



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Gordon Gosse

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Third Session

WEDNESDAY, MAY 11, 2011

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House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, WEDNESDAY, MAY 11, 2011

Sixty-first General Assembly

Third Session

2:00 P.M.

SPEAKER

Hon. Gordon Gosse

DEPUTY SPEAKERS

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

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

The late debate topic has been chosen for this evening and it reads:

Therefore be it resolved that the House recognize and applaud this government's many initiatives aimed at supporting those in our society in the greatest need.

It was submitted by the honourable member for Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage.

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Justice.

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

Bill No. 36 - Energy Saving Roadway Lighting (2011) Act.

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

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

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

The honourable Minister of Justice.

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

Bill No. 17 - Fair Drug Pricing Act.

Bill No. 40 - Liquor Control Act.

Bill No. 53 - Labour Standards Code.

and the committee recommends these bills to the favourable consideration of the House, with certain amendments.

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

TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal.

RESOLUTION NO. 1311

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

Whereas public works infrastructure and services are essential to our everyday lives; and

Whereas the diligence of public works employees helps ensure these vital services are delivered expertly and consistently; and

Whereas it is important that society appreciate the significance of public works infrastructure and services and the people who help make it function;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House acknowledge the efforts of Nova Scotians who celebrate National Public Works Week, May 15-21, 2011.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Environment.

RESOLUTION NO. 1312

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

Whereas David Orton of Salt Springs, Nova Scotia, has been a tireless advocate for the environment since the 1970s; and

Whereas Mr. Orton operates the Green Web, posting over 80 bulletins and articles over the years, and writing for the Deep Green Web blog; and

Whereas we are sad to hear that David Orton published his last post on April 30th, due to illness;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House thank Mr. Orton for his long-time dedication to the environment and his many efforts to raise awareness about issues that affect all Nova Scotians, and let him know that he is in our thoughts.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage.

RESOLUTION NO. 1313

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

Whereas the Museum of Natural History in Halifax recently successfully hosted a major international exhibit about dinosaurs called “A T. Rex Named Sue”, developed by the Field Museum in Chicago; and

Whereas attendance for “A T. Rex Named Sue”, which reached 94,046 people, surpassed expectations for attendance and audience satisfaction; and

Whereas the Museum of Natural History and all branches of the Nova Scotia Museum system play an important role in promoting knowledge and understanding about our natural, cultural, and social heritage;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House congratulate the staff of the Museum of Natural History on the excellent work they have done to stage the exhibit “A T. Rex Named Sue”, and wish them continued success with future programs and exhibits.

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 Environment.

RESOLUTION NO. 1314

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

Whereas the Ecology Action Centre in Halifax has been a strong voice for the environment, while working to build a healthier, more sustainable Nova Scotia since 1971 and can be proud of its legacy over the past 40 years; and

Whereas the government has been pleased to join the Ecology Action Centre in celebrating many achievements and milestones since taking office, including the banning of non-essential pesticides and uranium mining, hard caps and significant reductions on greenhouse gases, an aggressive, renewable electricity target of 40 per cent by 2020, an indefinite moratorium on drilling on Georges Bank, a forest policy to reduce clear-cutting by 50 per cent, and the purchase and protection of wilderness lands; and

Whereas we look forward to continuing to work together with the Ecology Action Centre to make a real and lasting difference for all our shared priorities;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly congratulate the Ecology Action Centre on its 40th Anniversary 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 Minister of Health and Wellness.

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to make an introduction, with your permission, before reading my resolution.

MR. SPEAKER: Most certainly.

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I would like to draw the attention of members of the House to the east gallery where we are joined today by representatives from Cystic Fibrosis Canada. I'd like to ask each guest to stand as I call his or her name. We are joined by Ross Drake, president of Cystic Fibrosis Canada; Pamela Barnes, the development coordinator; and Susan Kerslake as well. I'd ask the members to give them a warm welcome, please. (Applause)

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

The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

RESOLUTION NO. 1315

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

Whereas May is Cystic Fibrosis Awareness Month and every week two children are diagnosed and one person dies from cystic fibrosis, the most common fatal genetic disease that affects Canadians; and

Whereas Cystic Fibrosis Canada, a national health charity with more than 50 volunteer chapters, works tirelessly to find a cure while helping people and families affected by cystic fibrosis; and

Whereas Cystic Fibrosis Canada is a global leader in cystic fibrosis research, investing more dollars in life-saving cystic fibrosis research and care than any other non-government agency in Canada;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House recognize May as Cystic Fibrosis Awareness Month, and congratulate Cystic Fibrosis Canada for their commitment to those affected by cystic fibrosis and finding a cure.

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

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

2 Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

There has been a request to revert to the order of business, Tabling Reports, Regulations and Other Papers.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS

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

HON. MARILYN MORE: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to table the 2010-2011 Annual Report for the Fair Registration Practices Act. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The report is tabled.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

NOTICES OF MOTION

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Premier.

RESOLUTION NO. 1316

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 April 10th to April 16th marked Education Week around Nova Scotia and celebrated many educators and teachers for their continued work with their students; and

Whereas Ron Stewart, department head for business education and social studies at Prince Andrew High School, was one of the 2011 award recipients for his innovative teaching methods; and

Whereas Education Week is a co-operative effort of the Nova Scotia Teachers Union, the Nova Scotia School Boards Association, the Nova Scotia Federation of Home and School Associations, la Fédération des parents acadiens de la Nouvelle-Écosse, the Association of Nova Scotia Educational Administrators, and the Department of Education;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House congratulate Mr. Ron Stewart on receiving one of the 2011 Education Week Awards.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island.

RESOLUTION NO. 1317

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

Whereas Dr. William Barker has served as president and vice-chancellor of the University of King's College since July 1, 2003, and during his tenure has embraced opportunities to enhance the educational, artistic, and cultural advancement of Nova Scotia through his academic and volunteer activities; and

Whereas under Dr. Barker's leadership, the University of King's College has grown and prospered, elevating its reputation for exceptional interdisciplinary programs, particularly in the humanities and journalism, while maintaining its commitment to community and meaningful student engagement; and

Whereas Dr. William Barker will end his term as president on June 30, 2011, leaving this legacy of excellence and a firm foundation for the continued success of the University of Kings College;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulate Dr. William Barker on his distinguished and inspiring leadership at the University of King's College and applaud his personal commitment to providing an exemplary educational experience to our students.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party.

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, I request that I begin my resolution with an introduction, if I may.

MR. SPEAKER: Yes.

MR. BAILLIE: I would just like to introduce to all members of the House some distinguished visitors in the west gallery. First of all, my good friend, fellow Progressive Conservative, former Citizenship Court Judge, former candidate for election to this House, someone who has chaired the annual meeting of our Party for many years and has been a great citizen of the City of Halifax, Helen Gillis, who is here today with her friend, Betty Hobin. I would like them to rise and accept the warm welcome of the House today. (Applause)

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

The honourable Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party.

RESOLUTION NO. 1318

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

Whereas Helen Gillis of Halifax will receive an honorary doctorate from Saint Mary's University in its Spring convocation; and

Whereas Ms. Gillis worked for more than 30 years in the insurance industry as a former Canadian Citizenship Court Judge and served for many years as a member of the Saint Mary's University Board of Governors; and

Whereas Helen has been a leader in the PC Party serving as a past provincial president, provincial women's president and long-time provincial annual meeting chair;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House congratulate Helen Gillis on receiving an honorary doctorate from Saint Mary's and thank her for a lifetime of community service.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage.

RESOLUTION NO. 1319

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

Whereas Marc Perron along with his wife, Kelly, and daughter, Meghan, live in Eastern Passage as engaged citizens who are generous in their time and energies in volunteer capacities; and

Whereas Marc is a member of the Nova Scotia Commissionaires Corps posted at the Department of Community Services, but in his off time he has worn the community mascot Dolphin Dan costume for more than 10 years, Frosty the Snowman for more than five years and Hooter the Owl for over three years; and

Whereas Marc's friendly nature has entertained local residents, especially children, at events such as parades, seniors' teas, Christmas tree lightings and Girl Guide events, with his favourite being those involving children;

Therefore be it resolved that this Nova Scotia House of Assembly commend Marc Perron of Eastern Passage for his long-standing commitment to his community through his efforts as Frosty the Snowman, Dolphin Dan, and Hooter the Owl, and wish him many more years of dress-up events that put smiles on the faces of many Nova Scotians.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party.

RESOLUTION NO. 1320

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

Whereas yesterday the Premier boasted in this House that the unemployment rate is lower now than when his government took office by 0.2 per cent; and

Whereas the sad truth of the matter is that the number of full-time jobs has actually fallen from 373,000 to 358,300 - a loss of 14,700 jobs - and the total workforce in the province has shrunk by 7,300; and

Whereas the rate is only down because many Nova Scotians have given up in despair from looking for a job because of the job-killing, high-tax policies of his government;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House agree that actual loss of real jobs in Nova Scotia is the true figure this government should be concerned about and call on Premier Dexter to admit that his policies are costing our province real jobs.

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.

Order, please. I'm having a hard time today hearing the notices of motion. Maybe it's me but I wouldn't mind if you'd take the conversations outside the Chamber.

The honourable member for Queens.

RESOLUTION NO. 1321

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

Whereas in 1995, the Royal Canadian Legion set up the Call to Remembrance Program to enable students to participate in a quiz show focused on material based on Canada's participation in World War I, World War II and Korea; and

Whereas Catherine McLennan, Mary McLennan, Mark Wentworth, Natalie Rogers and Gavin Raddall, members of the Grade 9 team from South Queens Junior High School in Liverpool, recently won the provincial championship; and

Whereas the Call to Remembrance Program provincial winners edged out both of their opponents by one point in the semi-final and final;

Therefore be it resolved that the House of Assembly recognize and congratulate members of the Grade 9 Call to Remembrance Program team from South Queens Junior High School - Catherine McLennan, Mary McLennan, Mark Wentworth, Natalie Rogers and Gavin Raddall - on having won the provincial championship sponsored by the Royal Canadian Legion.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

Order, please. The resolution was just handed to me by the Clerk, the resolution by the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party, and in that resolution you made reference to Premier Dexter. It's the Premier. I would ask if you would mind changing that please.

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: I would be happy to do it all over again.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The honourable member for Lunenburg West.

RESOLUTION NO. 1322

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

Whereas Pro-Oceanus Systems is a firm that designs and manufactures tools to measure dissolved gases in the ocean; and

Whereas Pro-Oceanus Systems' engineers and scientists are working on a project to create and test an instrument to measure total dissolved inorganic carbon, which will provide data for understanding the chemistry of CO₂ in the oceans; and

Whereas Pro-Oceanus Systems recently set up shop in the former courthouse building on Pleasant Street in Bridgewater, bringing a new knowledge-based company to the area;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House extend a welcome to Pro-Oceanus Systems to Nova Scotia and wish them success 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 Cumberland North.

RESOLUTION NO. 1323

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

Whereas Cumberland North recognizes the hard work and fundraising of its constituents in support of the Canadian Cancer Society Relay for Life; and

Whereas Daren White raised over \$16,000 in four years, including almost \$4,000 this year for the Relay for Life, and continues to fundraise for this noble cause; and

Whereas Daren White received the Jim Connors Award 2011 from the Nova Scotia Cancer Society, for his fundraising efforts and accomplishments;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly join me in congratulating Daren White on receiving the Jim Connors Award 2011 and for his outstanding fundraising achievements, and wish him luck in the Relay for Life and future fundraising 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 Hammonds Plains-Upper Sackville.

RESOLUTION NO. 1324

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

Whereas on May 28, 2011, Canadian Tire and Mark's Work Wearhouse locations across Canada will celebrate their third annual Jumpstart Day with a portion of sales being donated to Canadian Tire's Jumpstart Program; and

Whereas the Jumpstart Program helps financially disadvantaged children participate in organized sport by helping to cover the costs of registration, equipment and transportation costs; and

Whereas since the Jumpstart Program was created in 2005, it has helped over 300,000 children participate in organized sports and continues to grow in hopes of helping even more children in future years;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of the House of Assembly congratulate all of the participants in this year's Canadian Tire and Mark's Work Wearhouse Jumpstart Day on May 28th.

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. 1325

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 Premier and Commodore Laurence Hickey, commander of the Navy's Canadian Fleet Atlantic, unveiled an engraved bell commemorating the 100th Anniversary of the Canadian Naval Service, at Province House on May 4th, to recognize the commitment and dedication of 100 years of service and excellence; and

Whereas the Lunenburg Foundry operates a full machine shop and operating facility at the head of Lunenburg Harbour, producing a large variety of hardware and components for marine, industrial, and commercial applications, as well as custom machining, repairs, and service; and

Whereas the naval bell was cast by the Lunenburg Foundry, creating a bell identical to the one presented to the Canadian Navy which is on display at the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly recognize the important contribution made by the Lunenburg Foundry in casting of the naval bell to commemorate the 100th Anniversary of the Canadian Naval Service.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Guysborough-Sheet Harbour.

RESOLUTION NO. 1326

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

Whereas the Cyril Ward Memorial Library in Guysborough will soon offer a cozier reading space due to funding received from the Municipality of the District of Guysborough; and

Whereas updates will include a new reading corner, new chairs, and a flat-screen television that will be used for promoting books, literacy programming, and community events; and

Whereas the renovations will mark the celebration of 25 years of public service catering to both locals and tourists visiting our area;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly congratulate the staff and members of the Cyril Ward Memorial Library on 25 years of service, and wish them success as they continue to promote literacy and a joy of reading for all residents.

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.

There has been a request to revert to the order of business, Introduction of Bills.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 64 - Entitled an Act to Allow Retired Volunteer Firefighters and Ground Search and Rescue Workers to Keep Their Firefighter Plates. (Mr. Keith Bain)

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS

MR. SPEAKER: The time is now 2:33 p.m. and we will run until 4:03 p.m.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

PREM.: JOB NUMBERS - EVIDENCE

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, the Premier stood in this House and said that no jobs were lost last month. He said, “. . . 300 jobs were created in this province last month . . . the actual number of jobs created was 300.”

Mr. Speaker, the report from Statistics Canada would show that there were 11,000 full-time jobs lost in Nova Scotia last month. So my question to the Premier is, on what evidence does he base the 300 jobs?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, it's Statistics Canada, in their actual Labour Force results.

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, on Page 28 of the Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey, it shows clearly that full-time employment has dropped by 11,000 Nova Scotians. The job losses in this province are mounting while our closest neighbours don't seem to be losing the jobs at the rate we are and the rest of Canada is growing. So my question to the Premier is, how many more Nova Scotians will have to lose their jobs before the Premier realizes he has taken our province in the wrong direction?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I would refer the Leader of the Official Opposition to the Statistics Canada, Table 282-001, which shows that the workforce in this province increased by 300 jobs.

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, I disagree with everything the Premier has just said. I wish he would do better research and get his facts straight because clearly he does not know what he's doing. While we know we are losing jobs across this province, our taxes are too high and the Premier has made them even higher. Energy is too expensive and this Premier stands by while power rates continue to climb. The price of gas climbs every week, yet this Premier refuses to help Nova Scotians at the pump.

Mr. Speaker, Nova Scotians can no longer do business in this province. My question to the Premier is, when will your government do a comprehensive tax review to show some relief for Nova Scotians?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that there is a constant review of taxation in the province underway by the Department of Finance. They want to make sure that the various levers that exist within the Finance Department are operating as efficiently and fairly as possible. That's why we undertook initiatives like the Affordable Living Tax Credit, to make sure that people who are on the lowest socio-economic indicators were better off than they were prior to us coming to government. It is why we took the HST off home energy; it's why we lowered the small business tax. Those are the kinds of things that this government has been doing.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. In that question, the member used the word "your". That is out of order. Questions are to be asked in the third person, so I'd ask the member, and later, to rephrase the question and any others that they may have. Thank you very much.

The honourable Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party.

PREM.: SMALL BUS. COMMUN. - STATUS

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier. Small businesses in Nova Scotia are now being asked to compete with one hand tied behind their backs, thanks to this government. As Leanne Hachey, the Vice-President, Atlantic of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business wrote in the Halifax ChronicleHerald on Saturday, "There's something happening in Nova Scotia. I doubt it's intentional, but it's happening nonetheless: the slow but steady erosion of small, independent business." And I will table that document for the House.

There is something happening all right, but it is intentional because every small business in our province is subject to the highest taxes in the country, HST increases, spiralling energy costs, and now the government has even broken an MOU with the municipalities which, no doubt, will lead to higher property taxes on our small businesses. My question to the Premier is, is Ms. Hachey wrong or are his policies wrong?

THE PREMIER: Well, Mr. Speaker, I did read that article and I have to say she is extraordinarily in error in that article she wrote. In fact I was with Ms. Hachey at the Red

Tape Reduction event where she congratulated the government on this initiative. So I am not aware of why she wrote the article she wrote, but I can just say that what I hear from small businesses around the province is that they are very, very pleased.

MR. BAILLIE: Well, Mr. Speaker, apparently the Premier thinks that Ms. Hachey is wrong, but she is not wrong. Whether it is pharmacies or road pavers or non-unionized workplaces, the policies of this government are making it harder and harder for them every day - and including insurance brokers across the province when the Premier gives \$1.8 million to a bank to compete with our own 1,100 brokers. That is another example of the government going in the wrong direction.

My first supplementary to the Premier is, why is your government deliberately putting our insurance brokers at risk by giving money to the Toronto Dominion Bank?

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. I'm getting pretty frustrated up here lately with the word "you". It's going to come to the point that I won't allow members to ask the question, if that's what it is going to take. So I'll ask you not to use the word "you" again, please.

The honourable Premier, in your response.

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I think that what has to happen is that the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party actually has to sit down and have a look at the reality of the world we live in. TD Insurance competes in this market. They were going to expand their workforce by 140 people, regardless of whether or not we were in the mix. The only question was whether or not those jobs would be in Nova Scotia or New Brunswick or in Toronto, and they would be competing in the same market. The good news, Mr. Speaker, is 140 Nova Scotians will now have well-paying jobs as a result of this government. (Applause)

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, one can only wonder what Moses Coady would think of the Premier's answer defending his assistance to the Toronto Dominion Bank at the expense of our own small-business sector. The Premier speaks of the reality of today's world, but the reality is that contrary to what the Premier said yesterday and today, there are 7,300 fewer Nova Scotians working today than when his government took office. My question to the Premier is, what more proof does he need beyond those 7,300 lost jobs that his government policies are taking our province in the wrong direction?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I gave the notation for the appropriate table in Statistics Canada to the Leader of the Official Opposition. What I'll do is once Hansard gets complete I'll print it off and make sure the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party gets a copy.

The reality is that you don't resolve questions of employment by refusing to invest in good jobs - exactly the opposite is true. That's why we see one of the largest hedge fund companies in the world coming to Nova Scotia, bringing new people here. We see TD Insurance investing in 140 new jobs. It's why we see the expansion of Cherubini. It is because this government is investing in good jobs.

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

PREM. - GAS PRICES: PLAN - DETAILS

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, today in Halifax gas is \$1.37 per litre, it is \$1.39 in Sydney, and it is \$1.40 in Yarmouth. That's a 30 per cent jump from this time last year. My question to the Premier is, as gas prices climb even higher, what is the Premier going to do to offer Nova Scotians some relief at the pump?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Official Opposition forgot to mention that it's \$1.40 in Toronto; it is \$1.46 in Montreal. Fortunately, in this province we have a regulated gas environment, which means that the wholesale price of gasoline in this province has been below the national average - I think it is 45 out of 52 weeks.

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, the people that I represent do not live in Montreal and Toronto; they live in Nova Scotia and what they're looking for is their government to respond to the fact that they are being pressured under the price of gasoline in this province and they want their government to respond. The situation is becoming critical. People are even drilling holes in gas tanks to take gas because of the price of it.

The Premier has called for the removal of the tax on tax when he was in Opposition. We ask on this side of the House for him to honour that commitment. If he were to honour his commitment for removing the tax on tax, Nova Scotians would save 3.8 cents per litre. My question to the Premier is, will the Premier honour his promise and remove the tax on tax?

THE PREMIER: The reality is, Mr. Speaker, we have honoured every commitment we made in our platform of 2009 without fail. We removed the tax from home energy cost. We reduced the small business tax and we would love to be able to do more. We would love to be able to be in a position to reduce taxation further. The simple fact of the matter is that the only alternative to taxation is to increase the debt. I know that doesn't necessarily bother the Leader of the Official Opposition, but we are not going to burden the future generations of this province with increased debt.

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, the Premier has already raised the debt in the Province of Nova Scotia; he has already broken promises. (Applause) He said he was going to balance the books; he simply hasn't done it. He said he was not going to raise taxes, an increase of 2 per cent in the HST. Fourteen hundred user fees have been increased under this Premier.

What Nova Scotians are asking of this Premier is to keep one of his promises and that is to remove the tax on tax, to provide them 3.8 cents per litre relief. Nova Scotians are asking for relief from this Premier and this government. My final question to the Premier is, when will you keep one of your commitments and deliver that relief at the pumps for Nova Scotians?

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. (Interruption) It's not a 100-year tradition, it's a tradition that is 18 months old. It's unparliamentary in every Westminster-based Parliament to use the word 'you' and 'your'. That's tradition.

The honourable Premier on the answer please.

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, the question of the tax on a tax is not a commitment that was made during the last election, but what was a commitment was to balance the budget, which we did. On top of that, last year not only did we balance the budget, we paid down debt; one of the few jurisdictions in the country to do that. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

ERD & T: JOB CREATION STRATEGY - DETAILS

MR. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, this government has spent a great deal of time and a great deal of money promoting the jobsHere strategy. This is a strategy without solid targets, without a concrete vision and that fails to support 90 per cent of small businesses in the province. Given the undeniable fact that small business is the most powerful driver of job creation in Nova Scotia, my question to the Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism is, how can he have a job creation strategy that fails to support and invest in small business?

HON. PERCY PARIS: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for the question. Small business makes up 96 per cent of the business here in Nova Scotia. I will say that it is through the jobsHere strategy and other strategies - we have tax incentives for small business in the Province of Nova Scotia, we have the PIP program, we have reduced taxes twice, something that hasn't been done in 20 years. We work with partners such as the Federation of Independent Business. It is erroneous for anyone in this House or anyone outside of this House to think that we don't cater to and try to assist small business with training initiatives, co-op programs. I could go on at length.

MR. CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, this minister might think he's helping small business but small business operators don't. In fact, they said this government's policies are marginalizing them and eroding their sector and I'll table those comments. That's because the conditions laid out by the jobsHere strategy make many small businesses

ineligible to access funding because over one-third of the small businesses in the province don't benefit from the marginal reduction in small business tax and because despite the slight planned reduction in small business tax, our small business taxes are still among the least competitive in the entire country.

My question for the minister is, when will this government recognize that they have created an environment that punishes small business owners?

MR. PARIS: Mr. Speaker, without a doubt we recognized when we were in Opposition, there were a lot of barriers that were facing small businesses in the Province of Nova Scotia. What we've done in the Province of Nova Scotia is, as I've already mentioned, we've created an environment that's going to be more conducive to small business. We have co-op programs, we've reduced the threshold for the PIP program which will allow more people, more small businesses, to access that funding. We have training initiatives targeted to small business.

The efforts that we are doing for small business in the Province of Nova Scotia have not gone unnoticed. We will continue to work with small business, those stakeholders and those partners that we currently have to produce and to make conditions better here for small business in the Province of Nova Scotia.

MR. CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, the minister might be able to ignore me in this House but he can't ignore all the small independent business owners out there that are saying they need more support from this government. In addition to the uncompetitive small business tax rates, our province also has the highest sales tax in the country. This drives up costs paid by small businesses and results in consumer spending less in our province. This government fails to admit that higher taxes, higher user fees and higher energy costs actually severely hurt small businesses and results in consumers spending less in our province. My question to the Premier is, will he explain why this government continues to leave small business behind?

THE PREMIER: First of all, Mr. Speaker, the honourable member ought to get his facts straight. Things like HST are an input tax credit so they have no effect on small business cost base whatsoever. That's the first thing.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, since the member opposite likes to table things, I'll table this. This is a quote from Leanne Hachey, who is the Vice President, Atlantic of the Canadian Federation of Independent Businesses. It says:

“We are very pleased with the results of the province's work to date in making the regulatory process a more effective and efficient one for businesses in Nova Scotia . . . We will continue to work with our government partners to further streamline and refine requirements.”

