



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Gordon Gosse

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Third Session

MONDAY, MAY 9, 2011

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House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, MONDAY, MAY 9, 2011

Sixty-first General Assembly

Third Session

4:00 P.M.

SPEAKER

Hon. Gordon Gosse

DEPUTY SPEAKERS

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

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. Before I start the daily routine, on Wednesday, May 4th, immediately following Question Period, the member for Colchester North rose on a point of privilege. Her complaint was that during Question Period a preliminary comment that was made by the Minister of Education in answering a question was about the honourable member and that she found the comment to be personal, uncalled for, and of no bearing on the question that was asked.

SPEAKER'S RULING: Comment by minister during Question Period uncalled for. (Pt. of privilege by Hon. K. Casey [Hansard p. 1702, 05/04/11]) Not a prima facie case of breach of privilege.

I have reviewed Hansard and found the complaint of - as members know, the role of the Speaker on a question of privilege is to determine whether it is a prima facie breach of privilege. This is clearly set out in Maingot's text *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada*. Based on the authorities on what constitutes a breach of privilege, I have concluded that while the honourable member was clearly not happy with the comment that I saw in Hansard, the comment does not establish a prima facie case of a breach of privilege.

I thank all members for their attention.

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GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

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

RESOLUTION NO. 1182

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

Whereas Building Safety Week, May 8th to May 14th, encourages all Canadians to be more aware of the importance of how the buildings in which we live, learn, work, worship, and play are safe, sustainable, and sheltering; and

Whereas confidence in the buildings around us is achieved through compliance with the National Building, Fire, and Energy Codes and the devotion of vigilant guardians: building officials, architects, engineers, builders, tradespeople, and many others; and

Whereas the National Building, Fire, and Energy Codes provide us with security in everyday times and in times of crisis;

Therefore be it resolved that the Province of Nova Scotia recognize the week of May 8-14, 2011 as Building Safety Week, and encourage its citizens and communities to participate in Building Safety Week activities.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of African Nova Scotian Affairs.

RESOLUTION NO. 1183

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

Whereas Sherri Borden Colley is an award-winning journalist with The Halifax ChronicleHerald, who also volunteers her time with many organizations and serves as a role model in the African Nova Scotian community; and

Whereas Ms. Borden Colley's story on Viola Desmond, titled *Unintentional Activist*, helped draw awareness and attention to this important chapter of Nova Scotia history last April, in the weeks prior to this province granting a posthumous free pardon to Mrs. Desmond; and

Whereas Ms. Borden Colley's story, *Unintentional Activist*, was recently nominated for a 2010 Canadian Association of Journalists Award with the awards ceremony to take place on May 14th in Ottawa;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Ms. Borden Colley on her continued fine work, and wish her the best of luck at the Canadian Association of Journalists Awards in Ottawa on May 14th.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Agriculture.

RESOLUTION NO. 1184

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

Whereas the wild blueberry is celebrating its 15th Anniversary as our province's official berry; and

Whereas wild blueberry crops are worth \$40 million in export sales to 30 countries and are the number-one fruit crop in size and export sales in Nova Scotia; and

Whereas blueberries tout many health benefits in areas such as cardiovascular health, neuroscience, cancer, inflammation, aging and, more recently, diabetes and sight;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly recognize the importance of our provincial berry, the wild blueberry, to our history, our economy and our way of life.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Community Services.

RESOLUTION NO. 1185

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

Whereas the week of May 8th to May 14th is Foster Family Recruitment Week in Nova Scotia, and foster care recruitment teams are working across the province to raise awareness about the rewards of fostering a child or youth; and

Whereas in Nova Scotia, foster parents work as part of a team of professionals to give children and youth the love and support they need; and

Whereas Nova Scotia is committed to attracting and training caring families who can help children and youth, and great strides have been made in recruiting and retaining foster parents in recent years;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House commend Nova Scotia's foster families, and encourage more families to open their hearts and their homes to children in need.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Premier.

RESOLUTION NO. 1186

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

Whereas shipbuilding excellence in Nova Scotia predates Confederation, and the Irving Shipbuilding Company has inherited that proud tradition; and

Whereas the Canadian Defence Review magazine has named Irving Shipbuilding one of Canada's top defence companies and the highest-ranked shipyard in the country; and

Whereas Irving Shipbuilding and the Halifax Shipyard have more than 120 years of experience, a highly skilled workforce and modern facilities, making the company ideally suited to build Canada's fleet for the National Shipbuilding Procurement Strategy;

Therefore be it resolved that this House extend its congratulations to the Irving Shipbuilding Company for this accomplishment, which reaffirms what we already know - that the best ships are built right here in the Maritimes.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Premier.

RESOLUTION NO. 1187

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

Whereas Nova Scotians have long been known for their significant contributions and accomplishments within the scientific community; and

Whereas Willard Boyle, an Amherst native and accomplished scientist, who received the Nobel Prize in Physics in 2009 for his work in digital imaging, is a prime example of our province's strong academic reputation; and

Whereas Mr. Boyle passed away this weekend at the age of 86;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this Legislature extend their condolences to the family, friends, and colleagues of Willard Boyle, and recognize his many years of work and subsequent accomplishments that have helped evolve such technology as medical imaging devices, digital cameras, bar-code readers and photocopiers.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 62 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 39 of the Acts of 2008. The Halifax Regional Municipality Charter. (The Premier)

Bill No. 63 - Entitled an Act to Promote Education Respecting Concussion in Sports. (Mr. Chuck Porter)

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

NOTICES OF MOTION

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

RESOLUTION NO. 1188

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

Whereas for many years the Canadian Corps of Commissionaires has been entrusted every day with the security of members of this Assembly and the precincts of Province House; and

Whereas since November 2007, one of our security officers entrusted with our protection has been Master Warrant Officer Robin Vinnedge; and

Whereas today, May 9, 2011, Mr. Vinnedge was promoted to the rank of captain at a ceremony held here in the Veterans Room in this House;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly recognize and congratulate Captain Robin Vinnedge on his promotion on this auspicious day.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Colchester North.

RESOLUTION NO. 1189

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

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

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

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

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly congratulate Deputy Chief John MacKay for receiving the Carl King Officer of the Year Award from the Onslow-Belmont Fire Brigade.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Argyle.

RESOLUTION NO. 1190

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

Whereas Mr. Willard Boyle, a Nobel laureate from Amherst, Nova Scotia, whose work paved the way for digital photography, medical imaging and astronomy, passed away on Saturday at the age of 86; and

Whereas in 2009, Mr. Boyle was honoured with the Nobel Prize for Physics along with George E. Smith and Charles Kao for their groundbreaking achievements in physics for such discoveries as the transmission of light fibres for optical communication and the invention of the charge-coupled device, which is an imaging semiconductor circuit used as a digital camera's electronic eye; and

Whereas Mr. Boyle, a veteran of the Second World War, flew spitfires in the Fleet Air Arm of the Royal Canadian Navy and after the war he completed his Ph.D. in physics at McGill University in 1950;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly honour the remarkable life of Mr. Willard Boyle and recognize the significant discoveries he contributed to the world of science.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage.

RESOLUTION NO. 1191

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

Whereas George Brown lived his entire 103 years of life in Eastern Passage, Nova Scotia, and sadly passed away on February 24, 2011 at Ocean View Manor; and

Whereas George spent 40 years as an employee at Imperial Oil, providing for his family as a proud husband, loving father, grandfather and great-grandfather; and

Whereas George lived independently for more than 102 years, only entering the long-term care facility Ocean View Manor in 2010;

Therefore be it resolved that this Nova Scotia House of Assembly recognize and honour the long and vibrant life of Eastern Passage resident George Brown, who passed away on February 24, 2011 after 103 years as a great Nova Scotia citizen.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Kings West.

RESOLUTION NO. 1192

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

Whereas Berwick and surrounding area was awarded the 2011 Lieutenant Governor Community Spirit Award and was chosen as one of four communities that demonstrate engaged and active citizens across many aspects of community life; and

Whereas the selection team is excited for the communities that were chosen, for “their pride, enthusiasm, and genuine way in which people have rallied together - such communities are an inspiration for all Nova Scotians,” suggests Lieutenant Governor Mayann Francis; and

Whereas the Lieutenant Governor will present the awards at a celebration to be held later this summer in the Berwick area;

Therefore be it resolved that members of the House of Assembly congratulate and recognize the community of Berwick and surrounding area as recipients of the 2011 Lieutenant Governor Community Spirit Award.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Argyle.

RESOLUTION NO. 1193

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

Whereas May is Caregiver Awareness Month, a special time to show appreciation for the contribution caregivers make to our families, communities and the health care system; and

Whereas this month Caregivers Nova Scotia is holding various Caregiver Appreciation Tea events throughout the province as an opportunity to acknowledge the vital role caregivers play in our society; and

Whereas Caregivers Nova Scotia is dedicated to providing recognition and practical supports to those who give care to immediate and extended family members, friends, neighbours, co-workers. and others in their communities;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly recognize caregivers as important partners in the health care system and honour the role they play in the lives of the people who they care for by acknowledging May as Caregiver Awareness Month.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

MS. MICHELE RAYMOND: Mr. Speaker, with your permission, before I introduce the following notice of motion, I'd like to introduce two members of the public who are with us in the gallery. They are Gloria Stephens and Iris Shea. Gloria is president of the Victoria General Hospital School of Nursing Alumni Association and Iris is the president of their anniversary celebrations committee.

I'm particularly privileged that they've joined us here because Iris is also researcher extraordinaire and has served as a real mentor and role model for me over the years. She's a writer, an artist, an incredibly active member of the community, and a resource for all and sundry. If you wouldn't mind, I would very much like the House to welcome Gloria and Iris before I read the following resolution. (Applause)

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

The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

RESOLUTION NO. 1194

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

Whereas the Victoria General Hospital School of Nursing began educating nurses in the 1890s, and in March 1920 a handful of early graduates held an alumni meeting, thus inaugurating the oldest continuous nursing alumni association in Canada; and

Whereas in the early years nursing alumni made dressings for patients and provided food and gifts to the poor and to patients, while today they work to enhance patient comfort, provide bursaries to further and recognize nurses' education, maintain an archive holding photos and artifacts related to nursing history in the province, and will soon celebrate their 91st Anniversary; and

Whereas today the VG Hospital School of Nursing alumni number more than 500 members who continue the tradition of such distinguished alumnae as Laura Hubley, class of 1898, who was instrumental in starting the first nursing curriculum here and implementing provincial examinations in 1925 and honouring the Canadian Nursing Sisters of World War I;

Therefore be it resolved that this House commend the Victoria General Hospital School of Nursing Alumni Association on 91 years of continuous service to Nova Scotia, thank them for their work to document the inestimable contributions of nurses to our health system, past and present, and wish them all the best as they return to the former nurses' residence ballroom at the Bethune Building, May 28th, to celebrate their anniversary.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Bedford-Birch Cove.

RESOLUTION NO. 1195

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

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

Whereas the 2010 Nova Scotia Recycles Contest student awards banquet was held on April 27, 2011, at the Brightwood Golf Club; and

Whereas Aaliyah Arab Smith, a student at Rockingham School, was the runner-up in the button design contest for students in Grades 2 and 3;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly congratulate Aaliyah on her achievement and wish her well in her future endeavours.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Inverness.

RESOLUTION NO. 1196

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

Whereas 432 people who are residents of St. Joseph du Moine, Grand-Étang, Chéticamp and surrounding areas signed their names in support of a letter requesting the province to upgrade old paved roads in their communities; and

Whereas the goal of this letter was to impress upon this Legislature the importance of fixing these roads; and

Whereas I, as the Member of the Legislative Assembly for Inverness, am pleased to table a copy of that letter and those signatures today;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly acknowledge the concerns brought forward by the people of St. Joseph du Moine, Grand-Étang, Chéticamp and surrounding areas about the need to upgrade their roads.

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 Hammonds Plains-Upper Sackville.

RESOLUTION NO. 1197

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

Whereas from March 11-13, 2011, the Sackville Flyers Boys Midget AA Hockey Team and coaches participated in the provincial hockey tournament in Pictou County, Nova Scotia; and

Whereas they played against the best teams from across the province and had the opportunity to demonstrate the skills they have been developing all season; and

Whereas the Sackville Flyers players were awarded the tournament's MVP, Top Scorer, Top Goaltender and Top Defenceman honours, the team won the 2010-11 Nova Scotia provincial title and, for the first time, brought the Midget AA provincial title to Sackville;

Therefore be it resolved that the House of Assembly congratulate the Sackville Flyers Boys Midget AA hockey team and coaches for winning the 2010-11 Nova Scotia Provincial Midget AA title and wish them the best of luck for next year.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

RESOLUTION NO. 1198

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

Whereas 225 years ago, a small group of individuals met at the Golden Ball Inn of Halifax to draw up the first articles of the Charitable Irish Society of Halifax; and

Whereas the original constitution focused on the importance of encouraging, through a group of individuals with something in common, assistance to people in the community entitled to compassion and relief; and

Whereas today, 300 members strong, the Charitable Irish Society continues the fine tradition of compassion by donating to charities and organizations active in caring for the sick, the elderly, as well as women's and children's organizations;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the Legislature recognize the 225th Anniversary of the Charitable Irish Society of Halifax, and extend our appreciation to all members past and present for their dedication to making our community a better place in which to live.

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. 1199

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

Whereas community volunteers work tirelessly on behalf of others or a particular cause without the expectation of payment or recognition for their time and services; and

Whereas Sandra Hogan was recently nominated by the St. Croix Pastoral Charge to receive a volunteer award for her many hours of dedication over the last five years; and

Whereas Sandra was instrumental in organizing the opening of the church as a venue for up-and-coming musicians and for giving artists a place to perform;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Sandra on receiving a Municipality of West Hants 2011 Volunteer Award, and thank her for her dedication and commitment.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Lunenburg.

RESOLUTION NO. 1200

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

Whereas the Peer Gallery, located in Old Town Lunenburg, is an artists' co-operative gallery exhibiting the work of 12 Nova Scotia artists who have established reputations with an emphasis on diversity and art viewing, including mediums such as painting, drawing, mixed media, coloured fused glass, raku and mosaic wall pieces, wood turning, printmaking, and other forms of artistic expression; and

Whereas during the summer months, the Peer Gallery features monthly exhibits, and is currently featuring the work of Barbara McLean and her compelling large-scale acrylic paintings; and

Whereas Barbara McLean's exhibit, entitled *Old Ground/New Ground*, opened May 7th and runs until May 19th with an artist's talk on Sunday, May 19th;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly recognize the Peer Gallery in Old Town Lunenburg as a venue for exposing new and established Nova Scotia artists, and congratulate Barbara McLean on the opening of her show *Old Ground/New Ground*.

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.

Before we go to the next notice of motion, I realized that the honourable member for Inverness had an attachment with this resolution which is out of order. However, if the House gives unanimous consent this one time I will accept it.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

RESOLUTION NO. 1201

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

Whereas six-year-old William Bate of Dartmouth learned to read at the age of two and is now studying calculus, particle physics, and chemistry; and

Whereas William recently won first place in his age group across Canada in an international on-line spelling bee; and

Whereas at six years old, William currently ranks 46th in the world for spelling;

Therefore be it resolved that members of the House of Assembly join me in congratulating William on this exceptional achievement and wish William every future success as he moves forward in his academic career.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Victoria-The Lakes.

RESOLUTION NO. 1202

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

Whereas Polytech Windows and Doors of Baddeck, Nova Scotia, was honoured May 9th at the 27th Export Achievement Awards luncheon as one of the province's top exporters; and

Whereas Polytech's Baddeck factory has been manufacturing its high-quality vinyl windows and doors since 1988; and

Whereas it is important to celebrate the successes of Nova Scotia's talented export companies and recognize the contributions exporters make to the local economy;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly celebrate the creativity, innovation and determination of Polytech Windows and Doors and recognize the important impact it has for Nova Scotia.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Natural Resources.

RESOLUTION NO. 1203

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

RESOLUTION NO. 1204

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

Whereas the Inspiring Lives Awards recognize the achievements of Nova Scotians who have inspired others as they face their own struggles with mental illness and addiction; and

Whereas co-sponsored by Canadian Mental Health Association - Nova Scotia Division and the Mental Health Foundation of Nova Scotia, the nominees have experienced long journeys and overcome obstacles which serve to inspire us all; and

Whereas the 2011 nominees and their inspirational journeys are representative of the outstanding individuals who make a difference in the lives of many every day;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this Legislature congratulate the Inspiring Lives 2011 nominees Shayne Brown, Ann Clyke, Stella Ducklow, Dani Himmelman, Graham Hooper, Carolyn Lawrence, Terina Pickering and John Roswell for their outstanding contribution and wish them all the best in their future endeavours.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Argyle.

RESOLUTION NO. 1205

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

Whereas St. Mary's Elementary School in Aylesford recently placed fourth in the World Literacy WOW Reading Challenge; and

Whereas this year, 61 schools and 11,811 students participated in the challenge with the partnership of local police, libraries and public schools in Canada, Ireland, England, South Africa and Ghana; and

Whereas St. Mary's students have been involved in the contest since 2007 and have always placed in the top 10 and this year the school earned a special mention for extraordinary effort because students read an average of 203 books each between November 10, 2010 and April 1, 2011;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly applaud the efforts of the participating students at St. Mary's Elementary as well as compliment

principal Sara Tessier, former RCMP liaison officer Richard Langille and school librarian Norma Malott for their support and participation in World Literacy Reading WOW Challenge.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Colchester North.

RESOLUTION NO. 1206

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

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

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

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

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly congratulate Chester Sabeau for receiving a 40-year Long Service Award from the Onslow-Belmont Fire Brigade.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Inverness.

RESOLUTION NO. 1207

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

Whereas people in the Acadian region of northern Inverness County are concerned about the recent closure of the bilingual Service Canada Community Office; and

Whereas 819 signatures were signed on a petition delivered to the federal government to highlight the people's concern; and

Whereas local offices provide a more people-based approach for the delivery of government services, and move jobs from employment-rich urban areas to rural areas of our country;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly acknowledge the concerns of the Acadian region of northern Inverness County and the steps they are taking to restore this Service Canada Community Office.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Halifax Clayton Park.

RESOLUTION NO. 1208

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

Whereas on February 10, 2011, the Bella Rose Arts Centre in Clayton Park was filled with local residents, sponsors, and supporters to celebrate the official gala opening; and

Whereas the opening of this professional 600-seat theatre presents tremendous opportunities to enhance the cultural life of Clayton Park and beyond; and

Whereas the dream of having a theatre in our community has been realized thanks to the generous corporate sponsors who appreciate the importance of the arts in enhancing the quality of life that we all enjoy;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of the House of Assembly thank Killam Properties for fostering and encouraging the expansion of the arts in our community through their financial contribution which enabled the completion of the Bella Rose Arts Centre.

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. 1209

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

Whereas for many years, the Royal Canadian Legion has sponsored an annual essay, poem, and poster contest that is open to all Canadian school children; and

Whereas Victoria Sullivan, a student at Windsor Elementary School, took second 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 among 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 Victoria on her award-winning poster and wish her all the best 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 Preston.

RESOLUTION NO. 1210

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

Whereas Shalyn Williams graduated from Dalhousie University last June with an electrical engineering degree, sporting an 85-plus average; and

Whereas Shalyn has roots in East Preston, Halifax, and New Glasgow, Nova Scotia, and we are proud that she is the first African Nova Scotian female engineer, as well as being a role model to young people; and

Whereas Ms. Williams has obtained employment with Lockheed Martin Canada working as an electrical hardware engineer on their navy patrol frigate contracts, as well as working part-time with the Army Reserve - 723 Communication Squadron;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly join me, her family and community in congratulating Ms. Shalyn Williams on her academic and historical achievement, and wish her much success in her future endeavours.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Victoria-The Lakes.

RESOLUTION NO. 1211

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 Lieutenant Governor's Community Spirit Award recognizes and celebrates Nova Scotia communities that demonstrate unique strengths and a high degree of pride and citizen participation; and

Whereas the communities included in the St. Ann's Bay/North Shore area have been selected for this important award, along with three other Nova Scotia communities, because of their high degree of community collaboration and strength; and

Whereas the community will be welcoming Her Honour, Lieutenant Governor Mayann Francis, this summer as they celebrate this occasion;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate the communities of St. Ann's and North Shore on receiving this prestigious award and thank them for their continued commitment to all residents of the community.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Glace Bay.

RESOLUTION NO. 1212

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

Whereas the Miners' Museum in Glace Bay, which officially opened in 1967, will begin its summer hours on June 1st, offering over 22,000 visitors this year a glimpse into our unique coal mining legacy; and

Whereas the Miners' Museum provides an in-depth look at the mining operations that took place in Cape Breton and includes an introduction to the people, tools, machinery and processes that provided our nation with coal for decades; and

Whereas the museum gives visitors an opportunity to enter the deeps for a tour of an actual mine shaft located under the Atlantic Ocean and guests can also be treated to an exclusive performance by the one and only Men of the Deeps coal miners' chorus;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of the House of Assembly join me in congratulating Mr. Tom Miller, the museum staff, the retired miners who offer underground tours, the Men of the Deeps and the Town of Glace Bay, as they enter their 44th year of showcasing our history to the world.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Yarmouth.

RESOLUTION NO. 1213

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

Whereas 2011 marks Yarmouth's 250th Anniversary, which is being celebrated with many exciting events that will bring together current and former residents and attract visitors to our beautiful town and area; and

Whereas for hundreds of years, the historical seaport of Yarmouth has been the friendly and accommodating gateway to Nova Scotia for visitors and immigrants; and

Whereas Yarmouth is host and home to citizens of proud, rich and diverse cultural backgrounds including Acadian, Mi'kmaq and Métis;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly congratulate Yarmouth on its 250th Anniversary and recognize its important contributions to the history, economy and culture of the Province of Nova Scotia.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Digby-Annapolis.

RESOLUTION NO. 1214

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

Whereas the Mental Health Foundation of Nova Scotia and the Canadian Mental Health Association - Nova Scotia Division recently held a ceremony recognizing individuals who have inspired others; and

Whereas award recipients are selected through a province-wide nomination process, based on their achievements and inspirations towards others, while struggling with their own mental illness; and

Whereas Digby resident John Roswell, founder of the Digby Clare Mental Health Volunteers, has received the Inspiring Lives Award at the ceremony held on May 3, 2011;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of the House of Assembly express their congratulations to John Roswell and wish him continued success in inspiring the lives of others.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Halifax Clayton Park.

RESOLUTION NO. 1215

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

Whereas on April 6, 2011, the Bella Rose Arts Centre was the site of an amazing evening of Italian music that was presented as a tribute to the 150th Anniversary of Italy's unification; and

Whereas the evening was made possible by the Italian-Canadian Cultural Association of Nova Scotia and the Italian Consulates in Nova Scotia and Montreal; and

Whereas the audience was delighted by this tremendous opportunity to enjoy famous opera arias and music presented by the award-winning Italian artists of bel canto;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of the House of Assembly congratulate Mr. Rodolfo Meloni, Honorary Vice-Consul of the Italian Republic in Nova Scotia and Luigi Velocci, president of the Italian Canadian Cultural Association on this wonderful evening of Italian culture, celebrating the 150th Anniversary of Italy's unification.

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 Dartmouth East.

RESOLUTION NO. 1216

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

Whereas Nova Scotia Power has announced plans for rate increases of 4 per cent in each of the next three years; and

Whereas this is in addition to already approved increases for the next two years, adjustments to fuel costs and increases to the efficiency tax added by the NDP; and

Whereas Nova Scotians are concerned that the NDP response to increasing power rates may be to just take the HST off candles;

Therefore be it resolved that the NDP support calls for a performance and value audit of Nova Scotia Power prior to any general rate hike hearing.

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

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

Is it agreed?

I hear several Noes.

The notice is tabled.

RESOLUTION NO. 1217

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

Whereas May 9-15, 2011 is National Nursing Week; and

Whereas this week focuses on recognizing the dedication and achievement of nurses who contribute to excellence in health care; and

Whereas this year's theme, Nursing: the Health of our Nation, provides an opportunity to celebrate the unique contributions of all nurses with areas of practice ranging from primary care, acute care, community care and palliative care to education, administration, research and policy;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the Legislature acknowledge May 9th to 15th as National Nursing Week and commend nurses throughout Nova Scotia for their dedication to public service and their tireless role on the front line of health care.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Yarmouth.

RESOLUTION NO. 1218

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

Whereas the Robots East 2011 competition, a robotics competition for the Atlantic Provinces, was recently held in Halifax; and

Whereas the Yarmouth Consolidated Memorial High School Robotics Team consisting of Christian Muise, Craig Sullivan, Garret Allen, Laura Eldridge, Josiah Cormier, Samy Abidib, Daniel Hatfield, Savannah LeBlanc, Runnan Wu, Jeffery LeBlanc, Riley Cook, Mitchell MacDougall, Alexandra Cooke and Julian D'Alessio-Doucet competed in this robotics competition; and

Whereas the Yarmouth Consolidated Memorial High School robotics team won first place in the competition, a first for the school, and won first place in the Multimedia and second place in the Strategy categories;

Therefore be it resolved that members of this House of Assembly congratulate the Yarmouth Consolidated Memorial High School robotics team, teacher-advisor Robyn McKenzie and team mentors Adam Blooi and Leland Whitman on this impressive achievement and wish them continued success.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Bedford-Birch Cove.

RESOLUTION NO. 1219

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

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

Whereas the student awards banquet for the 2010 Nova Scotia Recycles Contest was held on April 27, 2011 at the Brightwood Golf Club; and

Whereas Annika Benson, a Grade 8 student at Bedford Junior High, was the winner of the magazine ad contest for students in Grades 7, 8 and 9 - her second such award in the past two years;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly congratulate Annika on her achievement and wish her well in her future endeavours.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Glace Bay.

RESOLUTION NO. 1220

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

Whereas for 11 years, reachAbility has worked toward building a stronger community through innovative programming provided by dedicated staff who support clients living with various types of different abilities; and

Whereas on Friday, April 29th, the reachAbility Community Garden was officially opened on Joseph Howe Drive in Halifax; and

Whereas the Community Garden enables individuals to improve physical and mental health by providing a tool to bring people together of different abilities to aid in community cohesion;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this Legislature congratulate founding member Tova Sherman and asset coordinator Heather Cunningham on the success of the Community Garden and wish them, and indeed all staff, well in their future endeavours.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Richmond.

