



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Gordon Gosse

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

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

Third Session

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 1, 2011

TABLE OF CONTENTS	PAGE
PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS:	
TIR: Millpond & King Grove Rds. - Repair/Upgrade, Mr. K. Bain	2910
STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS:	
Shipbuilding - Combat Vessel Contracts/Ships Start Here, The Premier	2910
Educ.: Holocaust Educ. Wk. - Participation, Hon. R. Jennex	2915
GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION:	
Res. 1900, Proj. Red Ribbon: Launch - Support, Hon. W. Estabrooks	2918
Vote - Affirmative	2918
Res. 1901, Com. Serv.: Adoptive Families - Commend, Hon. D. Peterson-Rafuse	2918
Vote - Affirmative	2919
Res. 1902, Family Doctor Wk. (10/31/11 - 11/05/11) - Recognize, Hon. Maureen MacDonald	2919
Vote - Affirmative	2920

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS:

No. 71, Public Service Act, Hon. S. McNeil	2920
No. 72, Timely Medical Certificates Act, Hon. J. MacDonell.....	2920

NOTICES OF MOTION:

Res. 1903, Orrell, Eddie: C.B. North - Election Victory, Hon. S. McNeil	2920
Vote - Affirmative	2921
Res. 1904, Springhill: No. 4 Mine Shaft - Explosion, Hon. J. Baillie	2921
Vote - Affirmative	2922
Res. 1905, Com. Serv.: Foster Families - Recognize/Thank, The Premier.....	2922
Vote - Affirmative	2922
Res. 1906, Godsoe, Dale - Concertmaster Award, Hon. S. McNeil	2923
Vote - Affirmative	2923
Res. 1907, Educ.: Holocaust Educ. Wk. - Support, Mr. E. Orrell.....	2923
Vote - Affirmative	2924
Res. 1908, W. Queens First Responders: Commitment - Recognize, Ms. V. Conrad.....	2924
Vote - Affirmative	2925
Res. 1909, Diabetes Awareness Mo. (11/11) - Acknowledge, Mr. L. Glavine.....	2925
Vote - Affirmative	2925
Res. 1910, Blanchard, Logan - Celebration of School Sport Award (2010-11), Mr. C. Porter	2926
Vote - Affirmative	2926
Res. 1911, Springhill - No. 4 Colliery: Explosion - Remember, Mr. B. Skabar	2926
Vote - Affirmative	2927
Res. 1912, Proj. Red Ribbon - Support, Hon. W. Gaudet	2927
Vote - Affirmative.....	2928
Res. 1913, Centre de Recherche Les Archives de père Clarence d'Entremont - Carmen V. Carroll Award, Hon. C. d'Entremont.....	2928
Vote - Affirmative	2929
Res. 1914, Prostate Cancer Can.: Movember Campaign - Best Wishes, Mr. M. Whynott	2930
Vote - Affirmative	2930

Res. 1915, MLAs: Moustache Growing Contest - Participate, Mr. Z. Churchill	2930
Vote - Affirmative	2931
Res. 1916, Kelloway, Brent: Achievements - Congrats., Mr. A. MacLeod.....	2931
Vote - Affirmative	2932
Res. 1917, MacDonald, Shawn - Blockhouse FD: Serv. - Recognize, Ms. P. Birdsall.....	2932
Vote - Affirmative	2933
Res. 1918, Taylor, Rebecca: Bus. Success - Congrats., Hon. K. Casey	2933
Vote - Affirmative	2933
Res. 1919, Domhnallach, Goiridh/Whycocomagh & Dist. Historical Soc.: Teaching - Acknowledge, Mr. A. MacMaster.....	2934
Vote - Affirmative	2934
Res. 1920, Hockey Night in Canada: Producers - Congrats., Mr. A. Younger.....	2935
Vote - Affirmative	2935
Res. 1921, Mary Harper Nature Reserve - Bras d'Or Preservation Nature Trust: Designation - Congrats., Mr. K. Bain.....	2936
Vote - Affirmative	2936
Res. 1922, Cheema Aquatic Club: Natl. Canoe Championships - Congrats., Ms. K. Regan.....	2937
Vote - Affirmative	2937
Res. 1923, Springhill Mining Disaster: Toll - Recognize, Hon. J. Baillie	2938
Vote - Affirmative	2938
Res. 1924, Oliver, Alyssa: Digby Scallop Queen - Congrats., Mr. H. Theriault	2938
Vote - Affirmative	2939
Res. 1925, Seaward, Caitlin: Harvest House - Fundraising, Mr. C. Porter	2939
Vote - Affirmative	2940
Res. 1926, White, Eldon & Lucille - Woodlot Owner of Yr. (2011), Hon. W. Gaudet	2940
Vote - Affirmative	2940
Res. 1927, Surette, Miguel: World Children's Baseball Fair - Participation, Hon. C. d'Entremont.....	2941
Vote - Affirmative	2941
Res. 1928, Northumberland Arts Council/Colburn, Marg - Anniv. (30 th), Hon. K. Casey	2941
Vote - Affirmative	2942

Res. 1929, MacPhail, Mark: Arm Wrestling Accomplishments	
- Congrats., Mr. A. MacLeod.....	2942
Vote - Affirmative	2943
Res. 1930, Franz-Odendaal, Dr. Tamara: NSERC Chair/MSVU - Appt.,	
Ms. D. Whalen	2943
Vote - Affirmative	2943
Res. 1931, MacDonald, Albert & Jeanette - Hartery Award,	
Mr. A. MacMaster.....	2944
Vote - Affirmative	2944
Res. 1932, Bras d'Or Elem. Sch. - Royal Bank Join the Wave Contest,	
Mr. E. Orrell.....	2944
Vote - Affirmative	2945
Res. 1933, MacDonald, Anita: CD Release - Congrats.,	
Mr. K. Bain	2945
Vote - Affirmative	2946
Res. 1934, Leahey, Dr. Shelagh - N.S. Family Physician of Yr. (2011),	
Mr. Z. Churchill	2946
Vote - Affirmative	2947
ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS:	
No. 315, NewPage - Port Hawkesbury: Financing - Intervention,	
Hon. S. McNeil	2947
No. 316, First Contract Legislation: Plans - Details,	
Hon. J. Baillie	2949
No. 317, TIR - Chip Sealing: Agric. Min. - Political Influence,	
Hon. W. Gaudet	2951
No. 318, Advanced Educ. & Lbr. - First Contract Legislation:	
Reasons - Explain, Hon. S. McNeil	2952
No. 319, TIR - Paving: Five-Year Plan - Transparency,	
Mr. C. Porter	2953
No. 320, Health & Wellness - DHA Cuts,	
Mr. L. Glavine.....	2955
No. 321, TIR: Paving - Transparency,	
Mr. C. Porter	2956
No. 322, ERDT: Economic Policies - Explain,	
Mr. G. MacLellan.....	2957
No. 323, Prem.: Paving Plans - Ministerial Conflict,	
Mr. C. Porter	2959
No. 324, Educ.: Weymouth Elem. Sch. - Review Process,	
Mr. H. Theriault	2961
No. 325, Com. Serv.: ESIA Changes - Consultation,	
Ms. K. Regan	2962
No. 326, ERDT: Tourism Stats. - Decline,	
Mr. E. Orrell.....	2963

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS:

PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING:

No. 65, Nova Scotia Jobs Fund Act

Hon. P. Paris	2965
Hon. S. McNeil	2967
Mr. E. Orrell.....	2971
Mr. G. MacLellan	2972
Ms. D. Whalen	2978
Hon. K. Colwell	2981
Adjourned debate	2993

ADJOURNMENT:

MOTION UNDER RULE 5(5):

NDP Gov't. - MOU: Hidden Tax - Admit

Ms. V. Conrad.....	2994
Mr. A. MacMaster	2997
Hon. K. Colwell	2999

ADJOURNMENT, House rose to meet again on Wed., Nov. 2nd at 2:00 p.m.3002

NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3):

Res. 1935, Simons, Justin & Tina: Haunted House - Congrats.,

Hon. J. Baillie	3003
-----------------------	------

Res. 1936, Adoption Awareness Mo. (11/11):

Adoptive Families - Recognize, Ms. K. Regan.....	3003
--	------

Res. 1937, Beeler, Nathan - Prime Min. Teaching Excellence Award,

Ms. K. Regan	3004
--------------------	------



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 1, 2011

Sixty-first General Assembly

Third Session

2:00 P.M.

SPEAKER

Hon. Gordon Gosse

DEPUTY SPEAKERS

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

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. Before we begin the daily routine, the topic for the late debate has been chosen. It has been submitted by the honourable member for Hants West and it reads:

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly urge the NDP Government to stop downloading their financial hardships to the backs of hard-working Nova Scotians and admit that the broken MOU is just another hidden NDP tax.

We will begin the daily routine.

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

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

MR. KEITH BAIN: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to table a petition, the operative clause being:

“We, the undersigned, and concern [sic] citizens and benefactors of the Millpond and King Grove Road call upon the Province of Nova Scotia to recognizes [sic] the deplorable and unsafe conditions of these roads and invest in the community by making necessary . . . upgrades to a 10.7 Km. section . . .”

Mr. Speaker, the petition contains 493 signatures, and I’ve affixed my signature as well.

MR. SPEAKER: The petition is tabled.

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Premier.

HON. DARRELL DEXTER (The Premier): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. October 19th marked one of the most important days in the history of Nova Scotia when Irving Shipbuilding was awarded the right to negotiate the federal government’s combat vessel contracts, worth \$25 billion. (Applause) These contracts will change the economic landscape of the entire province and mark the beginning of a stronger and brighter future for Nova Scotia and an entirely new generation of shipbuilders. Our sons and daughters will have a good reason to come home to work.

Irving’s bid was backed by the entire province and every member of this Legislature. It was supported by our neighbours. It was endorsed by Canadians from coast to coast to coast. Nova Scotians, Maritimers, and people all across Canada saw that the Irving bid was truly Canada’s bid. Prime Minister Harper, Minister MacKay, and the federal Cabinet should be congratulated for a merit-based and far-sighted process. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. I would like to remind our guests in the galleries that under the Rules of our House they are not to show either their approval or disapproval of anything that happens here on the floor during our proceedings.

The honourable Premier.

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I understand their enthusiasm.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. I understand the rules also. (Applause)

THE PREMIER: And that, of course, is the reason why you're there. (Interruptions)

As I mentioned, the federal government should be congratulated, but so also should the dedicated civil servants in Ottawa, who took their job so very seriously. The province has already seen an increase in economy activity over the past two weeks. People who have been hesitant to buy or sell their homes have said, now is the time. Local businesses are talking about what this has done and will do for consumer and business confidence. Behind the scenes over the past eight months, the Ships Start Here partnership has been working to get ready for this opportunity. Ships Start Here now means that students are thinking about shipbuilding as a career, skilled workers are thinking about coming home, and businesses are thinking about the supply chain.

I'm pleased to announce that the Ships Start Here partnership will remain intact to make the most of the opportunity. Leaders like Don Bureaux from the Nova Scotia Community College, Valerie Payne from the chamber of commerce, and Rick Clarke from the Federation of Labour will remain at the helm of the partnership to tackle first and foremost the supply chain and training challenges. The unity of purpose that motivated that partnership will now be evident in the months and years ahead to ensure that Nova Scotians work together and earn our way on merit to make sure that the future starts here. (Applause)

They will work with Irving to ensure that Nova Scotia's suppliers and businesses from all over the province can make the most of this opportunity - opportunities like a supplier development day which will be taking place on November 23rd, the first in a series of events that will help prepare Nova Scotia for these contracts.

Mr. Speaker, I have sent a letter to every mayor and warden in Nova Scotia outlining what this opportunity could mean for communities right across the province. Several have already written back acknowledging the role that they have to play. The province will do everything it can to support Irving and ensure their success in this.

There is a lot to do now that is invisible. Irving is, of course, currently negotiating the umbrella agreement. That begins the process of negotiating the contract taking us to the end of 2012; then starts the design and engineering stage with the production of the first six vessels starting in the latter part of 2013. Peak employment won't come until the year 2020 when the building of the bulk of the vessels is underway.

