



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Gordon Gosse

Published by Order of the Legislature by Hansard Reporting Services and printed by the Queen's Printer.

Available on INTERNET at <http://nslegislature.ca/index.php/proceedings/hansard/>

Third Session

WEDNESDAY, MAY 4, 2011

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House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, WEDNESDAY, MAY 4, 2011

Sixty-first General Assembly

Third Session

2:00 P.M.

SPEAKER

Hon. Gordon Gosse

DEPUTY SPEAKERS

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

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. Before we start the daily routine, the subject for late debate has been submitted. It reads:

Therefore be it resolved that the House commend the Department of Justice on the establishment of the first ever in Nova Scotia, Domestic Violence Court, which should begin to address the issue of protecting women against violence in this province.

That was submitted by the member for Queens.

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

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

HON. MARILYN MORE: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to talk about health and safety. Our government is continuing its enforcement and education efforts to reduce the number of injuries, illnesses, and deaths that occur in our workplaces every year. Thanks to these efforts and through the support of our partners in the workplace safety and insurance system, and organizations such as Safety Services Nova Scotia, and employers and employees across the province, statistics are beginning to show improvement. They are showing that the internal responsibility system is working. Employers, employees, and government are doing their share to reduce workplace injuries, illnesses, and fatalities.

In 2010 we introduced administrative penalties as a measure to prevent workplace incidents, and I can tell all the members here that our government would be perfectly content if we never collected a penny in fines because compliance with our health and safety legislation is that good.

Sadly, there are some organizations and individuals for whom financial penalties remain the most effective means of making them adopt safer work practices. Still, many organizations and individuals are listening and learning and starting to work smarter and safer. We continue to have success with our educational efforts. Grade 9 students across the province now receive occupational health and safety training as part of their curriculum. We believe this will go a long way toward establishing a safety culture in our youth, one that will serve them well as they move forward in the world of work. That would be a first step toward developing a sixth sense of workplace safety - being aware of where you are, what you are doing, and whether you are putting yourself and those around you at risk and what action you can take to lower that risk.

We continue to recognize employers and workers who consider safety in all that they do like those at Black & McDonald, the 2010 Mainstay Safety Award winner, and also forward-thinking organizations such as Nova Scotia Power and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers who jointly signed a workplace safety charter last year. Our occupational health and safety inspectors and hygienists and senior staff regularly advise companies and organizations that embrace the concept of working smarter and working harder.

The Department of Labour and Advanced Education also funds workplace education initiatives to improve literacy levels across the province. Last August, The Conference Board of Canada released a report entitled *What You Don't Know Can Hurt You*, which said workers' inability to read manuals and to follow directions puts them and the public at risk.

This week is the North American Occupational Safety and Health Week, and there are a number of meetings taking place right here in Halifax and across the province. As the

name suggests, the United States and Mexico are like Canada, reminding employers, employees, government organizations, and others to pay greater attention to workplace safety.

On Monday, our department launched an on-line search tool that makes it easier to find and access our occupational health and safety information. This new Web site is called Knowledge Base, and can be accessed by anyone. It lets users search, print and share all of our safety manuals easily and all from one place. Users can also set up lists and subscribe to track updates in areas of interest. Not only will these features help Nova Scotians find information faster and easier, they will also help improve our efficiency by providing a useful and informative self-serve tool for the public. Internally, this new site will help us search our own databases quicker and allow staff to link common themes and related articles. It will also allow us to receive more timely feedback and respond to inquiries even faster.

This new resource is on the leading edge of what is being offered across the country. I provided each member of the House with an information card about the site and I would encourage you to take a few minutes to visit the Web site. It will be time well spent.

As I mentioned earlier, injuries are being reduced across the province. In its 2010 annual report tabled here recently, the Workers' Compensation Board noted that the incidence of lost-time injuries fell below 7,000 for the first time in many years. The department reports regularly on fatalities in the province, regardless of whether they were directly caused by a workplace incident or as a result of a work-related illness. The Department of Labour and Advanced Education statistics include deaths regardless of whether or not the worker was eligible for WCB compensation and whether or not the person worked in a provincially or federally regulated workplace. Those numbers like lost-time injuries are in decline. It is a trend that we very much want to continue.

I would like to close with a few comments about the Day of Mourning event that I had the opportunity - and I know several of you did as well - to attend last week. There were 23 flags representing 23 people who had been lost at work. There were several speakers, each telling their own story, but there was one story that I have thought of many times since because it truly speaks to why we need to be so diligent about workplace safety. The speaker was Annette Travis who was there representing Threads of Life. She talked about the day her father went to work in the morning but, tragically, never came home. He fell while working and died shortly after. She shared her painful story and how it continues to affect her family, deeply. She called on everyone to stay safe and to keep each other safe at work.

In this day and age everyone should be able to go to work and come home safely at the end of the day. By working together, those of us here on both sides of the House and

those who we represent, we can make sure that tragedies like the one that took away Annette's father and her children's grandfather never happen again.

I look to all members of this House for your support in reducing workplace deaths, injuries, and illnesses, as keeping Nova Scotians safe, healthy, and prosperous is surely a goal on which all of us can agree. Thank you.

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

MS. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to this very serious issue and I would like to thank the minister for providing an advance copy of her remarks yesterday. In 2010, over 28,000 Nova Scotians were injured at work. Tragically, 23 people died and we saw that on the Day of Mourning with those 23 flags that were laid out across the table.

We must do better to ensure that all workers come home safely to their families at the end of every day. In the last five years, 120 workers in this province have died from workplace injury or illness.

I'd like to recognize the work being done by the Workers' Compensation Board and the Department of Labour and Workforce Development. There have been efforts to educate employers and workers on workplace safety but more needs to be done. Recently the Nova Scotia Government introduced amendments that would increase fines for offences under the Occupational Health and Safety Act. Unfortunately, the increases in fines that may result will not go to worker or employer education, which the Liberal caucus would have preferred to see and which was recommended to government.

Coincidentally, one of the things that the minister just spoke about was the issue of literacy and how workers must be able to read instructions, et cetera. In fact, what you don't know can hurt you. For us, literacy is quite obviously a very key issue and that is why we are concerned and we are not happy with the cancellation of the Reading Recovery program because those young children, who will no longer get the benefit of that program, will one day grow up to be workers and if they can't read, they can't do their job properly.

Last year at the Day of Mourning I spoke about being in Hong Kong and turning on the television - this would have been in the early 1990s - I turned on the television to discover a huge story that was happening back here in Nova Scotia. We were watching the English language news there, it was the Westray disaster. I think for many of us, we will never forget that was the seminal event that underlines for all of us the importance of worker safety. Fortunately, accidents like Westray don't happen every day and I believe worker safety has been improved since that day, but it is the small accidents, it's the education piece that we need to be working on more.

We do commend the government for educational efforts with students who are in Grade 9. We think that's an excellent piece but there's much more work to be done. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I would like to thank the minister for providing her remarks in advance of our sitting today. I am pleased to have this opportunity to speak on behalf of our Labour and Advanced Education Critic, the member for Victoria-The Lakes, on the importance of education, awareness, and prevention of workplace injuries and fatalities.

It was only last week that we all gathered, as the other members had mentioned, in the foyer here at Province House to remember and to pay our respects to those Nova Scotians who were injured or who died as a result of workplace injury.

In Nova Scotia we have a proud tradition of working hard, often at difficult and sometimes dangerous jobs. The National Day of Mourning is our annual opportunity to recognize the impacts these accidents have on our entire community and our province. We continue to make progress in workplace safety; 2010 marked a new low in the number of serious injuries in workplaces since the Workers' Compensation Board began keeping statistics in 1995. That is the lowest it has been in at least 15 years but any injury or loss of life is too many, Mr. Speaker.

Education is important, too, that we have at our disposal to help with prevention and the minister spoke about some in-school programs that we're pleased to see. We know when we start our schools, we ensure students know how important workplace safety is and they become more aware of the things they can do to improve safety. Hopefully with that awareness there will be less workplace injuries and fatalities in their generation.

Far too often we're faced with the tragic reminders that more needs to be done to make sure Nova Scotians are safe and able to go home to their families. We remember those hard-working Nova Scotians who we've lost and the lives that have been changed forever due to an injury. If we all work together to focus on prevention, I'm confident we can significantly decrease the number of workplace accidents in our province.

Mr. Speaker, it is one thing for government to make rules around safety, but it is another for government to provide supports - and these are measures of support and we commend the government for that.

I can think of a time when I worked for a small business and we had an incident. I think about how at the time something like what we're looking at here, where people have quick access to information - how in a nice, practical way that's going to empower employers to build better safety in the workplace.

Once again, this is a practical solution and we commend the government for achieving it. I also note something that I think is special about this - they talk about ensuring continuous improvement. So there is going to be interaction with the people, whether they are employers or workers who are going to be using this information, and I think that is smart as well. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: There has been a request to revert to the order of business, Presenting and Reading Petitions.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

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

MR. ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the member for Victoria-The Lakes, I beg leave to table a petition on behalf of Nova Scotians concerned with the vandalism of cemeteries and public monuments. The operative clause is:

“We, the undersigned urge the legislature to pass Bill 86 and send a strong message to would-be vandals that senseless acts of disrespect will not be tolerated in Nova Scotia.”

There are 730 signatures on this petition, Mr. Speaker, and I have affixed my signature as well.

MR. SPEAKER: The petition is tabled.

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Premier.

HON. DARRELL DEXTER (The Premier): Mr. Speaker, I was wondering if I could make an introduction before I read my resolution.

MR. SPEAKER: Certainly.

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, as you know, in your gallery we are joined by Commodore Laurence M. Hickey, the commander of the Canadian Fleet Atlantic, who earlier took part in the unveiling of the Centennial Bell here in Province House to commemorate the 100th Anniversary of the Canadian Navy.

As well, Mr. Speaker, we also have with us Kevin Allen and David Allen who are representing the Lunenburg Foundry where the Centennial Bell was cast. I would ask the House to welcome these gentlemen to the Legislature.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Premier.

RESOLUTION NO. 1065

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

Whereas last year Canada celebrated the 100th Anniversary of the Canadian Navy;
and

Whereas the Canadian Navy has distinguished itself over the past century as a skilled, dedicated and courageous group of men and women and has called Halifax its home since its formation and CFB Halifax has become the largest military base in Canada;
and

Whereas earlier today the Government of Nova Scotia installed a commemorative bell in the Legislature, cast by the Lunenburg Foundry, in honour of the 100 Anniversary of the Canadian Navy;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House once again congratulate the Canadian Navy on its centennial, thank all of the sailors for their dedication and sacrifice over the past 100 years, and wish them well as we go forward into the next 100 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 Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal.

RESOLUTION NO. 1066

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

Whereas motorcycle riding is an increasingly popular form of transportation and recreation for thousands of people across the Province of Nova Scotia; and

Whereas the motorcycle is an energy-efficient vehicle which conserves fuel, reduces urban traffic and parking congestion, and causes less wear on our road system; and

Whereas the Premier has worked with Safety Services Nova Scotia to proclaim May as Motorcycle Safety Awareness Month in Nova Scotia;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House encourage Nova Scotians to be extra cautious and aware of the increasing number of motorcycles on the streets and highways during May, Motorcycle Safety Awareness Month, and always 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 Minister of Community Services.

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, with your permission, before I read my resolution, may I make a brief introduction?

MR. SPEAKER: Most certainly.

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: In the east gallery I'd like to bring to the attention of the House some very special guests who are here today with us. We have Ms. Sarah Rothman, the daughter of Mary Rothman, the former executive director of the Nova Scotia Association for Community Living. With her are her daughters, Kate Aubé, who is nine years old, and Rebecca, who is seven years old. They have joined us all the way from New Brunswick today so they will be able to hear the reading of this very important resolution in memory of Mary Rothman.

Mary was an incredible person for the Province of Nova Scotia, she did wonderful work on behalf of those who have disabilities and she was so committed, worked very hard, and made many positive changes. I would like to ask the members of the House to give our guests a very warm welcome and thank them for being here today. (Applause)

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to request a moment of silence at the end of the resolution I am about to read in Mary's memory.

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

The honourable Minister of Community Services.

RESOLUTION NO. 1067

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 it is with great sadness that we note the passing of Mary Rothman, executive director of the Nova Scotia Association for Community Living, who lost her hard-fought battle with cancer on February 27, 2011; and

Whereas as a long-time advocate and leader in the disability community, Mary Rothman worked tirelessly to promote the rights, dignity, and well-being of Nova Scotians with disabilities; and

Whereas Mary Rothman was highly regarded by all who knew her and is being remembered as a humble, professional, and dedicated individual whose life work was to improve and enhance services for persons with disabilities in Nova Scotia;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly remember Mary Rothman and the impact she made on the lives of Nova Scotians with disabilities, and on her loved ones also.

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.

[A moment of silence was observed.]

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

RESOLUTION NO. 1068

HON. STERLING BELLIVEAU: Mr. Speaker, I'll be requesting a moment of silence after I read this particular resolution.

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

Whereas on Tuesday, May 3rd, we were all once again reminded of the dangers of plying a trade from the sea as Ward Wickens of Bear Point and the captain of the vessel Silver Angel were travelling from East Jeddore to Pubnico and Mr. Wickens went overboard into frigid Atlantic waters; and

Whereas throughout Tuesday, military and Coast Guard professionals, ground search and rescues, and numerous volunteers searched the frigid ocean and shorelines by sea and by air for Mr. Wickens; and

Whereas late yesterday the operation was turned over to the RCMP;

Therefore be it resolved that this House recognize the courage and the commitment of the searchers, and express deepest sympathy and heartfelt concerns for Mr. Ward Wickens' family and the captain of the Silver Angel and crew.

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.

[A moment of silence was observed.]

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 53 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 246 of the Revised Statutes of 1989. The Labour Standards Code, Respecting Worker Recruitment and Protection. (Hon. Marilyn More)

Bill No. 54 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 9 of the Acts of 1998. The Cemeteries Protection Act. (Mr. Keith Bain)

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

The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, with your permission, I'd like to do an introduction before I introduce my bill.

MR. SPEAKER: Most certainly.

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, in the east gallery today we have with us Dr. William Lowe who is the Deputy Registrar responsible for registration at the College of Physicians and Surgeons. He is joined by Ms. Marjorie Hickey, the College's legal counsel and as well Dean Hirtle with the Department of Health and Wellness staff who have worked very hard on this bill that I'm about to introduce. I'd ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of the House. (Applause)

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

Bill No. 55 - Entitled an Act Respecting the Practice of Medicine. (Hon. Maureen MacDonald)

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

NOTICES OF MOTION

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Premier.

RESOLUTION NO. 1069

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

Whereas Jennifer Glover and Rebecca Keeping have successfully opened their new business, The Cole Harbour Daycare of Early Learners; and

Whereas Jennifer and Rebecca bring years of experience and understanding to their new business which serves the community of Cole Harbour; and

Whereas the fully licensed centre offers care and early learning to children aged 18-months to five-years-old on a full or part-time basis and also offers care on weekends;

Therefore be it resolved that this House congratulate Jennifer Glover and Rebecca Keeping on the successful grand opening of The Cole Harbour Daycare of Early Learners and wish them all the best in the years to come.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Environment.

RESOLUTION NO. 1070

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

Whereas Grade 6 Forest Ridge Academy student Cameron Clairmont was awarded first place in the Royal Canadian Legion's 2010 Remembrance Day Poster Contest for Nova Scotia; and

Whereas 12-year-old Cameron Clairmont's first place entry in the junior category poster contest has been forwarded to Ottawa to be judged at the national level; and

Whereas it is heartwarming to see Nova Scotia youth such as Cameron Clairmont remember the sacrifices that have been made for our freedoms by generations past and present;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulate Cameron Clairmont who is a resident of Barrington, Nova Scotia for being awarded first place in the Royal Canadian Legion's 2010 Remembrance Day Poster Contest for Nova Scotia.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Energy.

RESOLUTION NO. 1071

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

Whereas Caleb Halfpenny of Pictou County took part in a young writers' workshop sponsored by the Pictou-Antigonish Regional Library and their Writer-in-Residence program; and

Whereas Mr. Halfpenny was part of a group of four young writers from Pictou County who participated in a writing workshop under the guidance of Writer-in-Residence Gary Blackwood to write an original one act play called *While It Lasts*; and

Whereas the play *While It Lasts* was entered and performed at Theatre Antigonish's One Act Play Festival in March and won the award for Best New Play at the festival;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this Nova Scotia House of Assembly congratulate Caleb Halfpenny for being part of a group of young writers who wrote an award winning play at the Theatre Antigonish festival and wish him success in future writing projects and furthermore to thank the Pictou-Antigonish Regional Library for its Writer-in-Residence program.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Community Services.

RESOLUTION NO. 1072

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 April 10th through the 16th was recognized as Volunteer Week for the Province of Nova Scotia; and

Whereas these dedicated and special volunteers play a very integral role in our communities; and

Whereas Barb Boutilier was recognized by the Municipality of Chester for her charitable work, from canvassing for the Heart and Stroke Foundation to the Cancer Society and fundraising for people and groups in need and also providing free janitorial services for All Saints Church in Bayswater;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly extend congratulations to Barb Boutilier on being chosen the Municipality of Chester's Provincial Volunteer and thank her for all the good work she does for her community and our province.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Education.

RESOLUTION NO. 1073

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

Whereas the Brain Injury Association of Nova Scotia offers to its clients the Inroads program, which is a community-based program for people with acquired brain injuries; and

Whereas the mission of the Inroads program is to create a community-based program for survivors of brain injury that will provide a standard of excellence in its opportunities for learning, for positive social interaction, rehabilitation and reintegration into society; and

Whereas the Inroads program seeks to always maintain a safe environment that will recognize, value and encourage the potential of every survivor;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly recognize the value of the Inroads program in the recovery process of an individual with a brain injury.

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. 1074

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

Whereas each year the Nova Scotia Recycles Contest encourages participation in recycling and composting programs and celebrates the ongoing role of Nova Scotia youth in making this province a recognized leader in waste reduction; and

Whereas the 2011 contest, which encouraged students to reduce their waste by 25 per cent in order to reach the provincial goal of reducing solid waste from an average of 420 kilograms to 300 kilograms per person per year by 2015, saw over 8,300 submissions from 205 participating schools across the province; and

Whereas Nora Featherstone, a student at Inglis Street Elementary School, was the Grade 4/5/6 T-shirt design winner at the 11th Annual Nova Scotia Recycles contest and received \$500 for her school;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulate Nora Featherstone, of Inglis Street Elementary School, on her winning T-shirt design at the 11th Annual Nova Scotia Recycles Contest.

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 Truro-Bible Hill.