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

**NAT. RES.: FORESTRY STRATEGY
- ECONOMIC IMPACT**

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Natural Resources. This is a government that continues to regulate first and ask questions later and there is no better example than the long-awaited - and still waiting for - forestry strategy. Foresters are an example of a small business sector, a very important one in our province, who are suffering from the high tax policies of this government and its misguided policies.

Now the minister has engaged an economic impact study which says that his policies would be devastating on our forestry sector. So my question to the minister is, why generate new policy without regard to its economic impact in the first place?

HON. CHARLIE PARKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the honourable member for directing the question this way. We are working very hard on our Natural Resources strategy. It's a four-pillar strategy based on biodiversity and parks and forestry and minerals. We've gathered good information from Nova Scotians. We've had expert panels look at this. We've gathered an economic impact analysis and it's soon to go off to the printer and it will be available for review by all Nova Scotians sometime this Spring.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, the minister released the economic impact study yesterday and on Page 21 the study says, "The process of developing a Natural Resources Strategy was announced by the Government of Nova Scotia in May 2007, as a three year process expected to be completed by December 2010." This specific analysis was commissioned in October 2010.

Mr. Speaker, that was more than a year and a half into the mandate of the strategy development process and only two months away from the deadline that the minister was supposed to meet. My question to the minister is this, when did the minister wake up to the economic consequences of what he was doing and order up another fancy consultant?

MR. PARKER: Mr. Speaker, this is a very important analysis of our forestry and parks and biodiversity and mineral industries in Nova Scotia. It takes time to get it right. We've consulted with experts. We've consulted with Nova Scotians and it soon will be released to the public. As I said yesterday, it's a big ship, it takes time to turn it around but we're going to work to have a healthy forest and a healthy forest industry in this province.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, the report, the economic impact analysis, also says on the same page, "DNR believes that the CLFM framework represents the best option for evaluating the above scenarios given time and resource constraints."

Mr. Speaker, we can only wonder what the analysis would have said had it not had the biased opinion of the department already baked into its own terms of reference. My

question to the minister is, when will he start listening to the views of Nova Scotians who know best how to manage their own industry, rather than relying on the fancy consultants that he pays so much to hear what they have to say?

MR. PARKER: Mr. Speaker, we have listened very carefully to Nova Scotians. We've consulted with them in Phase 1 of the Natural Resources Strategy. We heard what values were important to Nova Scotians. We engaged volunteers in Phase 2 of the Natural Resources Strategy and we were very thankful for their expertise, support and advice. Now we are engaging Woodbridge Associates, an expert well recognized around the world, and we have all the information, now it's just a matter of compiling it and putting it together. I think people are going to be excited about the Natural Resources strategy when it comes out this Spring.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester North.

**EDUC. - LEVIN REPT.: TOWNS/CITIES
- IDENTIFY**

HON. KAREN CASEY: My question is to the Minister of Education. The terms of reference for Dr. Ben Levin's report clearly state that the report will make use of Nova Scotia data and examples where possible, and should reflect an understanding of the Nova Scotian context. Dr. Levin wrote that excess space in our schools, and I quote, "... will be in towns or small cities that have five schools but only need three, or have nine but only need five."

My question to the minister is, to which towns or small cities in Nova Scotia was Dr. Levin referring?

HON. RAMONA JENNEX: Dr. Levin consulted with the school boards and there was a conversation probably held around that but that question really is a question for Dr. Levin.

MS. CASEY: Well, you know, it would be great if we could all speak to Dr. Levin because we'd have lots to tell him that I don't think he heard. Mr. Speaker, it's clear Dr. Levin did not have a clear understanding of Nova Scotia when he wrote this report. In fact over the last 15 years, there have been many school closures and many school consolidations. Many school communities have already accepted the reality of excess space; for example, the Town of Truro had five schools in 2008, one school in 2009. Many other schools have accepted the fact that their schools will close.

My question to the minister is, what areas of the province did Dr Levin visit in order to allow him to make these statements and recommendations about our schools, in our communities, in our province?

MS. JENNEX: I would like to say that this is a very small component of a very comprehensive report that Dr. Levin provided. He provided us five areas of focus and we should be focusing our energy on reducing failure through our system, improving daily teaching - all of these components. There was a small piece in the report about the utilization of space. One of the things that he said is that at this time, we should be looking at better use of our facilities and communities using our facilities.

MS. CASEY: It's obvious the minister does not want to talk about the one particular component that affects every community in this province and that is school closures. Taxpayers in Nova Scotia paid for this report expecting that it would reflect the circumstances of our school system here in Nova Scotia.

Dr. Levin said, “. . . there would appear to be quite a few schools across the province with other accommodation close by . . .” When questioned by the press about how many schools should close, Dr. Levin used numbers like five or maybe 100, 20 or maybe 30 or maybe 40. These were not comments that reflect any knowledge of Nova Scotia's schools and they don't instill much confidence in the communities who are wondering if their school is on his list.

My question to the minister is, did Dr. Levin identify the schools - the five, 100, the 20, the 30 or the 40 - and did he share that information with communities who are out there wondering if they are on this list?

MS. JENNEX: Dr. Levin was talking about utilizing our facilities appropriately. He also is talking about communities where we could be using our facilities for daycares and senior's centres. This was a very small component; he was using that as an example about ways in which we need to move forward in our province. We have a very good system for reviewing schools and that is in the hands of the school board. We have a school review process and every school board across the province has gone through the reviews. Every parent in the community would know if any school is on any list because that is the responsibility of the school board.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle.

**PREM. - PHARMACIES: TARIFF AGREEMENT
- NEGOTIATE**

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, pharmacies are small businesses located in many small towns and communities across our province. In fact, 50 Nova Scotia communities are served by one pharmacy only. Like all small businesses in Nova Scotia, pharmacies are subjected to the highest corporate taxes in the country, HST increases, and spiralling energy costs. Tariff agreements with the government form a large part of the pharmacy's business model. The current tariff agreement expires in about six

weeks but government is now engaging in strong-arm delaying tactics with the Pharmacy Association.

So, Mr. Speaker, my question through you to the Premier is, why won't government go to the table and start negotiating a tariff agreement in good faith with Nova Scotia pharmacies?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, we're at the table and, in fact, we're doing exactly that.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Premier told reporters that pharmacists were opposing the government bill only to strengthen their bargaining position. My question through you to the Premier is, does the Premier doubt pharmacists' commitment to providing better and cheaper services to their clients, people who are often their friends and neighbours?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I don't doubt the dedication of pharmacists to their communities or to their neighbours, but I also understand that they are, of course, in a business and the job that they have, of course, is to maximize their ability to make a profit. That is a competing position with the position of government which is that we have to provide the fairest drug prices and ensure that we are able to supply the drugs that people need. We have simply recognized that there is a dichotomy in any negotiation and it is necessary for us to do this in as forthright a manner as we can.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, yesterday in the media, the Premier said that the actions of pharmacists were not conducive to a healthy relationship with government. I think many pharmacists would suggest that government's actions are not conducive to a healthy pharmacy industry. As Ms. Leanne Hachey said in her column:

“Small businesses are routinely overlooked, their tax dollars are used against them - either directly by government or indirectly through government support of large business - and their unique circumstances aren't taken into consideration.”

Mr. Speaker, my question through you to the Premier is, why is this government determined to weaken and destabilize a small business like pharmacies in Nova Scotia and risk depriving Nova Scotians of the valuable health services provided by these small business owners?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, this is a government that is working hard, in fact, to strengthen the health infrastructure across our province. This is a government that is working hard to ensure that we build the foundation for good jobs in our province. This is a government that is ensuring that there is an appropriate environment for competition in this province. Our government is dedicated to all of those principles which we think are abundantly obvious.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

**HEALTH & WELLNESS: GOULD REPT.
- RECOMMENDATIONS**

MR. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. Previously I have visited detox locations myself, have spoken to those who are sick as well as their families: those who are attempting to seek help or are in pain, and the families are in chaos wondering where they go next. It has now become very obvious to me that this is a very serious issue requiring immediate attention. Citizens of the Annapolis Valley are eagerly awaiting the findings of Dr. Gould's interim report, a report that was delivered to the minister on Monday with a briefing provided to some NDP caucus members yesterday.

My question to the minister is, did Dr. Gould provide solid recommendations that can be implemented immediately to address the prescription drug problem in the Valley?

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, yes, indeed, I did receive Dr. Gould's report yesterday; I'm not aware that there was any briefing for any members of the government caucus. I haven't had an opportunity to really consider the content of the report but I fully intend to do so and have something to say further on that later on this week.

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, in February 2011, Harlan Dorey cried, begged and pleaded for treatment. When help never came, all Linda could say to her son is, you have to fight. Many people in this House and throughout Nova Scotia are aware of the pain suffered by both Harlan and Linda. He was told he was not ready for a 21-day program, and time again, as for methadone treatment, he was told to wait. After entering and completing medical detox a total of seven times with no follow-up options being made available, he committed suicide.

My question to the minister is, what plan does the minister have to ensure addicts who seek help with a long-term rehab program and possible regulated methadone treatment will receive it in a timely manner?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, addiction is a very tragic disease. It can, in some instances, have very tragic consequences, in spite of the fact that people may have had access to services. We need to understand all of the services that we have available, where there are gaps in those services and what we can do to improve our response. That is exactly what I am doing in terms of gathering the information from the Medical Officer of Health who works directly in the district health authority that the honourable member is concerned about.

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, my final question is to the Premier. Too many people in this province have died from prescription drug addiction and families are concerned about the lack of adequate services available across the province. Last week I sent a mother who was afraid she would lose her son to this addiction directly to the provincial director of Addiction Services. The end result, he is 94th on the wait list for methadone treatment. Yesterday, an addict - I had visited last weekend - in the middle of detox was released after his seventh visit to detox; he is looking for a long-term rehab program or at least a methadone treatment until rehab is available.

My question to the Premier is, will the Premier have Dr. Gould's interim report tabled before the end of this Spring session, along with a commitment that he and the Minister of Health and Wellness meet with the Annapolis Valley Fighting Addictions group - yes or no?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I think what is appropriate is that the Minister of Health and Wellness have the opportunity to review and ingest the content of the report that she received yesterday. The Minister of Health and Wellness has said that she will have more to say about it later this week and I look forward, as I'm sure the member does, to what the minister will have to say.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle.

**ERD & T - ECONOMY: SOUTHWESTERN N.S.
- MIN. SATISFACTION**

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, small businesses in Nova Scotia are subjected to the highest corporate taxes in the country, HST increases, and spiralling energy costs. In addition to these business-killing NDP policies, small businesses in southwestern Nova Scotia are struggling with a drastic drop in tourism and spinoff businesses associated with the loss of the ferry. Unfortunately, the government has done very little to ease the hardships of their actions on the hard-working Nova Scotians who live in our region.

My question, through you to the Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism is, is the minister satisfied with the overall state of the economy in southwestern Nova Scotia?

HON. PERCY PARIS: Mr. Speaker, my response is that we are not happy with unemployment/employment conditions in the Province of Nova Scotia, period.

What we are trying to do through the jobsHere strategy is we're trying to improve the job situation, the economy in all parts of the Province of Nova Scotia. Unfortunately, when it comes to tourism, in 1972, tourism in the Province of Nova Scotia hit an all-time peak. Did I say 1972? I meant 1992. Since 1992 there has been a steady decline with

respect to - especially with particular reference to American tourism in the Province of Nova Scotia. It's unfortunate, things have changed.

I've stood up in this House a number of times, talking about how things have changed in the Province of Nova Scotia and what we are doing as a government, we are trying to keep pace with that change and actually we are trying to get out in front of it. We will do as much for Yarmouth and area, as we do for all regions of the Province of Nova Scotia, to create good economic conditions for the Province of Nova Scotia.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, for decades the Yarmouth-Bar Harbor or Yarmouth-Portland ferries were the mainstay of the economy of south and southwestern Nova Scotia. Travellers using the ferry were the customers and guests who enabled the development and growth of what became a thriving small business community.

What is the minister going to do to ensure the continued success of that small-business economy, in the absence of the ferry?

MR. PARIS: Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite is well aware, with the recent Team Southwest at the request- and the member opposite was present at the meeting I had in Yarmouth with people from the private sector. Certainly there were elected agents of the people there as well. We are working with the Team Southwest, we are working very hard and the people in the southwestern region are working very hard to get the RDA there up and running. We all know how vital an RDA is to any region in the Province of Nova Scotia. Unfortunately, due to unfortunate circumstances, the former RDA in the region had to be dissolved.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister, the municipalities, the workers' representatives, the churches, the local chambers of commerce, have been asking for leadership from this government and have been working diligently on their own to persuade and find businesses to operate a ferry. Is the government encouraging talks between new service providers? What will the government do to help secure a new provider and save the small businesses in southwestern Nova Scotia?

MR. PARIS: Mr. Speaker, I think that this government, in particular, has provided some leadership with respect to the southwestern region. Not only have we provided some leadership but we also supported the leadership down there. We've invested a significant amount of money in the southwestern region when it comes to the leadership that does exist there. What we also are willing to do, and I've said this time and time again, if somebody comes forward to us with a plan with respect to - whether it be ferry service or anything else, we are willing to look at it and it will be measured on its own merit.

Mr. Speaker, we've invested a lot of money as I'm sure the member is well aware. I've stood up in the House, whether it be the 250th Anniversary, whether it be a host of things related not only to tourism but to business - we will continue to support and give leadership to those things that make good economic sense.

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

**HEALTH & WELLNESS: AT-RISK PHARMACIES
- LIST TABLE**

MS. DIANA WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. For three days the Law Amendments Committee hearings have yielded a similar message, pharmacies and particularly rural pharmacies, are at risk of closure and Nova Scotians at risk for a loss of services. Government has as much as admitted that this risk is real, by indicating during a briefing that a list of rural, remote pharmacies had been drawn up and that a protection fund will be made available.

My question to the minister is, will the minister table the list of the rural pharmacies that have been identified as being at risk?

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, no.

MS. WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, that was very succinct, I must say. There are communities across this province that are in grave uncertainty; they don't know whether or not they're going to lose services in their community. It's not just the loss of a business, it's a loss of health care in their community. It means a lot to them. Government has a plan, they say they have a rural protection fund and they're not willing to share with the people most impacted by what that means. They've left pharmacists to plead their case and, really, their issues have fallen on deaf ears. My question to the minister is how much has the minister set aside in her plan in order to mitigate the risk to all pharmacies?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, this minister and this government very much value pharmacies in Nova Scotia, including rural pharmacies. I have told the honourable member before that we are in negotiations and that means we are in negotiations elsewhere, not on the floor of this Chamber. That's where these discussions need to happen, that's where they will happen. They will result in a fair and balanced outcome for pharmacies, for rural pharmacies, for taxpayers and for consumers of generic drugs in this province.

MS. WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, this government has been anything but fair on how they've dealt with this issue. Every other jurisdiction in the country that has dealt with generic drug prices has done so comprehensively, as a package, not in isolation. Meanwhile the spectre of pharmacy closures, the spectre of losing health care services is running rampant in communities across the province. That's because there's been a lack of transparency in dealing with all the issues before the pharmacists. My question to the

minister again is, when does the minister plan to tell pharmacies how she is going to mitigate the risks that they are facing?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, we are very committed to having a new tariff agreement in place by July 1st, this year. We're in negotiations right now. Those negotiations were timed to coincide with the Fair Drug Pricing Bill that is before this Assembly. This, in fact, is what the Pharmacy Association asked for. We are following the process that we discussed and was agreed to.

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

**HEALTH & WELLNESS: ER ACCOUNTABILITY REPT.
- TABLE**

MS. DIANA WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, my question again is for the Minister of Health and Wellness, but on another subject. In the Fall of 2009, Bill No. 52 was debated in the Legislature. The point of the bill was to provide greater accountability on the part of government to the public at large. One year ago today, on May 11, 2010, government adhered to the legislation and tabled the report chronicling emergency room closures across the province. My question to the minister today is will we see government comply with Bill No. 52 and table the 2011 accountability report on emergency room closures before the end of this House sitting?

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, my staff in the department is working on a report. I've seen a draft this week, however, I can't predict how long this particular sitting is going to last. I would very much like to be able to table it but we will see how long we'll be here.

MS. WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, communities across the province are still experiencing ER closures. Despite the flurry of activity around the interim and then the final versions of the Ross report, Nova Scotians still expect government to be accountable to the promises they've made. This includes their commitment to table, annually, a report outlining emergency room closures across the province. My question to the minister is, when can she provide that report to the Legislature or to the people of Nova Scotia?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: It is true, Mr. Speaker, that there still are emergency room closures in some parts of the province. We inherited quite a mess in the emergency departments around the province. We've worked very hard to address this. We will see, when the report is finalized, that there are parts of the province where we've seen substantial improvement but yet there is still more work to be done. This minister is fully committed to getting that job done.

MS. WHALEN: In last's year budget the minister also provided that there would be a \$3 million protection fund for emergency departments. This fund was set aside to ensure the emergency rooms across the province remained open. If government is to be truly accountable to the people of Nova Scotia one would expect that they would also be accountable for the expenditure of those funds. They either spent the \$3 million to keep emergency rooms open, as they said they would do, or they returned these funds to Minister of Finance.

My question to the minister is, will the minister table before the end of Question Period today, a full accounting of this \$3 million Emergency Department Protection Fund, which would show us which emergency rooms received monies from the fund and how it was spent?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I believe that as Minister of Health and Wellness I've probably provided more information to this Assembly on the work that's going on in emergency rooms than any other Minister of Health, including the two former ministers, one who is sitting behind that member over there.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

**AGRIC. - FARMERS: TAX CREDIT
- IMPLEMENT**

MR. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, every year tens of thousands of Nova Scotians go without proper nutrition. Large contributors to organizations like Feed Nova Scotia find it easy to donate their food as they have a central warehouse to distribute food across the province. Increasingly, more and more lower- and middle-income Nova Scotians are finding it difficult to buy healthy food for their families as identified in the 2010 Participatory Food Costing Report. We need to help these Nova Scotians and we need to help them now.

My question for the Minister of Agriculture is, will the minister consider implementing our bill that would provide a tax credit to farmers in Nova Scotia who donate products to Feed Nova Scotia?

HON. JOHN MACDONELL: Mr. Speaker, no.

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, it's very basic. Poor nutrition leads to poor health. By not aiding Nova Scotians most in need by helping farmers provide food to food banks we're placing undue pressure on our already strained health care system. According to the 2010 Participatory Food Costing Report released yesterday it costs a family of four \$770.65 a month to eat healthy.

Mr. Speaker, most families can budget to spend just over \$330 leaving them with a shortfall of more than \$440. Those, of course, on community assistance can't get the proper

food and are forced to buy less than healthy products. My question to the Minister of Community Service is, does the minister have any plan to assist families in need in order to gain access to healthier food items?

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, we have been doing a great deal of implementing several initiatives. We've done multi-planning in this area and I've talked about that before. We have rolled out many different types of initiatives to help individuals who are low income to meet their food needs.

MR. GLAVINE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, but I've heard enough, thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

**HEALTH & WELLNESS: YAR. REG. HOSP.
- WAIT TIMES**

MR. ZACH CHURCHILL: A few weeks ago emergency room physicians appeared before municipal council in Yarmouth to address issues around wait times for patients of the Yarmouth Regional Hospital. Our ER is faced with a staffing shortage and additional demands as more and more people are forced to use our ER for non-emergency situations. This problem isn't going away, as one of the ER physicians pointed out, "The number of doctors is not going to change at the present time, . . . We barely have enough to staff what we have now. In March 25 per cent of our shifts were filled by ER doctors outside Yarmouth." I'll table those comments.

My question to the Minister of Health and Wellness is, why is it acceptable that a hospital with a regional designation have an emergency department that can barely function due to a lack of staff?

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, the Yarmouth Regional Hospital is an important facility to that district health authority. We would never allow a regional hospital not to have adequate physician resources. I too saw this article in the newspaper that the member referred to and staff in the department had a very good discussion with the CEO of the district health authority just to reaffirm that, in fact, we have more than adequate physician coverage in that regional hospital and that will continue to be the case.

MR. CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, this isn't what physicians in Yarmouth are saying. According to the physician I quoted earlier, we are facing a crisis. He said, "Right now we are barely able to staff our emergency department with one doctor. I dread the day that we're not going to be able to have a shift covered . . . We may be approaching that this summer." What specific offer of assistance has the Minister of Health and Wellness made to ensure that the emergency room at the Yarmouth Regional Hospital remains open this summer?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, members might be interested in knowing that there is a payment agreement in place for ER physicians in our regional hospitals all across this province to ensure that they're paid the identical rate of pay as the physicians at the Queen Elizabeth II. This makes it very attractive for physicians from all around the province to move and provide locum services, for example, in instances if there is going to be a shortage, because there is no financial penalty to do so. That's probably the absolute best incentive that one can have and I assure the honourable member it gets the results in the regional hospitals that we desire.

MR. CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, I hope we end up seeing those results because right now the Yarmouth Regional Hospital, like other facilities across the province, is being challenged to provide emergency health care because it has become a portal to our regular non-emergency health care system. Dr. Ross identified this challenge in his report. Later this Spring Yarmouth will suffer another blow when it loses one of its ER physicians for an extended period of time, making it even more challenging for the existing complement of physicians to provide emergency health care services to the residents of Yarmouth and beyond. My question to the minister is, can the minister explain to the residents of Yarmouth what she plans to do to address the gaps in emergency health care that will inevitably occur when we lose our ER physician for the extended period of time?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, it is the case that there is a doctor shortage in terms of family practitioners in Yarmouth and that does place a particular additional pressure on their ER because people without a family doctor may go to the ER if they need health care. We have recruited new doctors into that community. We have two doctors who started there not so long ago, in a clinic, but we need to recruit and we're continuing to recruit. The department is assisting the DHA in their recruitment efforts. We have a number of incentives in place. We also have a medical student placement program between the medical school and Yarmouth, which will expose young medical students to the community and hopefully they will see what a beautiful area of the province it is and all of the amenities that it has to offer and they will be enticed to work there in the longer term.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

TIR: GOV'T. PAVING - CONSULTATION

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, my question today is for the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal.

Government's entry into the paving and chip sealing business came as a surprise to industry. Why did the government not consult with independent road paving businesses about ways to improve the tendering process prior to opting to getting into the business itself?

HON. WILLIAM ESTABROOKS: I thank the member opposite for the question. The history of this decision is based upon the fact that as a minister through this process,

when I began to look at what was happening when we look at contracts, we look at tenders and how they are awarded, it was my concern that as far as I was aware there were some gaps particularly in some parts of the province, Mr. Speaker - and I know you are aware of those and members opposite and on this side of the House are aware of them. I discussed it with staff and I gave them the task that I wanted them to make sure that they could give me the good information that there could be a fair and more acceptable way to get better tender bids.

Throughout that process I trusted the engineers who work in the department, who gave me the advice that I then took to the Treasury Board and passed on to Cabinet and, based upon that advice from that expert group that I worked with in the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal, the decision was made.

MR. MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, the minister tabled a five-year road building plan here last fall and we appreciated seeing that plan. Recognizing we are near the end of this Spring sitting, will the minister release a report by the end of June, detailing the cost of work it plans to do with its paving assets for the next two years, so that we have transparency and that we have an openness to private sector commentary, and so we can ensure that Nova Scotians are getting the best value and the best deal possible for their tax dollars?

MR. ESTABROOKS: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Inverness for that particular question. Based upon my background and my previous career that I enjoyed for many great years, June is report card month and there will be a report card that will be issued in the month of June, when we look at how we have been doing in the department and what is ahead with the five-year plan. Each and every year there will be that update and within the month of June there will be a report card on the process and the progress that we've made thus far.

MR. MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, I'm going to direct my final supplementary to the Premier, but I would like to make the comment that I think it's important to see that the plans for the government's own paving assets, the government's own entry into the paving and chip sealing business, it's important for people to have a transparent knowledge of the costs of that.

