



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

FRIDAY, MAY 6, 2011

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House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, FRIDAY, MAY 6, 2011

Sixty-first General Assembly

Third Session

9:00 A.M.

SPEAKER

Hon. Gordon Gosse

DEPUTY SPEAKERS

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

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

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Justice.

HON. ROSS LANDRY: Mr. Speaker, as Chairman of the Committee on Law Amendments, I am directed to report that the committee has met and considered the following bills:

Bill No. 21 - Public Archives Act.

Bill No. 25 - Occupational Health and Safety Act.

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

and the committee recommends these bills to the favourable consideration of the House, each without amendment.

MR. SPEAKER: Ordered that these bills be referred to the Committee of the Whole House on Bills.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 59 - Entitled an Act Respecting the Election of Members to the House of Assembly and Electoral Finance. (Hon. Ross Landry)

Bill No. 60 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 140 of the Revised Statutes of 1989. The Elections Act. (Hon. Stephen McNeil)

Bill No. 61 - Entitled an Act to Provide Greater Flexibility for Nova Scotians' Retirement Savings in Locked-in Accounts. (Mr. Allan MacMaster)

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

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

HON. MARILYN MORE: Mr. Speaker, I wish to draw the attention of members to the east gallery and to some distinguished guests who have joined us this morning. These gentlemen are with us today to mark the proclamation of Building Safety Week, which commences on Sunday.

As I read your name, perhaps you could stand and stay standing. Pat Boyce is the third vice-president of the Nova Scotia Building Officials Association, a body of municipal building inspectors who ensure that new buildings and renovations are up to code. Tim Leslie is the treasurer of the Nova Scotia Building Officials Association. As well, we have two regional representatives from the organization: Mike Morgan of Zone 2, Halifax, and

Rick Fraser of Zone 5, Cape Breton. They are also joined by two officials from the Department of Labour and Advanced Education: Ted Ross, who is our Building Code coordinator, and also Kevin Finch, who is with our communications staff.

Mr. Speaker, many of us take the safety of buildings that we live, work and relax in for granted and it is because of the Nova Scotia Building Officials Association that we can do so. Thank you. I ask my colleagues to give them a warm welcome, in appreciation of their work. (Applause)

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

NOTICES OF MOTION

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

RESOLUTION NO. 1143

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

Whereas every day throughout Nova Scotia mothers perform the role of superhero and nurturer by always providing for their children a shoulder to rely on and cry on, at any given time; and

Whereas mothers have taught and continue to teach generations of children the important traits of responsibility, honesty and self-respect; and

Whereas the things mothers teach us are important lessons that we all remember and are able to refer to for the rest of our lives;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the Legislative Assembly acknowledge Mother's Day on Sunday, May 8, 2011, and recognize and remember the lessons they teach us, the love they show us, and the sacrifices they make.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party.

RESOLUTION NO. 1144

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

Whereas Sharon and Richard Calder of Springhill, founders and owners of the largest Canadian-owned jewellery chain, Charm Diamond Centres, were recently honoured by being inducted into the Nova Scotia Business Hall of Fame; and

Whereas the Calders have demonstrated true sacrifice and dedication to their business vision by selling their house and car to launch their first store, which has now expanded to include 69 locations in seven provinces with more than 700 employees; and

Whereas the Nova Scotia Business Hall of Fame was established in 1993 by Junior Achievement Nova Scotia to recognize the achievements of local business leaders and to inspire young people to pursue careers in business;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House congratulate Sharon and Richard Calder for being inducted into the Nova Scotia Business Hall of Fame and wish them continued success.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Victoria-The Lakes.

RESOLUTION NO. 1145

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

Whereas the Baddeck Bay Hospital Auxiliary does many hours of volunteer work raising funds in support of their local hospital; and

Whereas recently the local hospital auxiliary used funds, which they raised in conjunction with many community sponsors, to purchase a new centrifuge; and

Whereas the new centrifuge spins blood samples at high speeds to prepare for analysis and was a vital purchase to help lab technicians do the important work;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly applaud the generous community spirit of the Baddeck Bay Hospital Auxiliary and members Fran MacRitchie, Brenda Cook, and Mora Nicholson for playing the leading role in securing the necessary funds for this much-needed piece of laboratory equipment.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Hants West.

RESOLUTION NO. 1146

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

Whereas while snowboarding can be the source of countless hours of fun and exhilaration, it also means dedication, perseverance, and commitment to participate competitively in a sport that is continuously gaining momentum and popularity; and

Whereas Jeremy Page of Falmouth, who has trained at Ski Martock near Windsor for the past 11 years, came first in the qualifying round for the Canada Games and raced to the finish in a nail-biter quarter-final run; and

Whereas Mr. Page displayed his exemplary snowboarding techniques and nailed his last run in the finals with a score of 33.3 points to reserve his spot on the podium for the silver medal at the 2011 Canada Games;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Jeremy on his exceptional snowboarding skills and wish him the best of luck in future competitions.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Cape Breton West.

RESOLUTION NO. 1147

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

Whereas David Cann, son of John and Karen Cann from Louisbourg, recently received the Howard and Genevieve Libbey Scholarship at Cape Breton University; and

Whereas the Libbey Scholarship is given to second-year Cape Breton University Bachelor of Engineering students who have been accepted into the mechanical engineering discipline; and

Whereas scholarships of this kind allow students to achieve their academic goals;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly acknowledge and congratulate David on receiving this scholarship, and wish him every success in his continuing education.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Deputy Premier.

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

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Deputy Premier.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 54.

Bill No. 54 - Cemeteries Protection Act.

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

MR. KEITH BAIN: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise today to move second reading of Bill No. 54. I'm pleased to speak today to our efforts to recognize the importance of our historic cemeteries and monuments. The Cemeteries Protection Bill extends special protection beyond grave sites to those monuments that recognize the sacrifices and achievements of Nova Scotians.

Mr. Speaker, there are few communities in our province that do not in some permanent way commemorate the fallen, those who were lost at sea, or those who served their community at home or in foreign lands. These tributes often take the form of a cenotaph or memorial with the names of those who should be remembered etched in stone. The monuments that we find in every corner of this province tell a story of our history. Located in the heart of many small communities and in the cities, they're a focal point of anniversary remembrance and Remembrance Day ceremonies, an event that brings out the young and the old to honour the memories of those who shall never be forgotten.

In some of our smaller communities, it seems as if there are as many names on the cenotaph as there are those living in the community today. They truly speak to the great history of our many communities and their contribution to our country. These memorials

take on many forms. The Swissair memorial remembers those who lost their lives that night. Lunenburg Fishermen's Memorial commemorates those lost at sea pursuing the livelihood that shaped our South Shore. In Chester, a statue of a Nova Scotia Highlander holding a bayonet sits on top of a granite base; twice in recent years the bayonet has been stolen.

It is an unfortunate reality that sometimes these wonderful symbols of honour are damaged by the senseless vandalism committed by a disrespectful few. The amendments put forward today ensure that those prosecuted for damaging these important monuments face harsher penalties for the crime. The legislation amends the Cemeteries Protection Act by extending protection beyond cemeteries to other monuments such as cenotaphs and other structures that commemorate an event, an individual or a group like fire, police, and Legion monuments.

We need to send a strong message to would-be vandals that any acts of disrespect against these monuments are serious and have serious consequences. The legislation increases the maximum fine for those convicted of vandalizing the cemetery or monument from \$2,000 to \$20,000 and increases the maximum jail time for offenders to two years.

Monuments are often the only physical representation of a lost loved one or of those who fought and died for our country. Disrespectful acts of vandalism are senseless and distressing to those who must restore and replace the monuments. In some communities it has, regrettably, become an almost annual occurrence.

Mr. Speaker, for those many Nova Scotian men and women who act as the caretakers of our cemeteries and monuments, we can only imagine their sadness and disappointment upon discovering a vandalized site. The damaged property is not only disturbing, but significant restoration costs add to the stress. The intent of this legislation is to ensure that when the perpetrators are caught they get far more than a slap on the wrist for their actions. In many cases, they will be expected to pay much of the cost of damages and serve time in jail.

Mr. Speaker, in support of this bill, we've tabled a petition containing the names of more than 700 Nova Scotians who support its intent. Members of the police community, Legion leadership and those tasked with caring for our cemeteries have all expressed support of this bill. Mr. Les Nash, president of the Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command of the Canadian Legion, expressed that he believes it will protect our veterans' cenotaphs; if indeed it can result in a stronger fine and a stronger message to think twice before damaging these respective monuments, then the effort is worthy.

Today in this House of Assembly we hope for the support of the other members of the House in passing this legislation. Thank you.

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

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to speak to this bill and offer our government's support of this amendment to the Act.

Nova Scotia's rich, diverse history is commemorated in many ways in many parts of our province. This includes monuments that acknowledge the contributions of Nova Scotians and mark important events in our shared past. Protecting and preserving these pieces of our heritage is one more way to ensure that present and future generations know about the people and the events that have shaped our culture. I'm sure many members of the House have shared the experience of learning about a piece of our province's history through monuments. That experience is repeated for our residents and visitors alike almost daily.

We also recognize that Nova Scotians want cemeteries - active or abandoned - to be treated with the respect and reverence they deserve. Government shares that desire. The proposed amendments to the Cemeteries Protection Act provide an added measure of protection for monuments and help to streamline the process of designating an abandoned cemetery under the Act. These changes not only make sense, they help to make the process of protecting abandoned cemeteries easier and more efficient.

Once again, our government is pleased to support this bill and we look forward to moving this to the Committee on Law Amendments. I want to thank the member opposite for bringing this forward because I think all members in the House would agree this is an important issue and something the government should look at protecting. We look forward to this moving on to the Committee on Law Amendments and I thank the member opposite for bringing this piece of legislation forward.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

MR. ANDREW YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the honourable member for bringing this bill forward. I think we can all agree that adding monuments to this bill makes eminent sense and it's unfortunate that wasn't included from the very beginning. As I see it, there are three changes that this bill makes. One is adding monuments to the definitions that are already there. The second one, which I think is actually perhaps one of the most important elements of this, is shifting the power from Governor in Council directly to the minister. That's important because it should allow changes and regulations that affect this to be done much more directly, I would think. We would certainly support that activity.

We also do support the increase in the penalty. The one comment I hope we would all agree on is - it's a matter of catching the people and having those penalties put in place. When you actually look at the history of these, very few people have actually been given the minimum penalties in these cases. I know there were a number of cases two or three

years ago of cemetery vandalism in HRM. When they could actually catch who did it, in many cases nobody was ultimately charged and there was no significant restitution.

My hope is that especially now that there's a single minister who has control of this as opposed to Cabinet as a whole, that his department will look at putting in a strategy in terms of how they ensure the protection of our cemeteries and monuments and other special places, and how they can work with our law enforcement officers and our municipalities, as well as the protection groups for cemeteries and monuments such as churches and Legions, to ensure that there is protection and that we have a situation where some of this vandalism and damage can be prevented up front and stop it from happening in the first place.

One only need go up to the Old Burying Ground on Spring Garden Road after there's been damage and recognize that once the damage has occurred, you're never going to get back the same history that was once there. Certainly, we are pleased to support this moving forward. We certainly don't disagree with any of the three changes that this bill makes but I think it's important to recognize that, especially on the changes on the penalty, it's important that the penalties are actually enacted by the courts to make that a practical reality. Thank you.

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

The honourable member for Victoria-The Lakes.

MR. KEITH BAIN: Mr. Speaker, with that I'd like to close debate on Bill No. 54.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 54. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, with the consent of the House, could we revert to the order of business, Tabling Reports, Regulations and Other Papers.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is to go back in the order paper. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS

MR. SPEAKER: I, the Speaker of the Nova Scotia Legislature, would table a report of the Chief Electoral Officer, response to Resolution No. 645 of the House of Assembly.

The report is tabled.

[GOVERNMENT BUSINESS]

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

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

PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 52.

Bill No. 52 - Government Administration Amendment (2011) Act.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Deputy Premier.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 52, the Government Administration Amendment (2011) Act, be now read for a second time.

Mr. Speaker, I was pleased to have the opportunity earlier this week to introduce an Act Respecting the Administration of Government. This new Act is necessary for a few reasons. In January our Premier announced many departmental changes and recently the Justice Minister announced the amalgamation of the Emergency Management Office with the Department of Justice. The restructuring which includes the new Department of Health and Wellness, and the Department of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism was necessary.

The moves will ensure that government continues to fulfill its commitment to improve health care, create good jobs and grow the economy. Additional restructuring, which includes transferring post-secondary education to the new Department of Labour and Advanced Education and creating the new Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage, ensures more effective service delivery to meet the needs of Nova Scotians and also helps to deliver on government's key commitments.

Mr. Speaker, the bill I introduced is necessary to support many department realignments. This bill also assigns responsibility for the supervision and administration of Government House to the Department of Intergovernmental Affairs. This has never been addressed in legislation before. There are a number of civil servants who work at Government House, it made sense to clarify responsibility in legislation.