RESOLUTION NO. 1075

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

Whereas Krista Murray-Hayden is a Grade 4 teacher at Harmony Heights Elementary School who has a great love of technology and due to her innovative teaching methods, has been the recipient of an Education Week award; and

Whereas Krista Murray-Hayden has been extremely dedicated to ensuring that the students and staff of Harmony Heights Elementary are skilled in many areas of technology such as digital photography, movie making, podcasting, editing and broadcasting, as well as maintaining the school's Web site, which she also developed; and

Whereas Krista Murray-Hayden has worked hard to make sure that the teachers at Harmony Heights Elementary make the transition necessary to be comfortable in a technology-enhanced school and that the students at the school will be capable with technology as they move forward through their schooling;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia Legislature congratulate Krista Murray-Hayden for being a recipient of an Education Week award, and thank her for taking the initiative to ensure that students and teachers are being educated in the latest technology.

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 Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage.

RESOLUTION NO. 1076

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

Whereas the Cole Harbour Wings Bantam AA Hockey Team travelled to the Pittsburgh Classic hockey tournament in December 2010, and were hosted by Cole Harbour's own Sidney Crosby of the Pittsburgh Penguins; and

Whereas Captain Michael Rumbsy has been unable to play this season due to a serious illness, yet he goes to all the practices and travelled to Pittsburgh along with the team, expecting to be a spectator; and

Whereas Michael was unexpectedly able to play in Pittsburgh due to a special "no checking" arrangement made by his coach Paul Mason which led to his scoring a goal and meeting his hockey hero Mario Lemieux, who took the time to offer encouraging words based on his own battle with cancer;

Therefore be it resolved that this Nova Scotia House of Assembly commend Michael Rumbsy for his success in Pittsburgh and as a role model for his courage and determination of a young man facing difficult challenges in health, while leading his Cole Harbour Bantam AA hockey team through the season as captain.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage.

RESOLUTION NO. 1077

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

Whereas Shelby Whynot of Queens County participated in the 5th Annual Atlantic Canada's Top Model and Actor competition; and

Whereas this competition was established to help launch the careers of aspiring models and actors, awarding trophies in several categories; and

Whereas Shelby Whynot placed first in Runway, first in Commercial, second in Casting, third in Swimsuit, and third in Photography;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia House of Assembly recognize and congratulate Shelby Whynot of Queens County for her success at the 5th Annual Atlantic Canada's Top Model and Actor competition.

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 member for Antigonish.

RESOLUTION NO. 1078

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

Whereas Hurricane Katrina, a Category 3 hurricane made landfall on the United States Gulf Coast on August 29, 2005, causing severe destruction in Mississippi, Louisiana, Florida, and Alabama; and

Whereas more than five years later, communities along the Gulf Coast are still rebuilding with the help of volunteers; and

Whereas 51 St. Francis Xavier University students recently took a 46-hour bus ride to Mississippi and spent their Spring Break doing unpaid work on construction sites, helping to build homes for people displaced by Hurricane Katrina;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of the House applaud the efforts of the St. Francis Xavier University students who spent Spring Break 2011 helping to build homes for people displaced by Hurricane Katrina, and all volunteers who continue to give their time and talents to help rebuild the Gulf Coast.

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 West.

RESOLUTION NO. 1079

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

Whereas Mr. Roger Selig is a retired diesel mechanic who lives on the Levi Hebb Road in Lunenburg County, and is a valued member of his community; and

Whereas Mr. Roger Selig has received certificates from the Canadian Red Cross for contributing blood 35 times and 75 times respectively, and from Canadian Blood Services for his 100th donation; and

Whereas Mr. Selig recently contributed blood at a clinic in Bridgewater for the 150th time, and anticipated making his 151st donation in April of this year;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House congratulate Mr. Selig, for giving the gift of life by donating blood 151 times and wish him well as he continues to offer this most precious gift.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Cumberland North.

RESOLUTION NO. 1080

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

Whereas Cumberland North takes pride in the talents of our youth; and

Whereas the E.B. Chandler Junior High School Band has proven their commitment to hard work and their dedication to musical endeavours; and

Whereas the E.B. Chandler band, under the direction of Laura Wilson, recently captured the silver ranking at the Atlantic Band Festival;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly join me in congratulating the E.B. Chandler band and their director Laura Wilson on all their hard work and the great performance that earned them the silver ranking at the Atlantic Band 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 Kings North.

RESOLUTION NO. 1081

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

Whereas Recreation Nova Scotia and Nova Scotia Labour and Advanced Education recognized the critical contributions volunteers make to the province in an annual Provincial Volunteer Awards Ceremony, this year on April 4th; and

Whereas Doug Macdonald of Kentville has for many years contributed his talent, time and skills to a very broad range of professional, business, public, church, educational and sport organizations and has been named, among many honours, a Paul Harris Fellow by the Rotary Club and an honorary director of the Valley Regional Hospital Foundation; and

Whereas Mr. Macdonald has been recognized by the Town of Kentville and the Province of Nova Scotia for his many contributions to improving life in his community;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly thank Doug Macdonald for his significant and long service to his community and congratulate him on being named a representative volunteer at the 37th Provincial Volunteer Awards Ceremony in Halifax on April 4, 2011.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Lunenburg.

RESOLUTION NO. 1082

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

Whereas Sylvia Winters of Garden Lots spent three months in Haiti this past winter to offer assistance to orphanages and schools, as well as to provide food to those in need through a non-profit organization called All of God's Children; and

Whereas Ms. Winters helped out a number of orphanages during her stay, including Port-au-Prince, one of the areas hardest hit by the January 2010 earthquake, where she experienced first-hand the extreme poverty and need of the people of Haiti; and

Whereas Ms. Winters' three-month stay brought her face-to-face with extreme poverty and difficult conditions, and she also felt accepted by the people that she met, including her host family of Rodriguez and Jeanette Francois, and she is considering going back to continue with humanitarian aid projects;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly recognize Ms. Sylvia Winters of Garden Lots for her commitment to volunteer efforts to help the people of Haiti.

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. 1083

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 April 14th, Chedabucto Education Centre under the direction of Ursula Ryan was represented by two choirs at the 73rd Annual New Glasgow Music Festival; and

Whereas Ursula Ryan, a music teacher at the Chedabucto Education Centre, has directed the school choir program for the past 15 years and during her tenure, the age 12

and under choir has won their category at the New Glasgow music festival four times in the past six years, earning them the prestigious New Glasgow Music Festival plaque in 2010; and

Whereas both the elementary school choirs - age 12 and under, and the Grade 3 and under - won gold in their respective categories with their performance at the Trinity United Church in New Glasgow;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly congratulate Ursula Ryan and the members of the Chedabucto Education Centre choirs on winning gold in their respective categories at the New Glasgow Music Festival and wish them continued success with their musical achievements.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Education.

RESOLUTION NO. 1084

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

Whereas Carroll Edwards of Sheffield Mills, Nova Scotia, is a volunteer who uses his musical talents to help those in Kings County in financial need; and

Whereas Carroll Edwards and his band perform in over 60 variety and benefit shows per year; and

Whereas Mr. Edwards' efforts to help others show that he is a caring and compassionate person, and through his service, presents an excellent example for others to follow;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulate Carroll Edwards for his support of the many people in local communities who would not otherwise have the financial resources to meet their needs.

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 Energy.

RESOLUTION NO. 1085

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

Whereas Juliana Ali of Lyons Brook, Pictou County, took part in a young writers workshop sponsored by the Pictou-Antigonish Regional Library and their Writer-in-Residence program; and

Whereas Ms. Ali was part of a group of four young writers from Pictou County who participated in the writing workshop, under the guidance of Writer-in-Residence Gary Blackwood, to write a one-act play called *While It Lasts*; and

Whereas the play *While It Lasts* was entered and performed at Theatre Antigonish's One-Act Play Festival in March and won the award for Best New Play at the festival;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly congratulate Juliana Ali for being part of a group of young writers who wrote an award-winning play at the Theatre Antigonish Festival and wish her success in future writing projects and furthermore, to thank the Pictou-Antigonish Regional Library for its Writer-in-Residence program.

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 Truro-Bible Hill.

RESOLUTION NO. 1086

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

Whereas Stu Rath has been awarded the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Truro and District Chamber of Commerce for his more than 50 years of involvement with the Truro business community including Eastern and Halifax Cablevision, the Truro Junior A Bearcats, as well as several other successful ventures, including co-owner of Somebeachsomewhere; and

Whereas Mr. Rath has been involved with the community at large by serving on many boards such as the Nova Scotia Business Inc., the Colchester Regional Development Agency and the Truro Industrial Development Society; and

Whereas Mr. Rath has also been involved with many charitable organizations such as the United Way, Camp Triumph, the To Our Health Campaign and the Ignite the Spirit Campaign;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia Legislature congratulate Stu Rath for being the recipient of the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Truro and District Chamber of Commerce and thank him for his many outstanding contributions to our 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 Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage.

RESOLUTION NO. 1087

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

Whereas every year, Lions Clubs across Canada hold Speakout contests for youth of their communities, to foster an appreciation for and experience in public speaking; and

Whereas the Cole Harbour Lions Club proudly hosted eight youth, from Grades 7 to 12, at an event that showcased public speaking by students from Astral Drive Junior High and Cole Harbour District High School; and

Whereas the Lions Club awarded first place to Marissa Goldsworthy, Astral Drive Junior High; second place to Meghan Naugle, Cole Harbour District High School; and third place to Abby Stevenson, Astral Drive Junior High;

Therefore be it resolved that this Nova Scotia House of Assembly commend Cole Harbour Lions Club for their continued efforts to offer Speakout contests and helping the young people in their communities be all that they can be.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Antigonish.

RESOLUTION NO. 1088

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

Whereas the 2011 Residence Energy Conservation Challenge ran from March 13th to March 26th and encouraged university residences across Atlantic Canada to reduce their electricity consumption for that period; and

Whereas more than 40 residences at seven Atlantic Canadian universities took part in the challenge; and

Whereas MacKinnon Hall at St. Francis Xavier University was the winner of the 2011 Residence Energy Conservation Challenge, reducing their electrical consumption by 24.3 per cent during the March challenge;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate the residents of MacKinnon Hall and applaud all of the Residence Energy Conservation Challenge participants for their efforts to reduce energy consumption.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Cumberland North.

RESOLUTION NO. 1089

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

Whereas Cumberland North recognizes the vital role volunteers play in our communities; and

Whereas Julia Beal has made a significant contribution to her community by dedicating her time and efforts to volunteering; and

Whereas Julia Beal has been selected as a recipient of a volunteer award which was presented at the 37th Annual Provincial Volunteer Awards Ceremony and Luncheon on April 4th in Halifax;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulate Julia Beal on receiving an award at the 37th Annual Provincial Volunteer Awards Ceremony and Luncheon on April 4th, and thank her for all the time and dedication that she has put toward making our community a better place.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Kings North.

RESOLUTION NO. 1090

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

Whereas Recreation Nova Scotia and Nova Scotia Labour and Advanced Education recognized the critical contributions volunteers make to the province in an annual Provincial Volunteer Awards Ceremony this year on April 4th; and

Whereas Merle Millet has been an athlete, a coach, umpire and volunteer with a passion for sports that helped him become a leader in the recreational life of Port Williams for many years; and

Whereas Mr. Millet has been recognized by the Village of Port Williams and by the Province of Nova Scotia for his numerous contributions to improving the life of his community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly thank Merle Millet for his significant and long service to his community and congratulate him on being named a Representative Volunteer at the 37th Provincial Volunteer Awards Ceremony in Halifax on April 4, 2011.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Lunenburg.

RESOLUTION NO. 1091

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

Whereas over 150,000 one-pound propane cylinders are sold in Nova Scotia each year, containing residual propane gas when they are presumed empty, creating challenges for disposal; and

Whereas RavenStar Resource Recovery, in conjunction with Sea Coast HVAC (2004), was approached by the Nova Scotia Resource and Recovery Fund Board to find a solution to the difficult disposal of one-pound propane tanks and RavenStar Resource Recovery owner David Cameron, along with David Nodding of Sea Coast HVAC (2004), developed a system for removing the propane gas making the propane tanks safe to recycle; and

Whereas the system was one of more than 140 clean technology projects to receive financial assistance through the Province of Nova Scotia through the ecoNova Scotia Fund for Clean Air and Climate Change;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly recognizes the important innovation created by RavenStar Resource Recovery and Sea Coast HVAC (2004) to allow for safe disposal and recycling of one-pound propane tanks in the Province of 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 Guysborough-Sheet Harbour.

RESOLUTION NO. 1092

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 March 12, 2011, a telethon was held at the Canso Lions Club in support of the new Canso Library; and

Whereas the Canso Library Committee, Eastern Counties Regional Library staff, the Canso Lions Club and members of the Canso area, along with many entertainers, some who travelled considerable distance, came together to put on an entertaining event to raise funds to help furnish the new library building; and

Whereas this “time” was well attended and considered a huge success as the afternoon event raised over \$6,000 towards library furnishings and a children’s corner;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly congratulate the Canso Library Committee, ECRL staff, the Canso Lions Club, the generous entertainers, and all volunteers on their accomplishment, and wish them all the best as they move forward en route to the grand opening of their new building scheduled for this May.

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. 1093

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

Whereas small businesses and entrepreneurs are the lifeblood of our communities; and

Whereas niche businesses, such as the Piping Hot Bake Shop in Liverpool, are the components which truly make our communities unique; and

Whereas Teil Korneski and Keith Korneski of the Piping Hot Bake Shop have been contributing to the business community of Queens County since November 2004;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia House of Assembly recognize Teil and Keith Korneski of the Piping Hot Bake Shop for their contribution and commitment to the business community of Queens County.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Digby-Annapolis.

MR. HAROLD THERIAULT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to bring the attention of the members to the west gallery where there are two important people in my life. One is my daughter and one is her husband - Krista and Dale Durand.

Mr. Speaker they are here visiting from B.C. My daughter is with child, carrying my ninth grandchild; my son-in-law, Dale, just came back from Afghanistan. Give them a warm welcome. (Standing Ovation)

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. We welcome all our guests to the gallery.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS

MR. SPEAKER: Question Period will begin at 3:09 p.m. and end at 4:39 p.m.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

PREM. - NSP RATE INCREASES: OPPOSITION - LACK EXPLAIN

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Nova Scotia Power's parent company, Emera, continues to collect huge profits

while Nova Scotia ratepayers face the seventh increase in 10 years, and still the NDP Government chooses to sit idly by and do nothing. So my question to the Premier is, why has the NDP Government chosen not to oppose any rate increases by Nova Scotia Power?

THE PREMIER: Well, Mr. Speaker, I've addressed this question on many occasions now. It's not true and, in fact, we are going to be there at the hearing in order to make sure that the rate base justifies the request that they've put forward to the Utility and Review Board. Thank you.

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, it is true, not only has this caucus asked that question to the Premier, so has the Progressive Conservative caucus, and each and every time the Premier says he will send somebody there but he does not commit to opposing any rate increase by Nova Scotia Power on the rate base to Nova Scotians. Homeowners are worried, businesses are concerned about the proposed rate increases. The NDP has created an environment that is not affordable to live in, an environment that is not competitive in which to do business.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier is opposed to intervening on rate increases and he is opposed to a performance audit of Nova Scotia Power. My question to the Premier is, how is he going to rein in increased power costs that Nova Scotians are facing?

THE PREMIER: Again, Mr. Speaker, I have to say that none of that is true. I keep saying it, it is not true. I would just remind the Leader of the Opposition that it was the Liberal Government that created the separate companies of Emera and Nova Scotia Power.

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, it was a Liberal Government that stood up for Nova Scotia ratepayers whenever Nova Scotia Power was looking for a rate increase. All we're simply doing is asking the Premier to do his job, and that is to stand up to Nova Scotia Power and protect Nova Scotians.

Mr. Speaker, the top 12 executives of Nova Scotia Power were paid a total of \$3.18 million last year. I want to quote the Premier from April 2007: Ratepayers shouldn't have to pay for exorbitant executive compensation.

Mr. Speaker, the performance audit that we've asked the Premier to initiate with Nova Scotia Power would review the exorbitant executive compensation that he referred to in 2007, plus many other parts of their operation. My question to the Premier is, why is he opposed to this audit?

THE PREMIER: Well, Mr. Speaker, I am not opposed to a performance audit. In fact, that power resides with the Utility and Review Board. We intend to be there to ensure that - we will make sure that whatever case is made by Nova Scotia Power, that it is justified.

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, we did the one thing that tangibly affects the rates for people in this province, we took the HST off (Applause)

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

**HEALTH & WELLNESS: MEDICAL EQUIPMENT
- BUDGET FUNDING**

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. During estimates this session the minister spoke at great length about the work of her department but she didn't mention that the estimates for the Department of Health and Wellness and for all of the health budget for all the DHAs contains the provision of exactly zero for health equipment for the upcoming year.

Mr. Speaker, this may be an error, I'm willing to entertain the possibility that it's an error, that the estimates show zero for health equipment this year. This is the provision that is usually made for diagnostic imaging equipment, for cardiac cath lab equipment, surgical lighting and other pieces of equipment, either new or for those that break during the year.

It seems kind of incredible to budget that nothing is going to break in our entire health system during the upcoming year. My question to the minister is, is this an error in the budget or, if not, why have you eliminated all the funding for medical equipment for the upcoming year, which is clearly an unrealistic expectation?

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. I want to assure Nova Scotians that our hospitals are well equipped to ensure the best care for patients in this province.

As part of our plan to get back to balance, it is the case that capital budgets have been reduced but this certainly does not mean that equipment that requires replacing will not be replaced or maintained, Mr. Speaker.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, I will table that page from the Estimates Book. I circled the zero amount. Reduced is reduced, zero is zero. Over the last few years, in fact, the average of the last three years that the province has spent repairing and replacing health equipment is an average of about \$24 million a year. Surely in the real world we can all agree something is going to break during the year and it will have to be replaced, yet the government has made no provision for that.

My question to the minister is, since she insists that the budget must be zero, what does she advise our hospitals to do, leave the equipment broken and take it out of circulation and advise them they should fund it through their operating grants that the department provides, or perhaps she'll be providing them with duct tape and Crazy Glue to try to keep the equipment going?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, it's very important to recognize that this government provides district health authorities with \$1.6 billion annually to operate. Of those operating grants the district health authorities allocate money to replace, repair and maintain equipment. The Capital District Health Authority, for example, has \$2 million allocated in their budget for this purpose. As I said, Nova Scotians should be reassured that hospitals are well-equipped to deal with the health care needs of citizens in this province.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, I am amazed at what I have just heard. Clearly, a government that loves strategies has no plan for the maintenance of our health equipment in our hospitals. They require that hospital foundations raise 25 per cent of the money to match the government grants, but now there is zero to match. The fact of the matter is, the operating grants to the hospitals are for operations, they've frozen that amount this year. They've asked the hospitals to absorb the cost of inflation and they've asked the hospitals to absorb any wage increases, which is a cut in real terms.