I will direct my final question to the Premier. Small businesses in Nova Scotia, including the road-building groups, are subject, of course, to the highest corporate taxes in the country; for many Nova Scotian businesses their consumers face high HST tax and, of course, we're all dealing with spiralling energy costs; this government supported big banks with the support to TD earlier, picked them over independent insurance brokers; and they are also, with changes to pharmacies, favouring large pharmacies because we could see smaller ones close in rural areas - so my question is to the Premier is, what small-business owners will this government target next with the disruption to their business model?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, this is a government that is committed to the small business sector. We have led the way in regulatory reform; in fact we are reducing the corporate tax on small businesses, we have reduced the threshold for grants that would be available to the small-business sector, all of which, of course, is good for small businesses in the province.

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

**HEALTH & WELLNESS - PHYSICIAN TRAINING SEATS:
BUDGET FUNDING - TABLE**

MS. DIANA WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness.

Yesterday during Question Period the Minister of Health and Wellness indicated her department is responsible for funding Dalhousie Medical School's physician training seats. While it was easy in the past for us to find the exact line item in the budget - in fact an average person could do so - it was easy to see the amount of funding that was allocated to that program, it's no longer the case.

I mentioned this yesterday and again today, Mr. Speaker. My question to the Minister of Health and Wellness is, will the minister endeavour, before the end of business today, to table the amount her department has budgeted this fiscal year for physician training seats?

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, yes, I will endeavour to do this but I find questions that are more appropriate for Budget Estimates rather odd, frankly.

MS. WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, I think what's important is that there's confusion around the funding and that the minister make it clear here today. I think even the departments are confused about who is spending and where it is.

There was another question I asked yesterday that I would like to go back to as well. In 2008 the government of the day funded eight seats for first-year graduates and two international medical graduates, as well, who had agreed to serve in underserved communities in Nova Scotia. This was established to ensure an ongoing supply of new physicians who would return to communities like Yarmouth where they are desperately needed. When I asked the minister yesterday whether she was still funding those seats, she talked about the high cost of training doctors, a physician resource plan that is coming and how complicated the funding arrangement is. But, Mr. Speaker, she did not answer my question.

Again today, I would like to ask, is the Minister of Health and Wellness still funding those 10 seats at Dalhousie Medical School in exchange for a return for service agreement to underserved communities, yes or no?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, the answer is yes.

MS. WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much, we're glad to hear that. That was again an area of uncertainty and confusion. Again, if the budget were clearer, it would be easy to find these things out.

There are a lot of pressures facing the government, no question about it. Last year when the battle began with the Dalhousie Medical School about funding, we called for clear and transparent funding arrangements. That was nearly a year ago that the minister said it was coming through the Hogg report that she had commissioned. I'd like to ask the minister, one year later, why don't we have a transparent funding arrangement that adequately funds Dalhousie physician training seats?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, the financing or the funding of medical school seats is indeed very complex, as my colleague indicated yesterday. There is a working group and Dalhousie Medical School is well represented in that group. We are working toward a resolution of this matter. Thank you.

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

**HEALTH & WELLNESS: BLACKLEGGED TICKS
- AREAS IDENTIFY**

MS. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, earlier in this session during budget estimates, I asked the Minister of Health and Wellness if any new areas in Nova Scotia have been identified as having endemic populations of blacklegged ticks since Pictou County was identified in August 2010. During budget estimates, the minister indicated there were no new areas so identified. She reconfirmed her position in a letter to me and to the member for Halifax Clayton Park, on April 29, 2011. My question to the Minister of Health and Wellness is, can the minister confirm that this is still the case, that there are no new areas identified as having endemic blacklegged tick populations?

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I think it would be fair to say that the blacklegged tick population is increasing in the province but there have been no additional areas identified specifically. I think last year we identified an area in Pictou County, but since that there has not been an additional area.

MS. REGAN: Mr. Speaker, if left untreated, Lyme disease can cause catastrophic health problems. Prompt treatment can avert a lifetime of health complications. People need to know when they are living in an area with ticks. They need to know how to combat them. According to a recent conversation I had with an HRM official, Capital Health has indicated to them that there is surveillance data from Health and Wellness that shows a tick

presence in Hammonds Plains and Fall River. It will be a provincial decision on when to call it an endemic area.

Mr. Speaker, this information was given to HRM in February. Can the minister please indicate why they have not alerted residents in Hammonds Plains and Fall River that ticks are endemic in these two areas?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, as I indicated a few moments ago to the honourable member, the blacklegged tick population in the province is increasing. We have not identified any additional areas. We are in the process of developing a public awareness campaign for the entire province. The various district health authorities have put out information, as well as, I believe Dr. Strang, because now is the time that people are getting out into the outdoors, now that winter is over. The best way to deal with Lyme disease is to prevent it from occurring in the first place.

MS. REGAN: Mr. Speaker, the same HRM official also indicated that Capital Health was keen to get a campaign going slightly earlier than the usual May launch because weather generally has been warming up sooner each Spring, although apparently not this Spring. They also mentioned that affected residents are concerned that the information isn't out there soon enough to be useful.

Mr. Speaker, it's now May. We've missed the opportunity to get the information out sooner. So my question for the minister is, when is her department going to launch this year's awareness campaign to alert Nova Scotians about ticks and Lyme disease?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, as I indicated, it is our intention to have a public information campaign which will include posters, brochures and radio ads focusing on prevention and protection, and that will be occurring fairly soon.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

SNSMR - BERWICK: STORM DAMAGE - RELIEF

MR. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, on December 13th, Berwick and many parts of the Valley suffered one of the worst storms in three decades. Power was cut off for days. Many properties were badly damaged. The Town of Berwick has sent a disaster relief claim to the province for \$77,000. My question for the Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations is, will the minister and his department be considering relief to the Town of Berwick for some or all of this sum?

HON. JOHN MACDONELL: Mr. Speaker, I think that question is more appropriately sent to EMO.

HON. ROSS LANDRY: Thank you very much for the question. In regard to a number of communities around the province, we're looking at the damage that has been done and how the funding arrangements will be made. I will have a follow-up on that particular question that was asked by the member there and we'll get an answer back to him later today.

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, it has been already four months since the storm struck the area. Just this past weekend some of us who attended the Waterville Fire Department banquet heard about the tremendous damage to the United Church campground to the tune of \$0.5 million. The type of damage in Berwick was their power infrastructure. The Town of Berwick needs some assurance from the provincial government that help or some help will come because this is a year again, when the Larsen plant closed in that community. So my question to the Minister responsible for EMO is, will your government seriously look at support to the Town of Berwick and the electric commission to repair the damages?

MR. LANDRY: Thank you very much for that question. As I stated, I'll get the particular information in regard to the community he is referring to but in all cases throughout the province, when there's a major catastrophe, there's a process in place on how that funding arrangement is measured. But we'll follow up in particular on the Berwick community and get an answer, as I said, later today.

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I'm very satisfied with that answer and I'll take my place.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants West.

**TIR - PANUKE QUARRY: OFFICIALS
- MIN. RESPONSE**

MR. CHUCK PORTER: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal. Last Fall, the warden of the Municipality of West Hants, along with a representative of the Dexter Construction and myself, met with the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal to discuss a very important issue regarding the quarry on Panuke Road in Three Mile Plains. To date, no response has ever been provided.

Mr. Speaker, in an effort to resolve important safety concerns, my question through you to the minister is, when can the warden and the community liaison committee, which meets regularly, expect a response?

HON. WILLIAM ESTABROOKS: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for this question. This has been an ongoing concern. I want to compliment the member for

bringing the issue to my attention on a number of occasions. This particular expansion of the quarry - where it is being expanded from 3.9 hectares to 13.9 hectares - will obviously have some impacts on the community as the member is aware. Of course, not just with traffic but environmental concerns.

It's very important that we look at the traffic impacts, specifically - in fact, the company that is doing the work has undertaken the traffic impact study, as we have requested. I have been assured by staff that this traffic impact study will be available during the month of June, at which time I'll make it available to the member opposite, to the warden, and to the people of the community who have been very patient through this whole process. Thank you.

MR. PORTER: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for that response. I know they'll look forward to that report and that response.

Mr. Speaker, I know the minister also understands the importance of road safety, as does every other member in this House. In this particular case, we have large trucks hauling gravel and asphalt up and down a narrow residential road that is well populated, has no sidewalks and very little shoulder, if any, to walk on.

My question through you, Mr. Speaker, to the minister is, will the minister commit today to having Panuke Road monitored to ensure that proper speeds are maintained when this quarry is in operation?

MR. ESTABROOKS: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member again for this question, an issue which we have decided - when we look particularly at road safety, it is extremely important that appropriate shoulders are there on a busy highway such as this. I know members, of course, from both sides of the House have brought this to my attention in the past, particularly when young people are walking on a particularly busy section of road.

Sidewalks, however, are not part of the mandate of the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal, so that's not something that we're going to consider. But I'll give the assurance to the member opposite that we'll closely monitor this situation. I know that he, of course, will be in contact with me at a moment's notice when an issue arises.

I encourage the warden and residents of the community to continue to bring their concerns forward. Road safety remains a priority for this government, and for all members of this House, who will do everything possible to make sure the Panuke Road is as safe as possible.

MR. PORTER: Mr. Speaker, I know everyone in this House understands that we have to have these quarries to build and maintain our roads. Unfortunately, to get to the quarry, all too often we have these heavy trucks travelling on secondary roads which were never designed for these heavy vehicles, thereby causing extensive damage to the road.

My question through you to the minister, Mr. Speaker, is, will the minister assure the residents who live on Panuke Road that this road will be kept in good repair and be repaved, as necessary, due to the damage of these heavy trucks?

MR. ESTABROOKS: Mr. Speaker, I again thank the member for this question. The assurance that I will give is we will be in regular contact, on this issue, with the warden or other residents, the concern, of course, comes down to the fact that once that traffic impact study is on my desk, I will share it with the member opposite.

The key thing, of course, Mr. Speaker, is that we have to make sure that this particular road receives the attention it is merited when it comes to the issue of the amount of traffic and the safety involved. Both of those issues will be used to make a determination on how we will handle, whether it is a repaving job - there could be other reasons we could take care of this particular road, but it's something that we'll make sure we do not forget.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

**ENVIRON. - PIONEER COAL: CONCERNS
- MIN. RESPONSE**

MR. ANDREW YOUNGER: My question is for the Minister of Environment. It has been five years since mining operations began at the Pioneer Coal site in Point Aconi and, as he'd be aware, some residents in the area have concerns about blasting and the monitoring of environmental regulations; Mr. Speaker, you may be aware of that yourself. Would the Minister of Environment please tell the House what his department is doing in response to the concerns recently raised by nearby residents?

HON. STERLING BELLIVEAU: Mr. Speaker, as with any application we take the environment very seriously. We'll be doing our appropriate homework to make sure that the application is fulfilled and we always have the best interests of Nova Scotians when it comes to the environment.

MR. YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, I was hoping for a little bit better answer than that, particularly, specifically what his department is doing to address the concerns. I was very clear, I wanted to know exactly what his department is doing to address the concerns that have been raised by residents, not just that the Department of Environment loves the environment and loves pretty flowers and things like that. That's not the answer we're looking for. The minister knows that residents have been upset, that the consultation that was promised by Pioneer Coal, the ongoing consultation, hasn't happened and residents have now complained that they've been unable to get answers from either the company or his department. What commitment can the minister make in the House today to people living near the mine site that his department will ensure that residents' concerns are not

only taken seriously, but that their questions are answered by both the department and the company?

MR. BELLIVEAU: Mr. Speaker, again, this particular issue, the terms and conditions and the approvals have met certain conditions dealing with noise and vibration levels. This is just routine business and we take the environment very seriously and we make sure that we are protecting it.

MR. YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, I'm sure the minister would understand from the e-mails that he is getting, and his department is getting, that the concern is, and the questions raised are, what exactly is allowed in those permits? People just want to know what is allowed and what isn't allowed and when the environment inspector goes out, whether he finds an issue or not. That's the answer they're not getting and when they don't get that answer, they get more and more upset and I think he can understand that. Since the minister referenced those reports, will the minister table in this House, before the end of this week, copies of all permits, orders, compliance reports and other documents his department has regarding the Pioneer Coal project?

MR. BELLIVEAU: Mr. Speaker, again, I want to continue to the member opposite that we will continue to monitor this particular file. I'll take the request to my staff and I'll present that to him and we'll do whatever is appropriate. We always have the best interests of all Nova Scotians and, in fact, in this particular case.

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

ERD & T - SKI CAPE SMOKEY: FEASIBILITY STUDY - DEVELOP

MR. KEITH BAIN: Mr. Speaker, Ski Cape Smokey has the opportunity to be a vibrant, thriving small business in rural Cape Breton. This past winter with Mother Nature on its side, the Ski Cape Smokey Society was able to raise enough funds to operate half its hill and provide much-needed outdoor recreation for local ski enthusiasts and families. The provincially-owned hill, with the right support, could be an important tourist attraction and economic driver for northern Cape Breton. My question is to the Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism, with the renewed volunteer support and commitment for Ski Cape Smokey, will the government commit to developing an economic feasibility study for re-opening the hill and encouraging winter tourism in the area?

HON. PERCY PARIS: Mr. Speaker, what I will commit to, as the minister responsible, I would be more than willing to meet with representatives from the area to discuss anything and everything pertaining to tourism in that particular area with particular reference to the ski facility.

MR. BAIN: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for that. All small businesses in Nova Scotia are subjected to the highest corporate taxes in the country. HST increases and

spiralling energy costs make it more difficult to attract investors and tourists to the province. My question through you to the Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism is, has the government, in co-operation with Ski Cape Smokey Society, been actively recruiting investors to help operate the facility and will there be support in place to re-open the facility for the upcoming ski season?

MR. PARIS: Mr. Speaker, I did, since being appointed as the minister responsible, I had met with representatives from the area on one occasion, they came down here and they met with me. Staff continued to monitor. We are always, whether it be the ski facility or other facilities that we are involved in, when it comes through, whether it be tourism, anything around economic development. We are always engaged. We will remain engaged. Again, I reiterate my offer. I pride myself on my accessibility and I'd be more than willing to meet with the member opposite, along with any representatives from his riding that he would like to bring with him.

MR. BAIN: Mr. Speaker, the lodge at Ski Cape Smokey is in need of repairs, in order to be fully operational and to attract viable investors. My final question through you is to the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal. Will the government commit to making upgrades to the Ski Cape Smokey Lodge, in order to get it to an acceptable working condition?

HON. WILLIAM ESTABROOKS: Mr. Speaker, it must be the infrastructure renewal part that you're interested in. Having listened carefully to both the questions and the answers that the member has brought forward, I'll have to take this issue under advisement and get back to the member with the assistance, of course, of the good member who is going to provide me with the details, is the Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism. Thank you for the question.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Richmond.

TIR - LITTLE HBR.: ROAD - MIN. PLANS

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, I want to raise some concerns with the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal regarding some roads in Richmond County. To his credit, last summer the minister joined me in visiting Little Harbour, which is a wharf in Lower L'Ardoise, which is currently only accessible by gravel roads. As the minister saw for himself, after meeting with both fishermen, crew members and a local buyer-processor, this wharf is the economic engine of this community and brings in over \$1 million in revenues at that facility itself. The minister had his department put in a counter on the road and now both the fishermen, crew members and local residents are waiting to see what actions will be taken. My question is, would the minister be so kind as to advise what his department's plans are to address the situation at Little Harbour?

HON. WILLIAM ESTABROOKS: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question. It was an opportune time, when I was in the community, of course, to actually have the opportunity to meet with the member and, of course, to meet with those important fish processors, who brought it very clearly to my attention their concern. The commitment was made that there would be an assessment done of that road. The chief highway engineer and myself meet each Wednesday on priorities over the next couple of months and I will assure you that this particular upcoming Wednesday, I'll bring this road and the Little Harbour situation to the highway engineer's direct attention. I thank the member opposite for the question. It was appropriate for sure, because I do know how important that gravel road is to the community the member represents. More importantly I want the member to know that I'm fully aware of the fact and I do thank him for the way the matter was handled and will follow up appropriately.

MR. SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, I'm certainly pleased with the answer. As the minister's aware, both crab season and lobster season have started and there is a flurry of activity taking place in that area. We're certainly looking forward to what updates the minister can provide us and I know the local councillor, Steve Sampson, has certainly been voicing some concerns to me as well, that he is hearing. One of the other roads that, unfortunately we didn't have a chance to visit while the minister was down but that I have raised and brought to his attention and staff's attention is the Cape Auget Road. This road is located on Isle Madame, just off the main road into Arichat and is home to the Clearwater live lobster holding facility, which is the largest live lobster holding facility in the world.

As a result of that, this road sees heavy traffic and as well, the traffic from all of the employees as well as local residents. Recently a child who attends school was injured on a school bus due to the rough nature of this road and the fact that the bus hit a section of road where the pavement is completely gone. I'm wondering if the minister could advise whether his department plans on taking any immediate actions to address the problems with the Cape Auget Road.

MR. ESTABROOKS: I thank the member opposite for the question, particularly when it comes to bus safety it's an indicator of the fact that we could have a real problem with that road. It will be a matter that I will have to look into, I thank the member for bringing it to my attention. Specifically, of course, I'm aware of the fact of the prominent role that the fishing industry plays in the community of Isle Madame and it will be something that we will bring to our attention on Wednesday but thank you for bringing it forward.

MR. SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, the local office of the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal has been very effective in dealing with some of these issues to the RIM funding. As the minister is aware, RIM funding has been cut as a result of this recent budget which is going to make it more difficult for the local staff to be able to address some of these pressing issues with roads throughout Richmond County.

If the minister is not prepared to commit to an actual tender to repave the Cape Auget Road this year, I'm wondering if the minister will at least make a commitment to ensure that necessary funding is provided to the local area manager and his staff in order to ensure that the dangerous nature of the Cape Auget Road can at least be temporarily addressed with some paving to patch some of the worst areas on that road during this summer season.

MR. ESTABROOKS: If I may, Mr. Speaker, it gives me an opportunity to speak on the RIM funding. I know how important that is to member opposite, RIM funding, in particular, in certain rural parts of the province. I know that when we were in the Red Room, discussing RIM funding various members brought it to my attention that they specifically wanted to know what appropriate dollars were available in their specific constituency. Hopefully members opposite and members on this side of the House have taken me up on that offer and have heard back from the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal when it comes to RIM funding.

I also, however, want to point out if I may, Mr. Speaker, and I don't want to take the time of the House but I'll take the occasion to point out to the member opposite that we'll be using RIM dollars as effectively as possible. Those local dollars are very important particularly when it comes to highway projects. Maybe tenders of a big nature are not going to contract a headline but we all of course know, those of us fortunate enough to be involved with RIM funding, how important it is to our community.

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

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Today in Question Period I asked the Premier about the price of gas and in his answer he said that in the Province of Nova Scotia we are below the national average. We are not and I just want to table that. The members on this side of the House are used to the Premier being inaccurate, I just want to make sure that the members on the opposite side don't go and spread that mistruth.

MR. SPEAKER: I will take the matter under advisement and get back to you.
(Interruption)

It's a difference between two members actually and I will not have to rule on that one tomorrow.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS' BUSINESS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Progressive Conservative House Leader.

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, would you please call the order of business, Motions Other Than Government Motions.

MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Progressive Conservative House Leader.

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Thank you very much Mr. Speaker. I do notice that Resolution No. 1239 is not on the order paper so I would ask that we have a consent to be able to use that resolution today.

MR. SPEAKER: Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Resolution No. 1239.

Res. No. 1239, re Gov't. (N.S.): Tax/Reg. Policies – Economic Analysis – Notice given May 10/11 – (Hon. J. Baillie)

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

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Thank you Mr. Speaker, it's my great pleasure to rise and speak in support of this resolution, an important resolution I might add, today called by the Progressive Conservative caucus.

Mr. Speaker, one of the most important things that a government is entrusted with when it is elected is to guide, successfully, the health of our economy to ensure that the number of jobs that are in place are protected, that policies are put in place that can see those jobs continue and, in fact, add to the base of jobs and the base of economic activity in the province. Sadly, as we call this resolution today we are at a point in time in our province where the number of full-time jobs today is 14,700 less than when the current government took office. So when we look at the government's record in managing the economy, what it was entrusted by Nova Scotians to do, clearly we see that they have failed in this important responsibility.

In addition to that, Mr. Speaker, we can only note that 80 per cent of the jobs in our province are created by the small-business sector, so it is to that sector that we look to when we look for increased levels of economic activity, when we look to new job creation, when we look to the sustainability of our rural towns and villages. That is where the small-business sector is most crucial and there the record of the government is particularly sad. There is, first off, the general policies that the government has pursued since its time in office that aren't specific to any one particular type of business but have, obviously, dramatically affected all business activity in the province.

Everyone knows, of course, the famous promise not to raise taxes, followed so quickly after the election by the largest increase in our sales tax in history - the provincial portion going from 8 per cent to 10 per cent, the total HST going from 13 per cent to 15 per cent, which has caused great hardship on our retailers and to consumers generally. Nova Scotia now has the unfortunate distinction of being the highest taxed province, both in sales tax and in income tax.

Income tax is particularly important to small businesses, Mr. Speaker, because many of our small businesses are unincorporated and, therefore, don't pay corporate tax, either the small business rate of corporate tax or corporate tax overall. Because they're unincorporated, they pay tax at the same rate as individuals do. They pay the personal income tax rate, so for small business in particular, an incorporated small business - they face the highest taxes in the country on their income, just as they face the highest taxes in the country on their sales.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, the policies, the legislation and the regulations that the government has brought in, that make unionization much easier in our province, that upset the delicate balance between labour and management relations which have been so successfully managed up until two years ago in our province - tilting that balance away from a reasonable balance to one that is clearly counter to business and more favourable to unions, including the creation of a Labour-Management Relations Committee that not only excludes small business, but it excludes all non-unionized businesses in our province. These are some examples of the general policies of the government that affect all business and all parts of our economy, not any individual or particular industry or sector that the government has brought in.

Ironically, Mr. Speaker, when entrusted to manage the economy well, the government saw fit to raise the HST by 2 per cent, increasing their tax take by well over \$200 million per year. In order to try to show that they cared about the economy, they introduced their economic development strategy which, by coincidence or not, also cost \$200 million to implement. There is no economist worth his salt in the world who would say that it is smart economics to raise taxes and then create new government programs to spend the money, to try to inject some life into our economy.

Mr. Speaker, that is a great irony - the economic development strategy of the government. Those are all general policies but, of course, this government - not satisfied to just generally do its best to dampen the economy, to break that great trust that Nova Scotians placed on them to manage it well - has also systematically, one by one, chosen to pick on small businesses and individual sectors of the small business community. There are numerous examples.

We're dealing with one in this session which is the pharmacists, particularly independent pharmacists of Nova Scotia, who are a great example of a small business -

many family-owned and employing five, six, seven or eight people: a pharmacist or two, some pharmacy technicians, some store clerks in the front of the store, and so on. That group has been a great contributor - both to income tax revenue from the incomes they generate, to donations to their local communities, and to the services that they provide to seniors and others, at no charge, in their hometowns.

Yet the government has chosen to kick the legs out from under our small, independent pharmacists by changing the rules for the price of generic drugs but not simultaneously dealing with the other side of the equation that would be helpful to pharmacists, like the tariff schedule. This is why we had a lineup of dozens and dozens of independent pharmacists here in the House, in the last week, trying desperately to make the point to this government that their policy is a direct attack on this particular small business.

Road pavers, contractors and road paving are another great example of small- and medium-size businesses that are scattered throughout our province who now find that their own tax dollars are being used against them as the government goes into direct competition with our contractor road pavers, without even having the courtesy to engage them in discussions about any issues the government might have about the way tendering is done.

The retailers of the province, of course, are the ones who bear the brunt of the HST increase because not only do they have the price of their products increase but they have to explain to Nova Scotians on the front lines, at the point of sale, at the cash register, why the price of so many everyday needs of Nova Scotians has gone up by so much.

Gas station owners would be another example, as the government systematically picks on one sector after another, who now have gas prices that are out of line with our sister provinces in the Maritimes and other across the country because the government refuses to provide relief to them. Even something that the government had previously opposed, like the compounding of one sales tax on top of another - and gasoline is the greatest example - which the government opposed in Opposition, said one thing in Opposition, and is now doing the exact opposite now that they are in government.

Nobody knows better than the gas stations of Cumberland County, the hardships that this government's policies have created for their particular sector in the small-business world.