The years leading up to building those 15 vessels will involve much preparation work, construction and improvements to the yard. We have a long and very exciting road ahead of us. Irving Shipbuilding won these contracts based on the expertise and

commitment of their workers. It's now up to all of us to ensure our respective communities make the most of them.

I hope you will join me once again in congratulating Jim Irving, Steve Durrell and all the workers in the Halifax Shipyard. Their experience and skills are what clinched this victory for Nova Scotia and for Canada. While I'm at it, I'd like to take a moment to welcome the folks from Irving who are here today, along with many of the folks who are here from the Ships Start Here partnership. On behalf of all the members of the House of Assembly and on behalf of all Nova Scotians, we want to say thank you. (Standing Ovation)

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

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Premier for a copy of his remarks. As I said yesterday in this House, in a resolution I did, that October 19th was certainly a fantastic day for the Irving shipyard and for Nova Scotians. It cemented our place in history as the shipbuilding capital of our country. I want to congratulate Irving shipyard for the work they did leading up to ensuring that Nova Scotia was the destination for the shipbuilding procurement that was going to take place over the next 20 years.

I think we also need to recognize the workforce that is down on the waterfront. It was quite amazing, each of us had an opportunity over the last number of months to go down and be escorted through and I think most of us were there together, getting a chance to see the work that is taking place and trying to imagine the capacity we're asking this company and this dockyard to take on. It's an amazing ask but one that I know they are more than capable of doing. (Applause) There is no doubt in my mind and I think in the minds of many Nova Scotians that Irving will more than deliver on the contract for our federal government.

This is an opportunity for our province, an opportunity that is just that. If we do not seize it we're going to allow this opportunity to pass us by. As the Premier mentioned in his remarks earlier, the ramping up to this project will be seven, eight, nine years out when we talk about full employment. But the decisions that we make in this House and the decisions that government makes over the next six, 12, 18, 24 months will determine the destiny of what happens at the end of this project. Are we, as a province, prepared to capitalize on the opportunity that was presented to us?

As I've travelled this province I've seen excitement in corners of Nova Scotia. I've said many times our province needs a vibrant capital city and I've said that in rural Nova Scotia. We also need a vibrant rural Nova Scotia, and one of the challenges that we have and one of the opportunities that we have is how will we spread the wealth that this contract will bring and the opportunities this contract will bring from one end of Nova Scotia to the other.

I've been in Shelburne where they see this as an opportunity; I've been in Pictou where they also see this as an opportunity at their shipyard; Sydport. But there are other parts of this province that are asking themselves, what role can we play and where is our opportunity in this wonderful Nova Scotia opportunity? That will be our challenge, Mr. Premier, to make sure that we reach out, as you have started that work with municipalities, making sure that this opportunity is there for every Nova Scotian. This is a door, a window that has been opened for us. The challenge for us here is to make sure that every Nova Scotian gets an opportunity to walk through that door and window, to create a job and an opportunity for themselves here in Nova Scotia.

One of the most exciting parts of this whole project for me though, quite frankly, is the excitement that I see in the private sector outside of the Irving shipyard. The excitement in the private sector who see this as an opportunity to build their corner of our economy; quite frankly, one that they haven't seen in quite some time. The enthusiasm that is there, we need to capitalize on it.

I do want to comment just briefly on the Ships Start Here campaign. There has been lots of controversy, words being said around that. I do believe it has been an opportunity for Nova Scotia to rally behind this cause and that phrase. It has, in that sense, provided and given us a positive step as we march towards securing this contract. I believe we need to capitalize on that optimism and enthusiasm. Again, I will say in the decisions we make, in the decisions that government makes, over the next 6, 12, 18 and 24 months will determine whether we can galvanize that optimism and move it towards a more positive future for our province.

It is exciting to see young Nova Scotians with hope. As we were building up to this, I heard a young man who was in school in Dartmouth, and he talked about his father and his uncles who have been working in the trade sector all their lives but never having had an opportunity at full employment. To hear that young man say this is an opportunity for him to have full employment in Nova Scotia makes it all worthwhile, Mr. Speaker, and underscores the importance of this project for us as a province.

This is our opportunity; it is our collective responsibility. While there are many things that will divide us in this House, there are the occasional things that should unite us. An opportunity for a positive future for Nova Scotia, an opportunity that will allow us to spread this wealth across our province, should be that common cause.

Our caucus will watch and work hard with the government of today, work hard with Irving and the workers in this province, to ensure that we can fully capitalize on this opportunity, to make sure there is a brighter future for Nova Scotia.

With those few remarks, Mr. Speaker, I thank you. (Applause)

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

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. October 19th, the day Irving Shipbuilding was awarded the \$25 billion contract, was certainly a day to celebrate. The shipyard came out as winner in a merit-based process. We always knew the Irving yard here in Halifax would be the yard to beat, and I know that all Nova Scotians are rightly proud.

The federal government put forward a fair and transparent bid process designed to keep politics out of the decision, and Irving in Nova Scotia was the winner as a result. Mr. Speaker, there is no better way to win than to win on the basis of merit, fair and square, and that's what the Irving shipyard accomplished.

This is one of those times when we truly have an opportunity to make generational change, not only for Halifax and for the Halifax Shipyard, but for all of Nova Scotia. Economically, the ripple effect of the work will be felt throughout and beyond our province.

There are many generations of Maritimers who have been part of the shipbuilding industry. We build the best ships in the world, in the past, present and in the future. Many of the members of this House have connections to the shipbuilding industry, and now we have an opportunity to provide a whole generation of Nova Scotians and Maritimers with true, meaningful work in the shipbuilding industry.

I was at the announcement that day, at the Irving yard, and I can tell you that it was truly a moving experience. There were tears in the eyes of many hard-working men and women, the very people who know best how the contract has the potential to change the lives of individuals and transform our economy. Irving's owners and employees put their hearts into the bid to build Canada's ships. The Premier is announcing today the continuance of the Ships Start Here partnership, but let us acknowledge that it is still the responsibility of the government to ensure we have the right business climate, the right tax structure, and the right education system to encourage workers and create meaningful jobs that last a lifetime. In other words, it is up to the government to make the most of this opportunity, to harness the unlimited potential that we have and not to squander it. I hope we all dedicate ourselves to that worthy goal in a nonpartisan way.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Premier on an introduction.

THE PREMIER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would just like to bring to the attention of the House some of the people in the gallery who are part of the Ships Start Here partnership. There's Tim Brownlow, Deborah Hashey, Mike Roberts with Irving; Ann Janega from the CME; Fred Morley from the Greater Halifax Partnership; Rick Clarke with the Fed; Stephen Lund and Lisa Bugden from NSBI; Sarah Young from MT&L, and I know there are probably people that I've missed - certainly a lot of ERDT folks as well, including Sandy and others.

I just wanted to have the House acknowledge them as part of that partnership that helped convey the enthusiasm and confidence that the Leader of the Official Opposition and the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party were talking about. (Applause)

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

The honourable Minister of Education.

HON. RAMONA JENNEX: Thank you Mr. Speaker. This week, schools across Nova Scotia will recognize the enduring lessons of the Holocaust by participating in Holocaust Education Week. As many of you are aware, this past week our Premier was in Israel and the West Bank for a trade and investment mission. A particularly significant moment came when the Premier visited Yad Vashem, the Jewish people's living memorial of the Holocaust. While there, he laid a wreath on behalf of the people of Nova Scotia in the Hall of Remembrance, honouring the millions of Jewish people killed during the Holocaust.

Recognizing the inherent and inalienable rights to dignity, respect, security, and the worth of all individuals, the Department of Education is committed to providing and promoting anti-racism and race relations, cross-cultural understanding, and human rights education within its school system. In Nova Scotia classrooms, students regularly address issues and topics which demonstrate the importance of human rights and the value of the diversity within their province, their country, and around the world.

As students progress through junior high and high school, they also address topics which underline the perils and horrible consequences of prejudice, discrimination, sexism, racism, and anti-Semitism. In addition, there are particular places in our Social Studies curriculum where students explicitly confront the Holocaust. In Grade 8 Social Studies, as students examine the Second World War, the Holocaust is specifically noted as students are asked to examine Canada's reaction and response to the moral and ethical issues raised by events such as the Holocaust. In Canadian History 11, and again in the study of the Second World War, students engage in learning about the Holocaust through analyzing Canada's role regarding Jewish immigration and the Holocaust. A thoughtful examination of issues of justice - including issues of genocide - is something our students must undertake as global and Canadian citizens in the 21st Century. Our Sociology 12, Law 12, and Global History 12 courses all provide the occasion for students and teachers to confront genocide, including the Holocaust and its aftermath.

The Department of Education has listed and provided a wide range of resources to support Holocaust education, including two new books. *The Righteous Smuggler: A Holocaust Remembrance* is a story about a young boy who decides to risk his own life to save his friends in Nazi-occupied Holland. *The Underground Reporters* is an account of Jewish children in Czechoslovakia in 1940, who struggle to maintain hope in the ideals of

peace through a secret newspaper. These two books have been distributed to Grade 8 classrooms across the province this week to support learning in social studies and to commemorate Holocaust Education Week. We must all be committed to valuing and protecting human rights for all individuals, and I would like to table these two books that are going out to the schools for our own library here at our House. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester North.

HON. KAREN CASEY: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the minister's office for providing a copy of her statement in advance, and I am proud to stand here to speak to this important part of our history.

The Holocaust affected millions of people and continues to touch the lives of so many in Canada and around the world. All members of this House will agree that the actions during the Holocaust were atrocious. We cannot allow those who lost their lives in this genocide to have died in vain. We owe it to the victims, to the survivors, and to their families to teach our youth about what happened to the Jewish people and all those who were persecuted under Nazi rule. We cannot let their stories of tragedy or death, or even hope or survival, be lost in the past. We have a common responsibility to ensure that young people in Nova Scotia and around the world are made aware of the dangers of ignorance and hatred.

Some people may think that the Holocaust is not relevant to Nova Scotia, that it is not part of our history or that it is a problem for somewhere else or for someone else. That is not true. In the year 2000, this House of Assembly adopted legislation recognizing Holocaust Memorial Day. Holocaust memorials are held in our province to remember the organized, state-led extermination of the Jewish people.

As the member for Colchester North, I have participated in Holocaust remembrance services held at the Veterans Memorial Park in Bass River - one of five sites around the world that celebrates and recognizes that day with a service of remembrance. On May 1, 2011, over 200 people braved the cold and rain to pay their respects to the millions who were victims of the Holocaust. Tributes from the families of victims and the families of survivors were shared amidst tears from both the presenters and the attendees. The Jewish community in Halifax was represented by Rabbi Ellis, whose message of comfort and hope was uplifting. This park has become a classroom for the students in the area, and every year - every day - students are reminded as they drive by the park not only of the Holocaust but of all the tragedies of war, and of remembering all of those who have served in the past and who are still serving.

I'm proud to say that during the life of that park - five years - there has not been one act of vandalism, and I give full credit to the school, to the teachers, and to the parents who have helped to instill in those young people the importance of respecting and remembering. It is said that ignorance and denial are the only ways history can repeat itself. So it is for

this reason that it's critical that we teach our youth about peace, tolerance, and diversity. Addressing the ills of the past will lead to a brighter, more tolerant, and more peaceful future.

The Liberal caucus supports the focus on Holocaust education currently included in our public school curriculum, but schools cannot do this alone. We - everyone in this House - have a responsibility. We as a society must move beyond a special day to remember. We as a society must take part and include this as part of our culture: to remember, to respect, and to value human life every day. (Applause)

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

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour for me to be here today, to rise to speak about this very important topic. I would also like to take the time to thank the minister for providing me with a copy of her statement before today's proceedings. I would also like to express my appreciation for the remarks by my colleague from the Official Opposition.