Now, if I understand the minister's answer correctly, there is a hidden \$24 million further cut to their operating grants. My question to the minister is, if she is asking our hospitals to fund their equipment purchases and repairs out of operating grants, would she agree she has cut the hospital budget by a further \$20 million to \$24 million?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I never heard such a ridiculous proposition in all of my life. Talk about hiding the capital grants in the estimates of the budget? For gosh sakes, this comes to the floor of this House and we have discussion right here so there's nothing being hidden. In addition to the \$1.6 billion that we give to the various health authorities, there is \$72 million for capital grants this year for the use on smaller projects and purchases. I would again reiterate that Nova Scotians need to be reassured our hospitals are well-equipped and we will not see any equipment that requires replacement or repair left unattended to.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester North.

**EDUC.: C.B. REG. SCH. BD./LAID-OFF TEACHERS
- MEETING**

HON. KAREN CASEY: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Minister of Education. Last night representatives from the Cape Breton-Victoria Regional School Board met to hear from 14 permanent teachers who have just been notified that they were laid off. These layoffs come as a direct result of the Department of Education's funding cuts to school boards. These teachers had just a few minutes to state their case as to why they should not be laid off. It is an incredibly emotional situation and it shows the impact of the minister's funding cuts. My question to the minister is, did the minister show enough interest and make any attempt to gather the statements from these teachers from last night?

HON. RAMONA JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, I see that the honourable member had to wait her turn to ask a question because I think she forgot which side of the House she was sitting on there. I want to say that this is a very serious situation and people's lives have been affected. Unfortunately, because of declining enrolment we do not need as many teachers in our system, it's a very unfortunate situation.

I have to say though that the honourable member does know that this was an in camera meeting and that is something between the school boards and the people who were there. I would not receive those statements, that is in camera, those are private conversations that the teachers had. I would imagine that this must have been a very difficult process for those teachers and it's a very unfortunate situation.

MS. CASEY: Mr. Speaker, 44 probationary teachers from the Halifax Regional School Board will appear tonight before their school board's committee meeting. These are teachers who were one step away from becoming permanent teachers; instead they were told they are laid off. The minister will claim these layoffs were not her decision and now she's trying to blame it on declining enrollment, but the fact remains that these layoffs are the result of her decision. Although this is an in camera meeting "interested parties" are allowed to attend - and that interested party could be the Minister of Education.

So, will the minister support teachers in this province by attending the in camera meeting tonight to hear the impact that her decision is having on our classroom and our teachers?

MS. JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, this is a very difficult time. We have declining enrolment in the province and, as the honourable member knows, within the provisions of the collective agreement, when teachers are displaced in one board they could, through the collective agreement, be relocated. Now, that's not the answer to the heartache that these teachers are going through, but we do have provisions to be able to provide teachers the opportunity to go to a board where we are going to be hiring because of attrition.

MS. CASEY: Well, Mr. Speaker, for the information of the House, declining enrolment is accommodated through the Hogg formula - this is in addition to declining enrolment in the Hogg formula. These teachers will be given five minutes to state the work of their profession and the impact that their cut will have on the classrooms. These are young teachers who have worked incredibly hard to earn their degrees, they have spent time in the system and were about to become permanent teachers, only to be laid off.

My question to the minister is, when in the history of Nova Scotia have teachers been forced to appeal their case before the school board because the minister has cut funding for teaching and learning in this province?

MS. JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, as I've said, this is a very unfortunate situation and I know that it's very difficult for those teachers this evening who will be speaking on behalf

of the situation that we have found ourselves in this province. Unfortunately, we are losing our children coming into our school system - we are going to lose 2,500 students in our system this year. Very unfortunate, and I apologize for the heartache that many families are going through during this time, but we are in a situation where we have declining enrolment, and we do not need as many teachers as we had.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Richmond.

**JUSTICE - N.S. LEGAL AID FUNDING:
CUTS - EXPLAIN**

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, access to justice is an essential part of a well-functioning justice system. For low-income Nova Scotians this can be a significant challenge; in fact, for low-income families trying to access legal representation for separation, divorce, or child custody matters, the Nova Scotia Legal Aid system has been there for them. My question to the Minister of Justice is, why did the minister order a \$553,000 cut to the Nova Scotia Legal Aid funding?

HON. ROSS LANDRY: Mr. Speaker, the adjustment was mainly to do with external purchasing of legal counsel to deal with cases and we're going to readjust our internal process and the director of Legal Services said that they can handle those cases internally, so it's a matter of making dollars work smarter.

MR. SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, I think it's time this minister realized that a cut is a cut. What they're taking away means less services that are going to be available to Nova Scotians.

But rather than listen to me, maybe I can quote another member of this House for the minister, where it says: “. . . there also needs to be additional money in legal aid services to allow people who are unable to afford the services of a lawyer to get access to those services as well because the system really functions much more efficiently when the people who are caught up in the system have fair access to those resources.” That's a quote from March 20, 2007 from the honourable Premier of Nova Scotia when he was a member of the Opposition. My question to the minister is, how are you improving access to justice for Nova Scotians of low income when you cut \$553,000 from the Nova Scotia Legal Aid budget?

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The member is using the word “you”. That is out of order. I've explained that we're going to follow proper parliamentary procedure in this House. I had a protocol note distributed to all the House Leaders for each caucus explaining why this is to be followed. I'll ask the member to rephrase the question and other members to do that. The requirement to use titles and use third person is uniform throughout the Westminster-based Parliaments. I'd ask you to rephrase the question.

MR. SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, how does the minister justify a cut of \$553,000 to the Nova Scotia Legal Aid funding after the comments made by his own Leader?

MR. LANDRY: Mr. Speaker, as I stated yesterday in one of my questions, I alluded to the fact of understanding the full picture of the issue before us. What I'm referring to is the member across the way is making the assumption that spending more money gets results. What I'm saying is that we spoke with the director of legal services and they looked at their process; they put a more strategic plan in place, within their department, on how to manage this and not to export the service outside the department so that they can fulfill the needs inside. Should there be issues of concern down the road, we'll evaluate them at that time.

This government and this minister are committed to sound fiscal management. It is unfortunate that the Opposition doesn't think the same way.

MR. SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, let me be helpful to the minister again because maybe the words of another one of his colleagues will help him understand that it's not simply we who are concerned with cuts made to the Nova Scotia Legal Aid funding, one of the important issues is the income cap that applies to who qualifies for legal aid, which has not been touched in quite some time. The quote says, ". . . the qualifying income for legal aid is so low now that essentially anybody who's working doesn't qualify for legal aid. Even if you're working full-time at minimum wage, you would still earn too much to qualify for legal aid. So you have this whole stratum of society that doesn't qualify for legal aid and yet can't afford a lawyer, and there's an enormous gap in between these two."

Mr. Speaker, those words were spoken in Hansard, on November 18, 2008 by the honourable member for Halifax Fairview, who is now the Minister of Finance. This is the same Minister of Finance who decided to increase 1,400 user fees by the cost of living so I would ask if the Minister of Finance would explain how he justifies increasing 1,400 user fees and not increase the income cap for low-income Nova Scotians to qualify for Nova Scotia Legal Aid.

HON. GRAHAM STEELE: Mr. Speaker, I refer that to the Minister of Justice.

MR. LANDRY: Mr. Speaker, the assumption being made by my colleague on the opposite side of the floor is that the service is going to deteriorate. I'm stating here today that it's not. We're working smarter and we're being good custodians of the taxpayers' money and should there be critical issues or need, we'll evaluate them case by case as we move forward. It's very important that we protect the taxpayers' dollars, that our departments are managed to the best of our ability and that we have confidence in the system and I have confidence in the system. It's unfortunate that my colleague does not.

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

HEALTH & WELLNESS: EQUIPMENT - FUNDING

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health. A moment ago, in answer to my previous question, the minister indicated that if a piece of equipment breaks in our health system, even though there's no provision for it in her budget, that she'll take it out of the \$72.056 million health infrastructure budget, which is clearly listed as being for hospital renovations and construction projects, not for equipment. My question to the minister is, since this amount is fully accounted for, right down to the last dollar, in a list of projects, which exact health renovation or construction project is she proposing to set aside if, by some crazy chance, a piece of equipment actually breaks during the upcoming year?

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, there is a very broad range of equipment used in our health care system, from small items to relatively large items. Quite often with the larger items the project money for those items comes from the capital grants because they also require the sort of infrastructure around the housing of pieces of equipment. That fund is a \$72 million fund and it is not an exclusive fund only for building projects but is also often used for capital equipment and will be in this case as well.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, this is clearly a new budgeting practice by the government where funds may or may not be used for what they've been stated for in the estimates of the province.

My question for the minister is, just as one example, a piece of diagnostic imaging equipment, a CAT scanner, for example, or PET scanner, can run to \$5 million or \$6 million, plus installation, plus training. If we should lose one of those pieces of equipment, is it the minister's advice to our hospitals and health authorities that they set aside some other infrastructure need in order to keep that piece of equipment in use during the year?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I'm not going to get into debating hypothetical situations around specific pieces of equipment here on the floor of the House. I have said that our hospitals are well equipped. Last year we spent \$20 million on equipping hospitals across the province and additional expenditures were made by hospital foundations. As well, there is money contained within the DHA budgets for capital equipment.

Mr. Speaker, there have been reductions in our capital budget because we inherited an incredible mess from the previous government. Everybody knows that. That means we have to find ways to maintain health care services but, at the same time, we need to get back to balance.

MR. BAILLIE: What is at issue here is the management ability of the current government and this is not hypothetical because common sense tells us that some time during the year a piece of needed equipment is going to break. That is what this estimate line item was supposed to be for. In fact, just to give you an example, Mr. Speaker, at

Capital Health today there are dialysis machines, half of which are in need of replacement, one of which is going to go at any time and we're going to need a provision for its replacement.

My question to the minister is, if her answer is, we'll take it out of somewhere else, then why not just produce realistic budgets in the first place?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, as I indicated, Capital Health, in their budget, has \$2 million for repairs and replacement of capital equipment. Additionally, we have another \$72 million available to the district health authorities for capital projects and small equipment replacement and repairs. This will be an adequate amount of money to help us maintain the equipment in our system and ensure that Nova Scotians get the best care possible.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Richmond.

IMMIGRATION: INTL. STUDENTS - RETENTION

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, last week the long-awaited immigration strategy was finally released. While it is in the best interest of our province that this strategy succeeds, specific action items lack details in certain sections of the report.

Mr. Speaker, in the most recent Statistics Canada information produced earlier this year, Nova Scotia was home to 3,394 international students. The new strategy calls for information sessions about work programs, welcome events, expansion of the connector program and encouraging employers to participate in co-op programs. My question to the Minister of Immigration is, has she reviewed what other jurisdictions are doing to retain international students once they graduate?

HON. MARILYN MORE: Certainly our staff have been reviewing best practices across Canadian jurisdictions and elsewhere throughout the world. A study done by the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission has indicated that in the short term the tremendous economic boost that international students provide. Also we retain a significant number of them because they fall in love with the province, they want to stay here, and raise their families and start their careers.

It appears that attracting them in a number of different ways is the best way of making sure they have a good opportunity to learn more about the province, getting engaged with organizations, feeling supported by cultural communities and also getting more information about where the labour market opportunities are.

MR. SAMSON: Well, Mr. Speaker, attracting and retaining - I haven't heard the word "retaining" which hopefully the minister is focused on as well.

Last September the Province of Manitoba made changes to their strategy by allowing international graduates to apply to the provincial nominee program in advance of receiving an offer of employment. Our strategy, unfortunately, has made no such changes.

Currently in Nova Scotia, before an international graduate can apply to the provincial Nominee Program, they must have a permanent job offer related to their field of study. Mr. Speaker, we all know in Nova Scotia that a job search could be extensive and the risk of losing these graduates to other jurisdictions remains high if we don't do all we can to ensure that they stay in our province.

So my question to the minister is, why didn't we see Manitoba's change, when it comes to international graduates, become applicable here in Nova Scotia under the new immigration strategy?

MS. MORE: Mr. Speaker, I think probably the best answer I can give is that we're trying to take a very measured, balanced approach. This is a strategy, it's not the final implementation action plan of the strategy. We'll be taking the steps that we feel will be very positive, talking more closely to international students and some of the sponsors within the universities, and gradually making improvements and changes as necessary.

MR. SAMSON: We've waited almost two years to get a strategy and now the minister says it's not actually what they're going to follow, it's just a mere guide. This isn't a difficult one that I'm suggesting here, minister, it's actually already being done in Manitoba.

The fear that students who graduate, who aren't able to immediately find work, don't qualify to stay in Nova Scotia is clearly a gap that needs to be addressed and it wouldn't be very difficult for the minister to address that. I do realize that there is an issue in that they would be applying for the provincial Nominee Program which we know the federal government has capped at 500 a year for Nova Scotia. As soon as our Premier realizes that it's actually the Prime Minister that he should be talking to about having this cap lifted, this should no longer be an issue.

But my question again, finally to the minister is, is the minister prepared to adopt the same strategy as Manitoba has to allow international graduate students upon graduation to apply to stay and remain as permanent residents of Nova Scotia even if they have not secured a permanent job?

MS. MORE: Encouraging international students to become part of the Nominee Program is just one of many, many aspects of our strategy. As I said, we're going to be taking a close look at any improvements that might have to happen. I just want to add also that there have been ongoing discussions among senior officials, deputy ministers and ministers, with our federal counterparts on the matter of immigration caps. The House may be interested to know that Nova Scotia is the co-lead with the federal minister on

immigration, so we have additional opportunities to discuss with our counterparts in Ottawa the impacts.

We have strongly suggested, as has the Council of Atlantic Premiers, that we need an equitable distribution of the caps across the country and that it's in the best interests, we feel, of all Atlantic Canada, but especially Nova Scotia, to be able to bring in more immigrants. They create jobs, they fill much-needed worker and skill shortages. This is something we take very seriously and we know that this new strategy is going to make a big difference. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle.

HEALTH & WELLNESS: NURSES STRIKE - WAGE SETTLEMENT

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, talks broke off yesterday between Nova Scotia's largest health authority, Capital Health, and the NSGEU representing the nurses of Local 97, who recommended that the nurses reject the government's 1 per cent pay raise. This government, of course, vowed in the Fall of 2009 that it would hold annual wage increases to 1 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, my question through you to the Minister of Health and Wellness is, is this government still committed to the 1 per cent wage settlement even if it caused a potentially lengthy nurses strike?

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. We very much value the work of the nurses in the Capital District Health Authority and across the province. We also, as the government, believe in the collective bargaining process and we want the collective bargaining process to work in the interests of the province. That process is underway and we're hopeful that a resolution will be reached in the process. Thank you.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, according to a statement released by the NSGEU, posted on their Web site, an e-mail was sent from the Capital District Health Authority stating that Local 97 was offered the same agreement that was recently ratified by Local 42. The union points out two specific examples of discrepancies between the two agreements. Nurses play a vital role in patient care and comfort, and deserve to know the truth about the offer on the table - I can table the document as well.

Mr. Speaker, my question through you to the minister is, is the minister aware of the inaccuracies sent out by the VP at the health authority and what is being done to help keep nurses from a strike position?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, as I indicated, we very much value the work of nurses in the Capital District, as well as all across the province. The collective bargaining process is underway and I'm hopeful we'll reach a resolution through that process.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, we too hope there will be a resolution to this one before the possible strike, but the possible strike is looming and the care of our vulnerable, ill Nova Scotians is the biggest concern right now. Nova Scotians need reassurance that they will continue to have access to these imperative health care services.

Mr. Speaker, my question through you to the minister is, what is the government's contingency plan to ensure the care and safety of Nova Scotia's patients?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to reassure Nova Scotians that this government, unlike previous governments, respects the collective bargaining process. We are hopeful that that process will lead to a resolution.

Mr. Speaker, there are still a number of steps that are left to proceed through in that process and we're hoping that at the end of the day a resolution will be achieved. Thank you.

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

DEP. PREM. - EAs: SUPPORT - DETAILS

HON. MANNING MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, my question today is for the Deputy Premier. As MLA for Cape Breton Centre for 13 years and Cabinet Minister for almost two, the Deputy Premier is more than aware of the importance staff play when it comes to ensuring success. For Cabinet Ministers, the role of an executive assistant is vitally important. These individuals meet with stakeholders, they act as gatekeepers. They assist a minister with daily agendas and they provide support when it comes to the development of public policy.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the Deputy Premier is, can the Deputy Premier please indicate whether an executive assistant provides support to Cabinet Ministers in the form of political advice?

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, I'm looking through my hot book but I can't find a note on that one. I'll assure you that I am not privy to each and every conversation that every EA has with their minister so I wouldn't be aware of that.

MR. MANNING MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, we do know one thing when it comes to government, many of the EAs arrived in their positions via a secondment from the NDP caucus office, ensuring government's intent in seeking someone political for the position. On September 20, 2009, the Deputy Premier indicated government's intention to

freeze the salaries of political staffers for a period of two years, by issuing a press release, and I'll table that press release. Yet a FOIPOP received in our office shows that at least three EAs received increases to the tune of 25 per cent, 24 per cent and 20 per cent, since government made that public announcement. So despite government's promise to the people that they would freeze salaries for political staffers, this government somehow feels it is justifiable to raise the salaries of some political staff, in significant amounts.

My question to the Deputy Premier is, how can the Deputy Premier justify increases of 20 per cent, 24 per cent and 25 per cent when they said the salaries of political workers would be frozen?

MR. CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, it's quite simple. When someone moves from one job - say, as in the assertion of the question, that you move from your job at caucus office and go into a new job as an EA - that it would be quite possible there would be a salary change. Thank you.

MR. MANNING MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, again the Deputy Premier was quoted in the Cape Breton Post on September 21st, stating the following - and I'll table that as well - September 21, 2009, "This is not us grandstanding . . . it's just us doing the right thing."

On the same date, September 21st, this same Deputy Premier stated, "We're going to have to be frugal and I guess we're going to have to kind of lead by example." Giving increases that average 23 per cent is not leading by example.

My final question to the Deputy Premier is, will the Deputy Premier now admit his comments made almost two years ago were nothing more than political optics and, indeed, this government has failed to lead by example?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Not true.

MR. CORBETT: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think my counterparts are right in answering this for me across the way, it's not true.