I wish those were all of the examples of individual small-business industries that the government has chosen to pick on, but there are more. Our 1,100 insurance brokers scattered throughout the province, employing three, four, five, six or a dozen people in their hometowns, who make income and pay income tax back into their local community, who are great donors to many charitable events and good causes in our own community, all the business they generate is retained in our province, Mr. Speaker, they have now found their own tax dollars used against them by a government that wants to subsidize the Toronto-Dominion Bank - net profits last year, \$4.6 billion - to compete directly against our own insurance brokers.

The effect of all of these policies, both the general policies of the government, like their high-tax policies, and the specific industries that they have chosen to pick on, have led to a net loss of 14,700 jobs since the government took office in June 2009 - 14,700 jobs would be roughly equivalent to the workforces of the Towns of Truro and New Glasgow added together. Imagine, Mr. Speaker, wiping out all the jobs in two very significant centres in our province, Truro and New Glasgow, but that is exactly what the government has done.

The intent of this resolution, Mr. Speaker, is to put a stop to this practice in its tracks, to ensure that the government does a full economic analysis of its policies, to underscore the devastating effect that their attack on small business is having on our small businesses, on our families, on our rural economy, on our small towns, and ultimately this will reflect in the tax base of the province. The great irony is we have a government that says they are interested in balancing the books and yet they undermine the very economic base that they need to tax fairly, in order to actually balance the books.

This resolution puts a stop to that practice in its tracks, Madam Speaker, as the government will be required to account truly, honestly, openly and transparently for its decisions. This should be a practice of government in any event, that when it considers a new policy, a new regulation, a new direction, or a new strategy, that it was required to do a proper economic analysis, an analysis of the impact that its decisions will have on individual businesses in our economy and on the economy overall.

One could only imagine how much better off we would be today if this resolution had been in force when the NDP took office. Perhaps we could have avoided the hardship that has been caused, and is being caused, to our road pavers, to our pharmacists, to our retailers, to our insurance brokers, to our gas station owners, and all other non-unionized employees in the province. If this resolution had been in effect in June 2009, all of those businesses would be better off today. All of those jobs that have been lost, those 14,700 jobs that have been lost since that time, would still be out there. They would still be safe. There would still be people working there. There would still be families relying on them.

That is why it's so important to support this resolution. As the government continues to turn to outside consultants, to tell it what to do, I can only conclude by saying that what this resolution calls on, which is wise, smart, businesslike decision making, was one of the roles that Voluntary Planning was set up to support all those years ago. The one place the government could have turned to, to get the advice and the collective wisdom of Nova Scotians, that could have told them how devastating their course of action was going to be - they weren't even satisfied to allow that group to exist and they kicked the legs out from under Voluntary Planning, so they're free to pursue their destructive course of action. That is a shame and there are 14,700 empty seats in companies around the province because of what this government has done to our small-business community.

So with those few brief, modest remarks, Madam Speaker, I will take my place and I look forward to the rest of the debate on this important resolution.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

MR. JIM MORTON: Madam Speaker, I rise today to discuss our government's support for the small-business sector in this province. This is not the first time we've been asked about this topic but let me assure you, this government recognizes that small businesses are certainly an important and vibrant part of our province's economy.

The bottom line is, we are in the business of creating a better economy. We know small businesses have consistently contributed 25 per cent to Nova Scotia's GDP, according to Industry Canada's statistics. In 2010, there were more than 50,000 businesses with less than 50 employees in Nova Scotia. In other words, small businesses are found across this province and they are essential to our economic growth. Small business contributes greatly towards improving communities across the province, not only by employing workers but also by supporting local charities, social events and countless other efforts.

Madam Speaker, we are always looking for new and innovative ways to help our small businesses, and this government has several programs and tax incentives that do just this. In this year's budget, this government has committed to reducing the provincial tax impact on small businesses. On January 1, 2012, government will reduce the rate of corporate income tax for small businesses from 4.5 per cent to 4 per cent, on the first \$400,000 of active business income. (Applause) I am very pleased to add that this is on top of last year's drop, from 5 per cent to 4.5 per cent.

Madam Speaker, in almost 20 years, this tax rate had not changed and in the last two years our government has lowered it twice - representing a 20 per cent drop in the rate of income tax for small businesses. That's significant. In addition to this tax rate reduction, which is in line with our province's jobsHere plan, to grow the economy, there are additional tax incentives for small businesses, such as the new Small-Business Tax Holiday and the tax equity credit. New small businesses can reduce their corporate income tax to zero during the first three years of operation, which typically provides about \$200,000 in tax relief each year, to small businesses.

Each year, the province provides \$5 million to \$7 million in tax relief to investors in businesses with assets of less than \$25 million, under the Tax Equity Credit. In 2010, the tax credit rate was increased from 30 per cent to 35 per cent. As you can see, Madam Speaker, this government has made quite a few positive changes to tax incentives for small businesses, during the past couple of years.

The province supports small businesses through a variety of programs and initiatives. Through jobsHere, we've committed more than \$200 million to growing our economy, much of which will be in support of our small businesses. The Productivity

Investment Program - an initiative of jobsHere - is a \$25 million program, designed to encourage companies to invest in productivity and innovation. Recently, the threshold for the Capital Investment Initiative was actually lowered to \$25,000, to allow additional businesses the opportunity to participate.

The Productivity and Innovation Voucher Program provides small- and medium-sized businesses up to \$15,000 to obtain assistance from universities and colleges with applied research, engineering services, prototyping and field testing - last year, 34 businesses were awarded vouchers. Our Workplace Innovation and Productivity Skills Incentive, which is part of the Productivity Investment Program, gives companies with fewer than 50 employees up to \$5,000 in employee training incentives.

Through the Nova Scotia Business Development Program, we are helping small businesses get started and existing businesses expand. The program provides funding and support through qualified consultants to help business operators review and assess their practices and develop new approaches to ensure success.

Another great program that offers benefits across the province, is the Small Business Financing Program. Through this partnership with the Nova Scotia Co-operative Council and Credit Union Central, we approved 723 loans - valued at more than \$30 million - as of December 2010. These loans help businesses acquire the financial support they need to succeed, which in turn, helps to develop and grow local economies.

We also work closely with our partners at NSBI - Nova Scotia Business Incorporated - and *InNOVAcorp* to ensure businesses have the tools they need to succeed. Programs such as NSBI's Venture Capital program and *InNOVAcorp*'s Nova Scotia First Fund, are helping to prepare our companies to succeed and compete in the global marketplace.

Many of the companies that work in the film industry are small businesses and they directly benefit from improvements to the Film Tax Credit and the Digital Media Credit. Just this past December, we made changes to both credits, ensuring the province's film, television and new media industry continues to be one of the most competitive in Canada.

Our commitment to small business and small businesses in general, is also seen in the areas of training and workforce development. Later this year, we will release our workforce development strategy. It will include incentives to directly support small and medium enterprises. It will foster entrepreneurship, develop on-line resources and provide more access to customized training.

We regularly support Nova Scotia businesses by hosting reverse trade shows, workshops and on-site visits. These procurement services supply our development programs, provide knowledge of the government procurement process and an

understanding of how to access publicly-funded procurement opportunities, both in Nova Scotia and beyond.

In the tourism sector, we are supporting the Nova Scotia Tourism Human Resources Council and its mission to develop best practices, skills development and innovation in the tourism industry. The Strategic Co-operative Education Incentive supports organizations that hire students for work terms as part of a recognized post-secondary co-operative education program.

For our small businesses that are new to importing or exporting, or for those who simply want to expand their expertise in international business, my government offers a form of international trade training, often known as FITTskills. The ExportABILITY program provides funding to ensure that Nova Scotia's small enterprises are equipped with the skills they need to become export-savvy; the program supports continuing professional development in the practice of international trade. The Go-Ahead Program helps exporters follow up on sales leads by helping smaller companies to cover costs of follow-up visits to seal the deal on sales outside the Maritimes.

Madam Speaker, we help small businesses join trade missions. We connect those entrepreneurs with qualified buyers and potential business partners in new markets. Our Export Prospector Program even opens up new business opportunities in markets outside of Nova Scotia.

Then there are the efforts we undertake not just because it's good for small business, but because they are good for Nova Scotians as well. Broadband for Rural Nova Scotia is a perfect example of this. With high speed broadband coverage now spread across the province, we have created new opportunities for international commerce and that has the potential to rejuvenate businesses province-wide.

The Business Retention and Expansion outreach program meets with businesses to help them identify growth solutions and how the department can work with them to retain and expand business. The Nova Scotia Business Directory is an on-line tool that matches suppliers with buyers, creating county-wide partnerships.

Madam Speaker, I've talked about a number of things that we're doing in Nova Scotia to assist small businesses but I haven't mentioned, so far, the success we've had in cutting red tape. You know, not long ago Leanne Hachey, from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, described Nova Scotia as a go-to jurisdiction for its success in making it easier for businesses to move forward with their business plans. We've reduced red tape in this province by 20 per cent.

Also Madam Speaker, I haven't mentioned the kind of services available to small businesses in Nova Scotia that relate to the regional development authorities. I had the honour myself of serving as a member of the board of directors for the Kings Regional

Development Authority for six years and I know the kind of outreach work those agencies provide throughout Nova Scotia is profoundly important to small business.

From the consultation services provided to business planning and strategic planning, from community development work that actually makes stronger communities and better places to do business, from library loans and professional development services that exist, from helping with our immigration strategies by staying in touch with universities and through creating sector networking, or whether it is for agricultural businesses or retail businesses or the forestry business, there are many things that RDAs do to help build stronger communities and I think they deserve credit for a lot of the work they do.

You know, we've just been talking recently, in the development of our forestry strategy, about investing \$5 million to help woodlot owners with the tools they'll need to become reactivated and engaged in a more vibrant forestry industry. I think that's an example of assisting one part of the small business sector that needs the attention it is going to get.

I'd be remiss to ignore the very significant work we're doing with Churchill Falls to create more stable electricity rates in Nova Scotia, all of which will help not only large businesses but small businesses as well.

Madam Speaker, we know there's always room to do more for the small business sector of our province; we're always striving to do that. That's why we have reduced the corporate income tax rate for small businesses for the second time. That's why we have ensured there are significant numbers of programs within the Department of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism that contribute directly to small businesses. That's why we want to continue to work with industry representatives to ensure that we do even more in the future. It's clear that our efforts to date demonstrate just how much our government, this government, recognizes this sector to be an essential part of our economy. Our government is committed to creating good jobs and growing the economy.

I want to thank you, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to speak about this important work this afternoon. (Applause)

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

MR. LEO GLAVINE: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am pleased to rise today and speak on Resolution No. 1239 as submitted by the Progressive Conservative Party, and I just want to highlight what part of the resolution says:

“Whereas this government says one thing and does another when it comes to supporting the small-business sector in Nova Scotia; and . . .

Whereas the small-business sector is the backbone of the Nova Scotia economy and the largest generator of jobs in our struggling economy;

Therefore be it resolved that this government provide a proper economic analysis of the effects of its high-tax, high-regulation policies and job creation and the health of the small-business sector.”

Well, it was interesting today to have the government voice come from the backbenches in regard to small business, because we know that this government - in terms of the front bench and the leadership of the Minister of Finance - got off to a very, very bad start with small business in this province when he would not meet and consult with the CFIB around some of the initiatives that they wanted to undertake, and they, in conjunction with the NDP Government, would make a better day for small business in Nova Scotia.

I think it's important to point that out. They're really playing now somewhat of a catch-up role, and in some ways perhaps following the lead of the new Premier of New Brunswick. In fact on his opening day he stated very clearly that as New Brunswick struggles with a significant deficit, that it is going to be small business and small business investment, support, and policies that will reignite the New Brunswick economy.

Now we seem to have taken a different tack in Nova Scotia. In fact, we invested heavily in big business with \$91 million to what was Northern Pulp and is now Paper Excellence, \$60 million to Daewoo, and \$75 million to J.D. Irving for lands - and very little that small business can find substantially to move forward.

We, in our Party, still think as we consult with a lot of different people that the province does need at this point in time to engage in a comprehensive review of taxes with an eye to fairness and competitiveness. We are hearing more and more from business across Nova Scotia that the margins are shrinking and they are having a very difficult time remaining competitive and remaining in business.

Just to highlight that, yesterday as I was talking to one of the big realty owners in the Annapolis Valley, in fact, throughout the province. It was just this week that he heard from an electronics business in Lockeport that he could no longer stay open. When he took a look at the cost of his lease, the cost of doing business, turning the lights on, he could no longer afford to stay in business - and, unfortunately, we're hearing that at a greater rate. I think if we take a look at the way Nova Scotians are taxed, the way businesses are taxed, the way corporations are taxed, we could start to make sure that the tax dollar that is required to run the province and provide the services that we all desire and have a high regard for - the distribution could have a different nature.

Some of that tax structure could undergo change that, in fact, would reduce some of the burden on low-income Nova Scotians and, in particular, those small business that we're here talking about today.

So if we take a look at just some of the more recent impacts on small business in Nova Scotia, we know that hiking the HST - I believe that hiking the HST is now grabbing hold in Nova Scotia and, in fact, is having detrimental effects on a whole wide range of business. I took a look at housing starts in Kings County. Kings County is one of the five counties of our 18 that continues to grow, at least in a small way, its population.

April is one of the most dynamic months for the starting of new home construction. Even this time last year, we know that there were federal incentives that help people in terms of the business trade of building homes and the impact on buying materials for homes. Well, with that incentive gone, home starts in Kings County this April went from 80 last year, down to 50 this year. Now, that really impacts on a whole range of small businesses. When we're talking about the carpentry, electrical, plumbing, heating, roofing - all of those subcontractors - 30 homes amount to a significant dollar that will not be earned by small business as we go into this new construction season.

On top of this, when it comes to getting a permit in Nova Scotia to build a home, we know that the user fees, all 1,400, have gone up. Again, we don't see a rationale for having done that, especially since the premise of user fees is that it is a cost-recovery basis.

We know that currently energy costs are also taking their toll and we know that there are some aspects of energy costs that we can't have control over. But I think when Nova Scotians - small business in particular - are expressing a need to have some assistance here, as they heat their premises, again, taking the tax off of the tax is a good measure.

Failing to index personal income tax rates, again, people look at supporting small business, supporting the retail sector, supporting the small-service sector, with the money they actually have in their pocket. While the Minister of Finance gloated about the province having an increase in personal taxes last year, most of it actually came about when people got a small increase in their pay and it actually moved them into another tax bracket. In terms of real dollars that Nova Scotians have to work with, it's just not there and if we analyze the personal income tax amount for the province, we'll see, in fact, that it came from the same group of taxpayers, for the most part, of the previous year. So failing to index personal income tax has, indeed, hit us.

I think the jobsHere plan has yet to prove itself. It's out there, it has the mention of sounding good, but obviously there was no traction in the months of March and April of this year. Those statistics around loss of jobs are very real. I can account for 600 just in Annapolis and Kings County: 300 with the closure of Convergys and another 300 with the closure of Larsen's and nothing to take place in that plant for at least one more full year, as it modernizes to a poultry processing plant. So jobsHere has a huge challenge ahead and we'll see if, in fact, it does make an impact on the province.

I think the taxes that I've talked about here have, indeed, been implemented at truly the wrong time. As we came out of a recession, not in a detrimental and as hard-hitting in our area as in the manufacturing parts of Canada but, nevertheless, having some impact. To raise taxes further has, indeed, had a negative impact and continues to show itself in that regard.

You know, there are 5,200 small- and medium-size businesses in Nova Scotia that are members of the CFIB and they remain a very strong voice for that segment of the business community. Hearing from them, engaging with them on directional policy pieces for government, needs to be given much greater prominence by the current government, because I think they can help us become more competitive and have a fairer tax structure. Seventy-five per cent of our businesses in Nova Scotia have fewer than five employees. There's no question that when small business gets a break on their profits from a good business year or from lower tax structure, it goes back into the business. They are the ones that will hire another part-time person, a full-time person, a summer student, invest in a new piece of equipment, update their building because that is their equity, that is their future when they sell that business.

Our Party has talked about and continues to believe that reducing the small-business tax to 1 per cent, being a bit bold here, as the Province of Manitoba did, it injected a lot of life into their business. It's not just the dollars that go into small businesses, the psychological impact is dramatic when small business sees, in fact, that they are held in high regard as job creators and generators of income to our economy.

It is something that we see no reason not to go down that road. I know we're challenging government on it, they're taking baby steps. They dropped the small-business tax by 0.5 per cent last year and another 0.5 per cent that unfortunately won't come into effect until January 1, 2012. Now is the time when many businesses can use any break.

You know it's further reinforced by the fact that 90 per cent of all businesses in our province have less than 20 people. In many ways, as I talk to small business, it is the great loyalty from their employees who are prepared to go without a pay increase for a year or two years, to make sure that their company stays in business. So if we have that kind of loyalty from employees, we should have leadership from government that helps them with some dollars going into their bottom line.

While small-business optimism in the rest of the country has remained steady, confidence in Nova Scotia has dropped. That was again the example I gave earlier in my deliberations here today.

The major cost concerns for small businesses in Nova Scotia as recorded by CFIB are fuel, energy costs and tax regulatory costs. Tax rates, it is true that government has lowered, as they said, by 1 per cent by January 1, 2012, but this really is still a very small measure and we look forward to change in that regard.

With that, Madam Speaker, I take my place.

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

MR. KEITH BAIN: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today to speak about an issue that is of importance to all Nova Scotians - the health of the small-business sector. Resolution No. 1239 states:

“Whereas this government says one thing and does another when it comes to supporting the small-business sector in Nova Scotia; and . . .

Whereas this government, since coming to office, has introduced measure after measure that has made life harder for the small-business sector and cost many jobs; and

Whereas the small-business sector is the backbone of the Nova Scotia economy and the largest generator of jobs in our struggling economy;

Therefore be it resolved that this government provide a proper economic analysis of the effects of its high-tax, high-regulation policies on job creation and the health of the small-business sector.”

Madam Speaker, small businesses play a large part in Nova Scotia's economy whether it's the mom-and-pop operation with one or two employees, or the one that employs 50 to 100 people. They are also contributors to their community, be it sponsoring the local sports club, or serving on their local volunteer fire department or church board, but since this government took office in June 2009, you can see supports for small business decreasing. This government has brought forth policies that continue to make it harder for small business to stay strong.

As the Canadian Federation of Independent Business' Leanne Hachey said in a recent article, we are seeing “. . . the slow but steady erosion of small, independent business.” I'll be referencing this article a few times, Madam Speaker, so I'll table a copy now. This steady erosion has been at the hand of this NDP Government. As Ms. Hachey says, she doubts that it's intentional but the end result is certainly all the same.

Madam Speaker, last November this government brought forward Bill No. 100, an Act to Establish a Unified Labour Board. Our caucus opposed this vigorously. Bill No. 100 was an attack on small, independent businesses. I know it was about six months ago so I'll refresh the memories of the members opposite in case they've forgotten. Bill No. 100 would have fundamentally changed the labour laws in Nova Scotia but government didn't even consult small business on the aspects of the impact it would have on most of them.

The Labour-Management Review Committee consisted only of unions and unionized employers. Madam Speaker, this was an affront to the majority of employers who are not unionized and this includes virtually all of Nova Scotia's small businesses. Our caucus tried to keep government from moving forward but they rammed Bill No. 100 through with their majority numbers, just like they'll ram through Bill No. 17, even in the face of strong opposition from small and independent businesses, the Progressive Conservative caucus and the Opposition caucus, they still did it.

Madam Speaker, I'll touch on the small-business tax for a moment. The small-business tax this government brought forward represents a drop in the bucket - 5 per cent to 4.5 per cent. A half a percentage point decrease does little to offset the cost of doing business in Nova Scotia. We are still the highest taxed jurisdiction in Canada after this. It's especially hard to take when you consider that this government has removed over \$250 million from the economy with their extra HST grab alone.

The speaker on the resolution on the government side referenced that the government reduced small-business tax by 20 per cent. Let's put it in dollar figures. This meagre change from 5 per cent to 4.5 per cent translates into an average annual tax reduction of \$500 to \$600 for small businesses. I'm sure you can understand why businesses weren't lining up to applaud this move.

What really hurts small businesses is that all the while government is targeting them at work, they're also getting them at home through higher taxes, increased user fees and increased debt; this NDP Government is putting strain on both families and businesses. Why is government targeting small businesses in Nova Scotia?

That's a great question that Ms. Hachey had the right answer to. Her quote is, "government's natural default is 'big'." "Small businesses are routinely overlooked, their tax dollars are used against them. . . and their unique circumstances aren't taken into consideration." There are certainly a few recent examples of that; Bill No. 17, to bring that up again is one of them. Another was the NDP decision to give the TD bank group nearly \$2 million.

TD directly competes with the small independent insurance brokers, 1,100 in number, in Nova Scotia. That hardly seems fair that a massive bank that reports billions in profits should receive this kind of handout from government. Maybe some members don't know this about me but before being elected MLA for Victoria-The Lakes, I owned a small business, a local grocery store.

That store was opened by my father in 1946 and many in my community were saddened to lose the store when it closed in 2004. During that time we were able to employ local residents and provide a service to our community. Or, take a look at Grant's Store in Ross Ferry that I mentioned in a resolution last week. Because of the importance of this store to the community, the store has reopened again because it is a focal point of that community.

Earlier, reference was made a few times to drug stores in small rural communities. I would like to talk about Hatcher's pharmacy in Neils Harbour, a pharmacy that serves all residents in the North of Smokey area of Victoria County. It's interesting to note that if this pharmacy were not there, residents would have to travel a minimum of two hours to get their prescriptions. The importance of this business is stressed by Evelyn Williams. Evelyn is from the Ingonish area and if I can find the paper, I'll read what Ms. Williams has to say.

This is a quote from Evelyn Williams of Ingonish, "I would be lost without Chelsea and I just could not survive here without the Neil's Harbour pharmacy. . . I would have no way to get my prescriptions, especially in the winter. . . There's just no one I can get to travel over Smokey for me to the next closest pharmacy." This is someone, Ms. Williams who lives in Ingonish, 30 minutes away from Neils Harbour that has no problem supporting a local business because although it is a half hour trip, it's a small business that contributes to the Neils Harbour community, the Ingonish community, the Cape North community, the Bay St. Lawrence community, the Capstick community, the Meat Cove community and I can keep going on and on and on. It's because it's a small business and the people will support it. So you see, small business is the backbone of the Nova Scotia economy.

I'd like to reference once more the column by Ms. Hachey. In it, she gives four references, for example, that we've spoken about: Bill No. 100; the paving business that was referenced earlier; the payroll rebate of \$2 million to TD Insurance; and the discussion that's going on now concerning Bill No. 17. In her column, Ms. Hachey states, "What messages do these four examples send? Small businesses are routinely overlooked, their tax dollars are used against them - either directly by government or indirectly through government support of large business - and their unique circumstances aren't taken into consideration."

I continue to quote, "Sure, government has done things like reduce the small business tax rate and brought on a small business advocate for energy rate hearings. They've also made some great strides on reducing paperwork. These are good things. But adding drops to a bucket with a gaping hole doesn't stop the leaking. It just slows it down."

Small business, as I mentioned, is the backbone of the Nova Scotia economy, providing much needed services and employment and whether you live in Neils Harbour or downtown Halifax, you realize just how important strengthening and maintaining small businesses is, not only for the local community, but for this province. Thank you very much.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable Deputy House Leader for the Progressive Conservative Party.

MR. CHUCK PORTER: Madam Speaker, would you please call the order of business, Private Members' Public Bills for Second Reading.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable Deputy House Leader for the Progressive Conservative Party.

MR. CHUCK PORTER: Madam Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 61.

Bill No. 61 - Pension Benefits Act.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness. (Applause)

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Madam Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to speak on this bill today, that we've introduced, this annual unlocking of 15 per cent from locked-in retirement accounts for Nova Scotians. This bill provides individuals who have locked-in retirement accounts greater flexibility to use the money they have saved for their retirement. Our legislation allows people with LIRAs who are 55 years and older to unlock 15 per cent each year, allowing them to use more of their savings when they want.