RESOLUTION NO. 1221

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

Whereas the NDP Government claims to have the best interests of low-income Nova Scotians; and

Whereas the Minister of Justice has seen fit to cut \$500,000 from the Nova Scotia Legal Aid budget, a move which will make it more difficult for low-income Nova Scotians to access legal services; and

Whereas while the Minister of Finance saw fit to raise 1,400 user fees by 2 per cent, the NDP Government failed to increase the income cap to qualify for legal aid services;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this Nova Scotia House of Assembly call on the NDP Government to invest in the Nova Scotia Legal Aid program and raise the income cap to allow low-income Nova Scotians access to legal representation.

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

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

Is it agreed?

I hear several Noes.

The notice is tabled.

The honourable member for Richmond.

RESOLUTION NO. 1222

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

Whereas the NDP Government claims to have the best interests of low-income Nova Scotians; and

Whereas the Minister of Justice has seen fit to place a \$6,000 cap on parenting assessments, a tool used by judges to help them decide how the needs of a child may best be met in custody disputes; and

Whereas this cut of \$164,000 will be a blow to low-income Nova Scotians and to families who find themselves in difficult situations with the potential result of more costly court time;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this Nova Scotia House of Assembly call on the Minister of Justice to review this cut to parenting assessments and provide this House with a justification for yet another blow to low-income Nova Scotia families.

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

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

Is it agreed?

I hear several Noes.

The notice is tabled.

The honourable Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage on an introduction.

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, on your behalf, I'd like to bring the attention of the House to the Speaker's Gallery where a friend of yours and a former

hockey teammate, Mark Gardiner, is with us today. He's from Hornes Road in Cape Breton, so if all members could give him a warm welcome. (Applause)

ORDERS OF THE DAY

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. 59.

Bill No. 59 - Elections Act.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Justice.

HON. ROSS LANDRY: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 59, the Elections Act now be read a second time. I was very pleased to introduce this important piece of legislation this past Friday.

I would first like to thank the province's chief electoral officer, Christine McCulloch and her staff. In 2009, the House of Assembly asked the chief electoral officer to review the Act. As part of the review, the chief electoral officer prepared a draft Act and most recently released a report regarding Resolution No. 645. With this work complete, government is in a position to introduce new, modern legislation.

Mr. Speaker, the new Elections Bill is a culmination of years of work and considerable consultation. It will replace the current Elections Act and consolidate Nova Scotia's law on elections administration and election finance in one comprehensive, modern bill.

Mr. Speaker, before I go any further, I would like to address the issue of third party advertising. This is an important issue and one that has sparked a fair amount of discussion. I would like to bring some clarity to this issue by informing the House that during the Law Amendments Committee meeting on this bill, government will be bringing forward a new amendment that will regulate third party involvement in elections. It will be based on the model in the Canada Elections Act which limits spending for third party advertising during an election campaign. In Nova Scotia, there has been a total ban on third party advertising.

Under the current law, any expense for advertising that promotes or opposes a Party or candidate can only be incurred by a political Party or candidate.

Mr. Speaker, the Supreme Court has already found that a total ban on advertising is unconstitutional, that it limits freedom of expression. The amendment to the new bill will bring us in line with federal legislation and a decision of the Supreme Court. The Elections Act must strike a balance between the right to free expression and the need to ensure a third party is unable to unfairly influence an election. While the right of third parties must be considered, they must also be regulated to ensure the election process is fair. Mr. Speaker, this is why we have decided to amend the bill before it passes.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I would like to turn my attention to highlighting three key improvements in the bill. Those include the role of the chief electoral officer, enhancing voting opportunities and increasing youth participation.

I will first speak to changes to the role of the chief electoral officer. This bill brings greater independence and accountability to this role. The chief electoral officer will be an officer of the Legislature, with the same powers as the Auditor General. The new bill also strengthens the chief electoral officer's ability to investigate and deal with offences.

Mr. Speaker, this bill also includes many changes that should enhance voting opportunities in an effort to improve voter participation. The right to vote to elect government representatives is a fundamental principle of democracy. Traditionally, the right has been taken very seriously and exercised by the majority of people. Unfortunately, in recent years, we are seeing a steady decline in the number of Nova Scotians exercising their right to vote.

The changes we are making should help improve voter turnout. Nova Scotians will have more voting opportunity and improved access. This is especially true for those people who face barriers to getting to a polling station. I am talking about seniors, nursing home residents and people with physical and other disabilities. Some of the things you might see are expanded use of mobile polls. The bill will also create a new type of voting opportunity called a continuous poll, which will operate in each returning office until the advance poll opens the weekend before the election.

The final key element I would like to highlight today is the involvement of youth. This bill will make it possible for youth ages 16 to 18 to get more involved in the administration of elections. Young people will be able to play a role as election workers. We hope this first-hand experience with the election process will encourage them to not only vote but to participate actively in political life. The future success of our province rests, in large part, on the engagement of our youth - our future leaders.

Mr. Speaker, there are many more changes and improvements outlined in the new bill, from improved accountability for protection of personal information to more modern and simple language. I want to reiterate that the work done by the chief electoral officer has

been instrumental in shaping this legislation. In fact, almost all of Ms. McCulloch's recommendations are captured and reflected within the new bill.

In developing the new Elections Bill, Mr. Speaker, we consulted with the chief electoral officer on many occasions and have worked hard to get the bill ready for introduction this session. I look forward to hearing from my colleagues opposite as the bill is debated in the House. I also welcome input from Nova Scotians through the Law Amendments Committee process.

Mr. Speaker, this is an important bill and one that I would like to see move forward quickly. The door is certainly open to reasonable amendments

I look forward to hearing from my colleagues opposite as the bill is debated in the House. I also welcome input from Nova Scotians through the Law Amendments Committee process. Mr. Speaker, this is an important bill and one that I would like to see move forward quickly. The door is certainly open to reasonable amendments from all three Parties and we are willing to work together to come to a reasonable consensus for change.

Mr. Speaker, in closing I want to remind all members of this House that the current Elections Act has not been significantly amended in 25 years. As you can appreciate, changes are long overdue. The new bill transports us into the 21st Century. Finally, I want to emphasize the importance of government moving forward with these proposed changes. Thank you.

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

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise to speak on Bill No. 59, the Elections Act that has been the cause for a lot of debate outside of this House over the number of days and it's nice to finally have it here. I'm pleased to hear that the minister is willing to work with Opposition Parties on how to strengthen this bill. Since the last provincial election, this Opposition Party has been talking about third party advertising in this House and it has been soundly drowned out by the governing Party not wanting to entertain that.

This is certainly an encouraging day that they have finally recognized that it's not just the Liberal caucus that is standing up and demanding that there be some parameters put around third party advertising but it is that Nova Scotians are standing up and demanding that the loophole which, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, was used in the previous election by the governing Party, needs to be closed. I am pleased to hear him suggest today that there will be amendments coming forward and I look forward to those amendments when they are presented to our caucus in the Law Amendments Committee to see how far they've gone.

Mr. Speaker, just by suggesting you're putting minor limitations on third party advertising is in no way going to correct the problem unless there are meaningful measures

and penalties in place to ensure that no third party has an opportunity to unduly influence an election campaign in this province. The Supreme Court has ruled that it is an infringement on the rights of organizations and individuals to have a complete ban on third party advertising, and at no time have we ever suggested that was the case. But they also said that as it is in this province where it is wide open that any third party can do as they wish - that is also inappropriate.

We've laid out in Bill No. 60 what we think are ways that are fair, that you can measure, It is a way to control third party advertising, to level the playing field, and it is a way to close a major loophole in how the election financing goes on in the Province of Nova Scotia.

As was mentioned earlier, when this bill was introduced we had a chance to look at it and I found it rather interesting; there were some interesting pieces to it, the absence of third party advertising being one of them. The fact that the Chief Electoral Officer in the Province of Nova Scotia, which was mentioned earlier, Christine McCulloch has recommended that that be part of this piece of legislation, but the government chose not to put it in its original draft - for what purpose? It will be interesting when the minister closes debate if he would maybe inform the House and inform Nova Scotians why they would have accepted all of the other recommendations brought forward by the chief electoral officer, but not that particular one. I look forward to that and I encourage him to do that.

The other piece which was rather interesting, Mr. Speaker, is where they talked about improving training and professional development for election officers - all that we would agree and support; they also had in there a clause of a code of conduct for election officers. It's rather interesting in this House when our caucus stood up and brought in a bill that there would be a code of ethics for the members of this House, we were denied the opportunity to try to amend the government bill, to put it forward. This government decided they didn't want to bring in a code of ethics for the MLAs in the place, but they want to bring in a code of conduct for election officers.

I would wish and hope that not only would that have been part of this piece of legislation but that they would have adopted the amendment that we wanted to make to the House of Assembly Act, to bring forward the recommendation to bring a code of ethics in for the 52 members that are elected and given the privilege to sit in this House. Instead they turned against that wanting to move away and I'm not sure why they would have ruled on that. We've been trying to understand their position other than to say that the bill went through without being amended, without it being made strong. If the words of the Minister of Justice are reflective of the government, then you would think that they would listen to Opposition Parties; when a positive thing comes forward, it would make it part of a piece of legislation.

So far it has been our experience that has not been the case. While we haven't always agreed with the full piece - we've tried to strengthen bills. We've acknowledged when government has brought in something good and we've tried to make some changes

for the betterment of Nova Scotians. I hope the Minister of Justice is speaking for the entire government when he says, we're now looking for some input from all members of this House to try to strengthen legislation. Each of us has our own unique experiences in our individual ridings when it comes to campaigning, challenges that have been brought forward. We're encouraged by the fact that there will be a modernization and the mobile poll will be extended through the advanced poll period. That's a positive improvement and we encourage the minister to go forward.

We also need to recognize that we need to make it an opportunity for every Nova Scotian to vote in every possible way. One of the things that was brought up and talked about was the issue of electronic voting. While we have some concerns around it, we are encouraged that we're beginning to look at how we can modernize the way Nova Scotians vote and how we can engage Nova Scotians. Obviously there is the protection of individual privacy, there is the assurance that we need to make sure that each of us gets one vote and how we go about doing that, but those are positive steps on how we would engage Nova Scotians.

It has been the fallacy, quite frankly, of members of this House and, I think, of some Nova Scotians, that by improving electronic voting we will engage the young people. Well, in my riding I can tell you it's not just the young people who are using the Internet, it's not just the young people who are taking the opportunity to do a lot of things electronically, whether it's paying bills, whether it's ordering product that comes into our constituency, into my communities. It is a way to engage all Nova Scotians on an opportunity to participate in the democratic process, participate, quite frankly, from their own homes, and a chance to make sure that their voices are being heard.

We are encouraged by the fact that young people are going to be given an opportunity to work on election days; it's from age 16 to 18. It has been the practice, I believe, of all political Parties in this province, I know in ours you can become a member of the Liberal Party at 14, participate in riding associations. You can participate at the provincial level in the Young Liberals; you can participate on many of the committees that are involved in our Party. Quite frankly, they've added a valuable voice to the debate in our Party, and I'm sure I speak for all Parties, that they do the same. It is about time that we have an opportunity to engage them at a young age.

I brought a bill in, I thought we should be discussing whether or not young people should have an opportunity to vote at 16, participate while they're still home, engaged in the community and having an opportunity to vote for the first time. This is a great step. This is a positive thing, I believe, that we're engaging them to work in the election campaign, giving them an opportunity to see, quite frankly, the process from the inside out, what happens on election day, what happens building up to election day and the preparation, quite frankly, for the whole 30- or 35-day campaign that takes place across this province.

It would be interesting if more Nova Scotians had a chance to experience what happens in a campaign, the work that goes on behind the scenes, not just by political Parties, but by Nova Scotians who want the democratic process to work. They understand that in order for that to take place, people have to be committed; they have to be out there voting.

It would be interesting if more Nova Scotians, seeing the kind of work that goes into preparing, planning and implementing an election, whether or not the participation rate would go up. I think it would. I think people would recognize that it is not just those of us in this House and our individual Party affiliations who want to have a vibrant democratic process; there are many Nova Scotians, in a non-partisan way, out there helping to ensure that we are engaging as many Nova Scotians as possible to ensure that the truest representation of our province arrives in the House of Assembly and try to provide good government to them.

Mr. Speaker, as has been talked about in this House, there have been many challenges around voter participation. As we look at what happened at the national level, there was lots of talk about there being an upswing in voters. I believe when you compare it to previous years where there was a complete drop-off, a small, minor improvement is not something we should be boasting about. The fact that 40 per cent of Canadians, and 40 per cent of Nova Scotians roughly, have not participated in an election campaign is discouraging and we need to do everything we can to engage them.

While I believe there are other things that could be done, Mr. Speaker, to improve how people get engaged in the democratic process, why they believe it's important, you know, I think some of this stuff that has taken place more recently has been discouraging for them and the elimination of Voluntary Planning is one of them. It was a way for Nova Scotians who have an expertise, Nova Scotians with something to offer, to contribute without actually running in an election campaign, without actually having to sit in this House. Voluntary Planning was a way for them to enter into some debates when government was looking for non-partisan views on how we best deal with some of the most contentious issues we're faced with and I think the elimination of Voluntary Planning was a step backwards. Probably instead of engaging citizens, it causes them to ask that simple question, why bother, why participate, when government says, we don't want an organization that might be promoting something that's not on government's agenda.

Well, Mr. Speaker, that's not the way in my view to move forward and it's not the way to enhance participation and we can modernize the Elections Act all we like, but if we continue to shut out Nova Scotians in the debate, if we continue to shut out Nova Scotians when we're trying to set out a direction for our province, what we're actually saying is we're going to shut them out altogether because they'll stop participating in the process and the 40 per cent will soon turn into 45 per cent and soon turn into 50 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, it's amazing to me how many people sit in this House with over 50 per cent of their electorate not voting. It's amazing to me how many people sit in this House

without 50 per cent of the people who actually vote supporting them. If you truly wanted to modernize that, that means that someone can get in this House with 33 per cent, 35 per cent of the electoral support in their individual riding. I believe, and I've promoted the idea, that I think we should have a preferential ballot where citizens in each constituency should have the right to rank the people who are running for office in order. At the end of the day, you don't get the opportunity to walk through these doors unless 50 per cent of the people have said you have that right. I don't think that's too much to ask, that if we want to try to get a majority in the individual ridings, to send who they want to be their representative.

I think those are the kinds of changes, Mr. Speaker, one of many that we could do to improve the process. You and I have had a discussion about how do we best improve what we do here, how do we best make this place more relevant in the lives of Nova Scotians on a daily basis. I've talked to you about resolutions, I'm not certain that that's the best use of our time. Do I think we should table them? Absolutely. But members here should have an opportunity starting off in debate, standing up and talking about the important issues in their riding. You would have members' statements. Let them stand up and defend the issues that are going on and talk about the issues that pertain to the members whom they represent on a daily basis.

Mr. Speaker, Question Period is another opportunity. If we want to engage Nova Scotians we should be improving and modernizing this facility, making sure that an hour and a half Question Period on Wednesday, quite frankly, should be changed. We should be moving to 50 minutes or an hour, four days a week in my view. We should be looking at, should we have two supplementary questions? Maybe we should have one and have an opportunity to get more questions out, have an opportunity that the place becomes relevant, you know, we're talking about now having - and part of this is giving the electoral officer an opportunity to have e-voting.

Mr. Speaker, today we still cannot table an electronic petition in this House. The member for Halifax Clayton Park has raised this issue for as long as she has been here and we're still waiting. I think in the spirit of moving to modernize the Elections Act, I know that the member for Richmond had an opportunity to take a committee around this province, to talk about how we improve electoral participation, how do we improve the House proceedings?

Mr. Speaker, that committee made a recommendation, made a report, which is sitting somewhere on a shelf. I think it is an opportunity to take the Justice Minister at his word to put together an all-Party committee, to make true recommendations that this House will accept and adopt to move forward, to improve how democracy works in this province.

Mr. Speaker, we joked that we celebrated 250 years of parliamentary democracy last year. We are the oldest parliamentary democracy in North America. I can tell you by the way we do business, most people would probably say that, without even looking it up, say that's accurate. This is an opportunity, as we move forward and we look at the

Elections Act, it's a real chance to show that the bipartisan approach that the Minister of Justice was talking about, let's show that to Nova Scotians.

All of us in this House, I'm sure, want to see the work that we do here to be modernized and improved and our caucus would be more than willing to help participate in that, providing it is in a meaningful way and that recommendations would come to the Speaker and that we, as a committee, and we, as a House, would adopt those recommendations to help make this place more relevant to Nova Scotians. If we truly want to increase the participation of Nova Scotians, we have to somehow ensure them and convince them that the work we do is important to them and that the work we do in this House is relevant today and will affect their lives today and into the future and that we want them to participate in it, not exclude them from it.

Mr. Speaker, I want to go back if I could, just for a second, on third party advertising. I think it is an extremely important piece that we, as a House, recognize the loophole that is provided there. There's been an awful lot of talk, particularly around union contributions, as many of you know, and being able to send out ads, as I am sure you know, Mr. Speaker, there was an ad sent around during the last campaign that was funded through a third party, it was a union pamphlet that was sent around. It was sent to a lot of households, I'm sure you are well aware of the issue that happened during the election campaign when there was a contribution made to the New Democratic Party which was a \$50,000 contribution, which was \$45,000 over and above what was the limit that you were allowed to contribute, which, at the time, the Premier had said had been returned. We come to find out later that it hadn't been, until later on.

Mr. Speaker, those are all serious offences, those are all serious concerns. That clearly lays out a loophole. It is not, quite frankly, just the unions that could use that loophole of third party advertising. There are many different organizations. You know, I couldn't help but, as we were leading into the federal campaign, and the barrage of negative ads that were going on in this country, made me think, quite frankly, of the United States and an American-style campaign, where we have constant advertising by outside organizations, personally attacking members of the Congress or Senate or a would-be President.

It led me to believe, quite frankly, and I think it led many other Nova Scotians and Canadians, to believe our campaigns are starting to reflect that, when we do that kind of advertising leading into a campaign. In this province, we've tried to somehow control corporations, union donations, the amount of money that can go into our individual campaigns, but we haven't in any way, shape or form, dealt with the kind of third party advertising, the kind of money that can be for outside groups to influence voting in this province. There's nothing else but to call it a major loophole in the system.

Mr. Speaker, anyone, third party, who wanted an opportunity, quite frankly, to defeat you, could have unlimited access to that. Spend money as they saw fit, without

having to account for it, without having to be registered, without any of the requirements that you would just automatically assume would be in place to protect the process.

Mr. Speaker, no one, and I think we'll go back to the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court said you cannot freeze out completely third party advertising. You can't shut out the people's voice. Organizations have a right to be heard, it's freedom of speech, but also if you go back, and I know there are a number of legal scholars on the other side who will be able to look at this, they also said, you do not have the unlimited right to influence campaigns, nor should it be *carte blanche*, wide-open. It was challenged in British Columbia, it was struck down, but it was replaced and improved. It was brought in where the spending limits were modest and in the Supreme Court it was challenged again. Lo and behold, it stood up.

The federal government has limits on third party advertising, when they made changes to the Elections Act, nationally. Those have stood up. Do I think we should have some serious questions about the amount of money that should be spent leading into campaigns, and particularly around negative advertising? Absolutely.

I think in this province, before we go down that road, we should look at how we deal with the major problem in here, which would be third party advertising and an opportunity for any organization to be able to unduly influence the process. I think what we're looking for and what we want, is an opportunity for every member of this House, every political Party, to express their views, to be able to have their ideas to put out in the public debate, without being unduly influenced by a third party that may, quite frankly, be very narrow focused. Well financed, but quite frankly, not worried about what is the best for our province but really how does this affect their organization or their membership.

As the Minister of Justice talked about making changes to this - I'm going to call it a loophole - around third party advertising. I'm hoping that the attempt he's going to make is one that is sincere, one that is not as wide open, that you can say there are some controls, but very loose controls. That's not going to close it.

This bill was introduced in the House on Friday and we're now having government talking about amending it. It really begs the question of why they didn't accept this recommendation earlier on from Christine McCulloch, the Chief Electoral Officer, here in the Province of Nova Scotia. You wonder why they wouldn't have done that. Is today's response from the minister one that is just trying to quiet down the outrage that's coming from Nova Scotians about the loophole? Or is it going to be a sincere attempt to close that gap and ensure that we have a level playing field across this province?

Everyone has a right to participate, everyone has a right to go out and campaign. Everyone has a right to make sure that their voice is being heard in an election but we need to make sure, quite frankly, that while we're trying to limit the level of participation some people can have in an election campaign, we do not leave the door open for others to have unlimited access to be able to influence the final debate.

I go back to this and I've talked about this, when it was around the federal campaign. We're heading down a road of U.S.-style elections. You just have to watch what's going on. Third party advertising is wide open and it is year after year; it's a constant election cycle down there. If we don't address this in a meaningful way, I see this coming down where we could end up not only having third party advertising affecting the election campaigns, but it will actually be ongoing, in non-election years, putting dollars into the fact that we're going to influence how Nova Scotians are going to vote, how they're going to participate. That is not the direction I believe we should be going, it is not the direction in how we're going to engage Nova Scotians.

If you look at the U.S., for example, their voter participation is about 50 per cent, it's worse than ours. That's the issue around third party advertising, there's a negative kind of campaign that has been taking place. It's actually to discourage people from participating, so that as it gets lower, we need fewer and fewer people to get elected. That is not the direction where we want to go.

We need to be finding a way that would encourage Nova Scotians to participate in this process. We've laid out some of the ways where we think we can do that. I'm hoping, as a goodwill gesture, that was spoken about earlier and I know the member for Richmond debated this the other day in this House around Voluntary Planning - it is our hope that that would be removed out of the bill that is being talked about, being separate, having a way to engage Nova Scotians. While it may not be a tool that government wants to use all the time, it has been reported, the Deputy Premier suggested this, it's a tool they've not used at this point, since becoming government. It is a tool that I think should be there for a government that wants to reach out beyond its ranks and get not a political view of a particular issue but a view that is one built around hiring that expertise. About going out, allowing Nova Scotians to come to meetings, allowing Nova Scotians to help set a real agenda, not in a controlled way by a political Party or in a political agenda. That would be a good first step in opening up and making sure that there was a way of engaging more citizens.

The decision to remove it, I think there has been an editorial in the local paper, I think there has been in every media that you've talked about, it talked about this as being a step backwards. We agree, Mr. Speaker, this is a real chance for the members of this House to tell Nova Scotians that we've listened to them and we've heard what they've said and that we're going to respond. Obviously the members on this side of the House need your help because government has the majority. At the end of the day they'll get bills passed as they see fit. But I would encourage them to look at Voluntary Planning as a way, quite frankly, to send a message to Nova Scotians that the Elections Act changes were important but we're not stopping there. We're going to find an avenue to engage you, as citizens, to keep participating, to keep having your voice heard. A way to say to them, while we're trying to modernize how we do elections, we're also going to make sure that the process between elections is one that engages you, not one that shuts you out.

The Voluntary Planning one, Mr. Speaker, which has been here for decades and has been used by previous governments on, quite frankly, really divisive issues, is a way to

encourage Nova Scotians - you know what - we've heard you. We've listened to you, not only are we going to leave that in place but we are going to look at how we participate in democracies. We're going to put tough measures on third party advertising. We're going to find new ways for people to participate. We're going to extend special polls in through advanced poll days. We're going to find new avenues for citizens to be able to cast their ballots because it is important that as many Nova Scotians as possible get a chance and exercise that right to vote and we're going to do that.

Mr. Speaker, in the process we can say to them, and we're going to modernize the Nova Scotia Legislature about how we do business. We've recognized there are some new ways of doing things. There's nothing wrong - every household in this province, every business in this province takes a moment in time and backs up and pauses and says, are we doing things properly? Are we going forward in the right direction? Have we met our personal goals as a family? Have we met our personal goals as a business? Is this the direction where we thought we were going? How can we improve it? How can we make it better? How can we not only make our company grow- that's what we should be saying here - how is it that we can improve the process, to ensure that we're making Nova Scotians feel like they are part of this, and they are part of it.

Each of us go back to our ridings on a weekly basis, and out campaigning, responding to the needs of our constituents and we can do that in an effective way when they arrive with something that pertains specifically to them. We can help find their way through the bureaucracy to find an answer, to find some positive result or, quite frankly, just find a result.

Mr. Speaker, it's much more challenging when you're talking about a global issue, on how do each of us have an input into some of the global issues, and particularly in a majority government.

Madam Speaker, it is always important that we have a way that we change on the fly, that we can adapt to new things. It's encouraging but we need to find a way to do that with the Elections Act. One of the ways I think, as we go forward and we talk about youth participation, we talk about young people not participating, I think we would do well as part of this, I think we would do well as an organization, I think we would do well as we try to modernize this place, to reach out to young Nova Scotians and say to them, what is it that we can do, what is it that we can change? How can we improve the system so that you feel you have a voice in it, that you feel it is important to you, that you feel that the work we're doing matters to you? We should reach out to them and find a way to engage them. I applauded earlier allowing 16- to 18-year-olds to work for Elections Nova Scotia as a good first step, but we need to go much further. I think we need to find a way to reach out and ask them, why is that when they reach 18 it's not as important for them to participate?

I can remember my first opportunity to vote, how excited I was. This last federal election was my son's first opportunity to vote. He was excited about the opportunity to participate, but what was actually quite nice for our family was that my son went to vote

with his grandfather, to recognize the importance of participating. They didn't discuss how they were each going to vote, but they went and voted and that was the most important aspect of the whole process.

Now, members of this House, and young members of our families, our children, of course exercise the right because we encourage them to do that. They understand what we do. They see first-hand the importance of participating, the importance of being engaged in this process, but that's not the case for a lot of young people in this province. We need to reach out to them and say, how can we best - as elected members of this House, as the Chief electoral officer - how can we best reach out to you to have your input on how we improve the rules and regulations on how people participate? Ask them why they're not and how can we make it more relevant to them in terms of voting.

It's not as simple as extending special polls. That makes it easier for all of us who are going to vote. That makes it easier, for those who want to vote, to participate. It doesn't do anything for that 40 per cent who are not voting. We need to find out from them why not. I'll go back and tell you that I think part of the reason is how we conduct business in this facility and I think we need to improve that.

I think the decisions we make around - and the prime example is Voluntary Planning, I know I've mentioned that three times, but I'm going to tell you, I heard about that a number of times. As a matter of fact, I was laying a wreath at the 66th Anniversary of V-Day, at Soldiers' Memorial Hospital, and the topic came up around Voluntary Planning. I was surprised to hear it at that event, but it came up because it is a concern. Nova Scotians saw that as an avenue to participate in a non-partisan way, particularly those who have an expertise in a particular issue or topic that was being discussed by that Voluntary Planning. It was their way of participating and improving the democratic process and they're discouraged by the way in which we're eliminating it. I would much rather have had that piece being debated individually and not lumped in a larger bill, which talks about how we're changing how government is going to be implemented.