Mr. Speaker, the Government Administration Amendment (2011) Act also transfers Voluntary Planning to Treasury Board. This amendment generated a few questions earlier this week so I welcome this opportunity to further explain this rationale. Government decisions on its priority areas must be informed by best available expert advice and by Nova Scotians' perspectives. Bringing Voluntary Planning in as part of Treasury Board is the right step to take. It improves government's ability to engage Nova Scotians; it also ensures that their input is taken into account during decision making.

Mr. Speaker, I assure you and the members of the Legislature that Nova Scotians will continue to be engaged. They will be engaged more often and more consistently. As part of Treasury Board, the staff will provide advice and support to departments, they will help departments and agencies identify opportunities for public engagement, prepare best practice guidelines, and provide input on consultation and engagement activities. They will also be instrumental in building government in-house capacity for public engagement for providing both formal and informal staff training.

Mr. Speaker, this will improve government's ability to engage Nova Scotians, it will make public engagement more systematic within government. I would like to take this opportunity to publicly thank the Voluntary Planning Board for all their good work.

Today's bill also introduces an amendment to the House of Assembly Act. The amendments postpone, until after the next general election, an inquiry report respecting the annual compensation to be paid to MLAs, the Speaker, the Deputy Speaker, the Leader of the Official Opposition, the Leader of any recognized Opposition Party and the salaries to be paid to members of the Executive Council.

Wages have been frozen since June 2009. We do not want to open the door to review, which could potentially recommend significant increases. That would be unacceptable at a time when we're asking the entire public sector to help government live within its means. This is yet another example of what this government is doing to ensure we are meeting our commitment to live within our means.

Today's bill is about supporting government's departmental restructuring so we are in a better position to meet our priorities for Nova Scotians and to ensure we continue to live within our means.

Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of Bill No. 52. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Richmond.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker it's a pleasure to rise and speak on Bill No. 52 on behalf of the Official Opposition. This is an interesting bill because, as you know, most of the government administration amendments that have come forward in this Legislature have been from the Minister of Justice. But for the first time, I believe, in a long time, we're seeing it come from a different minister and in this case, the Minister of the Public Service Commission, and Treasury Board, I guess. That's another one of his titles.

For the most part, these are amendments being made to reflect some of the changes that government announced with Cabinet and restructuring and different elements of how the Cabinet will now look. But there's a little cute element to the bill and I'll explain what I mean when I say a cute element to the bill.

As I've mentioned, for these justice administration bills, governments tend to throw stuff in the bill that really doesn't fit. I'll explain to you what I mean by that because there are a couple of elements here that really don't fit. First of all, there's the creation of the new Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage. I'm sure the minister himself was interested to see the bill because it probably finally tells him what his department is actually responsible for. We've waited some time to find out exactly what it was supposed to do.

There are changes as well to Health Promotion and Protection being merged with Health and Wellness; a movement of Advanced Education over to Labour. A couple of the items that really don't seem to fit - two items, in fact - the first one is the elimination of Voluntary Planning. That's a whole different subject and I would submit to you is one that should be standing on its own for debate here in Nova Scotia as a separate stand-alone bill. Keep in mind, this is the government, under the former Minister of Energy, that believed that a Clothesline Bill should be its own stand-alone legislation.

Yet, now, when it comes to an issue of the Voluntary Planning board basically being dissolved and merged as a government entity, controlled by government, it's merged in with this bill. We've already indicated that we don't support that. I believe the Progressive Conservative Party has indicated they don't support that either. The other cute element about this bill is that they've also included a section dealing with the remuneration of members of the House, in this bill.

What is the politics behind that, Nova Scotians may be wondering? It's very simple. We don't support the changes to Voluntary Planning. We have concerns about putting Health Promotion and Protection in with the Department of Health. There are a number of items that we are concerned about but here's how this will get played if we were to vote against this bill. The Government House Leader would be the first to stand up and say, look, the Opposition is concerned about their salaries and that's why they're voting against this bill, which would be the furthest thing from the truth. Our Leader has already

publicly said that he has no issues with that change. But he has also said, we don't support the elimination of Voluntary Planning as proposed by the government.

This is another example - when I look at the government backbench and even some in the front bench, many of them felt this government would be different from other governments - they really aren't. This is politics, old-time politics, that's what it is. The Minister of Community Services knows that; it's old-time politics. If it wasn't, what the government could easily do is split this bill; in fact, you could almost make three bills out of this one. One should be just dealing with the changes to Voluntary Planning and let's have a debate on that. If we could have a debate on clotheslines, I think we should at least be able to have a debate on Voluntary Planning. Let us have another bill dealing with the issue of MLA remuneration, which doesn't fit in here at all, in no way, shape or form. Let us have a bill dealing with the changes in government structure.

For those who thought the NDP would be a different government, I think that's what would have happened, but in reality this is just pure politics. How can you make sure that the Opposition is forced to support legislation and be timid about speaking against it? Because the government would be the first to say it's mostly because they're concerned about their salaries. Now, we'll get back to that afterwards because I have some comments on that very matter itself.

First of all, what is in Bill No. 52? Well, Bill No. 52 talks about the amalgamation of the Department of Health Promotion and Protection with the Department of Health to form the renamed Department of Health and Wellness. Well, here is one of the issues that has been raised with that. You have a minister who has to deal with issues such as chronic illness, disease and the general health issues of Nova Scotians, who is also supposed to be focused on health promotion. I believe Nova Scotia was the first province to create the position of a Minister of Health Promotion, something we should have been proud of - a minister dedicated specifically to promoting good health in Nova Scotia.

It was a full-time job and I believe some important measures were made. I believe there is a collective awareness amongst Nova Scotians now that the outcome of their health rests in their hands and rests in their behaviour. The changes that have been in our school system include not only the food that is being given to our children, the food that's available to our children, but the element of exercise and healthy living.

However, with all due respect to the Minister of Health and Wellness, when one looks at what her responsibilities are with hospitals, with district health authorities, with drug prices, with new programs to deal with chronic illnesses - to believe that she has the time to focus on promoting good health for Nova Scotians - again, not being a criticism of the particular minister but I believe it's unreasonable to request that because she is responsible for the single largest spending department in Nova Scotia, a monumental task to say the least.

To now suggest that she can as well spend her time focusing on promoting good health while trying to keep spending in line and make sure Nova Scotians have timely access to health care services, we don't believe that is reasonable. Unfortunately, we believe health promotion is taking a backseat in this government and is not the priority that it should be.

There is a change as well in this bill that transfers matters pertaining to tourism to the renamed Department of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism. Ironically, I'm sure my colleague, the member for Cape Breton South, will recall that when the Department of Tourism was first created, he was the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism. So we've made a full circle in that department and now Tourism is once again merged with the Department of Economic and Rural Development.

One of the items that we are pleased to see is that the government has split education and post-secondary education and that we will now have post-secondary education being with the Department of Labour, to be known as the Department of Labour and Advanced Education. Nova Scotians will probably recall that it was the Liberal caucus that introduced legislation some time ago to create a new minister responsible for advanced education because it's extremely difficult for a minister to be asked to focus on the P-12 public school system and as well give the same amount of attention to the very specific demands and needs of our advanced education here in Nova Scotia. We certainly do wish the new minister well in dealing with the very specific matter of advanced education. Access to affordable advanced education in this province remains a priority for all members of this House.

When we continue to see increases taking place - we're hearing again of the 3 per cent increase in tuition in a number of universities - it comes down to the issue of affordability and accessibility. That's something that we all need to be concerned about because I believe everyone in this House agrees that the ticket to a prosperous future in many ways comes from a degree through advanced education, whether it be through our universities or our community college system. This is certainly one of the changes that we do support.

The Emergency Management Office has gone over to Justice. That's not a change that causes any great concern. As I mentioned earlier, the creation of the new Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage and, as well, transfer of responsibility is associated with the Office of Acadian Affairs, African Nova Scotian Affairs and Gaelic Affairs to the Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage.

Now this one is a little bizarre and I'll explain to you why it is bizarre; the Minister responsible for Communities, Culture and Heritage is responsible for the financial administration of these offices, yet each office retains a separate minister responsible. That's a little strange because the budget appears to be controlled by the Minister of

Communities, Culture and Heritage but Acadian Affairs, for example, responsibility is with the Minister of Finance; for the Office of Gaelic Affairs, responsibility is with the Minister of Health and Wellness, and for the Office of African Nova Scotian Affairs, responsibility is with the Minister of Rural and Economic Development and Tourism.

Naturally I believe the press and Nova Scotians have been scratching their heads at figuring out who truly is responsible. Who does the staff report to when you have a minister responsible for their financial administration yet three separate ministers responsible for the actual offices themselves? That's one that only time will tell as to how that is going to work out.

As well, the Government House Leader mentioned assignment of responsibility for the supervision of Government House, the Department of Intergovernmental Affairs, that's something that I don't think is of great concern to anyone and probably something that should have been done some time ago.

Now one of the other contentious elements in this bill is the transfer of Voluntary Planning to Treasury Board. The question is, why would government want to transfer Voluntary Planning to Treasury Board? Why not leave it as it was, as a board made up of Nova Scotians of various backgrounds, and allow them to continue addressing some of the concerns of the day? I was curious to hear what the government rationale was going to be on this, what was their thinking, and now having this controlled by political staffers and a select group of employees of the Province of Nova Scotia on these issues. I, like so many Nova Scotians, watched to see what the press was going to report on it.

When I look at the Halifax ChronicleHerald of Wednesday, May 4th, which was just a couple of days ago, it says in the headline, "N.S. to cut advice gatherer. Opposition slams decision to fold Voluntary Planning into Treasury Board." When we scroll down, it says, and I'm not going to use his name but it's the Government House Leader, "... said the move means the function of the board will be more integrated with government." and it quotes him; "It's not about control. It's about government perspective . . .", the Government House Leader said, "Governments in the past have taken reports just to say we've had a report and then ignore it. I mean, if it's not in line with government thinking, why have it?"

That's an interesting statement, so naturally the press being the press, asked the question, well, which reports did Voluntary Planning do in the past that government didn't pay attention to, weren't in line with government thinking and were a waste of time? When Nova Scotians read the very next line, it said it all because it said - and I'm not saying his name but it's the Government House Leader "... couldn't name a report as an example."

So you decide to get rid of a Voluntary Planning board, making the argument that they're just producing reports that are sitting on a shelf collecting dust and then when asked, well give us an example of what kind of reports you mean, you don't have any.

I assumed after seeing that headline, which is certainly embarrassing for a Government House Leader - embarrassing for the government that they would not have one example to give - I said to myself, when they are going to introduce this bill the Government House Leader will have a list of some of the reports that he was referring to because possibly, when the press conference took place, he may not have been able to think of any just off the top of his head. Yet today you are here, Mr. Speaker, as am I, and the Government House Leader did not mention one example of where Voluntary Planning has done a report which was considered to be of not any use for the governments of the day.

Mr. Speaker, one has to ask exactly what type of work has the Voluntary Planning Board been doing in Nova Scotia? If I'm not mistaken I believe one of the media reports indicates that this board was set up by the late Honourable Robert Stanfield.

MR. SPEAKER: Order please, order. There seems to be a lot of chatter in the Chamber this morning, and it's very difficult to hear the member for Richmond. So if you have your conversations would you mind taking them outside the Chamber please.

The honourable member for Richmond.

MR. SAMSON: Thank you very much Mr. Speaker. As I was saying, if I'm not mistaken, the Voluntary Planning Board was first created by the late Honourable Robert Stanfield back in the 1960s, I believe if I'm not mistaken. So it has been around Nova Scotia for a significant amount of time and I found it unfortunate that the Government House Leader and the NDP Government would feel that the work done by the Voluntary Planning Board was not of any use to government or to Nova Scotians.

I was curious as what exactly Voluntary Planning had been doing over the years. Well, let's look at 2009, what were they doing? They did report entitled *The Future of Nova Scotia's Natural Resources: Our Common Ground*. Well, that's a pretty topical issue these days when we're talking about mineral extraction in the province, when there are questions about the fees that we charge for companies to extract minerals, questions that have been asked about the Natural Resources Strategy - which I believe we're still waiting for - issues around clear-cutting, and issues around sustainability of our forest. All very topical issues.

Let's look at 2008. In 2008, the Voluntary Planning Board issued a report called *The Future of Nova Scotia's Natural Resources, A Tourism Perspective* - again, an issue that is certainly of great importance to Nova Scotians and one that is still something that we are talking about today. In 2006, Voluntary Planning issued a report called *Our Heritage Future, A Shared Responsibility, Recommendations for Nova Scotia's Heritage Strategy*. Well I think that is something that is very useful for the government and very useful for Nova Scotians. Part of what makes Nova Scotia as attractive as it is, is our respect for our

heritage, our respect for our history, our respect for our institutions and our many buildings, especially here in Halifax Regional Municipality.