People want freedom in retirement. Nova Scotians want to make their own decisions about how they spend their pension savings. Existing rules are designed to protect people who may trade retirement income for the economic need of the day. This legislation strikes a balance. It continues to protect people from spending all of their LIRA savings too quickly, but it allows for a 15 per cent annual withdrawal, to give responsible savers greater flexibility.

Most Nova Scotians have opened these accounts - I call them LIRA accounts for locked-in retirement accounts - when they left an employer and needed to personally manage the pension they had saved while working for that employer. This legislation affects Nova Scotians right across the province. Some people have large amounts of savings tied up in these accounts and for provincially registered plans, the Nova Scotia Government restricts how much of their money they can spend each year.

The federal government moved to change its legislation, a few years back and they made changes to allow a one-time 50 per cent unlocking, because they saw and they were hearing from people right across the country, the need for greater flexibility for these types of investment accounts.

Government should be doing its part to reward savers. We need not penalize people for being responsible and this legalization strikes a balance because it provides the flexibility that will be appreciated by those who want it. Now for the rash, Madam Speaker, for somebody who might trade away their retirement savings and their retirement income for the economic need of the day, for whatever that might happen to be, this legislation has

protection in it. It provides an inconvenience, an annual ritual that must be considered and it must be navigated. People may not be sophisticated enough to do it every year and they may also be counselled against doing it, so there are natural protections within the existing rules and the existing practices of the investment industry. We may also see institutions who will not want to assist people who may be trying to trade their retirement savings for the economic need of the day.

I also want to make the point that there is a fiduciary responsibility in the investment community to make sure that people understand what they're doing with their savings and to ensure that they don't spend too much too soon. Advisers are responsible; by the very fact of their licence they have a responsibility to the people that they counsel to ensure that they are not helping people do things that are not in their best interest. If we could put that in a positive context, they are there to help people to do the right things that they need to do to ensure that they do have safety of retirement income when they need it.

The next point I'd like to make is that we have looked at allowing for a one time, 50 per cent unlocking of locked in accounts. But after recognizing the people who hurt themselves after cashing in their saving and trading retirement income of the day, we tried to look at things differently. We tried to find another way that might gain broader acceptance for what we're trying to do.

Madam Speaker, I spoke with people in the investment industry and they said, well why don't you take a look at allowing the flexibility but through a different means. We decided that allowing for 15 per cent annual withdrawal from locked in accounts would achieve that goal. To put it in practical perspective, assuming an annual rate of return of 5 per cent, which is not unrealistic at this point in time with interest rates being as low as they are, people over the age of 55, with a locked in account, could remove about half of their money over a six-year period. That money is not necessarily money that would be spent but money that could be moved to accounts for investments that are less restrictive. People can decide for themselves, once the money is transferred into a more flexible account, how much of their money they want to spend each year.

Madam Speaker, I spoke about freedom and people wanting freedom in their retirement years. We often have perceptions of what people want to do in retirement. We sometimes find out that we're not accurate in those perceptions. Probably the best catch-all I could use is that people want freedom. They want to be able to make their own decisions. They worked hard all their lives and they want to be able to make decisions on their own at that point. They have freedom, they no longer have to work and that is what this bill is intended to do, give them that freedom.

I expect that most people will be counselled to transfer unlocked money to less restrictive accounts. I want to say that there are benefits to each type of pension plan. For people there are really two main types of pension plans out there: there are defined benefit

plans like people working in the provincial government would have, and there are defined contribution plans, and there are benefits to each type of plan, Madam Speaker. A lot of people feel that defined benefit is the best route to go. After looking at plans myself, I've actually seen where defined contribution can sometimes be a preferred option and that may surprise people.

This legislation would help both of those types of plans. It can be of benefit to both. For people who might be taking a commuted value of their pension plan, it could be somebody working in government who might be leaving after say five, six, or seven years of service, this legislation would give them flexibility for that commuted value, that one-time lump sum that they receive from government when they depart government and maybe they move on to work at another business. It would also help people who have defined contribution plans. That would be somebody who might have their company or their organization, may have a pension plan where it is matched by the organization, whatever the employee puts in. When that employee retires or leaves, they are required, by virtue of the rules of their very pension plan, to remove their pension savings. Well, this legislation would help those people as well, because it would provide them with flexibility because all of those monies, whether it be transferred from a defined benefit plan or defined contribution plan, they must move into a locked-in account, at least a good portion of that money has to move into a locked-in account. This legislation would benefit people, whether they have defined benefit plans or whether they have defined contribution plans.

Madam Speaker, I know there may be - may I ask how much time I have left, Madam Speaker?

MADAM SPEAKER: Three minutes.

MR. MACMASTER: I know there may be mixed feelings in the Legislature about this legislation and I know some members have spoken previously on a bill that allowed people to unlock, for financial hardship. This legislation is not focused on financial hardship, it's focused on providing . . .

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please. Sorry, I want to correct that, it's actually seven minutes. Forgive me. Thank you.

MR. MACMASTER: Thank you, Madam Speaker. In that case I'll have a glass of water here.

Madam Speaker, I know there have been previous discussions in the Legislature on a previous bill that involved financial hardship. People were concerned, and rightly so, that if people unlock all of their savings and spend it, maybe because they're making decisions, they've grown desperate for reasons - it could be any kind of reason. I don't really want to start specifying, but there's lots of situations people might find themselves in where they become in a position of financial hardship and that's not what the focus of this bill is for.

This bill's focus is to give people flexibility and we do feel that the fiduciary responsibility of people in the investment industry will protect people who may try to take out their retirement savings for the wrong reasons.

I know there were mixed feelings in the Legislature and I think what I do hope will happen is that people who have had feelings that we shouldn't look at flexibility for locked-in accounts, they might start to hear from people who live in their constituencies, people who will appreciate the flexibility that this legislation will provide. People who have these accounts know all too well of what these changes can mean for them. I've met many people over the years who have been frustrated by the restrictions on their savings accounts and this legislation will help those people.

I should also point out that there was legislation introduced in the Province of Ontario and it was actually introduced by an NDP member of that Legislature. I think it's important that the members opposite have a chance to hear about that, it was legislation introduced to allow 100 per cent unlocking. While I wouldn't go that far, it just goes to show that people from all political stripes have seen and felt this issue and people of all political stripes have decided to take some action on it.

I would ask members to keep an open mind to what is being presented here today and I'm hoping that you may hear from some of your constituents on it. You may, after some further thought about it, you may decide that you may depart from past decisions on the matter and begin to look at passing this legislation.

Madam Speaker, we ask all members of this Legislature to support this bill and we ask that the government move it forward to the Law Amendments Committee and forward on to third reading for final approval. Thank you.

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

HON. MARILYN MORE: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate this opportunity to speak to Bill No. 61, which has been introduced by the member for Inverness. Bill No. 61 is entitled An Act to Provide Greater Flexibility for Nova Scotians' Retirement Savings in Locked-in Accounts.

Madam Speaker, I have the pleasure to rise to speak on this because Part II of the Pension Act is within my portfolio at the Department of Labour and Advanced Education and that basically covers the regulatory side of pensions in this province. I have to say I've learned more about pensions at all levels of government responsibility in the last, nearly two years, than perhaps I had known in my previous life entirely. If I have appreciated anything, it's that one has to be very careful about unintended consequences and that

government has the responsibility to protect the balance between ensuring that promises made in pension plans are there when people expect to use them.

I understand the very sincere intent of the member for Inverness to take part of the bill and look at it carefully in terms of providing, you know, as he mentioned, freedom and flexibility. I must say that the bill is a little bit of a puzzle to me because it deals not so much with the Pension Benefits Act but actually the regulations that support it. And considering the changes that are being proposed in Bill No. 61 would actually provide procedural rigidity, if I may put it that way, and lots of critical responsiveness - which, in some sense, is perhaps the opposite of what is being proposed. I'll explain that in a little more detail because, as we all recognize in this Chamber, traditionally one puts the intent and framework of a policy into legislation and puts the details into the regulation part.

So if passed, Bill No. 61 would actually put a number of provisions, Madam Speaker, into place that could only be changed when the House was sitting. I realize that when the House is in session, we have very long hours, we're very productive, and we work very hard on behalf of the citizens of Nova Scotia. But, there are also many other ministerial department responsibilities and constituency responsibilities that have to be performed during the year. Elected members at all levels of government cannot sit in meetings together in this Chamber, or in Parliament, or in municipal chambers, all the time. So it would certainly create problems in the future if government could only respond to situations that happen with individuals, or with economic situations, or the future of institutions as impacted by provisions of the Pension Benefits Act, if they could only change when we were in session.

Now, Madam Speaker, I wanted to talk about also why this level of detail as proposed in Bill No. 61 - you know, it's almost like the granules, the granularity, should be handled through regulation. So just to summarize very briefly, the proposed changes in Bill No. 61 would permit the unlocking of amounts less than \$19,320 at age 55. They would also permit pension funds to be depleted at the rate of 15 per cent a year with no funds possibly remaining after the 6.7 years. There's also a reference to Clause 22(1)(a) not being valid and I'm not clear on what that intent is.

It's much easier, as I was explaining earlier, for government to respond to issues in a timely manner through regulations. For example, during our administration, we have responded to the economic downturn that ravaged the private sector pension plan investments, which had left many struggling to comply with the solvency requirements. Because that's been covered in regulations, the government has been able, through regulatory changes, to provide solvency relief to universities, to municipalities, to multiple employer pension plans and others. We could not have been so accommodating if we'd had to wait until the House was in session.

However, let's move on to the essence of Bill No. 61 . . .

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable member for Hammonds Plains-Upper Sackville on an introduction.

MR. MAT WHYNOTT: Thank you, I'm glad to be able to stand here today and introduce to the House, a good friend of mine and many members in this House. A good New Democrat from Bedford and was our candidate in 2009, in Bedford-Birch Cove and that's Brian Mosher, so if the House could give him a round of applause please. (Applause)

MADAM SPEAKER: Welcome to the House of Assembly.

The honourable Minister of Labour and Advanced Education.

MS. MORE: Getting back to the larger issue, I don't believe that passing and implementing Bill No. 61 would actually be in the best interests of Nova Scotians. Not for the people who would transfer assets out of their pension plans, nor for the taxpayers of this province.

As you know, Madam Speaker, our government came into power in the summer of 2009. Earlier in January of that year, the previous government had received the final report of the pension review panel entitled, Promises to Keep. That three-person pension review panel was chaired by Bill Black, the former president and CEO of Maritime Life. Ron Pink was a member. Ron Pink, QC, had been voted one of the best lawyers in Canada for employee benefits and labour and employment law. The third member was Dick Crawford, who also served as president and CEO of Maritime Life and a former president of the Canadian Institute of Actuaries.

In its final report, the pension review panel said, "Our focus is first and foremost to create an environment where pension promises will be fulfilled." We have to continue to remember that: where pension promises will be fulfilled.

In March 2010, having had the benefit of the extensive work done by the pension review panel, as well as considerable work that has been done across all Canadian jurisdictions, by the various superintendents of pensions, in researching and developing what's called model law, which is model pension legislation, the ultimate hope is that, over time, various jurisdictions will sort of harmonize as much as possible pension law around this model.

Using that as our foundation piece, our government issued a discussion paper, to gather additional information with an eye to introducing amendments to the Pension Act. We allowed considerable time for discussion and consultation by various stakeholders. There was considerable interest and we received a number of different presentations, proposals, suggestions, and recommendations, as well as questions and inquiries around the discussion paper.

I also want to mention, as we all realize, there has been considerable interest on the national level about the adequacy of pension income. Discussions at the federal, provincial and territorial level are ongoing, and I want to give credit to my colleague, the Minister of Finance, who has responsibility for Part I of the Pension Benefits Act, and he continues to represent the interests of Nova Scotia at those tables.

Madam Speaker, through our discussion paper and in dialogue, as I said, with many stakeholders across Nova Scotia, the pension-related issues that we hear most about are adequacy of pension income and the fact that the majority of Nova Scotians do not have pensions until they reach the age when they are able to qualify for CPP, or a disability pension in some cases.

We have not had, in all our consultations and all our deliberations, many people asking for open access to their pension savings, starting at age 55 - exactly what Bill No. 61 would provide.

Madam Speaker, our goal is to maintain pension savings for their intended use - providing income and security when one retires. This, as I mentioned earlier, is the applied promise of the pension plan and certainly the motivation for the regulatory process. That is the promise that is to be delivered.

Now on April 7th of last year, Nova Scotia's Superintendent of Pensions appeared before the Public Accounts Committee about pensions and, specifically, she spoke about the processes that the Department of Labour and Advanced Education - or Labour and Workforce Development at that time - uses to protect the interests of Nova Scotians, to ensure that promises made are promises kept.

Now, Madam Speaker, the member for Inverness questioned the Superintendent of Pensions and his line of questions is actually reflected in Bill No. 61. For example, the member for Inverness spoke in favour of safe harbour provisions. Now safe harbour may have a certain meaning to Nova Scotians, but in the pension world it actually limits a pension plan sponsor's liability when he or she makes poor investment decisions or offers bad advice to members. Safe harbour provisions are more common in the United States and are less necessary here in Canada because we have a different legal system.

The member for Inverness also made a case for unlocking pensions; that is, making the money intended to provide income and security when one retires available earlier in life for other purposes. Now the Pension Benefits Act does have provisions to unlock pension funds under limited circumstances. These include unlocking for mortgage arrears where the owner is facing foreclosure, and this can only happen once in a lifetime as an exception; when medical expenses necessary to treat an illness or disability are not covered under another program; and the third exception is for low income, where expected income over the next 12 months is less than \$19,320.

Now I think we can all appreciate why those exceptions need to be made. If one is possibly going to lose their home or if one has a terminal or serious illness, then it is recognized that there has to be that amount of flexibility where small amounts may be withdrawn from pension savings. We recognize that there are instances where people need to access pension savings before retirement and the Pension Benefits Act provides for those limited circumstances.

I just want to go back to a proposal in the bill, permitting pensions to be depleted in 6.7 years. Now this would result in many seniors having no additional income to supplement their CPP and OAS in retirement. There are a number of concerns that I would have regarding these proposals.

I accept the premise that hopefully most people, who might want take benefit of the proposals being made in Bill 61, would be responsible and that they would continue to invest their savings for old age. But quite frankly, Madam Speaker, I've worked with seniors from one end of this province to the other and their major concern is having adequate income in their senior years. I am not convinced that taking, what I consider, a fairly short-sighted view in terms of greater flexibility for retirement savings and locked-in accounts is going to serve Nova Scotians. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness on - is there a particular reason?

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Yes, Madam Speaker, on a point of order. There was a comment made about something I had said at Public Accounts that it was to unlock money for other purposes, but it was to unlock it for great flexibility, which is what was proposed by this bill, so I just want to clarify that for the record.

MADAM SPEAKER: That would not be my understanding of a point of order but it's on the record now. Thank you very much.

The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

MR. ANDREW YOUNGER: Thank you, Madam Speaker, we'll call that a point of clarification.

Madam Speaker, I rise to speak in support of the majority of provisions in this bill. I listened to what the minister said and the minister mentioned that this is not an issue which had come up during the consultations on pension reform, which surprises me because it's an issue that actually comes to my office quite frequently. I think that the minister and her department are looking at a fairly narrow use of what this bill might be where somebody's entire retirement savings are potentially in a locked-in RRSP and have to be transferred to a retirement account.

In fact, we know that any people are not staying in the same job for the same number of years; there are fewer people who stay in the same job for 40 years and then go and retire. So what would happen is, you have situations - including provincial government employees, in some cases if they're here less than a certain number of years - who would end up taking out their contributions and their only options is to actually put those into a locked-in RRSP. Now that would form part of their retirement savings but it may only be \$7,000 or \$8,000. It may actually be a very, very small portion of their total retirement savings pool.

I want to go through, in order what I consider to be the order of importance, if you will, the issues in this bill. The most important part of this bill is the ability to begin withdrawing at age 55. There are a number of places where you can retire when you reach what they would call the rule of 80, or sometimes there will be an early retirement plan, but we know that there will be a lot of people who will choose to either retire fully or depart at the age of 55; other ages too, but 55 is one of the more common ones. Currently, somebody holding these assets would not be able to access any of those retirement funds until the age of 65, 10 years after they retire. So that is why the most important part of this bill is actually being able to access your locked-in RRSP contributions at the age of 55.

Now, I don't disagree with the minister that there is concern over the adequacy of pensions and, of course, that is the perfect example of why you should be able to access this at 55, because somebody choosing to retire at that age - they might choose to retire at that age for health reasons, there are any number of reasons they may do that - they are not eligible for CPP and OAS programs until 60 and 65 and then that causes a problem where they actually have no access to any funds whatsoever.

Yes, the minister is correct, they can go to the department and ask for a waiver and all this sort of thing, but the problem is when you have somebody who has a portion of their retirement savings - because, frankly, there is going to be hardly anybody who would actually have their funds locked up in an RRSP, 100 per cent of their retirement savings are unlikely to be in a locked-in RRSP. If they were somewhere long enough for that to happen, then they would actually end up with a pension from that source. These locked-in RRSPs are going to be from somebody who has left a pension plan before the age of retirement and drawn out those funds. If they leave at the age of 55, the odds are they're eligible to retire anyway.

What we're saying is that, for example, for a provincial government worker or somebody in any number of companies or public or private sector that, yes, you can retire at 55, but you can't touch your retirement savings until you are 65. That is what we're saying to them, without changing that age. That's why the age shift from 65 to 55 to begin withdrawing, is the single most important part of this bill. So if nothing else, if the government would change nothing else, it should be that age.

The second most important one, from my perspective, is the amount that you can withdraw. The minister expressed concern about being able to draw down over six and a

half years, but what we need to do is look at a number of other cases. There are a number of issues. The first one is that if somebody chooses not to draw those funds out at 65, you are actually forcing them to withdraw them, because you have the 5 per cent limit. If they say, for the sake of argument, well I don't want to actually withdraw these funds until I'm 70, I want to withdraw them at a greater rate at that point - that actually isn't an option. They have no choice but to begin withdrawing them earlier, forcing them to withdraw their retirement savings at an earlier age than they might otherwise want to.

The second issue is that on the flip side, let us turn that around and look at the other option. If they wanted to retire at 55, like I spoke about earlier, they may be eligible for other pension benefits such as OAS and CPP at 60 and 65. They may wish to bridge that period between 55 and 60 - for illness, for maybe taking care of a loved one or a spouse or for any number of reasons - and the easiest way and most effective way to bridge that period is to draw down the locked-in savings. Let's remember, if you have a locked-in retirement savings account, it's going to be a relatively small portion of your overall retirement savings. Otherwise it's unlikely you would actually have a locked-in retirement plan in the first place, because it means that you've left an employer and taken those out, left that pension plan.

What you may want to do is you may want to look at that and say, I'm going to pay for the five years of my retirement - and I recognize this would be six and a half - but I'm going to pay for the period from 55 to 61 through the locked-in plan and then I'm going to draw on my other pension benefits, which kick in at 60 and 65, at that point. It provides flexibility.

The minister spoke quite rightly about the fact that people are concerned about the adequacy of pensions. There is no pension option between 55 and 60 because everything else kicks in from 60 to 65. If somebody chooses to leave wherever they are, the fact that you would now have the flexibility of having an option to use what might be only a very small locked-in RRSP and draw down that 15 per cent, to bridge that 55 to 60 gap, actually solves that problem of the adequacy of pension benefits for the group between 50 and 60. That's significant. It's about flexibility. It doesn't mean that you have to draw that money out. It just means that that's an option.

When we look at why that's important, it's all about having flexibility with your own pension benefits and a locked-in RRSP needs to be treated similar to other pension options. There are very, very few pension plans, public or private, that would not allow you, if you had worked enough years - obviously all pensions, if you start with that assumption, but that would not allow you an option of retiring at 55, either under a reduced pension option or under an option where you actually add up the number of years and you get your rule of 80 or 85, depending on what plan you're in.

What we're saying is that by not agreeing to what the Progressive Conservative Party has suggested here, is that the locked-in plan should be treated more onerously than other pension plans - more onerously - and in many cases more onerously than the pension plan that you pulled your locked-in RRSP out of. Many of the plans that - if you were working somewhere for 10 years, you left that employment and you pulled out your retirement contributions, the pension contributions and your employer's pension contributions and the interest, and you created this locked-in pension plan, there's a very good chance that when it was in the pension plan, you actually had the option of either a full or early retirement at 55 under that plan.

So what you're saying is, you're pulling that money out, putting it into a locked-in RRSP, and yet you no longer have that option. You're actually taking options away from people by not doing this when, in fact, what we've heard through consultations on pensions is that people need flexibility. They need that flexibility to address those issues.

I've had a number of people come into the office over the past couple of years, as I'm sure we've all had people come in with questions about pensions and issues like that, that this has become an issue and perhaps is the reason why the minister, in the consultations, hasn't heard very much about this. It's because most people don't even recognize that this is an issue until they're in this situation and they go to pull out - or they start drawing down that pension and, lo and behold, they find out they can't do it at 55, that they have to wait to 65, that they can't draw out any greater than 5 per cent. Imagine if you had a locked-in pension amount of only \$10,000 or \$20,000, can you imagine drawing that out at 5 per cent a year? It doesn't make any sense.

It makes absolutely no sense that we would have more restrictive rules around pension plans, around the locked-in retirement plan, than we did in the original pension plan, and so when we look at this, just sort of to recap, because I know I only have a few minutes there, is that we need to start with understanding that the most important option is the ability to begin drawing at 55. So if the government is going to accept just one change to regulation, if they're going to accept just one element from this bill, it should be the option to start drawing at 55 instead of 65. Nobody is forcing anybody to draw at 55. If you don't want to draw until 70, then don't draw until 70. Nobody is going to force you to do it.

The second most important part of this bill is changing it from 5 per cent to 15 per cent. You should not assume that 100 per cent of somebody's retirement savings are in a locked-in RRSP. I can't think of a single case where that would be in existence, because you would only have a locked-in RRSP. If you've drawn your pension after leaving somewhere else that had a pension plan, and you would only do that if you didn't have enough in there to qualify for a substantial pension - so you're somewhere for seven or 10 years and moved on to another job, and you said, fine, I'm not going to get a good enough pension there, so I'll put it in the locked-in RRSP. So we're not talking about 100 per cent of someone's retirement savings.

The third most important thing is to consider the fact that the only option many people have for bridging the period between 55 and 60, before CPP, and then at 65 when OAS benefits kick in, is accessing a locked-in RRSP. For some people that is the only option they have. If they have to retire for health reasons, or for whatever reason it might be, that may be the only option they have to supplement their other income benefits until they reach the age of 60. Why are we taking away an option for people and saying to people that you actually should have a lower income between 55 and 60 than you do between 60 and 65, and then even lower still than what you would have between 65 and up? It just doesn't make any sense and it strains the bounds of credibility.

I would encourage the minister to at least begin looking at some of these options and consider why this wouldn't have come up in some of the consultations I think it's really that the people don't realize this is a problem until they hit that issue, so it's not on the front of everybody's consideration. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

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

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise in support of Bill No. 61, which will provide some pension flexibility for Nova Scotians. I do want to commend the sponsor of the bill, the member for Inverness, for bringing this important bill forward. I will point out that the member for Inverness is the Finance Critic for the Progressive Conservative caucus and doing a fine job in that role and has displayed his expertise in these matters on a number of occasions. He is also the member and Critic responsible for Integrity in Government, and I think that this bill reflects both of those jobs that the member now holds.

The Finance responsibilities obviously fit nicely with the bill but his job as Integrity in Government Critic also fits because I think he has accomplished a number of important things that meet the high test of integrity in this bill. One, he is proposing something that is in the power of the government to do that can help Nova Scotian families, that doesn't cost the government any money. It doesn't consume resources, scarce resources of the government to implement. It doesn't take people's tax dollars and create a new program or fund for their expenditure. It doesn't require the accumulation of more public servants on the payroll of government to implement. It's something that can be done with the stroke of a pen, to make life a little easier for a surprisingly large number of Nova Scotians. For that reason I believe he has met an important test of integrity when he brings a bill like this forward.

Secondly, Madam Speaker, I believe that Bill No. 61 strikes the right balance between the need to protect a person's retirement savings - that's what locked-in accounts are for - and for the need from time to time, prior to their retirement age, to reallocate a portion of those savings for some other more urgent need or for some re-investment need.