There were some changes from the elimination of Health Promotion and Protection, a few other changes that took place in the new department that was created. Those things all make sense to be part of that, but Voluntary Planning, in my view, is so important that we should have excluded that and had that as a stand-alone issue that we could have debated on its own merits in this House.

I want to go back to the Elections Act and the kind of changes that we are seeing. We too want to thank the people who participated in that; Christine McCulloch, obviously, who is leading the way. While we welcome her new role in terms of being independent, that she will come back directly to us in this House, that doesn't mean much if no one is going to listen. That doesn't mean much if she's going to report to this House and we still ignore it and that's what took place. One of her recommendations was that we need to deal with third party advertising and we ignored it. What difference does it make if we give her all the independence and we have her report back to the House, if we're not going to take

her position seriously, if we're not going to recognize the thoughtfulness to which she went about doing her business and with the support of the people she has reached out to, with the thoughtfulness of the people who had participated in the changes that were going to take place?

We can give them all the independence we like, they can report to whoever they want, but if it is not going to be binding, if we are not going to accept what she says, then what's the difference? We're still left in the same position we were when we started. It gives her some independence on who works in terms of some of the elections across the area but I don't believe that's what she was looking for. I believe what she was looking for was an opportunity to report directly to this House, which we had given her, but more importantly I think she was hoping that there would be a sincere attempt by all of us to accept the recommendations that would come forward, and particularly when it's not just from her.

Of those recommendations that were put in - all three Parties have people who sit on the Election Commission for Nova Scotia who were participating. They reached out beyond just the people there who were participating, they reached out to Nova Scotians and they brought forward recommendations. What's really interesting about the third party one, she highlighted in her report the fact that was the one that kind of kept raising its ugly head in the last campaign. It was the one that she had to deal with more often than not and as I'm sure, Madam Speaker, you're well aware, it lingered beyond the campaign because it continued to be talked about.

What she is saying is, this is a problem. It's not like we're trying to anticipate a problem, we know it is a problem because we've already experienced it. So let's put some rules and regulations around third party advertising in a meaningful way, as every other province in this country that has gone on to modernize their Elections Act has modernized third party advertising. They've dealt with it, even the national government has dealt with it, but for some reason in this province, even though we've had more problems with it than anybody, we don't need to deal with it.

That's not the way to go and it is not showing the respect that, in my view, we should be showing to Elections Nova Scotia. It's not showing the respect we should be showing to the volunteers from our individual Parties who've gone out and worked to try to improve the Elections Act. It's not showing the respect to the voters of this province to ignore what has been the single biggest problem facing our last election, and that was third party advertising. That was being able to move around the election spending limits by outside organizations. It is well known that it has happened here. There are other issues around the campaign about people not recognizing how much they can actually literally contribute to a campaign but as serious as that was, and it was serious, the biggest way to circumvent the election rules in this province is through third party advertising and it was used, and used effectively, in the last provincial campaign.

The fact that we need to find a way to be able to eliminate that is a positive thing. The Minister of Justice who stood here today and said he is going to put some recommendations forward, I hope to see those before the Law Amendments Committee since he has obviously given some long-term thought to that. We as a caucus would like an opportunity to see those before we reach the Law Amendments Committee. I think we can work collaboratively on this issue. After hearing the minister stand up today, the only issue is what the limits will be.

I think if you look at what has happened nationally and if you look at what has happened in British Columbia, which is - British Columbia is a great test model because it has been challenged in the Supreme Court of Canada, it's one that stood up. They brought out which are pro-rated from the national level, it's pretty easy. It's easy for us, as all members of this House, to be able to come together on what is, I think, a very reasonable landing spot on this particular issue to ensure that everyone has an opportunity to participate, to ensure that everyone has had a chance to have their say, but making sure that no one and no organization has an undue ability to have undue influence on an outcome of an election campaign, whether it be at the provincial level or whether it be at the local level.

These are all reasonable requests. It's reasonable when the electoral officer of Nova Scotia made it and it's one that we fully support. As you know, since the last campaign, I've introduced campaign financing reform, a third party advertising bill, every session. We've adjourned the House, we have prorogued the House every session, and I've reintroduced that bill.

Ironically, we're debating today Bill No. 59 and the bill that I've introduced is Bill No. 60, which actually talks about how we don't eliminate third party advertising, we control it. We do it in a way, and if you look, we lay out inside of the bill, it would be pro-rated, based on, obviously, the electoral district size of our population but also looking and comparing it to nationally and, as well, comparing it to what's happening in British Columbia, in terms of the number of electoral seats and how much we can spend in each election. We put a cap on the overall spending but it also allows them to spend a certain amount in individual ridings, which has, quite frankly, gone to the Supreme Court and withstood the test and it's constitutional.

So, you know, since we all agree that this is a real challenge and it's a loophole, that we finally all come to the same soft spot that Elections Nova Scotia was leading us to, then the only thing left to debate are the numbers and how much. It would only seem reasonable that we would look at jurisdictions which have already done it, had it tested in court, had in a positive way been held up, that it's constitutional and you're not infringing on anyone's right, or any organization's right, to free speech. What you are, though, is making sure that no one has undue influence. That has already been tested. We have an opportunity just to reach out, find, look at the numbers, pro-rate them, so they make sure that they fit with our province, that they're reflective of the number of electoral districts here, reflective of the population, and implement them.

I look forward to having that conversation and I hope, as I said a few minutes ago, that our caucus gets an opportunity to see the amendments before we ever get to the Law Amendments Committee. Before we get through the public debate, I hope we get an opportunity as a caucus to see those. We would be more than willing to work with government to ensure that those limits are positive and encouraging.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Truro-Bible Hill on an introduction.

MS. LENORE ZANN: Madam Speaker, I would like to introduce a couple of people in the balcony today who are visiting from Truro. We have Ernie Lund, whose late wife, Lenore Lund, recently passed and Ernie and I became friends when he came into my office to thank me for the card that I had sent him. We also have his daughter, Katherine Saxton, and she is the mother of our wonderful Page, Kait Saxton, here. So I just want to welcome them and thank them. (Applause)

MADAM SPEAKER: Before I recognize the honourable member, the honourable member for Argyle, also on an introduction.

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Madam Speaker, I also would like to do a quick introduction. In our west gallery, we have a visitor, a friend of mine, a brother to an EA I used to have. Many of you would remember Kevin Surette who worked with me for a number of years. Well, Paul Surette is joining us today, Kevin's much wiser, a little bit older brother, and I just welcome him to the House and to enjoy the proceedings here in the Legislature. (Applause)

MADAM SPEAKER: We welcome all visitors.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition. (Applause)

MR. MCNEIL: Madam Speaker, it's great to have visitors here and it's especially great to have the family of a Page, someone who's participating in the democratic process here, to not only view what we do but, more importantly, to recognize and support their daughter, who I am sure this will not be her last opportunity to be involved in the process in a way that is beyond just being a Page, I'm sure she'll welcome the opportunity to maybe seek public office someday.

To go back to Bill No. 59, it has been brought up, as I've mentioned a few times and I know that the minister has gone out and spoken around what the third party limits will look like. Surprisingly enough, he said he never thought about that until the media spoke to him last Friday. It's interesting because it's quite alarming at this point because Elections Nova Scotia actually made the recommendation around third party advertising. If the minister hadn't thought about it until the media brought it up, I'm wondering if he read the rest of it. That's a little bit discouraging at this point.

The other issue was when the media asked him, what were the limits? He said, we maybe want to mirror the federal guidelines. Well, it's my hope if we're going to mirror the federal guidelines we'd better pro-rate them to be reflective of this province. There are 308-plus seats in the federal Parliament of Canada. There's total maximum spending of \$150,000 for a third party. In this province that limit is way too high. It needs to be reflective of the fact that we have 52 electoral districts in this province, it needs to be reflective of how we want to do business.

I am concerned. While I was encouraged by what the minister said at the beginning of his remarks around third party advertising, I am concerned about his remarks outside of this House, remarks around: I didn't think about it, it didn't come to my attention until the media asked me. As long as he's been in this House, we've tabled third party advertising, he's been in this House when I've asked the Premier questions about third party advertising. Elections Nova Scotia actually made a recommendation to deal with third party advertising and we didn't. I hope between now and when this bill leaves this House to the Committee on Law Amendments, that we have put together some real restrictions around third party advertising and we have a full understanding of the amendments and the direction where government may want to go on that particular issue.

It is extremely important that if we're going to co-operate in a bipartisan way, in a meaningful way, to deal with an issue which, as of tonight, all three Parties have recognized as a problem, then I hope we do that prior to going into the Committee on Law Amendments, that the amendments to this bill will come to our caucus so we can talk about them. I would encourage the minister to look at the bill that I've introduced, Bill No. 60, which talks about the federal restriction on third party advertising, the numbers that have been used in British Columbia which have stood up in the courts. It actually gives out numbers for our province on a meaningful way to control third party advertising, in a way that would be reflective of the number of electoral districts, reflective of our population and it would also be a way that ensures no entity, no third party has a chance to influence an election in this province.

They can participate, of course, and we encourage that, just like we encourage all Nova Scotians to participate, but they should not have the ability as an outside organization to be able to influence. I'll go back, we talked an awful lot about unions, but they're not the only third parties that will be out there. There will be others and we need to find a way to ensure we do not end up like American-style election campaigns where people who have a vested interest in a particular issue are coming out and spending a lot of money to get people elected; not because they believe they're the best person to represent their state or their community, they want to get them elected because they support one thing and that's their issue. We need to make sure we eliminate that possibility from growing in our province.

I can tell you, I can just see the day where the people outside, the political people will be looking for ways around this rule. The third parties have unlimited opportunities to spend, how can we find a way to do that? We want to eliminate that before we get started. I

think we can do that. I think we can do that in a constructive way and in a non-partisan way that allows that voice to be heard, allows every organization to have its say, but allows no one to be able to control and manipulate the process beyond where it should be.

I know each of us has an opportunity, each of us has a chance as we campaign in our ridings, as we go around and we're trying to encourage people to participate, encourage participation not only by individuals, but we all go to organizations, we all go to them because they have large numbers. We go to them, whether it be an opportunity to speak to the Rotary Club, we get an opportunity to speak to different organizations because it's a large number that we can use to best get our message out, all of which is positive, all of which should be encouraged, all of which are good things. I think we all recognize, and we can break it right down to our individual ridings, I think we break it right down.

No one organization should be able to determine whether I get elected or not. That's not healthy for the people of Annapolis, nor is it healthy for any other riding. That's why we need to control that third party spending and advertising. When you break that out on the national level or provincial level, it's the same thing. We brought in an avenue for them to participate, to spend their money, to encourage them to go out and find their candidate of choice, whoever he or she may be, and support them, but not in a way that gives them too much influence.

Madam Speaker, that was the case in this province - business had too much influence at one point. They were spending a lot of money, unlimited opportunities, unlimited, and we moved to prevent that, but they were doing it in an open way, they were doing it directly - we now have a loophole that you can do it indirectly, with no rules, and that's a step backwards in many ways, and it's not where I think we were going with election reform, nor was it where we were going in terms of campaign financing reform.

It is important that as the minister moves forward on bringing these amendments in, that he welcomes the conversation with the two Opposition Parties, that he welcomes an opportunity to be able to set out what are meaningful restrictions in numbers. It's not elimination, as I said earlier, it has been challenged already in the Supreme Court of Canada, in British Columbia. The only thing they've said is you cannot limit third party advertising altogether, putting restrictions on it. What they did in British Columbia is they pro-rated what happened nationally to their province. They went and said okay, what happens when we move from 385 electoral districts to 85? They cut the capital limit and they made it possible that that law withstood a test and it is now that third party advertising is controlled in the Province of British Columbia as well as it is nationally,

It is doable, it is one that we can do collectively, here. It is an opportunity for us, as a House, to show Nova Scotians that we are working collaboratively in a way that would improve the changes in terms of the Elections Act, and it is one that I think then when we take the next step, and the next step would be, as I mentioned earlier, modernizing the House of Assembly, modernizing the way we do business.

I threw out some ideas. They may not be accepted by everyone in this House, and that's fine. I'd love to hear others. I'd love to hear the ideas of members of this House and citizens who tell us how we can best modernize the work we do, so they feel it is meaningful to them, and they feel it has an impact in their lives.

One of the things I know - maybe restrictions around when we sit in the Spring and Fall, when we start and when we finish, put a fixed calendar out - those are all ways to engage not just young people, but engage Nova Scotians. We, as a Party, as I am sure all Parties in this House, are finding a way, how do we best engage young people? What's really concerning, Madam Speaker, it's not just young people who aren't voting, that 40 per cent who don't vote aren't all made up of 19 and 25-year olds - there are a lot of citizens in our province who said, what's the use, why do I participate?

I'll be honest with you, I've been extremely discouraged, not by the federal result - while I might not have liked it, I can tell you I was really discouraged by the young woman who got elected in Quebec who never campaigned, because people in my riding, whether I disagree with them, and I do in some cases, they work to get elected. I lost a campaign in 1999 and I knocked on doors and I know what it was like, and I won campaigns since. I know men and women whose families put their whole 35 days on hold so they go out and knock on doors and work hard, but at the end of the day they might not win, yet we have someone who never knocked on a door, never showed up in a riding - I think she's going to visit, I read in the paper she's going to go visit because she heard it was a nice place.

That was discouraging, that tells you the level of, I won't say anger, but apathy that is out there, but it tells you the level that's going on out there when it comes to voter participation. We have to find a way as elected members to turn that around. There's nothing better than, in a community, when you have men and women who stand up and say, I want to represent you and here's why. You go out and you pound on doors and you go out and work as hard as you can to get your vote. Then you try to encourage as many people to go participate and at the end of the day you accept the verdict. Sometimes we don't like it, other times we're really encouraged by it, but it's what we should be doing.

That result in one of those Quebec ridings, I didn't look at it as because of the political Party that was being represented, I looked at it from all of us. Like all Parties, we're trying to encourage someone to run in a by-election, which is going to happen at some point in the future in Cape Breton North. We're out there looking for people because we believe in this process, we believe in what we're doing, we believe that each individual community should have a voice in the House of Assembly. We look for somebody who is going to have the energy and enthusiasm to go out and knock on doors and show the passion that each of our communities has to bring to this House and they're not all going to win. In order for a healthy, modernized democracy to be in place, each of us needs to have somebody representing our voice as Parties in by-elections who are actually out there working, who are actually out there engaging their citizens to find out the issues that matter to them. Without it, we get an opportunity where the minority chooses who the voice is; that's not healthy, that's not the direction we should be going.

I've said this in my own riding, I'd rather lose with a large turnout of public participation than win with fewer. This is where I see this third party advertising bill affecting how we go forward. I don't want us to turn into, quite frankly, elections like it's going to happen in the U.S. I fought internally in the last campaign not to do negative ads; I've said that publicly in the press. It's going to be awfully hard for me to do that going forward when I see the results. Do you know what those things do? They limit participation because people get fed up and fewer and fewer people show up at the polls. That's good in some people's minds, because that means they only have to get a small percentage to get elected, but that's not good for all of us. That's not good for democracy in this province or in this country. Elections Nova Scotia has identified a real challenge and a real problem. We have different views on how we settle that, but we should recognize it's there and we're going to try to settle it and we should do it before we reach the Committee on Law Amendments and go in and lay out those things. I think collaboratively we can find a solution to this. Where is the middle ground?

Elections Nova Scotia, the people that we have all appointed to sit on Elections Nova Scotia, the people that they've engaged outside of that organization, all recognize that as being a problem and they've sent it back here. It was not part of the original bill. The minister has said he is going to try to deal with third party advertising. We encourage him now to call us. I encourage him to read Bill No. 60. It doesn't mean he has to adopt Bill No. 60. If he has a better way to deal with it, if he has a more constructive way to deal with it, we'll be more than happy to support that. We would like that dialogue to start now, so that it would allow us to not only begin to move forward and modernize the Elections Act, but it will allow us to deal with what was the only recommendation that wasn't dealt with in the original bill that Elections Nova Scotia brought forward.

I think I - I almost said, I think I speak for everybody in this House, but I don't want to do that, I saw all the heads pop up, but I think I speak for a vast majority. Our goal here is to modernize the Elections Act, to find a way to encourage more Nova Scotians to participate, of all ages. Electronic voting is one that will not just impact young voters; it will affect seniors all across this province. Many of them are tuned in; they're on the web more than most of us are. It is a positive way to allow them to participate. It is an opportunity for us to make sure that no organization, no entity - whether it's business, unions, outside organizations - who have no affiliation to any political Party, but may have a real huge desire on a particular cause- that they do not have an avenue to influence elections. They can participate, their voices can be heard, but they should never determine them. That's not what we're looking for here. What we're looking for here is an opportunity to make sure that this is a level playing field, that all of our voices are heard individually, as communities and as organizations, but not in a way that it influences the outcome of the election.

What we want, and I think what all members of this House want, is a healthy, vibrant democracy, one that is encouraging participation from one end of this province to the other, from all ages, making sure to ensure that the people who land in this House after the next election are reflective of their community. At the end of the day, like I said earlier,

I may not always agree but I respect it. The voters never get it wrong. Let's make sure that the rules we put in place are fair, are modernized, and are ones that are engaging not only us as members but communities and organizations.

Madam Speaker, with that, I will sit down.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants West.

MR. CHUCK PORTER: Madam Speaker, I'm pleased to have an opportunity as well this afternoon to speak to this bill, the Elections Act. I do understand it has been a good many years since anything has been done to bring it up-to-date and we certainly need that.

One of the things certainly of concern, Madam Speaker, was quite simply the fact that the minister seemed to be in a hurry to get it through. I don't know if he used the word "hurry" but he was anxious to get this through and passed. I don't know exactly how we're going to be able to get it through in a hurry if we're going to give it the proper time for consultation and, you know, involve our youth who are out there. I think that the youth and those kids around voting age - 18, 19, 20, 25 - have a lot of questions.

I know that you, Madam Speaker, and probably lots of members in this House, visit their schools, probably talk to their Grade 12 classes. I know I have in the past. People have come into your offices, you run into them at events - especially during election time - and they're curious, whether it's a simple question about where do I vote, how do I go about it, how do I get one of those cards, they are all very important questions. So there is an interest, I do believe that there is an interest there, but sometimes they just don't know how. They don't know what to do next, and we haven't really done a great job of answering that, in my opinion, I don't think, but the last thing I want to do is hear that we're in a rush to get it through, in a hurry to get it through.

We just can't do that if we're really going to give this bill the time that it needs and there are a lot of people who need to be involved, not just the youth and those that we're trying to get into the process, I think, but even those who are voters. We've heard a lot of talk about new ways of voting - maybe it's electronic voting somehow, on-line, or maybe it is telephone voting, I don't know. I do know in campaigns past, from leaderships and things like that, there was voting done by telephone and in a number of different ways, so these are not new. I do know, however, and I believe it was in the last municipal campaign, there was a pilot done on electronic voting. I don't believe that there was any increase in the number of voters who came out, strangely enough. It was exactly the same, or pretty darn close to exactly the same, but it was not the significant increase that people thought.

Now, mind you, only a couple of areas were tested across the province, in a municipal election, but it held steady. So I don't believe that solely one way is the only way. I think what we need is to explore those opportunities and, again, there is a good portion of people nowadays who are on-line, but there are still some who are not. There are

a lot of seniors who are on there and that's great, but there are a lot who will tell you, well, that's long past my time and I have no interest in learning it. You realize maybe there are mixed ways of doing business, maybe the phone thing is, I don't know, I think there's a lot to be worked on here and debated before it's clearly defined what the end will look like for this bill.

It's good that the amendments were put forward. We heard that the minister talked about third-party advertising. Well, I'll speak a bit about that. It's interesting how we look at third party. A lot of this is circled around the union involvement. We hear a lot about the unions. Well, I was a member of a union for a lot of years. I was a shop steward and I negotiated contracts, Madam Speaker, and that was all fine. I know an awful lot of union people who are - certainly paramedics is the industry that I formerly came from. I can say that decisions are being made - and I'll use unions as an example - to spend money on a third-party-advertising-type campaign and we could say for a political Party.

My question would be, why did nobody ever come to me, as a union member who pays union dues, and say, is it all right if we put your money into supporting a political Party? Now, I'm not opposed to that idea but perhaps there should be unanimous consent amongst all union members who are card-carrying, dues-paying, because it is their money that is endorsing a Party or another, perhaps if you're looking at fair ways to do it, if you're going to endorse one Party, you endorse all Parties that are registered as official Parties, regardless of whether NDP or Liberal or Tory or Green or whatever they may be out there, and it should be.

We talk about just different ideas to throw out there and not being in a hurry to settle this issue of third-party advertising. I agree with the former speaker who said, you know, it shouldn't make the difference or it shouldn't be undemocratic, it should all be fair, it should be democratic, there's no question about that, but the limits are interesting and you can't quite follow the national model, I don't think, at \$150,000 per riding, I don't think that's a reasonable one, nor fair. You can just imagine that not ever happening, I guess, in a small province like Nova Scotia.

There is probably a figure that could be used, so if this does go through, this bill and having third-party advertising allowed to happen, we have to be very reasonable in what road we travel here, by way of what kind of dollars and cents could be afforded. Again, it has to be fair for all.

Some people will say, well, maybe there shouldn't be any third-party advertising. Well, there are some who do believe that but, on the other side of things, people are working hard out there trying to raise money for campaigns. You know, advertising does cost a lot of money, just as an example, so that is one way that they do endorse it or are able to cut some of the costs.

It has to be fair across the board Party-wise, it can't be just one way or the other and it can't be just for one organization. I only used the unions as one reference but I think there

are probably other organizations - and I don't know of any right off the top of my head - that do financially support different Parties. Who makes those decisions? Is it the CEOs and presidents and so on who are making decisions? I know that there are corporations over the years that have donated to all Parties, through various companies that they hold within a company. There's a number of ways of doing it and there are loopholes that can be made.

You know, we talked about some of the other reforms that have been done in years previous, when it came to donating to a campaign, \$1,000 per individual and not more than \$5,000, I believe it is, for a corporation. Madam Speaker, that will be an ongoing issue, I think, and it will be a great debate as we move forward and it is far from being done, but it has to be transparent.

The other piece of this third-party advertising is if you're going to allow it, corporation A is going to have to show, on the dotted line, who they represent, who they are, not just a numbered company and what value they donated or contributed in any way and to whom. That's all part of being transparent and fair. We talked about that being a big issue when it comes to integrity in this House. We're a long ways from it. I don't think we are close to that yet, when it comes to getting these regulations in place, getting all the input that we need to push a bill through this House. I hope that we're not in a hurry and we take the time that is absolutely necessary.

There are some interesting pieces in this bill that I do want to speak to, Madam Speaker. They are some of the stuff that's - I know we can't go through clause by clause, but I do want to touch on a few things with regard to the education piece here and the instructions for these polling officers and election officers and how they conduct the polls and their responsibilities and so on, because in the past there have been great discrepancies in how that business is carried out, from poll to poll, from supervisor to supervisor and so on. I don't know how that could possibly be, given that they all go to training prior to election polling days and they are taught how and provided books - I've seen the manuals that go out and so on - but there still have been some discrepancies in how the rules are applied. Of course, it's just differences of opinions of people, I guess, is probably fair to say, when it comes to setting a final decision and the rule that will be decided on.

Sometimes what has happened is that has discouraged voters, and this is all about trying to reach out to voters and encourage people to come to the polls and vote, regardless of your age. We heard a lot about 60 per cent. I think this past federal election was 61 per cent, a little under 62 per cent, and I think the last provincial election in my area was somewhere around 62 per cent. That's very low. There's a huge percentage who aren't voting that we need to get there.

Again, back to actually going and voting, trying to make this simple for people to come in, and a lot of times, for whatever reason, there are people who voted their whole lives but they still lack an understanding of what to bring when they come to the poll, and this last federal election was yet again another example - nothing on that little card said

bring your ID, you need to show a picture ID. We're not doing enough around telling all those of voting age where they should go and how.

There's confusion and I understand it's a human resource issue and that people will make mistakes and certainly machines will make mistakes by those entering the data. That's all fine, but there has to be a way to make that a little better; there has to be a way to inform people of what it is that they need to take with them when they vote.

There have been issues around polling stations where they wouldn't swear people in, based on a variety of reasons. It's interesting, however, in a lot of these small towns and communities you can go to the poll - and you've lived in a community your whole life - and somebody says I don't know you all of a sudden and you need an ID to cast your ballot. It seems a bit unreasonable as far as I'm concerned and I know the people who have been there have used harsher language than that when it comes to trying to cast their ballot over something as silly as an ID, which they weren't told in the beginning to bring. So I do hope the regulations are very clear and I hope the instructions, when they're given, that they do need to bring whatever it is they need - there needs to be communication.

I see in the bill that there's an opportunity for communications by the elections officer. I hope that direction is not optional; I hope that's clearly written in regulation telling them what must be done - not what should be done, but what must be done in this case to help encourage people to get out to vote, so when they get there they're not discouraged and turn away after having a bad episode there and say they won't be back. That does nothing to help the process whatsoever.

Certainly with new voters, the new voter coming in should be very well aware the very first time what that process is so that they know, and in future elections, whether municipal, provincial, or federal, that they very clearly understand all of the rules and what they should bring and how easy it is to actually go and cast a ballot. It is, as we know, a very simple thing.

The importance of it is another piece. We don't do very much when it comes to stressing the importance of why you should go and vote. Yes, we had Democracy 250, we travelled around the province, gave away all kinds of little trinkets. I don't know if that brought one voter out. Did we ever go back and look at that and say, we did this and we did that and meeting after meeting, went to schools - I know, Madam Speaker, you weren't there at the time but a former Speaker travelled around the province, went to schools with the mace, and maybe the current Speaker is doing that and other Speakers in this House have probably done that as well.

Do we really know that has encouraged people to get out and vote? I don't think we ever did any follow-up, and if we have I haven't seen it. It should instill something in our kids to say hey, what's this all about? Taking the mace there is a great idea, having the Speaker go there, he's an important guy or gal and he gives a wonderful presentation about what the House of Assembly is all about - how much of that is captured, really? At what

age groups are we doing it? We don't even have civics anymore in school, or whatever we call it these days. I know we have political science, I guess maybe that's the right terminology - it definitely is a science, there's no question about that. We could all attest to that in this House, having gotten here. There is a bit of a science to all of it, every step of it - and many strategies.