Mr. Speaker, what we have done, again, they were the positions they inherited and positions that we paid a heck of a lot less to people than the other government before us. This was people incumbent to jobs. No EA got a job the way the question was premised. They inherited the job and that was the rate of salary they inherited. Thank you.

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

**TIR - DANGEROUS HWYS.: MOTORISTS
- RECOURSE**

MR. ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, my question through you will be to the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal. It's Spring in Nova Scotia so that means that potholes are making travel on some dirt roads dangerous. My question to the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal is, if Nova Scotians live or travel on a road that they believe presents a danger to motorists, what should they do and what actions should they expect from the department staff?

HON. WILLIAM ESTABROOKS: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for the question. It's a rough time of year and there are some real hard conditions, situations around the province that have been brought to my attention, particularly when it comes to gravel roads that are going to have to be graded. At this time the heavy equipment just can't get on those roads. I do know that trucks are trying to get in there sometimes with some gravel. I would urge the people in those situations to contact their local depot, contact the local base, find out when the grader is going to be on the road and be patient.

MR. MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, as the minister knows, because I've had him on this particular road, people who live on the Grand Mira South Road are fed up. They estimate that there are 200 potholes on the road this year and they say that condition isn't much better than last year. One man's vehicle sustained \$900 in damage from traveling on this road. When local department staff was contacted, they said the road will get attention in due course. My question through you to the minister is, how bad does the Grand Mira South Road have to get before the department makes an effort to make some kind of short-term improvements to that road.

MR. ESTABROOKS: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question. That was one of the roads in your constituency that I had the opportunity to be on. If you recall the time of year that it was, it was firmer then than it is now of course because of conditions in the Spring.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. Again, we seem to be going back to using the word "you". Your apologies and I would ask the member to rephrase their questionS and any others that you may answer in this question period. Thank you.

MR. ESTABROOKS: Thank you, I'm sorry for the "you" there. The member opposite has a great example of a road because when we were on it together I do understand that the member brought to my attention the concern, what happens when the Spring arrives?

Mr. Speaker, as you are well aware, there are certain roads in this province that are in difficult shape this time of the year. We're doing everything possible, we'll make sure the roads are safe as soon as we can get on them. But when you're dealing with heavy

equipment, as the member opposite knows, we're having difficulty this time of the year bringing them up to shape.

MR. MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the minister for that answer. Jerry Gardiner, a 69-year-old retired resident of Grand Mira South is so frustrated by the poor condition of the road that he has taken matters into his own hands. For the second year in a row, Mr. Gardiner, who his neighbours call "the Grand Mira road crew" is going down the road filling potholes with gravel, spreading them out with a rake. He says that if he wins the lotto, he will spend his winnings on road improvements.

My question through you to the minister is, I'm sure the minister can see the many safety and practical problems about having a taxpayer doing roadwork. I'm sure the minister can understand the level of frustration of the residents on the Grand Mira South Road when they feel they must take such drastic measures. Will the minister make a commitment today to take a special interest in the Grand Mira South Road and ensure the needed repairs are made as soon as possible?

MR. ESTABROOKS: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for the question. I wish the opportunity would have been there for me to have met Mr. Gardiner as arranged but there was another meeting at that time. I really would urge that constituents in Cape Breton West and other parts of the province be very careful about going out and doing that initiative. It could be a very dangerous day, although I know that Mr. Gardiner has experience with such challenges when he worked on the roads himself as a contractor. I would ask him to please cease from doing the job that he's doing, to contact the department and we'll try to work together to bring the Grand Mira Road up.

When it comes to Cape Breton West, I think the member opposite is well aware of the fact that the roads in his area do receive special attention for some other reasons. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

**ENERGY: WHOLESALE ELECTRICITY MARKETS
- ADVISORY COMM.**

MR. ANDREW YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Energy. Yesterday the Department of Energy announced they are seeking nominations for a new wholesale market advisory committee, which is fine except for the fact that this work has already been done twice. The Electricity Marketplace Governance Committee final report was released October 2003 and the Green Administration Report was released in September 2006. That's not even counting the government's own Renewable Energy Strategy.

Mr. Speaker, why is the government seeking new advice on wholesale electricity markets when it's already been done at least twice by government in the past eight years?

HON. CHARLIE PARKER: Mr. Speaker, it's important, as the department, to have the very latest information, to be up to date, to know what is going on and that's exactly why we've called for this advice.

MR. YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, it just seems a bit strange that we would go out and create redundancy in this area. It looks like the government just wants to keep getting reports done until it gets the advice it wants. I say that because neither the NDP nor the Tory governments have implemented many of the recommendations from the first two reports, so why bother doing another study on the same subject and get a third report that says the same thing for the third time? Will the minister commit to actually implementing the recommendations of the study this time around?

MR. PARKER: Mr. Speaker, as you know, market conditions are constantly changing. That's certainly why we're trying to get this information. We'll hopefully have good advice and take it under advisement and act on it accordingly.

MR. YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, of course the market conditions are changing all the time, but neither this government nor the previous government implemented those first two reports, so why would anybody think they're going to implement the third one. It baffles the mind that this government would commission a third version on recommendations of the Wholesale Electricity Market given that the last two reports had almost identical recommendations and weren't implemented.

Independent studies since then have continued to recommend the same things, yet the government still has not implemented them. In fact, had they been implemented, Nova Scotians today might very well be enjoying not only a better electricity market, but, perhaps, lower prices and certainly more stable prices. Does the minister actually expect to receive different advice this time or is this just about trying to make it look like the NDP are doing something on energy issues?

MR. PARKER: Mr. Speaker, obviously I can't prejudge what advice we're going to get, but we're confident that the information that comes to us will be first rate and we're going to have to judge it on its own merit, of course. It has been over five years since the last report and we certainly need an updated version of where we're at. This is 2011 and I think it was 2007 or before, the previous report, so let us judge it on its merit when we receive it.

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

**HEALTH & WELLNESS: NURSES STRIKE
- CONTINGENCY PLANS**

MS. DIANA WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. As the minister is well aware, Capital Health nurses, represented by NSGEU, voted 94 per cent in favour of strike action last week. Today we learned that conciliation broke off last night and the union is recommending that its membership reject the government's offer. Last week I asked the minister to update the House on the status of the contingency plan should the 2,500 nurses within the Capital District go on strike. The issue has now become more serious and pressing.

Given that the minister has had almost a week to act since I last posed the question, my question through you is, has the minister spoken directly to the Capital Health District Authority about contingency plans that they may have in the event of a strike?

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, as I said to one of the other members earlier today, we value the work of nurses in the Capital District. We are very much committed to a successful collective bargaining process and we're hopeful that process will lead to a settlement. We are a number of steps away from being in a situation where we're looking at a labour dispute at this time.

MS. WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, all members of the House definitely support the work of nurses and value their work. What we're talking about here today is just taking some prudent steps towards making contingency plans and being ready in the event of a strike. My question to the minister is, will the minister please indicate whether she is satisfied that the contingency plans in place will protect patients if we do, in fact, face a strike in Capital Health District?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to tell the House that I have very good relations both with the head of the nurses' unions and the CEOs at the district health authority. These are issues that we have discussed many times, and it's something that I've felt strongly about discussing before we ever got to a stage where we're threatened by the potential of a strike - that being assured we have strong essential services in our health care system in the event of labour disruptions.

Mr. Speaker, as I said we're still quite some way from the potential of a labour disruption. I am very encouraged that we still have a strong collective bargaining process and I would like to see that process work to the benefit of everyone involved.

MS. WHALEN: We acknowledge that there are a couple more steps left but we're one step closer to a strike this week than we were last. The union is recommending a rejection of the offer that's on the table. Nurses working in mental health, public health, critical care, transplants, corrections, occupational health, nurse educators and

rehabilitation have said to the government that they didn't like the first offer and three days after conciliation they still have not resolved this situation.

Patients who rely on these essential services are wondering who will provide for them in the event of a strike. Today's media reports simply heighten that anxiety. My question to the minister is, given the fact that she's already spoken to us and to the House here today that she's had discussions with the CEOs and has been assured herself, could she please table to the House today before the end of business, a copy of the contingency plan that is in place should the nurses go on strike.

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Once again, I do value the work of all of the nurses in the Capital District irrespective of the type of nursing they provide, whether they're in public health, a very important aspect of our health care system, or in the intensive care units, equally as critical, Mr. Speaker.

These nurses, their bargaining agents are in the collective bargaining process and I'm hopeful that that collective bargaining process will result in a positive outcome. I want that process to proceed without any undue stress on the public.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

JUSTICE: GUN CRIMES - HRM COUNCIL ASSIST

MR. TREVOR ZINCK: Today my question is for the Minister of Justice. Mr. Speaker, as many of us are aware there's been a recent rash of violent crimes and in particular those including guns in the Halifax Regional Municipality. In fact, to date we already have eight homicides this year in comparison to 12 murders in all of 2010. Today Halifax Regional Municipality has reached out publicly to ask the minister and his department for help. Can the minister today explain how and what plans his department might have to assist HRM in addressing the increasing numbers of violent gun crimes in our communities?

HON. ROSS LANDRY: I'd like to thank the member for that question. I've stated in this House before, the issue of violence in the communities is something that's very important to me; I'm very concerned. In that regard our staff is continually meeting with the various policing agencies. In fact today, a letter went out but we had it prepared the other day to the Mayor and Council of Halifax to meet. I spoke today with the Chief of Police and with the RCMP so it's an ongoing issue and we take great concern in this and I thank him for the question.

MR. ZINCK: Mr. Speaker, this isn't the first time HRM has reached out to the minister. On February 21st a letter from Commissioner Earl Gosse, chair of the HRM Board of Police Commissioners, wrote to the minister regarding additional officer programs. In the letter, that was supported also by the regional councillors, Mr. Gosse expressed the following:

“ The Additional Officer program plays an important role in ensuring Nova Scotia is a safe and secure place to work and live. The Program has allowed HRM to deploy officers to some of our vulnerable communities. These communities are experiencing effects of poverty, discrimination and isolation. Many are struggling with drug trafficking and related violence. The program has had a direct impact on the violence on these communities and others.”

Mr. Speaker, on March 4th the response by the minister stated that severe financial challenges were being experienced by the province and that he could not ensure that the program will remain. My question to the minister is, can he assure the House today that, during the review of this program, he'll consider both the role that HRM plays in public safety in Nova Scotia and the impact that these officers have made in the communities they serve?

MR. LANDRY: Once again, thank you to the member for that question. I did respond on March 4th to Mr. Gosse in regard to his initial letter and subsequently I had a follow-up meeting with Mr. Gosse. At that time I advised him, and others who were from various police commissions, that in fact the program for this year was not being touched, so the request that he had put forth had been met.

MR. ZINCK: Mr. Speaker, a recent article in The Coast uncovered some alarming figures regarding the Pinecrest-Highfield Park areas of my community. Analysis of police call data showed that 7 per cent of all police calls for serious incidents from 2005 to 2010 are in the areas of Highfield and Pinecrest. Among the most common incidents - assaults, robberies, drug use, weapons, and attempted suicides.

Mr. Speaker, through you, can the minister today commit to me to have a tour of my community with my local community constable as soon as the House rises?

MR. LANDRY: Mr. Speaker, thank you to the member for that question. As I stated in the House before, and I think that similar question was asked last year, my position is the same - just contact my office to organize that. My position hasn't changed from that point, I would be more than happy to accompany him or others in the office - and I extend that invitation out to others in the House. I am very concerned and committed to policing in this province and the safety of all Nova Scotians.

If you feel there's a need for me to get that exposure, I'd be more than happy to see that we accommodate that.

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

**HEALTH & WELLNESS: TOBACCO CONTROL STRATEGY
- FEEDBACK**

MS. DIANA WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. A well-integrated Tobacco Control Strategy is one built on the premise that we reduce smoking rates. In order to do this, government can place its emphasis on two key groups of people: those who are younger and have not yet started to smoke but are at risk to do so; and those who have been smoking for a number of years. Both are equally important and both require equal attention by government.

My question to the minister is, Mr. Speaker, when consulting around the new Tobacco Control Strategy, did the minister receive feedback indicating government should do more to assist current smokers?

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, there was extensive consultation, in the development of the tobacco strategy, with numerous groups. I think it is a very good strategy, I am pleased with the endorsements we've received from district health authorities, Doctors Nova Scotia, Cancer Care Nova Scotia, Smoke-Free Nova Scotia, and the Canadian Cancer Society. I'm looking forward to the work implementing this strategy over the next five years.

MS. WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, the long-awaited Tobacco Control Strategy certainly is another step forward and we appreciate that, but it does contain 69 action items and, of those 69 action items, only one action item speaks to the importance of helping people quit smoking in an action-oriented way.

Mr. Speaker, we know from Health Canada's reports that three months after a smoker quits smoking, their risk of heart attack drops; and in five to 15 years after quitting, the stroke risk is reduced to that of a non-smoker. Heart attacks, strokes and other health implications add significant costs to our health care system, so it makes sense that we should be putting more resources into preventing those future cost burdens on our health care system.

Again, as I said, Mr. Speaker, of 69 action items, only one relates to helping quit smoking - the others are general vision items and generally relating to having people to never start smoking. My question to the minister is, why does this strategy mention only one action item that speaks to the need of investing in support to help people quit so that we can save money in the future?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, the member is correct in saying that there are multiple ways to address tobacco control. One is to keep people from ever becoming addicted to tobacco and the other is to work with people who already are addicted, to help them kick the habit. This strategy contains measures to address both of those concerns. Additionally, we have identified the need to have better information and then action approaches to some groups that are marginalized, that have persistently high

rates of tobacco use, such as people with mental health disorders and people from low income groups.

As of yet, the specific activities that would target those groups have not been spelled out because the research needs to be conducted to help us establish what is the best approach to get at those more persistent and difficult groups of smokers.

MS. WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, what we're really asking for here is some balance and trying to balance those two aims and the two different groups of people that the strategy should speak to. Our belief is that there should be more emphasis on helping people quit because the DHAs today will run out of money before the year ends, every year, on their smoking cessation plans. They're not able to help people as the year advances because the money is used up, so we're not helping, at that end, to the extent that we should. It's not a question of not having enough money because I mentioned last week, there's \$200 million-plus that we collect every year in taxes related to tobacco and there was a \$25 million settlement in just one legal case that the province benefited from, so we have the money; we should be investing it.

My question to the minister is, given that the minister wants evidence to guide spending decisions and given that there is a mountain of clinical evidence showing that we can save money on future health care costs by helping people to quit smoking, why hasn't the minister added any new monies to the strategy to do so?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, we've allocated the money in this budget, the budget for the social marketing campaign aimed at young people to prevent them from taking up smoking. As the strategy rolls out over the next year, we will assess, on an annual basis, what the revenue needs are to support the various measures in the strategy. The Province of Nova Scotia spends the second most per capita on their tobacco control efforts of any other province in the country. I think that fact speaks for itself.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

**EDUC. - FARM PARTIES: DANGERS
- WARN**

MR. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Education. As the minister is acutely aware, there is a serious issue that is plaguing the community of the Annapolis Valley. Countless media reports have been written about young individuals who have lost their lives and many still struggling to deal with addictions. One common thread when it comes to young people is the prevalence of farm parties where prescription drugs are taken in combination with alcohol. As many are aware, this can be a deadly combination, as we witnessed from a March death. My question to the minister is, what is the minister doing from an educational perspective to warn students about the dangers of farm parties?

HON. RAMONA JENNEX: As you know, we have been greatly affected across the province with the use of drugs in our young people and so I take this situation extremely seriously. I know that within our school system we have guidance counsellors and our teachers are talking about this with their students all of the time. It's a tragedy, what we're going through in Nova Scotia with our young people and the choices that they're making. I want everyone to know that we're taking this very seriously and we're doing absolutely everything that we can to educate our young people not to take drugs and not to have this kind of activity. We will keep doing that and hope that it effects some kind of change.

What we really need to do too is hear from our youth to what we can do to support them in supporting each other and not going down this road. Thank you.

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, one of the most passionate crusaders I know, when it comes to dealing with the tragedy associated with prescription drug addictions, is Linda Dorey. Her son, while waiting for treatment, tragically took his own life earlier this year. Yesterday Linda travelled to Calgary to present at the Prime Minister's constituency office about the urgency of this issue. Being part of a group here in Nova Scotia that has been looking for support from the province for the past 16 months, she felt it important to take her message to the next level due to lack of urgency on the part of the provincial government. My question to the Minister of Health and Wellness is, will the minister agree to meet with Linda Dorey to hear her story in order to ensure that any further government plans address the issue of timely treatment?

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, this is an issue of great seriousness. Whenever a young person has their life ended because of a drug overdose or any other tragedy, we all are very concerned. We seek to understand what has occurred and what we can do, as a society and as a government, to address these issues.

I have not had any contact from the lady the member has mentioned, however if she wishes to contact me, my office, to request a meeting, we will certainly deal with that in a way that we deal with all requests for meetings with the minister.

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, many in the community are concerned that Dr. Gould's report will spend too much time focusing on the deaths of individuals. They feel that more needs to be done to focus on concrete actions that will help people today, however, little has changed so far.

Four people have approached my office in the last seven days, all seeking treatment. Yesterday's most urgent case was passed on to the provincial director for addictions services and all had to resort to investigating treatment through private options. My question to the Minister of Health and Wellness is, will the minister reassure the people of the Annapolis Valley that a concrete action plan will be part of Dr. Gould's interim report scheduled to come out in the not too distant future?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, what I've asked Dr. Gould to look at is not the deaths, but to look at the facts surrounding the situation that has been reported to me in the Annapolis Valley and to make some recommendations with respect to addressing the situation as he is able to establish it. I'm looking forward to receiving those recommendations in the next few days at which time we will be able to move forward on this. Thank you.

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

**PREM. - TORONTO-DOMINION INSURANCE:
INCENTIVE - EXPLAIN**

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier. Today the Premier announced a \$1,800,000 incentive to Toronto-Dominion Insurance, a division of the Toronto-Dominion Bank Group, hoping to have them create 140 jobs here in Nova Scotia. This appears to be a new policy of the government because, previously, when they wanted to give money to insurance companies, they were providing incentives to companies like Marsh or Flagstone Reinsurance, which are offshore insurance providers. Now they're giving \$1,800,000 to the Toronto-Dominion Bank, which is a direct competitor of the insurance providers here in Nova Scotia. I should add that the Toronto-Dominion Bank made a profit last year of \$4.6 billion and competes directly with the 1,100 insurance brokers of the Province of Nova Scotia. My question to the Premier is, why are Toronto-Dominion Bank jobs more valuable to his government than the 1,100 Nova Scotia brokers who provide the same service here at home?