For many, the Holocaust is a difficult issue to discuss and for a good reason. The atrocities and tragedies that occurred during this dark period in our history stir our deepest fears. We are often reminded of some of the gruesome images that have survived this period. For many of us these are images that will be burned in our memory forever. However, despite the complex and challenging emotions that accompany remembering the Holocaust, it is an event we cannot allow ourselves to forget, individually or as a society. After all, sharing the stories and reports of abuses suffered by the Jewish people and others during this genocide is a chilling reminder of the evils humanity is capable of. Only by appropriately remembering these incidents will we be able to ensure that this heartbreaking part of our past does not repeat itself. That is why it is so important that we take the time to educate our young people about the Holocaust and its infamous role in human history.

It is said so often that it sounds like a cliché, but it is true, that our young people are our future. In order to ensure the leaders of tomorrow are prepared to tackle the challenges that lay before them, we must be sure that they understand the tragedies of the past. We can look to individuals like Philip Riteman of Halifax to help us tell these sad but important stories. Last year Mr. Riteman, a Holocaust survivor, launched his book, *Millions of Souls*, because he knew the story should be told and remembered. It is not an easy topic to discuss. We can all rest assured that thanks to the work of Philip Riteman and many others, Nova Scotia students will be subject to careful discussion about the Holocaust and its aftermath.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the minister for highlighting the lessons of the Holocaust by confirming that Nova Scotia schools will take part in Holocaust Education Week and for continuing to support a curriculum that ensures that difficult topics such as the Holocaust and other grievous events will be thoughtfully discussed in classrooms for years to come. (Applause)

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

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

RESOLUTION NO. 1900

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

Whereas Project Red Ribbon is MADD Canada's longest-running public awareness campaign; and

Whereas red ribbons are a powerful symbol of a person's commitment to sober driving during the holiday season and, more importantly, all year long; and

Whereas red ribbons serve as a tribute to the thousands of Canadians killed or injured as a result of impaired driving;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House join me in supporting the national launch of Project Red Ribbon that occurred here earlier today and encourage the efforts of volunteers all across Canada who make this program a viable tool in the fight against impaired driving.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Community Services.

RESOLUTION NO. 1901

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

Whereas adoption can mean love, support and a permanent, nurturing home for many children in permanent care and custody; and

Whereas in Nova Scotia there are nearly 350 children and youth, most of them between six and 16 years old, who are waiting to be adopted into a loving family; and

Whereas November is Adoption Awareness Month and during this month all Nova Scotians, families and individuals, are encouraged to consider adopting one of Nova Scotia's waiting children;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House commend Nova Scotians who have welcomed a child into their homes, their families, and their hearts.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

RESOLUTION NO. 1902

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

Whereas October 31st to November 5th proudly marks Family Doctor Week in Canada, acknowledging the outstanding contributions of Canadian family physicians; and

Whereas in Nova Scotia we rely on our family physicians to provide quality care in times of sickness regardless of the ailment, from managing chronic diseases to treating an ear ache; and

Whereas family physicians play an integral role in arranging and coordinating with other medical specialists and health professionals to provide treatment;

Therefore be it resolved that this House recognize Family Doctor Week and join me in thanking family doctors across the province for the service they provide to the people of Nova Scotia.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 71 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 376 of the Revised Statutes of 1989. The Public Service Act, to Establish the Office of Fire and Emergency Services. (Hon. Stephen McNeil)

Bill No. 72 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 494 of the Revised Statutes of 1989. The Vital Statistics Act. (Hon. John MacDonell)

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

NOTICES OF MOTION

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

RESOLUTION NO. 1903

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

Whereas in this House we all cherish the democratic process; and

Whereas we all respect those who put their names on the ballot in pursuit of public service; and

Whereas yesterday in this House we welcomed a new member to our ranks;

Therefore be it resolved that members of the Legislature congratulate Eddie Orrell on his victory in Cape Breton North and welcome him to the debate.

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. 1904

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

Whereas on this date 55 years ago, the Town of Springhill suffered a terrible tragedy in the explosion inside of its No. 4 mine shaft; and

Whereas many brave men and women came forward to assist in the rescue efforts of their friends, family and co-workers, putting their own lives at risk; and

Whereas despite the tragic loss of 39 souls during this disaster, nearly 90 more were rescued due to the efforts of these brave men and women;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House remember the 39 lost lives in No. 4 mine shaft, and recognize the courage and generosity of spirit exhibited by all those involved in the rescue.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Premier.

RESOLUTION NO. 1905

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

Whereas the third week of October was Foster Family Appreciation Week in Nova Scotia, honouring the nearly 800 foster families in this province who open their hearts and their homes to children and young people in need of a loving, stable environment in which to live; and

Whereas 16 of those wonderful foster families live in my own constituency of Cole Harbour; and

Whereas this government knows what an incredible commitment it is to foster a child, which is why in April we increased foster care rates by more than 10 per cent, or about \$50 per child per month, providing more support for costs like clothing and school supplies;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of the House of Assembly recognize and thank all the foster families in this province for providing a home and so much more for these children in need, and encourage more Nova Scotia families to consider being part of this very important initiative.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

RESOLUTION NO. 1906

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

Whereas the annual Concertmaster Award is presented to an individual or organization that has made a significant contribution to Symphony Nova Scotia; and

Whereas this year's recipient, Dale Godsoe, chosen for her outstanding role in the Listen to the Future Endowment Campaign, is truly an inspiration for us all; and

Whereas Dale's leadership has touched many organizations and individuals through her work with the National Arts Centre, the United Way, the YMCA of Canada, and the Atlantic Film Festival, just to name a few;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of the Legislature congratulate Dale Godsoe on receipt of this prestigious award and recognize her many past achievements, and extend our appreciation for the difference she has made in the lives of so 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 member for Cape Breton North.

RESOLUTION NO. 1907

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

Whereas the events of the Holocaust, during which more than six million Jews were put to death in a brutal genocide, are amongst the darkest periods of human history; and

Whereas being open and honest about our past is the only way we can adequately ensure we do not repeat humanity's mistakes in the future; and

Whereas as the leaders of tomorrow, it is appropriate that Nova Scotia students are subject to a thoughtful examination of the events of the Holocaust;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly support the efforts of the Department of Education to ensure that Nova Scotia students benefit from the important lessons to be learned during Holocaust Education Week.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Queens.

RESOLUTION NO. 1908

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

Whereas timely and professional delivery of emergency medical services in our rural communities is crucial; and

Whereas the Medical First Response Program was established to enhance a community's ability to provide safe, effective, reliable advanced first aid, and currently involves a total of about 2,200 certified medical first responders across the province; and

Whereas the West Queens First Responders now have eight trained and certified members under the Medical First Response Program ready to respond to emergency calls and assist our paramedics in their community;

Therefore be it resolved that the House of Assembly recognize and congratulate the West Queens First Responders for their commitment to providing vital emergency assistance in their community.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Kings West.

RESOLUTION NO. 1909

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

Whereas November is Diabetes Awareness Month, a month dedicated to raising awareness around the harsh realities of diabetes; and

Whereas today, one in four Canadians have diabetes or pre-diabetes with 20 people diagnosed with the disease every hour of every day; and

Whereas in addition to the personal crisis experienced by people with the disease, diabetes cost our health care system \$12.2 billion nationally in 2010, a number that is expected to grow to \$16.9 billion by 2020;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly acknowledge November as Diabetes Awareness Month and be ever mindful of the implications of diabetes on individuals and the sustainability of our health care system.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Hants West.

RESOLUTION NO. 1910

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

Whereas over 40,000 student athletes participate annually in school sport programs throughout the province; and

Whereas the Nova Scotia School Athletic Federation annually organizes a celebration of school sport to celebrate participation, fair play and service to school sport and to reinforce the significant role interscholastic athletics play in education; and

Whereas Logan Blanchard, son of Chris and Connie Blanchard and a student at West Hants Middle School, was made the recipient of the Celebration of School Sport 2010-11 Award for demonstrating respect for others and displaying a true example of good sportsmanship;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Logan on receiving this award and wish him all the best.

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. 1911

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

Whereas 55 years ago today, an explosion in the No. 4 Colliery of the Springhill mine left 127 men trapped below the surface; and

Whereas draegermen and barefaced miners navigated the 6,100 foot deep mine shaft to aid and rescue their fellow miners, bringing 88 miners to the surface alive; and

Whereas the term 'Springhill Mining Disaster' recalls the disaster, the 1891 fire in Nos. 1 and 2 Collieries, which claimed 125 lives, and the 1958 bump in No. 2, which claimed a further 74 lives;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House honour the memory of those lost miners, commemorate the extreme sacrifice of their families, recognize the brave and courageous efforts of their fellow miners in aid and recovery attempts and remember today the tremendous losses in the community of Springhill in pursuit of coal.

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 Clare.

RESOLUTION NO. 1912

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

Whereas each year, tens of thousands are injured in impairment-related traffic accidents; and

Whereas traffic deaths and injuries that result from impairment-related crashes are entirely preventable; and

Whereas starting November 1st, Mothers Against Drunk Driving and its partner, Allstate Insurance Company of Canada, will be out in communities across the country to distribute red ribbons and educational materials on impaired driving;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly offer our support to Project Red Ribbon, MADD Canada's annual holiday awareness campaign and

applaud the efforts and hard work this valuable organization has in preventing impaired driving.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Argyle.

RESOLUTION NO. 1913

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Monsieur le Président, à une date ultérieure, je demanderai l'adoption de la résolution suivante:

Attendu que le 5 mai, 2011, The Council of Nova Scotia Archives a présenté le Centre de Recherche Les Archives de père Clarence d'Entremont le prix Carmen V. Carroll; et

Attendu que ce prix reconnaît les réalisations exceptionnelles dans la préservation des archives; et

Attendu que Bernice et Pauline d'Entremont, au nom de la société historique acadienne de Pubnico-Ouest, ont accepté le prix un certificate commémorative reconnaissent les détails du projet, ainsi qu'un certificate-cadeau de 200 dollars;

Par conséquent, qu'il soit résolu tous les membres de cette Chambre de l'Assemblée se joignent à moi pour féliciter le Centre de Recherche Les Archives de père Clarence d'Entremont pour ce prix prestigieux et remercier la Société pour leurs efforts inlassables dans la préservation de leur culture et leur patrimoine.

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

Whereas in Halifax on May 5th the Council of Nova Scotia Archives presented the Centre de Recherche Les Archives de père Clarence d'Entremont, the Carmen V. Carroll Award; and

Whereas this award recognizes outstanding achievement in archival preservation;
and

Whereas Bernice and Pauline d'Entremont, on behalf of the société historique acadienne de Pubnico-Ouest, accepted the award as well as a commemorative certificate acknowledging the details and a \$200 gift certificate;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate the Centre de Recherche Les Archives père Clarence d'Entremont on receiving this prestigious award and thank the society for their untiring efforts in preserving their culture and their heritage.

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.

MR. MAT WHYNOTT: Mr. Speaker, with your permission I would ask to do an introduction, please.

MR. SPEAKER: Most certainly.

MR. WHYNOTT: Mr. Speaker, and all members of the House, there are some guests in the gallery today who are representatives from Movember. It's that time of year again and I would ask you give them a warm round of applause at the end. We have Patrick Hemsworth, Mike Milloy who actually works for the Department of Finance, Andrew Nehas, Bruce Wood and some guy by the name of Mike Kydd. I wanted to welcome them here and if everybody here would give them a warm welcome as well. (Applause)

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

The honourable member for Hammonds Plains-Upper Sackville.

RESOLUTION NO. 1914

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

Whereas every day 12 Canadian men die of prostate cancer, one in six men develop the disease in their lifetime, and with early detection and treatment, prostate cancer remains one of the most treatable of cancers; and

Whereas Member of Parliament Olivia Chow, in an address to Prostate Cancer Canada's Network Leaders Conference in Halifax, congratulated Nova Scotia for funding the PSA test which is the most reliable and accurate detection tool for prostate cancer; and

Whereas the month of November has been renamed Movember by Prostate Cancer Canada to encourage men to grow a mustache to improve awareness of the disease, show support for those living with the cancer and its treatment, and as a way to raise funds for the cause of finding a cure;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Prostate Cancer Canada and the representatives from Movember Nova Scotia for bringing awareness to the benefits of early detection and wish them all the best in 2011 Movember campaign.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Yarmouth.

