memorial Piano Scholarship;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia House of Assembly recognize and congratulate Leah Whynot for having won a Maddie Keay Memorial Piano Scholarship during the 2011 Queens County Music Festival.

RESOLUTION NO. 1055

By: Ms. Vicki Conrad (Queens)

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

Whereas music plays such an important role in the education and growth of our youth; and

Whereas music festivals promote and encourage the growth in music through local festivals in competitive and non-competitive classes like the 2011 Queens County Music Festival recently held in Liverpool, Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Lincoln Inglis won the KMP Award (Jr. Musical Theatre), a Maddie Keay Memorial Vocal Scholarship and the Astor Theatre Society Jr. Musical Theatre Solo Scholarship;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia House of Assembly recognize and congratulate Lincoln Inglis for having won the KMP Award (Jr. Musical Theatre), a Maddie Keay Memorial Vocal Scholarship and the Astor Theatre Society Jr. Musical Theatre Solo Scholarship, during the 2011 Queens County Music Festival.

RESOLUTION NO. 1056

By: Ms. Vicki Conrad (Queens)

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

Whereas music plays such an important role in the education and growth of our youth; and

Whereas music festivals promote and encourage the growth in music through local festivals in competitive and non-competitive classes like the 2011 Queens County Music Festival recently held in Liverpool, Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Lori Anthony won a Lions Club Vocal Scholarship;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia House of Assembly recognize and congratulate Lori Anthony for having won a Lions Club Vocal Scholarship, during the 2011 Queens County Music Festival.

RESOLUTION NO. 1057

By: Ms. Vicki Conrad (Queens)

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

Whereas music plays such an important role in the education and growth of our youth; and

Whereas music festivals promote and encourage the growth in music through local festivals in competitive and non-competitive classes like the 2011 Queens County Music Festival recently held in Liverpool, Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Nicholas Townsend and Robyn Whynot won the Hank Snow Country Music Centre Trophy (Guitar);

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia House of Assembly recognize and congratulate Nicholas Townsend and Robyn Whynot for having won the Hank Snow Country Music Centre Trophy (Guitar), during the 2011 Queens County Music Festival.

RESOLUTION NO. 1058

By: Ms. Vicki Conrad (Queens)

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

Whereas music plays such an important role in the education and growth of our youth; and

Whereas music festivals promote and encourage the growth in music through local festivals in competitive and non-competitive classes like the 2011 Queens County Music Festival recently held in Liverpool, Nova Scotia; and

Whereas North Queens School Band won the Queens County Music Festival Trophy (Instrument Ensemble);

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia House of Assembly recognize and congratulate North Queens School Band for having won the Queens County Music Festival Trophy (Instrument Ensemble), during the 2011 Queens County Music Festival.

RESOLUTION NO. 1059

By: Ms Vicki Conrad (Queens)

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

Whereas music plays such an important role in the education and growth of our youth; and

Whereas music festivals promote and encourage the growth in music through local festivals in competitive and non-competitive classes like the 2011 Queens County Music Festival recently held in Liverpool, Nova Scotia; and

Whereas North Queens Elementary School Choir won the Bank of Montreal Cup (Overall Choir - junior or senior);

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia House of Assembly recognize and congratulate North Queens Elementary School Choir for having won the Bank of Montreal Cup (Overall Choir - junior or senior), during the 2011 Queens County Music Festival.

RESOLUTION NO. 1060

By: Ms. Vicki Conrad (Queens)

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

Whereas music plays such an important role in the education and growth of our youth; and

Whereas music festivals promote and encourage the growth in music through local festivals in competitive and non-competitive classes like the 2011 Queens County Music Festival recently held in Liverpool, Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Olivia Gaetz won the Tutty & DiPersio Instrumental Scholarship;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia House of Assembly recognize and congratulate Olivia Gaetz for having won the Tutty & DiPersio Instrumental Scholarship, during the 2011 Queens County Music Festival.

RESOLUTION NO. 1061

By: Ms. Vicki Conrad (Queens)

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

Whereas music plays such an important role in the education and growth of our youth; and

Whereas music festivals promote and encourage the growth in music through local festivals in competitive and non-competitive classes like the 2011 Queens County Music Festival recently held in Liverpool, Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Peter Ernest won the Evelyn Rieser Memorial Trophy (Senior Piano), received a recommendation to compete at the provincial Music Festival in Halifax and a Maddie Keay Memorial Piano Scholarship;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia House of Assembly recognize and congratulate Peter Ernest, who won the Evelyn Rieser Memorial Trophy (Senior Piano), received a recommendation to compete at the Provincial Music Festival in Halifax and a Maddie Keay Memorial Piano Scholarship, during the 2011 Queens County Music Festival.

RESOLUTION NO. 1062

By: Ms. Vicki Conrad (Queens)

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

Whereas music plays such an important role in the education and growth of our youth; and

Whereas music festivals promote and encourage the growth in music through local festivals in competitive and non-competitive classes like the 2011 Queens County Music Festival recently held in Liverpool, Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Queens County Girls Choir, with recommendation to compete at the Provincial Music Festival in Halifax, won the Kinsmen Shield (Overall Choir) and the G. Cook and Sons Financial Services Choral Vocal Scholarship;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia House of Assembly recognize and congratulate Queens County Girls Choir, with recommendation to compete at the Provincial Music Festival in Halifax, won the Kinsmen Shield (Overall Choir) and the G. Cook and sons Financial Services Choral Vocal Scholarship, during the 2011 Queens County Music Festival.

RESOLUTION NO. 1063

By: Ms. Vicki Conrad (Queens)

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

Whereas music plays such an important role in the education and growth of our youth; and

Whereas music festivals promote and encourage the growth in music through local festivals in competitive and non-competitive classes like the 2011 Queens County Music Festival recently held in Liverpool, Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Sarah-Jane Stevenson, Bailey Selig and Hannah Barnes won the Lions Cup (Senior Piano Duet or Trio);

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia House of Assembly recognize and congratulate Sarah-Jane Stevenson, Bailey Selig and Hannah Barnes for having won the Lions Cup (Senior Piano Duet or Trio) during the 2011 Queens County Music Festival.

RESOLUTION NO. 1064

By: Ms. Vicki Conrad (Queens)

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

Whereas music plays such an important role in the education and growth of our youth; and

Whereas music festivals promote and encourage the growth in music through local festivals in competitive and non-competitive classes like the 2011 Queens County Music Festival recently held in Liverpool, Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Tiffany Miller won the Kinsmen Piano Scholarship;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia House of Assembly recognize and congratulate Tiffany Miller for having won the Kinsmen Piano Scholarship during the 2011 Queens County Music Festival.