In 2005, one of the reports from the Voluntary Planning Board was *Closing Our Prosperity Gap, A Working Paper of the Voluntary Planning Sector Committee on Economic Growth and Competitiveness*. Again, Mr. Speaker, certainly a topic I believe that Nova Scotians all have an interest in. But here is one I believe that many members of the House will recall - not some of the government members that were elected in the last election, but many of us who have been around here a little longer will certainly remember this one. In 2004, Voluntary Planning issued *Final Report of the Voluntary Planning Off-highway Vehicle Task Force*.

Now Mr. Speaker, I'm sure you will recall a most difficult issue for Nova Scotia, a very divisive issue even to this day, and one that was extremely difficult for elected officials to grapple with. Yet we asked the Voluntary Planning, volunteers with various expertise from throughout Nova Scotia, to tackle this issue and I can say I believe they produced a very balanced report (Interruption) yes, 21 different organizations were involved in working with Voluntary Planning to bring this report forward. Is this the example that the Government House Leader refers to when he says that these reports and this work are not in line with government thinking and they were just gathering dust? Not at all. I'm sure you recall, Mr. Speaker, this led to significant changes in usage and the rules around all-terrain vehicles in Nova Scotia.

I can tell you this winter I had the opportunity to go on a poker run. Now many might not know what a poker run is. A poker run - certainly down home with ATVs in the wintertime - is an organized outing of individuals on all-terrain vehicles where they have various stops along the way and you get to go through the trails. There's a little game of cards, some games of chance involved there as well. I had the opportunity to see some of the work done by the Isle Madame Trails Association.

I have to tell you, Mr. Speaker, I was truly impressed. The bridges that had been constructed over waterways, the respect that was given along the trails to not cut any more than absolutely necessary to allow for the passage of vehicles, the relationship that had been established with landowners and the respect that was shown by the users - I have to tell you I have no doubt that this, in many ways, came from the work of the Voluntary Planning board on all-terrain vehicle usage in Nova Scotia.

So to suggest that this is the type of committee that the government should abandon, I think is completely unacceptable and unfortunate. That's why again I say if we're going to debate this, let it be a stand-alone bill. The government should not be hiding this in a government administration bill. (Applause) If this is the same government that saw fit for us to take the time of this House to debate a Clothesline Bill, yet suggests that a committee that did historic work such as the Voluntary Planning board, on issues such as off-highway vehicles - to say that should be merged in with an omnibus bill as a government administration bill, I think is completely unfortunate. But again, this is

old-style politics - when there are issues that can cause government embarrassment, bury them in a bill and hope that there is stuff there that would embarrass the Opposition to vote against. That's what they have done here.

There is still opportunity, Mr. Speaker. If this government truly is trying to do things differently, as they've tried to convince Nova Scotians in the last election, they would bring in a bill dealing with changes that they are proposing to the Voluntary Planning Board. Then we could have a full debate on that subject, not have the important work of this committee buried in other legislation.

Mr. Speaker, one of the other reports that was done by the Voluntary Planning Board in 2001 was entitled *Non-Resident Land Ownership in Nova Scotia. Final Report - December 2001*. I can say I was a member of the House at that time and I can tell you that the issue of non-resident land ownership was a major concern to Nova Scotians, to many communities throughout Nova Scotia. I'm sure the member for Lunenburg West will remember the discussions that took place in his own riding back in 2001 and before then, on the issue of non-resident land ownership, especially waterfront properties in communities throughout Nova Scotia. It was a very divisive issue, a very emotional issue and it was one that government was reluctant to tackle. Instead, it turned to the Voluntary Planning Board and asked them to provide an independent report and a fair report and they did that. That's the type of work we want to see the Voluntary Planning Board do.

There's a whole host of other reports that were provided that I may have an opportunity on another occasion to go into more specifically. But I believe I've established today that the work of the Voluntary Planning Board has worked for Nova Scotians. It's been a tremendous asset for government, especially in dealing with issues of great difficulty. No government wants to have to deal with these divisive issues, to be seen to be picking one side over another. Yet when you have a body such as the Voluntary Planning Board, then naturally you can allow them to go out in an independent way, to hear the concerns of all Nova Scotians and to be able to bring forward a fair and reasonable approach to deal with the various issues.

The other issue that is buried in here, which does not belong, does not fit, but it is the government's decision to delay a review that was going to take place of MLA salaries, along with yourself, the Speaker, and Executive Council, and Leader salaries. This is an issue that is difficult for elected officials in Nova Scotia. It is one that most elected officials don't want to talk about. The way the system was set up from the start, especially with the review of salaries, was that no elected official should be able to make the determination of what their salaries are going to be. It should be independent, it should be done outside of the Legislature, and it should be seen by Nova Scotians as being fair and performed by people not influenced by the political process.

We have seen occasions before where governments have interfered with that process so it's not just this government. We've seen where, under the John Hamm Government, that an independent report that did come in was rejected. That was unfortunate because it sent a message that elected officials could make these decisions on their own, so that was one occasion. What was the excuse of the day? The province couldn't fiscally afford the findings of that report, yet ironically, a mere few years later, many would argue a more generous report was put together and that one was adopted.

Now we have seen, when this government was first elected, that they had no hesitation to go in, use their majority and make unilateral changes. At the time they claimed it was what Nova Scotians were asking for, yet Nova Scotians were never given the opportunity to give their opinion, as they would under an independent review; they didn't have that opportunity. Government came in, for purely political reasons, and made unilateral changes.

The previous Chief Clerk of the House of the Assembly raised concerns of where this government was going with the administration of the Speaker's Office and he raised the issue of the independence of the House of Assembly, that it not be governed by government departments. Yet we have seen this NDP majority government take the administration and control of the Office of the Speaker away from the Legislature and into the hands of the Department of Finance.

Now we have an elected minister who is a politician - that's how he got here - a member of a political Party that has administrative control of this Legislature and the members who sit inside it. The whole premise of the British parliamentary system, the Commonwealth parliamentary system, is that the Legislature must be independent of the Executive Council.

I'm sure the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal, who has been a teacher of history and well respects history, will know that under the NDP Government of Nova Scotia, that no longer exists. The three branches of government that are supposed to be independent are the Executive Council, the judiciary and the Legislature. Under this NDP Government, the Legislature is no longer independent. We are now under the control of the Minister of Finance; it is he who has administrative control of this House. That is not the way this system was set up and that's why the former Clerk raised that, and no one could dispute what he was raising. (Interruption)

The Minister of Finance is going to dispute it, so they have decided they know better than what has worked so well in the Commonwealth parliamentary system. They have decided, instead, that the independence of the Legislature is not relevant, that we should have a minister who can determine the salaries of members of this House independently, that a government can go and say that an independent review that was scheduled to take place will not take place.

Because of that, we now have the Executive Council determining the remuneration of members of this House; they know best and not Nova Scotians, who would have the opportunity to give their opinions under this type of review. The review, as you know, Mr. Speaker, which has been done in the past, would allow all Nova Scotians to give input on what remuneration is paid to members of this House. Instead, this government has decided that they are the ones who will decide when that will take place.

Again, the independence of this Legislature is put at risk and the reason the government put this in this bill is that if we are to vote against this bill, the Minister of Finance will be the first one to stand up and say, the Liberals and Tories voted against it because they're upset the salary review is not taking place. Mr. Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth and it comes down to crass politics that a government that said they would do things differently would put this type of change in the bill.

What was ironic and, I have to say, the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party made a very interesting point. He said what the government is proposing here is that Nova Scotians be asked in the next election to elect members based on a certain level of remuneration that we pretty much all know will change after the election, yet Nova Scotians won't be given the chance to pass judgment at the ballot box before this change takes place.

I have to say to the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party that I heard from a number of Nova Scotians who thought that was a very interesting argument because that has happened in other jurisdictions where immediately following an election, increases took place and Nova Scotians said wait a minute, why were we not given the opportunity to express whether we felt that was a proper remuneration for our members before we went to vote? That seems to have certainly not had the intended effect the government was hoping to have and I'm sure Nova Scotians will have the opportunity to discuss that at a future date.

Someone said, well, if you speak on this, it will give the impression that you're just looking for an increase. Nothing could be further from the truth - and the Minister of Finance laughs, because I'm sure that's the first thing he'll argue. The way the system was set up is that I should have absolutely no opinion and no influence on what my salary is going to be because that's the way it was set up, that it be independent, that it be scheduled and outside the hands of political influence. That's no longer the case. This government can now determine what the remuneration of members will be because they have basically already said the reason they don't want it to take place is it may offer or suggest increases based on a review of what is being paid to elected members in similar provinces throughout the country.

They've already sent a message, basically, that regardless of how independent a review might be, they are the ones who will decide whether they'll adopt it or not. Once

again, the independence of the Legislature is out the window under a majority NDP Government.

Why Nova Scotians should be concerned about this is that a majority government can then use these types of powers to punish the Opposition and that's the last thing that the Commonwealth parliamentary system was set up to do, to allow a government of the day to punish the Opposition through remuneration and control of that remuneration, yet that is exactly what has been done. I would submit to you that the Management Commission, with the changes that have been rammed through there - that is what is being done, trying to delay an independent review that is taking place that would allow Nova Scotians to make comment on what a remuneration might be.

For those teachers of history who are teaching our students of the independence of the three pillars of the British parliamentary system of judiciary, executive and legislative branches right now in Nova Scotia under this government, the legislative branch is no longer an independent institution under this government - it is now under the direct control of the executive branch. Many Nova Scotians might not be concerned about that. Down the road, I believe we'll look back and we'll see that this was an unfortunate decision and this leads to a very unfortunate situation of a majority government being able to punish the Opposition as it wishes through the issue of remuneration.

Only time will tell. Fortunately, if all goes well, I've got time on my side and we'll see down the road exactly whether this will be used as a tool of blatant abuse by majority governments, either currently or in the future. At the end of the day, there is no one who can look at Bill No. 52 and not suggest that there are elements in this bill that don't belong. Voluntary Planning should be a stand-alone bill, a delay in the independent review of remuneration of members should be a separate bill, and then the changes to government structure should be a bill that stands on its own. I look forward to debate that is going to take place from my colleagues in the House.

I did note in today's ChronicleHerald, the previous chairman of Voluntary Planning indicated, once again, similar to what we heard from municipalities, that they received absolutely no consultation from the government as to what their future would be under the NDP Government of Nova Scotia. Instead, I believe they were informed by the Government House Leader, the Minister of the Public Service Commission and Treasury Board, that they would no longer exist and that their services were no longer required, or better yet no longer wanted by the NDP Government.

This is the same message we heard from municipalities. This is the same message I'm sure we will be hearing from other Nova Scotians as this government moves control out of the hands of independent Nova Scotians into the hands of the so-called change secretariat, into the hands of, what I believe they call themselves "the centre" - NDP political staff who see the best interests of Nova Scotians resting in their hands not in the hands of the elected officials of this House or in the hands of ordinary Nova Scotians.

Again, I believe the future will show that this was an unfortunate decision. Hopefully if all goes well this government will not be of long duration and we will see a change and that Voluntary Planning will be able to be returned back to Nova Scotia so that Nova Scotians can once again have a direct say over the contentious issues that are facing our province.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to Bill No. 52 moving forward. As I said, the government still has time to withdraw this bill and bring back separate pieces of legislation if they truly are a government that's going to do things differently. Bill No. 52 is old-style politics, they still have time to change it, if not, for any member of the backbench to say that this government is any different than previous governments, Bill No. 52 is further proof of that fallacy. Thank you.

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

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, I can't help but note that there's an interesting spirit of co-operation here in this House this morning. The bill passed previously by the member for Victoria-The Lakes received support around the Chamber, it was great to see. In this case I can't help but point out that I find myself in agreement with much of what has just been articulated by the member for Richmond in his wise dissertation on the perils of Bill No. 52. I know in his own modest way he will understand that I say this just to send him off for a good weekend at home.

The fact of the matter is that when I look at Bill No. 52, I can't help but wonder how this government decides which items deserve stand-alone status as a bill. The member for Richmond pointed to the obvious example of the Clothesline Bill which came forward in the Fall which was all of 46 words but was on its own as a bill in this House. But in Bill No. 52 we find three very different, non-related items all mashed together into one.

Mr. Speaker, the question obviously is why the government chose to have clotheslines as a stand-alone bill but then take the reorganization of government departments, the MLA salary review, the demise of Voluntary Planning and put them all together. Obviously, the government is hoping that members will feel compelled to take it as a package and vote Yea or Nay, even though it would be very appropriate for a member of the House to be in favour of some but not all provisions of the bill. That is an old trick in our system, to lump together things in this omnibus way, some of which are odious and some of which are not, and force a decision on the package as a whole.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, I do want to deal with the three general themes of the bill in short order. First of all on the reorganization of government departments, I can't believe that we've reached this point in the debate without this point being made, so I guess I get to make it. It's the most recent example of the old saying about reshuffling the deck chairs on the Titanic, when government brings forward a bill to move divisions of

departments around that ultimately accomplishes nothing as a result. It is the story of this government that by engaging in these kinds of activities, moving a division from here to there, writing up a strategy that goes from here to there, creates a sense of activity. But it actually accomplishes nothing and there is nothing in this part of the bill that Nova Scotians can look to and be comforted that any real progress is being made on the great issues that our province faces.