Clearly the bill does not take one extreme and unlock the entire retirement savings of someone who has a locked-in account, nor does it lock up 100 per cent of that amount until their retirement. It finds a reasonable balance that allows for some flexibility. That is another test of integrity when bringing forward a bill of this nature that it strikes a reasonable balance and I believe that the member for Inverness has done that.

After all, Madam Speaker, to allow for some withdrawal from a locked-in account for more urgent needs, at age 55 or beyond, provides for some important flexibility for Nova Scotians who find themselves in need. In some cases they may feel that they can do a better job of investing and managing their money than the institution that has their locked-in account. If they do, then good for them. After all, it is their money and it has been proven time and time again that the best investor is the person who has the most at stake, and that usually is the person whose money is being invested, and I think the bill recognizes that.

There's an old investment saying that you shouldn't keep all your eggs in one basket, and this bill allows for informed investor Nova Scotians to benefit in a small way from the reduced risk and from the increased potential returns that can be had from investing your assets in more than one place.

Secondly, Madam Speaker, on the theme that people do know best what to do with their own money, the bill respects that principle in that there are some bumps along the road of life that happen to the best of us, that make for a good case to be able to access a portion of that savings and to be able to unlock it. I'll tell you that when the member for Inverness explained the principle of his bill to me when we first discussed it, my first reaction was, I have someone in my riding in that exact situation, and in fact I do. There are many, and I'm sure that in every single constituency that's represented in this House there are Nova Scotian families who find themselves in a situation where they could really use a bill like Bill No. 61.

In the case of the individual in my constituency, they are 55 years old, married, with a family, have lost their job and the pension benefits that accrued to them were placed in a locked-in account. This all happened just in the last year. At the same time this individual has a daughter who has been accepted at a very specialized school to pursue the education she has chosen, aimed towards a special career that she wishes to pursue. Because of the job loss, the tuition, which in this case is quite high because it's a specialized school, needs to be paid. The only way that this family could make that tuition payment is if they can get access to a small portion of their locked-in retirement account.

Now, Madam Speaker, I hope there wouldn't be too many members in this House who would argue that an investment in your child's education is anything other than that - an important investment for that family to make. This is their last option. For the benefit of members who are skeptical, they have gone to their banks and looked for financing and, obviously given the job loss situation, have been declined. This young woman graduated from high school, wanting to make her way in the world, wanting to reach as high as she

can reach, needs that tuition to be paid. That same family has a pretty substantial locked-in retirement account because this individual, the father in this case, worked for his employer for 23 years and built up a fair pension benefit as a result.

That person, obviously, would ask, what would be wrong with being able to take a small part of that benefit and apply it to my own daughter's education? I can't think of a better argument in favour of Bill No. 61 than that example. Surely all of us in this House should be able to say in a resounding way, yes, a way should be found for you to be able to take a small portion of your locked-in retirement account and invest it in something else besides the money market funds or whatever investments your financial institution that holds that account in trust for you has invested it in. One of the highest returns you could possibly find is your own daughter's education, and she should not be denied that because of a paper rule that can so easily be changed at the stroke of a pen by their provincial government if they pass Bill No. 61.

This is for them, Madam Speaker.

We can also imagine a situation where a family in the same circumstance needs to make an urgent and important repair to their own home - perhaps a new roof or a new furnace, or a flooding damage, which could happen to any of us. If you don't have the funds at hand to make those repairs, you are in a real hardship position. It would be very frustrating to have, just out of arm's reach, a pile of money in your name that you can't access, even a small part of it for that repair.

Some people would say that's a current expenditure of money and that's why we lock it away so you're not tempted to go at it. How condescending is that to Nova Scotians in that situation? That is the problem with the current rules the way they're set up. It's a government-knows-best, do-what-you're-told, nanny-state situation, and when you think about it, repairing your furnace or your basement because of a flood or your roof because of a leak, isn't really an expense at all, it is an investment in your house. For virtually all Nova Scotians, for the vast majority of Nova Scotians, their home is their largest asset and when you invest in it, you are not really spending money, you are reallocating your pension investment to your home investment. With house prices the way they are, home investment's been a pretty good investment and a home with a leaky roof, or a bad furnace, or a flooded basement, is worth a lot less than a home that's been repaired. Really, we've done nothing to the financial benefit of that family, if we insist that they leave their locked-in account completely locked in and away from that family.

Madam Speaker, those are two examples. One very real, one that we can only imagine how many times it occurs in our province but it wouldn't take a lot of imagination to think of thousands of examples of where Bill No. 61 would make a real difference in the current lives of many Nova Scotia families and that is why I support it. It is both a bill that can make a difference that costs the government nothing, in dollars or resources. It is a bill

that strikes a reasonable balance, between the need to protect retirement savings and those occasions when flexibility is required. It meets that high test of integrity in finance that I articulated earlier.

I also say, Madam Speaker, that one can only imagine how much better off we'd be as a province, if some of the earlier calls to include financial literacy as a curriculum item in our schools, were heard and implemented, along with Bill No. 61, to give Nova Scotians all the tools they need to make the best financial decisions they can. Then give them access to their own financial resources, to make those decisions with. This is the kind of Nova Scotia that we want, where every family has all they need, in education, in training, in numeracy, in literacy, and financial literacy, specifically in this case and access to their own money, to make their own best decisions, for themselves and for their children. That is what we all want.

One can only imagine what the government would hear as advice, if they were to have an organization like Voluntary Planning, to refer this concept to because they would get the collective wisdom of volunteer Nova Scotians, whether they're small-business people or financial experts or a sample of those very families who face these kinds of hardships. Unfortunately, we don't have Voluntary Planning anymore, to refer an item like this to. So it falls to the members of this House and Bill No. 61, to do the right thing to find a way to make it easier for families to cope with those ups and downs, that inevitability arise in the journey of life, to help people like my constituent, who right now, is struggling with this very issue, of how to pay for his daughter's education, something that we would all agree she deserves and we can imagine how enriched her community will be when she comes back, having received that higher education; able to, not only support herself and earn a higher standard of living than she would without that education but also to contribute to the cultural and to the sporting life and to the volunteer life of her community.

This is how we build wealth. This is the lesson that I hope the government eventually learns, that by giving people these tools, by giving them flexibility, by allowing those with the greatest interest in how to invest and spend their own money, the flexibility to do that, that we actually build wealth for individual families and for our communities. Bill No. 61 aims to that high purpose. It meets that high standard of integrity.

With those brief remarks, Mr. Speaker, I encourage all members to support Bill No. 61 and I will take my place.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please.

The honourable House Leader for the Progressive Conservative Party.

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. [Deputy] Speaker, it's a pleasure to see you in the Chair. All I can say is I thank everybody for a wonderful Opposition Day and say that's our business for the day. I pass it off to the Government House Leader.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, I move that we do now rise to meet tomorrow at the hour of 12:00 noon until 10:00 p.m. We will deal with the bills that are in Committee of the Whole House on Bills and any other bills that we would have in front of us that the House would deem appropriate to move forward. With that, I ask you to now rise to meet from the hours of 12:00 noon until 10:00 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion before the House is that we now rise and meet tomorrow between the hours of 12:00 noon and 10:00 p.m. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

We have now reached the moment of interruption. The late debate tonight has been submitted by the honourable member for Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage:

“Therefore be it resolved that the House recognize and applaud this government’s many initiatives aimed at supporting those in our society in the greatest need.”

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION UNDER RULE 5(5)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage.

GOV’T. (N.S.): INITIATIVES – APPLAUD

MS. BECKY KENT: Mr. Speaker, it’s certainly my pleasure to rise this evening to recognize our government’s many initiatives - and I’m saying many - aimed at supporting those in our society in the greatest need.

Before I do that though, before I address the resolution, Mr. Speaker, I do want to take the time to express my gratitude as a woman to be able to fulfill the role as Deputy Speaker in this House of Assembly. I’ve not had that opportunity yet and I do want to recognize that. You, as well, fulfill that role and it has been said that our new Speaker, the honourable member for Cape Breton Nova, is our new Speaker and doing a tremendous job, and we would perhaps have large shoes to fill. As a woman, I’m proud to be part of that and I would venture a guess that some might even suggest that perhaps the heels that I wear would be an interesting addition to that role. I would speak to the resolution now.

Mr. Speaker, so many good things are happening in Nova Scotia for Nova Scotians. You know, I could list them all, the pages are long. We’ve been giving that as support to

the many debates that we have here in this Chamber but they're just too many to discuss. I'm going to focus on a few.

We've been elected to be the voice, Mr. Speaker, for those who are often unheard or otherwise don't have the ability to stand up for themselves. I'm proud of that and I'm proud to be here speaking to that and I would like to focus on some of the initiatives that we brought forward as a government for children and families. It's no surprise to many of you who know me that this is an important area for me to speak to. Having had a previous career in early childhood education, I can speak to a few of these initiatives that I think are particularly important, that recognize the financial contribution and support to this issue in society, but some areas that you just can't put a price tag to. I'm pleased to be part of a government that is helping people provide for their families when they're working and to give them a place to have their children cared for, while knowing that their young child is safe in a nurturing childcare environment.

Our government, Mr. Speaker, announced 250 new childcare subsidies, making childcare more accessible for struggling families. Again, I can speak to that from experience, that the challenges that families face regarding their childcare priorities are real. Families from all financial situations want the same thing, they want a place where their child can grow and learn, laugh and, yes, sometimes cry, in a caring environment, socializing with other children in a way that is, frankly, in keeping with what they would experience in their home but what they need is an opportunity to find a space in a childcare facility.

They need it to be able to fit within their own budgets and often, Mr. Speaker, that is challenging. I remember as an owner of a private childcare facility and early childhood education facility, Passage Preschool, and I don't mind saying it, I operated it for five years. People saw my business, I'm proud to say, as an affordable alternative. I had waiting lists and that's indicative of two things; one is that they were pleased - there was a general understanding they were pleased with the care being provided but also that there was a lack of space perhaps for them to be able to go somewhere else.

They still fulfilled that opportunity for their own child and they would enrol. Once in there, Mr. Speaker, sometimes, even as affordable as it was, sometimes situations change and a family was in the position where they had to come back to me, as an owner, and say I'm struggling with the fees that I need to cover for this but, of course, my child is benefitting. We, as a family, need this for me to be able to go to work, for my husband or partner or whoever is providing the income for that family needs to be able to go work.

As well, the children in the facility would have formed a bond with this child and the teacher would have formed a bond with this child. The experiences that that child was having was one that, as an owner, it was certainly difficult for me to even consider that that child could not be there. So I was put in the position, of course, of trying to work out a way for them to be there.

I would say it's not uncommon across Nova Scotia in most of the childcare facilities that owners and operators, whether they be private or not-for-profit, they would not want to see a child not have this opportunity, whether it is leave after a difficult situation where they can't afford it any longer or even not access it in the first place.

What that means then is that, as a business operator, your own sustainability to provide for all the children and to continue to provide a childcare facility of some fashion, has to adjust their financial side of it to accommodate that child. I can tell you in my case, sometimes I would say, you know what, it's worth it for me to be able to help your child become all that they can be and I don't need anything.

I know I'm not the only one who has done that and I'm proud to be part of Nova Scotia that has childcare providers who would consider doing that. So the 250 spaces that we, as a government, have offered to Nova Scotians- yes, we may still have more out there who need it but there's a three-fold effect. It's offering affordable childcare spaces, it's offering more families the opportunity to have quality childcare and more successful child care businesses, Mr. Speaker. I'm very, very proud that we, as a government, have taken that step.

Another government initiative that I can speak to is the changes to cohabitation policies within income assistance, Mr. Speaker, to enable families to form stable relationships without losing support; I can't imagine anyone in this Chamber would argue the benefits to that. I have families in my own riding who would benefit directly from it, there's no doubt that all members do. Families in Nova Scotia all want healthy, supportive environments for their children to be raised in. That usually includes two parenting roles and to put a family in the position where they might have to have - and in my situation in Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage we have families who are choosing to put food on the table, clothing on their backs and a shelter over their heads while one parent stays with the child, the other stays with a family member. That's a shame and this is the kind of significant change that we've offered these families and that's a tremendous thing.

The initiative around shelter benefits for income assistance will no longer be reduced when their young people turn 19 and go off to university or college. I can't think of a better thing, a better initiative to hear about. When we talk about educating our young people in communities and move them into a place - the next stage in their life, with the comfort of knowing that even though they are in a difficult situation where they require income assistance, they can still give that young person the support, the nurturing, the home atmosphere that every young person needs going to university. If the choice is to live at home, these families are not disadvantaged by that change.

We can't always put dollar values to that. I have young men in my life, my boys, who are at that stage, and I can't imagine not being able to provide that for them and yet be disadvantaged at the end of the day for them, because they do rely on coming home, being

able to offload their concerns, their stress, and be able to have a home-cooked meal. All families want to provide that.

So, Mr. Speaker, these are just a few things that we are doing. I'm proud to be part of that and I thank you very much for hearing me tonight.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

MR. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to take my place here and discuss this motion that has been brought forward. I do find it ironic that this motion has been brought forward on the same day where the ChronicleHerald's headline reads, "Many Nova Scotians can't afford to eat nutritiously." Today's top story in the ChronicleHerald talks about a mother of two, struggling to feed and care for her children. The sad thing is that story, I believe, is reflective of the struggles of a lot of Nova Scotians today.

I think if you look at the indicators out there, that would help us identify how those in need are doing, I would think the indicators that are out there actually say the opposite. Unemployment rates are up in some of the regions in Nova Scotia; part-time work is up, full-time work is down. These are all indicators that there are a lot of people that are out there struggling right now, and I don't believe this government has actually done all they can do to support them.

In fact, if you look at a lot of the actions this government has done, it has had an adverse effect on many Nova Scotians, especially those in need. The members opposite laugh and giggle when I bring up the Yarmouth ferry issue, but that is a serious economic issue in Yarmouth - 300 people lost their jobs as a direct result of that decision. Those are 300 people who are now without work and could be in need. And small business owners have been struggling since that decision was made to make ends meet and provide for their families, to employ community members.

The situation is so dire that the churches in Yarmouth, in an unprecedented move, Protestant and Catholic churches came together to send letters to the Premier letting him know how dire the situation was. How their clients coming to them for support because they were in need - they were struggling, they were desperate - has increased since 2009 when that decision was made. The churches are getting involved with this, that's how bad the situation is.

This government has increased the HST so those in need are now paying more for goods, more for food, more for household products - more for everything. Business owners, small business owners in particular now are forced to pay more to receive their products that they're going to sell. This doesn't help those in need.

Let's look at what has happened with education. I think if you look at what a government does with education policy and funding, it's a clear indication of their philosophy when it comes to society. This is a government, while in Opposition, who

championed education, championed students, supported our teachers, and talked about the need for universal access to post-secondary education. Those are things that I was sympathetic towards as a student leader.

But now that they have been given the chance to govern, they have done the opposite. Look at the programs that have been cut because of this government's cutback in education funding like Reading Recovery, a world-renowned program that supports those children in our classrooms who are struggling the most when it comes to literacy. World-renowned, world-recognized as a leading program that produces results, that helps those in need - cut. What's going to happen? Well, we've put together a program that's going to replace it, put that together in four days and, hopefully, we'll receive some results.

Those are children in need who now aren't receiving support from their government, from their education system that's supposed to be there to help them, help give them a foot up, a leg up in society. Then cuts to Youth Pathways and Transitions, math and literacy mentors, student support staff, and teaching positions.

I'll tell you, the people who are going to suffer the most from these NDP cuts to education are the students who are in need the most. That's the reality. That's what we're hearing from teachers, that's what we're hearing from parents, we're hearing that from administrators. The only people who seem to be denying that is the government. What happened to helping those in need? Our children are our most vulnerable in our society and what have we done? Instead of providing them with resources, with financing, with support, we've done the opposite. Here, we present a motion, in the House, saying we need to applaud the government for all the great things they're doing for those in need. I'm not sure where that's coming from.

Let us look at what has happened with post-secondary education. The government has brought forward a very good affordability program, to cap debt in the province, to make education a bit more affordable for Nova Scotians, but you're actually not supporting those who are out there, in our society, who aren't participating in our education system. Those supports only help those who are currently in the system and who will continue to go, most likely, no matter what the costs are. There has been no outreach for our Aboriginal youth, who are under-represented in our post-secondary education system, to low income students, to rural students, to students with disabilities, students in need. Nothing has been done to support these students getting through the education system and pursue post-secondary and yet we bring forward a motion that says we're helping those in need.

I think the major problem here is that there is no over-arching strategy when it comes to some of the great things that the NDP has championed for in the past, like reduction in poverty levels. This is something that, as a principle, that this Party has stood for in the past - to reduce poverty and lift people out of poverty. That's something that I

care about, that I'm sympathetic towards, but this government has done nothing in terms of an over-arching strategy to support that.

What we've seen are some tidbits here and there, of minimal supports, tax credits, whatever else, to support those in need. It's a patchwork of support mechanisms. Where is the comprehensive strategy to actually do something about it, to make an impact in society and help these people? The only vision that has been presented by this government is to balance the books, balance the books, balance the books, get back to balance and everything we do in the meantime is to try to get us towards that end goal. Yes, sure, that's important. We need to balance the books, no one is going to deny that, but what is going to happen in the meantime? We still need to stay focused on those things that are important to our society - education, supporting those in need and we haven't done that, because the over-arching vision of this government is to balance the books and nothing else.

That's not the NDP, I don't think. What I've heard from former New Democratic Party supporters in my constituency is that the actions of this government actually don't reflect the principles of the Party. (Interruptions) This is coming from New Democratic Party supporters because they haven't brought forward a vision to actually champion the great things that they championed in the past in Opposition: reduction of poverty, supporting those in need, supporting universal access to post-secondary education, providing support mechanisms for students in need, in school, in secondary. They've done the opposite.

Where is the holistic strategy to do all these things? We haven't seen it. We haven't heard mention of it, because this so-called NDP Government is focused more on balancing the books and less on those necessary programs that we need to have in our society to give people a leg up, to provide people with the support that they need to be successful.

One thing we've forgotten, I think, on the government side is that, in order to balance the books, you actually need everyone being as productive as they can, so that they can get through the education system, so that they can learn, they can read, they can go to post-secondary and then they become productive and successful citizens. We forgot about that. We're going to balance the books solely by making cuts and looking at everything as a budgetary line, instead of investments in our people, investments in our economy and investments in our future.

I think that's something that does desperately need to change, because, if the vision that we present to Nova Scotians is only a four-year one, which is what this government has done - we'll balance the books in four years, forget everything else in the meantime and then say we won, after those four years, because we balanced the books. It's like a general winning a battle but losing all his troops.

I strongly urge this government that if they believe in this motion, that we need to have initiatives aimed at supporting those in our society in the greatest need, then there's a desperate change of course that's needed. Thank you so much. (Applause)

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

MR. KEITH BAIN: I am pleased to rise in my place to speak to this resolution that's been put forward by the member for Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage. Mr. Speaker, many of the initiatives the member opposite just cited, are well intentioned policies that we believe are put forward by government in the sincere hope that they would help Nova Scotians in the most need. In a vacuum, many of these policies and initiatives are positive steps forward in our province's battle to ease the burdens of poverty for Nova Scotians. But like so many things in life, there are two sides to this story. It is true that this government has increased minimum wage and income assistance rates but it's also true they've taxed away advantage these policies gave to struggling Nova Scotians.

The very people this government sought to help, with such things as affordable child care options that the honourable member from Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage has referenced, are now paying 2 per cent more for virtually everything they buy because of the NDP increase in the HST. They're paying more for marriage licences, driver's licences, birth certificates and nearly every interaction they have with government.

We need only to take a look at the front page story of the ChronicleHerald today, which I'll table, to know the actions of government are not doing enough for the working poor, the unemployed and Nova Scotians on assistance. Who among us read about Jacqueline Smith's struggle to feed her family without profound sadness? Here she is, an unemployed mother of four. When Ms. Smith says it breaks her heart that she can't afford to feed her children, all our hearts broke for her.

Mr. Speaker, the 2010 Participatory Food Costing Report, released today, shows that Ms. Smith is not alone. In the last 10 years, the cost of the basic nutritious diet for a family of four has increased 35 per cent, outstripping the earnings of many Nova Scotians. Patty Williams, a nutrition professor at Mount St. Vincent and the Canadian chair of Food Security and Policy Change, said that many Nova Scotians simply cannot afford to eat nutritiously. She said those in lower income brackets or on assistance are still in a deficit situation when it comes to making healthy food choices. Ms. Williams said a family of four living on minimum wage would be short \$84 a month if they bought the basic basket of food and paid their other expenses. The same family on income assistance would have a monthly deficit of \$440 and worse off yet, our low income single men, who are more than \$500 short every month, if they choose to eat a healthy diet.

Clearly, in Nova Scotia today, many people are forced to make the difficult decisions between feeding their family diet a healthy diet or going into debt. Feeding their family a healthy diet or paying the rent. Feeding their families a healthy diet or putting oil in the tank. These people are not applauding the government's many initiatives aimed at supporting those in our society in the greatest need. These people like Jacqueline Smith are worried about what to answer when her daughter asks why they're living like they do.

Mr. Speaker, as sad as this situation is, this government is also killing any hope people like Jacqueline Smith have for a better life. We all know that a better job represents that hope for many low income Nova Scotians. There are 7,300 fewer Nova Scotians in the workforce today than there were when this government came to office. There are 7,300 people who have given up, who think it's futile to look for work in our province. There are 7,300 more people who have no hope for a brighter future and, despite this sad statistic, this government seems to be going out of its way to stifle job creation, to - as Leanne Hachey put it, which I referenced earlier - preside over the slow but steady erosion of small, independent business.

Mr. Speaker, I don't think anyone in this Chamber would argue that small businesses are engines in the economy and important job creators. As a matter of fact, as the Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism indicated during Question Period today, small businesses comprise 96 per cent of business in the province, so you'd think the government would support small business, create an environment that makes it easier for them to create jobs and give hope to Nova Scotians like Jacqueline Smith.

You would think that's what this government would do, but instead, they are doing the opposite. They've put in place job-killing policies. They put government at a disadvantage with Bill No. 100, even excluding them from the committee that discusses issues that impact small business.

This government bulldozed into the paving business, putting itself in direct competition with dozens of small businesses that do the exact same work. They anted up \$2 million in payroll rebates to the TD Bank, an institution that made more than \$4 billion last year and who will compete with hundreds of independent insurance brokers who provide service to their friends, their neighbours and their communities.

Mr. Speaker, the latest example of this government's contempt for small business is their approach to the pharmacy industry. This government is de-stabilizing these small businesses and putting the valuable and needed health services they provide at risk. In short, Mr. Speaker, what this government gives to those Nova Scotians most in need, with one hand, they take away with the other.

On this side of the House, we hope that the government keeps people like Jacqueline Smith and her family in mind when they develop social and economic policies. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. That concludes the business of the House today. We shall now rise and meet again, between the hours of 12:00 noon and 10:00 p.m. We stand adjourned.

[The House rose at 6:23 p.m.]

NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3)**RESOLUTION NO. 1327**

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 on March 6, 2011 Mount Saint Vincent University celebrated the 25th Anniversary of its Nancy's Chair in Women's Studies; and

Whereas the Chair raises awareness of women's issues by bringing distinguished activists and scholars in women's studies to MSVU, the first Canadian university to establish a department of Women's Studies; and

Whereas the Honourable Senator Nancy Ruth, C.M., attended the anniversary celebration as a guest of honour for her generosity in establishing Nancy's Chair;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate the current Nancy's Chair, Dr. Rita Deverell, on this important milestone and also recognize the contribution of all the amazing women who have held this position previously and have contributed greatly to Women's Studies at MSVU.

RESOLUTION NO. 1328

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 Canada Games Centre on Lacewood Drive opened to the public on March 5, 2011 marking the success of a coordinated and sustained community effort to ensure that the new recreational facility on the Mainland Common would meet the needs of the growing population in the area; and

Whereas the centre is an excellent facility to help the Clayton Park community stay active and healthy by swimming, walking or exercising; and

Whereas the centre will act as a hub for the community by offering rooms for special events and meetings, a youth centre and a studio for dance and arts;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in celebrating the opening of the new Canada Games Centre in Clayton Park and offer sincere congratulations to the many unsung heroes in our community who worked so hard to ensure that the facility would be built to accommodate our needs today and into the future.