Again, I visited Grade 12 law classes and talked about legislation and how that process works, and there were two kids out of a whole class who asked questions. To me that said two kids out of 20 had an interest in what was actually going on. How many of them will vote - they're of age this year - who knows? We have to reach out in some way to try to increase voter participation. We have to make it easier, not more difficult, as we move forward.

I hope through the instruction process that is in this bill and the regulations, again, it's not a "should do", but a "must do" when it comes to teaching our new people coming to be supervisors and poll clerks and so on and so forth - everybody has to be singing off the same song sheet and understand the rules clearly to make that happen.

The number of polling stations was also mentioned in here, and I know in my area, especially in some of the communities - I don't want to call them older communities but the older people in some of the communities have always voted at Polling Station A over the years and I have people tell me, nope, if I can't vote there next time I am not going to vote; I'm not going to Brooklyn, I live in Scotch Village, why do I need to go to Brooklyn? There are a variety of rules around that and there are certain must-haves like washroom facilities and so on for the people working but the people understand that they want to cast a ballot. We're not making it easier; we tend to be making it more difficult in some ways.

It's important that we recognize the geographical issues, the demographics that are ever-changing; the older population who want to be able to, easily and without taking a whole lot of time, go and cast their ballot on Election Day. I don't think we have spent a lot of time but, again, I hope that we spend a fair bit of time trying to figure out if we are going to make changes, what that does mean to populations in certain areas and certainly different age demographics and informing them of how and why these changes are necessary. We talk about this all through the public, communications and education - call it whatever you want. Again, we seem to struggle at times with something as simple as getting that out there and we are not there for whatever reason.

I want to talk a bit as well, Madam Speaker - I introduced a bill here, I think it was last Fall, maybe prior to that, that had to do with voting in hospitals. I see in this bill there is something introduced, and I thought for a second maybe it was covered, but it isn't. It says "residential centre" and that refers to ". . . a nursing home, special care home, assisted living facility, residential unit in a public hospital . . .", and I'll give you an example of what that is, Haliburton Place, which is a nursing home facility in the Hants Community Hospital upstairs, using one of the former wings - ". . . or any other residential facility operated for the purpose of care and treatment of senior citizens . . ." et cetera. But it does

not get into what my point was, people who are sick and unable to go out and vote. The mobile poll is right there but yet it does not allow people across the hall, in the hospital side, to vote. They have to do that by other means and by other ballots.

Well, that's easy to say if you been there maybe two or three months, six months or even a few weeks prior to the election, or during the election, you could make arrangements for that. But if you go into the hospital part-way through and you haven't voted in an advanced poll or a continuous poll - and those are good things and we'll talk more about that - there's no opportunity for the person in hospital to vote. It's taking that away, especially if they're not able to get out and a lot of times they're not, they are in a hospital for a reason - because they're ill - but they can certainly made their way to a mobile poll in that facility and cast their ballot.

I'm not sure about the logistics; I know that there would be some. Did they do other voting? How do you cross off that they voted or not? I know that they do that anyway. They'd have their card for St. Croix, let's say, but they're in Windsor at the hospital - there has to be some way and maybe that's during an advanced poll. Maybe that mobile polling takes place during advance times, but no consideration as yet, I don't think. I think the minister tried to pick up what I had introduced, but maybe not clearly. It is very important.

Windsor Hospital is just one example, and a small example because we have a limited number of beds there, but if you take a big regional hospital like in Halifax where there could be hundreds of people in hospital, they would totally miss that opportunity to vote. I'm sure they have and will continue to do unless there are opportune changes that will be made. Halifax is a great example, again, as I said you have the Abbie J. Lane Memorial and also where the veterans are - they would be classified in this bill as residential centres. They would be able to vote; that mobile poll would be in that very building. Yet across the hall and on other floors, no dice - they can't cast a ballot and they would miss out.

When we're trying to encourage increased voting, it would be interesting to know what percentage of those people did vote. Maybe we should be looking at that and saying how do we make that better. In looking at this and detailing it as we have, I truly believe that there's a will to want to encourage that and a will to want to capture all of those people. With regards to those people who are in hospital who are not permanent residents, they are ill, they're still in a hospital and have not had the opportunity to vote, but they would all get a card. You would have to present that card and you have to leave that card when you do vote, that can be done at the hospital.

I know it's no different than the nursing home or wherever it might be, they all get their cards mailed out. Perhaps this is where the family of people who are sick would have to be helpful and committed to - Dad might say call up and I'd bring my card in, I want to be able to vote, but we're not producing the opportunity to vote. I mean they can't even leave right now in Unit 200, go through a set of doors in Haliburton Place and vote. They

should be able to because you should be able to vote anywhere, by getting sworn in - show your ID and cast your ballot. But that's not happening, we don't make that happen.

As I said, in a small facility like Windsor, a small facility like Hants Community Hospital or smaller facility - I know there are some even smaller than that - there are a number of patients there who miss that opportunity. We should look at it and say, how many didn't get the chance to vote because they were in hospital? That's well worth looking into, in my opinion. I know it's hard enough when we take the mobile poll to the Windsor Elms and Dykeman Lodge in Haliburton and any residential care facility, nursing-home-wise, to try to capture those who are able to and generally speaking; those who are not miss that opportunity to vote. Even though they are, in all likelihood, sent the proper documentation to do so and I'm sure throughout the course of life have had many times, but still miss that opportunity due to their medical condition.

Again, it's a missed opportunity there and I know there are rules around assisting somebody to vote but I also know that there are rules around those people who are sometimes just not able to make a decision as well and we are obviously not able to make decisions for others. We hear a lot about how maybe our fathers and grandfathers and so on and so forth were very strong - whatever; we may not necessarily be very strong one way or the other. We know that's changing, that's not necessarily a bad thing. The partisan piece of that is less and less, I think, from what I see at least. I know that you'll always have the diehard NDP vote, you'll always have the diehard Tory, you'll always have the diehard Liberal - I say always, but maybe you will and maybe you won't. Maybe that will continue to change as the demographic changes and the older people move on, it's hard to say.

We have seen changes, we do know that we have seen changes in the way votes occur in different demographics, different age groups and it's the reason that this bill is quite worthy, because there are changes occurring out there and we should be changing and modernizing with it. We have presented a bill in this House - the Modernizing Government Act - as you know, that we are in favour of updating changes and wanting to make it easier for people to vote, Madam Speaker.

Again, I just want to stress that piece about the hospital. I do hope that the minister takes into consideration some of these comments. I know again that it would be maybe a bit difficult, I'm not sure, but they would get the card, there would be a process. I don't see it being any more of a process than what we've seen in a regular poll or a mobile poll. They are assisted to wherever they need to be and as long as they are capable, Madam Speaker, to cast that ballot then so be it. They should be given the opportunity and not have it taken away.

One of the other pieces we need to consider when we've looking at this other 38 per cent or 40 per cent of what we're not capturing is our schools. Our other organizations, there's a lot of organizations out there that people are members of - the Lions, the Rotary, et cetera. I've been a Rotarian for quite a few years and I don't think anybody has ever come and presented and said you know what, this is why we cast ballots, this is why it's

important to vote or this is how you vote, the real simplicity of it all. That's never happened and I'm sure in the Gyros and the in the Lions, I've never heard of anyone ever coming out, I've never heard of any documentation ever being sent out.

Those are options and we talk about ideas and how to - the simple one for the youth is obviously through the school system. In my opinion maybe it's not political science any more, maybe it is truly democracy class or it's civics class or whatever you want to call it. I know there are teachers in here who could probably call it whatever it used to be. Maybe you look back and there were times when we could show that there were - you know when we had those classes, that there was proof, for lack of a better term, that so many people voted. The numbers were obviously higher in years past, or at least we think they were higher in years past and we know that they were, but they are going down and it is a big of a struggle.

You have to ask yourself, what is fair. We heard others talk about 50 per cent of that cast ballot being in favour in a majority before members should be elected. Well, I don't know that I agree with that totally. People are voting, it's a majority that gets you here and a majority that you work for. You work for everyone, as we all know, but it's the majority that do get you here. What would that mean? Another round of ballots - if there are four on it then you take the top three and the top two. Is that the way that they're projecting that it works? I don't think it is but that's sort of what I took from it. If that were the case, you can only imagine the extra costs that would be involved in trying and at that point, what would you really be getting? Would you be getting 50 per cent; 50 per cent of what? Fifty per cent of 60 per cent. Still interesting math, no matter how you do it.

I'm not sure that I really agree with it having to be 50 per cent plus one, of the polling results on Election Day. I don't know that that's totally reasonable because I don't know how many people do. I certainly know that there are some in this House who poll well over 50 per cent, but I don't know how many. I know a former member for Cumberland South polled somewhere in the high 70s or 80 per cent on polling day, but he was a very fine and good member, as are all members in this House, but not all members are able to poll like that. (Interruption) The new member for Cumberland South, I'm hearing, got 60-odd per cent of the vote as well.

We know that there are a lot of times, close races. I don't want to make it sound biased, because I was in a close race once and it was 46 votes, my first campaign. The percentage, of course, was - I don't know - maybe work it out as 0.0-something per cent, after recounts, that are all fine and you move forward. I'm not sure that taking somebody off of the ballot to make that happen, you know, taking off the bottom two and allowing the next two to go for another round, how is that democratic? That says, if it's an NDP and a Tory, then it leaves the Liberal off the ballot. How is that fair when it comes to democracy? I'm not sure that it is, so I don't totally understand where he was going with that and I certainly don't agree with it totally. It is the majority of vote that it takes to get here and the majority of people in any constituency or riding, regardless of the level of government, gets you where you need to be.

It's expected that you as a member, Madam Speaker, and I and all members of this House, regardless of the percentage or the numbers of votes cast, have an opportunity, but more importantly a duty, to represent, each and every person in our constituencies, whether you have 10 or 15, 000. I know in mine, I've got somewhere around 15,000 voters and when you take in the under-18s, it's somewhere around 20,000 or 21,000, I believe I represent. It doesn't matter to me what their partisan politics are but I can tell you a lot of them don't have a partisan way about them. A lot of people will tell you, yes, I've voted every way that there is to vote. You hear a lot more about that and why they're voting and how they're voting and it all makes a difference.

You can't focus on partisan politics. We spend 30 days trying to tell everybody why we're different and then we spend four years trying to tell everybody why we're the same. I always found it a very unique business, when you're out there because you are working for everybody and it never mattered to me.

I've had people call me on the phone - I remember in 2006 when I was first elected - and said, look, I am this or I am that, you probably won't do anything for me because I'm not a Tory. Well, that doesn't matter to me; did you vote? Yes, I voted. Great, that's what matters, but we work for them all, whether they vote or they don't. Those that don't will tell you, I don't vote. Well, you try to encourage them and they do. I tell them, it doesn't matter who you vote for, go vote, cast your ballot and at the end of the day, they'll all be counted and somebody will represent you, whether it's myself or someone else on the ballot. Someone will come to this place and they will represent you as they should and they will talk about all these bills. That's democracy, that's a good thing.

Regardless of where we've been, this is, I think, one of the best countries in the world and we will probably all share that. We live in not too bad a province as far as that goes, when we look at other issues across the country. Our democracy is alive and well here, I think. People have the opportunity. There's nobody standing outside a polling booth with a rifle in their hand or a machine gun or anything like that saying, you must vote this way; that doesn't happen. We're very fortunate. Hopefully that will never happen in this country.

I understand and appreciate in other areas that, that is not the way that it is and as hard as Canadians try to do their piece and a good many from this province as well who are certainly representative of the military who are overseas in places like Afghanistan, trying to create freedom, it's a hard battle. We're lucky we don't have to battle that here. Our battle is getting them out. Our battle is trying to get them to the polls, not shunning them away from the polls. We have to determine or find a new way to make that happen.

I was excited to hear the minister speak today, a little bit, when he talked about his amendments and one of them being the youth participation. Now, this is an interesting idea of having kids who are 16 to 18 years old at the polls and working; that's a great thing. I think it's an opportunity for my daughter, who's going to turn 16 this week, the next time there is an election, well perhaps she'll probably be 18 and able to vote. I hope that she

would take an opportunity to go in and actually really learn about it. Now, she's probably not a great example because they've had the pleasure of being in this House and seeing how things do operate, to some degree, and they understand it really well. It didn't discourage her. I'm glad it didn't discourage her. Did she have a few questions about some of the things that go on? I think probably everybody that's ever stood in this Chamber or ever been a guest and watched some of the goings-on here, has probably had a question or two, about any number of things, about process. That's fair, that's reasonable, this is their House; this is the people's House.

I hope she and her friends and others, take the opportunity, in the next election, say, you know, I want to be a poll clerk or I want to go count ballots, when it's all over. I want to see how the process works from start to finish. I think that's a big piece of trying to encourage our young kids how to get out there and cast that ballot and why it's important, and to get them excited about it.

Now, the federal election, a lot of people argue we shouldn't have had a federal election; I agree. Nobody really needed a federal election and the money that was spent, but guess what, we had a federal election, it was caused, it was had and it started out kind of dull. It really did. It was kind of dull, nobody talking about it much, saw a few signs go up and as it went on, it got a little better, like it always does. I referred to it, it started kind of dull but ended with a bang. There was so much going on toward the end of it, not just myself as somebody who has a little knowledge of politics - I wouldn't say a lot, but a little knowledge of politics - who is very interested.

I see the Minister of Finance over there getting a chuckle out of that, he caught it. People were engaged, they were excited to see it going on. Still, the increase in the percentage of the vote didn't really go up; less than 62 per cent. It's incredible. There were a lot of people paying attention, there were a lot of people talking about this, talking about that and the media does a fine job of instilling whatever it is that they'd like to instill, whether it be positive or negative or who's going to get in and all the guesses and the pollsters. There was a lot going on, it ended with a bit of a big huge bang.

I don't say that because of the end results. I say that because of the interest that kept building toward the end of it. How do you take that interest, that builds toward the end of a campaign like that and convert it in that last week, to getting people out to vote. Because, as big a bang as it had toward the end, we did not see it carry it over with the percentage of vote that got out.

It is exciting to see some of the youth, 16 years and up. I know other members in this House, the Liberal Party have put forward a bill about 16-year-olds being able to vote. Well, I can say that I don't disagree with it - sorry, I do disagree. I don't agree with that, simply because I'm not sure at 16 years old, I'm really not sure and maybe I'm wrong, I'm only one opinion. I'm not sure, unless you were going to take the time to educate those 16-year-olds clearly, democratically on all the options that you had. Not just say, you know what, I'm a Tory, dear Erica you should vote Tory because I'm a Tory. I don't believe

that's the right way. I believe you should instill in these kids the reason why you're a Tory or you're a Liberal or you're an NDP-er or you're a Green and whatever other Parties that might come along in the years ahead. (Interruption)

They can drive at 16, that's what one of the members just said. Yes, they can drive at 16 and I'm not so sure, having a daughter who's just turning 16, that I'm all that excited about that. She's saying, Dad, I want to take my money out of the bank and I want to go and get on this Excel driving program and learn how to drive. I'm thinking, oh my, I'm glad I'm not teaching you. I don't think I could do it. I've taught lots of people to drive, old girlfriends and stuff like that and I'm still trying to teach my wife a little bit more about driving better. She would disagree with that statement, but maybe not. Anyway, I'm not excited about my 16-year-old driving.

I think there's a maturity level and all kids are different and all people are different and some kids don't mature until they're a little bit older. I know there's a lot around that but, unless you're going to provide something to these 16-year-olds, 17-year-olds and so on, and educate them, why it's important wanting to vote and I think it's great that these kids would want to vote, but I do know at the school, I think Avon View and other schools, maybe it was the middle school this year - Hants West Middle School - held a vote of their own, on how it would go and I'm anxious, because I haven't seen the results of that yet. They just named candidates for Parties and I think maybe that one of them told me they had used my name - well, I don't know. I don't know what the results were, perhaps I was beaten badly in that school, I don't know. I can tell you that it's encouraging that they're doing that, because that's education.

Even an 18-year-old going to cast a ballot, 19 years old, 20 years old, who don't have a lot of experience. I know that when we were young, we all thought we had all the experience that was required, whether we got behind a wheel and we're heading down the road or we're going to a movie or going to our friend's house, we all knew everything about everything. At least we thought we did. But as time went on and we got out of school and we got jobs, mortgages and cars, and the kids came along, we learned a lot about not knowing much of anything. You learned again along the way life does mean something, the experiences mean something, and being educated means something, especially (Interruption)

They'll let us know, yes, they'll let us know. Thank you. It's important that these kids know why they have the opportunity to go to that poll on polling day, whether it's an advanced poll, special poll, writing poll, continuous poll, as I now see presented in this document, why they're going to vote. Do most people understand, Madam Speaker, do you think, do most people understand in this country, around the world, why they have the opportunity to vote? Do they clearly understand or is it something they just think, oh, I've got to go vote because I can and it's election time again and I'm a diehard this or that, or I want to change something and I'm going to go vote for so and so, and do they really understand?

I'm not so sure that everybody does. I think that the older demographic does because they came through an era in their lives that taught them some things. Times weren't always easy. Times were difficult. We went through world wars. We went through other wars. They understand the cost of freedom. I'm not sure that our young, I don't want to say don't, but I'm not sure they're as clear why it is that they're free today to do that. So I think there's a huge piece. I don't know what history teaches us anymore. I know when I went to school, I learned all about American history. I could have told you anything about American history. I couldn't tell you anything about Canadian history unless I learned it myself, which I did learn by myself. I'm a bit of a history nut when it comes to our own Maritime history and, specifically, provincial history. I like that more than most, but I can tell you there's a lot to getting these kids involved, whether it's just going to polls and working, and if you're going to give them that opportunity to work, and I think that's good that you give them the opportunity, that the minister has added it to the bill, but tell them why they're there. They're not just there to collect \$50 or \$100, or whatever they might pay you these days, I have no idea what a polling clerk or one of these people make. I know Parties pay agents I guess sometimes to go in and do work and so on. They're not just there for the money. They're there to learn what the process is about. They're there to learn the importance of why we are actually having an election – what's going to happen, what the potentials are, what the outcomes could possibly be.

Madam Speaker, as we saw in the last recent federal election, the outcomes can be very surprising - unexpected. Now, I don't know if I've talked to anybody who wasn't very surprised at the recent outcome. Well, surprised they may be, it doesn't matter. It's all about going forward - what will government do, what will those elected officials do regardless of the Party they represent, or how many of them there are? It doesn't matter. They still have a job to do and their work is at home representing the individuals who put them there. It doesn't matter what their politics are, that's their job. Do we understand that? Do the members going forward, the members who were elected, understand that? I hope that they do.

We've heard some discussion about how one member never even campaigned. Well, there's a reason for that and I think it's probably fair to say we know what that is – the name went on the ballot, we see it all the time. That's not immune to this business. We know that, you know, okay, we want to make sure that we have someone in every riding in the country - all 308. I'll use even our province, all 52 ridings, constituencies, not ridings, constituencies in this province want to have a name on the ballot.

I've seen it where that's not new here, I've seen in a previous election here where a name was thrown on a ballot and they never even showed up to campaign. So they knew that they weren't going to win and, of course, they know through polling and so on and so forth, but can we now look at that and say that that's even reasonable. We just saw it again. I talked about how dull, who would have ever thought what happened in the Province of Quebec was going to happen. Nobody in week one or two anticipated that, did they? I don't think so, Madam Speaker; that all happened near the end when we saw the decline, people had a change for some reason. Something was instilled in people in the Province of Quebec

who said, okay, it's time for a change. That wasn't present on day one. It wasn't there. It wasn't present on day two or on week two; it came about in the last couple of weeks.

Now, what helped that over the top? Well, pollsters were there and they were doing their thing. The media was there, they were doing their thing. The media drives an election campaign. It's incredible how much, I'll use the word power, or I'm not sure what the word is, to instill people's thinking - influence is one, power may be another. There is a whole variety of names you could probably use to describe how this goes and when you talk about democracy, is that democratic? How democratic is the influence of the media? Well, the media would say, right to free speech, I agree with that, good, it's all about what people buy, what they believe when they read that line.

I always say when I read articles in the paper, it doesn't matter what paper and I don't even need to mention any, there's a line that's missing and it's a line of fact, generally speaking, in between every other line. When you read a lot of stories, you'll see and you'll know different because you were there - and pictures, well, worth a thousand words. Is that not the statement - a picture is worth a thousand words. It doesn't mean it has to be accurate. What is perceived in that picture? What is perceived in the article? Depending on how you read the article, it could be a story about any member in this House and you said, that's not what I said, that's not what I meant. It doesn't matter what it is, it's about how it's interpreted. That's right, minister, it's about how it's interpreted.

People are just human, they'll interpret things how they wish and if they think there's a great movement towards change, perhaps they'll jump on that bandwagon and they'll be part of that. Is that right or wrong? It doesn't matter, it's democratic. It is their free right to do just that. They, the people of this province and of this country will and must, after having the opportunity to cast that ballot, stand up and take responsibility for their actions. So if people aren't happy (Interruption) I'm sorry, Madam Speaker, I've got the minister there throwing me off a little bit, I forgot where I was.

Madam Speaker, I'm getting back to the bill. I'm trying not to be discouraged and influenced by some of the other people around this House as you can see how easy it is to do that, so that's a great example, which really references what I was speaking to. People want to get on and they want to say, I want to be part of that winning team or I think that's exciting and I'm going to be part of that. That is free, that is democratic, there's nothing wrong with that. People need to stand up and they need to take responsibility for their actions after they vote. People will need to stand up and take responsibilities for the recent vote that they just cast.

You hear a lot about Stephen Harper and majority government and sometimes people aren't happy with it. It doesn't matter which radio station you listen to or which columnist you read or which poll you look at, there's good and there's bad to both, by way of comments. We'll really know what's good and we'll really know what is bad by the end result, Madam Speaker, and nothing more. It will be the same as any government, it will be the same as the current government we have in Nova Scotia.

The NDP is here, people voted a majority government in this province, we have to accept that and respect those decisions, which we do, I do, and I tell people when they're not happy, okay, if you're not happy you'll have an opportunity when the times comes, stand up and take responsibility for your actions because the majority of people obviously voted for a majority government, that's democratic, complain all you like, or not, maybe you are happy, maybe you are not.

One thing we do know is it doesn't matter who is in government, people are not always happy, that's for certain. So they have the opportunity, fortunately, every, in this case, four years - a couple more years to go yet, probably, and I'm guessing, before we'll have another provincial election. I think the people are happy that they're not going to the polls or threatening to go to the polls. That was the result of the recent federal election. Democratically they said, okay, it's time, it's my right to say I don't want this anymore. We have the opportunity to do that and we have to make sure that we respect that, Madam Speaker.

The continuous polls, it should be interesting. Now I thought in previous elections in this province that we were able to go to the returning office where Elections Nova Scotia was set up in our local area and I believe it was the same in the most recent federal election, you could vote any day at that poll, up to the day before, I guess, or the day of advance polling day. Now maybe that's just a new name for it but I thought that rule always existed. But there were people who did not know, strangely enough, and still don't know that that opportunity does exist to go and vote. They think that because I'm at work every day, I don't have an opportunity to do it, what have you, it would be very good. Again, it's about educating Nova Scotians that they can go to these continuous polls, that they can vote, they don't have to wait for advance polling day, they do not have to wait until election day.

Now I do know in talking to some people it doesn't matter, they say we're waiting until election day, it's something I've always done and I'm not going to change. That's fine, we respect that as well, but we do all try and part of getting that vote out is obviously through the ability to have such a thing as the continuous poll open and certainly the advance polls, we work hard at trying to get the vote out as well because we know that people are busy, they are working, they are doing whatever. I know that there are rules around a few hours and letting people off if they have a job or wherever they're employed, to go and vote on election day and that's fine. How many really do? I don't know, but again, if we're looking at trying to increase the vote and getting out the vote, we have to figure out how to make it easier and I believe that this continuous poll is a great opportunity, provided that we tell people.

When we are sending out that little card that says, here's your card and take it to the polls, here's your card to vote with, there's not enough information, obviously, on it. There's a phone number and you can call Elections Nova Scotia or Elections Canada or whatever the election might be or your local municipal unit, perhaps, when the time comes, for that matter. It's a fairly big card, there's lots of room on there. Don't just put, 'if you have questions, call'. We should be putting advanced polling days, hours. We should be

putting the continuous poll is open every day. There is lots of room to put stuff on there and one of the things we should definitely be putting on this card is to bring your ID with you so that it is clear. Put it in a big bold colour, something that stands out. Maybe it's blue - I don't know - or orange or yellow or whatever the colour might be, it doesn't matter, but you've got to bold it and you've got to put it out there, bring your ID with you. So many people still don't know that.

Continuous polls, I think it's good, I think we should list it and I think we need to educate people that this is a change, because there would be a lot of people who are not paying attention to this debate or not watching it, don't have the time to watch this debate. It will be a couple of years probably, as I said, that will go by, this bill will get through. How many people will pick up this bill and just read it at their leisure? Something to put you to sleep at night, perhaps, depending on how you look at this stuff. Probably not many, it's fair to say, unless you're involved in the process, for example, the people within this House who work here and so on, the people who work for us in our offices, people who are politically motivated, will not read this. Candidates won't even read this, in all likelihood, until they're making decisions toward the next election.

There has to be a way to make sure that people, in general, the voting public, are aware that there is a new Elections Act in the Province of Nova Scotia and you have the opportunity, on these days and this is how and this is why, these are the directions. It's not that hard, yet we've not been able to capture that in years past. It makes it difficult, again, as candidates running with our name on a ballot, what's our goal? Our goal is to get people to the poll and yes, we'd like them all to vote for us. Sure we would. We know that's not realistic, but we need people to get to the poll.

Now in some cases, the majority vote for us, which is not a bad thing. We're able to get here and we're able to represent them, as I said before. Again, I think it's a really good thing that we're seeing some changes in the polls. The poll locations are important to people, I want to stress that. I want to stress, again, very much touching on the hospital piece. How much time do I have left, Madam Speaker?

MADAM SPEAKER: Around 13 minutes.

MR. PORTER: There have been some issues with registering that I know that I've dealt with in previous elections and again in this federal election, registering the list of electors and how that's created. I know there is a census that's being done and I think I've heard recently, commercials around the importance of doing our census. We've made them available to do on-line. Even doing them by hand is really, only minutes. I did mine the other day when it came and, I don't know, it might have taken me, I am going to say, 10 minutes at the very most, to whip through that and there were five of us. They aren't asking a whole lot. It doesn't take much. You can go on-line. It's probably even much quicker to do it on-line.