Although I certainly recognize that it's the government's right to reorganize and shuffle and change and move around within the departments of government to their heart's content, I can't help but point out to what end? The bill is silent on what exactly it is attempting to accomplish; there's no dollar figure for cost savings that I've heard, as a result of the reshuffling. There's no actual loss of activity or elimination of redundancy or decline in employment or a regulation that will no longer be in effect. All of that remains the same. It is simply as a result of the reshuffling of those deck chairs and what a lost opportunity that is.

On the MLA salary review, once again, we see a piecemeal - one of a political approach to the issue of MLA salaries. I would put to the House, through you, Mr. Speaker, that until we have a permanent structure in place, that is fully independent and led by citizens themselves, that the government will always find itself in hot water as it attempts to deal with this issue. It will always be seen for what it is, which is a political exercise. Whether the government proposes to raise salaries by an astronomical amount or proposes to freeze them or proposes to cut them, as long as the government itself is making those decisions, it will be a political decision.

When we have scheduled reviews, whether those reviews go ahead or not, whether the government chooses to go ahead or whether the government chooses to cancel them, it will be seen as a political decision, as it surely is. Only when we get to a time when there is a permanent panel of citizens representing the people of Nova Scotia - who, after all, are our bosses, are the true CEOs of the political system - when we put them back in charge, when we put them at the top, when we rest in their hands and only their hands the decisions about what they pay their elected officials, will we truly be free of these kinds of issues.

That is why this provision in this bill is so odious. It doesn't matter whether it proposes to delay the panel for a day or a year or five years or whether it accelerates the timing of the panel, it's odious for that reason. It is a decision that has been made by members of the government themselves.

As further proof, members of this House learned along with all other Nova Scotians that a member of the government, in this case the Deputy Premier, had decided himself what the raises should be for MLAs. I don't care if it's zero or 100 or minus 10, it doesn't matter. The issue is who is making the decision. In this case the decision was made by the Deputy Premier that it will be plus 1 per cent. We can debate whether it should be plus 1 per cent or minus 1 per cent or plus 10 per cent or minus 10 per cent or whatever. That is not the point. We shouldn't be debating it at all.

This is why we need to finally rid ourselves, as a House, of these kinds of decisions by putting in place a panel of citizens who will make those decisions as our bosses on our behalf. I might add, what could be more manipulative politically than to say we're going to defer the review until after the next election? What could be more politically manipulative than that? Tell Nova Scotians that their MLAs will be up for hire when the next election comes, that they can choose who they want and we'll do a review after that, after the balloting day is over, to see how much they're going to get paid.

How many businesses would last if the way they hired people was that the applicant for employment had a deal that you'd hire him first and then after he starts - he or she - that then she'd tell you how much she is going to charge you for her services. Clearly we are violating a responsible business principle, but we're also violating a responsible governing principle. The people of Nova Scotia deserve to know before the election what the pay and benefits and pension arrangements are going to be for the people they put into office.

This government is doing the exact opposite; they stand in their place and with a straight face, tell Nova Scotians that they are delaying the review until after the election, as if that was in some way a good thing. I tell you, Mr. Speaker, far from being a good thing, far from reducing the level of cynicism that there may be in our province, that there is in our province over the way pensions and pay and benefits are handled in this House, it is a bad thing. It increases the level of cynicism because people see it for what it is, political manipulation by elected people themselves, the very thing they want us to get away from.

I have no doubt, Mr. Speaker, that that is why the government has planted this stink bomb into the middle of this bill, with is otherwise about other things, like reshuffling the deck chairs between their departments. Of all the cynical things that could be done, to bury this provision in this bill ranks at the top.

Mr. Speaker, the other provision in the bill that I find offensive is the elimination of Voluntary Planning. It is a great honour for me to rise in this place, having the job that my boyhood hero, Robert L. Stanfield, once held, the member from Truro, the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party, a Premier who Nova Scotians of all political stripes have come to respect in his time. The greatest test of all, of a political leader, is he looks better and better and better as the decades roll on.

Now, Mr. Speaker, one of the creations of the Stanfield Government that Mr. Stanfield himself pointed to as an accomplishment was the creation of Voluntary Planning. At a time of financial restraint in his government, when major change was required in our province, to our economy, to our social services, to the way we govern ourselves, he didn't go to Manitoba or Toronto or some other place and hire a fancy consultant to tell him what to do. He knew that the collective wisdom and experience of the people of Nova Scotia was out there for his government to draw on, on a voluntary basis, at no cost, to advise the government on what needed to be done.

That was the basis of Voluntary Planning in the 1960s. What is more relevant today than that? Mr. Speaker, I will yield to another member who I believe wishes to make an introduction.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island on an introduction.

MR. LEONARD PREYRA: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party for ceding the floor for this introduction. I'm delighted to introduce a group of students, teachers and chaperones from a school that I hold very dear to my heart because I share a common fence with them, LeMarchant St. Thomas. I should tell them that I have a number of soccer balls and basketballs and things like that in my backyard that I would like to give back to you.

I'm delighted to have with us today, Mr. Speaker, the teachers from LeMarchant St. Thomas. There are 19 students here, I believe and half of them have spoken to the honourable member for Inverness. They haven't got an antidote to that talk and I'm hoping that they'll leave well-informed and I'm sure they will.

The teachers here are Madame LeDuc; parents, Cindy Wheeler, Dominika Wranik; Jessica Young and her students, Alex Schofield, Suzie Manovill and Yana Fedortchouk. I'm sorry if I massacred those names, but I welcome you, nonetheless, all the students and teachers I just read out, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, very much. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: We welcome all of our guests to the gallery, especially the young lad wearing the Boston Celtics T-shirt. We hope you enjoy this morning's procedures.

The honourable Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, I would also like to welcome the class that is with us today. In fact, to point out to the benefit of the students and others who are in the gallery that when I was a student at Dalhousie University, my part-time job was to be a lunch monitor at LeMarchant-St. Thomas School. I would run over at lunch hour and supervise the elementary classes at that school. I raise that today because it's relevant because I think of all the jobs I held between then and now, that's probably the one that prepared me the best for participating in the debates of this House of Assembly. So I thank the students of LeMarchant-St. Thomas for that training which has become so useful to me over the last few months here in this House.

I was speaking of Voluntary Planning and the reason the Stanfield Government brought it in, but I should point out that Voluntary Planning has been used successfully and repeatedly, not only by the Stanfield Government, but by every government of every political stripe since then until now. Liberal or Conservative, back and forth, the value of Voluntary Planning was recognized and used and although it was created in the early

1960s, it has successfully rebranded itself over time to always be modern and available to the government.

In the last decade Voluntary Planning, independent of government, with its own board, rebranded itself into the consultation arm of government, again, on a voluntary basis that could be used by the government of the day, whoever they were, to reach out into the many communities of Nova Scotia to gather expertise, to gather opinion, to gather the wisdom of Nova Scotians and collect it up and report back to the government. Of course, it's very important that that was done independently because one would assume that the government wants to do the right thing. If you want to do the right thing then you want to make sure that the information being collected is being collected in a way that is independent of influence, so that the opinions you get back are of the highest quality; that was recognized by Mr. Stanfield and by every government since his time. Now we have a government that does not want to proceed in that manner. They're not interested in the collective wisdom of Nova Scotians and their experience, their opinion, and they're certainly not interested in collecting it in an independent way.

I find it very interesting, this bill is before this House for second reading today, but we know that the board of Voluntary Planning have already been given their walking papers. The government didn't even wait for the Legislature to pass its judgment on its decision. This is a deeply disturbing point that we're in second reading and they have already eliminated the Voluntary Planning board. The employees of Voluntary Planning have already been dispersed out to other departments and we're only in second reading. The board has been told, go home.

The reason, of course, that the government gives for this action is that they want to save money. I'm glad they want to save money somewhere, but we're talking about \$400,000 to \$500,000, 90 per cent of which is salaries, all of which has just been reallocated somewhere else. Talk about reshuffling the deck chairs, here is a great example, one line item goes down, and 12 others go up by the same amount so clearly this is not about saving money because no money is going to be saved. In fact, by eliminating the voluntary method of collecting public opinion and engaging in public consultation, clearly, unless the government wants to close its ears altogether to the views of Nova Scotians, it's going to replace it with the fancy consultant method of collecting opinion and listening to Nova Scotians, which is far more costly but interestingly, is also far less independent because you get what you pay for, Mr. Speaker, and when the government itself hires consultants, at the cost of thousands and thousands of dollars per day, to do this work for them, they will, no doubt, get back exactly what they want to hear.

Ironically, on the odd occasion when they don't, they do everything they can to bury the report, to deny its release - the gambling study would be a great example - to pretend it never happened, to disparage the consultant who prepared the report and, in this case, attempt to deny payment, all of those things because they didn't like what they heard.

None of that could happen under Voluntary Planning. This was the wisdom of Mr. Stanfield, that when you ask Nova Scotians for their opinion, when you collect it in an independent way, in a voluntary way, not only do you get back good, independent, wise information, but it's very hard then for a government to ignore it. It is far easier to ignore the consultant from Toronto to whom we have just paid hundreds, or tens of thousands of dollars to do the work that Voluntary Planning used to do.

Mr. Speaker, here we are with a hodgepodge bill, filled with administrative changes and deck chair reshuffling, with odious provisions like delaying the MLA pay review until after the election and eliminating Voluntary Planning, deliberately mashed together in an old trick to force the Legislature to consider them as a package. Secondly, here we are with a majority government grown so arrogant in its short time in office that it already doesn't wait for the Legislature to actually deal with and pass or not pass a bill, but goes ahead and disbands the Voluntary Planning board before we've even got through second reading.

Surely this is offensive to you, sir, as someone who is in charge of the proceedings of this House, and surely it's offensive to all of your peers across the country and across the British parliamentary system who believe in the supremacy of Parliament because that supremacy has been violated with this bill, as has the wisdom of Nova Scotians been violated by this bill, as has the common decency to tell people what they are going to pay their elected officials before the election been violated by this bill.

With those few, modest remarks, I will take my place and allow the debate to go on. Thank you for your time, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

MR. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today and speak to this bill, Bill No. 52. I know my colleague, the member for Richmond, and the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party have outlined a wide view of what this bill - it kind of reminds me of, I guess it is an omnibus type of bill since it does involve a number of changes, both administratively, with elimination of a very valued process in our democracy; Voluntary Planning deals with MLAs salaries and benefits, so it is indeed an omnibus bill.

I want to speak just for a very short time about Voluntary Planning and the Voluntary Planning board, which now is being eliminated through this bill and sent on its way, and has, in fact, done yeoman's service to this province and that entire process and how valuable it has been. I know there are a number of areas in which they have influenced legislation, they've influenced guidelines and, in fact, have had very significant benefit to us as a province.

I know since coming to the Legislature, there are two areas in particular: I think of Voluntary Planning and the off-road vehicle legislation and, of course, now still awaiting the outcome of the natural resources strategy. Those two pieces of work, in fact, are

landmark documents for this province because we had an out-of-control situation around off-highway vehicles. To bring people from the medical community, the trails associations, the hiking groups, people concerned, like the Ecology Action Centre, to bring all these diverse groups together and to work for a better day, to bring in a plan, to bring in recommendations - finally 39 recommendations came forward that I think have led to greater safety, trail development and a real sense of care in our outdoor environment in Nova Scotia. I know we still have some way to go in that regard, but we have made great strides.

I went to a couple of those meetings put on by Voluntary Planning, both for the off-highway vehicle Voluntary Planning group as well as the natural resources strategy. One of the things that Voluntary Planning does is bring forth individuals from across Nova Scotia, from one end to the other, with a great degree of expertise that we're not paying big dollars for, but are very knowledgeable in the area and with the perspective that they are taking. Whether it was the off-highway vehicles, whether it was what we should do about uranium mining or what we should do with our forests and their future, all of these areas, people brought enormous expertise, because that's their education and training, and they now live in our communities scattered throughout the province - they took the time to come to these.

Also, people brought passion to those meetings about how much they care about our province and some of the directions that they want to see it go. I think it will be a real failure of government if this in some way is not replaced. The ordinary Nova Scotian, the Nova Scotian with a very learned perspective both from formal education as well as a lifetime of experience - if we can't blend all of those together and take them through a Voluntary Planning process, I think it is a huge democratic deficit to have that abolished by this government. That's what I'm really lobbying for today because I know the kind of countless hours, the community meetings that, in fact, beg to go on longer than their designated times, so that Nova Scotians from one end of the province to the other could get on their feet and speak intelligently, passionately, caringly about how they want a direction to go on very controversial issues.