RESOLUTION NO. 1329

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

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

Whereas Nova Scotia is lucky to have corrections officers and sheriffs who not only do an outstanding job in their respective roles in the Department of Justice, but also go above and beyond for the local charities in their communities; and

Whereas The Cup for the Cure hockey game was held on March 27th at Cole Harbour Place where the corrections Team faced off against the sheriffs to raise over \$6,000 for breast cancer research; and

Whereas in July they will host their annual Pitches for Wishes Charity Ball Game which, with the help of Scotiabank, raised over \$11,000 in 2010 for the Make a Wish Foundation;

Therefore be it resolved that this Nova Scotia House of Assembly commend Nova Scotian corrections officers and sheriffs for their volunteer community efforts through events such as The Cup for the Cure and Pitches for Wishes, to benefit the lives of Nova Scotians who need their support.

RESOLUTION NO. 1330

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

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

Whereas I was pleased to drop the puck to start the Cup for the Cure at Cole Harbour Place on March 27th as corrections officers and sheriffs competed against each other in a hockey game to raise money for breast cancer research; and

Whereas in two and one-half short hours they raised over \$6,000 with the support of Scotiabank, NHL hockey legends Bobby Orr, Wayne Gretsky and Sidney Crosby, as well as celebrities Georges St. Pierre, Church Liddell, Randy Couture and Gene Simmons, to name a few; and

Whereas Deputy Sheriff Roy Fraser demonstrated great dedication, energy and commitment to The Cup for the Cure as the event coordinator, with his enthusiasm leading to its great success;

Therefore be it resolved that this Nova Scotia House of Assembly commend Deputy Sheriff Roy Fraser for his outstanding commitment to The Cup for the Cure hockey event on March 27, 2011 and for demonstrating the caring nature of our Nova Scotia corrections and justice employees through volunteer efforts in their communities.

RESOLUTION NO. 1331

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

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

Whereas Ellen Fraser, a Grade 12 student at Auburn Drive High School and a resident of Cole Harbour, has had a healthy and rewarding relationship with the sport of ringette over the past 10 years, playing for the Cole Harbour Ringette Association and for Team Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Ellen was a member of Team Nova Scotia, representing our province at the 2011 Canada Winter Games, placing 6th, the highest ever achieved by Nova Scotia in ringette; and

Whereas Ellen plans to continue to play ringette and volunteer as a coach while studying engineering at Dalhousie University where she has been accepted this Fall to pursue an engineering degree;

Therefore be it resolved that this Nova Scotia House of Assembly commend Ellen Fraser for her outstanding achievement on Team Nova Scotia at the Canada Winter Games and excellence in the sport of ringette and wish her the very best in her future endeavours at Dalhousie University.

RESOLUTION NO. 1332

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

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

Whereas Ethel MacKenzie is an active member of the community of Eastern Passage, participating in many community events and is a member of the Recycled Teenagers Red Hatters Club, in Dartmouth; and

Whereas on July 21, 2011 Ethel will celebrate her 100th birthday and her long and fulfilling life with her family, friends and community; and

Whereas at 100 years young, Ethel MacKenzie is an inspiration and role model to all Nova Scotians as an example of how to contribute to your community as a senior citizen and engaged member of your community;

Therefore be it resolved that this Nova Scotia House of Assembly congratulate Ethel MacKenzie on her 100th birthday and wish her many more years of enjoyment with the Recycled Teenagers Red Hatters Club and involvement in her community.

RESOLUTION NO. 1333

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

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

Whereas Keith Williams, from Eastern Passage, was a participant on the Nova Scotia Wheelchair Basketball Team in the 2011 Canada Winter Games, in Halifax, where they had four victories; and

Whereas Keith has been involved in wheelchair basketball for the past four years, regularly playing as part of the Halifax Heat Wheelchair Basketball Team and part of the Maritime Wheelchair Basketball League and he was chosen to carry the Canada Games Torch during the HRM Natal Day Parade; and

Whereas Keith also plays wheelchair curling, adaptive rowing, kayaking, wheelchair rugby and, most recently, table tennis, and has participated in several national events for wheelchair curling and kayaking;

Therefore be it resolved that this Nova Scotia House of Assembly commend Keith Williams for his outstanding performance in the 2011 Canada Winter Games as wheelchair basketball athlete, and as a torch bearer, and wish him continued success in the many sports that he engages in.

RESOLUTION NO. 1334

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

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

Whereas Lauren Claus is an Eastern Passage resident attending St. Francis Xavier University, majoring in Science, with plans to pursue a medical career; and

Whereas Lauren graduated from Cole Harbour District High School last year, completing the International Baccalaureate program with distinction in the French bilingual program; and

Whereas Lauren was the recipient of the Governor General's Academic Medal while attending high school, volunteering at Ocean View Manor, learning to ballroom dance and participating in yoga and local plays;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulate Lauren Claus, of Eastern Passage, on receipt of the Governor General's Academic Medal and all of her exemplary efforts in her academic pursuits, volunteer roles and lifelong goals and dreams.

RESOLUTION NO. 1335

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

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

Whereas Mrs. Heather Elms-Wood, an English teacher at Astral Drive Junior High School in Cole Harbour since the school opened in 1988-1989, is known both within the school and in the community as a professional who pushes her students to succeed and is highly respected as a result of this and many of her students have gone on to pursue careers in the literacy field as a result of having had Heather as a teacher; and

Whereas to enhance the lives of students Mrs. Elms-Wood has initiated various extracurricular activities such as Student Showcase, Literature Night, Lions Club of Cole Harbour Speak Out and a cross country team; and

Whereas the Speak Out was a great value to the students, giving them the opportunity to voice their opinions and concerns on issues important to them;

Therefore be it resolved that this Nova Scotia House of Assembly commend Heather Elms-Wood for her outstanding dedication to her role as English teacher at Astral Drive Junior High and wish her many more years of making a difference to the students in classes, well beyond the classroom.

RESOLUTION NO. 1336

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

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

Whereas Rene Matteau has spent the last 33 years as the caretaker at Caldwell Road Elementary School and has done an exemplary job; and

Whereas Rene is retiring after a long career going above and beyond the role of caretaker by participating in classroom presentations, school family activities and sharing the history of the school with all who have an interest; and

Whereas Rene is well respected by administration, staff, students and families at the school for his dedication to his job, willingness to help where needed and eagerness to participate in all aspects of the school experience for the students over his 33 years;

Therefore be it resolved that this Nova Scotia House of Assembly congratulate Rene Matteau on the occasion of his retirement after spending 33 years as the caretaker of Caldwell Road Elementary School.

RESOLUTION NO. 1337

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

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

Whereas Rhonda Gibson from Eastern Passage has been figure skating since she was eight years old and at the age of 10 she began skating competitively, training one to three times per week as a member of the Dartmouth Special Olympics team; and

Whereas the 2011 Special Olympics Winter Games for figure skating were held in Pictou and New Glasgow, Nova Scotia, and Rhonda brought home the silver medal; and

Whereas Rhonda's silver medal performance consisted of spins, spirals and cross-cuts, backward skating and two-foot jumps;

Therefore be it resolved that this Nova Scotia House of Assembly commend Rhonda Gibson of Eastern Passage for her strength and determination in figure skating, which were key to her success as a Silver Medal Finalist in the 2011 Special Olympics Winter Games.

RESOLUTION NO. 1338

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

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

Whereas Stephanie Walmsley is a 13-year-old resident of Cole Harbour who attends Astral Drive Junior High where she participates in the French Immersion Program and plays flute for the select band; and

Whereas Stephanie has been figure skating for six years, during which time she has won numerous medals and championships both at home, in Nova Scotia, and in the Provinces of New Brunswick and Ontario; and

Whereas as a member of the Dartmouth Skating Club Stephanie was one of two figure skaters to represent Nova Scotia at the 2011 Canada Winter Games in Pre-Novice, where she placed 11th and she has been nominated to be Nova Scotia Competitive Skater of the Year;

Therefore be it resolved that this Nova Scotia House of Assembly commend Stephanie Walmsley for her dedication to and excellence in the sport of figure skating and congratulate her on representing Nova Scotia at the 2011 Canada Winter Games in Halifax.

RESOLUTION NO. 1339

By: Mr. Brian Skabar (Cumberland North)

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

Whereas Cumberland North takes pride in the talents of our youth and their dedication to community involvement; and

Whereas many participants and onlookers braved the cool, harsh, March winds to attend the annual Cumberland 4-H Spring Rally, making it a successful event; and

Whereas several of Cumberland North's youth constituents earned top spots in their participant categories, leaving them eligible to attend the regional rally;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly join me in congratulating all those who participated in the Cumberland 4-H Spring Rally, including those who were selected to move onward to the regional rally in May.

RESOLUTION NO. 1340

By: Mr. Brian Skabar (Cumberland North)

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

Whereas the people of Cumberland North know that we are privileged to live in such a wonderful country; and

Whereas the devastation of the 2010 Haitian earthquake is still being felt in the poorest country in our hemisphere; and

Whereas recognizing this, Beth and Barry Gould of Tyndall Road, Nova Scotia, have dedicated themselves and their skills to helping the people of Haiti;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly thank Beth and Barry Gould and encourage other Nova Scotians to support their efforts.

RESOLUTION NO. 1341

By: Mr. Brian Skabar (Cumberland North)

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

Whereas the Town of Amherst recently celebrated 225 years of Black presence in our community; and

Whereas the executive director of CANSA, Elisabeth Cooke Sumbu and many other community members came together on the evening of Thursday, March 31, for a celebratory banquet; and

Whereas three new interpretive panels were unveiled at this banquet, each of which will help to tell the history of this area's Black community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly celebrate 225 years of Black presence in the Town of Amherst.

RESOLUTION NO. 1342

By: Mr. Brian Skabar (Cumberland North)

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

Whereas Cumberland North takes pride in all of its local business operators and recognizes the integral role they play in keeping our economy strong; and

Whereas Deanne Fitzpatrick's Rug Hooking Studio is a strong asset to this area's economic and cultural development; and

Whereas Deanne Fitzpatrick's Rug Hooking Studio will be the recipient of an Export Achievement Award at the 27th annual awards event;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly join me in congratulating Deanne Fitzpatrick's Rug Hooking Studio on its business success and on being the recipient of an Export Achievement Award.

RESOLUTON NO. 1343

By: Mr. Brian Skabar (Cumberland North)

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

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

Whereas I recently had the pleasure of judging the 2011 Double "D" 4-H Club Public Speaking contest and was extremely pleased at the efforts of General Leader, Sharlene Carter Earle and talents of the youth who participated; and

Whereas the hard work and efforts of Double "D" 4-H Club members - Dylan Corkum, Cory Pipes, Emily Pipes, Chantzlyn Logan, Shelby Wellwood-Sawatzky, Frankie Jacobs-Peters, Elissa Pickles, Melissa Mills, Sarah Manthorne and Quentin Lawless - earned them top spots at the Double "D" Public Speaking contest;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulate Dylan Corkum, Cory Pipes, Emily Pipes, Chantzlyn Logan, Shelby Wellwood-Sawatzky, Frankie

Jacobs-Peters, Elissa Pickles, Melissa Mills, Sarah Manthorne and Quentin Lawless, the winners of the 2011 Double “D” 4-H Club Public Speaking contest, and thank the General Leader, Sharlene Carter Earle, for her hard work and dedication.

RESOLUTION NO. 1344

By: Mr. Brian Skabar (Cumberland North)

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

Whereas the constituents of Cumberland North take pride in showcasing our community spirit; and

Whereas the E. B. Chandler Cheetahs cheerleading team did an excellent job of showcasing this sense of spirit at the 2011 Cheer Expo competition in Halifax; and

Whereas the E. B. Chandler Cheetahs cheerleading team captured the first place banner at the 2011 Cheer Expo;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulate the E. B. Chandler Cheetahs cheerleading team in capturing the first place championship banner at the 2011 Cheer Expo in Halifax, and also thank them for displaying the sense of cheer spirit that is ever-present in Cumberland North.

RESOLUTION NO. 1345

By: Mr. Brian Skabar (Cumberland North)

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

Whereas Cumberland North sincerely treasures the dedication and efforts of community volunteers; and

Whereas Phyllis Cameron has made a significant contribution to her community through her efforts advocating for the deaf and working with the Cumberland Health Care Foundation; and

Whereas on Thursday, March 10th, Phyllis Cameron received the Amherst Rotary Club’s Community Paul Harris Fellowship Award, the highest honour for a community member;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulate Phyllis Cameron on receiving the Amherst Rotary Club's Community Paul Harris Fellowship Award, and salute her for all of her hard work and dedication to her community.

RESOLUTION NO. 1346

By: Mr. Brian Skabar (Cumberland North)

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

Whereas the communities of Cumberland North recognize the integral role that team sports play in enriching the lives of our youth; and

Whereas the community of Pugwash has proven their dedication to community spirit and the promotion of physical activity by supporting team sports; and

Whereas the Pugwash Panthers girls basketball team earned the top spot at the 2010-11 NSSAF Division 4 championship tournament the weekend of March 5, 2011;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly join me in congratulating the Pugwash Panthers girls basketball team on an overall successful basketball season, including their win at the 2010-11 NSSAF Division 4 championship tournament, and also in congratulating the community of Pugwash for their dedication in supporting and promoting team sports.

RESOLUTION NO. 1347

By: Mr. Brian Skabar (Cumberland North)

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

Whereas Cumberland North recognizes and applauds the hard work and dedication of its constituents in achieving their personal goals; and

Whereas Robert Verstraten received the Power Scholarship Flying Program Top Cadet Award for the summer 2010 program, as well as the Wyman Young Award from the Air Cadet League of Canada; and

Whereas Robert Verstraten was also awarded the Air Canada Pilots Association Scholarship for 2010 and is in the top of his class in the Moncton Flight College Diploma Program;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly join me in congratulating Robert Verstraten on his many achievements and awards received in his efforts to reaching his ultimate goal of becoming a commercial pilot, and in wishing him luck in achieving his goal.

RESOLUTION NO. 1348

By: Mr. Brian Skabar (Cumberland North)

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

Whereas Cumberland North respects and promotes the right and equalities of all of its residents; and

Whereas the Trinity-St. Stephen's United Church congregation has voted in favour of allowing same-sex marriages to take place within the building; and

Whereas local gay rights activist Gerard Veldhoven states that "it goes to show what this community is like in how it's willing to embrace the GBLT community";

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly applaud the Trinity-St. Stephen's United Church for voting to allow same-sex marriages to take place within its establishment, therefore promoting the rights and equalities of all members.

RESOLUTION NO. 1349

By: Mr. Clarrie MacKinnon (Pictou East)

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

Whereas the Groupe Savoie Inc., hardwood sawmill has been operating in the Town of Westville since 1998 and has survived despite a shortage of hardwood sawlogs; and

Whereas the company's senior officials have been encouraging the best utilization practices for sawlogs and development of a value-added hardwood industry; and

Whereas this company has proven to be a good corporate citizen through its forestry practices and by participating in community events and committees which contribute to the betterment of Nova Scotia;

Therefore be it resolved that all Members of the Nova Scotia Legislative Assembly congratulate Groupe Savoie Inc., for its commitment to Nova Scotia in forwarding the cause of a hardwood strategy for the province.

RESOLUTION NO. 1350

By: Mr. Clarrie MacKinnon (Pictou East)

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

Whereas the Westville Miners took home gold from the 2010-11 Nova Scotia Midget B Hockey Championship; and

Whereas the Miners went undefeated in the five games they played during the championship held in Canso on March 11th - 13th; and

Whereas the Miners dominated the first team all-star selection by taking three of the six possible positions;

Therefore be it resolved that all Members of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly applaud the Westville Miners Midget B team for their strong team spirit and competitive capability.

RESOLUTION NO. 1351

By: Mr. Clarrie MacKinnon (Pictou East)

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

Whereas Westville Miners Pee Wee B team won gold and brought home the championship banner from the Gary Wentzell Memorial Tournament in Bridgewater; and

Whereas the team entered the championship game with a record of three and zero; and

Whereas all team members demonstrated strength and team spirit to end the game with a 6-0 win;

Therefore be it resolved that all Members of the Nova Scotia Legislative Assembly congratulate the Westville Miners Pee Wee B team in their success in capturing the gold from the Gary Wentzell Memorial Tournament in Bridgewater.

RESOLUTION NO. 1352

By: Hon. Charlie Parker (Natural Resources)

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

Whereas Brody Blair, a 19-year-old boxer from Lyons Brook, Pictou County, fought and beat three of South America's best to win gold in his division; and

Whereas Brody has trained long and hard to win these fights in Quito, South America which qualifies him to represent Canada in the 165 lb class at the Pan-American Games in October 2011 in Mexico; and

Whereas the Pan-American Games is a fantastic opportunity but it is only the next step in Brody realizing his dream of boxing in the Olympic Games representing Canada in 2012;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this Nova Scotia House of Assembly congratulate Brody Blair of Lyons Brook, Pictou County on his boxing win and wish him every success as he goes on the Pan-American Games and hopefully to represent Canada at the Olympics in 2012.

RESOLUTION NO. 1353

By: Hon. Charlie Parker (Natural Resources)

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

Whereas Judy Keating Suirane of Pictou has recently opened the Oceanside Gallery to display Pictou County Artists' work such as paintings, prints, carvings, jewellery and glasswork; and

Whereas Pictou County has a vast array of artists with many talents who were looking for a permanent gallery to show their work and now have such a place; and

Whereas the Oceanside Gallery will appeal to all ages from seniors to even encouraging school children to visit and looks forward to being a boost to the tourism industry of Pictou County;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this Nova Scotia House of Assembly congratulate Judy Keating Suirane on the opening of Oceanside Gallery and wish her every success in the future.

RESOLUTION NO. 1354

By: Mr. Jim Boudreau (Guysborough-Sheet Harbour)

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

Whereas April 10th to 16th was Education Week and this year's theme was Innovative Teaching in the 21st Century; and

Whereas one of the features of the Provincial Education Week Committee's activities was the recognition of staff who have been identified by their NSTU locals for having made outstanding contributions to their work relative to the Education Week theme; and

Whereas Kevin Chisholm, a teacher at Chedabucto Education Centre/Guysborough Academy, was recognized at the 2011 Education Week Awards Ceremony on April 11th and his innovative teaching will be further recognized when he attends the Working Committee Meeting of the Strait Regional School Board on April 20th;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly congratulate Kevin Chisholm on his innovative and engaging teaching skills and wish him continued success in all his future endeavours.

RESOLUTION NO. 1355

By: Mr. Jim Boudreau (Guysborough-Sheet Harbour)

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

Whereas the Larry's River Fire Fighters recognition night was held on February 26th, 2011; and

Whereas the Larry's River Volunteer Fire Department was established 18 years ago and continues to serve Tor Bay, Charlos Cove, Larry's River and Lundy; and

Whereas all the firefighters were recognized for their ongoing commitment to their community, which in one case goes back as far as 30 years for one firefighter;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly acknowledge all the members of the Larry's River Volunteer Fire Department for their dedication to the safety of their respective communities.

RESOLUTION NO. 1356

By: Mr. Jim Boudreau (Guysborough-Sheet Harbour)

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

Whereas Brennon Skinner and Ashley Williams, both of Guysborough County, graduated from the Rural Leadership Development Program, offered at the St. Francis Xavier Extension Department; and

Whereas the two took part in a six-month program, with 17 others, and this program focused on developing and documenting personal leadership skills while remaining immersed in their communities; and

Whereas the Rural Leadership Development Program is part of a province-wide initiative called Rural Communities Leading: Strengthening Rural Nova Scotia Through Community Leadership and Learning, and it aims to help emerging and experienced leaders to make a difference in their communities;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly congratulate Brennon Skinner and Ashley Williams, as well as the other graduates of the Rural Leadership Development program and wish them luck as they move forward as community leaders.

RESOLUTION NO. 1357

By: Hon. John MacDonell (Agriculture)

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

Whereas seniors' lives are improved by the efforts of volunteers; and

Whereas Arlene Bent, of Mount Uniacke, has used her free time to help seniors get to medical appointments and Legion functions; and

Whereas on April 29, 2011, at Volunteers Awards Night, Arlene Bent was recognized by the Municipality of East Hants with the Shining Star Award for her selfless assistance offered to seniors;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulate Arlene Bent on her Shining Star Award and thank her for using her time to make seniors' lives in her area better.

RESOLUTION NO. 1358

By: Hon. John MacDonell (Agriculture)

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

Whereas communities are strengthened and improved by volunteers; and

Whereas Blair McLellan, of Walton, has volunteered for the Walton Volunteer Fire Department, the Noel Legion and the Walton Lighthouse over the course of 18 years; and

Whereas on April 29, 2011, on Volunteers Awards Night, Blair McLellan was recognized by the Municipality of East Hants with the Shining Star Award for his valuable efforts on behalf of these organizations;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulate Blair McLellan on his shining Star Award and thank him for his keenness in helping where needed.

RESOLUTION NO. 1359

By: Hon. John MacDonell (Agriculture)

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

Whereas volunteers are vital to keeping communities tidy, well-groomed and facilities well-maintained; and

Whereas Derek Sanford of Shubenacadie has served an important role in the beautification and maintenance of Shubenacadie's public grounds; and

Whereas on April 29, 2011, Volunteers Award Night, Derek Sanford was recognized by the Municipality of East Hants with the Shining Star Award for his efforts with the Shubenacadie Community Development Association;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulate Derek Sanford on his Shining Star Award and thank him for his part in making his community a nicer place to live.

RESOLUTION NO. 1360

By: Hon. John MacDonell (Agriculture)

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

Whereas community organizations need a core of committed volunteers to function; and

Whereas Elsie Retfalvi of Upper Nine Mile River has been a reliable and willing volunteer for local organizations for many years; and

Whereas on April 29, 2011, Volunteers Awards Night, Elsie Retfalvi was recognized by the Municipality of East Hants with the Shining Star Award for her steadfastness in volunteering;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulate Elsie Retfalvi on her Shining Star Award and thank her for being there when her community organizations needed someone.

RESOLUTION NO. 1361

By: Hon. John MacDonell (Agriculture)

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

Whereas volunteer fire departments are important organizations in many rural communities; and

Whereas Ernest Moore of Mount Uniacke has been a member of the Uniacke and District Volunteer Fire Department for 40 years; and

Whereas on April 29, 2011, Volunteers Awards Night, Ernest Moore was recognized by the Municipality of East Hants with the Shining Star Award for his contributions to the training of the volunteer firefighters;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulate Ernest Moore on his Shining Star Award and thank him for ensuring that firefighters in Mount Uniacke are well-trained.

RESOLUTION NO. 1362

By: Hon. John MacDonell (Agriculture)

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

Whereas doctors are often attracted by the facilities put in place by communities; and

Whereas Garnet Day of Rawdon played a vital role in the planning and building of the Rawdon Hills Community Health Centre; and

Whereas on April 29, 2011, Volunteers Awards Night, Garnet Day was recognized by the Municipality of East Hants with the Shining Star Award for his time-consuming efforts in making the Rawdon Hills Community Health Centre a reality;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulate Garnet Day on his Shining Star Award and thank him for using his skills and time to such a positive end for his community.

RESOLUTION NO. 1363

By: Hon. John MacDonell (Agriculture)

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

Whereas volunteers time and efforts are put to maximum use if well organized; and

Whereas Ged Stonehouse of Shubenacadie has developed Shubie.ca to help with avoiding scheduling conflicts between local organizations; and

Whereas on April 29, 2011, Volunteers Awards Night, Ged Stonehouse was recognized by the Municipality of East Hants with the Shining Star Award for his efforts to promote Shubenacadie;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulate Ged Stonehouse on his Shining Star Award and thank him for using his skills to put our community on the virtual map.

RESOLUTION NO. 1364

By: Hon. John MacDonell (Agriculture)

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

Whereas 4-H has played an important role in the development of young people's character and abilities in rural communities; and

Whereas Andrew Hebda and Gwyneth Jones have served for over 20 years in leadership roles with Cobequid 4-H Club; and

Whereas on April 29, 2011, Volunteers Awards Night, Andrew Hebda and Gwyneth Jones were recognized by the Municipality of East Hants with Shining Star Awards for their contributions to the young farming community;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulate Andrew Hebda and Gwyneth Jones on their Shining Star Awards and thank them for their dedication to giving young people in their rural communities positive choices.