RESOLUTION NO. 1915

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

Whereas November 1st marks the official start of Movember, a month long event where men in Nova Scotia, throughout Canada and around the world sprout mustaches to

raise vital funds and awareness around men's health issues, specifically prostate cancer; and

Whereas in 2010, 3,407 Nova Scotians participated in Movember raising a very impressive \$457,853 for much needed research and programs; and

Whereas many members of this House of Assembly have and are stepping up to the plate to participate in the 2011 Movember campaign;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly accept my challenge to the member for Hammonds Plains-Upper Sackville to a moustache growing contest in a mutual effort to raise awareness of prostate health, and that neither the Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism nor the Minister of Natural Resources be allowed to participate as one already boasts this Assembly's most epic moustache and the other this Assembly's cutest moustache.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Cape Breton West.

RESOLUTION NO. 1916

MR. ALFIE MACLEOD: There's something about that resolution I like, Mr. Speaker.

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

Whereas Brent Kelloway of Donkin recently received recognition and an award for his academic achievement; and

Whereas Brent received the Principal's Award for the highest average aggregate for Grades 7, 8 and 9 at Donkin-Gowrie Complex; and

Whereas Brent also received the Mae Mills Memorial Award for outstanding sportsmanship qualities at their recent awards night;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Brent Kelloway on his achievements and wish him every success during his high school years and his future endeavours.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Lunenburg.

RESOLUTION NO. 1917

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

Whereas Paula MacDonald has a tradition of firefighting within her family and has been a member of the Blockhouse Fire Department for 10 years, serving as an officer for seven years; and

Whereas Paula's husband, Shawn MacDonald, stepped down as chief of the Blockhouse Fire Department after holding the position off and on for 11 years; and

Whereas Paula MacDonald has been elected as the new fire chief for the Blockhouse Fire Department, becoming the first female fire chief in the department and the first female fire chief in Lunenburg County;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly recognizes Shawn Macdonald for 11 years of service to the Blockhouse Fire Department as outgoing fire chief and congratulates Paula MacDonald on her new role as fire chief.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Colchester North.

RESOLUTION NO. 1918

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

Whereas Rebecca Taylor of Colchester North honed her entrepreneurial skills by taking workshops, courses on bookkeeping and small business taxation, and seeking guidance from sources such as CoRDA, Crafts Alliance and the Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage; and

Whereas Rebecca began the Pearl and Daisy Natural Soap Company and quickly established a reputation for the high quality of her products; and

Whereas Rebecca was given the opportunity to promote her business by sponsoring the official gift lounge of the Canadian Country Music Awards held in Hamilton, Ontario;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly congratulate this energetic businesswoman for visualizing, creating and running a very successful business, for having the opportunity to advertise her products in such a unique setting and for having the opportunity to meet so many of Canada's top entertainers.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Inverness.

RESOLUTION NO. 1919

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

Whereas Jeff MacDonald of Glendale spent a day with Grade 8 students in Whycomagh and talked to them about the history of the Gaelics from pre-Celtic times of Stonehenge to the stories of Cu Chulainn, to the aftermath of the Battle of Culloden; and

Whereas there was a mixture of Mi'kmaq and Gaels in the class and they were told about how the Gaels were indebted to the Mi'kmaq for helping them here in Nova Scotia during their first years of settlement; and

Whereas a message was given to the Mi'kmaq students about how important their language and culture is - that they should be proud of it and learn more of it by speaking with their elders;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly acknowledge Goiridh Domhnallach and the Whycomagh and District Historical Society, because teaching our young people about their history makes them appreciate other ethnic peoples, and this is bringing Nova Scotians together.

Mar sin, biodh e na rùn aig a' Phàrlamaid seo gun toirear taing do Ghoiridh agus do Chomann Eachdraidh Sgìre Hogamagh chionns gu bheil teagasg an cuid eachdraidh dar n-òigridh a' toirt orra sùim a ghabhail ann am pobaill eile agus bidh seo a' tarraing sluagh na h-Albainn Nuaidhe ri chelle.

A Labhraiche Urramaich, tha mi a' guidhe gun tèid brath-gluasad an darna taobh agus gun tèid a' chùis air adhart as aonais deasbaid.

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

MR. SPEAKER: I'm going to check with Bob at Hansard up there to see if he's doing all right. (Laughter)

There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

RESOLUTION NO. 1920

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

Whereas on this date in 1952, Hockey Night in Canada first debuted on CBC Television; and

Whereas that game saw the Boston Bruins edge out the Toronto Maple Leafs with a score of 3-2; and

Whereas Hockey Night in Canada became a true Canadian institution, celebrating Canada's national winter sport;

Therefore be it resolved that members of the House of Assembly congratulate the men and women who bring Hockey Night in Canada to Canadians and wish them many more years of success.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Victoria-The Lakes.

MR. KEITH BAIN: Mr. Speaker, if I might be permitted to do an introduction before I do my resolution.

MR. SPEAKER: Most certainly.

MR. BAIN: In the gallery opposite is a councillor from the Municipality of the County of Victoria, Larry Dauphinee. Larry is here for the UNSM annual general meeting. I would ask that Larry stand to receive the warm recognition of the House. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: We welcome all of our guests in the gallery and hope that you enjoy the proceedings today.

The honourable member for Victoria-The Lakes.

RESOLUTION NO. 1921

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

Whereas the Bras d'Or Preservation Nature Trust worked diligently on behalf of the late Mary Harper, an amazing woman with a passion for nature, to grant her wish to preserve her property; and

Whereas the Mary Harper Nature Reserve was designated on October 12th as a nature reserve, the highest form of legal protection by the Province of Nova Scotia; and

Whereas the Mary Harper Nature Reserve will not only contribute to the conservation of the natural heritage and provide a safe haven for plants and wildlife in the Bras d'Or Lakes and watershed but will also pay tribute to a woman who influenced the course of history, and whose personal achievements and story can continue to inspire residents and visitors to Nova Scotia;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Grosvenor Blair, Chair of the Bras d'Or Preservation Nature Trust, and members Aynsley MacFarlane, Wayne Beaton, Brian Goyetche, John G. Langley, Dr. Henry Muggah, Clair Rankin, Michelle Stephens, and Roland Thornhill for their hard work in securing the designation of the Mary Harper Nature Reserve.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Bedford-Birch Cove.

RESOLUTION NO. 1922

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

Whereas on August 25, 2011, 14 young paddlers from Waverley's Cheema Aquatic Club won their 200-metre canoe race in the finals at the National Canoe Championships in Welland, Ontario; and

Whereas the Cheema Club was one of five Nova Scotia clubs which also raced in the final; and

Whereas the victory gives the midget-age team the right to take part in a demonstration of canoeing at the 2012 Olympic Games in London, as part of an International Canoe Federation strategy to attract more people to paddling;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly congratulate the Cheema Club team on their success and cheer them on as they take their place in the 2012 London Olympics paddling demonstration event.

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 on a very important introduction.

MR. MAT WHYNOTT: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I know I've been doing introductions all the time here but I wanted to bring the attention of the House to two very, very important people in my life: my beautiful wife, Charlotte, and our new baby daughter, Morgan. (Applause) She was born on August 21, 2011, and she is definitely the best thing that has ever happened to me, absolutely.

AN HON. MEMBER: What about the marriage? (Laughter)

MR. WHYNOTT: The marriage was the best part, right, sorry. Thank you very much. (Applause)

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

RESOLUTION NO. 1923

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

Whereas on November 1, 1958, the last of 100 survivors of the Springhill Bump was found after being trapped underground for nine days; and

Whereas 74 men lost their lives in the Springhill Bump, which was then the most severe mining accident in North American history and a tragic reminder of the tremendous human cost of mining; and

Whereas the disaster had a huge impact on people all across Canada because it was the first major international story to be covered by live television;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House recognize the terrible toll the mining disaster had on the community of Springhill and remember the men who lost their lives underground.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Digby-Annapolis.

RESOLUTION NO. 1924

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

Whereas the 36th annual Digby Scallop Days were held this past August; and

Whereas during these festivities we saw several young ladies vying for the title of Digby Scallop Queen; and

Whereas at this year's coronation ceremony Alyssa Oliver was chosen as Digby Scallop Queen 2011;

Therefore be it resolved that members of this House congratulate Alyssa Oliver on her coronation and wish her continued success.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Hants West.

RESOLUTION NO. 1925

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

Whereas after attending an information session on homelessness in the Windsor area Caitlin Seaward felt compelled to try to find a way to help with the growing number of people with no place to call home; and

Whereas Caitlin, a 15-year-old student at Avon View High School, organized a benefit concert for Harvest House in Windsor which raised \$1,147 towards the local outreach centre; and

Whereas the concert included such performers as Mike Aube, Andy and Ariana, Merle Jacklyn, and Peter Gibson who graciously donated their time to this very worthy cause;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly thank Caitlin for her thoughtfulness and compassion, and wish her all the best with the future events.

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 Clare.

RESOLUTION NO. 1926

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

Whereas the Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources presents the Nova Scotia Woodlot Owner of the Year Award each year to recognize and reward landowners for outstanding stewardship of their woodland and to help encourage the practice of sustainable woodlot management; and

Whereas Eldon and Lucille White, who were also the western regional winners, were chosen Nova Scotia's 2011 Woodlot Owner of the Year for their diversity of excellent management techniques and ingenuity; and

Whereas owners and operators of Richfield Forestry since the 1980s, the White family continues to show that an active forest is a healthy forest;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Eldon and Lucille White on being chosen provincial Woodlot Owner of the Year and thank them for their innovative approach to woodlot management.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Argyle.

RESOLUTION NO. 1927

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

Whereas in July 2011, 10-year-old Miguel Surette of Abram's River was chosen as one of four minor baseball players from across Nova Scotia to participate in the World Children's Baseball Fair in Taiwan; and

Whereas Miguel, who is the son of Scott and Lenora Surette, was accompanied to Taiwan by his dad and was part of the contingent sent by Baseball Nova Scotia; and

Whereas baseball is extremely important to Miguel and his whole family;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Miguel Surette on being given such a remarkable opportunity to hone his skills in the sport, and to take part in cultural and recreational activities rarely offered to someone so young.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Colchester North.

RESOLUTION NO. 1928

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

Whereas the Northumberland Arts Council Tatamagouche recently celebrated its 30th Anniversary; and

Whereas the council continues to promote and support artisans from along the shore, across the province and beyond; and

Whereas on October 15th the community of Tatamagouche, in Colchester North, celebrated the 30th Anniversary of the Northumberland Arts Council and acknowledged the council's first president, Marg Colburn;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly extend congratulations to the arts council and to Marg Colburn, its first president.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Cape Breton West.

RESOLUTION NO. 1929

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

Whereas Mark MacPhail of Ben Eoin is an accomplished arm-wrestling competitor; and

Whereas in May, Mark was crowned the left-hand open champion at the 27th provincial championships held in Porters Lake, his 16th title; and

Whereas Mark also claimed second in the right-hand class, losing a tough battle to Shawn Ross;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Mark MacPhail on his accomplishments and wish him every success at the Canadian National Armwrestling Championships being held in Ottawa.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Halifax Clayton Park.

RESOLUTION NO. 1930

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

Whereas Dr. Tamara Franz-Odendaal, a professor at the Mount Saint Vincent University Biology Department, was appointed the only Atlantic Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council Chair for Women in Science and Engineering; and

Whereas Dr. Franz-Odendaal will work over the next five years to increase the participation of women in science and engineering in the Atlantic Region; and

Whereas holding the chair position is a first for the Mount, a university that is committed to the advancement of women;

Therefore be it resolved that members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating both Dr. Franz-Odendaal and Mount Saint Vincent University on this prestigious and important appointment.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Inverness.