We have to stress, we know that the census is important. I won't argue - short form, long form - I don't even know what this form is. It was a long form to me. I rolled it out and it had a whole bunch of stuff on it, but I can't tell you what version of it it was, I just filled it out. The importance of that obviously goes without saying. Obviously there's some census data that goes back to Elections Canada, Elections Nova Scotia in the end when it comes to election time and it says, okay, these are the list of electors in your area. We know that they're off. I don't know what other numbers are like, I know that in my area, there are probably 15,000 names on it, but we know that people move and for whatever other reasons, people obviously pass on and the list is sometimes not up-to-date. Fortunately, we'll have something here that should be fairly close to being up-to-date within maybe a year or a year and a half, two years, when it comes time to getting that right. I do know that there are some sensitivities around people not wanting to give information, but there have been assurances by government that this information will be kept and not given out to the local flyer company who wants to call you every night at suppertime and try to sell you something that you don't need.

It's important that these people get that census done; it's important that the list is accurate and up to date. Again, it is part of encouraging people how to vote, because there are a lot of people that if they don't fill out the census perhaps they don't realize there is a chance that they won't get an opportunity to vote because the card won't come. Maybe there's some relationship to that that we have to instill in people that this is why you fill it out. They know, and I'll just speak to my own, that my daughter's going to turn 16 years old, perhaps by the next election when they're looking at this census they'll know that she's voting age, perhaps they'll send that card to her in the mail, it won't be an issue. Creates another person who says, oh yeah, I can vote now, here's my card, I can go vote. It will make a difference and we need, again, and as I said, I heard a couple of commercials about trying to encourage people to go to the polls and to vote.

I have a bit of a highlight here that the minister provided just on the chief electoral officer, and they talk about the improved access to voting opportunities. It highlighted some of the things here, the mobile polls and the broader categories of residential centres, and I talked about those, and a new poll type, which is the continuous poll. On the independence of the chief electoral officer, I want to touch on just for a few minutes before I finish up my time here on this hour. Interesting how we're going to bring this all in.

Here we have the Chief Electoral Officer, who is currently Christine McCulloch, she has had a lot to do with this and I know that she has been there through previous elections and I do want to say that she has been very helpful when we've had issues in our constituency. I know that there were calls made through the people who work in the Elections Nova Scotia office and the regional offices who were great as well. Ken Sears is one of the gentlemen who worked in my office locally, fine gentleman who did a great job in my opinion, and when he didn't know he knew right where to go and Ms. McCulloch was very good at helping him through that process and answering questions and things seemed to work out.

So I think she has a lot to offer to this entire process making it totally independent, taking the politics out of it and I really hope that that's where it goes. There always seems to be this flavour of politics involved in who makes what rules, and I hope what she has and I think what she will have is a great ability to add to this in the end. I'm sure she has been adding all the way along by way of developing the bill and setting the rules.

But the regulations are going to be an important part. It is one thing to write the piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker, as you and I both know, it's another thing to draft the regulations. So I can see why the minister is probably anxious to get the bill through, looking at time frames and next elections and having this in place and an opportunity to get it out and to educate people and provide it for them. It's going to take some time to develop what will be good, solid regulations around this particular bill because I don't think it's as easy as one might think.

The chief electoral officer is going to have an awfully big role to play in doing just that because he, or she in this case, is going to be the top person who's going to make final decisions and who is going to have to have something to reference them. In this case, she is going to have a great deal to reference, not only a bill that has numerous pages - I think 117 pages is what I read this weekend since getting it on Friday - she's going to have an awful lot to go through, and I'm sure she'll know it inside and out prior to an election coming, having been part of developing it.

Certainly the regulations around each and every clause in the bill, that will be where the devil is in the detail as we've referred to, Mr. Speaker, because those will be the things that are important to us as members, those will be things that are important to candidates, official agents and so on and so forth. The official agents who have an enormous amount of work to do and it sounds like a pretty small title, but it's probably the biggest title in all of the campaign, as you and I would both know. That person has great responsibilities and they have to have a go to, they have to be able to say this has to clear. That's all part of this reform when it comes to what's good for Nova Scotians - not just good for candidates and political Parties, but what's good for Nova Scotians, what will work for them and what's fair. Most importantly, what's fair.

This process has to be a fair one, it has to be a democratic one and it has to be one that is going to encourage the voter to come out. Again we have to remember, what are we going to do to get that vote out? Will this bill and the little bit of media - maybe it will get a lot of media, I don't know. You know what it's like, it's a story for a day or two and then it goes away. How do we get it back? We see all kinds of reports crafted in this House and generated on this subject and that department and it doesn't matter what it is. You and I both see them come through this House and throughout the course of the year the paper that is generated is absolutely unbelievable. A lot of reports come in and they get shelved and no one will ever read them.

In my office, I put them out in my waiting area so if people have any interest at all in looking at some of the things that government does and reports that are generated,

they're there. To date I don't know of anyone who's ever picked one up and looked at it. Yet we have questions around some of them, when constituents do come in, I pull them out, we'll open it up and see what's available to them and sometimes the reports are valuable. I shouldn't say sometimes, that's not really fair. If used the way they're intended to be used and the reason they were developed for, I think there's great opportunity and there are probably some good material in each of the reports that are put forward.

Again, people don't take advantage of that because we don't do a good job of selling it. It gets put around here to 52 members and thrown in a drawer and maybe that's where it ends up. But we have to be able to get this out to the public in a way that is meaningful and I'm not talking about commercials with maybe people from here out there having opportunities to sell something. I'm not necessarily saying that works, but there has to be something that follows this.

A good piece of legislation, good regulations that go along with it and then when it comes time or we know that we're coming up on elections - maybe that's where in some provinces or countries fixed election dates mean things. They have the opportunity maybe three, four, six months in advance to say, don't forget this is part of how the process works to potential candidates who may be interested, to Party people who may be interested. We know there will be significant rule changes so everybody should be interested, but more importantly to the voters, say these are the simple pieces, how do I get my little card? Oh, it will come by this date, after the writ is dropped, it arrives a week or two later or whatever the prior number of days and if you don't get it by then, this is what you should do.

People don't get it - well I never got my card so I didn't go vote. That's not good enough. That's a failure on our part, that's a failure on people who are out there but they're only doing the best they can with what they have. We know that as well. It comes back to that census bit again. If we don't do the census every once in awhile and we don't provide the information, then sometimes Elections Canada or Elections Nova Scotia don't know or municipal units don't know when it's time every four years. I think they have the best deal going, they have set election dates, they know exactly when the next one will be in 2012. They'll be out there campaigning, we know that but people who are interested will say okay, maybe along about August I'm going to start knocking on a few doors. I know that's what I did, the year that I ran in 2004. I started knocking on doors in late August, even before I had my nomination paper filled out, to get a feel for what this was about and learn a little something about it and hear what the people in town had to say.

Maybe that helped get me elected that year, I don't know, because there was competition. I can tell you there was a benefit to that, not only to me as a candidate, but I think the people said, you know what, there's an election coming up, we probably should be thinking a bit about that. People were. There was also a process opportunity that people had to learn, myself as a candidate, other people who ran as candidates, people who were working who had done it numerous times, who had been through this process as workers still had forgotten over the course of those years. People will forget again because four years is a fairly long time and there are people who will say I worked elections ever since

I've been alive - the regulars we call them - they work and work and work and that's great, wonderful to have those people.

There are still new things and what we do know, in a document this size, they go, oh, this is the rule book now? This isn't even half of it. By the time the regulations are drafted, it'll be twice that and more probably. There's going to have to be people who know what their role is. My thought is, okay, if you're a poll clerk and you photocopy out the pieces that say poll clerk and the regulations that go with it and that's how you teach it and you get it right. I don't know, that seems rather simple, but maybe that works.

You have to be able to help people get the job done and get it done correctly. If you don't do that, that's going to create other issues. The last thing you want to do is create issues on polling day. You don't want a disagreement between someone coming in the door who says I didn't get my card but I want to vote. That's happened, people don't get their card and they think they can't vote because they don't have a card. Well, you can. You go, you sign your oath, you swear in or you get somebody to verify and swear in, that says I am this person and I swear that to be true and it's really simple. But it appears to some people, I don't want to bother, I didn't get my card.

We also have to get that message out and obviously you can't put that on a card if you haven't got it but you have to be able to get that out there. You have to be allowed to do that, as a candidate, if you're going to throw out advertising material. Most of us probably have put advertising material out, as members certainly, newsletters and what have you. We've put stuff out during campaigns that say this, this and this. We certainly have to be allowed to put on that this is important, in some fashion, and maybe that's standardized. Maybe every Party has to use a standard ad on their documentation going out that says that everybody can recognize this, regardless if they're getting material from this Party or that Party or this candidate, it doesn't matter. One thing should be standard here, and that's just another idea, that it all looks the same - everybody is selling the same message so there's no confusion.

My time is up already, Mr. Speaker? I appreciate the opportunity this evening to have - the hour goes by quickly, so with that, thanks very much and I'll take my seat.

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

MS. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today to speak on some of the highlights of the new Elections Bill. I think what I'll do is first off is focus on what is a major concern for the Liberal Party, which would be the exclusion of the third-party financing or advertising provisions. This actually had a great deal of interest for me because back in 1997 there were no limits on third-party advertising, so when the federal election occurred that year, there was an organization - it's still around today - the National Citizens Coalition, and the National Citizens Coalition decided they would take out some ads against a number of candidates throughout the country. (Interruption)

Yes, well my colleague just asked, like whom, for example? Well it just happened to be that year they decided to take out some advertisements against the youngest member of Parliament in Nova Scotia. I just happen to be married to him so that's how I know this story. In that particular election the National Citizens Coalition decided to run radio ads and say that if this particular member were re-elected, he would be able to collect a \$1 million pension. So suddenly a member who was in his mid 30s was subjected to advertisements by an organization that had no limits on how much it was going to advertise and there were no ramifications for this organization if what it was saying was not true.

Now I suppose in some fantasy world that pension, if he had been re-elected at that time, would have added up to \$1 million, but at \$30,000 a year it would have been quite a long time before that added up, plus there had been some changes that had come in so that MPs who were defeated and who had invested in their pensions could not begin collecting those pensions until age 55. So unlike in the past, where if a member were vested after six years and two terms, they could begin collecting right away, the amounts were lower and you could not collect until age 55.

I have to tell you that I had neighbours who had been all gung-ho and were going to support the Liberal member for Halifax West, until those ads began airing. I had neighbours who couldn't even look at me because they thought that my husband would begin collecting a \$1 million pension if he were re-elected. You could sit down and explain, stop and think about this, \$30,000 - the inflation rate would have to be massive to get up to the \$1 million mark. It didn't matter. There was no control on the National Citizens Coalition on how much money they spent and there was no necessity for them to actually tell the truth. There would be no penalty for them if they didn't.

I have to say that ever since that - and yes, my husband lost but then he came back three years later. Anyway, the thing was when that happened, I realized the power of third-party advertising, and ever since then I have felt very strongly that that was a case where a member who had controls on how much money he spent could not respond effectively to an organization that had no controls on what it spent. That didn't seem fair to me.

The irony of all of this was that my husband was one of the people who had actually pushed to have pension rules changed so you had to be older to be able to collect it and the amount was lower, but that didn't matter. It was easier to inflate the numbers with a really young guy and so that's what they did. My concern about third-party advertising is that without controls it means organizations - and that could be corporations, industry groups, it could be unions - their voices are louder than the actual candidates who are running. And because the candidates have controls on the money they're spending but these organizations, if this bill were to go forward unamended, do not, it's not really a level playing field.

It also begs the question, where's the voice of the people who do not have money? So for poverty groups, for example, that may not have money, where is their voice? What I think we don't want is the kind of system where we see in the U.S. where negative

advertising - although the Lord knows we've had enough of that - continues for a really long time in advance of an election. I mean sometimes it just seems like in the U.S. it's a never-ending election cycle. I think that's what happens when there's no control on advertising. Again, we are referring to an election cycle and not to the lead-up to one, but if we don't have some kind of a control, money buys elections.

My concern about excluding third-party advertising from this bill is that the minister was just outside the Chamber and he indicated to reporters that he hadn't read the report before introducing the bill. I guess I find that kind of surprising because I would have thought that would be job one before drafting the bill, but apparently the bill was drafted before the report was even issued. So I have to say I think this is a case of putting the cart before the horse.

The minister indicated he hadn't thought about third-party advertising and I have to ask, why not? It certainly has been a factor in elections here. In fact, every other jurisdiction in the country that has been introducing controls, introducing new Elections Acts and has been updating their rules, has in fact introduced some form of control on third-party spending. Now, we are not seeking a ban on organizations communicating with their own membership during an election. For example, during this past federal election I was forwarded an e-mail from a constituent who belongs to a labour union and she was very concerned that this had come to her. I explained to her that that's perfectly legitimate. This labour union is allowed to communicate with its members, it's perfectly fine. Any organization can communicate, send an e-mail out, and say we're supporting x or y, or we think you should do this or that.

It said: Sister/brother, I am contacting you on behalf of the labour outreach campaign in regard to the upcoming federal election. The labour outreach campaign is coordinated by the Canadian Labour Congress in conjunction with the partisan unions within the labour movement. We are working to mobilize our members to vote as well as support candidates who stand for workers' issues - I note the term "partisan unions" there which I thought was interesting. CUPE National, as you are aware, is a partisan union and strongly supports the NDP. We are asking members to check out our election campaign from the CUPE Web site - it lists the Web site - and to please contact me if you would like a sign on your lawn and would like to volunteer an hour or two for the candidate in your riding. Also tomorrow, April 16, 2011, please join your fellow trade unionist in a Worker Appreciation Day at Robert Chisholm's campaign office, 124 Woodlawn Road, Dartmouth, for a day of food, fun and festivities - it goes on to indicate the times. I look forward to hearing from you over the next week or two. In solidarity - it's the member area coordinator from the CUPE labour outreach campaign.

We are not advocating that this kind of thing stop, although we'd like it if they were supporting us. But this is not what we're talking about. We're talking about advertising, we're talking about sending out flyers that appear to be flyers for one Party when, in fact, they're not for a Party. They are, in fact, being put out by an organization. I guess I find it very disturbing that the government brought forward this bill without thinking about third-

party advertising, because to me it's a pretty basic issue and maybe that's just because of my particular experience with it, but I don't think so.

We would welcome an amendment, something along the line of what we see in the federal government where there is, sort of, a global amount that you can't spend over and then amounts within that amount, per riding. For example, if the global amount is \$25,000 for the entire province, then they would not be able to spend more than, say, \$3,000 per riding.

Some other highlights of the new Elections Act - if I could just go through the bill and take a look - is improved access for voters and enhanced voting options, so improving the convenience and increasing opportunities to vote during the election period, new continuous poll and extended advance polls. What we really have seen over the last number of years, federally, is that this is very convenient for people to do. People travel, people go away on business, people are having surgery, that kind of thing. I had some friends who are not well and who are waiting to see surgeons and they were hoping that they might get in during the writ period and so they went off and voted early because they didn't know what each new day would bring. I think it makes it much easier to fulfill their obligation to vote, if they can vote at the Elections Nova Scotia office or, in the case of the federal election, the Elections Canada office.

I know federally, people who are, say, in nursing homes or are bedridden, having an official from Elections Canada visit and take their ballot at that time has meant - we had one friend who had Lou Gehrig's disease and she was very determined to vote. Elections Canada officials visited her and she got to vote, and she called us at the campaign office. This was, I guess, about 10 years ago and she was so excited, she had been able to vote and it meant an awful lot to her. I think that so often, people who are ill or who have various disabilities might find it difficult to get out of the house to vote and that is very important for them, to be able to participate as a citizen. I know it made our friend Joyce's day that day.

The second highlight in the new Elections Act is the independence and accountability of the office of the chief electoral officer. It makes the CEO an officer of the Legislature and this officer is appointed in the same manner as the Auditor General, with the same high level of independence. It makes provision for the appointment of returning officers through merit-based election processes and those would now be appointed by the CEO and not the Governor in Council.

It also makes provision for the improved training and professional development of election officers. I can tell you that one of the things I heard a lot on election day was the issue of identification. For some reason various election officers didn't know what the rules were and they were turning people away who didn't have a driver's licence because a passport isn't good enough because on your passport you write in your address, so the passport is not going to work. Those people should not have been turned away. There are a number of different options they can take to prove their address. When I hear about people

getting turned away from polls, I have to say that really ticks me off. Because, quite frankly, if people have made the effort to vote, I do think that our elections officials should be trained well enough to know what the rules are and that was not happening in this past federal election. From what I was hearing, it was happening over a wide area.

If we are going to improve the training and professional development of elections officers, I think we should also be giving them a literacy test because if they can't read instructions, they may not be getting instructions right. When we hire census workers, they get a literacy test so I think we should be doing that with our elections officers so that we know they can actually read the instructions.

I do believe, actually, that the voting cards indicate that you must be able to prove who you are; that was on the federal cards. So perhaps with the provincial cards, we could give a little more information about how you do that. I think they do refer you to a Web site which gives you indication but if you don't have access to a computer, that might be difficult, so perhaps it would be a good idea if that information was printed directly on the card. Maybe the card would have to be a little bit bigger so that would all fit on there because there's a number of different - if you don't have this, then this - a number of different contingencies, I guess, so that might make things a little more difficult.

I do think it's important that people know that your card is no longer just good enough to walk in with. I have an aunt who is legally blind, so she's never had a driver's licence; for her, proving her identity might be a little more challenging. I talked to a constituent on Saturday night whose father is in his 90s and he's not driving anymore so he doesn't have a driver's licence. So it was a little challenging for him to prove his identity but his wife was there and she drives so she was able to swear to his identity. I do think that making that process clear beforehand is a good thing. I do think that if we are encouraging people to go out and vote, if we are concerned about voter turnout, then it is incumbent upon us to actually make it a little easier for people to (a) get there and (b) when they get there, make it easier for them to vote, not throw up other roadblocks in front of them.

I also think that - oh, now I've lost my train of thought but I'm sure it'll come back again. One of the things, under the independence and accountability of the Office of the chief electoral officer, it indicates that a code of conduct for election officers should be followed. I find it kind of funny that here we are talking about a code of conduct for elections officers and yet we, as MLAs - well, my Party tried to introduce such a thing and it has not been called and we would like to see that.

Modernization and simplification is the third subheading there and there is a simplified procedure for the conduct of recounts. As we saw in this federal election, there are a number of recounts underway because there were some very close races and . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: CBC doesn't know how to broadcast the liability.

MS. REGAN: Well this bill does not deal with CBC and calling certain candidates elected or not elected early. There's been some mea culpas on that part already, so I'm sure we don't need to discuss that further.

In terms of the conduct of recounts, it's important to have rules around this sort of thing. I think we probably all remember - well maybe not the member for Yarmouth because he was probably in diapers then, but I think we all probably remember (Interruption) He's really young.

AN HON. MEMBER: True.

MS. REGAN: Remember the election that occurred, I think, was it in Shelburne? Where there was, it was flip a coin, right? (Interruption) Or draw it out of hat. Whenever people say, oh my vote's not going to make a difference, I always like to tell them the story of Shelburne, where there was a tie and then they had to break the tie. I think having rules around what happens in that kind of a case or what happens around a recount is very important.

The modernization and simplification subheading also modernizes much of the language in the Act and, goodness knows, that's always nice when we can actually look at a document and read it and figure out what it actually means. It also includes a provision to incorporate best practices in geographic information services, list management and other relevant technology.

I have to say, I still have not decided whether the permanent list is part of the reason why we have seen voter engagement plummet, because I note that the permanent list, when that came in that also seemed to be at the same time that we saw voter engagement plummet. I'm wondering if that list simply isn't that accurate and that's why it looks like we are not seeing a lot of people voting, when maybe they've moved or passed on or whatever. But I wonder whether the permanent voters' list is the way to do things or maybe it's just the simple act of having someone knock on your door and say that they're enumerating for the election. Maybe that makes people who don't follow politics or follow elections more cognizant of the fact that, in fact, an election is underway. Although, I really don't know how you could have missed the federal one, because it seemed to be everywhere but then again I might be a little biased that way.

The fourth highlight of the new Elections Act is around improved accountability - enhanced provisions for the protection of personal information and for security of the list of electors, I think we can all agree that that is an important aspect of the list, the consolidation of election finance legislation in the Elections Act, because currently elections finance provisions are scattered in the Elections Act, the Members and Public Employees Disclosure Act and the Income Tax Act. Anybody who's ever been an official agent - I haven't been an official agent but I have been a campaign manager - it is a complicated enough job without having to find the various parts of the legislation that are

pertinent to you, in several different places. I think anytime that we can see streamlining of such things is very important.

The fifth highlight of the new Elections Act is education and communications. The first thing is a program to involve Nova Scotians aged 16 to 18 as election workers and, you know, I think that's a really laudatory thing, a program to get young people interested in elections. My sense is that a lot of young people are actually interested in elections, probably more than we realize, and they often have lots to say. Anybody who has gone to a high school during an election period, you often get a lot of students who have very good questions, who are very engaged. I can't help but think that if we actually taught them a civics class along the way that, gosh, they might be a lot more engaged. They might understand what the heck is going on, the difference between the three levels of government.

I think we do our students a disservice when we do not give them the tools that they need to be informed citizens and I'm gravely concerned about what I believe is a lack in our education system. I think if we're giving them tools to do all kinds of other things to be functioning adults, this is one thing that we should be teaching our students - how governments work. Tuesday night, I actually am looking forward to going to the First Bedford Scouts and I'll be speaking to them about what we do here and what we don't do here, what we do in a constituency office on any given day, and I have those excellent books, the Democracy 250 books, along, to give to the scouts - and thank you, former Mr. Speaker, those were great. So I'm looking forward to speaking to these young men and women, because there are girls in the troop as well, about what we do here and when I go to speak to them, that's just one part of their civics badge that they'll be working on.

I do find that kids who have parents who are engaged and it doesn't even have to be that they work on an election campaign or anything. Certainly when I was growing up, my parents would never have dreamed of volunteering on an election campaign but they always had a sign. Of course, it depended which Party got to the house first, which sign went up, because my mom voted one way and my dad voted another way. (Interruption) No, now they don't vote NDP.

We always talked politics at the dinner table - always, always, always - but they would never have dreamed of volunteering on a campaign. The result was that, as we were growing up, my brothers and I had a keen interest in politics, although growing up I would never have imagined I would be standing here today, I have to say. I thought if I was really lucky, maybe I could go work for an MP or an MLA someday but I certainly never imagined I would be doing this. In fact, one of my earliest memories is of being in the backseat of the car and my dad was listening to the radio and he was very irritated at Mr. Trudeau, let's just put it that way. I like to remind him of that when he's out here working on a Liberal election campaign.

Anyway, I do think that, you know, families that discuss politics will probably breed children who vote - maybe not necessarily. I do think that we would certainly give

our students the tools to make decisions about voting if we actually had civics courses in high school. It wouldn't have to be a huge, you know - you don't have to know how to draft a bill or anything at the end of it, but I do think some basic tools around how a government works would be a really huge advantage for the young people of Nova Scotia and maybe we would actually see voter turnout increase.

It's funny, on Friday night, my family was at bingo night at Bedford Junior High and some girls came up and they wanted my husband, as the newly re-elected MP, to sign their bingo cards and get a photo and everything like that. I said, oh no, now there will be no living with him, but it was one of those rare moments where you had the sense that politics had actually petered through the firmament that is Facebook and Twitter and whatever else the kids are on. They actually knew what was going on and they had actually had - in the Grade 7 class at least - a mock election.

Actually, I believe the Minister of Finance indicated to me that his eight year-old son had voted in a mock election during this time too. I'll let him tell you how his son voted, he told me, but I think those experiences for kids - if they're in a class with an engaged teacher - can make a difference along the way because they get an idea of how things work; majority, minority parliaments, for eight-year-olds that might be a bit much but I think that can be a help. I really would like to see some provision made to increase the education of students along the way so that they actually have the tools that they need to become engaged citizens.

Education and communications also include training programs and guidelines for volunteers such as official agents, electoral district associations, et cetera involved in election campaigns to improve understanding and compliance with election rules and regulations. They're pretty complicated rules federally. I think provincially they're not quite as onerous, but the reporting aspects for federal campaigns are quite onerous. I think that education really is key for the volunteers who are doing that because you definitely want to make sure that your people who are working are not breaking any rules; that they are, in fact, dotting the i's and crossing the t's and making sure that they are doing everything possible to make sure that they are obeying the rules. I don't think that official agents or campaign managers want to do anything that could jeopardize their candidate's chances of a victory or embarrass their candidate or anything like that.

That particular provision, the education and communications, also includes the authority to develop and implement public communication, education and information programs and to appoint advisory panels, conduct research and studies to improve understanding of the election process and democratic traditions and values. I always thought that politics and government was the most fascinating thing that I could imagine and it was an avocation before it became a vocation. I think a lot of people think it's kind of boring, but I can't imagine anything that's more important. If I'm speaking to a class, I'll say, how did you get here today? The kids will say, we came on a school bus. Well, the roads that you're driving on, that's the result of government. The bus, the regulations surrounding how that's looked after, there are regulations surrounding that. The

streetlights, everything you did today, whether it was putting on make-up or whether it was what you ate for breakfast, that is regulated in some way, shape or form by government. So don't let anybody tell you that what we do here isn't important. I think it's important for kids to know that, that what we do is to make life better.

A number of years ago, my husband - I think it was maybe 1995 or 1996 - was an election observer in Haiti. I guess it would have been after 1996 because I had a new little baby at home and so Geoff - and for Hansard, that's G-e-o-f-f - was going off to Haiti to be an election observer. I was very uptight, somebody said to me he's just going off to observe an election and I said, well, first of all, there's been violence there for election observers so there have been threats made.

Second of all, my biggest concern, bigger than that because I figured that would be kind of fluky, but my biggest concern was that this was a country that didn't have a lot of rules around things that we take for granted. I was worried that a bridge he was driving over would crumble or something like that. You can imagine my chagrin when, I think it was about seven days, I didn't hear from my husband who normally calls me every night and all I knew was that he had gone into the central plateau area called Hinche and then I heard nothing. Finally, one night he called me and explained if he wanted to call me he had to walk to the local telco and if they had power and if, if, if - all of these different things - then he might be able to get through to me.

As it turned out, he happened to be in one of the areas where they had had death threats against the election workers which really did not improve my anxiety level. Once he got home, he made it through it fine, but once he got home he was describing to me what the roads were like in Haiti and he said it was like a moonscape, you just bounced up and down the whole way along. He said at one point (Interruption) Well, it's kind of like the roads of Cape Breton West, according to my colleague for Cape Breton West. But, he said that at one point they were about to go down a very windy mountain and they were going along the outside and this young boy waved them over and they got out and they looked at I think it was the back left tire, this would have been, no, it was the front left tire, it was the outside, and all of the lug nuts save one had been sheared off from the sheer bouncing up and down of this jeep. They would have died of starvation before they hit the ground from this mountain.