THE PREMIER: Well, Mr. Speaker, I wish the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party had been at the announcement today. TDI - TD Insurance - has been in Nova Scotia since 1996. They started with a small operation with just seven jobs, they've grown it to 165. They were looking to expand to work regionally, and this is a group that works on its insurance business on an inbound basis so it's not calling out, it's receiving inbound calls.

They had a choice of the places they could go to create those jobs. These are very significant, well-paying jobs. They are going to create an additional 140 jobs over the next number of years. We think that's good for Nova Scotians, it's good for the young people who are going to get the jobs there, it's good for our economy.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that the 1,100 jobs that are done by the insurance brokers of Nova Scotia are also very important and valuable jobs in our province. TDI may have been in our province since 1996, but the fact of the matter is that the law prevents the Toronto-Dominion Bank from directly selling insurance. In fact, as the Premier will remember, even over the Internet, the federal Minister of Finance put in place some pretty tough restrictions on the ability to sell insurance, if you are a bank, over the Internet.

If you'll indulge me for a moment, Mr. Speaker, the reason is quite important to know because people who are going to a bank to borrow money are very financially vulnerable and that is why they are being protected from the sale of insurance at that moment when they are applying for a loan. This is an important principle of our financial services industry that is designed to protect consumers.

My question to the Premier is, given that the government wants to give \$1.8 million to the Toronto-Dominion Bank to provide this service in direct competition with Nova Scotia brokers, why is he siding with the bank and not on the side of consumers who deserve that legal protection?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, in the first part of his question he actually made my point - this is not the bank, they are not competing with the brokers. TD Insurance is, of course, a separate organization from the bank. This is a regional operation - this just doesn't operate in Nova Scotia, it's going to operate regionally, it's going to create 140 good jobs here in this province.

Mr. Speaker, today I met with young people who are graduates of Saint Mary's and Dalhousie, some of whom came from other countries to Nova Scotia and are going to stay because they've got a good job with TDI. This is important for the economy and I think the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party should acknowledge it.

MR. BAILLIE: Well, Mr. Speaker, the 1,100 jobs that are currently done by Nova Scotians are also important jobs. In fact, the protection of consumers of insurance is also important. I will just share with the Premier this quote from Ken Myers, the chair of the Insurance Brokers Association of Nova Scotia: The banks ought not to be able to sell insurance at the point of granting credit. The reason is obvious, that is not a fair point to be selling insurance.

My question to the Premier is, those 1,100 brokers have not asked nor received any incentive for the work that they do in Nova Scotia, for the jobs that they provide all across our province, for the profits that they return to their communities. Why is this government so determined to incent banks and not our own insurance brokers?

THE PREMIER: Again, this is TD Insurance. I want to point out that it was not a question of whether or not this work was going to take place, it was going to take place. The competition that exists among the various insurance companies is still going to be there. The only question was where the jobs were going to be located for young people to have. In this case, because of the work that this government has done with TDI, those jobs are going to be located here, those young people are going to be able to stay here. They are going to be able to fill their lives here, they are going to be able to raise their families here and that's what is important. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Richmond.

**JUSTICE - CRIME PREVENTION: BUDGET CUTS
- JUSTIFY**

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, last night HRM Council joined our call in requesting that the provincial government adopt a strategy to deal with the recent increase in violent crime in our province. Recent shootings, stabbings and murders have alarmed Nova Scotians.

Rather than make new investments in crime prevention strategies in this year's budget, the NDP Government saw fit to cut the Department of Justice budget by \$5.35 million. My question is, how can the Minister of Justice justify cutting \$475,000 from the discretionary crime prevention and restorative justice budget?

HON. ROSS LANDRY: The answer to the question is very simple. We didn't cut that, and I explained in the answer yesterday and there should be correspondence delivered to him today in regard to that matter. What happened is that we had a number of projects where money was being spent that came to an end and that's where the money is from.

MR. SAMSON: Well, Mr. Speaker, for the information of the House, the Minister of Justice saw fit to put out a cheap press release today accusing me of being misleading. Ironically it comes from the NDP caucus office, not from the Department of Justice, which I think tells you how much how much weight should be given to this release.

Let's go back to the Red Room where the Justice estimates were held and let's go to Thursday, April 28, 2011, when I said: Am I correct here in seeing that for the grants of discretionary crime prevention and restorative justice, you've cut that by 55.4 per cent? That's over half of the budget for crime prevention that has been cut, is that correct? And the answer that we received: First off, any cut to crime prevention is a sad day; however, you have to make decisions and you have to take some action. I'm a big proponent of crime prevention but we have to live within our means and we have to make good, wise choices with the dollars we put in.

So I ask the Minister of Justice, when I said that this government cut crime prevention funding by 55.4 per cent, exactly how was that misleading?

MR. LANDRY: There are a number of points that he made there in his question. First off, on the issue of doing the press release which clearly answers some of the questions that he put forward, I did it through the caucus office because I really didn't want to waste my office's time. We've answered it several times to him and therefore the answer was given in that when the member makes false accusations in the paper they do need to be responded to. But just to give some clarity to some points, when a project comes to an end, is that Party over there saying that we take taxpayers' money and spend it on a program just because we did it in the past?

Let me point out that this department has spent money on safer communities and neighbourhood programs; the municipal police and the RCMP funding have been maintained for officers; the domestic violence court pilot project in Sydney has gone ahead; the civilian lead investigative unit has gone forward; extra staff and equipment at Burnside have been put in place; a new corrections facility in Pictou County is going ahead; good legislation dealing with body armour - Mr. Speaker, I could go on and on and on about the things that this department has done. We have been constructive and achieved many things, and this member will do well to look at it.

MR. SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, Nova Scotians are demanding that this government invest in strategies to put an end to the violent crimes that are taking place in this province, to put an end to the shootings, to the stabbings and to the murders that we are seeing take place - last night we heard it from HRM Council.

Mr. Speaker, the facts are this minister had an opportunity to take \$475,000 and put it in anti-crime strategies to make Nova Scotia's streets safer; he chose to send it to the Minister of Finance rather than reinvest it in his own department. So I ask the minister again, why did you allow a 55.4 per cent cut in anti-crime strategies at a time when so much violence is taking place in this province?

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. I don't know how I'm going to get this point across again. I know we're going to keep working on it but it's coming to the point that - I said that in all Westminster-based Parliaments, please start using the third person or going through the Chair and stop using the word "you". I will now go to the Minister of Justice for his answer.

The honourable Minister of Justice has the floor.

MR. LANDRY: Once again, I'd like to point out that my colleague across there would rather create fear than take the responsibility in the community to speak positively about things that are happening. (Interruptions) Mr. Speaker, may I continue?

MR. SPEAKER: Please do.

MR. LANDRY: Mr. Speaker, this morning I made an announcement on the civil forfeitures and he can't make the link that if you take the assets and the resources away from the criminals that the behavior will go down. He can't make the connection between the violence and the money. It's unfortunate that he is limited in his ability to comprehend that concept, but we will work overtime with him to make sure he gets the information.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

**COM. SERV. - DAY PROGRAMMING: PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES
- LISTS**

MR. ANDREW YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Community Services. On February 17th I sent a letter to the Minister of Community Services expressing concern over the lack of day programming for individuals with severe physical and cognitive disabilities. I would like to thank the minister for her response, and her letter included a list of adult service centres which provide day programming for persons with disabilities. The minister said that currently there are several centres that offer day programming for individuals with high needs ranging from mobility issues, non-verbal, vision issues, require mechanical lifts, and behavioural issues. The minister did not, however, outline which specific centres provide services for individuals with severe needs. Would the Minister of Community Services please name a specific, or specific centres, which provide these services to individuals with severe needs?

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, the day programs in the province are very important for people with disabilities. It is one area that unfortunately there hasn't been concentration of funding over the years and therefore this government has initially put in funding. Two weeks ago we made an announcement to increase the dollars into day programs because some of the areas, as the member would know, that we do need to focus on are the areas where people have higher needs and to be able to provide them with those services.

MR. YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, it's like this. I wrote a letter to the minister asking her about a case of somebody with severe disabilities. The minister sent back a list of adult service centres and not a single one on that list actually provides the services that were required by this individual for which I wrote the letter to the minister about. When the constituent in question, Ms. Shelly Maxwell, read the minister's letter, she called them all and she responded: I find it interesting that the directory of adult service centres that were listed are ones that we have already been in touch with and none are in a position to accept individuals like Meaghan.

The minister will remember from the letter that Meaghan is tube-fed, non-verbal and has no access to day programming, and as a result is forced to be at home most days. Will the minister acknowledge that there are significant gaps in the current system for individuals with severe disabilities and the list that she sent did not address the question that the constituent was asking about?

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, the important piece of knowledge that the honourable member has to realize is that there are issues out there with day programs because of a lack of investment over the years. We're working very hard to make a difference. We are meeting with day program people and every one of the day program service providers that we have in the province looks at each case individually. There is no problem for this member to come to our department and to discuss that with us if the

situation has been that this particular individual has not been able to find the services that are needed, that we can look at that and see what we can do. What we do is we provide a list because each day service provider has different programs that they offer and so they need to have the information. That's why I provided the list, because then they can go and talk to them to see if that particular service is available for their loved ones.

MR YOUNGER: Quite frankly, I find the minister's answer baffling, because, the whole point of my letter - and my letter was very clear to the minister - the reason we were writing was because there was a problem that we could not find the services. And so, we did go back to the department and the minister's department's answer was, put Meaghan in a nursing home. Well, Mr. Speaker, that is unacceptable. This is a family that wants to care for their daughter at home. All they're looking for is support and day programs, yet this minister's department seems more willing to spend more money, and have the government spend more money, putting this young woman in a nursing home instead of providing the necessary services.

So, Mr. Speaker, will the minister commit to finding a solution that offers Meaghan, and people like Meaghan, day programming without forcing them into nursing homes? (Applause)

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, one point I would like to make is that most members in this House, when they have an issue, they have come and they have spoken to me personally and I have taken every step that is possible to work with each and every member here. So, instead of sending a letter, if he's not happy with the response, he can come and talk to me about it. That is the adult way of doing business to help others, not stand in this House and rag on somebody about programs and such that we are working really, really hard to make a difference. Come talk to me and let's find out what the solution is. We are a solution-oriented government. He may not be, but we are. (Applause)

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

**ENERGY: TIDAL TURBINE MAINTENANCE
- DIGBY SUPPORT**

MR. HAROLD THERIAULT: I find some long-winded answers from over there, Mr. Speaker, but I only want a short one. If I have time here to get one short answer from the Minister of Energy, I'll be pleased. Recently, we have been told that hundreds of turbines, tidal turbines, can be installed, in the next few years, in the Bay of Fundy. This is good for the environment, also good for economic development, if the provincial government supports the Municipality of Digby in its hard work to make this area the port of choice for maintenance on these turbines. My question to the minister is, does the NDP Government support Digby in its efforts to become the port of choice for tidal turbine maintenance over Saint John, New Brunswick?

HON. CHARLIE PARKER: Mr. Speaker, I thank the honourable member for the question. Certainly the Fundy offshore tidal project is very important to this province and it's a huge investment by a number of companies to look at the tidal power in the Bay of Fundy, where more water comes in there than all rivers in the world and it gives a tremendous opportunity to invest in our tidal energy. But, Digby is a beautiful area of our province and I would encourage the honourable member to work with our department to make that happen.

MR. THERIAULT: I'll direct this question to the Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism, Mr. Speaker. My question for the minister is, will the Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism push this initiative at the Cabinet Table and help to bring much-needed economic development to the Digby and surrounding areas in this new tidal initiative?

HON. PERCY PARIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and through you, the answer is, yes I will.

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

The honourable member for Colchester-North.

HON. KAREN CASEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and I rise today on a Point of Privilege. During Question Period, in some preliminary comments that were made by the Minister of Education about me, I found to be personal, found them to be uncalled for and I found them to have no bearing on the question that was asked or the response that should have been given. So, Mr. Speaker, I would ask you, as Speaker, to review those comments in the context in which they were given and to rule on the appropriateness of those comments. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. I will do that. I will take that under advisement and ask my staff to look into it and get back to you at my earliest convenience.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS' BUSINESS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Opposition House Leader.

HON. MANNING MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, would you please call the order of business, Motions Other Than Government Motions.

MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Opposition House Leader.

HON. MANNING MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Resolution No. 930.

Res. No. 930, Educ.: Cuts - NDP Gov't. Reconsider - notice given May 2/2011 - (Hon. K. Casey)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today to speak to Resolution No. 930. I'll read the operative clause which says, "Therefore be it resolved that the members of the House of Assembly urge the NDP Government to reconsider their deep cuts to public education in Nova Scotia."

Many times during this session, members of our caucuses ask questions of either the Minister of Education or Premier about the education cuts. The Premier and the minister will often say, we have not cut funding to education on a per-pupil basis, the fact is that our budget is actually meeting the number of kids that are dropping out of the system. I find that rather interesting for since as long as I have been in the House since 2003, in subsequent years, we've had many debates about the Hogg formula. As all of us know in this House, the basis of the Hogg formula is to deal with declining populations, particularly across many of the rural areas.

I know the Minister of Education and I share the same school board. Oftentimes when we're visiting that board which meets with the MLAs from that area, the Hogg formula has been part of the discussion, as it was with previous members. They talked about how the formula punished them, quite frankly, even though they had a declining number. They were losing money out of that because that's the way the system worked and the Hogg formula wouldn't respond to helping them offset the number of kids who were dropping out.

When the minister and the Premier stand up in this House and suggest that the cuts that are being made to Education are based on declining enrolment, Madam Speaker, those cuts are in addition to what the Hogg formula has already dealt with, as every member in this House knows and every member in this House who deals with their school boards and schools in their community would recognize.

I have taken the opportunity over the last couple of weeks - really intensively since last Wednesday - to send a letter out to every teacher in the province. I've been getting responses back and oftentimes they refer to - quite frankly, we're talking about students as if they're some benign object, not recognizing the uniqueness of each of them, not recognizing each specific need of each of the children who are being put into the classroom. When we stand up and talk and justify the reduction in education based on the very fact that students are going out of the system, we're not recognizing the need that is in the classroom.

Madam Speaker, as all of us in this House were in classrooms across this province at various times, we would recognize the demand that is on a classroom teacher has increased substantially, since many of our own days of being students or going in there as parents. I've had an opportunity to really only see the education system twofold - one as a parent and one, obviously in the role that I am playing today where I go in and have an opportunity to go in to the school system. I can tell you the demands on the classroom teacher over the number of years that my children were in the school system. My youngest child just graduated last year and from the time he entered the public education system until he graduated, the demands on the classroom teacher became tenfold in that short period of time.

When we look at funding education solely based on the number of children in the system, we have lost sight of the fact that we have put so many more pressures on the system. We have asked them not only to become educators, we're asking them to become social workers, we're asking them to deal with all the other challenges that are being faced by children and by families across this province. Without the proper supports in the system, they are doing the best they can. I would submit it is an impossible task that we are asking. I believe, based on these cuts and based on the fact that we're going to cut Reading Recovery, we're going to cut Math Mentors and we're going to cut literacy programs it is only going to become that much more difficult.

Madam Speaker, one of the interesting things that kept coming back to me as I was speaking to educators was a very simple request that they were looking for. They were looking for a vision for education. They said, you know, perhaps before we start determining what the cuts are going to be, why don't we look at where we want to be in five and 10 years?

They were quite hopeful, as I was, and I made reference to this when Dr. Ben Levin was asked to do a report and asked to make recommendations to the government on the direction of where we might want to go. Dr. Levin's report is not in yet, and yet boards are being cut, Reading Recovery programs are being cut, Math Mentors are being cut, the very supports in a classroom that are there to help those struggling students, those young students who, with little support very early on in their education, are going to get an opportunity to flourish through the public education system, are going to get an opportunity to seek out their chosen profession, to seek out their post-secondary institution of choice, and go and build a productive life here in Nova Scotia.

Madam Speaker, some of these students will be lost and that's the simple fact. They will not get an opportunity to reach their full potential because we are not providing them with the kind of supports that are required.

I took the opportunity, after the debate in here on Education, I asked a number of - the minister was with me the day that I encouraged all members of the Valley caucus, as I like to call the meeting with our school, to go out and ask and go into a classroom. I

accepted the challenge and I went into a number of them, but I specifically went to Annapolis East Elementary School, one school that, quite frankly, has done a tremendous job dealing with children with autism. People from not only across this province but across this country were moving into our community, to provide sports, much of which were created and a program that was created in the Valley board by Miss Kim Hume, who is retired now but well known across this province for advocacy around supports for children with autism.

When I had an opportunity to go into the schools and, in particular, into Annapolis East, and have them talk about the support changes that will be coming, they are quite fearful of the direction we will end up going. Madam Speaker, they are discouraged by the very programs that we're talking about, Reading Recovery, the Math Mentors; they believe, and I believe teachers across this province believe, that we were capturing that young student who we can provide, with a little support in Grade 1 and some additional support surrounding Grade 1, an opportunity at a very bright future.

Boards like the South Shore have added to that Reading Recovery program, they've added around the Math Mentors. If you look at what has taken place in the Chignecto board, they've done the same thing. Madam Speaker, what this government has done is pull out from underneath them the very foundation of the programs they had built, and that was Reading Recovery. It is from that, which is disappointing, because that appears to them and, quite frankly, it appears to parents and to us - I won't speak for everybody on this side of the House but I'll speak for myself - it appears to me that this was very much based on looking at a budget item and not looking at educational outcomes, at the end of the day. If it was about educational outcomes, we would have looked at what has taken place in some parts of this province and seen the successes that have been built around that program.

If it wasn't about a budget item, then we would allow individual boards across this province to pay the fee of around \$3,000, on average, to continue to apply Reading Recovery to their students. They know their students, quite frankly, better than the Minister of Education knows them, better than anyone sitting in the Department of Education or any one of us.

What they've asked for is flexibility, the flexibility to provide a program that they know works, that works for their students and they can prove it because listed down in front of them are the statistics. What we are replacing it with is a framework that is yet to be fully developed and has no evidence to back it up. They are saying to us, as a professional group of teachers, you're asking us to give up on evidence-based and go on a wing and a prayer, hoping that someone in the Department of Education knows what they are doing.

That is not the direction I believe we should be heading, Madam Chairman, and I would encourage this government to reconsider these cuts.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Education.

HON. RAMONA JENNEX: Thank you. It is my pleasure, yet again, to speak on public education and the sound, common sense decisions government is making to preserve and protect the quality of education in Nova Scotia. The resolution states that the future of the Nova Scotia economy depends upon providing the best education possible for our young people, and I couldn't agree more.