Say the words "off-highway vehicles" five or six years ago, say the word "clear-cutting" today and it evokes certain responses among Nova Scotians and no longer a minority group. We're talking about well-informed, considered and thoughtful views of people, and to allow Voluntary Planning to go by the wayside is a very sad day for our province. I know how much they have contributed to the process of gaining information that otherwise is often overlooked.

We can't get everybody to come to the Red Room and talk about a bill and a piece of legislation. Sometimes, yes, some pieces of legislation will bring a good cross-section, but very often it is one very narrow segment of the population. Whereas Voluntary Planning goes out into communities and people don't have to worry about transportation,

inconveniences, and so on that may prevent them from coming and speaking on an important process.

That's what it is here. It is the process that is so democratic, so open and a way for us Nova Scotians to express ourselves on things that matter, on things that shape the future. We know this natural resources strategy is going to shape the next 50 years. In the same way, we now see the results of the off-highway vehicle and it wasn't we as legislators who had the greatest influence, it was ordinary Nova Scotians who went to Voluntary Planning, put their mark on that document, and from it we moved it into legislation and recommendations and a process is unfolding, which is so much better than going down to the Tobiatric and seeing ATV ruts through areas of the Tobiatric. We've corrected that, we've corrected those misdeeds.

The same way with any issue and area that faces the future of our province, it is citizens and their well-being, we should be open to that process. I hope government will reconsider the future of the place of Voluntary Planning, as we make legislation, as we present landmark documents as we have in the past, there will be other needs in the future. It is my hope that government will reconsider and continue that lively process. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: If I recognize the Deputy Premier it will be to close the debate.

The honourable Deputy Premier.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Madam Speaker, I thank all the members for their interventions; some I obviously agree with, some I'm a bit more reluctant to agree with. Nonetheless, I really thank them for their participation in the debate. With that, I move second reading of Bill No. 52.

MADAM SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 52. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Madam Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 53.

Bill No. 53 - Labour Standards Code.

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

HON. MARILYN MORE: Madam Speaker, I move that Bill No. 53, an Act to Amend Chapter 246 of the Revised Statutes, 1989, the Labour Standards Code, Respecting Worker Recruitment and Protection, be now read a second time.

It is my privilege to rise and speak on this bill, which contains amendments that will improve protection for temporary foreign workers, especially recruitment and unfair treatment. These are some of the most vulnerable workers in our province and they play an important role in the ongoing growth and success of our economy.

Temporary foreign workers who come to Nova Scotia from outside of Canada to work on specific projects for specific periods of time are often unfamiliar with our employment laws and standards. They may also face language barriers and may be socially isolated and feel unable to complain about unfair treatment. Although these workers are protected by labour standards and occupational health and safety laws in the same way as all other employees, the province has become aware that they may need additional protections.

To further explore these issues, the Department of Labour and Advanced Education and the Office of Immigration released a consultation paper last May that was sent to key stakeholders as well as released publicly in English and French on the department's Web site. We received replies to the discussion paper and held meetings with employers, employers' associations, recruiters and a number of former and current temporary foreign workers. In some cases responses were from umbrella organizations which consulted their membership before responding.

The consultations confirm what we had been hearing, that there is a need to improve protection for temporary foreign workers in our province. One of the issues we heard during the consultations involved fees being charged to temporary foreign workers by recruiters. In one case those fees ranged between \$2,500 and \$3,000. It is a basic principle of employment law that workers do not pay for jobs.

Another issue involved what is known as bait and switch, that's when a job is offered to a worker only to find out it is not quite the job described in the offer and it's at a lower wage. Madam Speaker, to put this in context, the complaints we received from some of the workers did not indicate any systemic problem, such as those found in some other jurisdictions. These amendments are proactive and focus on protecting the workers.

Madam Speaker, many Nova Scotians think of seasonal agricultural workers when they think of temporary foreign workers. In 2009 there were about 600 of these workers in the province. However, another 2,600 temporary foreign workers were employed in skilled and unskilled occupations. These included university professors and instructors, chefs and cooks, child care and home support workers, specialist physicians, software developers,

engineers, electrical trades, social workers, registered nurses, and transportation and equipment mechanics.

The demand for these workers will continue increasing as our employers deal with issues related to an aging and shrinking working age population. Madam Speaker, protecting temporary international workers is not unique to Nova Scotia. Ontario, Manitoba, Alberta and British Columbia have all taken action to protect temporary foreign workers while other provinces are in the process of doing the same.

Madam Speaker, these amendments will only change one of the province's existing labour standards. It will increase the period of time employers and recruiters must keep records from one to three years. The focus of these amendments is to protect temporary international workers who come to Nova Scotia to work. The amendments will cover a number of areas. They will update the provision that prohibits charging fees to temporary foreign workers for job placement services and it will include effective enforcement of those provisions.

The current Employment Agencies Act is 90 years old and it carries a maximum fine of \$25. It has never been used. The new legislation will repeal this Act. The new provisions will be included in our labour standards and will make any fees charged recoverable. It will also include a more substantial penalty of up to \$50,000. Recruiters of temporary foreign workers will have to obtain a licence from the director of Labour Standards. This applies to recruiters based here in Nova Scotia and outside of the province. This is over and above any federal requirements in this area.

We will put in place an appeal process for recruiters who are refused a licence. The appeal will be made to the Labour Board. Employers who wish to recruit temporary foreign workers will need to register with Access Nova Scotia. This registration is free, automated and takes just minutes to complete. Madam Speaker, this is a very minimal administrative burden.

We will also put in place an appeal process for those refused a registration certificate and a refusal may occur if the employer has been flagged for previous safety or labour standards violations. Employers will not be allowed to change the conditions of employment offered to a temporary foreign worker without approval from the federal government. Employers will be prohibited from indirectly recovering any recruitment fees. Any such fees will be recovered by our Labour Standards branch. Employers will be prohibited from holding a passport or work permit from any temporary foreign worker.

Madam Speaker, our new immigration strategy is part of the government's jobsHere plan to grow our economy. International workers have the technical skills and international contacts the province needs to become more innovative, productive and competitive. By focusing on attracting immigrants with the right skills and experience, our strategy will make our immigration programs more responsive to employers' needs. When employers can't find the skills or the number of workers they need in Nova Scotia or across

Canada, they can apply to bring in a temporary international worker. If the need is confirmed, these workers are brought in for specific jobs and specific time periods.

Earlier this year Nova Scotia signed an agreement with Citizenship and Immigration Canada that provides the province with a greater role in helping employers bring temporary international workers to the province. Basically the agreement allows us to speed up the process if certain conditions exist and criteria are met.

Madam Speaker, we are being proactive and coordinated in our approach to immigration. If we are going to bring in more international workers to meet the demands of our employers then we need to ensure those workers are properly protected. (Interruption) Yes.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness on an introduction.

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Thank you Madam Speaker and I'd like to welcome the students from the Grade 4 class of LeMarchant-St. Thomas and their teacher. Why don't you all stand up so you can be recognized. Madam Speaker, I'd also like to welcome their teacher who happens to be my cousin, Miss Adele Beaton, and we have three parents today. We have Dean Jones, Audrey Steenbeek, and Fafa St. Denis.

I had a chance to visit with them yesterday and they asked some excellent questions. One of the questions they asked me is if I ever win any of my debates.

HON. MEMBERS: No, no! (Laughter)

MR. MACMASTER: Another interesting question was they asked if it was fun to be an MLA and I think we all find it pretty fun to be an MLA.

AN HON. MEMBER: Especially with you. (Laughter)

MR. MACMASTER: Especially, yeah. So, Madam Speaker, with that I'd like to welcome them to the House. They had a chance to have a little tour and I hope they had a chance to enjoy seeing us at work for them.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you very much and I certainly welcome them to the House of Assembly today.

The honourable Minister of Labour Advanced Education.

MS. MORE: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and it's certainly a delight to have youth of our province here following the second reading debate on Bill 53.

In closing I just want to remind the chamber that the amendments that we are introducing will be phased in. The provision that prohibits charging fees to temporary foreign workers for job placement services will take effect this summer, the requirement for recruiters to be licensed will take effect this Fall and the requirement for employers to register will take effect this winter.

Madam Speaker, we will ensure resources are in place to effectively administer and monitor the provisions contained in these amendments. We will ensure the agreements are in place with the federal government for information sharing that allows us to monitor compliance with federal and provincial rules and regulations. We will ensure employers have access to the information they need about this legislation before the regulations take effect.

I am losing my voice so I will conclude my remarks and look forward to hearing from members opposite.

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

MS. KELLY REGAN: Madam Speaker, I'm afraid the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education and I suffer from the same allergies so I'm not sure how long mine will last either. I'm pleased to rise and speak on Bill No. 53, the Labour Standards Code today.

The goal of this bill is laudable; to improve the protection of temporary foreign workers. It repeals a 90 year-old toothless Act never used that had as its maximum fine \$25 so it's good to see that go. The reality is that many industries here utilize the services of temporary foreign workers to fill jobs that otherwise would go unfilled. For many individuals living outside our country, this is an opportunity for them to seek employment because they can't find jobs at home and it's key to their economic security. However, there have been instances where temporary foreign workers have been asked to pay fees and in some cases substantial fees to private recruiters for placement.

As the minister indicated, there are also cases of what we call 'bait and switch' where they are promised certain wages when they arrive and it turns out when they arrive here that the terms of their employment are quite different from what they had agreed to. There have been instances where passports have been held and workers have not been able to move freely. We are pleased to see that that will no longer be the case with this legislation. These are vulnerable workers and they need protection.

Madam Speaker, this piece of legislation is not necessarily ground-breaking. We have seen that Alberta, BC, Ontario and Manitoba all have similar pieces of legislation and all have the same goals: a prohibition on the collection of recruitment-related fees, a requirement that all employers register when they hire a temporary foreign worker, mandatory licensing of recruiters and ways to deal with enforcement measures. For

potential employers they will have to register every time they hire a temporary foreign worker.

While the government indicates at this time registration will be free, we are left to hold them to their word because we won't be able to debate any increase in fees on the floor of the House because the government can simply implement a fee with the stroke of a pen. We've seen this happen this year where they increased 1,400 fees without bringing those fees to the Legislature.

We know that the government plans to hire three new workers to manage the registration process. This comes with a price tag of \$300,000 and that could be easily absorbed through a fee established for the cost of service if this government decides that's the way it wants to go. I'm sure it won't be too long before this Minister of Finance finds this potential revenue source and deals with it in the form of a user fee. Depending on the size of the fee, one would wonder whether this could become a deterrent to hiring temporary foreign workers. If numbers remain as was mentioned in the press conference where, as of 2009, you had 3,200 temporary foreign workers and the government spends \$300,000 to hire employees to manage the registration process and the oversight process, strict cost recovery today would be \$93.75 per worker. That would be a cost per employee and I'm not sure whether that would be a deterrent or not to companies. However, it would be one more cost for businesses here in Nova Scotia.

I note also with interest that in yesterday's press release, the minister stated, "As part of our new immigration strategy, we will speed up the approval process for temporary foreign workers in certain circumstances." Madam Speaker, I am almost certain that the minister meant she would work with the federal government as the granting of entry to Canada as a temporary foreign workers falls under federal jurisdiction. Let us hope she is more successful there than we have been getting the federal government to remove the cap, or to increase the cap, on our number of provincial nominees. This is a continuing problem, the failure of the federal government to increase the number of provincial nominees.

Madam Speaker, we have no major objections to this bill. We would prefer if government would be open and accountable as to whether they will eventually charge a fee for registering a temporary foreign worker. We were pleased to see that through consultations, there were no real systemic problems when it comes to the treatment of temporary foreign workers in our province. There appear to be isolated issues but there did not appear to be system-wide problems to report. That is positive and it speaks to the commitment of our local employers to ensure Nova Scotia is a welcoming community.

Legislation that establishes preventive measures are positive and will ensure that we keep Nova Scotia in the forefront when it comes to a province where we can embrace the invaluable role our temporary foreign workers play in our community. In speaking to stakeholders, one concern was raised and that was with an agency that charges students

here, Nova Scotian students, to find them a paid internship overseas - would this legislation affect them? Perhaps in her closing remarks, the minister could clarify whether this would, indeed, affect that practice.

Before closing, I'd like to make one more observation. The minister indicated that consultations were held last year. It would be very much appreciated if the minister could share with us, with whom she consulted leading up to the development of this legislation and which stakeholders she worked with in the creation of Bill No. 53. We are not so much interested in the stakeholder groups who were offered a briefing on the completed model, but more so those groups who helped shape the legislation. It would also be interesting to hear what the minister had in mind when she stated that in certain circumstances she would speed up the approval process of temporary foreign workers and what those certain circumstances would be. We would like to know.