RESOLUTION NO. 1931

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

Whereas in May the Strait Area Chamber of Commerce awarded its most prestigious award, the Jack Hartery Lifetime Achievement Award to Albert and Jeanette MacDonald of Port Hood; and

Whereas the MacDonald family has been involved in the construction industry for 50 years and received the lifetime achievement award which recognizes business and community excellence in Cape Breton and Mulgrave; and

Whereas the late Jack Hartery was a long-time resident of Port Hawkesbury, who was greatly respected in the community and remembered for his concerted efforts to negotiate an agreement between labour and management at Stora Enso, Port Hawkesbury, in the 1990s;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate the MacDonald family on being awarded the Jack Hartery Lifetime Achievement Award and recognize their commitment to business and community excellence.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Cape Breton North.

RESOLUTION NO. 1932

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

Whereas Bras d'Or Elementary has been chosen as one of only nine winners of the Royal Bank Join the Wave school contest in Atlantic Canada; and

Whereas each contestant school has to submit an act of blue - creating a water-themed mural, conducting water-related science, or completing a freshwater cleanup activity near their community; and

Whereas the Royal Bank has pledged more than \$28 million to organizations around the world promoting education and awareness about the value and vulnerability of the world's water resources;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating the students of Bras d'Or Elementary and thanking the Royal Bank of Canada for their efforts in protecting our water.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Victoria -The Lakes.

RESOLUTION NO. 1933

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

Whereas Anita MacDonald, a talented young fiddler, dancer and Gaelic singer from Little Narrows, Victoria County, released her first CD, Stepping Stone, surrounded by fans and family during the Celtic Colours Festival Club at the Gaelic College at St. Anns; and

Whereas Anita's album was as a result of being awarded the 2011 Frank "Big Sampie" Sampson Award presented by the Festival Volunteer Drive'ers Association and supported by Lakewind Sound Studios; and

Whereas Anita, who is currently in her third year of a Bachelor of Arts degree in Cape Breton University, has become an inspiration for young, talented artists to reach for the stars by demonstrating that with dedication and hard work you can achieve your goals;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly applaud Anita MacDonald on the release of her CD and wish her the best of luck in all 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 Yarmouth.

RESOLUTION NO. 1934

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

Whereas since 1976, Dr. Shelagh Leahey's care for the people of Yarmouth has included family practice, in-patient care, emergency care, obstetrics, and palliative care services, and Dr. Leahey is the medical administrator of Ocean View Family Practice, mentors international medical graduates, and is involved in a palliative care project; and

Whereas Dr. Shelagh Leahey, a former president of the College of Physicians and Surgeons, has served with Doctors Nova Scotia for 24 years, has held a variety of positions with the South West Health, and has participated on the board of Cancer Care Nova Scotia and the Reproductive Care Advisory Committee; and

Whereas Dr. Shelagh Leahey's many contributions, dedication and leadership were recently recognized by the Nova Scotia College of Family Physicians when they named her the Nova Scotia Family Physician of the Year for 2011;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly recognize Dr. Shelagh Leahey for the many years of dedication, compassion and medical care she has given to the people of Yarmouth, and congratulate her on being named the Nova Scotia Family Physician of the Year for 2011 – and I would also like to personally thank her for the many years she served as my family physician.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS

MR. SPEAKER: As we begin Question Period, I remind all honourable members that the use of BlackBerries, laptops, and any other electrical devices is not permitted during Question Period. They are to remain off during that period.

I would also like to remind all honourable members who are recognized by the Chair that they must direct all comments and questions through the Chair.

The time is 3:21 p.m. and we will continue until 4:21 p.m.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

NEWPAGE - PORT HAWKESBURY: FINANCING - INTERVENTION

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Yesterday we learned that NewPage Ohio has filed a notice of motion to investigate the \$25 million it transferred to NewPage Port Hawkesbury. The official creditors committee representing NewPage Ohio claims that NewPage Port Hawkesbury owes the parent company \$45 million and it is questioning the \$25 million that was transferred here to our operation.

My question to the Premier is, can the Premier tell us what government has done to intervene on NewPage Port Hawkesbury's behalf to ensure that that money remains here for the benefit of the workers and Nova Scotia companies owed money?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, the government has been involved in the process right from day one. In fact, that fund was something that we worked with the company on to ensure that it was in place in order to provide some comfort and payment to those creditors. In addition to that, we've also done a number of other things, but we continue to work through the court process in order to see to it, to the extent that it's possible, that we protect the interests of the contractors and the mill workers there at NewPage.

MR. MCNEIL: My question to the Premier was that NewPage Ohio was now questioning that transfer and that very fund. It's our hope and the hope of, I'm sure, not only Port Hawkesbury but Nova Scotia, that government intervenes to ensure that that money remains here in Nova Scotia. This mill holds the surrounding communities together and is worth millions in economic development. We know that the Minister of Natural Resources or some of his staff have met with some potential buyers. My question to the Premier is, what discussion has government had with prospective buyers and what plan does government have should the new buyer seek government funding?

THE PREMIER: As I think all members of the House would know, I was in Port Hawkesbury, I announced the seven-point plan that was designed to keep that facility, that plant, in an operating condition so that a new buyer would be able to come in and bring it back on-line. In some senses, that is already an investment by government in ensuring that a new buyer has an asset that they're able to operate.

Again, throughout the process what we're attempting to do is to ensure that the asset is there so that there are as many competitive bids as possible, meaning that there will not be a case where you're simply stuck with one undesirable situation. There are things that have to take place, like the transfers of licences and those sorts of things. We're going to consider all of them. We're working with the monitor who is in place under the creditor protection Act. We, like everyone else, are doing everything that we can to ensure that that mill remains an operating mill - not just for the Strait area. Many people would know that the impact of that closure would actually ripple pretty much right across the province.

MR. MCNEIL: The seven-point plan the Premier speaks of states that the stockpile wood would be used as fuel for the biomass cogeneration facility. That stockpile is losing value every day as it's rotting there. NewPage Port Hawkesbury is seeking permission to sell that stockpile wood before it loses even more value and contribute the money from the sale to the underfunded Woodsmen's Reserve Fund. My question is, does the Premier support the efforts of NewPage Port Hawkesbury to aid the reserve fund or does he stand by his position that that stockpiled fibre should be used by Nova Scotia Power in its biomass facility?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Official Opposition is confusing wood that was cut and either piled at the roadway or brought into the plant that was there and our commitment to ensure that there would be a stockpile for eventual use in the biomass project. Now, the biomass project requires dried wood, so it needs wood that has been out and cured, whereas wood that is being used in the mill is actually greener.

So there are two different stockpiles, Mr. Speaker. As far as the ones that he's talking about, those are ones that are being claimed by the company. What I would support, of course, is that the value of that wood go into the fund so it can be distributed through the contractors.

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

FIRST CONTRACT LEGISLATION: PLANS - DETAILS

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier. Last Fall the Premier's government set up a Labour Management Review Committee, ramming through Bill No. 100 to create this committee. The ChronicleHerald at the time called it a model of bad democracy that is also pretty much guaranteed to produce out-of-touch advice, and I will table that quote for the Premier.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier assured worried Nova Scotians that the committee would only deal with issues of unionized workplaces and yet his government has told that committee that its first item of business should be to set up first contract arbitration for Nova Scotia. First contract arbitration is a job killer for our province and so says the legal opinion of McInnis Cooper, one of our leading law firms, who say "such legislated arbitration can have serious implications for employers", and I will also table that.

My question for the Premier is, Mr. Speaker, why was he so silent on his true plans during Bill No. 100 but is now plowing ahead with this new thing – first contract arbitration?

THE PREMIER: Well, Mr. Speaker, first of all this is before the LMRC. The very purpose of it was to have the ability to be able to have open and frank conversations about labour relations matters. That's what it's doing. I understand they had a study day with respect to first contract - 80 per cent of the workers in Canada are already covered by first contract legislation, right across the country; 15 per cent of the workers here in Nova Scotia are already covered by first contract legislation.

So, Mr. Speaker, I understand that this is an opportunity for the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party to pontificate about labour relations but really, Mr. Speaker, it's much ado about nothing.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, when it comes to pontificating, no one in this province can hold a candle to the Premier. The fact of the matter is that over the past 20 years Nova Scotia has had the lowest rate of time lost due to strikes and work stoppages. In fact, in 2010 Nova Scotia lost exactly zero days to strikes or work losses according to Human Resources and Social Development Canada. (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please.

The honourable Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party has the floor.

MR. BAILLIE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. According to Human Resources and Social Development Canada, there is no problem here. We have all enjoyed the benefits of

collective bargaining and labour/management peace, one of the key conditions to having a growing economy and creating real, sustainable jobs. Since there is no problem, my question to the Premier is this, if it isn't broken, why meddle with it now?

THE PREMIER: Well, Mr. Speaker, my recollection is, the last major strike I can remember is, of course, when the member opposite was the chief of staff to the Premier and that was how much they valued collective bargaining. They brought in a bill to take away collective bargaining rights. That's what I recall. (Interruptions)

Mr. Speaker, one of the reasons we set up the way the Labour Management Review Committee was, in fact, to ensure that there was a forum for the discussion of labour relations matters. I'm please to see that is happening.

I'd just like to go back to correct something that the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party said. Of course, what is being discussed in terms of contract arbitration, of course, only applies to unionized workplaces, Mr. Speaker.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, I know the Premier likes to debate things that may or not have happened in early 2000, but he should check his facts because he is factually incorrect in the way he started his answer. What is factual is that the Premier made no mention of first contract arbitration when he was running to be Premier, nor did he talk about it when he was ramming through Bill No. 100. He said nothing about first contract arbitration when he met with the worried small business owners of our province who came to this House during the debate on Bill No. 100.

The fact of the matter is, Nova Scotia doesn't need it, there is no problem here, nor does Nova Scotia want it. The Minister of Labour and Advanced Education in his government does say that - and I quote - it is a long-standing aim of the Labour movement, in her own discussion paper. So now we know the reason why, Mr. Speaker. My question to the Premier is, will he be a Premier for all Nova Scotia and scrap this plan now, or is he only going to be a Premier of his own special interests?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I just want to confirm for the member opposite that I am the Premier for all Nova Scotians. I intend to act in the best interests of all Nova Scotians. (Applause)

Consistently, through election campaign after election campaign, we talked about the Labour Management Review Committee. We said it was a good idea, we said we didn't want to see what had happened in the past, where legislation was just introduced without any consultation, without any vehicle for study. We talked about that because we thought it was the best way to proceed for Nova Scotians. We still believe it is the best way and we look forward to receiving the report of the LMRC.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clare.

TIR - CHIP SEALING: AGRIC. MIN - POLITICAL INFLUENCE

HON. WAYNE GAUDET: Mr. Speaker, my question is about chip sealing roads. We know that the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal decided to get back in the business of chip sealing roads in Nova Scotia this year. The department initially had planned to do over 350 kilometres of chip-sealing this year. We found out last week that the department only did about 35 to 36 kilometres of chip-sealing. Furthermore, I understand the road that the Minister of Agriculture lives on was one of the very few roads that the government chip-sealed this year, Mr. Speaker.

My question to the Minister of Agriculture is, did the minister use his political influence at the Cabinet Table to have his own road chip sealed?

HON. JOHN MACDONELL: Not within my department portfolio, Mr. Speaker.

MR. GAUDET: Mr. Speaker, Nova Scotians across this province are driving on thousands of kilometres of road, badly in need of repair and maintenance, yet what we are seeing is a minister whose road was not on the original list get special treatment from this government. My question, again, to the minister is, were government paving and chip-sealing schemes devised to pave the roads of Cabinet Ministers?

HON. WILLIAM ESTABROOKS: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take the opportunity to table the 5-Year Highway Improvement Plan for 2011-12. I'd like to direct the member's attention to Page 11, where it is listed that 4.7 kilometres of the Grand Lake Road are scheduled for chip sealing. (Applause)

MR. GAUDET: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Agriculture indicated today that he wanted the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal to not chip seal his road, but to pave it. This is consistent with what the former NDP president in Truro-Bible Hill stated that Party executives asked for a list of roads that voted NDP so they could be paved first. My question to the minister is, are the roads in this province being paved by merit or by political influence?

MR. ESTABROOKS: Mr. Speaker, members of this House are aware of the fact that on many occasions they come to my office and we talk about their priorities. I want those priorities to be clear and I want them to be public, therefore we have put forward a five-year road plan. The concern of the past is not what we're dealing with - we're dealing about the present and how business is about to be done.