I want to thank the member opposite for an opportunity to have my comments linked to the member opposite's Party Web site. It gives me another opportunity to confirm my commitment to education. This is a government that cares enough to do the work that needs to be done in the best interests of the children in this province. I care and we care, so I thank you for this opportunity.

Quality education is, of course, a priority of this government, just as it is for any government occupying this side of the House. It is absolutely ridiculous to assert that any government would not place the education and success of its students high among its priorities. I think what people listening today need to understand is that these are challenging times for the province. Decisions must be made to protect those public services that we hold dear - health and education, just to name two.

Nova Scotians want a strong public school system. They also want a government that shows leadership, can deliver on that priority, and do so by spending our limited resources wisely. We have twin challenges facing this province - limited financial resources and, unfortunately, a dramatically changing demographic, which has slowly but surely eroded student enrolments over the last 40 years. In that time Nova Scotia has gone from a high of 215,000 students in our public school systems to barely more than 128,000 students today.

Over the past decade, we have lost almost 30,000 students while our costs have climbed; our teacher numbers and administrations grew 42 per cent. Over the next three years, we are going to lose close to 7,000 more students. This is an unsustainable path. We cannot continue to maintain high levels of staffing for fewer and fewer students. We must take steps to ensure our considerable investment in education - \$1.05 billion this year - matches the numbers and needs of all of our students.

The decisions we are making today will ensure the long-term viability of public education. These budget decisions that we have made, and that have been passed by this Legislature, are challenging to boards and for our teaching and school support staff but they are manageable and I congratulate boards on the work they are doing to help us right-size our public school system. We have done our utmost to make sure that the funding to boards is reasonable, reflects our declining enrolment and protects children and learning.

To illustrate this point, I want to highlight a couple of facts. First, our per-student funding for public education continues to rise, increasing this coming year from \$10,126 to \$10,372. Secondly, our student-to-teacher ratio is still the lowest in a generation; just at

13.4 to 1. A decade ago, the student-teacher ratio stood at 16.5 to 1 and in 1980 it was 17 to 1.

So, we are headed in the right direction and our decisions are sound. Our critics, of course, are probably going to say our per-student funding is still behind that of a richer province. Nova Scotians recognize and place a high priority on education and they can take a back seat to no one on that. The most recent Statistics Canada release issued December 20, 2010 is very interesting. Nova Scotia compares relatively well on spending per capita and is at the high end for proportion of the GDP spent on education.

Nova Scotians contribute more than 4 per cent of their gross domestic product on public schools. That's higher than Ontario, Quebec, B.C., Saskatchewan and even Alberta, which spends the lowest, less than 3 per cent according to the Statistics Canada data. The fact is, it is not how much money one spends on education, it is how wisely you spend your money, and making decisions that are focussed on supporting the best interests of all of our students. The funding we are providing boards achieve a reasonable balance between the need for restraint, while providing boards to live within their means, to maintain their quality.

As is our practice, we will work closely with boards to ensure that at the end of the day that the best decisions for students and for public education are within the current financial and social reality. We will work together to resolve this and to work with the best interests of the children in this province. Student success and quality education come first. Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak to this, this afternoon.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle.

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to stand and speak for a few moments on this resolution. (Interruption) I still only have the 10, unfortunately. This resolution before us talks to the education cuts that school boards, students, are having to face a reality of in our system today.

I want to start with a quick quote, which I think is attributed to the President of the United States. If you are cutting education or doing so on education, it's pretty much sort of like trying to fly an airplane without the engines - if you don't have a good education system, everything else around it falls apart. The feeling is that the cuts that we're seeing by this NDP Government are really cutting at the engines of the airplane that is Nova Scotia.

The other thing that we looked at and truly find opposition to is, who would cut education first? I mean if you are really trying to balance a budget, who would look at the public education system first? Apparently we did find that group and that is the NDP that governs this province.

Madam Speaker, what happened here, too, is that in the middle of asking for these tremendous cuts - 2 per cent, 3 per cent, 4 per cent, in some school board's cases across this province - this province, this Minister of Finance, this Premier went and posted a surplus of \$460 million. So you are asking for a cut on one side yet you are posting a surplus on the other.

When you are talking to teachers, educators, you're talking to parents and you're saying sorry, we're not going to be able to offer that service any more, they look at you and say, well jeez, didn't you just post a \$460 million surplus? Couldn't you have used some of those dollars to go towards public education in some way or another, instead of asking for the cuts that are before us today?

I listened with interest to the minister's comments. We always tend to get a new set of numbers or a new way to try to justify this inaccuracy when it comes to our education system. All of a sudden we're hearing of student ratios, we're hearing about percentages to GDP, of a 4 per cent per GDP. What that really does is that they are really searching for a justification for this travesty that is going to be continuing in our education system.

If we go back 10 years or more, we find an education system that was in turmoil, an education system that was still reeling from huge cuts by the Liberal Government of the time, the early 1990s, one that really hadn't adjusted itself from those early retirements and trying to find their way. We had outcomes in this province 10 years ago that weren't very good. Kids were not doing well in math, they weren't doing well in reading, they were I don't know where on science. Quite honestly, as a parent today, many of the things we were hearing were really embarrassing, that our system was performing the way that it was performing. Adopting new methodologies, adopting new programs, finding ways to help students, investments were made in our education system - investments that I believe have turned some very good results when it comes to how our children are performing in comparison to other provinces in many of those subject matters. The results, in my mind, speak for themselves. That's why the government of the day made those investments.

We are looking forward to tomorrow when Dr. Levin brings forward his recommendations on the education system - what we could do better, what we could fix, what we could change - because ultimately this government tends to do a lot of study. They tend to look at a lot of recommendations and I'm hoping that many of the recommendations that will be in it will be to stop this craziness of trying to cut our education budget or trying to balance a budget on the backs of students. This happens tomorrow and all I can say is I hope the recommendations that we see within them to be realistic and to be recommendations that this government will follow. We will hold our comments on that until tomorrow, until we see the full scope of Dr. Levin's recommendations.

When we started this discussion, the Leader of the Liberal Party talked about the Hogg formula. Still today, I would love it if somebody could really give us a full accounting of what the Hogg formula does for us. We know - even from what we all know

of the Hogg formula - that declining enrolment is a huge part of the way that formula calculates the dollars that school boards will be receiving in order to offer educational services to them.

The Hogg formula has made the adjustments along the way for the number of students that are held in those areas, the schools that they must maintain, the busing system and the geography of those boards are all held within that formula. For the minister to stand and say there is a huge declining enrolment in this province - and we can't debate that, the numbers speak for themselves - what this really shows is that we are cutting education far beyond where we need to be cutting without impacting the outcomes of the students. Already today, we've heard many cuts, very unpalatable cuts that school boards are going to have to be doing in order to meet the budget lines of the department.

We've already heard of the Pathways and Transitions Program here in the Halifax Regional School Board that is going to have to be cut; we've talked at end about Reading Recovery - and for the small amount of \$2 million and to put the whole system into a bit of a flux on what the new programs are going to be and how they're going to be rolled out and what the response is going to be for students is a tremendous one. Why would we go down this road? We're hearing every day of new teacher layoffs on different boards. Don't forget that 80 per cent of every dollar in this province goes to people, goes to pay for nurses and doctors and snowplow drivers, continue on the list of what we pay for in this province and our civil service.

So, Madam Speaker, from any cut that really happens is that we end up losing people - we end up losing teachers in this particular case, because of the cut to education. I can tell you that as a parent and as a husband of a teacher, you can understand the angst that this creates on the school level when you start losing teachers, because today we're asking far too much of our teachers because of the added responsibilities these individuals, these educators need to put on themselves. It's too much to ask to start to change the teacher ratio because of the disabilities that we're seeing, because of autism, because of ADHD, because of different disabilities.

What I can say is I thank the member for bringing this forward and what I can say to the government is, we still believe you're definitely rowing in the wrong pond on this one, that you really need to rethink cutting education because education does talk to our future and does talk to the economic engine of Nova Scotia. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester North.

HON. KAREN CASEY: Madam Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today and speak to Resolution No. 930. We have heard from earlier speakers, obviously the main issue here is the cuts to public education and the clause, "Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly urge the NDP Government to reconsider their deep cuts to public education in Nova Scotia" - all of the speakers from both Opposition Parties have reiterated that.

We had started talking about that back in the Fall of 2010 when there were some rumblings out there about cuts to education. It's nothing new for the minister or for the government to hear this resolution and to hear members on this side of the House speak to it. Unfortunately we have not seen any indication that the government listened. That is what is making us on this side of the House passionate about education because we care about kids, we care about their outcomes, we care about their future.

We know that - it's not from us, it's from economists who have said during times of tough economic conditions - the last place that a government would cut would be in education. They say that all around the world. That's an accepted premise on which you would build any kind of a budget, that you don't cut education dollars when you have times of economic downturn. Here we have a government that has recognized and repeated many times the economic conditions in the province. Yet the minister would accept and the government would support a cut to the funding for public education.

Initially the minister told us that this was a budget decision. I think we believed that to be true because immediately upon announcing the Reading Recovery, discontinuation of that program, immediately we heard that it was going to save \$7 million. Well, it wasn't long before the outcry came and it continues. The outcry was, how can you take a program that has high success rates all across this province, it's recognized internationally, how can you take that program and cut it? Then the response back was, well, we will find a replacement program for Reading Recovery and it will cost \$5 million. Nobody knew what the program was, nobody knew what human resources you would need for that, what material resources you would need for that, but it was very quickly tagged with a \$5 million price tag.

If you go back to the original decision that the minister said was a budget decision, we're now down to \$2 million. The impact that decision is having and will continue to have on this province, on the education of our kids and on our public school system is worth a lot more than \$2 million. You can't put a price tag on the cost of education, you can't put a price tag on whether students learn to read or not. We have a responsibility to ensure that we do everything possible in our public school system so that students will learn to read.

What was originally a budget decision to save \$7 million quickly became \$2 million. People gave the minister the benefit of the doubt and they said, well, she is talking about a replacement program for Reading Recovery so let's see what it is. It was going to be research-based, it was going to be evidence-based, it was going to be one on one, and it was going to be early. All of the criteria that you find in Reading Recovery was going to be part of the new program.

Well, Madam Speaker, we waited and we waited and on April 26th we had an opportunity, we thought, to get an answer. Those of us who were interested, along with the media, went out to the announcement and the announcement was to be the replacement for Reading Recovery.

I can tell you Madam Speaker, it was nothing but a huge disappointment. The announcement fell flat. There was no detail in this announcement. There was a document called Succeeding in Reading and as one former principal said, it is quite like a term paper and when you read through it there is not one thing in this document that you could argue. It's full of motherhood statements about reading and about literacy.

It talks about early identification, which we currently do in our school system and we know how valuable that it. It talks about early intervention, which we currently do and we know how valuable that is. It talks about collaboration, teachers working with other teachers, and you know Madam Speaker, we've been doing that in our public schools for years. It's already happening, but this document talks about collaboration. It talks about consultation. It talks about team work. It talks about professional development. It talks about intense one-on-one support. It talks about the guiding principles of learning. It talks about small group instruction. It talks about flexibility in delivery. It even, Madam Speaker, talks about the strands of leaning: reading, viewing, speaking, listening and communicating - it talks about those strands.

It's a great document about what's important in literacy. It's a great summary of what we are currently doing. It talks about motivating students to learn. Well, the first thing you learn when you go into a teacher education program, as a student, is how you motivate your kids to learn. It's in this document. It talks about the passion that we want kids to have for reading, and as I said, those are all honourable, commendable statements about reading and literacy. But Madam Speaker, there is not one thing in this document that would suggest that we're going to be doing anything differently than we currently are.

Except, I will give credit, we're now not using the word Reading Recovery teachers, we talking about Early Literacy teachers, and Madam Speaker, that is the only difference in this document that you can find from what we are currently doing to what expect we might be doing with a new \$5 million Succeeding in Reading program, which is supposed to be implemented in September.

So Madam Speaker, it was a huge disappointment. It was something that people had expected would be, maybe, the answer to the lowest 20 per cent of students in Grade 1 who are struggling and who were helped through Reading Recovery. Maybe it will be something, as the minister said, that will reach far more children.

It's not here, Madam Speaker, and that is what is disappointing and that is what is causing anxiety, because people were waiting. They were hoping, and when school opens in September and parents bring their kids to school and they're looking for the supports that they currently have, they're going to be anxious. Teachers are going to be anxious. What this does is simply talk about what we are currently doing and, in speaking with members from school boards - and I don't mean elected school boards, I mean people in the trenches, people who are making a difference - their comment is this: we are concerned about the quality of programming that we will be able to deliver within this framework because one

of the key components of the current program has been yanked away and that is the early intervention intensity of Reading Recovery, and there is nothing in this to replace it.

In this document the minister talks about early identification, absolutely critical to helping kids learn to read, but we already are doing two instruments that are used in our public schools to identify kids early on who are having difficulty. This document identifies them, but guess what? We are already doing them, so they are not new. It talked about early intervention. You know the minister said she hoped this program would reach more students but if you look at the early intervention and the early, intensive, short-term literacy initiatives that have been developed by boards and are currently in place, it was addressing students in P to Grade 3. Those programs are already there so that's nothing new.

What we wanted to get was, if Reading Recovery for some reason is something that the minister can't support, then we were hoping there would be some other program she could support that would do exactly what Reading Recovery is doing. Another comment, I guess a statement in this, has to do with looking at effective instructional strategies. Well again, that's what teachers do every day, they look at how they can have a whole menu of strategies, which they believe will help students learn.

The last one that I want to comment on is joint responsibility. This document says that the education of these students will be the joint responsibility of the classroom teacher and the early literacy teacher. Madam Speaker, joint responsibility - there is one person who is responsible for the education of our kids in our schools. The classroom teacher has always assumed the responsibility but the classroom teacher has been very open to working with other experts in the field. We have teams in our schools. We have teams who work together to look at how you can better improve the instruction and the learning for students.

I can't understand how a minister or any educator could suggest that having collaborative teams working together to plan for programs for students is something new. We have program planning teams, we have site-based planning teams, we have grade level meetings, we have transition teams and we have professional learning teams. Those have existed in our public schools for years, and they are there to provide support for the classroom teacher. On those teams we have many people who participate.

The bottom line of all of this, Madam Speaker, is that there is nothing concrete. It's a \$5 million document, it says absolutely nothing about what will improve learning for students in our schools and for that reason we are asking that this government reconsider the devastation that will happen in our public schools because the funding to support students in our schools has been cut. Thank you very much.

MADAM SPEAKER: The time allotted for Resolution No. 930 has expired.

The honourable Deputy Opposition House Leader.

MR. ANDREW YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Resolution No. 944.

Res. No. 944, re Justice - Crime Prevention Progs.: Cuts - NDP Gov't. Condemn - Notice given May 2/11 - (Hon M. Samson)

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Richmond.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Madam Speaker, it's a pleasure to have the opportunity to speak on this resolution. Allow me to read it briefly;

Whereas justice is a significant issue in Nova Scotia, a concern made greater with the seven murders in the province already this year; and

Whereas since March there have been 16 shootings in the Halifax Regional Municipality alone; and

Whereas the NDP Government cut crime prevention programs by 55 per cent in this year's budget;

Therefore be it resolved that the House of Assembly condemn the NDP Government's cut to crime prevention programs and demand a renewed focus on the prevention of crime in Nova Scotia.

Madam Speaker, I believe the facts are clear now, although there certainly has been an attempt to muddy the facts in the last number of days by the Department of Justice, by the minister, by some political staff, to challenge some of the comments and conclusions I have reached, one being that there was a 55 per cent cut in crime prevention programs.

Where did I possibly get that number? Well, as has already been stated in this House, I got it from the Minister of Justice, who provided me with those figures. In fact, it's very detailed information, it says, "Reduce Grants - discretionary crime prevention, restorative justice" Reduction, \$475,000. The Program Budget for 2011-2012 is \$857,000 and the per cent of Reduction is 55.4 per cent. Those are the facts.

Then the Minister said, no, the member for Richmond has it wrong, it's not a cut to crime prevention, it is cuts to other programs. He talked about grandfathering, programs coming to an end, everything else. So we said maybe we're mistaken, maybe that's possible. So we did the responsible thing, we did our research, we went back and we asked Hansard - as you know, when the estimates are done in the Red Room they are not transcribed by Hansard as they are here in the Legislature, on a daily basis, but if you request it, they will transcribe them for you.

We said, what exactly did the Minister of Justice say when we had the debate on this question. Before we had the opportunity to bring that to his attention, today the

minister saw fit, with the assistance of NDP political staff, to put out a press release. In that press release the headline is, Justice Minister Asks Samson to Stop Misleading Public. That's quite a statement for the Minister of Justice to make, quite an accusation for him to make. In fact, the release goes even further and it actually says that I was reckless and irresponsible - again, very serious accusations for a minister to make.

Ironically, as was pointed out today, this release didn't come from the Department of Justice, where you have independent, professional media relations people. Because I am sure if they looked at this, they would have said, well, first of all, it's inaccurate because basically what he is saying, what the member for Richmond said is true, he has just repeated what that Minister of Justice told him.

Those chose - Communications Nova Scotia - not to send this out. Instead, it comes out from the NDP caucus office. So what kind of press release comes from the NDP caucus office? Political ones, so this is nothing but a political smear by the Minister of Justice, which I have to say surprised me. But then again, if I were the Minister of Justice at a time when Nova Scotians are seeing increasing violent crime and I had been forced by the Minister of Finance to cut \$5 million from my department, including almost \$0.5 million from crime prevention initiatives, I'd probably be slightly upset as well.

I'm not sure I would have made the smears that were made in that release but so be it, I would certainly be upset. So it is understandable. What we were able to show today is when I raised the issue with the minister in estimates, when I referred to them as cuts to crime prevention programs, the minister acknowledged that.

Let me just point out again today, while I have some time here, which is not very much, Madam Speaker, but first of all the answer from the minister was, first off, any cut to crime prevention is a sad day - these are his words - however, you have to make decisions and you have to take some action. I'm a big proponent of crime prevention but we have to live within our means, and the rest. This is what the Minister of Justice said, so this is what he accuses me of being misleading on, using his own words, where he acknowledges a cut to crime prevention.

Further to that, the minister yesterday put out an opinion piece saying that all the investments he had made, not acknowledging the cuts that were made, talking about investments made in 2009-10. Well, that's not the budget that we're talking about. We're talking about the budget for 2011-12 and that's where the cuts were made. The minister talked in Question Period and referred to programs and everything else. I should point out, for the record, on April 28th, Thursday, I asked the minister for more detailed information about which exact programs were not being renewed. I should point out that the minister has yet to provide that.