We are supportive of moving Bill No. 53 on to the Committee on Law Amendments; such a bill would serve to enhance Nova Scotia's reputation in the international global marketplace to the benefit of our province and Canada alike. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants West.

MR. CHUCK PORTER: I'm glad to have an opportunity just to take a couple of minutes this morning to comment on Bill No. 53, the Labour Standards Code. We will be supporting this bill over to the Committee on Law Amendments, at least that far, and seeing where it goes from there.

I'm not going to be critical of any bill that supports workers or treats them with fairness; whether they be foreign workers or local workers, it is a very important issue. I do know there have been some issues, unfortunately, that we've heard about; I don't know the facts behind all of them. At this point, it doesn't matter as long as they're being dealt with and this piece of legislation will, I hope, strengthen that. I guess what's more frustrating for me, and our caucus, is that we have to bring in foreign workers when we have an unemployment level in this province.

I understand maybe not everybody wants to work in certain fields and I appreciate that as well, but at the same time there are job opportunities out there and we're bringing in foreign workers. In talking to organizations that do use foreign workers, there's a reason for that - they're happy with them and that certainly does matter to their bottom line and their business and that's supported by us as well and that's important.

I just wanted to get on the record as saying that this caucus does support this bill, that the fairness of all workers is very important to us now, and always, and going forward. We look forward to seeing it at the Committee on Law Amendments and see whether there will be any amendments, additions, et cetera, coming back and being passed through this Chamber. With that, I will take my seat.

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

The honourable Minister of Labour and Advanced Education.

HON. MARILYN MORE: Madam Speaker, I thank the honourable members for their comments and their support in moving this bill to the Committee on Law Amendments. With those remarks, I move second reading of Bill No. 53.

MADAM SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 53. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Madam Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 55.

Bill No. 55 - Medical Act.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Madam Speaker, it gives me pleasure today to rise to move second reading of the new Medical Act. This Act will modernize and update the existing legislation, streamlining processes and allowing the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Nova Scotia to operate more efficiently. The college exists to protect the public and the new Act will further support this mandate.

I want to thank the college for its hard work and leadership in making this happen. The college advised the department that Nova Scotia needed a more current and modern Act to regulate the medical profession, to protect the public interest and to make it easier for the college to do business.

The current Medical Act was passed 15 years ago and this is the first major revision. Over time, the structure and content of the existing Act has become outdated. We are happy to be able to support the college in modernizing their legislation. The changes outlined in the bill fall into three categories; administrative, professional practice and disciplinary. This Act will have its key operating concepts and principles in the body of the Act, with details now included in the regulations, bylaws and policies.

Madam Speaker, it will also assist the college in complying with the federal agreement on internal trade and the provincial Fair Registration Practices Act. These

changes will make it easier for doctors licensed in other provinces or who have trained overseas, to become licensed here.

There's a key element of the new Act that I'm quite pleased to introduce, Madam Speaker, because it will allow government to continue to provide better care for families. The new Act clarifies what falls within the scope of medical practice. This will make it easier for the college to develop processes to permit non-physicians to take on certain aspects of the practice of medicine. Some examples of this that are already in place are nurse practitioners ordering tests and pharmacists prescribing certain medications.

The third and final category of changes addresses disciplinary infractions. These changes ensure that the process for handling complaints is clear and fair for all involved. Madam Speaker, this ensures that the best interests of patients continues to be served and that Nova Scotians continue to receive the best quality care from their physicians. Nova Scotia's doctors are responsible for the care of many patients, the guidance, support, reassurance and trust they provide is invaluable. As a government, we value and respect the skills and expertise of physicians.

Madam Speaker, we know how much Nova Scotians count on their doctors for advice and care. The tenets introduced in the new Medical Act will allow physicians to more effectively regulate their own profession while supporting our shared goal, providing better health care for Nova Scotian families.

Madam Speaker, I welcome second reading of this bill and encourage all Parties to support this important piece of legislation. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Clayton Park.

MS. DIANA WHALEN: Madam Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today and speak on Bill No. 55 which is the Medical Act. This is a completely revamped Act, I gather an updated Act from 1996, when we originally had the first of the Acts that would govern the registration and management of the doctors in our province. It was the first of the college's models, as I understand it, that we had introduced when we began, and we did it first for the physicians and then later for many other groups that have come before us, asking for recognition in the House and a professional society that would manage their complaints and their registration and maintain these standards of practice for their profession. That I think is the real key in the model that we choose - to allow them to be self-regulated to create their own body; in this way it's called a college. We have the College of Physicians and Surgeons here in Nova Scotia that manages the registration and the mobility of doctors, the reorganization of their training and so on.

So this bill has a number of key components as the minister said. First of all it is going to look at a number of things in terms of its governance model. I should say before going there is that this is a modernization and I think that the trends have changed. We may have been one of the first to adopt it but as we go forward it's important that we keep pace

with some of the other innovations that we see in other provinces. Modernizing our view of the profession, which the minister referred to, allowing for changes in scope of practice and other professions which may now be part of the system and working partly with doctors. This really outlines how that will all take place.

On the government side, Madam Speaker, one of the changes, which is quite fundamental, is the change to the council size. The college allows for a council made up of different representative groups who help to govern a lot of the decision-making that they do. What we've had in the past is a council that was made up of 15 members and the new Act allows for a makeup of the council that will be a minimum of nine. What we understood was that it would not necessarily change size immediately but if all of the components are filled, just to the minimum number we are going to have nine members. It will eliminate, as well, the representative that we had on that larger council, the representative from Doctors Nova Scotia. We understand that that has been discussed with Doctors Nova Scotia and to the best of my knowledge, there is no objection to that.

However we do want to hear from Doctors Nova Scotia about other elements as this moves forward. I'm certain if there are any strong objections we'll hear about them at Committee on Law Amendments which is a fortunate thing. Nova Scotia is a province, and I think the only province in Canada, that provides the opportunity for stakeholders and individual members of the public, even. Any citizen can put their name on the list, calling the Clerk's Office and say I want to speak to that bill. I'm not sure the clerk's going to advise me if I were the only one but we're among the few if not the only one. The fact that people can come forward and speak to a bill and make suggestions to the Legislature and individual MLAs, I think is very important.

Doctors Nova Scotia, as it appears, will be giving up their seat on that council. A positive part is that one-third of the members of the council - that would be a minimum of three people - will be members of the public, so that will be lay members not doctors. We've maintained the seat for the dean of the medical school, which I think is very important for that connection to medical training, and we have five members who will be doctors-at-large who will sit on this council. I believe that in truth, probably nine is a more workable number. I'm not sure why they wanted to decrease it but I know you could probably get more done with a smaller group. As long as your representation is there for the general public I think that we are all going to be well served by that.

Madam Speaker, there is a change here as well to the appointments process and I think it's interesting, as I know many members of the House have sat on the Human Resources Committee, which actually has made the appointments in the past to the council for the College of Physicians and Surgeons. They are asking now that those appointments be made directly by the college and that is opposed to going to Cabinet and having those appointments approved through the Minister of Health and Wellness and making its way back to the Human Resources Committee to be endorsed.

I know having been a member of that committee we have been criticized in the past for being too slow, maybe not fast enough to fill the public seats that are various boards and committees which cause a problem for the groups that rely on that means to fill their ranks. Particularly, with the College of Physicians and Surgeons they have things like disciplinary hearings or things that really need to be dealt with in a timely manner and I'll use that as an example. There are probably others but disciplinary hearings certainly come to mind. If there has been a complaint and they need to look at and hear from all the parties, they need to have their council fully in place and if we've been slow on the government side to fill those positions, then they're not able to move some of their work forward.

I think there might be a little bit of a lesson here, or a question that is raised for us, about how can we streamline or improve the timeliness of our appointments process through the HR Committee. I think that the College of Physicians and Surgeons has asked for this change because they know that they can be responsive and quicker on the ground than going through this lengthy process.

One point we would like to make, as a Liberal caucus, is just to ensure that when they're going out to look for members of the public, that that be advertised because our process is very public. When we go forward for any of the appointments through the HR Committee, there are, in fact, some big improvements made over the last number of years to those ads. We try to reach out to any kind of special publications. We want to make sure that women hear about the ads, that Aboriginal people hear about the ads, that disabled people are contacted.

We try to use Web sites and publications that are going to get to any of the groups that might otherwise miss the call. There has been a real effort to open the door and make sure that it's not an obscure process but that people know that the Government of Nova Scotia is saying, please step forward, you have skills to contribute and we want you to be involved in our boards and committees and agencies.

I think it's a good process that we've been trying to improve, but if the doctors themselves - through the College of Physicians and Surgeons - are going to make these appointments, we want to make sure that they are properly advertised and that it doesn't become something very in-house. We want to make sure everybody has a chance to indicate their willingness to serve and be involved. Again, I think that is an important point for us on the size of the council that governs them.

There's another element of the bill that is going to involve doctors of osteopathy. Osteopathic physicians are something that I wasn't too familiar with. I've heard the term and I didn't quite understand what it would be, but I understand from talking to others and through the briefing on the bill that there are doctors trained in the United States who are called Doctors of Osteopathy. They have a slightly different training but it does cover all of the bases for our medical training. This bill will allow them to be fully recognized to practice here in our province. That aligns us as well, I believe, with other jurisdictions in Canada so that we've got better mobility and we become, again, in sync with our

neighbouring provinces and recognizing that these doctors, who are trained in the United States, may have a different approach to some of the work they do, as physicians, but they certainly have all of the solid grounding that we provide in Nova Scotia.

In this case I'm not entirely familiar with what they do differently. I understand it's a little bit more hands-on and that they have some different training along the way. They talk about osteopathic manipulative medicine, so I think it is hands-on. I think it will be good for Nova Scotians to see that has been improved and maybe we'll have the option of some other, slightly different medical approaches for us to use.

Bringing us into line with other jurisdictions, I think is always important in harmonizing across Canada. I know there's an effort to help with the mobility of doctors and recognition being coordinated between jurisdictions.

In the bill there is a clause that is going to allow the introduction of physician assistants. Mr. Speaker, we understand that this is a category of individual professionals within the health care delivery who are recognized in other provinces but we don't have any physician assistants right now, in Nova Scotia. I think it's actually a category that bears having some close examination of, because for one reason, I certainly see physician assistants as being a category of professional that would allow us to integrate more of our internationally-trained medical graduates. We have, in this province, people who we have attracted from overseas to come to Canada. They are doctors by profession and it's very difficult for them to get recognition when they come here.

What I'd like to see is that we find more ways to bring them into our medical and health delivery. These people are well trained although they may not be trained in exactly - well certainly not the same schools, they have been trained overseas or in other countries, but if we could find other ways to bring them into our health care system we could then be helping them to upgrade their skills or fill the gap of whatever skills it is that they should have in Canada and they haven't had the opportunity to get.

I know New Brunswick has introduced physician assistants and some of these international medical grads have gone to New Brunswick to fill those positions and they've been so delighted because it has allowed them to be working in health care again. Maybe - I just say maybe - that would be one means for us to be able to have them stay in Nova Scotia.

I'm sure that other members of the House, as well, have had people come to visit them who are frustrated, disappointed, sometimes they're certainly a little angry because they've come here under a certain premise that we wanted them in Canada because they're doctors. They were given the opportunity to come for that reason, because they filled that professional quotient or need, and then when they come here they're not able to practice. I think we need to do everything we can to expand the number of opportunities through our

Medical School, through mentoring, through the various programs we've got in place for education and upgrading, so that we fill those gaps and allow these individuals to stay here, because we have physician shortages.

I was just listening at the Committee on Law Amendments to a person speaking from Yarmouth who was speaking in defence of pharmacists, but they were speaking specifically about the fact that - the woman who spoke said her parents, who are ages 90 and 94, have not had a family doctor for the last year and that they have depended upon their pharmacist to help guide them in their prescriptions and advice because they have no family doctor. It's not even getting in; doctors have left there. We know there are communities like Yarmouth, that's not the only one in Nova Scotia, and we need to bring these people in. When I saw this new Medical Act, Bill No. 55, before us, I hoped that there might have been more reason to be optimistic that through this Act, again, we can help some of these internationally-trained doctors to come and be working here in Nova Scotia.

We really want to see them make Nova Scotia their home and I know it ties in with the immigration strategy that the Minister of Immigration announced just last week. We want to make this a welcoming place for all newcomers and when we know the federal government is targeting professionals - we have pharmacists, as well, coming here who aren't able to practise. I think they're given one chance to write the exam. It's not a very open process. Even if it's two or three, there has got to be a process where we give them education and help them get ready for those exams when they come here. They've been fast-tracked because they're pharmacists or doctors.