I don't have the time to go through the history lesson of why we have become involved with the five-year road plan and how we wanted to make it public, but I want all members of this House to ensure that when you look to the five-year road plan, you saw what was listed there, you brought your concerns to my attention, and that is going to continue. The Grand Lake Road is to be double-chip sealed from the get-go and that was

the final decision. In fact the work has been completed, a barbeque has been held by the local people for the road crew, and it has been very well received. (Applause)

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

**ADVANCED EDUC. & LBR. - FIRST CONTRACT LEGISLATION:
REASONS - EXPLAIN**

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education. I am proud that Nova Scotia has strong labour legislation; we have good labour relations here with few work stoppages. The Department of Labour and Advanced Education conciliation services have a 95 per cent success rate - that's why Nova Scotians were surprised to hear about the potential introduction of first contract arbitration. My question to the minister is, since we have good labour relations in this province, what problem is government trying to fix with first contract arbitration?

HON. MARILYN MORE: Mr. Speaker, I know that my colleagues in the Chamber share the government's goal of enhancing labour relations within this province, and certainly our interest in looking at a possible Nova Scotia model for first contracts should be no surprise. The NDP Labour Critic, back in 2006, actually introduced a bill into this Chamber on first contract. We're only one of four provinces who don't have first contract, and it's only natural that when we see the rest of the country moving in that direction we should ask our Labour Management Review Committee to take a look at it, and that's exactly what's happened.

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, I'm wondering if the minister would clarify in her next answer - did she direct the committee to look at contract arbitration or did they actually make the recommendation to the department, because it was always with the understanding that it was the labour relations committee that was making this recommendation to the minister, not the minister asking labour relations to look at it.

I think it's an important clarification because in the public it's being addressed as if this stand-alone committee is out there doing work and looking at issues that are affecting the labour workforce. I think, minister, in your answer you said that you had asked them to look at it. Could you please clarify that?

MS. MORE: Mr. Speaker, the Labour Management Review Committee is one of a couple dozen advisory committees that report to me and I have asked them to look at this issue. I'm looking for research analysis and a group to coordinate the consultation on this. They have undertaken it in a very thoughtful way. They had their study day to which they invited representatives not only of unionized workplaces and employers, but also non-unionized workplaces and employers. They put out a discussion paper and that consultation finishes this Friday and they're going to be meeting next week to analyze the results. I look forward to hearing their summary of the consultation.

So I sent a letter to the co-chairs asking them to look into the issue of first contract and what it might look like in this province.

MR. MCNEIL: On October 28th, at the Nova Scotia Federation of Labour Convention, delegates said that the passage of first contract arbitration was their payday for campaign work done by labour organizations to get NDP members elected. I'm sure the minister remembers that question being asked to her.

Mr. Speaker, last session we saw Bill No. 100. This session maybe we'll be dealing with first contract arbitration. Can the government tell us what other payback legislation may be coming?

MS. MORE: Any proposed legislation, any legislation that's introduced, and any policy changes in this province are always done in the best interests of all Nova Scotians. We have fairly stable labour relations - we acknowledge that and it takes co-operation on the part of both unionized and non-unionized employers and employees. But certainly, first contract legislation could possibly put another tool in the toolkit in terms of enhancing stability in this province, to make sure that on those rare occasions when the collective bargaining process does not result in an easily achieved first contract, that there are other methods to help both the employer and the union to reach agreement. This will enable workers to continue to take wages home to their families and make sure there's no disruption of work and productivity in this province. Looking at this makes sense. It's a sign of a responsible government.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants West.

TIR - PAVING: FIVE-YEAR PLAN - TRANSPARENCY

MR. CHUCK PORTER: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is for the Premier. Under his leadership the five-year plan for paving is supposed to get politics out of paving, and I'll table his very words. Does the Premier agree that his plan must be transparent so that Nova Scotians can trust it and trust his government is doing the right thing?

THE PREMIER: I do and it is.

MR. PORTER: A key part of transparency is accuracy. In the Premier's five-year paving plan, the government said it would pave a 4.7 kilometre stretch of the Grand Lake Road. It sounds innocent enough. However, it turns out that the Grand Lake Road is what the Municipality of East Hants calls an alias for the Monte Vista Road - and I'll table that information as well, Mr. Speaker - the very same road about which the Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations was embroiled in controversy some three years ago.

My question for the Premier is very simple. Does he agree that it is not appropriate to be sneaky and use a name which is an alias and not the common name for a road to avoid questions about whether the government is trying to hide a project from Nova Scotians?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, what I think is sad is that a member of the Legislature would come here and ask a question which imputes that kind of motive to another member of another party in this Legislature. I think that's truly sad.

As I understand it, the Monte Vista Road turns into the Renfrew Road at some point in time and goes down into Grand Lake. They actually switch from one part of the road to the other. In fact, the people who've been out to the minister's house before will know that the paving already goes past his front gate. The people on that road have argued for years for it to be paved or chip sealed. They've come to the House, they've talked about the engineering standards, and they've talked about the school buses that have had trouble getting up and down that road. That road was neglected for years by the Progressive Conservatives, and finally it's been double-chip sealed according to the plan that we put not only before the Legislature but before the people of Nova Scotia.

MR. PORTER: It's not about the work getting done; it's about how it got done. So sneaky were the NDP that not only did they use an alias for the Monte Visa Road, it isn't even 4.7-kilometres long. No, only by measuring that road at 3.5 kilometres and doing the math can a Nova Scotian find out that the NDP hid an extra 1.2 kilometres of paving on the unnamed road. Guess which road, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker, I asked the Premier if the NDP Government wants to do paving fairly. Does the Premier agree that it must use accurate information and not both use a sneaky alias for a controversial road and sneak in an extra road, one that just happens to be in front of his Cabinet Minister colleague's house?

THE PREMIER: I'll just repeat what I said. The people who were on that road, as they are on many roads in this province, expect that the province will take the responsibility to ensure that the road is appropriately paved. In this case, we put it in the five-year paving plan for exactly the reason that we intended to take the political lobbying out of it. I don't know, over the last couple of years, how many members of the Opposition have come to see the minister about paving their roads? There have been a lot of them, and they have approached me about roads because that is the job of the MLAs.

I'm not saying it's a bad thing, but what I am saying is that what the minister does is determine the priorities based on engineering standards, on the basis of the economic use for that particular road. They consider a lot of things. This is a fair, transparent, open process for road paving in this province; something that never, ever happened when the Progressive Conservatives were in power.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

HEALTH & WELLNESS - DHA CUTS

MR. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, in true NDP fashion, in a mid-Friday afternoon flurry, the public was informed that next year's DHA budgets would be reduced by 3 per cent. We learned from last year's experience that a freeze in DHA health care budgets is a cut. Lessons learned from last year can lead all of us to the conclusion that a 3 per cent cut will be much more than 3 per cent. The cost of living is running at 3.4 per cent. A contract reveals today a one-year increase of 3.4 per cent. I question the Minister of Health and Wellness, why does the minister continue to downplay the cuts by saying it will only be \$46 million when she knows full well DHAs will have to deal with a dollar amount far greater than that?

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I thank the honourable member for the question. By my calculation, 3 per cent of \$1.6 billion is, in fact, \$45.5 million. I would say to the honourable member, do the math. It's fairly straight-forward and I have a calculator if he needs one.

MR. GLAVINE: When in Opposition, the NDP would be the first to scream and yell about any mention of cuts to health care, not to mention \$46 million. Now, when the people of Nova Scotia are facing the health care cuts, it will be more in the tune of about \$80 million. The minister downplays the fall-out to patients and is telling everyone, everything will be okay.

For the IWK, a 5 per cent cut is \$9.3 million. That is \$9.3 million less for programs for children, women and families. According to the CEO of the IWK, cuts of this magnitude will result in the closure of outpatient clinics. For Capital District, that same 5 per cent cut represents a reduction of \$33.6 million. My question to the minister is, will the Minister of Health and Wellness stand before this House, guarantee Nova Scotians that a reduction of \$80 million in DHA budgets will not impact patient care?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: In the past 10 years, the IWK budget has gone from \$89 million to \$189 million. This rate of growth, for example, in that one facility is simply not sustainable. We can do things better and we are doing things better. We're making strategic investments in health care. We're seeing expansion of many services for Nova Scotians around the province. I remind the members across the way that the last time they were in government the health authorities in this province were running a \$240 million deficit. This government will not permit our health care system to be jeopardized by doing the kind of thing that that Party did when they were in government.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Glace Bay.

MR. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and how about those Maple Leafs?

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. Wrong order - it's the honourable member for Hants West.

TIR: PAVING - TRANSPARENCY

MR. CHUCK PORTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question through you is to the Premier. It's a shame that the NDP Government plan uses an alias and sneaks an extra road in by using an inflated distance, but sadly, there is more. I'm sorry to say that the NDP also tried to hide their political paving by telling Nova Scotians in their five-year paving plan that this project, this paving fiasco, was from the Renfrew Road to the end of the Grand Lake Road. No reasonable person reading the plan would think they were paving the Renfrew Road.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the Premier about his leadership is, how does Cabinet approve a plan that uses an alias, hides paving a controversial extra road, and strongly suggests that the NDP was not paving the Renfrew Road when they were paving right in front of a Cabinet Minister's home?

THE PREMIER: Again, as I said, I am just completely disappointed in the member opposite and his approach to these kinds of questions. I think it is sad and reprehensible.

The reality is, Mr. Speaker, we set out a public road-paving plan for everyone to see. He has had it for months now to look at. It is based on, as I've said, engineering standards, it's based on the usage of those roads; it's based on questions like the economic considerations. He can go out and ask the people on that road whether or not they think the road needed to be double chip sealed and I'm sure he will find out that that had to be done.

Mr. Speaker, we don't do it the way that they did it, which of course was a mystery really. We do it through a public process so that people know when they can expect to get their road paved.

MR. PORTER: Mr. Speaker, this is about integrity of government and so difficult questions have to be asked and answered, not deflected. If someone pulled the wool over the Premier's eyes or one of his ministers to get something done, this House needs to know exactly what happened. So will the Premier commit immediately to release all records of meetings in the government that had anything to do with paving the Renfrew Road, to help get to the bottom of this sticky, dark mess?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, it makes you wonder what went on in past governments. Were they really sitting down having some kind of meetings over a piece of pavement somewhere? It's hard to believe that that's what went on. Maybe it did, I don't know.

Mr. Speaker, in the past when I was in Opposition, I took a real interest in what was going on around the province. I went out to that road and I went right down to the very end of it. I know exactly what it looks like. I met with the residents down there and they told me how difficult that was for the operation of the school buses that went on it, the fact that they had people down there who were building new homes, and they asked the former government on many occasions to take note of the difficulties they were having.

The member and the minister, of course, made those representations to the former government as well, Mr. Speaker, as is completely appropriate. That is why it was included in the five-year public road-paving plan for everyone to see.

MR. PORTER: Mr. Speaker, the Premier trumpeted a five-year pavement plan and claimed that it would help get politics out of paving. Yet, in the first year of the plan, what was one of their highest priority roads to be paved? It was a 1.2-kilometre stretch of the Renfrew Road, running right through the heart of the lands owned by the Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations and his family.

How can the public have confidence in the NDP Government's actions when the only family they stood up for was the minister's, using money paid by every other family in Nova Scotia?

THE PREMIER: Well, Mr. Speaker, first of all, it is the second year of the road-paving plan, that's the first thing. Secondly, we pave roads in that member's constituency, just as we pave roads - I don't know, perhaps we've paved the road that goes right by his house. I don't know because I don't keep track of where everybody lives. (Interruptions) We pave the roads that need to be paved. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Glace Bay.

ERDT: ECONOMIC POLICIES - EXPLAIN

MR. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and once again, how about those Maple Leafs? (Interruptions) How about those Flyers?