Yesterday, after the minister's responses in Question Period where he again accused me of misleading and not providing the facts, I wrote to him personally and to his

deputy minister and asked for him to provide me with a list of the programs in question and some explanation about his comments. As I stand here today, I have not received that information. I believe I've done the responsible thing as a member of this House, even though the minister has accused me of being reckless and irresponsible, he had an opportunity to provide me with facts. He chose not to do so, instead focused his time on sending out a political smear press release. Instead, he could have been providing me details on behalf of his department to show us exactly which programs were not renewed. What groups were getting funding for anti-crime measures or for restorative justice that the funding was no longer renewed.

At the end of the day, we realize the tough decisions have to be made and the Minister of Justice had to make tough decisions, but to now suddenly try to convince Nova Scotians that the cuts made were not to crime prevention programs is irresponsible on his part and he can send out all of the opinion pieces he wants. I think he saw the reaction from the media today where they basically mocked his press release when we showed them exactly what the minister had to say in the Red Room during estimates. There's nothing worse in politics than having your own words come back to haunt you and that's what the Minister of Justice had happen today. I often hear government members saying we should do better research. I think this is a case where possibly the Minister of Justice should have asked his political staff- not staff in his department because they weren't responsible for that press release- but maybe his political staff could have done better research to see exactly what it was that the Minister of Justice said.

At the end of the day, we now have HRM Council last night who spoke about the issue of violent crime in the municipality and how it is not normal. Although the Minister of Justice will tell us it's cyclical and that it's going to go away on its own. They don't believe that and we don't believe that. What we have asked, which I think is the responsible thing to do - which is something that I believe the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal when he was Justice Critic on this side - would have asked as well. Is there a strategy? Is there a plan? Is there a focus on dealing with the increase in crime? Does it involve money? Possibly. Does it involve new initiatives? Possibly.

When we were asked today, a fair question, the media asked, what would you suggest? I said, well, very good question, the problem with that is, how do you suggest a solution to a problem that the Minister of Justice says doesn't exist. Until we at least get an acknowledgement that it exists, until the Minister of Justice actually provides us with the information of which funding has not been renewed for restorative justice, for crime prevention initiatives, it's very difficult for us in Opposition, not having access to all this information to be able to bring forward some responsible suggestions to the minister.

I'm no expert in crime prevention, but I, along with Nova Scotians, realize there's a problem here. I don't believe that those who are using illegal hand guns and shooting are just in a cycle and that suddenly they're going to get it out of their system and stop doing it. Something needs to be done to address this. It is not normal. Nova Scotians don't want to see it in HRM and they don't want to see it in their communities. We have to work as

legislators to see what can be done to try to stop crime before it happens because unfortunately to date, everything the Minister of Justice has told us, crime has already happened.

In his announcement this morning about seizing a forfeiture of the proceeds of crime assets - great initiative - it was passed in 2007. The courts upheld it in 2009. It took two years to get the announcement we had this morning. Long term, will it have a positive effect? We can all hope. Short term, will it stop the shootings taking place, last week, the week before, or that might take place this week? It will not, which is why we need the minister to acknowledge that there is a problem, that there needs to be an open discussion, which we're prepared to participate in, to try to make Nova Scotia streets safer for the benefits of all Nova Scotians and certainly especially for the benefit of all of our children. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Justice.

HON. ROSS LANDRY: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I'm happy to rise in my place and speak to this important issue. In fact I welcome the opportunity to discuss the essential work done at the department. This is also an opportunity to clarify changes to this year's Justice Department budget.

Madam Speaker, safety is what drives much of the work carried out at the Justice Department. Our work is integral to helping to keep our cities, our communities and our homes safe. One of the things that comes to the top of my mind or to most people's when they think about the Justice Department is making and enforcing laws to keep us safe.

Traditionally, law enforcement has been the main tool used to fight crime, to make sure people are held accountable for their actions. Our Public Safety Division provides policing services governances for this province. Through this division we provide oversight governance and advice to police, private security services and firearm licence holders.

I would like to advise that the Additional Officer Program remains unchanged for this year. However, as any responsible government as we go forward we will continue to work collaboratively with our policing partners. We know that society and the world around us are changing quickly and constantly. Given this it is clear that our policing programs must adapt to respond to the ever-changing world. Madam Speaker, I assure members of this House that work is ongoing to ensure that we have laws and that the law enforcement is in place to keep Nova Scotia safe.

In recent months some progress has been made with respect to public safety initiatives including continued funding of the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act, known as SCAN. SCAN gives citizens the tools to take back their neighbourhoods and combat illegal activity; continued funding of the Criminal Intelligence Service Nova

Scotia, which provides intelligence relating to organized criminals throughout Nova Scotia.

We are also creating a civilian-led unit to investigate serious instances involving police. We're also investing \$1.2 million of additional funding in the domestic violence court. This pilot program will increase victim safety and help rehabilitate those who commit abuse.

Most recently, today in fact Madam Speaker, we announced a new Civilian Forfeiture Unit. This unit will help deter unlawful activity by allowing the province to sell seized assets acquired through criminal activity or used to engage in criminal activity. This unit will immediately begin working to take the profit out of crime and ensure people are not benefiting from their criminal activities and enhance community safety. Madam Speaker, there is a direct correlation between those carrying the guns and the money obtained by crime.

It is more clear than ever that preventing and reducing crime is just as important as making and enforcing laws to keep us safe. We work with policing partners and community leaders and groups to combat, reduce and prevent crime. We are working to create opportunities for youth that will help them to make better life choices and steer away from crime.

We continue to provide Restorative Justice Operating Grants to not-for-profit agencies across the province who administer the program. This crime reduction program holds youth accountable while providing an opportunity for healing for the victims and the community. This budget also saw funding fully protective for crime prevention activities. Our Lighthouses Program will continue to provide \$240,000 in grants to community organizations across this province. This funding enables the organizations to provide recreational, educational, and cultural and life skill programs for Nova Scotians. Our core funding, and I repeat Madam Speaker, has not been cut one penny.

Some of the projects include the Peers and Parents Peace Program in Sydney, Youth on the Radar program in Halifax, the Name the Shame project in Bridgewater, Maggie's Place Youth Programs in Cumberland County. We will also continue to support grassroots community programs, community crime prevention activities through the one-time crime prevention investment fund, this amount remains at \$40,000 annual investment. In fact, since 2009 the overall budget in areas relating to combating, reducing and preventing crime has increased by over \$5.2 million.

At this time, Madam Speaker, I want to set the record straight; recent claims that the Department of Justice cut its crime prevention budget and made changes that would put additional pressures on police are simply not accurate. Let me tell you, Madam Speaker, what is accurate about the Department of Justice budget. We have taken on the hard work to get our fiscal house in order so that essential programs and services continue to be available for our families, our neighbours, our grandchildren and beyond. That hard work

includes finding savings within the Justice Department's budget. We reviewed all programs and services very carefully and made changes that would not critically affect the balance of the justice system. Public safety was at the forefront of every decision that was made. None of these measures we are taking will jeopardize public safety.

In 2011-12, we are making some reductions, but not to crime prevention initiatives or grants. Madam Speaker, let me be clear, the grants being reduced are restorative justice - I repeat again, one-time grants in general or discretionary grants. The restorative justice grants in question are non-operating in nature. They are one-time grants that provide extra support for different projects. The initiative is that these grants would eventually come to a natural end.

We will continue to provide operating grants for not-for-profit agencies that administer restorative justice across the province. The crime reduction program holds youth accountable, while providing an opportunity for healing for the victims in the communities. On that note of general or discretionary grants, through this funding, we support many different initiatives across the justice system, from the Uniform Law Conference to the Law Reform Commission and police or stakeholders' events. While we are reducing the amount of overall funding available for these grants, we have not yet determined which initiatives will continue to receive funding.

Madam Speaker, I also wanted to address claims that the reduction in some of our programs, specifically electronic supervision and bail supervision, will put additional pressures on police and keep them from the important work of fighting crime in our communities. I will start with the electronic supervision program. This reduction of almost \$300,000 will be phased in over the next three years. This year's savings represent the elimination of two vacant positions. Electronic supervision uses GPS and wireless technology with an ankle bracelet to track offenders' movements on a 24-hour basis. Generally speaking, at any given time there can be anywhere from 40 to 60 offenders enrolled in the program. Changes to this program will see the number of participants in the program capped at 35 by years 2013-14.

Are we making difficult decisions in an effort to be more fiscally responsible? Absolutely, the answer to that is yes. Are we doing things to put more pressures on police in the system to jeopardize public safety? Let me be clear, Madam Speaker, absolutely not. I should clarify that the electronic supervision is only one way that offenders in the community are supervised. We also use traditional forms of supervision that include offenders reporting to probation officers.

Another measure that is being talked about, Madam Speaker, is the bail supervision program. The elimination of this program will not generate additional work for the police. The program was initiated, or intended, to take some of the workload out of the correctional facility. It was created as an alternative to remand; however, it was minimally used by the courts. When implemented, the expectation of this program was about 40

people. Instead, we're down to the mid-teens. The program was reviewed and it's not as effective as we would have liked. Madam Speaker, we saved \$170,000 in this.

It is very important to note that these changes have helped us put in place new programs, such as the domestic violence and serious incident response team. Before I close, I want to address the important issue of violence and guns in the community. Of course, I know that we are all concerned about this. Halifax Regional Police and our policing partners also share the concern. We welcome the opportunity to work in a collaborative manner to tackle these problems. I have always said that the Justice Department is here to support the police throughout the province.

Madam Speaker, I see that my time is coming to an end and I have a few more pages here. However, I will leave it at that. I think that my message is clear: this department is doing its job.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cape Breton West.

MR. ALFIE MACLEOD: Madam Speaker, I want to say that it gives me great pleasure to get up and say a few words on this very important topic that was brought forward by my colleague, the member for Richmond.

Nova Scotians deserve and expect to feel safe in their homes and their communities. They want to enjoy the peace of mind of knowing that their lives and their properties are protected. I want to begin by saying that we in the Progressive Conservative caucus have nothing but respect for police officers. We recognize them as heroes who put their own safety on the line every day in order to keep the rest of us safe. We want and expect government to provide police officers with the resources, the person-power, and the equipment they need to do their jobs. Give them the tools they need to keep them safe, and as well, serve and protect Nova Scotians.

The former government recognized the importance of police officers in our community. Our former government provided funding to hire an additional 250 police officers, over four years, to work across this province. Within the first two years every municipality had at least one additional officer. Police officers in every municipality make a difference in crime prevention and in catching those who commit crimes. The officers were allocated to working in partnerships with schools, communities and among police forces.

For example, funding was provided to hire more school/community resource officers, serving as positive role models for young people to deter bullying and other abuse. They can also gain valuable information so that they can limit and shut down drug, alcohol, and gang-related activities involving youth on and off school grounds. We saw this week that this government has turned its back on this important initiative.

We saw the elimination of five community liaison officers at the Cape Breton-Victoria Regional School Board. In one pen stroke the government said they were okay with removing front-line workers who deal with bullying, limit drug and alcohol use, and provide a sense of safety in schools in Cape Breton. They were okay with removing these professionals who prevent and deter crime in our schools and in our greater communities. The former government took crime prevention, crime deterrents and consequences for lawbreakers very seriously. Our approach was simple: we had effective laws, sufficient resources and swift consequences.

The former government, which we were part of, initiated the Task Force on Safer Streets and Communities, a diverse group of Nova Scotians who gathered information from across the province on preventing and addressing crime. Our government approached crime prevention through significant, serious law enforcement coupled with programs that addressed the root causes of crime. Unfortunately, this government has taken another approach.

The former government also initiated the Rewards for Major Unsolved Crimes Program by offering cash rewards of up to \$50,000 for information leading to the arrest and conviction of individuals responsible for major unsolved crimes. Our government signalled to Nova Scotians that we were serious about seeing justice done, that we understood that knowing the perpetrator of a serious crime may be walking on the streets of your community is unsettling for Nova Scotians and that getting tough on crime is a priority.

It was the former government that introduced and passed the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act. It was legislation that ensured a citizen complaint could result in court orders to close locations that are a home to prostitution or illegal liquor, drugs or gaming. The 2006 budget committed \$540,000 to the creation of a public safety investigation unit to follow up on complaints and work with community members to address their concerns. That same year the government passed an Act to combat the production and use of illegal drugs - legislation that allowed government to regulate the storage, transportation, distribution, and sale of ingredients, materials, and equipment used in the production and use of illegal drugs. That was meaningful crime prevention.

In the same year our government saluted fallen Nova Scotian heroes, when we designated the third Sunday of each October as the Police and Peace Officers Memorial Day. It was the former government that acted decisively to prevent and deter crime by producing the Act to further discourage criminal offences involving use of a motor vehicle. Because of this legislation, people who use a motor vehicle in the commission of an offence or who steal gas will lose their driver's licence.

Our government also developed the Proceeds of Crime unit that had the power to seize assets related to criminal activities or purchases from profits of crime. The enforcement of this law showed Nova Scotians that government cared about keeping their

neighbourhoods safe, that our commitment to crime prevention wasn't a theory, it was real action that they could count on, point to, and have in their neighbourhoods.

Madam Speaker, Nova Scotia is a great place to live, it's a place where people know their neighbours, where they feel comfortable in their tight-knit communities and neighbourhoods. Government has a role to play in preventing and deterring crime all over Nova Scotia. It takes thoughtful and innovative laws and policies like the ones that I have just outlined. It takes resources and it takes respect for law enforcement officers, and it takes meaningful consequences for those who choose not to obey the law.

I hope that the minister remembers these important components and remembers the good work of the previous government as he moves forward with his very important job.

Finally, Madam Speaker, I would like to say that when you see a police officer in your community, take the time to thank them for making your community a safer place for you and your family to live. With those few words I will take my place and thank you for the time.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

MR. LEO GLAVINE: Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today in my place and speak on Resolution No. 944. Since this resolution was tabled in the House, it is already out-of-date, because since it was read there has been a stabbing in Sydney, four students assaulted a police officer at Citadel High School in Halifax, and HRM Council has expressed their concern over the level of violence. In fact Councillor Darren Fisher, East Dartmouth-The Lakes, asked yesterday that council write to the Justice Minister to find out if there's anything that it can do to strengthen the justice system.

Madam Speaker, let's make no mistake about it, the eight deaths, the 16 violent crimes, while they've happened here in HRM, the ones that we have documented, this is a provincial issue - all Nova Scotians take a look at what is happening in our capital city because it has a reflection on the kind of life, the quality of life that we have an extremely high regard for.

When I think and when I look at the migration patterns that we've had in this province, with 13 counties losing population and again, many of them are intra-migration - meaning they move to HRM - I know parents take a look at what is happening here because their sons and daughters are here in HRM in order to find work. So it is, indeed, an issue that resonates right across Nova Scotia. We do have an issue around crime, around murder, and we need to be taking more action in addressing this problem.

We know that prevention is a key to a peaceful and safe environment. There are a number of us here who have spent time in the school environment where 1,000 or more young adults gather on a daily basis. We know that a plan must be in place in order to have a peaceful and safe environment, and it's the same way in any of our communities - there

must be prevention measures that are constantly being put into place, renewed, updated, so that citizens can expect that they will have a safe environment to live in.

I know that when we take a look at losing 55 per cent of the prevention for crime, that has an impact. I've heard from my colleague from Cape Breton West about losing five liaison officers in schools in his areas. Well, we lost one for the past school year and I've heard from teachers and principals of the schools affected - the loss of that position has made a difference this year, and it's a negative difference. That presence of the police officer, the kinds of trust that he or she gained with students - in the case that I experienced while vice-principal at West Kings High School, that position made a difference to the climate of our school, and it made a difference in gathering information that the RCMP and local police could use, solid information about what may be going to happen in our community.

Those police liaison officers have not been given high regard by this government, and I am hearing about it throughout the Annapolis Valley, not just in the riding that I represent.

We know at the current time the prescription drug issue and the general drug issue is getting great exposure about the Valley, but we know it's also a problem throughout the province. Again, prevention here, preventive measures can go a long way in dealing with this issue. This is the area now that authorities - the Kentville Police Department, the RCMP throughout the Valley - are taking a look at what are the next steps around prevention. And it's not going to be less human resources - it's going to take more human resources to address it both at the law enforcement, at the educational and at informing community leadership on how, in fact, they can deal with this issue.

And when it comes to restorative justice we know that it doesn't stop every adolescent, every young adult from going on to perhaps further crimes. I have had a very, very positive experience with restorative justice. In the three cases that I had to go before the restorative justice panel to present the school's position on a crime issue that had taken place - and it so happened that they were all Grade 9 students - this is an area in which restorative justice can make a significant impact, a huge impression upon the adolescent and upon young adults. Let them see that connection, that when an incident takes place - whether it's in school, in our community - there are victims of crime and it's not just the one victim that they bullied, had a fight with or stole from. Whatever the issue may be, it involves a whole lot of other people in those communities.

Restorative justice has a significant role to play in a solid prevention program. It, again, is another measure that has been proven over and over again to be successful. In all cases? No. But in many cases, it certainly does. I'm sure the minister has read the Nunn report. If we take a look at the Nunn report, a very common theme throughout the Nunn report is about preventing crime. It is about using a number of resources from different departments. In fact, five departments were identified as being able to play a key role in

taking adolescents, young adults - in particular at the junior high level - and putting resources in place, the kind of mentoring and coaching that would link the child causing a disturbance, behaviour problems in school, with his home and with his or her community.

We can't, we should not dismiss the significance of the Nunn report. It has been taken and used in other provinces across Canada. It has enormous power to change the climate in our schools and in our communities and we must give it the kind of resources, not take 55 per cent out of prevention programs. There will be a price to pay for that and we'll start to see it over the next years, unless there is a reversal of some of the dismissing of those programs as this budget has caused.

You know, in our province the demographic is skewed tremendously towards the 50-and-over population. They are looking at what this government is doing to create and to allow safe communities to exist. This is the older population, this is the retirement population and whether it's Amherst or Halifax or Aylesford or any little community of Nova Scotia, they want to live with a high degree of safety and know that there are programs working to allow for more peaceful communities to exist because that's what that population, perhaps, desires the most. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable Opposition House Leader.

HON. MANNING MACDONALD: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. That concludes the Liberal Party's agenda for today, on Opposition Day. I'd now like to turn it back to the Government House Leader for tomorrow's business.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Madam Speaker, after the daily routine and Question Period, we will go into Public Bills For Second Reading, Bill Nos. 30, 33, 35, 36, 40, 41, 42, 43, 51 and 52. Then time permitting, we would do Private and Local Bills for Second Reading, which are Bill Nos. 20, 22, and 38 and, if time permits, we'll do third reading.