That was the kind of thing I was worried about when he went off to Haiti. It's the kind of thing that we often here in Canada and in Nova Scotia take for granted, that the services we get from government will be provided and that the regulations will be followed. In Haiti if there were regulations, and I'm not sure there were, they weren't being followed because they had other more pressing issues, shall we say.

Another highlight of the new Elections Bill deals with offences and contraventions. This includes enhanced provisions for the chief electoral officer to investigate and deal with offences and contraventions and refer appropriate matters to the Director of Public Prosecutions for appropriate action. You know what? I'll bet you most of us go through our

careers in Parliament or in the Legislature and you never have to deal with that. Yet, again, I have an example here from, I believe, it was the 2000 election and one of the other Parties in the federal election decided to drop a fake poll in the final weekend before the election, they dropped a piece of literature. They never used the actual word “poll”; it was a survey and the numbers suggest and things like that. It indicated that the Conservative candidate was in first place, the NDP candidate was in second and the Liberal candidate was in third. Although it had come out from the local PC campaign, there was no imprimatur from the official agent of that. It actually gave the name of a friend of mine as the media contact on that, which was interesting because she wasn’t actually working on that campaign. That ended up going to Elections Canada, it ended up that the local PC Association ended up being investigated for dropping information that was (a) not correct and (b) did not have the official agents sign-off on it and they could have been fined \$10,000. In the end, the local Liberal candidate that I was working for declined to have that happen because he didn’t want to bankrupt the local PC Association.

These kinds of things do happen, there are shenanigans and certainly in this past federal election and during the past provincial election I heard of cases, both in Dartmouth, where people who had Liberal signs were being called and being told that their polling station had changed. That takes a fair amount of organization to be able to actually pull that off because you have to have people go out, look who has signs, go back, see who lives there, get their phone number and then call them and misdirect them. I think that kind of thing, when it happens, needs to be dealt with.

I did raise the issue when we had our briefing from Justice officials about this because I do think that if campaigns are going to engage in that kind of misdirection then the CEO, the chief electoral officer, needs to have the ability to actually investigate that kind of thing. I guess that would include phone records because I do think that this is an extremely unfortunate side effect, I guess, of competition. Elections are important but I really just don’t think they are so important that you need to cheat to win. I would hope that for cases like that that we would see offences and contraventions dealt with severely.

The seventh item listed as a highlight of the new Elections Bill for me is needing major studies in piloting, enabling continuous improvement of election procedures through major studies of election-related issues and piloting provisions, i.e., the trial of e-voting, when practicable, securely, with authorization of the House of Assembly. I don’t want to seem like a Luddite but I’d not a big fan of e-voting simply because I don’t believe that you can actually guarantee the privacy of a vote when you’re doing e-voting. I guess I have fewer concerns about it when we’re actually talking about municipal voting because we don’t have a Party system there. I don’t think at this point municipal elections seem to have the number of volunteers who could actually stand over top of people or whatever, as they vote. I do think it’s very important to make sure we have the sanctity of privacy, the sanctity of the vote, that it’s a secret ballot. I guess that’s what I’m trying to say, the sanctity of the secret ballot I think is very important.

To conclude, what - well, I have a number of minor concerns, which I've outlined here. To me the biggest concern is around the issue of controls over third party spending during an election period. I think that the ability of third parties to influence the outcome of a vote, at this point with nothing controlling it, is it gives third parties an advantage over political candidates, an advantage over political Parties which have controls on how much they can spend. At this point, if you have a third party which has unlimited ability to spend versus a political Party or a candidate who has a cap on how much they can spend, it doesn't seem fair to me and it doesn't seem right.

I'm glad to hear the government has now come to that conclusion. I would like to point out that this issue was raised when the government did come and do a briefing with our caucus last Wednesday or Thursday, I believe, that issue was raised loud and clear as the key issue for us. It was also raised by our communications staff with the government's communications staff so we were very clear even before Friday when this bill was introduced that what we needed to see was some meaningful controls on third-party spending.

What we would like to see is something close to what we have seen with the federal government where there is an overall control that the group can spend sort of globally across the province and then also within each electoral district that there would be some controls on there. Otherwise, quite frankly, it's simply not fair and we will see the power of money. I don't think that's how elections should be decided. It should be on a contest of ideas, but it should not be about whether group A or group B has lined up another group with deep pockets. That does not seem right to me.

I'm surprised that the Justice Minister hadn't read the report from the chief electoral officer before this weekend, as my colleague, the Leader of the Third Party, indicated to me that it wasn't really far into the report that this was dealt with. It could not have been that difficult - I believe it was about Page 6 he indicated to me. It wasn't like it was buried deep at the back end of the report, it was pretty close to the beginning. I just think that this is significant enough of an issue that it should have our comments that came back to Justice on Thursday, the comments of our communications staff should have raised a red flag for the government, because to say that we want to study this more - quite frankly, it's been studied to death across the country. I don't think any further study is needed.

Meaningful controls are needed. Again, I want to make it clear, as I indicated, I had that letter come to my office from a member of CUPE very concerned this was not kosher. I said it is kosher, absolutely, unions or any other group, whether a business group, a charity or a church group, they're entitled to talk to their - well, the church group might lose its charitable status - but any other group is allowed to talk to their members about what they would like to see. We are not interested in limiting the communication that an organization like that would have with its members. What we are interested in seeing is a levelling of the playing field so that a candidate will not be overwhelmed by the decision of an organization to massively overwhelm a single candidate over an issue and because at

this point there is no stricture, there are no controls on this group. If what they say is inaccurate, that may go unchallenged.

The thing is, political Parties have attention on them during election campaigns and so for them to be able to, if Party A is saying something that's completely wrong about Party B, in theory, the media should be calling them on that. In theory, the other Party should be calling them on that, and that doesn't happen as much. There's no penalty for a third party if they're saying outrageous things, because they're not actually in the election. If Party A is lying about Party B, you know, it should affect Party B, but the problem is that there's nothing that's going to happen to a third party, if they're out there making outrageous claims and, you know, they may get what they want.

So I think the government should be looking at meaningful controls, not just controls but meaningful controls, controls that will make sure and, quite frankly, I think the federal government's model on this is bang on. Yes, the Supreme Court has ruled that you cannot say there is no third party advertising but there should be some controls on that. I realize I have not quite taken my full hour, but I think we're really close, I think we have about, yes, I think we have about nine minutes left. I can tell the member for Antigonish is very upset that I may not fill the full nine minutes. I can tell because he looks sad right now. (Interruption) Oh, yes, well, maybe that's asleep, but at this time, I would like to thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to speak about what I view as a very important issue and with that, I will take my seat.

MR. SPEAKER: Before I recognize the honourable member, I would like to bring the attention to the honourable member for Bedford-Birch Cove on an issue of tabling e-mails that were unsigned by the author. On October 16, 2003, Speaker Murray Scott, with respect to a letter, observed that information that would reveal the author had been removed. He ruled that any document that is not tabled in its entirety is incomplete, and, therefore, out of order. Unsigned or unattributed documents should not be put before the House.

Also, Speaker MacEwan on November 15, 1993, a member wanted to read a letter and eliminate the identity of the person who wrote it. Speaker MacEwan had interceded and stated that an anonymous letter is out of order according to Beauchesne. He further stated that an unsigned letter should not be read in the House. Further to Scott's ruling also, he said, "I would like to remind all members when attempting to read from e-mails or to table printed copies, these forms of communication, first ensure that the name of the author is shown on the copy of the e-mail and that the member is prepared to disclose the identity of the author and to take full responsibility of the context before it is tabled in the House."

So I'm going to say this evening that I will ask my Chief Clerk to send a procedural note to all the caucuses, reminding them of this fact; he has done that before in the past and will continue to do that. So I will ask him to do that, to remind all members that that is the procedure.

The honourable member for Bedford-Birch Cove.

MS. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I was not aware of that ruling or I would have paraphrased the communication or something like that. So, please, rest assured that in the future I will fully comply.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, and that's why I'll have my Chief Clerk send out a procedural note, like he continues to do, to make sure that everybody is aware of the procedures and the policies on the floor of the Legislature.

The honourable Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party.

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, it is my distinct pleasure to rise and speak on this bill tonight. I can't help but note that we are talking about one of the most fundamental and basic principles of our democratic system, that is the rules around which people are granted their franchise, the privilege of voting in an election and the rules we put in place to assure all Nova Scotians that when they take the time and effort to determine who they are going to cast their ballot for, how they are going to exercise their franchise and when they go and do exactly that, that they have rules in place that are fair and impartial and based on sound democratic principles.

It is, of course, appropriate that those rules be updated and modernized from time to time to keep pace with the ever-changing nature of our society. And I say that recognizing that we are, in fact, here in this Chamber in Halifax at the very home of responsible governments in our country and in our Commonwealth and around the world. Nova Scotia was a leader all those years ago, more than 250 years ago, in modernizing its system of government to ensure that it was democratic, that the people's voices were heard, and that people chose their government in a fair and impartial way.

We have lived by those principles ever since, even though behind those principles the rules of the game may change from time to time in order to keep pace with technology or with modernizing society, with a society that communicates at a faster pace, with a society that has grown in wealth and in a society where the distribution of wealth has changed dramatically, it's important and appropriate that our rules be updated from time to time to reflect that.

Mr. Speaker, I am using the term "responsible government" particularly because I think it's fair to say that although the term responsible government has a very specific meaning in our parliamentary system, that Nova Scotians would apply other meanings to the word responsible government. The exact meaning, of course, in parliamentary tradition is that a responsible government is one that is responsible to its electors through the Legislature; in other words, the Premier and his ministers - his or her ministers - are drawn from the Legislature and are therefore responsible to the House of Assembly. That's what responsible government means.

I say this because when Nova Scotians talk about a responsible government, they mean that, but they also mean a government that does its homework, a government that doesn't put forward legislation until it has gone through the appropriate steps of consultation, of examination, of looking at best practices around the country and around the world and so on. Although this government may meet the first test in that the Premier and Cabinet are responsible to the Legislature in the traditional sense, here again we have a bill where they are not responsible in the way that most Nova Scotians consider the word "responsible." They haven't, yet again, done their homework.

It's shocking, Mr. Speaker, because I'll contrast them to a group of electors who I believe did do their homework, at a higher level than this government has done. I'm referring to Mr. Kane's Grade 5 class at my 11-year-old daughter's school because they had an election project in line with the federal election that we just all went through, and they had to study all of the Parties and they had to determine which platforms, which candidates most closely respected their views, keeping in mind that they are 11 years old. They did research and they wrote papers and they debated amongst themselves and they came to their decision on May 2nd and they cast their ballots in secret and then those ballots were counted in a fair and impartial manner by the teacher. What could be more fair or impartial than that?

I don't think it's a coincidence that the Conservatives actually won that election in Mr. Kane's Grade 5 class because, after all, look at all the research they had done and the homework they had done; it only seems appropriate that they would come to such a logical conclusion for their country. That is, unfortunately, a very sad contrast to the work that has gone into this bill because it was two years ago, Mr. Speaker, that this House passed a resolution empowering the chief electoral office to go about an examination of all the issues that would be involved in producing a modernized Elections Act for our province, and it has been a long time since this exercise has been done and society has changed a lot since this was last done more than 25 years ago. Now we have Twitter, we have Facebook, we have blogging and email - the Internet, generally, is now a tool of communication. In fact, in my house my kids think that email is old-fashioned and it wasn't even in use when the Elections Act was last faced with a thorough revision. So society continues to evolve and so, too, do the rules of democracy need to evolve to keep up with it.

As the rules evolve to keep track of a fast-paced ever-changing society, the basic principles that underline those rules, they do not need to change: that Nova Scotians should cast their vote in secret; that every Nova Scotian - regardless of their mobility, regardless of their income, regardless of their geography - should have easy and fair access to a polling station; that every Nova Scotian should be on the list of electors; that every Nova Scotian should be able to get to a polling station and all the way from the front door of that polling station through to the ballot box and back without restriction.

These are principles that are timeless, that have existed since Confederation itself and will continue to exist well into the future regardless of what technology might come and go in the meantime. Or the idea that when the time comes for a writ or a series of writs

to be dropped and Nova Scotians to be asked for their opinion on who it is that should form the government, that they should be able to make those decisions without undue influence, without someone shouting in their ear, particularly if that someone just has a larger bullhorn than everybody else or more money to spend than anyone else. There are, in fact, too many examples in our past, both as a province and as a country where that kind of unfair influence has been brought to bear in an election.

I'm going to deal with that in a moment but I do want to just complete my theme about how the government has not acted responsibly because in the last two years the Election Commission has gone about doing its work in response to a resolution of this House. It has used the Election Commission itself, which has equal representation from all Parties to draw opinions from the political Parties on what provisions need to be modernized. I know that every Party in this House has representatives on that commission and that they have done their work as political Parties to provide that information to the government for it to consider when drafting this bill.

Further, I know that all Parties have engaged their own experts, volunteer or otherwise, to provide information to the Election Commission on amendments that need to be made to the Elections Act. I know that the office of the chief electoral officer has drawn widely on the expertise of political scientists and other informed Nova Scotians about what amendments are appropriate as we modernize the Elections Act. All of that was done and a whole host of suggested amendments came forward, many of which are in this bill, but mysteriously not all.

In addition, other Parties on this side of the House have brought forward their own bills or amendments or suggestions to improve our political process. I know that the Liberal Party has done that on occasion, I'll leave it to them to describe theirs. But I will point out that on April 1st of this year, well over a month ago, almost six weeks ago, our Party introduced the Modernizing Government Bill, which had some very specific provisions to update the electoral process, based on important principles to make our electoral process more open, more accessible, more fair, more equitable and more meaningful to Nova Scotians. To speak specifically to the many people who have grown cynical and distrustful of our political process, who have turned their backs on it in disgust, who we need to turn around and come back in. If we're ever going to move forward as a province, if we're ever going to face and tackle and win and overcome the great challenges that we face and take advantage of the great opportunities that we have, we need an engaged citizenry.

So the time for playing games is over. The time to cherry pick amendments that are favourable to your Party and not to the other Parties is over. When all of that body of work was done, it included some very good ideas on access, polling days and so on. But it also includes some very specific recommendations on third party advertising, so I will say that the government has at least picked up on some of the other items, some of the things that have been suggested.

In the case of our Modernizing Government Bill, we proposed that there be a disabled person who is part of the Election Commission so that they can look at the rules and procedures that the commission puts out to polling stations in districts to ensure accessibility with the eye of someone who is disabled or has mobility issues. Because on paper, you may feel that you have proposed a regulation that ensures accessibility but until you have been there yourself, you cannot be assured that that is the case.

For example, Mr. Speaker, you can have a regulation that all polling stations must be wheelchair accessible, there must be a ramp to get you from street level up to the front door of the building that houses a polling station and that is in fact a regulation. But too many Nova Scotians have attempted to enter a polling station that does have a ramp, only to get to the top of the ramp and find that they can't get in the building. Perhaps there is too great a lip between the top of the ramp and the bottom of the doorway, this happens because there's no regulation specifically about that. Or they get to the top of the ramp and the door opens the wrong way and so as you're at the top of the ramp in a wheelchair, you can't open the door and enter it, thus defeating the purpose of having accessibility regulations. Or the regulation provides accessibility to get you in the front door but provides nothing to get you from the front door to the polling booth which defeats the whole purpose.

These are things that can be addressed, these are issues that can be identified if the Election Commission has a person of disability on the commission or as a non-voting member of the commission if that's where the government wish to go, but have them there. This particular bill takes a small step in the right direction by requiring that the office of the chief electoral officer consult with a disabled person when drafting regulations. It's not everything that we had proposed. I believe that our Modernizing Government Bill provisions in this area were much more effective at ensuring the ultimate goal, which is that there be full, fair and free access to the ballot box itself for all Nova Scotians, regardless of their mobility. I hope the government eventually moves in that direction by recognizing that at least this particular Elections Bill takes a small step forward in that way.

The Elections Bill also has some provisions about public opinion polls and the publishing the results of the public opinion polling. This is, of course, an attempt by the government to keep up with modern times. The bill requires that polls must, when published, provide the sample size and the margin of error and the sponsor of the poll so that Nova Scotians, in reading the poll, can know those things, which it's important for them to know when making up their mind how much weight to put on that particular poll.

However, Mr. Speaker, technology is already moving on beyond the traditional public opinion polls, the telephone-based public opinion polls where you can calculate margins of error and sample sizes and confidence levels. Many public opinion research firms are now moving past telephone-based polls, because they're getting harder and harder to complete and moving to on-line panels. Quite frankly, on-line panels don't have margins of error and they don't have confidence levels. They don't truly have sample sizes.

The math doesn't work that way for them. But yet, they're published in the media side by side with traditional polls and given equal weight.

If the government had done its homework appropriately, they would know this and have provided some provision for the publishing of on-line panels as a result. In fact, in the last provincial election, in the middle of the election campaign itself, there was published, to great fanfare, a poll, which was in fact an on-line panel. Now it was favourable to the NDP. But it was a big wake-up call, that there's a whole new field of research now. That was two years ago.

Mr. Cain's Grade 5 class would have uncovered this in their research and made sure their bill to modernize the Elections Act at least brought it up to today, not to 50 years ago. But by these particular provisions on polling - although in the NDP's view, I guess it's modernizing, it's modernizing up to the way things were 50 years ago. That's not modern enough in the view of anyone who thinks about it for a moment. So I hope that the government considers the effect of on-line panels, which are now becoming more widely used, in public opinion research and ensure that there is appropriate regulation of on-line panels.

My main point tonight is that all of the data, all of the feedback, from all of the Parties, from all of the political science professors, from all of the Nova Scotians that were consulted, was compiled in the report of the chief electoral officer, which was then published and presented to this House. Many of the items in the report are in the Elections Bill but third party advertising limits are not in the Elections Bill; a glaring omission. An omission that actually ignores the collective wisdom of all of these people who participated in the process of contributing to the modernizing of the Elections Act over the last number of years, including our political scientists, including volunteers and supporters of all three political Parties, including the members of the Election Commission itself and including the chief electoral officer who wrote extensively about third party advertising in her report.

In fact, if I could quote the report for just a moment, from Page 6, not very far into the report, I might add, that for those that don't like to read more than a few pages, you only have to reach Page 6 to get to the section on third party regulation. I quote from the report:

“There is increasing recognition by both legislators and the public that organizations, apart from parties and candidates, undertake activities - particularly with respect to advertising - that have the potential to influence how electors vote during an election. Additionally, these third parties may solicit contributions to fund those activities in a manner similar to the solicitation of political contributions by parties and candidates.”

That's a very true statement, Madam Speaker, and it is on Page 6 of the report. I wish that the senior members of the government who were responsible for introducing the Elections Bill had bothered to read the report, at least to Page 6, because maybe the Elections Bill would have contained appropriate provisions in this area. Or, if that's not

really the reason - it is kind of incredible to think that the reason there was nothing on third party advertising is because the senior officials responsible on the government side didn't read that far in their own report. If that's not the case, then it's a glaring omission. It's a glaring omission that defies common sense, to have set as a goal to modernize our election laws and have nothing to say about third party advertising. It's not only a slap in the face to all of those who participated openly in the process, but it is just a glaring omission that is contemptuous of our political history.

There are many examples, both in our country and in our province, where we have had elections that the influence of third parties has been felt overly much. I shouldn't need to remind the members on the government side, the NDP members, of the 1988 federal election - the free trade election - but it is a great example of what I'm talking about. Many members of this House, and others present, will recall that Canada went through a very dramatic election in 1988 where the government had proposed a free trade agreement with the United States and then the Opposition Parties in the House of Commons in Ottawa opposed that agreement.

So Canadians heard from both the governing Party and the Opposition Parties at that time in a general election largely fought around this one issue, but the fact of the matter is, Madam Speaker, that Canadians will also recall that the business community of that time had a lot to say about the free trade agreement, and spent heavily advertising its promotion, including multiple full-page colour ads in all of our national newspapers and local newspapers, and television ads. They spent millions and millions and millions of dollars. On the other hand, the national labour unions of the time, having a different view, also collected up the dues of their members and spent heavily against the free trade agreement.

Now, in the interest of fairness, I am talking about both sides, because at the end of the day both had a special interest in the outcome. What is the shame about that, Madam Speaker, is that when that happens, Canadians are left wondering, well, who is out there talking about the general interest, never mind the special interest? Who is it in our system that stands up for the people, for the general interest? The ultimate answer to that question should be our political Parties and their Leaders - but our Parties more generally. They are the ones that get elected, they are the ones that have to weigh and balance all of the interests in our society and do what's in the best interests of the general public - that is one of the most fundamental purposes of a political Party.

For the country as a whole, political Parties are the place where people from across the country who hold a common view can come together in a united way. Francophone, Anglophone, western, eastern, Atlantic, richer, poorer, labour, management - political Parties bring them all together and forge a great common consensus that is not beholden to any one special interest. At least this is the ideal, they're for the general interest, but in that free trade election the general interest and the special interest all got mashed together because third-party advertising played such a gigantic role during the election campaign in the great national debate.

For those who remember that election will also remember that the Public Service Alliance of Canada spent heavily in targeted ridings trying to defeat members of the governing Party. So this is a very specific political objective, not even a high-minded ideal like free trade or not, but just a pure political play to take out members of a particular political Party that the Public Service Alliance of Canada, not happy with the wage settlements that had been negotiated during that particular government's time in office, not happy with the labour agenda of that particular government, identified a number of government members across the country - one of which was in Halifax, this is why this is particularly interesting - and sent paid workers in and took out heavily expensive paid advertisements to defeat those individuals. A pure political play based on a special interest.

The great crime in all that, if I could use the riding of Halifax as an example, is that in Halifax it was not left just to the electors of Halifax to choose who their representative was, they had to be subjected to a great deal of noise and colour and expense by a special interest that did not have as its core what was best for the federal riding of Halifax. It had its own political interests and, because there was no regulation in this area, they didn't have to identify who the sponsors of their ads were, they didn't have to disclose how much they were spending in Halifax, they didn't have to explain what their special interest was, they could advertise without limit - even beyond what the Parties themselves are allowed to spend.

Certainly when a political Party runs an ad, appropriately it must identify that the ad has been authorized by that Party, so that electors can judge for themselves the merits of the claims made in elections ads. That was the election of 1988.

Let me give you another example, let's go back further in our history. Some members - not me, but some, not the member for Bedford-Birch Cove because she is too young to remember as well - some members will remember, or other members, will remember the great Medicare debate of the 1960s, first in the Province of Saskatchewan and then later for our country as a whole. This, it turns out now, Medicare to be one of the great shining achievements of our country, something that Canadians, regardless of political Party, are very proud of. But we don't remember how hard it was at the time to get it through, first in Saskatchewan and then later in every province across the country.

In the first election in Saskatchewan, an NDP Government - I might as well be accurate in describing history - brought in Medicare and subjected it to a provincial election. There were a lot of special interests, including the Medical Society, who were against it and spent heavily in advertising, in work, in 100 ways to try to defeat Medicare.

Now imagine if they had succeeded, imagine how unfair it is that there was no one, outside of the political Parties on the other side, organized to promote the benefits of a universal, accessible, publicly-funded health care system. Now fortunately the electors in Saskatchewan saw through all the special interests and saw fit to return the government.

This same thing happened in Nova Scotia, Madam Speaker. I am quite proud of the fact that Medicare was brought in to our province by a Progressive Conservative Government in 1967. I think it is a great achievement of our province, as well as all other provinces, but it wasn't easy even here. There were a lot of special interests out to defeat Medicare in its infancy, even in Nova Scotia, who had the ability to spend without limit, without identifying their own special interests, without registering as a third party. Without those rules in place, accomplishments like Medicare are very hard to achieve and very rare.

Let me give you another example. Madam Speaker, and many members - this is a more recent one - you'll remember the national referendum we had on the Constitution in 1992, the Charlottetown Accord. There was heavy spending on all sides, by corporate Canada and others, pro and con. One of the most fundamental questions of that time, Quebec's role in Canada, whether Quebec is a distinct society or not, what is the role for Aboriginals at our First Ministers' meetings and so on - Aboriginal Canadians. This was at the heart of the Charlottetown Accord and this was given to Canadians to pass judgment on.

One can only wonder what that debate would have looked like if it had been free of all the special interests, to allow Canadians to decide in the general interest for their country, what is best for their country, free and clear of all that interference, to hear directly from their political Leaders without others cluttering up the message. That is what democracy is supposed to be all about.

Of course, Madam Speaker - and I don't raise this to be overly partisan - but even in our most recent 2009 provincial election we saw the heavy hand of unrestricted third parties trying to weasel their way through the electoral laws on financial contributions by pooling their resources through the Building Trades Council, to make sure they got as much money as they could to their favourite political Party, the NDP. This has resulted in a scandal that continues to reverberate to this day and it's only because the statute of limitations has come and gone that we haven't seen charges laid in this case. It's a shame that Nova Scotians have that stain on their own record from the 2009 election that goes uncleansed and here we are with a chance to deal with these kinds of things again since we have as a stated goal to modernize the Elections Act.

Given that opportunity, the government remains silent and it's a shame because no one can conclude that the government has left third-party advertising out of this bill because of any high-minded principle, because every high-minded principle in our system would point exactly in the opposite direction, that Nova Scotians should determine who their government is, free and clear of outside influence, that for all those years between elections they hear from all the special interests.

In fact, I think Nova Scotians know in their gut that there are a lot of well-funded special interests that pay lobbyists to come here to the Legislature, in Halifax, to speak to members of the government, to speak to individual MLAs, that their voice gets heard. For that everyday family, for that ordinary Nova Scotian who is just working hard and trying to

make ends meet, pay the mortgage, pay the heating bill, drive the car back and forth to work, send the kids to school, save for a dignified retirement, they don't have a lobbyist.

They don't go out and hire a lobbyist to come to Halifax and speak for them, and God help us, nor should they have to do that because the person that they should look to, the person they should hear from, the person they should be able to speak to directly and clearly in our system, in our province, is their MLA. That is their lobbyist. That is our number-one job. That is what we were sent here to this Chamber to do, is to be the one group, the one person in your constituency who is free of special interest, who has only the general interest at heart. When we debate bills - whether they're on the Elections Act or anything else - that we can tell them, and they can see for themselves, that they don't need a lobbyist like big unions and big corporations do because they have their MLA directly.

Now I can hear thousands of eyeballs rolling back across the province as I say this because people have become so cynical about our system, but this I believe to be true. This needs to be true again in our province. Just like 250 years ago, here, this was the place that restored democracy to British North America, brought democracy to British North America. This can be the place, again, where all those people who have turned their backs and said, oh, that might be the way it's supposed to be, but that's not the way it is, things like this Elections Act, this bill, are our chance to show them that they don't need to turn their backs, they can come back in. We're not going to get them all the way there with one simple bill, too much damage has been done over the years to do that.