Mr. Speaker, this government campaigned on changing the province for the better, but today out-of-work Nova Scotians aren't feeling much change. Unemployment is still unacceptably high in the province and it only gets worse as you go outside of Halifax. People are leaving the workforce, looking elsewhere for jobs, especially in southwestern Nova Scotia, northern Nova Scotia, and in my home of Cape Breton. The NDP's approach to economic development has failed so far so my question to the Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism is, why does his government continue with the same failed economic policies of the past?

HON. PERCY PARIS: Mr. Speaker, we've launched the jobsHere initiative and under the jobsHere initiative we've seen growth in jobs in the Province of Nova Scotia. You know, in the world of economics and the world of jobs, sometimes companies close for reasons that are beyond any one individual's control.

We've created jobs in the Province of Nova Scotia, Mr. Speaker, and do you know what? We've got a plan. For the first time the Province of Nova Scotia has a plan on how to move this province forward when it comes to jobs. Talk about jobs - let's not forget about Ships Start Here. Let's not forget that at the peak that contract will hire over 11,000 new jobs for the Province of Nova Scotia. (Interruptions)

MR. MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, we certainly do recognize the impact that the Irving Shipbuilding project will have and we do thank Irving for all their efforts in making that happen. (Applause)

Mr. Speaker, the reality is we still are uncompetitive as a province. Wages are amongst the lowest in the country. Our unemployment rate is consistently one of the highest in the country. We have some of the highest taxes in the country and some of the lowest rates of growth, yet the minister fails to address any of these issues. He is simply more interested in marketing and rebranding the failures of his government's first two years in power.

Mr. Speaker, why is the Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism more interested in catchy slogans than in making the province more competitive and prosperous?

MR. PARIS: Mr. Speaker, I could take some time to talk about what this government has done in just two-and-a-half years after falling on the heels of a government that was inactive for 20 years. I can talk about the PIP program, the Productivity Investment Program. I can talk about the old IEF, which is now called the Nova Scotia Jobs Fund, and the opportunities. (Interruptions)

Mr. Speaker, I can talk about the incentives that this government has in its tool box for jobs in the Province of Nova Scotia through payroll rebates and such as that. I can talk about the credit union loan program and how it's helping to create jobs in the Province of Nova Scotia where we increased the ceilings of that to \$500,000 and increased it to a 10-year period as far as payback goes. We are doing things and the good people of Nova Scotia recognize that, and I hear that everywhere I travel in this province. (Applause)

MR. MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I invite the minister to come to Glace Bay and ask the people of Glace Bay as people leave, continuously. If you want to find them they will be in Alberta.

What this province needs is to change the way we do business in terms of economic development. Nova Scotia suffers from an uncompetitive tax structure which has been made worse by this government. They've hiked the HST and refused to index income tax. The NDP continues to charge a tax on tax at the pumps which even the Premier called an immoral tax when he was in Opposition. Now is the time for us to get the politics out of economic development but the minister simply chose to slap snazzy new logos on an old slush fund.

Mr. Speaker, when will this minister act to make necessary changes to ensure that Nova Scotia businesses are competitive and end the slush fund politics?

MR. PARIS: Mr. Speaker, I listened pretty intently to that and my response is, well, maybe that member should go down to Shelburne Shipyard and tell them the same thing. Maybe that member should go to Yarmouth and go to Theriault & Son in Meteghan River and tell them that same thing. Maybe he should go to Seaforth Enterprises and tell them the same thing.

This government has funded and co-operated with companies and individuals from one region of the province to the other. In two and a half years we have a proven track record and we will continue to do what's right for the Province of Nova Scotia.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants West.

PREM.: PAVING PLANS - MINISTERIAL CONFLICT

MR. CHUCK PORTER: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is for the Premier. Sadly, serious questions have now been raised about a Cabinet Minister and paving work in front of his home. The Premier has spoken about taking politics out of paving and bringing forward his five-year plan. The chip sealing work on the Renfrew Road in East Hants used provincial government equipment and provincial government workers to double-chip seal a stretch where about 90 per cent of the frontage is owned by the Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations and members of his family.

Can the Premier state - when this matter came before Cabinet - what steps did he take, what leadership did he exercise to make sure the minister declared his conflict? (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Thanks, boys. The honourable member for Hants West has the floor.

MR. PORTER: Thank you. What leadership did he exercise to make sure the minister declared his conflict of interest and remove himself from discussions and decisions involving the five-year paving plan?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, he's right about one thing and that is that it's sad. The reality is that the five-year paving plan was put forward by the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal based on engineering standards. The purpose of the member's question is to, by innuendo, slander another member of this House and I think it's reprehensible. (Applause)

MR. PORTER: Mr. Speaker, this is a very sad moment, indeed, because you would think the NDP Government would want to say very clearly that the Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations had removed himself from all discussions involving matters in which he had a personal interest. The Premier knows full well that the government he leads can choose to provide that assurance to Nova Scotians, the assurance as to whether decisions were made in a proper and ethical manner. My question to the Premier is, will he undertake to explain all steps that were taken to keep the Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations from participating in discussions about roadwork in which he had a personal interest?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, again, it is amazing. I'd love to have known what went on in the former government that they had ministers sitting around talking about paving in their own ridings. Maybe it's just so unbelievable we can't imagine that they would be wasting their time that way. Of course, the minister brings forward his road-paving plan as was presented here in the House.

MR. PORTER: Mr. Speaker, the Premier knows that his minister was willing in 2008 and trying to stack a petition against his road. He also knew the minister in his personal capacity had opposed the cost share of a full paving job of that road. The Premier knew the minister was experiencing political trouble for blocking the wishes of his constituents. Is the Premier now saying that no one was paying attention to see if the Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations was trying to get out of political trouble with his neighbours by getting the Monte Vista Road and his own road paved?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, first of all, you know, we have a lot of challenges for the government, dealing with the economy that was of course so endangered by the actions of the former government (Interruptions) but for the details on the five-year road improvement plan, I am going to ask the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal to explain it to the member opposite.

HON. WILLIAM ESTABROOKS: The member opposite and previous members of the other administration - if you think this government sits at Cabinet meetings and goes through road by road, you are from another planet. We have many things to decide, we have many questions to decide. I want you to know, Mr. Speaker, I meet with staff, we look at the priorities, we publish it in the five-year road plan and when you see it, he saw it. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: I went through this in the last sitting of the House, using the word “you”. I would remind all members of the House of Assembly to please refrain from using the word “you” in the House of Assembly.

The honourable member for Digby-Annapolis.

EDUC.: WEYMOUTH ELEM. SCH. - REVIEW PROCESS

MR. HAROLD THERIAULT: Mr. Speaker, I think we’re all from another planet in here.

Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Education. Students and parents in Weymouth are trying to save their school. Despite having 250 students and a growing community, this school has been recommended for closure. Parents and students of Weymouth Elementary School want to know why their school has been slated to close. So can the Minister of Education explain why Weymouth is at risk of losing their school?

HON. RAMONA JENNEX: Thank you very much for the question because I think there might be a little bit of misunderstanding. When a school is identified by a school board for review, that does not necessarily mean that it’s slated for closure. There’s a very robust process that everyone in this House and the province works towards, to make sure that the review process is fair and is open and that the students and the parents will be able to participate in that review with the school board. There are very clear regulations assigned to that. So I just want to clarify that, that if their school is up for review, then there’s a very clear process and they can be involved in that process.

MR. THERIAULT: I wish the minister would be in Weymouth tonight when all the people gather there at the school and could say that to them and maybe I’ll get that word to them but they believe that on March 12, 2012, that school is going to be closed and the school board is saying that.

Mr. Speaker, parents in Weymouth believe the board is making a big mistake also. The board would have to build eight new classrooms at St. Mary’s Bay Academy. It would only save \$120,000 in administration costs and would put four- and five-year-olds in schools with 17- and 18-year-olds, which is a big concern in that community. Would the Minister of Education review the recommendation and make sure that the board is making the best decision for the children and parents of the Weymouth school?

MS. JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, the school board has a mandate and that is to make sure that rules and regulations, procedures are followed. The minister does not get involved in any of the decisions around that. We just make sure that the process is followed appropriately. In terms of the message to people in that area, they have a role to play in being able to articulate their concern to the school board and the school boards have a role to play in making sure that they make the very best decisions on behalf of their students and

their school board. I understand that school review processes are very stressful, but I also want to say that parents and families have a part to play in making these decisions.

MR. THERIAULT: They believe the minister is involved. They believe the Minister of Finance is involved, because they're asked to make cuts to that school and they're going to close one down if they can save \$120,000 a year. A measly \$120,000 a year is what the school board is going to try to save to gather up a few pennies for these budget cuts and that's what they're after.

Mr. Speaker, the parents of Weymouth Elementary School are meeting tonight to discuss the future of their school. They wished I was there but I did send a statement and I will send the answer that you're going to give me in a moment, Madam Minister. Can they count on the Minister of Education to stand up for the children of Weymouth Elementary School for the sake of a mere \$120,000 to be saved by that board?

MS. JENNEX: The Minister of Education supports the schools boards and the discussion that they make and the decisions they make are definitely made within the best interest of all students in their school boards. So I support the board as they go through this process, I support the parents and families as they articulate their concerns to the board and I trust this board will make the appropriate decisions around this.

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

COM. SERV.: ESIA CHANGES - CONSULTATION

MS. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, on August 8th the Minister of Community Services announced changes to special needs regulations under the Employment Support and Income Assistance Act. This meant changes for clients accessing essential items to alleviate pain and suffering. Disabilities groups and anti-poverty advocates came together to denounce these changes.

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Community Services tell the House with whom she consulted in advance of this announcement to ensure this policy would not have a negative impact on Nova Scotia's most vulnerable?

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: Thank you to the honourable member for her question. Firstly I want to get the facts out there that are correct facts. It is not a change in a policy that has affected all Nova Scotians with disabilities who receive IA. It was clarity in the language that was going to the appeal board, which they requested clarity on what the definition of "special needs" means, and it affected 25 individuals over a 10-year period and was actually a request from those individuals who were not in our policy in the first place.

MS. REGAN: Mr. Speaker, on August 17th in an interview with CBC Radio, the minister chastised Dalhousie Legal Aid for spreading misinformation and fear-mongering about these policy changes. Interestingly, Dal Legal Aid and Nova Scotia Legal Aid were to appear before the Community Services Committee this morning, along with the Department of Community Services; the latter at the insistence of the department and NDP committee members. They all cancelled their appearances yesterday. This begs the question, has the Minister of Community Services placed a gag order on these organizations?

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, I think that's a little bit of a funny question because of the fact of, who puts a gag order on Dalhousie Legal Aid and Nova Scotia Legal Aid? What we have done, because we are a government that works with the people of Nova Scotia, we have invited them in because they've had some concerns. We want to make sure they understand all the facts and what is taking place, and we're hearing their side. I think that's what you call good government.

MS. REGAN: Mr. Speaker, if what the minister says is true, why didn't they show up? They didn't show up for a reason. While we were very disappointed the two legal aid societies cancelled their appearance before the committee, we were especially surprised when the Department of Community Service cancelled its appearance too.

Can the minister please explain to this House how her department pulled out of a House committee appearance with almost no notice even after its presentation had been sent to committee members? Could it be that the Department of Community Services only planned on appearing before the committee to counter what was being said by the legal aid societies?

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, I find it very odd that anyone would be chastising you as a government and as a minister who is working with the people of Nova Scotia. That is what we've done with Nova Scotia Legal Aid and Dalhousie Legal Aid - we have been talking to them. Instead of ignoring them, we have been talking to them. We said there's a lot of misinformation out there, a lot of miscommunication, so what we need to do is come together as a team and let's work together for a solution for the people of Nova Scotia, instead of fighting against each other. I think that's a very good thing and we should be congratulated for that.

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

ERDT: TOURISM STATS. - DECLINE

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, the August tourism stats came out last week and they were very discouraging. They show that between January and August of this year, room nights sold in Yarmouth dropped 8 per cent over the last year; the South Shore and

the Eastern Shore both saw a drop of 5 per cent; and Cape Breton, the number-one Island in North America, declined by 3 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, my question through you to the minister is, will the minister concede that under his leadership tourism stats are moving in the wrong direction? Will he admit that he has failed the tourism industry in Nova Scotia and is presiding at a slow death of family businesses in this province?