With that said, I move that the House do rise, to meet tomorrow from the hours of 12:00 noon to 8:00 p.m.

MADAM SPEAKER: The motion is that the House now rise, to meet again tomorrow, Thursday, May 8th, between the hours of 12:00 noon and 8:00 p.m.

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

The motion is carried.

It is now the moment of interruption and the subject was put forward by the honourable member for Queens, which reads:

“Therefore be it resolved that the House commend the Department of Justice on the establishment of the first ever in Nova Scotia, Domestic Violence Court, which should begin to address the issue of protecting women against violence in this province.”

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION UNDER RULE 5(5)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Queens. (Applause)

JUSTICE: DOMESTIC VIOLENCE COURT - ESTABLISHMENT

MS. VICKI CONRAD: I stand in my place tonight, Madam Speaker, with a heavy heart but I also stand in my place with an enlightened heart and I would suggest that tonight this is not a debate, but rather this is a continued discussion. It's a discussion to raise awareness and it's a discussion to ask members for their continued commitment to continue the fight to end violence against women.

Madam Speaker, on Monday, May 2, 2011, I along with hundreds of community members paid respects and said good bye to Laura Lee Robertson. Laura went missing on April 14, 2011, and two weeks later her body was found in a wooded area in Bangs Falls, Queens County. Her fiancé was later charged with her murder. Laura was a daughter, a mother, a grandmother, an aunt and a friend to many.

Laura's death galvanized a community, a community that banded together in support, making posters, putting together a ribbon campaign and Madam Speaker, I'm wearing a ribbon today with both the colours of yellow and purple - yellow symbolizing hope and showing support and faith that Laura would be found, and purple to symbolize the need to end and stop violence against women.

The community held candlelight vigils, they set up Facebook sites with well over 800 members. They staged a protest walk to end violence against women. Laura's family, Amanda and Tim Jones-Robertson and mother Shirley showed amazing strength and courage through this most difficult time. Laura's tragedy and meaningless death was broadcast province-wide and beyond, and Laura's family endured the public airing of some of the most intimate details of Laura's life.

Madam Speaker, it doesn't matter what side of the track one is on, domestic violence touches many. Many women including myself share a common bond, a common thread with woman such as Laura and that thread is one of abuse. A lot of women are able to make change but many more are not able to make change and they remain victims of violence and Laura was one of them.

We know, Madam Speaker, that stats show women are more likely to be a victim of spousal abuse and I'd like to just share a stat from the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women. The rate for spousal violence involving female victims is higher compared to male victims of spousal violence in both Nova Scotia and Canada. According to police reported data of spousal violence in 2007, approximately eight out of 10 incidents of spousal violence involves a female victim both in Nova Scotia and Canada.

Madam Speaker, women who are abused or live for years in abusive situations often suffer from low self-esteem, lack of confidence, depression, some turn to alcohol and other substances to help with and alleviate pain. Women in abusive situations have their health, dignity and security compromised. They have feelings of helplessness, shame and unworthiness.

Violence against woman, Madam Speaker, is unacceptable and it comes in many forms: emotional and physical abuse, workplace violence, criminal harassment, bullying, intimidation, prostitution, pornography, sexual harassment and even human rights violations.

From 2006 to 2011 we have seen the loss and silencing of many women in our communities and I want to give names to some of those faces. January 2006, prominent health care professional Judith Bourgeois, of Mahone Bay, died at the hands of her spouse in a murder-suicide; November 2007, Shelley Marie Smith, of Cape Breton, strangled and her body burned at the hands of her boyfriend; February 2008, 12-year-old Karissa Boudreau, murdered by the hands of her mother; July 2010, Christina Mae Eisnor, of New Germany, was shot and killed at the hands of her husband; March 2011, in Antigonish, Ottilia Chareka was found murdered at the hands of her husband; in March 2011, Jason MacRae was charged, finally, for the murder of his wife, Paula Gallant.

Who can forget that it was in March 1982, when Jane Hurshman fatally shot and killed her husband Billy Stafford, ironically in Bangs Falls, Queens County? Jane suffered five years of brutal abuse at the hands of her husband. Jane had almost 10 years of some peace and some freedom. Jane became an advocate, speaking up and speaking out, telling her story, fighting to end the violence against women. Unfortunately, Jane's voice, like Laura's, became silent, and Jane's life ended in violent tragedy, in a death that is suspected to be suicide. Jane's voice, like Laura's may be silent, but their story and their life history continue to be told and their lives will not be in vain.

I am so proud of the members of our community in Liverpool, Queens, for coming together, raising their voices in support of Laura and her family. They're raising awareness and pushing our community, in Queens, to take the blinders off, to name the issue of violence against women and to make change. I am so proud of my government and the installation of Nova Scotia's first ever Domestic Violence Court Program, which is a part of the province's Domestic Violence Action Plan, which was released in December 2010.

A key part of the plan is developing a specialized Domestic Violence Court Program to increase support for victims and rehabilitation services for their offenders. A Domestic Violence Court, which is a pilot project, will help the justice system work with our community partners to respond more appropriately to crimes linked specifically to violence. The pilot project in Sydney will offer victims and their children much needed services and it will hold offenders accountable for their illegal behaviour and reduce and deter abusive behaviour in relationships.

I want to remind all members that we need to continue to work together with community support groups such as Second Story, Harbour House, Alice Housing just to name a few. We need to work with our partners such as the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women, the Departments of Justice, Education, Health, and Community Services. We need to ensure that men who abuse women are held accountable. We need to work together to remove the stigma, shame, take the blinders off of the face of violence against women and we need to offer women in crisis, living in violent situations, courage, support and hope so they can begin to heal and choose change. Thank you. (Applause)

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

MS. KELLY REGAN: I would like to thank the member for Queens for her most eloquent remarks. I was particularly impressed that you mentioned not just domestic violence, because I do believe we have this habit of whitewashing what is primarily a man on woman crime, so to actually name what this is I think was very important. I think it was important to put some names to the anonymity that often surrounds this, but let's be clear, the vast majority of women in this province who are victims of battering, we'll never hear their names. They lead lives of quiet desperation.

I was particularly interested when you mentioned Jane Hurshman because, I guess it would have been in the 1980s, I interviewed Jane Hurshman, I did a long, long interview with her for ATV and ASN. I hadn't thought about Jane for a while, I have to say.

But on to the Domestic Violence Action Plan - the resolution is: "Therefore be it resolved that the House commend the Department of Justice on the establishment of the first ever in Nova Scotia, Domestic Violence Court, which should begin to address the issue of protecting women against violence in this province."

Recently I was at a policy session and a woman who had been away from this province for 20 years, we happened to be discussing spousal abuse, she said, you know what? I have been away for 20 years and I gotta tell you, nothing's changed. And so, while we have this excellent plan, the Domestic Violence Action Plan, I do have a couple of caveats. One of the things is there's almost no money attached to this plan. When it was announced in December, that was the first thing that struck me, there was money attached to one recommendation and that was it. And there were a lot of good items in here, action items, but there's no actual timeline for those items.

So, we are now establishing a court - it is a pilot program. And as we have seen in a number of departments, particularly Education - and no disrespect meant to this minister, because it has been going on for a long time, in fact I suspect there are probably fewer pilot programs underway now in the Department of Education - there are all kinds of pilot programs that start and they just remain pilot programs. If they're successful they don't seem to be adopted system-wide and so, while this appears to be a good step, it clearly is not going to serve the whole province, and it is, again, only a pilot.

If we look at the Domestic Violence Action Plan, it's a good, thick document. There are 10 headings under "New actions to address domestic violence." Under those actions there are 10 major actions, there are 39 sub-actions, and there has been no identified progress on most of those. I do believe there is going to be an ongoing collection of first-hand experiences, which is not part of the new actions - that was listed under "Working smarter together." So I do believe that is going on.

The other concern I have is that there was some very good work done on this Domestic Violence Action Plan and it was done in conjunction with the transition houses for example, but they tell me they've been cut out of the implementation phase of this plan, so I have to wonder, why would that be? Why would we take the good work that was done by people who have first-hand experience in this particular area and then say thank you for your input, and not involve them in actually implementing the changes that need to be made? For example, Avalon Sexual Assault Services is mentioned in here, but they haven't had an increase in their budget since 1993. And so, I have to ask, are we really serious about combating this problem?

When we look at some of the things that are being done - I believe the pilot Neighbours, Friends and Family campaign, work is being done on that. But to me, one of the big things is a communications strategy. What we do hear from women who are in abusive relationships is that they think if they contact a transition house, they have to leave. They think that picking up the phone and saying I need help means they are going to have to leave, and for many women that is simply not possible; they can't make that step. What we need to let women know, we need to have a communication strategy around letting women know that if you are being abused by your partner, by your significant other, you can still contact a transition house, you don't have to leave - and we're not doing anything on that.

I really think that we need to be doing some advertising and, as I've said before, I don't care if the minister appears in the ads. I think that we need to let women know that there are supports out there for them if they're being battered and they don't feel they can leave yet. There are plans that they can make for safe exit strategies. There are plans that they can make for when an incident is occurring, and I don't think we're doing a good job there.

One of the 10 headings there was "Introduce legislative changes to better support victims", and one of the sub-items is "Amend the Residential Tenancies Act." Well, we

just did that last year and this wasn't included - there was no reason why. "Amend the Residential Tenancies Act to let a tenant sever their financial obligations under lease if it is not safe for them to stay in their home because of the risks from domestic violence." There is no reason why that wasn't included last year, it should have been in there.

A number of the things that we see in the plan would make a big difference to women but, again, because there is no timeline here we don't know when these are actually going to happen; we don't know if they're actually being worked on. The thing about a domestic violence court program pilot is it's billed in this resolution as that it should begin to address the issue of protecting women against violence in this province. Now, the thing is, once you're involved in the court system, that means that domestic violence has already happened in some way, shape or form and you may be going there to get a protection order or you may be going there because there has been serious battering and there is an assault case or whatever, but it is not going to protect women.

Change in attitude will protect women. We need to do work with children, with teens, with young men, and we need to make sure that our young women understand what an appropriate relationship is and that kind of thing. I'm afraid that today, what our young people are exposed to in terms of relationships, if they're watching videos, I don't think they understand what an appropriate relationship is or there are some who don't understand because they see women acting as accessories to men and there are certain kinds of music that have violent lyrics and we seem to accept that.

While I commend the government in starting this pilot, it is a good first step, I think we need to be aware that we have a long way to go and there is much, much more to be done. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cape Breton West.

MR. ALFIE MACLEOD: Madam Speaker, it really is a hard subject to get up and speak about here. I want to congratulate my colleague, the member for Bedford-Birch Cove on her words, but especially to my colleague, the member for Queens, because I believe she is right. I don't think this is a debate; I think this is a discussion that is long overdue and it's a discussion that should never be put on a shelf. It is a discussion that has to be ongoing and one that we keep at the forefront, so that we can try to deal with this problem. (Applause)

There are so many people whose lives and families are affected and a lot of times the individuals who are involved blame themselves. They think it's their fault that they are being abused. They bring the blame on themselves and then they find it hard to reach out and ask for some help and assistance, because they think they brought this on themselves and they are ashamed to go and look for help.

What we, the people in this House, need to do is we need to find a way to let them know that there are people who care. I would be willing to say, Madam Speaker, there is not an individual in this House whose family has not been affected by some type of domestic violence. Although we don't speak about it, we have an opportunity, as members of this House, to try to do something to improve the situations.

Now we say, how do we do that? I've got a saying that I like to use on occasion and it's a little like eating an elephant: you eat an elephant one bite at a time, and you are going to effect change to this issue one step at a time.

Is a court in Sydney, a pilot project, enough? Probably not, but is it a good step? Yes, Madam Speaker, it's a good step. From that, hopefully we legislators in this province will learn what needs to be improved so we can take that program and expand it across the province and make sure that more people have access to that program.

Now there are many things that we, as government, regardless of what side of the House we sit on, don't do right, but you can never fault anyone for trying to do something for people who are in need and people who suffer from domestic violence. It's not just them, it's their family, and it's their extended family. There are so many people who are affected and we don't see it. Many times we take and we look at the broad picture and think, oh, they look like it's a great thing going on and we don't know how much the families are affected.

We have had tools in the past, like transition houses, that provide a valuable service, that do so much with so little and need our support as members of this House. We need to be able to find a way to reach out to these people who are involved and affected, and we have to help work on their self-esteem so that they feel they are somebody who is worthy, so that they feel there are people out there who care about them.

When the member for Queens said this is not a debate, I give her full marks for that, because it's not a debate. It's about working together to find a solution to a problem that has plagued Nova Scotia much, much too long.

Madam Speaker, I cannot add any more to this conversation than has already been added by my two colleagues. I want to say that it has truly been an honour to be part of this discussion and I hope that we all, in this House, have the courage and the foresight to move forward, to bring domestic violence in our communities to an end. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you. I'd certainly like to thank all members for their thoughtful comments in tonight's late debate.

The House now stands adjourned, to meet again tomorrow at 12:00 noon.

[The House rose at 6:25 p.m.]

NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3)**RESOLUTION NO. 1094**

By: Ms. Becky Kent (Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage)

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

Whereas every year Lions Clubs across Canada hold Speakout contests for youth of their communities to foster an appreciation for and experience in public speaking; and

Whereas Abby Stevenson of Cole Harbour participated in the Cole Harbour Lions Club Speakout and spoke passionately about issues that concern her; and

Whereas Abby spoke passionately about senior citizen abuse and its effects on victims;

Therefore be it resolved that this Nova Scotia House of Assembly congratulate Abby Stevenson for her participation and 3rd place finish in the Cole Harbour Lions Club Speakout and wish her every success in all that she does.

RESOLUTION NO. 1095

By: Ms. Becky Kent (Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage)

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

Whereas every year Lions Clubs across Canada hold Speakout contests for youth of their communities to foster an appreciation for and experience in public speaking; and

Whereas Ali White of Cole Harbour participated in the Cole Harbour Lions Club Speakout and spoke passionately about issues that concern her; and

Whereas Ali spoke passionately about media and its effect on men and women and our communities;

Therefore be it resolved that this Nova Scotia House of Assembly congratulate Ali White for her participation in the Cole Harbour Lions Club Speakout and wish her every success in all that she does.

RESOLUTION NO. 1096

By: Ms. Becky Kent (Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage)

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

Whereas every year Lions Clubs across Canada hold Speakout contests for youth of their communities to foster an appreciation for and experience in public speaking; and

Whereas Arden Lausch of Cole Harbour participated in the Cole Harbour Lions Club Speakout and spoke passionately about issues that concern her; and

Whereas Arden spoke passionately about the use of profanity in society, the tolerances of people in general and her position that it is unnecessary and negative;

Therefore be it resolved that this Nova Scotia House of Assembly congratulate Arden Lausch for her participation in the Cole Harbour Lions Club Speakout and wish her every success in all that she does.

RESOLUTION NO. 1097

By: Ms. Becky Kent (Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage)

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

Whereas every year Lions Clubs across Canada hold Speakout contests for youth of their communities to foster an appreciation for and experience in public speaking; and

Whereas Brook Henderson of Cole Harbour participated in the Cole Harbour Lions Club Speakout and spoke passionately about issues that concern her; and

Whereas Brook spoke passionately about child abuse and its devastating effects on the children of our communities;

Therefore be it resolved that this Nova Scotia House of Assembly congratulate Brook Henderson for her participation and 1st place finish in the Cole Harbour Lions Club Speakout and wish her every success in all that she does.

RESOLUTION NO. 1098

By: Ms. Becky Kent (Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage)

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

Whereas every year Lions Clubs across Canada hold Speakout contests for youth of their communities to foster an appreciation for and experience in public speaking; and

Whereas Isabella Opra of Cole Harbour participated in the Cole Harbour Lions Club Speakout and spoke passionately about issues that concern her; and

Whereas Isabella spoke passionately about post secondary education and the need for government support for students in Nova Scotia;

Therefore be it resolved that this Nova Scotia House of Assembly congratulate Isabella Opra for her participation in the Cole Harbour Lions Club Speakout and wish her every success in all that she does.

RESOLUTION NO. 1099

By: Ms. Becky Kent (Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage)

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

Whereas every year Lions Clubs across Canada hold Speakout contests for youth of their communities to foster an appreciation for and experience in public speaking; and

Whereas Jeffrey Lewis of Cole Harbour participated in the Cole Harbour Lions Club Speakout and spoke passionately about issues that concern him; and

Whereas Jeffrey spoke passionately about the Nova Scotia education system and his suggestions for improvements;

Therefore be it resolved that this Nova Scotia House of Assembly congratulate Jeffrey Lewis for his participation in the Cole Harbour Lions Club Speakout and wish him every success in all that he does.

RESOLUTION NO. 1100

By: Ms. Becky Kent (Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage)

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

Whereas every year Lions Clubs across Canada hold Speakout contests for youth of their communities to foster an appreciation for and experience in public speaking; and

Whereas Marissa Goldsworthy of Cole Harbour participated in the Cole Harbour Lions Club Speakout and spoke passionately about issues that concern her; and

Whereas Marissa spoke passionately about child abuse and the negative effects that it has on victims and those who love them and how it impacts their future;

Therefore be it resolved that this Nova Scotia House of Assembly congratulate Marissa Goldsworthy for her participation in the Cole Harbour Lions Club Speakout and wish her every success in all that she does.

RESOLUTION NO. 1101

By: Ms. Becky Kent (Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage)

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

Whereas every year Lions Clubs across Canada hold Speakout contests for youth of their communities to foster an appreciation for and experience in public speaking; and

Whereas Meghan Naugle of Eastern Passage participated in the Cole Harbour Lions Club Speakout and spoke passionately about issues that concern her; and

Whereas Meghan spoke about material things and the value that people put on them;

Therefore be it resolved that this Nova Scotia House of Assembly congratulate Meghan Naugle for her participation and 2nd place finish in the Cole Harbour Lions Club Speakout and wish her every success in all that she does.

RESOLUTION NO. 1102

By: Mr. Leo Glavine (Kings West)

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

Whereas Cecil “LaVerne” Gould, who recently passed away, had a lengthy career of 35 years with the Federal Government as a Maintenance Mechanic; and

Whereas LaVerne spent over 30 years volunteering with the Aylesford and District Fire Department, making a valued contribution in various roles, including deputy chief; and

Whereas LaVerne had a love of life that saw him foster many interests including hunting and fishing, as well as taking on any challenge that involved a mechanical operation;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly express condolences to his wife, Carolyn, and family, and acknowledge gratitude for his commitment to work and community.