RESOLUTION NO. 1365

By: Hon. John MacDonell (Agriculture)

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

Whereas religious organizations form the nucleus in many rural communities; and

Whereas Joyce Custance of West Gore has been an important volunteer for the Rawdon and Gore area in her administrative capacities with Rawdon Pastoral Charge of the United Church of Canada; and

Whereas on April 29, 2011, Volunteers Awards Night, Joyce Custance was recognized by the Municipality of East Hants with the Shining Star Award for her dedication to the administration of the church and cemetery;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulate Joyce Custance on her Shinning Star Award and thank her for her part in keeping the community functioning well.

RESOLUTION NO. 1366

By: Hon. John MacDonell (Agriculture)

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

Whereas police forces are helped immensely by community volunteers; and

Whereas Joyce Steadman of Mount Uniacke has been an important part of the COP group in Mount Uniacke; and

Whereas on April 29, 2011, Volunteers Awards Night, Joyce Steadman was recognized by the Municipality of East Hants with the Shining Star Award for her efforts with the COP group in Mount Uniacke;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulate Joyce Steadman on her Shinning Star Award and thank her for her part in making her community a safe place to live.

RESOLUTION NO. 1367

By: Hon. John MacDonell (Agriculture)

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

Whereas volunteerism is a selfless act that deserves to be recognized; and

Whereas every year, one person is singled out to exemplify the model of a volunteer; and

Whereas on April 29, 2011, Volunteers Awards Night, Shirley Nicoll of Rawdon was recognized by the Municipality of East Hants as the Model Volunteer of the Year;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulate Shirley Nicoll on being selected as Model Volunteer of the Year and thank her for her exceptional example of selfless giving of time and skills for the betterment of the larger community.

RESOLUTION NO. 1368

By: Hon. John MacDonell (Agriculture)

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

Whereas sports organizations depend on dedicated volunteers; and

Whereas Ron Barnaby of Mount Uniacke has volunteered for the Uniacke District Softball Association in many important capacities; and

Whereas on April 29, 2011, Volunteers Award Night, Ron Barnaby was recognized by the Municipality of East Hants with the Shining Star Award for his dedication to local softball and athletes;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulate Ron Barnaby on his Shining Star Award and thank him for ensuring that youth in his community have a positive outlet for their energies.

RESOLUTION NO. 1369

By: Hon. John MacDonell (Agriculture)

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

Whereas many people find a rewarding second career, that fills retirement, in volunteering; and

Whereas Shirley Nicoll of Rawdon has become a valuable part of many organizations in her area; and

Whereas on April 29, 2011, Volunteers Awards Night, Shirley Nicoll was recognized by the Municipality of East Hants with the Shining Star Award for her tireless contributions to her community;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulate Shirley Nicoll on her Shining Star Award, and thank her for using her retirement to help her local organizations.

RESOLUTION NO. 1370

By: Hon. John MacDonell (Agriculture)

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

Whereas the joy of volunteerism can infect a whole family; and

Whereas Wade and Warna Stubbington of Nine Mile River have made volunteering with Riverview United Church and the Nine Mile River Trail Project a part of their life; and

Whereas on April 29, 2011, Volunteers Awards Night, Wade and Warna Stubbington were recognized by the Municipality of East Hants with Shining Star Awards for their contributions to their church and community;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulate Wade and Warna Stubbington on their Shining Star Awards, and thank them for using their time together for the betterment of their community.

RESOLUTION NO. 1371

By: Ms. Lenore Zann (Truro-Bible Hill)

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

Whereas Bible Hill Central Elementary School recently won the elementary school division of the Nova Scotia Adopt-a-Library Literacy Program WOW! Reading Challenge; and

Whereas the school accomplished this feat by reading 70,649 books between November and April even though they only have a student base of 156 students, which translates to an average of 453 books per student; and

Whereas Bible Hill Central Elementary School received trophies and a banner, during a ceremony held recently at the school, in recognition of their commitment to literacy;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia Legislature congratulate the staff and students of Bible Hill Central Elementary School for winning the WOW! Reading Challenge and for their continued commitment to literacy.

RESOLUTION NO. 1372

By: Ms. Lenore Zann (Truro-Bible Hill)

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

Whereas the Cobequid Cougars girls hockey team has only been playing for two seasons and has shown great motivation, skill, and determination; and

Whereas Cobequid Cougars brought home the gold medal in the Fifth Annual North Nova Gryphons girls hockey tournament in February of this year, as well as winning the Northumberland Region banner in early March, placing them in the running for the provincial title at the Nova Scotia School Athletic Federation girls provincial hockey tournament; and

Whereas the Cobequid Cougars girls hockey team surpassed their expectations of doing well at the provincial tournament, and instead made history by winning the gold;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia Legislature congratulate the Cobequid Cougars girls hockey team on winning the provincial title, and also for their outstanding year in hockey.

RESOLUTION NO. 1373

By: Ms. Lenore Zann (Truro-Bible Hill)

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

Whereas the Cobequid Educational Centre (CEC) in Truro has a Reach for the Top team which consists of team members Jaxon Baker, Brad Creelman, Sally Faulkner, Jason Gauthier, Aiden Manley, Sander Manley, Luke MacLean and Ryan Terry and has the assistance of three coaches, Hans Budgey, Nicole Hart and Andrew MacNeill; and

Whereas the CEC Reach for the Top Team has advanced to the nationals at least 10 times since the nationals started in 1996, capturing that title two times; and

Whereas the CEC Reach for the Top Team recently won the provincial title again and will be heading to the nationals in Toronto in late May, where they will be vying to win their third national title;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia Legislature congratulates the Cobequid Educational Centre Reach for the Top team for winning the provincial

championship again and wishes them the best of luck as they head to the National Championship later this month.

RESOLUTION NO. 1374

By: Ms. Lenore Zann (Truro-Bible Hill)

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

Whereas Graham Campbell is a lifelong volunteer and has demonstrated a passion for helping others through his work as a canvasser for the Heart & Stroke Foundation and the Canadian Cancer Society as well as working with Scouts, the Red Cross and coaching little league baseball; and

Whereas Graham Campbell has been a member of the Masonic Order for 44 years and the Central Shrine Club for 16 years, where he often takes part in parades and other events as Beeper the Clown and has even participated in clown school for the last three years to hone his skill as a clown; and

Whereas Graham Campbell's commitment to being a volunteer earned him the Volunteer of the Year Award from the Village of Bible Hill and the Outstanding Community Service Award as he represented Bible Hill at the provincial volunteer awards ceremony in Halifax on April 4, 2011;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia Legislature congratulates congratulate Graham Campbell on being named Bible Hill's Volunteer of the Year and being the recipient of the Outstanding Community Service Award and thanks him for his outstanding dedication to his community which is demonstrated through his extensive volunteer work.

RESOLUTION NO. 1375

By: Ms. Lenore Zann (Truro-Bible Hill)

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

Whereas the Annual Hubtown Youth Fun Run was initiated five years ago by Dr. Barry Wheeler, a retired family physician, to promote physical activity among youth and to bring awareness about health concerns relating to childhood obesity; and

Whereas the Youth Fun Run continues each year with the support of local physicians including Drs. Mike and Roya Murray, event organizers, the Colchester East

Hants Health Authority, Moe Dunn of the Big Dog radio station and many community volunteers; and

Whereas the Hubtown Youth Fun Run encourages elementary and junior high students to train and participate in the run, offers incentives such as healthy snacks, free t-shirts and prize draws as well as giving a School Spirit Award to a school that shows the best combination of participation and spirit;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia Legislature congratulates the many organisers and volunteers that make the Hubtown Youth Fun Run possible each year and recognizes the important work being done to keep our youth aware of the importance of physical activity as it relates to good health.

RESOLUTION NO. 1376

By: Ms. Lenore Zann (Truro-Bible Hill)

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

Whereas Lou Davis, a Truro resident, has recently been appointed by Disney and the American Athletic Union to be the umpire-in-chief for softball tournaments starting in 2012; and

Whereas Mr. Davis is approaching his 23rd season as an umpire and has travelled extensively in order to officiate at many softball tournaments; and

Whereas Lou Davis holds the highest level of umpire certification in Canada as well as his having international certification and uses his experience and skill to mentor young umpires;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia Legislature congratulates Lou Davis for being appointed umpire-in-chief by Disney and the American Athletic Union and wishes him well in this new endeavour.

RESOLUTION NO. 1377

By: Mr. Maurice Smith (Antigonish)

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

Whereas the Antigonish Bantam A Female Bulldogs hosted the Hockey Nova Scotia Bantam Female Provincial Championship at the Antigonish Arena from March 25th to 27th and

Whereas Josee Morell scored the winning goal at 3:51 of overtime in the championship game to secure the Antigonish Bantam A Bulldogs' place as Hockey Nova Scotia 2010-2011 Female Bantam A Provincial Champions; and

Whereas at the tournament award ceremony Antigonish player Emily Doiron received the top defense award and teammate Kayleigh MacIntyre received the leading scorer trophy and was named to the all-star team;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of the House congratulate the Antigonish Bantam A Bulldogs players and coaches on their provincial title and applaud them for their hard work throughout the season.

RESOLUTION NO. 1378

By: Mr. Maurice Smith (Antigonish)

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

Whereas Antigonish artist Anne Camozzi uses the French serti method to create vibrant silk paintings and sees her art as a form of meditation and prayer to heal herself, others and the earth; and

Whereas Ms. Camozzi runs the Anne Camozzi Art & Design Studio and works with corporations and organizations to create public art, some of which will be featured in the new People's Place Library in Antigonish; and

Whereas the Entrepreneurs with Disabilities Network, which provides inspiration and support to help people with disabilities turn dreams of owning a business into reality, recently named Anne Camozzi their 2011 Entrepreneur of the Year;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of the House of Assembly congratulate Anne Camozzi on receiving the Entrepreneurs with Disabilities Network's 2011 Entrepreneur of the Year Award.

RESOLUTION NO. 1379

By: Mr. Maurice Smith (Antigonish)

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

Whereas Gavin Fraser, Simon Fraser and Stefano Dodaro, Grade 11 students at École acadienne de Pomquet, are members of the band Asokah; and

Whereas Asokah recently participated in Frogstock 2011, a competitive event for young Acadian and francophone dancers, musicians and artists; and

Whereas Asokah won in the traditional category at Frogstock 2011, which was held in Pomquet as part of Rencontre jeunesse provincial;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of the House congratulate Stefano Dodaro, Simon Fraser and Gavin Fraser, of the band Asokah, for their award and wish them all the best in their future endeavours.

RESOLUTION NO. 1380

By: Mr. Maurice Smith (Antigonish)

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

Whereas Antigonish resident Casey van de Sande first became involved with Antigonish Farmers' Mutual after making a presentation to the board on behalf of the 4-H program in Antigonish County and was subsequently approached to become a board member; and

Whereas Casey van de Sande recently retired after 42 years as a board member of Antigonish Farmers' Mutual; and

Whereas Mr. van de Sande was honoured for his long-standing volunteer work at Antigonish Farmers' Mutual's recent Annual General Meeting.

Therefore be it resolved that the members of the House thank Casey van de Sande for his lengthy volunteer career and wish him all the best for his retirement.

RESOLUTION NO. 1381

By: Mr. Mat Whynott (Hammonds Plains-Upper Sackville)

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

Whereas this summer on Saturday, August 20th, 2011 the Springfield Lake Recreation Association, in conjunction with Weir Rockin', will host their fifth annual outdoor rock concert series at Weir Field in Upper Sackville; and

Whereas Springfield Lake Recreation Association looks forward to expanding their musical offering and welcoming four headline bands this year: Lee Aaron, Sass Jordan, Honeymoon Suite and The Headpins; and

Whereas all members of the planning committee and the community are excited about the annual outdoor rock concert and are encouraging everyone to attend this tremendous event;

Therefore be it resolved that the House of Assembly extend best wishes and congratulations to the Springfield Lake Recreation Association for the upcoming Weir Rockin' outdoor concert series on August 20th, 201, at Weir Field in Upper Sackville.

RESOLUTION NO. 1382

By: Ms. Pam Birdsall (Lunenburg)

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

Whereas communities across Canada celebrate National Volunteer Week from April 10th - 16th to thank and honour people who donate their time to help others by supporting the causes in which they believe; and

Whereas Volunteer week, highlighted in Nova Scotia by the Provincial Volunteer Awards being held on April 4th, 2011, reinforces the human values that volunteering represents and increases awareness of the vital importance of volunteerism to our communities; and

Whereas Elizabeth Fraser of the Municipality of the District of Lunenburg has been nominated for the Provincial Volunteer Awards;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly recognizes the contributions that Elizabeth Fraser has made to her community through her volunteer efforts, and congratulates her for being recognized during the Provincial Volunteer Awards Ceremony on April 4th.

RESOLUTION NO. 1383

By: Ms. Pam Birdsall (Lunenburg)

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

Whereas the Parkdale Maplewood Community Museum was founded by Thomas Spidell in the 1930s, and has remained as a community museum to interpret, preserve and display the natural and human history of Parkdale-Maplewood and the surrounding communities; and

Whereas the Parkdale Maplewood Community Museum, which is owned by the community and run by a board of directors, offers a research centre, educational programs, and many fundraisers including the Blueberry Festival and the Maple Syrup Festival; and

Whereas locally produced maple syrup and maple products - all served and prepared by volunteers - were the feature of the 28th Annual Maple Syrup Festival held at the museum grounds on April 16th of this year;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulates the Parkdale Maplewood Museum on another successful fundraiser, their 28th Annual Maple Syrup Festival.

RESOLUTION NO. 1384

By: Ms. Pam Birdsall (Lunenburg)

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

Whereas the Bluenose Striders Running Club based in Lunenburg and Queens Counties hosts and participates in many running events throughout the province, with many of its long-standing members participating in the Boston Marathon; and

Whereas seven members of the Bluenose Striders Running Club participated in the prestigious Boston Marathon on April 18th of this year, the 115th year of the event; and

Whereas Bluenose Strider member Nancy Petrie of Mahone Bay trained very hard, overcoming numerous injuries, to cross the finish line at the Boston Marathon for the first time with a time of three hours, 45 minutes and 55 seconds;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulates Nancy Petrie of Mahone Bay for becoming a Boston Marathoner at the 115th event on April 18, 2011.

RESOLUTION NO. 1385

By: Ms. Pam Birdsall (Lunenburg)

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

Whereas the Progress Enterprise in Lunenburg, founded by E. I. Nash in 1876, and The Bulletin in Bridgewater, founded by C. J. Craig in 1888, now owned by Lighthouse Publishing Limited in Bridgewater, one of the few remaining family-owned newspaper operations in Canada, have served the South Shore area well for over 125 years; and

Whereas Lighthouse Publishing publications and staff members have won countless individual awards over the years for photography, news coverage, feature and editorial writings, advertising ideas, graphic design and community service; and

Whereas on May 3rd, 2011, the Bridgewater Bulletin and the Progress Enterprise merged to become one single paper - The Lunenburg County Progress Bulletin - allowing Lighthouse Publishing to remain a viable local media outlet;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly recognizes that Vibrant local media is an essential ingredient to sustainable communities and congratulates Lighthouse Publishing on the merge of its new publication - The Lunenburg County Progress Bulletin.

RESOLUTION NO. 1386

By: Hon. Ramona Jennex (Education)

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

Whereas the Annapolis Valley Regional Science Fair Award Ceremony was held at Kings-Edgehill School in Windsor, Tuesday April 5th, 2011; and

Whereas awards were presented in Life Sciences, Physical Sciences, Engineering Sciences, Earth and Space Sciences and Math and Computer Sciences; and

Whereas Fahid Jarmash, a student at Horton District High School, located in Greenwich, Nova Scotia won a total of seven awards including the People's Choice Award for Grade 7-12 Best Math and Computer Science Project and the Acadia University Jodrey School of Computer Science Award;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly recognizes and congratulates Fahid Jarmash on his accomplishments at the Annapolis Valley Regional Science Fair and wishes him every success with his academic endeavors.

RESOLUTION NO. 1387

By: Hon. Ramona Jennex (Education)

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

Whereas on Saturday, April 30, 2011, the East Kings and West Kings Women's Institutes co-sponsored a Farm Safety Day at Green Diamond Equipment located in Steam Mill, Kings County, Nova Scotia, which was attended by 21 children ages 8 to 12; and

Whereas this day is designed to make children aware of safety issues and safety practices that would help them prevent injuries while being around small and large farm equipment; and

Whereas this Farm Safety Day also offers workshops to educate children on other topics such as sun safety and bicycle helmet safety;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly recognize the contributions of the East Kings and West Kings Women's Institutes in educating children on very important safety issues that will help them avoid serious injury as they grow.

RESOLUTION NO. 1388

By: Hon. Ramona Jennex (Education)

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

Whereas the Kings Leo Club, sponsored by the Coldbrook and District Lions Club is located at Central Kings Rural High School in Cambridge, Kings County, Nova Scotia and is the only Leo's Club in the Province of Nova Scotia; and

Whereas the Kings Leo Club is active in their school collecting winter clothing for needy children at the school, collecting pop bottles to raise money for cancer and collecting used eye glasses for use in developing countries; and

Whereas the Kings Leos also help with various Lions' functions such as Adopt-a-Highway and the Monthly Lions breakfasts and teach others about food bank awareness;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly recognizes the contribution of this special group of young people and congratulate them for being positive role models to other students and for being good examples of volunteerism at Central Kings Rural High School.

RESOLUTION NO. 1389

By: Hon. Ramona Jennex (Education)

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

Whereas on December 23, 2010, Ryan Allen, owner of Morine's Towing was travelling along Melanson Mountain Road; and

Whereas on his journey Mr. Allen talked to Shirley Guitard only to find out that his parents' car was resting in a tree, near the guardrail on Melanson Mountain Road with his parents Alton and Sheila Allen trapped inside needing help to be rescued; and

Whereas Mr. Allen acted quickly, using his towing experience to secure the car so emergency workers could remove his parents from their car and move them to safety;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulates Ryan Allen for his quick action in saving the lives of his parents Alton and Sheila Allen.

RESOLUTION NO. 1390

By: Hon. Ramona Jennex (Education)

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

Whereas on December 23, 2010, Shirley Guitard was walking her dog up Melanson Mountain Road; and

Whereas Ms. Guitard decided to walk her dog a further distance than usual when she heard sounds coming from near the guardrail on Melanson Mountain Road; and

Whereas Ms. Guitard found Alton and Sheila Allen's car resting in a tree that had earlier gone over the guardrail with the Allen's trapped inside the car and immediately called for help;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly recognize Shirley Guitard's quick action in obtaining emergency assistance that saved the lives of Alton and Sheila Allen.

RESOLUTION NO. 1391

By: Hon. Ramona Jennex (Education)

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

Whereas the Annapolis Valley Regional Science Fair Award Ceremony was held at Kings-Edgehill School in Windsor, Tuesday, April 5, 2011; and

Whereas awards were presented in Life Sciences, Physical Sciences, Engineering Sciences, Earth and Space Sciences and Math and Computer Sciences; and

Whereas Tim Cooper, a student at Horton District High School, located in Greenwich, Nova Scotia, won a total of five awards including a silver medallion for Math and Computer Science, the Nova Scotia Association of Science Teachers Award for Grades 10 to 12 and the Nova Scotia Community College Information Technology Award;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly recognize and congratulate Tim Cooper on his accomplishments at the Annapolis Valley Regional Science Fair and wishes him every success with his academic endeavours.

RESOLUTION NO. 1392

By: Hon. Ross Landry (Justice)

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

Whereas on June 19, 2011, Fore the Cure will take place at Abercrombie Golf and Country Club; and

Whereas the annual event is used to raise money in support of the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation - Atlantic Division; and

Whereas in the past there have been more than 65 teams participate and have raised more than \$2,500 and this year the committee is hoping more teams will register and they will exceed last year's goal;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate the Fore the Cure Committee on their efforts to raise funds to fight breast cancer.

RESOLUTION NO. 1393

By: Hon. Ross Landry (Justice)

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

Whereas in February 2011, Paige Turnbull, of Trenton was nominated for the 37th Annual Provincial Volunteer Awards sponsored by Recreation Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Paige is an active youth who is involved in many activities from organizing fundraising events for the local SPCA; is involved with Earth Arc, a program which helps horses; serves as vice-president at the Trenton Middle School and was chosen to attend the Henderson Paris United Nations Seminar; and

Whereas the Trenton Middle School nominated Paige for this outstanding award, not only because she is always willing to help, but because she understands what it means to be a good community citizen;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Paige Turnbull for all her volunteer work and her award at the 37th Annual Provincial Volunteer Awards.

RESOLUTION NO. 1394

By: Hon. Ross Landry (Justice)

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

Whereas the 27th Export Achievement Awards recognized some of the province's top exporters on May 9th, among those was a local Pictou County company - STARK; and

Whereas STARK International received the Outstanding Export Achievement Award for their excellence in exporting in their community; and

Whereas STARK International provides transformer maintenance and services across Canada and the United States;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate STARK International of New Glasgow on receiving the Outstanding Export Achievement Award at the 27th Export Achievement Awards on May 9th.

RESOLUTION NO. 1395

By: Hon. Sterling Belliveau (Fisheries and Aquaculture)

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

Whereas Andy Stuart is principal of Lockeport Regional High School; and

Whereas Andy Stuart is dedicated to providing many quality activities for the students of Lockeport Regional High School by coaching the senior girls soccer and senior girls basketball teams and also refereeing both soccer and basketball games during the past season; and

Whereas Andy Stuart is a dedicated volunteer both within Lockeport Regional High School and within the community through such activities as organizing the floor hockey program in the community and being front and centre in helping a family re-establish their home after a fire;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly recognize the hard work and dedication of Andy Stuart in providing important activities for the students of Lockeport Regional High School as well as improving the lives of citizens of the community.

RESOLUTION NO. 1396

By: Hon. Sterling Belliveau (Fisheries and Aquaculture)

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

Whereas Shelburne residents and members of the Shelburne Harbour Yacht Club, Guy Tipton and Matt King, competed in the Fireball North American Mid-Winter Championships in Tampa, Florida; and

Whereas Guy Tipton and Matt King were successful in becoming the Fireball North American champions for a second time; and

Whereas Guy Tipton and Mat King will be competing in the International and Fireball World Competition in Sligo, Ireland, in June of this year;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulate Guy Tipton and Matt King on becoming the Fireball North American Mid-Winter Champions and wish them success in the International and Fireball World Competition.

RESOLUTION NO. 1397

By: Mr. Alfie MacLeod (Cape Breton West)

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

Whereas the dedication and hard work of young athletes should be commended; and

Whereas track and field is very popular among young people in Cape Breton; and

Whereas Rachyl MacPhail of Sydney River, a Grade 9 student at Malcolm Munroe Memorial Junior High School, recently won the 1,500- metre race hosted by the Track and Field Association of Cape Breton;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly acknowledge and congratulate Rachyl on her recent achievement, and wish her all the best in her future endeavours.

RESOLUTION NO. 1398

By: Mr. Alfie MacLeod (Cape Breton West)

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

Whereas in the world of Internet start-ups, two Cape Breton cousins are working to make technology easier for the average computer user; and

Whereas Joe Ward, formerly from Catalone, Nova Scotia, and his cousin Rob Kennedy, from Louisbourg and Arichat, have developed a new software that takes existing software and optimizes it so you can get more hits from Google; and

Whereas this new software was recently launched at a conference at Silicon Valley, near San Francisco;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly recognize the innovative talent of Rob Kennedy and Joe Ward, and wish them every success in marketing their new software.

RESOLUTION NO. 1399

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 for three days beginning on May 3, 2011, Park West School proudly presented the musical *Beauty and the Beast* to a packed audience of family and friends; and

Whereas the staging and costumes were wonderful, and the actors and chorus were able to transport the audience to a magical place; and

Whereas under the musical direction of Kathryn Servant, many parents, teachers, and students worked together to bring this charming musical to life;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly thank Kathryn Servant and all those who contributed to the success of this musical production of *Beauty and the Beast*, and congratulate the student actors in particular for an outstanding performance.