I'm hoping that the government will keep working with the College of Physicians and Surgeons, and perhaps move forward on the opportunity of creating physician assistants. That is just one avenue, I think, that can help the international graduates, but we also need to look at how they are licensed and that's part of this Act. A lot of the detail will be in regulation, but the Act allows for the College of Physicians and Surgeons to carry out the licensing and the testing and the assurance, which I understand is a quality control, to ensure the quality of the medicine that is practiced in this province, to protect Nova Scotians.

I do believe that we can work together to ensure that is accomplished. It's just something that's near and dear to my heart because, certainly in my riding of Clayton Park, we have many newcomers, many new Canadians and I have, over the eight years that I've been an MLA, had the privilege to meet many of them and to talk to them about the challenges that they face making their home here in Nova Scotia. I would say, without a doubt, the biggest challenge is getting credentials recognized and medicine is one of those professional credentials that are brought to my attention on a regular basis.

What I understand is there's not going to be any movement on the physician assistants right now, but it is now going to be allowed for in law, and if it's allowed for, then we can look at moving forward. At least we've made the provision that it is possible, it's enabling at this point in time, so I'd like to see that done.

With the international medical graduates, it says here that the appeal processes for denials of registration are also included and it's to ensure that they meet the requirements of our Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act. That Act spells out very clearly that every one of the regulated professions has to have very clear processes, so if I was a newcomer to Nova Scotia, I could go to the profession that I'm a member of and look to see exactly what is required of me, what steps and what hurdles I have to jump to become recognized and registered in the province. So FARPA - its abbreviation - is a good thing and I gather this Act now, by modernizing and updating the Medical Act, just formalizes what the College of Physicians and Surgeons had to do as a result of that Act.

Mr. Speaker, you might remember that I had introduced a Private Member's Bill some years ago urging the government to do just that, to make it a more transparent system for newcomers. I was pleased when the previous government did introduce this Act, which was certainly more comprehensive than my Private Member's Bill would be. It covers trades as well as the regulated professions but all of those groups had to change their processes and become more open and transparent. That's a positive thing.

Unfortunately, in looking at this bill, my only sadness is that this just formalizes what the College of Physicians and Surgeons has already done, the steps they had to take in order to be compliant with FARPA. I'd love to see us go further and really be more proactive and more aggressive in saying there has to be a way for us to get over these hurdles and allow people to practise in this province. I think a lot of professions have had a reluctance to embrace this change and I think we need to try to see what we can do that will make it a little bit more embracing of newcomers and more willing to look at what we can do to overcome any gaps in their training or experience so that they can take their place alongside Canadian-trained doctors. The changes that are made there have really just been in line with other legislation. It won't make a big difference at all on that one.

If there are any concerns that Doctors Nova Scotia may have, I think we will hear that at the Committee on Law Amendments. I haven't contacted them directly and I'm trusting that both the minister and the College of Physicians and Surgeons have done their due diligence in reaching out to the other stakeholders that needed to be contacted. It's important to note that a bill like this which governs a profession is actually written and prepared by the profession and brought to government to say this is how we'd like to see it. Then the government staff and experts within government go through that to make sure that everything is correct and that it aligns with other legislation. Also, that there's a bit of a checklist at least that everything is covered off, that we see in each and every one of these professional Acts.

I'd mentioned before, we now have, although our physicians were the first group to come through, we have midwives who have their own Act, we recognize a number of other groups as well - nurses certainly have theirs. There's a whole series of professionals that I don't think we could even begin to name because rather than doing a single Act, we allow

each profession to come through on their own. For that reason the bill obviously got the support of the College of Physicians and Surgeons because they would have presented it to the government and asked the government to move forward with a modernized, updated Act.

With that I look forward to the Committee on Law Amendments, hoping to see if we hear from any other stakeholders, if there are any other people who would like to see changes in this bill or support the bill. Again, we do support the idea of modernizing and improving any of our professional Acts. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants West.

MR. CHUCK PORTER: Mr. Speaker, I'm just going to take a couple of minutes to speak to Bill No. 55. I'm happy to have an opportunity this morning. Certainly our caucus agrees with this bill and agrees that it probably needs to be brought up to speed, up to date and modernized. With everything that goes on, most importantly the public protection of Nova Scotians, and all Canadians for that matter, and people travelling through our provinces, they should be treated and cared for when they are in hospital or what have you.

The administration, the disciplinary, all good. The interesting piece was doctors having the ability to be interprovincial or multi-provincial, whatever you'd like to call it, and doctors trained in other countries being able to come and doors being opened for them here to be able to practise. I do know of doctors, I had one in my area, Dr. Wieslaw Machel for years could not practise as an obstetrician when he first came to Canada from Poland, I believe was his home. He sold newspapers on the street in Toronto, Ontario while he waited to get through the process of writing exams, and so on and so forth.

We all know the need for more doctors today in this province, certainly in rural areas, and trying to get folks out. So it's great to have something being done on that and bringing it up to more modernized ideals.

Scope of practice, of course, certainly changes over years with new technologies and new sciences and the development of things, so it's good to consider all of these types of things in this bill. There's not really a whole lot that needs to be said, there's been a fair bit said on it, and we look forward to it going over to the Committee on Law Amendments, as well, and to see if there are any presenters coming in to speak to it. I'm going to assume Doctors Nova Scotia or the College of Physicians and Surgeons will be in and maybe some others. They should come from all different scopes of medical practices, which should include the pharmacists and the doctors, the nurses, the LPNs, the nurse practitioners and so on. It would be nice to have good input across the board from all levels of health care providers, paramedics included, and so on, down the line.

With those very few words today, we'll look forward to this going to the Law Amendments Committee for its debate and process over there and coming back for what

will probably be a little bit more debate, if need be, in this Chamber. With those few words, thank you very much.

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

The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I thank the members from the Opposition Parties for their very constructive interventions. With that I would move second reading of Bill No. 55.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 55. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 56.

Bill No. 56 - Real Estate Trading Act.

Bill No. 57 - Private Ways Act.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of these bills. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motions are carried.

Ordered that these bills be referred to the Committee on Law Amendments.

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. This week has been a trying week for me, trying to satisfy the wishes of the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal, so it's my understanding I'd like to table this at this time for the Speaker of the House so that he can use this next week in the proceedings. Am I permitted to do that? (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: I thank the honourable minister but that is not a point of order - a point of privilege or a point of order - it's a disagreement among three members.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, a wise decision.

That concludes the government's business for today. We will now rise to meet from 4:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. on Monday, when we will be doing Public Bills for Second Reading, Bill No. 59, and going into Committee of the Whole House on Bills and bills that are in Committee of the Whole House.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now rise to meet from 4:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. on Monday.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is that the House adjourn. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

[The House rose at 11:35 a.m.]

NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3)**RESOLUTION NO. 1148**

By: Alfie MacLeod (Cape Breton West)

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

Whereas Nova Scotians feel safe in their communities because of the brave men and women who risk their lives each day as police officers; and

Whereas Juanita Fudge, of Louisbourg, recently graduated from the Atlantic Police Academy; and

Whereas police work is a noble profession that carries with it the responsibility of serving and protecting fellow citizens;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Juanita Fudge of Louisbourg, on her graduation from the Atlantic Police Academy and wish her well as she embarks upon her new career.

RESOLUTION NO. 1149

By: Keith Bain (Victoria-The Lakes)

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

Whereas the thought of climbing Mt. Kilimanjaro, Tanzania, the highest mountain in Africa at 19,000 feet, is only for those who are absolutely confident in their fitness and endurance; and

Whereas 82-year-old Lloyd Stone, of Baddeck, decided to make the climb and managed to go 13,650 feet - a feat only dreamt of by many; and

Whereas it is challenges like this that keep Lloyd young as he continues to be an inspiration to so many who only wish they could achieve what he has achieved;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House congratulate Lloyd Stone on this marvelous achievement and wish him continued good health and good climbing in the future.

RESOLUTION NO. 1150

By: Keith Bain (Victoria-The Lakes)

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

Whereas Joseph Gerard Thurbide, formerly of Bras d'Or, has been named Chauffeur of the Year by Limousine Digest in the United States; and

Whereas Mr. Thurbide began his chauffeuring career after driving for a wedding in Cape Breton and has now been doing it in the United States for over 20 years and has driven such celebrities as Bruce Springsteen, Danny Glover, Danny DeVito, members of the New England Patriots, Boston Bruins and various other PGA and baseball players, as well as the daughter of the President of Indonesia during the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta, Georgia; and

Whereas Mr. Thurbide credits his work ethic to his parents, Reggie and Bridget Thurbide of Mill Creek;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Joseph Gerard Thurbide for being named Chauffeur of the Year by Limousine Digest and wish him many more years of success.

RESOLUTION NO. 1151

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

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

Whereas the Baddeck Curling Club recently completed their 2010-11 Tim Horton's Little Rocks Youth Curling Program; and

Whereas this year the program saw 15 young and upcoming curlers register under the capable direction of seven certified youth coaches; and

Whereas in late March five of the 15 young curlers, Sophia Brownstein, Tommy Prentice, Nick Erickson, Josh MacDonald and Caleb MacCormack competed in their first bonspiel at the Sydney Curling Club, playing two six-end games, winning one and losing one of their games;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly recognize the enthusiasm of the Little Rocks Youth Curling Program at the Baddeck Curling Club and wish them luck as they prepare for the opening of the 2011-12 season in November.

RESOLUTION NO. 1152

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

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

Whereas the Combined Christmas Cheer Project of Sydney Mines, Florence and Little Bras d'Or, which has been in operation as a registered charity for approximately 30 years and assisted over 320 families with grocery hampers; and

Whereas 20 families were helped through the Adopt-A-Family program and 315 children under 16 years of age received gift certificates; and

Whereas the generous efforts of the Combined Christmas Cheer Project make Christmas just a little bit brighter for those in these communities that are in need;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate the Combined Christmas Cheer project and all of their volunteer members, including Evelyn Wells and Peter MacNeil, for their tireless commitment to the community.

RESOLUTION NO. 1153

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

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

Whereas students from schools in the North of Smokey took part again this year in the Canwest Regional Spelling Bee held at Cape Breton University, on February 12; and

Whereas all three schools in the area - Cape Smokey Elementary, North Highlands Elementary and Cabot Junior/Senior High School participated in the competition; and

Whereas Dakota Warren and Jenacy Samways, of Cape Smokey Elementary; Selena MacDonald and Molly Morrison, of North Highlands Elementary; and Dalton Rambeau and Kelsey Burchell of Cabot Junior/Senior High School represented their respective schools;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate these students on a job well done and wish them every success in their future endeavours.

RESOLUTION NO. 1154

By: Mr. Chuck Porter (Hants West)

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

Whereas snowboarding is quickly becoming a popular sport; and

Whereas Kimberly Sutherland, of Windsor, recently had the thrilling experience of competing at Ski Martock, near Windsor, in the snowboarding cross discipline during the 2011 Canada Winter Games where she finished an impressive 4th place out of 20 competitors; and

Whereas Ms. Sutherland became hooked on snowboarding about six years ago when she competed on a high school race team and hasn't looked back since;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Kimberly for her perseverance and wish her continued success with her future competitions.

RESOLUTION NO. 1155

By: Mr. Chuck Porter (Hants West)

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

Whereas since 2005, the Canspell National Spelling Bee has encouraged spelling and language development through healthy competition; and

Whereas Emma Belliveau, a Grade 7 student at King's Edgehill School in Windsor, was named as one of the 47 finalists from across the province in the Chronicle Herald Regional Spelling Bee; and

Whereas the Canspell National Spelling Bee program is designed to engage students from Grade 4 to Grade 8 by celebrating excellence in academic achievement and encouraging positive study habits;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Emma on her phenomenal spelling skills and wish her continued success with future competitions.

RESOLUTION NO. 1156

By: Mr. Chuck Porter (Hants West)

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

Whereas Rebecca Card, a Grade 10 student at Avon View High School, was born with cerebral palsy but despite her disability she is treated like a local celebrity by her neighbours and friends in Centre Burlington where she resides with her mom and grandparents; and

Whereas a smile on the face of 17-year-old Rebecca is just what her mother, Lorraine, and her respite worker, Kelly Church, are looking for when they take Rebecca out for a public skating session; and

Whereas Rebecca was thrilled with a skating party, which was held specifically for her at the Hants Exhibition Arena in Windsor, and put on a huge smile for her mom and best friend, Lorraine Card;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly thank Rebecca for keeping up her “happy-go-lucky” spirits and wish her all the best.

RESOLUTION NO. 1157

By: Mr. Chuck Porter (Hants West)

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

Whereas the Meaning of Home contest through Genworth Financial Canada is open to Grades 4, 5 and 6 students across Canada and the participants are asked to write about what home means to them; and

Whereas 11-year-old Paige Levangie, who attends Brooklyn Elementary School, submitted an essay to the contest and was the only Nova Scotian among the 18 semi-finalist to earn \$500 to donate to a Habitat for Humanity cause of her choice; and

Whereas Ms. Levangie donated her winnings to a Habitat for Humanity building in Wolfville where she learned of a building whose roof had collapsed and wanted to help;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly applaud Paige for her excellent writing skills and wish her continued success with her future literary competitions.