I'm realistic enough to understand that. This is a chance to take a step in the right direction, but it's not going to happen when the government brings forward a bill that cherry-picks only items that are favourable to them and their Party, and is silent on something so important and so fundamental as a matter of principle as to whether or not there should be limits on the ability of third parties - organizations that don't put a name on the ballot; organizations that have no fiduciary duty to an elector somewhere in the province; organizations that have a very special interest, whether it's a shareholder or a union member or some other group other than the people themselves - that the government would bring forward a bill that is silent on this problem is unfathomable and unconscionable because we don't get to do this very often, nor should we have to do it very often.

How sad is it that the government introduces a bill, calls it for second reading on a Friday, goes home for the weekend, and comes back Monday and says, oops, I forgot something. That is what we're supposed to take from the government's statements today: oops, we forgot this whole section starting on Page 6. Maybe we'll bring forward an amendment to clean that up. That is not doing your homework like Nova Scotians would expect homework to be done. It doesn't even meet the test of Mr. Kane's Grade 5 class. He would give the government a failing grade for not having done their homework, even though it's all there for the government to see, to read, to study, to take up, to convert into an actual bill, even though they have all of the officials of government at their disposal, to

make sure these things happen. That is what is so incredible, Madam Speaker, to hear that we're supposed to take this oops as the way it is.

But the alternative explanation is even worse, that it wasn't an oops, that, in fact, the government full well, read the entire report, including third party regulation on Page 6, including the input that it asked for from all of those Nova Scotians who care about our system and provided input on how it can be modernized. This is even worse than an oops, when the government cherry-picks favourable changes and ignores the rest. That is a greater problem that we have in our system.

Perhaps, Madam Speaker, it is the greatest argument of all for why we need an independent chief electoral office, one that is required to report to all parties through this House of Assembly, because we cannot count on this government, even on the rules of elections, to be fair and balanced and impartial. That is why that on the issue of third party advertising, in our own bill, the Modernizing Government Act, we specifically require: that all third parties register with the chief electoral office; that all third parties that propose to spend more than \$500 in our province on advertising, be required to register with the office; that they disclose in any advertising, the sponsor of that advertising; and that their spending be limited and limited in a way that is relevant to Nova Scotia, so Nova Scotia political parties have spending limits and appropriately so.

Third party advertisers should have spending limits and they should be very low. The Supreme Court correctly points out that we do have the right to free speech, both as individuals and as organizations and so the limit ought not to be zero. I'm not advocating that it be zero; that would violate our constitutional rights around free speech. On the other hand, there is a democratic principle, that at election time, Nova Scotians should hear directly from their MLA, from their political parties, that their conversation should be limited, almost exclusively, to a discussion between the voters and their political representatives, for the greater good, for the general interest. So that when Nova Scotians cast their ballot, they'll do so with the greatest clarity about what the parties stand for, what the candidates and their constituency stand for, and so they can make their best possible choice.

That should be the aim of this bill, but it's not, when it leaves third parties unfettered to spend as they please without registration, without limit, to try to influence the votes of Nova Scotians in a special interest, as opposed to the general interest. We proposed in our bill, a very modest limit for third parties, one and a third per cent of that limit that applies to the parties themselves, recognized political parties. Ensuring that primarily, in an election, that the discussion is between the parties and the voters themselves, ensuring that there is a proportionate relationship between what parties can spend and what third parties can spend, ensuring that that limit is in place, as a matter of principle, for all time. Never mind inflation, never mind changes in technology, never mind changes in net wealth in our province, that that relationship, that one and a third per cent, can remain in place, as a matter of principle.

I hear the government is looking at the federal rules, which, as a matter of interest, are fixed dollar limits, \$150,000 for the country on third party advertising limit. Well, that is a ridiculous amount to propose for a small Nova Scotia, so I'm hopeful when the government brings forward an amendment it will be something that reflects the reality of the size of Nova Scotia. But we already proposed this, a month ago, in our own bill, not as a fixed dollar amount, but as a percentage of what the provincial Parties can spend, so that that principle can be maintained. I might point out, that these limits only apply during the writ period or during the election period itself. That is because we don't have fixed dates of election in our province and so there is no way to regulate the amount of third party spending that might go on prior to an election.

Only the Premier knows when the next election is going to be, if he knows. Only he has the ability to set that date. That, of course, is the old way. That, of course, confers a tremendous advantage on the government of the day. Now, imagine that you match that advantage up with the benefits of third party advertising. When you have a government, as specifically and wholly beholden to special interests as we now have in Nova Scotia, that possibility is no longer theoretical, it becomes a very real threat. You can just imagine, as all Nova Scotians can imagine, what happens behind closed doors when a representative of that government and a special interest, get together to plot out their combined strategy on limited spending and the timing of an election to their mutual advantage.

Who is left out of that discussion, by the way? It is the people themselves. It is the voters in an election, the very people that we all want to have free and unfettered discussions with their political Parties. That's why, it's not enough, to just limit third party advertising during a general election because that would leave those third parties a sky's-the-limit approach in the lead up to a general election, an election that, when it's not fixed, only the Premier and whoever he chooses to let in on his secret about when that election will be, can benefit from. I say again, who is left out in that equation? It is the voters themselves. That is the violation of a pretty fundamental principle.

In our Modernizing Government Bill, we matched up these very fixed, specific limits on third party advertising. You must register \$500 or more and you must register no more than 1.33 per cent of the limit for registered political Parties themselves. You must disclose the special interest that is doing the advertising. Those are the province-wide limits and then similar limits in each and every constituency themselves. We match those up with fixed election dates, so that Nova Scotians have clarity about when their elections are, on an equal footing with the governing Party, so that Nova Scotians know before and during an election who is trying to influence their vote, whether it is a corporation or a union or some other special interest. So that Nova Scotians will hear primarily, in the majority, exclusively from their own Party and from their own candidates, from those whose names are on the ballots that they have to mark an x on.

This is not to get an advantage or a disadvantage for any one particular Party because those rules will apply to all but what it will do is ensure that the great debate that should happen at election time, is done under the shining light of day, with full and fair

disclosure, at a time that everyone knows it's going to happen. All towards that greater goal of reducing cynicism about our process and ensuring Nova Scotians get all the information they need to cast the best vote that they can. Then we'll all live with those results. That's what needs to happen.

We're looking forward to whatever amendments the government is now, I'm sure busily, at some office here drafting, to make real this weekend revelation that they apparently had. I just hope they'll take a look at the very real, fixed solutions that we proposed on April 1st in the Modernizing Government Bill, a bill, I might point out, we actually called for debate in this Legislature a week ago Wednesday, that all three Parties spoke to, where we actually raised these points.

Madam Speaker, you may remember that on the government side, the government provided a speaker to the Modernizing Government Bill that talked about everything but the Modernizing Government Bill. What a great lost opportunity that was. We could have had a real debate about third party limits then and fixed election dates and all of the things that would bring our Elections Act up to a real modern, dynamic, 21st Century Nova Scotia governing process, but that opportunity was lost.

Perhaps if the senior officials of government on that side had spent as much time on our actual provisions of the Modernizing Government Bill as they did in drafting the speech for that day, they would be in a better place today than explaining the great oops of this bill that accidentally or not left out an important part of modernizing the Elections Act.

Madam Speaker, I know my time is coming to a close momentarily. I hear the groans of disappointment from the other side of the House when I say that but in all seriousness - I don't think I do, actually - if we take a principles-based approach to important institutions like the Electoral Office, like the House of Assembly itself, like the franchise of election, if we hold true to the basic principle that it was Nova Scotians in this Chamber who started modernizing democracy in our part of the world all those years ago and set as our goal to hold true to that and do our bit in our time, to hold that great democratic tradition in trust in 2011 and bring forward an Elections Bill that actually does modernize our systems of elections, one that all Parties could proudly support, without looking to cherry-pick advantageous provisions and ignoring others, that would be a great accomplishment.

That would be something that truly would reduce cynicism in our province; that would be something that would be worthy of our time here in this Chamber; that would be something that wouldn't require a weekend revelation to fix; that would be a bill that a minister sponsoring it wouldn't need to come into the House on a Monday, having introduced it on a Friday and say oops, I just realized I forgot something, or, worse, I didn't really read the report that my bill was drawn from, until after I introduced the bill for second reading.

Going back to where I started, Mr. Kane's Grade 5 class, which went through that great exercise in conjunction with the federal election, where those kids, 11 years old, they did their homework before they voted, they would be very disappointed to know that their own government here in this Chamber doesn't even do that same level of homework before it proposes to introduce an Elections Act.

As I mentioned a moment ago, Madam Speaker, I would like to take the minister and the government at its word, that it did just forget about this part or it didn't read far enough into the report to get to that part, even though they only had to read as far as Page 6 and even though their copy of the Elections Bill is an appendix to the report itself. I would like to take them at their word on that, because the alternative is so much worse. That they did, in fact, read the entire report, that they did, in fact, see the recommendations on third party advertising, that they did, in fact, do their homework and think it through. But they were so absorbed by their own self-interest in this area that they chose to leave it out of the bill. That is a far worse conclusion, even than the oops and I sure hope that when those amendments come forward that they will satisfy all of us, that it was just an oops, as bad as that is and that it wasn't something far worse, which would be a deliberate attempt to leave the field wide open in this area.

I have to say, Madam Speaker, that we're not confident that that's what's going to happen when we see the amendments because, unfortunately for this government, past behaviour suggests otherwise. Much like other bills that have come to this House, where the government claims to have done all its consultation, where it claims to have done its homework, only to find that that is not the case, this looks like part of a pattern.

In the last session in Bill No. 100, where the government brought in a bill that looked pretty innocent on the surface, that claimed to be aimed only at a high-minded principle of improving labour and management relations in our province, that claimed to be a simple administrative matter, that claimed that all of the relevant parties had been consulted, got introduced in this House and only a few days after introduction - kaboom - we were descended upon by many interested Nova Scotians who were in shock at what was being proposed because they had not been consulted, because their interests had been ignored, because the government was proposing to put in important committees, like a Labour-Management Review Committee, to make sweeping recommendations to the Labour Code that would leave out 70 per cent of the employers of the province.

That is our experience when it comes to innocent-looking bills, or even in this session with Bill No. 17, where the government brought in a bill that purported to have a high-minded principle, where the government claimed to have done its homework, where the government claimed that it consulted with affected parties, only to find out again, after just a few short days of introduction, that a whole group of people were in shock at what the government was proposing. Bill No. 17, of course, deals with pharmacies themselves and yet who is the most upset? Pharmacists. Now, who would you think the government would consult before bringing in the bill? Pharmacists, and yet they're lined up over in the other place at the Law Amendments Committee, one after another after another describing

(Interruption) I'm setting an important pattern of behaviour here that's very relevant to this bill.

My point being, Madam Speaker, that this is a pattern of behaviour that continues into this bill, which I am speaking about at this very moment, which, again, comes out after extensive consultation, that doesn't do everything it's supposed to do and now we're here to pick up the pieces, yet again, to hold the government to account for what it has failed to do, yet again, to defend important principles of democracy that the government is ignoring, yet again.

Well, we'll continue to do that, Madam Speaker, we'll continue to do our job on this side of the House to defend those important principles, because left to their own devices, the government is obviously intent to continue to manipulate the electoral process to their own advantage. It continues to bring in bill after bill with these provisions in it, or left out, or omitted deliberately, in the hopes that no one will notice. Well, Nova Scotians, whether they're Opposition members of the Legislature, whether they're interested parties, or even whether they're voters generally, are on to this pattern of behaviour and are saying no. That's really why the government has had this weekend conversion, because they've been called out, yet again, on this despicable pattern of behaviour and that's why we continue to hope, like Charlie Brown and that football, that each time they say they're going to do better, we continue to hope that they will do better.

Well, we're not running up to kick that football quite yet at this time, Madam Speaker, because now we need to see proof. So the government has an opportunity - this is their great test on the amendments that are going to come forward, that they better meet this test, that they better meet the test of principle, that they better provide real, meaningful reform in the area of third-party advertising like was called for in the report, like we gave them in the Modernizing Government Act. That is the threshold that they now need to meet before we're going to run up and take another kick at that football.

So, Madam Speaker, with those few brief remarks, I will take my place and await with great interest what is coming forward next from this government.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

MR. ANDREW YOUNGER: Madam Speaker, I'm pleased to (Interruption) The member for Pictou West just asked if I want to adjourn debate. I would love to, but I think that the Government House Leader would probably get a bit touchy about that if I did that for the evening, so I'll avoid that. See, look at that - the Deputy Government House Leader is already trying to stage a coup over there against the Government House Leader on this.

I am pleased to rise and speak about this bill. There are a number of issues that I want to speak to related to this bill, including electronic voting and some of the other issues. I will start, however, with the elephant in the room - the elephant in the room, of course, being the issue of third-party advertising. I guess the reason I want to speak to it is

because I happened to be outside the Chamber and heard the Justice Minister's comments to the media when he said that this had never occurred to him, he had never thought about this until Friday. That troubles me because I'd like to quote from Hansard in November 2009 when the Leader of the Official Opposition, the member for Annapolis, asked the Premier about this very issue and the Premier said, ". . . when the Electoral Commission considers it, comes forward with a set of recommendations - once the commission has an opportunity to consider it, we'll be happy to have a look at it."

Well, that was November 3, 2009, and so clearly the Minister of Justice heard about it then. He heard the chief electoral officer talk about it then and since that time that particular officer of the Legislature has spoken about it in media reports, and so for the Minister of Justice to then stand and walk outside and say that, well, it never occurred to him until Friday is troubling me because this is an issue that has been talked about now for the better part of two years - it has been talked about in editorials in the news; it has been talked about in Question Period; and it has been brought up by the chief electoral officer.

It also bothers me that he said "unanimous resolution of the House" - every member of this House voted for a resolution that asked the chief electoral officer to go forward, write a report and come back with a draft Act, which that officer did and those were her recommendations, and yet the Minister of Justice stood outside and told the media that he didn't even wait to read this report or see her recommendations before drafting his own Act. I think we should all be troubled by that because we all, 52 members of this Legislature, voted for a resolution - a resolution that the government brought forward - asking that officer to go and do this work, and then the government ignored it and wrote their own.

What should have happened, the chief electoral officer should have tabled her report through the Minister of Justice, as was done, and then after that the minister should have had his staff go and compile the Act, which is what was committed to back in that resolution early on - but he stood outside and admitted that he didn't even read it before they put this together. He didn't even look at her recommendations.

Well, that wasn't what we agreed to. That wasn't the point of the government resolution that we all unanimously supported at the time when a new Elections Act was promised and the chief electoral officer came forward and did that. That is not what was promised; that is not what was committed to. Fine, the government may choose to not agree with some of her recommendations, that's well within the rights of the government, of course, but to not even review that advice that was asked for and sought, that's very troubling indeed, Madam Speaker.

It's no less troubling than the fact the minister is standing outside and saying, well the first he even thought about this issue was Friday, when it was discussed in Question Period and elsewhere since that time, it's nothing but disingenuous.

Madam Speaker, if the minister had waited for the recommendations, in the chief electoral officer's report, which has already been tabled in the House, so I don't think I have to table it again, I'd like to quote her. On Page 6, the chief electoral officer says, "Electoral finance regimes in a number of Canadian jurisdictions have evolved beyond the basic rules governing election spending and contribution disclosure requirements. That trend has been towards introduction of contribution limits, contributor eligibility rules and public financing." She goes on to say, on the next page, Page 7, "The chief electoral officer recommends that inclusion in the Elections Act have a moderate model of regulation of third party participation in election campaigns."

That makes sense and this is absolutely not the only jurisdiction that is dealing with this issue, even for that matter, Canada is not the only jurisdiction that is dealing with this. The Leader of the Third Party talked about some of the previous campaigns in Canada but I think anybody who follows U.S. politics has watched the issue around the U.S. Supreme Court ruling there, where their existing legislation around third-party advertising was, in fact, struck out. It was struck out by a challenge by a group called Citizens United, which, if I understand correctly, was actually a business lobby group. If you want to put right and left wing, it was a right-wing business lobby group.

In a recent Senate race in the U.S. quite a bit of money was actually spent. In a recent Senate race in Colorado, \$9.4 million was spent in one race, by third-party advertisers who didn't have to disclose who they were and 80 per cent in that case went to support the Republican candidates. (Interruptions)

MR. LEONARD PREYRA: You're speaking against your own resolution.

MR. YOUNGER: Madam Speaker, the member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island may one day actually be able to stand up and say something on the record but I guess that would take making it to the front benches.

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please.

The honourable member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island.

MR. LEONARD PREYRA: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is just a simple question of whether or not the member for Dartmouth East was now speaking against his own resolution.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East to carry on with his comments. Let's stay with the bill.

MR. YOUNGER: Thank you, Madam Speaker. This is definitely on the bill and I will answer the member's question and I thank him very much for the question. Pretty soon it will be reversed, anyway, so he'll be able to ask lots of questions, actually three days a week. (Interruptions)

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable member for Dartmouth East has the floor. Thank you. Second reading on Bill No. 59, and if you could continue to speak to the bill. Thank you.

MR. YOUNGER: Thank you, Madam Speaker. On the bill - and actually the member's question is related to the bill. In fact, I'm not speaking against this at all, I'm pointing out why you need third-party restrictions in an elections bill, so you do not have the extreme examples of what we've seen in the United States. The U.S. is a perfect example of how bad this can get, as it evolves. I don't think any of us want that.

This isn't about an attack on different groups, because frankly, I'm as equally concerned about a chamber of commerce being able to spend hundreds of thousands or millions of dollars in an election, as I am about a union being able to do it, or any other interest group, it doesn't make any difference to me. What bothers me is the fact that somebody, some group - and nine times out of 10 you don't know who the donors are - could spend as much as they want, without any limits, in any riding and that's not right. (Interruptions)

Madam Speaker, there's things that I could say that would be unparliamentary, but let me leave it at the fact that on that issue, the members opposite were very quick to deal with that issue, which couldn't even be spent during elections, but they're not willing to deal with the contributions that went to their own Party.

It seems to be a little bit of the pot calling the kettle black there, doesn't it? I think the Leader of the Third Party brought up a perfect example of an issue that happened in the last election, which I think the members opposite wouldn't want to discuss much further.

The fact is that during an election campaign - and this is about money which can be spent during an election campaign - you have to have the registration of third parties. It is absolutely constitutional. In 2004, the Supreme Court ruled in a decision - to me, ironically titled - called Harper v. Canada, that these were absolutely constitutional because at the time Stephen Harper, who I believe when the case was launched was leader of the National Citizens Coalition, or some group like that, and he wanted those rules struck down. He wanted third parties to be able to spend whatever they wanted. There are laws limiting that and now they have to register and they're limited as to what they can spend.

If you look at the 2008 federal election, which followed rules which we suggest here and which we're hearing talk that maybe that is going to be amended now and come, you just need to look - I'll table this list in a second - at the different groups that are there to understand that there is a wide variety. You have the Canadian Shooting Sports Association, the Citizens Against Carbon Tax - which I assume was a group set up against Stephane Dion at the time. I love this one - Friends of Conservatives is a registered third party advertiser. (Interruption) I didn't say there were a lot of members in that group.

The tourism industry, groups like that . . .

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please. The chatter is getting a little high; it's difficult to hear the speaker.

The honourable member for Dartmouth East has the floor.

MR. YOUNGER: There are other groups, Make Poverty History and so forth, but the point is, the federal legislation on third party advertising puts all of these groups, whether they are well-financed groups - there's no question some of them on this list are well-financed groups - and others that are less well-financed groups, on an even playing field in terms of what they can spend. I'll table that list because I did quote from it.

That's all we're suggesting here. In fairness, despite the error of that not being in this bill, we hear rumblings that maybe now it's going to be included at the Committee on Law Amendments, but we'll see that wording before it hits the Committee on Law Amendments. That's encouraging news. It's absolutely encouraging news and I give the Minister of Justice and his Cabinet colleagues credit for listening to that discussion since Friday. I don't understand why it wasn't included in the very beginning but I don't take away from the fact that they're now looking at including that.

Now the wording will be very critical. We're told it may - "may" is always that sort of caveat word - it may mirror the federal rules. If it does and it pro-rates it to the size of constituencies, that could work. But of course if we end up with the same rules and the same spending limits per constituency that they have federally, then that would be almost having no limit at all, based on the geographic sizes.

It's unfortunate that the minister did not have the wording of that here. You've heard other members say, already today, that we await that specific wording before we move on to the Committee on Law Amendments. It really gets into the details of how a third party will be defined and these are issues that Elections Canada struggled with at the time as well. How will they be defined? What will the limits be? One of the ones they spent quite a bit of time struggling with was with how communications are defined, which is an ever more challenging issue in this day and age.

It's something that we wish we could be debating the merits of specific wording right now, at this stage and whether that wording works but instead, we have to discuss something that is a potential, that may come, that we may hear about tomorrow or may hear about Wednesday. We sit here and we wait and we can only debate the theoretical possibilities of what the government may bring forward in terms of an amendment, without knowing whether - the minister stood up and, to his credit, said that he'd be open to further amendments. But until we see what it is that the government is proposing, it's very difficult to make any further suggestions based on that.

It's worth also noting that a representative of the government called our caucus and I assume, probably called the Progressive Conservative caucus as well, earlier last week, when they were trying to schedule a briefing on this and said, are there amendments or things you'll be looking for, and we said, well obviously we'll be looking for provisions on third parties. Perhaps the Progressive Conservatives said the same thing and yet the minister still stands up and says, well I never heard about it until Friday, when not only was it in Question Period as early as November 3, 2009 but it also ends up appearing in communications directly to the government, when the government solicited those comments. It makes absolutely no sense, the comments by the minister in that regard.

I think, Madam Speaker, it's important to also compare this to the registration of lobbyists, because the government brought forward a bill that was supported by all Parties, changing the way that lobbyists are dealt with in Nova Scotia and the registration of lobbyists. In many respects, a third party advertiser is a lobbyist; they are lobbying for a particular position, or a candidate or an issue. Very often, they are single-issue focused, although not always but very often. If you look at the ones that were registered federally, many of those are on a specific issue. Whether it's the environment or the Leader of the Progressive Conservatives had mentioned free trade, specifically on free trade and other issues didn't matter. There are ones that were registered on poverty issues.

It's important to know what their mandate is, what they're seeking, and of course, just like a political Party does, they have to report their expenditures afterwards. I think that that just makes sense, it's about fairness in elections. It's about knowing who is spending what kind of money and what they're doing with that money and knowing why that is. Because is it right to get something in the mail or see an advertisement in the newspaper promoting a certain position without, especially during an election period, without that organization or that individual indicating who they are or who they're on behalf of? No it's not right, it's why we have those rules for political Parties. It is why those rules exist, it's to ensure that there is fairness.

Elections have come a long way in Canada and around the world and we see, including many members of this Legislature who have participated in election monitoring in other countries, ensuring fairness in elections should be something that we all want to see, and I think it probably is. We don't want to see any election be unfair, we want to see as few questions about elections, we want to see that the public feels their elections are being fair and that's absolutely critical.

One of the biggest shames about this is that the government has introduced a new Elections Bill and the Minister of Justice is right, it's the first one in - I don't remember how many years he said, I think he said 22 years but I could be mistaken. But in a number of years, it's the first major revision of the Elections Act - that's important, that's extremely important. It's the absence of dealing with this issue in this draft, the absence of having the wording before us today, that actually takes away from some of the other issues in the bill and I would like to spend some time talking about some of the other items that the chief

electoral officer recommended and some of the things that are actually in the bill, because there are some important elements and I think it's worthy of consideration.

Clause 29 of the proposed bill talks about election day. I don't know how long we've had elections on Tuesdays, but they've been on Tuesdays as long as I can remember, and one of the things that the chief electoral officer recommended was that the day of the election actually not be necessarily set on a Tuesday. They looked at the issue that maybe it should be a Saturday - municipal elections in Nova Scotia are on Saturdays; federal elections are Mondays. Maybe in this day and age, there may not be a right day. Back in the day when Tuesday was set, or perhaps even when Monday was set, I venture to guess that most people worked Monday to Friday, most people probably worked nine to five, but there are many fewer people, a much smaller percentage of our population who now works regular Monday-to-Friday, nine-to-five jobs. Maybe Tuesday doesn't make any sense anymore.

Now, the government appears to have accepted one of the recommendations, which is this issue of a continuous poll. The interesting thing about accepting the wording of a continuous poll, as the Minister of Justice said that he hadn't seen or read the chief electoral officer's recommendations and yet he has almost the officer's exact wording in his bill on the issue of continuous poll. I just can't imagine that two people working in two different offices came up with exactly the same wording without the other one seeing it, but let us accept that he hadn't seen the recommendations or reviewed them because he hadn't seen any of it and that was his reason for not including the issue of third party advertising, but that starts to deal with that issue.

It deals with the issue that if anybody looked at the recent federal election, if you have not voted or applied for a mail-in ballot before April 22nd and you didn't vote in the advance poll and then something happened, you got sick, you had to go away, whatever, there would have been no way for you to vote if you weren't going to be there on election day. That's because the federal rules still actually require that you either apply for a mail-in ballot by April 22nd - it was however many days before the election, 10 days, I guess - or, the alternative, that you vote at the returning office before that 10-day period.

This is an important change and I think it's a very good change in this Elections Bill, that it would allow a continuous poll where you could actually go and vote at the returning office at any time. So if something happens in the family that would allow you to go the day before the election or two days before the election in a period where there's no advance poll or regular voting day and vote, that's important. At a time when voter turnout generally is on the decline - although it has been up and down - we need to work very hard to improve that, and making it easy to vote is one of the things that we can do as a tool in that respect.

I also think it is important that the addition of allowing younger people to work in polls and be more involved in the electoral process also makes more sense; I think that's a step in the right direction. I think engaging people at that age gives them a sense of

ownership in the electoral process that, hopefully, will translate into something later on in life where they will continue to vote. I may be wrong in this, but I think that if people vote when they're 19, 20, 21, that they continue to vote generally through their whole lives. I think the problem is that when people don't vote when they're younger, then they're less likely to vote later on because they don't think that it matters, and they don't recognize it as a responsibility as much as it is a right.

There are, of course, other jurisdictions around the world which - and I'm not necessarily advocating for this - have dealt with this in different ways, such as Australia where they've made it the law to vote. In their recent election, they had a 93 per cent turnout and that 7 per cent that didn't vote were primarily people who shouldn't have been on the voters list or there are all kinds of little issues that you can imagine, and they always end up with half a dozen people who get fined. We don't want to have to go in that direction, obviously, and I'm not even necessarily sure that we could at this level, but there are countries - and I don't believe that Australia is the only one that has done that - but there are countries, at least one, that have gone in the direction of mandatory voting, but that could be like the big hand of government coming down and telling you what to do, which may upset more people again.

So what you really want to do, I think, is make it easier for people to vote and really make them part of that electoral process. I believe the bill moves it to age 16 or 17 where you could actually be involved as poll clerks and things like that. That makes a lot of sense. It gives an understanding of how the political process works. Many of us have had students of various ages here at the Legislature for tours, or to see the Legislature in session. I always find it amazing, there's a Grade 5 or Grade 6 class that generally every May or June I end up taking on a tour of the Legislature. It's amazing to see them when they're in here and the Clerk or the Sergeant-at-Arms will bring out the mace and they'll get to see it. They all want their picture in the Speaker's Chair and they all want to be sitting in one of the chairs, somewhere, pretending they're doing it, and they get really excited about it.

It's a shame that somehow we lose that enthusiasm that's possible in these kids who are 10, 11 and 12 years old. We seem to, I don't know, we beat it out of them as the years go on. I mean I'm sure that if there are 52 people in the Legislature, there are 51 at the moment I guess, there are probably 51 different reasons, there are probably that many different ideas on why people become disillusioned in the political process, or why they
(Interruption)

The member for Pictou West said it might be watching Legislative TV and he might be right but there's an interesting point. When we talk about how the Elections Act has been getting people involved, it amazes me, it never ceases to amaze me how many people actually do watch Legislative TV. It amazes me because - and I'm sure we've all had this experience where somebody will call us after having seen something or we said something and they just had a question about it, or they wanted to comment on it, and it amazes me that there's a group of people who, and I have no idea how large it is, but there's

a group of people who are engaged enough that they will not only vote and get involved but they will watch it on TV, or they'll go on-line and read it, or they'll go read Hansard.

We can get that group of people who are immensely involved or people who are involved in the political process, knocking on doors, whether it's NDP, or Tory, or Liberal, or an Independent candidate, or Green Party - I can't remember all the Parties that ran in the last election - but the thing is that there is a group of people that will get that involved and yet there's a very large segment of the population that feels completely out of touch with what's going on and completely aloof and I don't think that's a good thing, I really don't.

Frankly, at the end of the day, I would much rather see people involved, regardless of their political leanings or regardless of whether they support anybody, I would rather see those people involved so that you have an informed society and a society that actually cares about what's going on at their city hall or in Ottawa, or in Halifax at the Legislature, on a regular basis, because it is important and somehow we haven't made the connection on a lot of issues. I think we all deserve the blame for some of this; we haven't quite made the connection between what happens here and how that changes life, sometimes in very small ways and sometimes in larger ways, we haven't made that connection. Regardless of whether it's a policy that we agree with or disagree, we haven't made that connection and I think that's one of the keys to improving the voter turnout, is really getting to the point where people understand that and feel that they are a part of that process.

When we talk about people watching it on Legislative TV, I have no idea what the audience is for that sort of thing but I know that EastLink, Madam Speaker, you'll recall this, that EastLink, of course, covered some of the municipal councils and HRM Council for awhile - I don't know if they still do - was second in ratings, second only to the Mooseheads games. Now they have a lot more shows and I don't know whether - I'm sure the other shows must be better now.

You've got to figure that there are people who are interested enough to know what's going on, that there must be a way to get them engaged. When we look at these issues, I'd be interested to know from the minister, when the Elections Officer made the recommendation that the bill should give the officer the flexibility of the day of the week, to consider the day of the week then maybe we should be - why wasn't that flexibility in here? Obviously the (Interruptions) Madam Speaker, it's like Question Period from the member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island, so I'll answer his question. He wants to know what day I think it should be. The Elections Officer just asked for the flexibility to consider different days in the future and that's all I'm saying, I'm just wondering why. So there is no particular day that (Interruptions)

Madam Speaker, the chief electoral officer asked for - Madam Speaker, if the member had actually been listening to what I was saying, he would know that I wasn't advocating for a change in day, I was advocating for what the chief electoral officer asked for, which was a flexibility in the dates, should it be more appropriate. Interestingly

enough, it's very likely that Saturday wouldn't be the best day because, of course, that would be the Jewish Sabbath. Likewise, other days may not be the best either but you can look at things like - the chief electoral officer made that recommendation because that officer of the province felt that it was legitimate to be looking at that issue and legitimate to be having that flexibility.

I'm not saying that it's wrong to leave it at Tuesday, what I'm saying is - and this is exactly what I asked, if the member had been listening, is that I'd be interested to know from the minister, why it was decided that that flexibility shouldn't be there. I didn't say that it's wrong to take that one out, I'm asking - because obviously the minister has an opinion and I'd like to know why he felt a certain way.

The other thing that's interesting here and there does seem to be some flexibility, is around the issue of pilots and voting trials. I think that if we were not so concerned and if we were not facing a situation where we are in the absence of having information on the issue of the third party advertising and how that will be worded, because I think that's critical, the wording is very important, one of the other issues that we should be looking at is how these pilot projects would work.

I think there's a number of opportunities and many people have talked about the obvious one, which is e-voting, we know that e-voting has been done in a number of municipalities in Nova Scotia, it's been done in, I think, maybe all the municipalities in Ontario, I'm not quite sure whether it's all of them or almost all of them, it's now being done through some of the federal elections in Asia and a lot of those, in fact arguably the leading company in the world is actually a Nova Scotia company that is doing that. So I am pleased to see that there are provisions for a pilot there. My personal bias is I would have liked to have seen it go further and that is strictly a personal bias, because I think that the easier you make it for people to vote, the better it becomes. I know that and I do recognize and I entirely respect the fact that there are people who are concerned about the security of e-voting, I absolutely respect that view. My personal opinion is that it is no more or less susceptible to that than the paper system and there are plenty of examples of how that has been an issue in certain areas, not only in Canada but elsewhere.

There are plenty of examples of how the e-voting system has worked effectively and one only needs to look at examples in various parts of Nova Scotia, in municipal elections or in Ontario in municipal elections, where making it easier for people to vote has worked very well, not least of which is the fact that if you were in Halifax on voting day, because you are at work - I mean we talk in this bill about the fact that you get three hours to be away from work, you actually remove the need for that in many cases, if somebody wishes to vote in that manner.

Also, the issue I talked about earlier, which the government did include in the bill, is continuous polling. In the last municipal by-election in HRM, what they did was they actually had the regular paper advance poll and general election day but they had continuous e-voting from advance poll day until election day and that proved to be very

successful, very popular, interestingly, very popular across a wide variety of demographics.

I think it was Windsor that actually did voting by text message, which I think maybe goes a little bit too far. You can see where the possibilities of this coming in the future and I think that it opens the doors to things like a more participatory democracy where you have things like more opportunity for referenda or plebiscites on issues, where you don't have to mobilize on an issue like that an entire paper ballot system and polling stations. You obviously still need to do that, at least in the foreseeable future, for a general election, even with e-voting but not necessarily on some of those other - especially on a plebiscite where it's a non-binding issue. It provides you some options to look at.

I think that it's my hope that we see that the chief electoral officer has been granted the power to do pilots. I'm not entirely sure how those pilots would work. Whether when they say a pilot, they mean a by-election comes up and you would test it there or what the case may be. I think that's probably the best way to do it, is you try it out in a by-election somewhere. It does work well and I'd encourage any member of this House to go over and, granted, they're only one company, there are others, heck the province might even set up their own system. I encourage anyone to go over and tour and meet with the folks at Intelivote in Dartmouth, just to get an idea of how one system works. One system that's been fairly widely used around the world now, successfully, without issues. (Interruptions) Issues early on, but there have been - the member for Pictou West, how about a pilot in all Easts? All ridings that end in East.

It's an issue of (Interruptions) the members opposite will probably know that I was a proponent of going to that system when I was up the road and they did go to that system and they now use it and it's proven highly successful, it's been widely audited in recent municipal elections in Ontario and now is actually required to be used in the Ontario municipal elections and the entire Ontario provincial government is now looking at going that way as well.

Actually, I was asked whether voter participation went up and actually it did. I wish I knew the number. Interestingly enough, in 2004, in the HRM election, which was a paper ballot, they had a plebiscite on the Sunday shopping issue. The voter turnout in the subsequent election, which only had electronic voting for the advance poll, was almost the same as the election without the plebiscite, which was unheard of, compared to previous non-plebiscite elections. Then the one that they did it in a full by-election was the highest turnout they ever had in a municipal by-election. It was still too low, but it was the highest they've ever actually had for a by-election. So, it does work. I have no idea what the results were comparatively in Ontario but what they did find was they were able to - I know the voter turnout didn't go down in Ontario and they were able to reduce the number of advance polling stations and so forth.

I'm not suggesting it's the be-all and end-all. It's not. I'm not suggesting you get rid of the paper ballot. What I am suggesting is that we should be doing everything to make it

easier and more importantly I'm speaking in favour of the fact that the government included the opportunity for the chief electoral officer to do these pilots in this legislation. So a pilot could actually be done on this and perhaps other issues.

Frankly, as the years go on we're going to see different issues. We're going to see different opportunities. We're going to get to the point, one day, where you have things like that, it's much easier to put plebiscite questions on an electronic ballot. It's much easier to put plebiscite questions on an electronic ballot. It's much easier to be able to set up polling stations in a town mall or a central place in town where you can have the computers that allow you to vote, even if the mall is in the centre of town and the boundary lines for two ridings go through the middle.

It doesn't matter because when you key in your number, it knows which riding you're from, so it doesn't become an issue of, I have to go back to my riding to vote. That can be an issue in some of the more geographically diverse ridings, even in ridings where the boundaries are sometimes funny. For example, it has always been an issue in Craighburn Estates in Dartmouth - they actually end up going to vote in Sackville just because where the boundary ends up coming both federally and provincially. They actually aren't included in the Dartmouth riding and so their polling station tends to be quite a distance away from them. In some cases they managed to get that changed, but the turnout in that poll location is always lower than everywhere else because they actually have to drive away from anywhere they would be for the day and drive to areas that they wouldn't be on a regular basis. Interestingly, when you talk about voter turnout, when that was done municipally, the voter turnout in that poll actually went up because people just voted from home.

Those are the kinds of things that become a little bit easier to address because these communities of interest become much more difficult as populations shift and populations change and so it gets into actually the riding boundaries as well.

I think that there are a number of very important things when it comes to issues around modernizing everything from how you register a political Party to other issues in here - for example, in terms of how we address the issue of identification. I think we're probably all aware that the issue of identifying somebody at a poll became a major issue in the 2008 federal election. I think that was shortly after the rules changed federally and all of a sudden you had to have your driver's licence and voter card and all kinds of things, and people showed up at the poll and some people didn't vote. I don't know whether that affected voter turnout - it was low, but we've seen it going down for some time.

I think that when we look at this, we have to understand that it's really, to me, about making it clear and about making sure that obviously people understand within that 30 days before the election. But when you talk about identification and how you ensure you're on the voters list and how the enumeration list is correct and how you update it, especially in student residences and things like that, it strikes me that it's better if there is a way - and I think this bill does provide the tools to do it, it's just a matter of whether the budget will

be able to do it - to get that information out on a regular basis. You know, you fill out your tax form and it says, do you want to be on the federal voters list? That certainly brings some awareness for people at least on a federal level. I think that it just has to be second nature in terms of how do I vote - that shouldn't necessarily have to be a question the day that you go to vote.

MR. LEONARD PREYRA: It's the same list.

MR. YOUNGER: I know. The member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island said it's the same list. I know that and I'm aware of that - I'm talking about the identification that you need when you go to the poll. There is inevitably always confusion with people on what they need and what you need federally, provincially, and municipally is marginally different. (Interruptions)

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

MR. YOUNGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think the member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island will find that I haven't said anything that's inaccurate. The last one he tried was the voters list and I didn't say the voters list was created any different - I wasn't even talking about that. I was talking about the identification and the identification that you require at the polling station and how voters are identified, and my point being that I think it's important that message get out throughout the period between elections, so that people inherently understand how it is that they are on the voters list, and if they move, how they ensure that they are on the correct voters list. So if they move to Pictou West or Pictou East, they ensure that they get on that voters list.

Also, when you come into things - and this bill deals with the issue of boundary divisions and polling divisions. When those reviews come up, because inevitably, and I'm sure that many of us, if not all of us, have seen this happen, that it isn't until election day after polling boundaries change, that people suddenly go, oh my goodness, I didn't know this change, I didn't know that I'm in a different riding, it's not my community of interest. We've seen a couple of challenges on some of these sorts of things here in Nova Scotia - in fact, there's one before the URB at the moment.

It's important that people understand the process as it goes along, so they know how to be on that voters list, so they know what it takes to be on the voters list if they move, so that they know what - just so it's second nature. When I go to vote, what is it that I need to go to vote and if I care about or if it's important to me what the polling divisions are, when those reviews happen, how do I get involved and have my say, so that at least somebody is heard. I think we all recognize that's an important issue.

One of the things - when we get back to this issue that I started on, which was the third party advertising, if you look at the list of (Interruptions) Mr. Speaker, there are two members over there who are glad I'm back on third party advertising. However, the fact is

that Bill No. 59 actually covers every single one of the issues I talked to - the one that it doesn't cover that it should is third party advertising, so every issue I've been talking about is actually covered in this bill.

Mr. Speaker, if the members would like to hear another hour on the issue of third party advertising and not the other very important issues in here, then I would have been happy to do that, but I thought spending 20 minutes at the beginning on third party advertising was quite a bit.

One of the things that I wanted to point out with respect to that is that when you look at some of the third party advertisers from the list I tabled from the 2008 federal election, some of that - I would argue their goal is vote suppression. That is not an ideological thing, on left-wing or right-wing or centre or anything else. There are organizations that their advertising was intended to suppress the vote of the people - to suppress the vote of those they were working against. So when those advertisements are able to go out in newspapers or in a flyer, whatever the case may be, or robocalls, which are the big thing of the past five or six years it seems, without those being identified, without those messages and communications being identified as to who they are from, it changes it fundamentally. (Interruptions) There are like three conversations going on behind me that I am listening to.

If you don't know who those are coming from, I think it changes the message. That is what regulating third party advertisers is all about. Frankly, it doesn't matter, as I said at the beginning of this. Whether it's a corporation or a union or an environmental lobby or the five members of the "friends of conservatives" that were in that group, at the end of the day it's important to know who are sending out those messages. It's important to know what their goal is, it's important to know who their donors are - who are the donors to those organizations?

There are a lot of issues around third party advertising, from the amount that is spent to how that money is raised, to what the stated goal of that organization is, and there is obviously a fundamental difference between organizations as third parties that are set up specifically for elections and those that exist on an ongoing basis, like unions or chambers of commerce or organizations like that. I think that's something you really have to look at and you have to answer in this third party advertising issue and that's what it has to be, that's how it has to be reported.

The fact that the minister would come forward and say that he had never heard about this issue, or that he hadn't considered this issue, or exactly whatever his words were, until Friday, when it was asked about in Question Period on November 3, 2009, when it was brought up by the chief electoral officer immediately following the last election, when it was brought up to the government when they called the Opposition caucuses and asked whether we would have any input into the bill, when it was brought up at the meetings of the tri-party electoral commission, when it was brought up at those meetings, the fact that

the minister can stand up and say, oh, I only heard about it Friday, I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker, that just strains the bounds of credibility.

It's fine from my perspective, if the minister decided that he wanted to not include that, that he didn't believe that, that's fine. But to then claim that he hadn't heard about it, that just doesn't make any sense. If he had walked out the door and said, I didn't think it was important, I've changed my mind, well, fine, great, but the stand that he hadn't thought about it until Friday makes no sense to me at all. I mean, this caucus has introduced a bill in each one of the sessions to regulate it, yet he hadn't heard about it or thought about it? He sat here in Question Period when the Premier answered questions about it, yet the minister hadn't thought about it when it's under his portfolio? That doesn't make any sense.

Mr. Speaker, then the minister stood up today and he said he wants to pass this bill very quickly. I can't remember his exact words, but he wanted to move this through the process quickly and get this done, and that's great. And he said, and I'm going to do an amendment in the Law Amendments Committee to deal with that third party advertising issue. The member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island complained that I hadn't talked enough about third party advertising at the beginning of my remarks. The minister couldn't even tell us what his amendment would do when he stood up and spoke to tell us that everybody should support the bill. Well, you can't support moving the bill forward until you know what - the government's already decided there's going to be a change and can't tell us what that change is.

Mr. Speaker, the government has agreed that there should be a change to third party advertising but we don't know what that change could be. You put a third party advertising limit that says, well, you can spend a million dollars per riding, well that's not really a third party advertising limit is it? Then they say, it will probably, or may mirror the federal regulations, well that's nothing either. We said, fine can you put it in writing and even if you can't get the exact wording through council and that, can you just put it in writing so we all have that commitment; no, can't do that at the moment either. The minister stood up here and said that that he was going to introduce this, I'm sure he must know what he's going to introduce or what his intent is. He stood up in this House and made a commitment to the House that this was going to happen.

MR. LEONARD PREYRA: That's a good minister listening.

MR. YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, the member from Halifax Citadel-Sable Island says that's a good minister listening. A good minister listening would have been actually addressing the issue before now and having it in this bill since it's been brought up so many times. (Applause) A good minister is not creating policy on the fly and announcing policy that he doesn't even know what it is and by his own admission doesn't know what it's going to include, that isn't.

Mr. Speaker, we introduced a bill on this issue, repeatedly, so we know exactly what we would propose on the issue of third party advertising. We tabled it right here. As a

matter of fact, the exact numbers we have up here had, I think, a \$25,000 province-wide limit and you can read the bill. The bill is in his package. (Interruption) I do know, and a registration of third party advertisers. I don't think the member has to worry that I know the bill because the bill is quite simple. Of course, I just let him know what's in that bill. And, I might add, it's mirrored after legislation which has already passed the constitutional test with the Supreme Court. We've actually done the work for the minister. All he has to do is say, we'll take that and move it along.

There are other issues, which could have been addressed in here. The Progressive Conservatives introduced a bill that talked about fixed election dates. That would certainly have merited some discussion and no doubt it was something they suggested. (Interruptions) I don't disagree with the member that the current Prime Minister made a mockery of that bill, but the point is that you still have to be accountable to it when you don't follow that. It's up to the public to decide whether they care whether you follow it.

The fact is that is something which, in my view, certainly would have merit, just the same as other issues around that have merit, such as the electronic voting that I've talked about and I'm glad to see that the provisions in the bill would allow for pilots on that issue, just like it has merit to allow younger people to work in polling stations, just like it has merit to have continuous voting, which is in the bill. There are things which are important changes in this bill, there are many things in this bill which deserve to see the light of day, deserve to be passed. I've said that a number of times, that's the first time that member said, hear, hear, so I appreciate it.

There are a number of things which we would have liked to have seen in the bill which will evolve over time. There's only one issue that sits there and we see it as an absolute glaring omission at this time and that's the addressing of third party advertising. There are lots of minor issues and there may be issues that members on the other side of the the House would like to see end up in there at some point as well. Those can be addressed and dealt with, but this one is a major issue. This issue that we are seeing is of increasing concern and will become a bigger issue as the new donation limits and who can donate to parties, as that all changes, the issue of third party advertising becomes that much more critical.

Once you stop - and we all supported it - corporations and unions from donating to political Parties, then both of those groups have an incentive to then spend that money elsewhere. I want to be very clear, this is not, to me - it might be for some other members, but this is not - about corporations or unions or some other group is bad, it's just as bad to have a chamber of commerce spend to buy an election as it is to have any other group do that. This is about having clarity about who is spending money in elections. That's what this comes to.

I am happy to hear the minister say he's looking at amendments and I'm very eager to see the wording of those amendments because if those amendments do the things that we hope to do and hope to achieve, then I, like the minister, hope to see this bill move forward

especially so the chief electoral officer becomes an officer of this Legislature, just like the Auditor General and others.

With that, I'm happy to leave my last 25 seconds on the table as I'm sure the member for Argyle is happy to use that. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle.

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, I thank everyone for their input tonight. It seems like my children, quite often when the hours get late they get a little silly and a little hyperactive and they actually want to do more than they really should be doing. I know the member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island is getting in that kind of giddy state and I know that some members back here maybe are getting there as well. So, as much as I would like to maybe talk about a few issues that we find are of value within this bill, there are a number of issues that we find are omissions in this bill that we would like to talk about at another time, of course one of them being the omission of the third party advertising, but seeing that the hour is getting late, I would like to adjourn debate tonight so we can come back on this one tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is to adjourn debate on Bill No. 59. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, that concludes the government's business for today. Tomorrow, after the daily routine and Question Period, we will be calling Public Bills for Second Reading, Bill No. 59, plus bills that are in Committee of the Whole House on Bills, Bill Nos. 1, 7, 13, 19, 21, 25, and 27.

Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now rise to meet tomorrow from the hours of 12:00 noon until 8:00 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is that the House now rise to meet again tomorrow at 12:00 noon.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

We stand adjourned.

[The House rose at 9:56 p.m.]

NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3)**RESOLUTION NO. 1223**

By: Ms. Diana Whalen (Halifax Clayton Park)

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

Whereas the Lieutenant Governor's Award was presented on June 2, 2010, to one male and one female Grade 11 student in each high school across Nova Scotia for demonstrating leadership, service and commendable academic performance; and

Whereas Jillian Burk received the honour of being chosen as the female recipient of the award for Halifax West High School in Clayton Park; and

Whereas Jillian has been an exemplary student in the International Baccalaureate program, is an accomplished musician and demonstrates strong leadership;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Jillian Burk for receiving the Lieutenant Governor's Award and wish her continued success in all her future endeavours.

RESOLUTION NO. 1224

By: Hon. Wayne Gaudet (Clare)

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

Whereas on April 9, 2011, Mr. John deRosenroll, Council Youth Commissioner, Nova Scotia, Scouts Canada, awarded Patrick Comeau of Saulnierville the Medal of the Maple for distinguished youth service; and

Whereas the Medal of the Maple Award was launched in 2007 to mark the centennial year of the Scouting movement in Canada; and

Whereas the award was designed to honour those youth who have significantly contributed to the movement and the spirit of Scouting through community service, extraordinary Scouting participation and a system of personal value;

Therefore be it resolved that members of this House of Assembly congratulate Patrick Comeau on receiving the Medal of the Maple Award and wish him continued success in all future endeavours.

Monsieur le Président, à une date ultérieure, je demanderai l'adoption de la résolution suivante;

Attendu que le 9 avril 2011, monsieur John deRosenroll, commissaire des jeunes Scouts de la Nouvelle-Écosse, a remis à Patrick Comeau de Saulnierville la Médaille de l'érable pour service exceptionnel auprès des jeunes; et

Attendu que la Médaille de l'érable a été lancée en 2007 dans le cadre du centenaire du mouvement scout au Canada; et

Attendu que la Médaille vise à rendre hommage aux jeunes qui ont contribué de façon exceptionnelle au mouvement et à l'esprit du scoutisme par leur service communautaire, leur participation extraordinaire au mouvement et leurs valeurs personnelles;

Par conséquent, il est résolu que les membres de cette Assemblée félicitent Patrick Comeau pour avoir reçu la Médaille de l'érable et lui souhaitent un succès continu dans tous ses projets futurs.

RESOLUTION NO. 1225

By: Hon. Wayne Gaudet (Clare)

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

Whereas on April 9, 2011, Mr. John deRosenroll, Council Youth Commissioner, Nova Scotia, Scouts Canada, awarded André Saulnier of Little Brook the Medal of the Maple for distinguished youth service; and

Whereas the Medal of the Maple Award was launched in 2007 to mark the centennial year of the Scouting movement in Canada; and

Whereas the award was designed to honour those youth who have significantly contributed to the movement and the spirit of Scouting through community service, extraordinary Scouting participation and a system of personal value;

Therefore be it resolved that members of this House of Assembly congratulate André Saulnier on receiving the Medal of the Maple Award and wish him continued success in all future endeavours.

Monsieur le Président, à une date ultérieure, je demanderai l'adoption de la résolution suivante;

Attendu que le 9 avril 2011, monsieur John deRosenroll, commissaire des jeunes Scouts de la Nouvelle-Écosse, a remis à André Saulnier de Petit Ruisseau la Médaille de l'érable pour service exceptionnel auprès des jeunes; et

Attendu que la Médaille de l'érable a été lancée en 2007 dans le cadre du centenaire du mouvement scout au Canada; et

Attendu que la Médaille vise à rendre hommage aux jeunes qui ont contribué de façon exceptionnelle au mouvement et à l'esprit du scoutisme par leur service communautaire, leur participation extraordinaire au mouvement et leurs valeurs personnelles;

Par conséquent, il est résolu que les membres de cette Assemblée félicitent André Saulnier pour avoir reçu la Médaille de l'érable et lui souhaitent un succès continu dans tous ses projets futurs.

RESOLUTION NO. 1226

By: Hon. Wayne Gaudet (Clare)

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

Whereas on April 9, 2011, Mr. John deRosenroll, Council Youth Commissioner, Nova Scotia, Scouts Canada, awarded Elise Comeau of Saulnierville the Medal of the Maple for distinguished youth service; and

Whereas the Medal of the Maple Award was launched in 2007 to mark the centennial year of the Scouting movement in Canada; and

Whereas the award was designed to honour those youth who have significantly contributed to the movement and the spirit of Scouting through community service, extraordinary Scouting participation and a system of personal value;

Therefore be it resolved that members of this House of Assembly congratulate Elise Comeau on receiving the Medal of the Maple Award and wish her continued success in all future endeavours.

Monsieur le Président, à une date ultérieure, je demanderai l'adoption de la résolution suivante;

Attendu que le 9 avril 2011, monsieur John deRosenroll, commissaire des jeunes Scouts de la Nouvelle-Écosse, a remis à Elise Comeau de Saulnierville la Médaille de l'érable pour service exceptionnel auprès des jeunes; et

Attendu que la Médaille de l'érable a été lancée en 2007 dans le cadre du centenaire du mouvement scout au Canada; et

Attendu que la Médaille vise à rendre hommage aux jeunes qui ont contribué de façon exceptionnelle au mouvement et à l'esprit du scoutisme par leur service communautaire, leur participation extraordinaire au mouvement et leurs valeurs personnelles;

Par conséquent, il est résolu que les membres de cette Assemblée félicitent Elise Comeau pour avoir reçu la Médaille de l'érable et lui souhaitent un succès continu dans tous ses projets futurs.