RESOLUTION NO. 1158

By: Mr. Chuck Porter (Hants West)

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

Whereas the beginnings of the game of Badminton can be traced to mid-18th century and became an Olympic sport in 1992 with five events of men's and women's singles, doubles and mixed; and

Whereas Justin Barkhouse, of Hantsport, earned the opportunity to participate in the 2011 Canada Games held in Nova Scotia where he competed in the Badminton Doubles Male event with teammate Nigel Power, finishing an impressive 9th overall; and

Whereas on February 12, 2011, Mr. Barkhouse captured the special conference award for "Player of the Year" during the Atlantic Colleges Athletic Association (ACAA) Badminton Banquet;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Justin for his determination and perseverance and wish him all the best with future competitions and his desire to be coaching others in the game of Badminton.

RESOLUTION NO. 1159

By: Mr. Chuck Porter (Hants West)

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

Whereas while snowboarding can be the source of countless hours of fun and exhilaration, it also means dedication, perseverance and commitment to participate competitively in a sport that is continuously gaining momentum and popularity; and

Whereas Jordan Newcombe, of Falmouth, son of Kevin and Brenda and a first-year business student at Acadia University, competed at the Canadian Open in Calgary in February, where he displayed excellent snowboarding skills while vying for a spot on the Nova Scotia Team for the 2011 Canada Games; and

Whereas while Mr. Newcombe put his amazing snowboarding skills to the test and came very close to landing a spot on the Nova Scotia Canada Games Team, he will have to wait a little longer for his potential chance at the Olympic podium;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Jordan on his outstanding snowboarding career and wish him all the best in his quest to make it to the Olympics.

RESOLUTION NO. 1160

By: Mr. Chuck Porter (Hants West)

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

Whereas volunteering your time towards helping others gives a great sense of accomplishment, along with that feel good feeling you get when you know you have improved someone's life; and

Whereas Hantsport School faculty member Jennifer Brothers, along with students Bailey Levy, Nicole Russell, Lauren Jodrey, Jessica O'Leary, Amanda Thomas, Brianna Riley, Shannon Harbers, Thalia Ackroyd, Brooke McNeil, Eleanor Gallant, Robyn Sanford, Rachael Bouwman, Cassandra Caldwell, Courtney Garland and Jerid Watton, collected new pairs of pyjamas over a three-month period to be included in Christmas Care baskets from the Hantsport Food Bank, which were distributed to needy families in the area; and

Whereas volunteering their time and efforts through the Hantsport School's Citizenship Club will help these young leaders understand the importance of helping others, a lesson that will remain with them the rest of their lives;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly applaud the members of the Hantsport School's Citizenship Club for their efforts and wish them all the best with future events.

RESOLUTION NO. 1161

By: Mr. Chuck Porter (Hants West)

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

Whereas the role as Chief of Gates for Snowboarding at the Canada Winter Games involves placing gate judges on the hills, overseeing them, ensuring the course is clear before each rider starts their run, and making sure help comes immediately if an athlete falls and no riders start until they are cleared; and

Whereas Amber Shute, of Windsor, took evening and weekend courses to deepen her knowledge of the sport and how to properly officiate it, as she excitedly took on the role of Chief of Gates for Snowboarding for the 2011 Canada Games in Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Ms. Shute's knowledge of the hills at Martock is enhanced due to her jobs teaching snowboarding and coaching border cross as well as her own fair share of trips down the slopes on her own snowboard;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly applaud Amber for taking on such a huge responsibility and wish her all the best as she sets her sites on a career in officiating.

RESOLUTION NO. 1162

By: Mr. Chuck Porter (Hants West)

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

Whereas Danette te Bogt grew up on the Hermanus family farm in Falmouth and has been farming all her life, supporting the family farm by selling farm products to a local, privately-owned retail outlet, Mike Oulton's Meat Store, near Windsor; and

Whereas the te Bogt family have been farming in Falmouth for more than 40 years and presently are operating a pork operation with 55 sows; and

Whereas Danette and her three siblings are happy to be living on the farm their parents built from the ground up, 40 years ago, and look forward to supplying the local industry with fresh pork for many years to come;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly applaud Danette for her perseverance and determination and wish her and her family the greatest success with the te Bogt farm.

RESOLUTION NO. 1163

By: Mr. Chuck Porter (Hants West)

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

Whereas Scothorn Farms Ltd./Bluenose Holsteins is a modern dairy and Christmas tree farm operation situated in Hardwoodlands, Hants County, and home to 750 head of cattle, 400 of them milking cows; and

Whereas Scothorn Farms/Bluenose Holsteins ships on average approximately 11,644 kilograms of milk annually while also having high level bulls, such as Bluenose Allentown, going to bigger units; and

Whereas in addition to their dairy production, Gary, Jason and Jeff Scothorn own 570 acres and lease another 350 acres of farmland with 226 of those acres dedicated to Christmas tree production;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly applaud Gary, Jason and Jeff Scothorn for having such a huge dairy farm, championship bulls and a thriving Christmas tree industry, which attendees of the Canadian Holstein Convention will see in a tour in May.

RESOLUTION NO. 1164

By: Mr. Chuck Porter (Hants West)

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

Whereas Sunny Point Farms Ltd., is a 264 cow herd dairy farm located in East Noel, Hants County and is one of 14 Nova Scotia dairy operations visited by Canadian Holstein Convention attendees this Spring when the convention begins in Halifax and concludes with more tours in Newfoundland and Labrador; and

Whereas Sunny Point Farm, operated by the Vroegh family, milks in a double 12 parallel parlour three times daily; and

Whereas Sunny Point Farm averages 11,995 kilograms of milk a year and they have had the highest BCA in Nova Scotia for the past three years;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly applaud farm president Phillip Vroegh and his family for their commitment to Nova Scotia agriculture and wish them great continued success with their dairy operations.

RESOLUTION NO. 1165

By: Mr. Chuck Porter (Hants West)

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

Whereas Freeman Swinamer of Three Mile Plains has dedicated his time and energy for more than 35 years into community activities and for 2011 was named Volunteer of the Year by the Municipality of West Hants; and

Whereas Freeman has been an active volunteer with the Three Mile Plains Community Hall Association, serving on the Board of Directors while helping out with everything from cleaning the floors to tending the bar; and

Whereas in addition to assisting at the Three Mile Plains Hall, Freeman has been a loyal member of the Hants County Exhibition Ox Association for the past 30 years while serving as president and treasurer for 10 years while also volunteering with the Windsor Agricultural Society for 10 years and also spending time coaching minor hockey in Windsor-West Hants and assisting with the Three Mile Plains Community Outdoor Rink during its existence a number of years ago;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly acknowledge the tremendous accomplishments of one Freeman Swinamer, a resident of the Mountain Road in Three Mile Plains for his dedication and service to the community as a volunteer and extend our sincere and best wishes to Freeman and his wife Frances and all family members in achieving this volunteer milestone.

RESOLUTION NO. 1166

By: Mr. Chuck Porter (Hants West)

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

Whereas 453,000 volunteers contribute \$1.8 billion worth of services to Nova Scotia's economy; and

Whereas one of these volunteers chosen as the Town of Hantsport's Volunteer of the Year for 2011 is Angela Pelton who has a varied volunteer resume including Treasurer

of the L.E. Shaw Home and School Association and between 2000 and 2006 Angela served as both co-chair and chair of the Home and School Association; and

Whereas in 1999 Angela also became a board member of the Hantsport Memorial Community Centre where she serves as event organizer for the historic Churchill House while giving countless hours to ensure the preservation of Churchill House while also finding time to serve as Hantsport's coordinator and community representative for the Annapolis Valley Apple Blossom Festival;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly acknowledge the tremendous accomplishments of one Angela Pelton of Hantsport for her dedication and service to the Town of Hantsport as well as Avonport as a volunteer and extend our sincere and best wishes to Angela and all family members in achieving this volunteer milestone for her.

RESOLUTION NO. 1167

By: Mr. Chuck Porter (Hants West)

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

Whereas community volunteers give freely of their time to work on behalf of others or a particular cause without expecting payment or recognition for their services; and

Whereas Blaine and Donna Eldridge have been the volunteer coordinators of the Harvest House Outreach Centre in Windsor for the past nine years where they feed approximately 10 to 15 people on a daily basis and 25 to 30 residents of Windsor on Tuesdays at the weekly noon hot meal program; and

Whereas Blaine and Donna have been a source of comfort for many people and often hand out food and clothing to those in need as well as opening their home to those who have no place to go;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly applaud Blaine and Donna on being recognized by the Town of Windsor and the Municipality of West Hants with a Volunteer Award and thank them for their selflessness and compassion for those in need.

RESOLUTION NO. 1168

By: Mr. Chuck Porter (Hants West)

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

Whereas volunteering takes many forms and is performed by a wide range of people, including our youth in and around our communities; and

Whereas Tatiana Bowness was recently nominated by the Ardoise Community Hall to receive a Youth Volunteer award for the countless hours she has spent over the last three years volunteering at the monthly bingos, pre-teen dances, helping out in the canteen and acting as secretary for the Youth Committee; and

Whereas young volunteers like Tatiana should be commended for knowing the importance of helping others and the satisfaction that comes from helping someone in need;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Tatiana on being recognized by the Municipality of West Hants with a Volunteer Award and wish her all the best in her future endeavours.

RESOLUTION NO. 1169

By: Mr. Chuck Porter (Hants West)

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

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

Whereas Haley Brown, a student at West Hants Middle School, took 1st place in the Intermediate Poem division at the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 9, in Windsor; and

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

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

RESOLUTION NO. 1170

By: Mr. Chuck Porter (Hants West)

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

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

Whereas Brooke Lefresne, a student at West Hants Middle School, took 2nd place in the Intermediate Poem division and second place in the Intermediate Essay division at the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 9, in Windsor; and

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

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

RESOLUTION NO. 1171

By: Mr. Chuck Porter (Hants West)

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

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

Whereas Breanna Rogers, a student at West Hants Middle School, took 1st place in the Intermediate Essay division at the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 9, in Windsor; and

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

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

RESOLUTION NO. 1172

By: Mr. Chuck Porter (Hants West)

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

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

Whereas Shoelyn Dawn Allen, a student at Three Mile Plains District School, took 2nd place in the Poster Contest Primary Colour division at the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 9, in Windsor; and

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

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

RESOLUTION NO. 1173

By: Mr. Chuck Porter (Hants West)

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

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

Whereas Sabrina Hiefer, a student at Avon View High School in Windsor, took 2nd place in the Senior Poem division at the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 9, in Windsor; and

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

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

RESOLUTION NO. 1174

By: Mr. Chuck Porter (Hants West)

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

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

Whereas Ryan Greenham, a student at Avon View High School in Windsor, took 2nd place in the Senior Essay division at the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 9, in Windsor; and

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

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

RESOLUTION NO. 1175

By: Mr. Chuck Porter (Hants West)

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

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

Whereas Rebekah Weatherbee, a student at Avon View High School, took 2nd place in the Poster Contest Senior Colour division at the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 9, in Windsor; and

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

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

RESOLUTION NO. 1176

By: Mr. Chuck Porter (Hants West)

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

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

Whereas Patrick Weir, a student at Windsor Elementary School, took 1st place in the Poster Contest Junior Black and White division at the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 9 in Windsor; and

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

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

RESOLUTION NO. 1177

By: Mr. Chuck Porter (Hants West)

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

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

Whereas Natalie Rippey, a student at West Hants Middle School, took 1st place in the Poster Contest Intermediate Colour and the Intermediate Black and White divisions at the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 9, in Windsor; and

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

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

RESOLUTION NO. 1178

By: Mr. Chuck Porter (Hants West)

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

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

Whereas Korolos Sawires, a student at Windsor Elementary School, took 1st place in the Junior Essay division at the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 9, in Windsor; and

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

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

RESOLUTION NO. 1179

By: Mr. Chuck Porter (Hants West)

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

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

Whereas Kelsey Le Lacheur, a student at Avon View High School in Windsor, took 1st place in the Senior Essay division at the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 9, in Windsor, with her essay titled 'Remember...'; and

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

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

RESOLUTION NO. 1180

By: Mr. Chuck Porter (Hants West)

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

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

Whereas Jayma Porter, a student at Windsor Elementary School in Windsor, took 2nd place in the Junior Essay division at the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 9, in Windsor; and

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

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

RESOLUTION NO. 1181

By: Mr. Chuck Porter (Hants West)

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

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

Whereas Jonathan Weatherbee, a student at Dr. Arthur Hines School in Summerville, Hants County, took 1st place in the Poster Contest Junior Colour division at the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 9 in Windsor; and

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

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