HON. PERCY PARIS: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise in my place and talk about tourism in the Province of Nova Scotia. As we all know, tourism is an important economic driver for the Province of Nova Scotia. Tourism is down right across Canada but, on a good note, Germany air flights are up, our cruise ship visitations are up, and those are all good things.

Mr. Speaker, our U.S. tourism has continued with a downward trend, which has been that way for the last number of years. We just announced a new operating agency for tourism and we're expecting big things from that agency and for the future of tourism in the Province of Nova Scotia.

MR. ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, this time last year the minister was questioned about tourism stats and he said, "The honourable member talks about me not listening, well, I wish he'd listen because we have thought outside the box." I will table that.

Mr. Speaker, tourism numbers are plummeting across the province and this government has no plan to fix it - and shows no indication that they intend to fix it. My question through you to the minister is, he tried thinking outside the box last year and that has failed - what is the minister's plan to increase tourism and get this failing industry back on track?

MR. PARIS: You know what, Mr. Speaker? We did think outside of the box. I can remember kicking off a commercial last year, which I received some negative publicity about, but I think that kickoff was well received by all Nova Scotians and all those outside the region who viewed it.

Mr. Speaker, we've got great things in mind with the new operating special agency when it comes to tourism. One of the things that we are doing through that agency is we are going to start a consultation process through that agency with all the key stakeholders in the area of tourism.

Mr. Speaker, we all know that Nova Scotia is a great place to vacation. What we have to convince people of is we have to do more in the way of advertising, more in the way of a lot of things. We are going to get there. Things have changed in the world, people do not travel as much today as they did 10 years ago, that's an obvious fact.

MR. ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, the minister cut funding to the Yarmouth ferry, destroying the economy of the South Shore; he launched an expensive, self-serving tourism ad campaign, yet tourism numbers are down; the government raised the HST; it's driving up power rates and killing small, locally-owned business. My question is, will he admit he has no plan to turn the tourism industry around and put life back into rural Nova Scotia?

MR. PARIS: Mr. Speaker, we do have a plan. We've had a plan. When we came into government, we noticed right away, it was obvious to us that previous governments sat idly by and allowed things to happen. We recognized that right away and we put together some initiatives and we are still doing that. I've already mentioned . . .

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

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

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

PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 65.

Bill No. 65 - Nova Scotia Jobs Fund Act.

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

HON. PERCY PARIS: Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of Bill No. 65, also known as the Nova Scotia Jobs Fund Act.

It gives me great pleasure to rise in this Assembly to speak with you about the Nova Scotia Jobs Fund Act. This updated, modern legislation will provide the backbone for job creation in the Province of Nova Scotia. As Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism, I quickly realized that a 1950's model for economic development could not be adapted to meet today's growing needs.

The Industrial Expansion Fund was simply outdated. It was not providing the foundation or the oversight necessary to properly support future initiatives in businesses

and communities of the Province of Nova Scotia, and, I might add, our Auditor General agreed. The Nova Scotia Jobs Fund will be created from this new bill, which will replace the Industrial Expansion Fund, more commonly known as the IEF. The bill fulfills the recommendations of the Auditor General's Report and it will help the province make the most of jobs. Here, the plan to grow our economy.

I am pleased to say that the Nova Scotia Jobs Fund Act will meet the needs of the province's businesses and retain the flexibility and responsiveness. But, make no mistake about it, the Nova Scotia Jobs Fund Act is not the same as the Industrial Expansion Fund. Our new fund is distinctly different. Provincial economic development investments are being improved with a new, joint-management committee. This committee will have representatives from the Premier's office, Economic and Rural Development and Tourism, Department of Finance, Nova Scotia Business Inc. and InNOVAcorp.

It will allow for improvements in serving Nova Scotia businesses and communities. Further, it will also attract foreign investments to the Province of Nova Scotia. This joint-management committee will determine whether proposals should be directed to NSBI or the new fund. This will allow for better coordination of the province's various types of investments.

For most business transactions, NSBI will now be the main point of contact for the Province of Nova Scotia. The new fund will pursue specific investment opportunities such as assisting communities in transition, supporting industry sectors, offering regional support, assisting small business programs, investing in infrastructure, and pursuing large industrial ventures.

The Nova Scotia Jobs Fund board will now have joint members with the board of NSBI. They will continue to advise me as minister on how to maximize provincial investments to grow the economy and create good jobs.

This is only the beginning of the transparency and accountability improvements that we are putting in place with this bill. For example, the new fund, NSBI, and other provincial economic development investments will be overseen by the newly-created Economic Investment Committee. This committee will help better serve Nova Scotian businesses and our communities. It will attract foreign investment to the province.

The Public Service Act will also be amended to allow for the creation of this new Cabinet Committee. Under the Nova Scotia Jobs Fund Act, each new body plays a distinct and important role. The joint management committee will ensure all the provincial agencies are working well together, and it will ensure that the process is as timely and efficient as possible. The Jobs Fund board will involve community leaders in decisions on economic investments through the new fund, and the investment committee will ensure accountability decisions.

We will be ready to launch the new Nova Scotia Jobs Fund on April 1st; however, much of the work is already underway. We are reorganizing our investments division, adding resources, and documenting all investment procedures. We are strengthening the processes and reporting on existing files. This includes tracking and managing existing investments. We are also consolidating and processing all documentation in client files, creating a client file checklist, and formalizing an application process based on best practices and client needs.

Nova Scotia is on the cusp of some of the greatest economic opportunity in the province's history. The shipbuilding contracts alone will create thousands of jobs and boost our economy for decades to come, but we can't sit idly by, watching to see these spinoffs. There are tremendous opportunities for growth in this province, and this new legislation will help ensure that Nova Scotians have access to good jobs that will allow them to stay and build a life here in the Province of Nova Scotia. The new fund will help the province pursue regional economic initiatives, support programs that will provide assistance to small businesses, and provide community economic stability where and when needed.

It is time to think big. It is time for all of us to be optimistic about our future, and this legislation lays the groundwork to help us do just that. Thank you.

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

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am pleased to enter a few words on Bill No. 65. I dare say, after yesterday, Nova Scotians are disappointed. The only thing that really has changed from yesterday to today is the title and perhaps they have dumped a little more money in it that they can hand around as a Cabinet very quietly, without defending the business plan, without identifying to Nova Scotians, without it being open and transparent.

The only thing that has happened over the last few days, Madam Speaker, is that we've changed the title and we've left this slush fund there for Cabinet Ministers to hand out as they see fit. It is rather interesting to listen to the minister talk about - they are going to coordinate, inside of his department, a number of investments, look for job opportunities for Nova Scotia. It begs the question, what have they been doing if they haven't been doing that already? What have they been doing?

I can tell you what they have been doing. They have been waiting for Nova Scotia Business Inc. to reject business ideas, say no, it doesn't fit for us, it doesn't have a business case; it won't fly, go to the government and look at the Industrial Expansion Fund. Government looks down the list and starts picking winners and losers, Madam Speaker, in a very closed shop.

This piece of legislation simply doesn't address anything the Auditor General brought forward. What we have is a fund that is still secretive and anything goes. Madam Speaker, I think the Minister of Finance, who is sitting there, even suggested that took place in the Industrial Expansion Fund. What we have here is Industrial Expansion Fund 2. Someone referred to it yesterday in the media that it was like a Christian baptism - go in and come out with a different name, it is the same person. Call it whatever you like - the fact of the matter is there's nothing new or open and transparent about this piece of legislation.

Nova Scotians are optimistic. Nova Scotians are trying to look to the future. They are looking for a government that is going to try to modernize itself, instead of trying to find a way to go behind the Cabinet door and make decisions without being open and transparent to Nova Scotians.

When the Auditor General brought his report here to the House, he made a number of suggestions and accusations around the old Industrial Expansion Fund. I was quite pleased, as a matter of fact, if you check the record, I mentioned how happy I was that the Premier responded; that we were going to do something different with the Industrial Expansion Fund. I was very surprised that we waited six months to find out that we have changed the title and that is about it.

Madam Speaker, the Industrial Expansion Fund has an oversight committee now, one that has no teeth; one that the government went against, on at least one occasion. What is the difference between the new committee? We have somebody from the Premier's Office. I wonder how many members of the Civil Service are going to say, I wonder who in the Department of Economic and Rural Development is going to go against the representative from the Premier's Office. I wonder who in the Department of Finance is going to go against the representative from the Premier's Office. I wonder who in NSBI or inNOVAcorp is going to say no to the representative on this committee.

How is that open and transparent? The only thing missing is that we haven't put the minister on, we just shoved someone in from their office. The Premier will send someone from his office with their marching orders and who do you think, out of everyone on that committee, is going to stand up and say, no? Madam Speaker, not a single member of that committee will say no, and government knows it.

This is nothing more than a sham. Government should be embarrassed to stand up and suggest that this is rebranding, that this is about trying to be optimistic about the future. This is nothing more than keeping the old fund available to this Cabinet. If they really wanted to try something different, maybe they would have moved the investment arm out of government to an arm's length, the business arm.

Madam Speaker, NSBI is looking at cases on a business model. Are they perfect? Absolutely not. Should there be some changes? Of course. We've made some

recommendations on how that could be improved. We're not against government - this government or any government - recognizing they need to make an investment in an individual community on socio-economic needs about the only major employer, if the town needs help, to transition the community to a new tomorrow. We're not against that but let's call it what it is. It's not economic development. We're basing it on compassionate need for that community. We're trying to help that community transition to a better economic future. It's not economic development.

Let's not kid ourselves and start calling it that. I would have more courage and more respect for any member of government who stood up and said, you know what, this business is in trouble, we don't believe it has a future but we have a responsibility as a collective here, to help this business transition to something new or, quite frankly, help this community transition to a new economic model. Rather than to suggest throwing more money out of the Industrial Expansion Fund, behind closed doors, with no business case and no supporting models to suggest it's a good investment for Nova Scotians and calling it economic development.

Madam Speaker, they know it's wrong, Nova Scotians know it's wrong, and this new program is nothing more than a renamed Industrial Expansion Fund. It was interesting to follow the media to look at it. There isn't a single person who believed it and had the wool pulled over their eyes, that this was anything new and anything different. They recognized, when the Premier spoke, now six months ago, it was nothing more than to take the Auditor General's Report off the table for a few months. It was nothing more than paying political lip service to a problem that the Auditor General identified. What government should be doing is trying to fix what the Auditor General said, instead of trying to manipulate it and rebrand it as the old model.

Madam Speaker, we do have an opportunity as a province – thanks to the Irvings, thanks to the tremendous work by the workers in the shipyard. We do have a tremendous opportunity. As I said earlier, we also have a responsibility as a House and as a government to find out how we're going to spread that opportunity to economic prosperity across our province but by rebranding a failed development policy and calling it economic development for the future is simply missing the point. It's missing the point.

The minister talked about this as being a 1950 model. Madam Speaker, if you've got a 1950 car and you repaint it, it's still a 1950 car. That's what we have here. This is a poor attempt to try to keep the secrecy of Cabinet hidden, to try to keep how they hand out money hidden inside of Cabinet. We have always suggested, and will continue to suggest, that for any economic development tool, anytime that we are lending public money, we should be open and transparent about it and we should allow the business arm of government the opportunity to review that investment and tell Nova Scotians whether it is a good investment on the economic basis and any government who wants to make a decision for any other reason – socio-economic, helping communities transition to a new

economic model – should have the courage to stand up and say that’s what they’re doing and not hide behind some failed attempt to rebrand an old policy. (Applause)

Madam Speaker, I’m sure if the Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism needs any advice on what was wrong with the old Industrial Expansion Fund, he just needs to lean over and speak to the Minister of Finance, because he has clearly, and I might say articulated so well on many occasions, the flaws of the Industrial Expansion Fund. I even heard him suggest one time that they just throw in \$50 million at any time and anything goes. Well, his government threw in \$75 million extra and anything still goes. I would say to the Minister of Finance, the only thing different here is the title and we threw in a little more cash to be handed out behind closed doors.

I know it probably doesn’t sit well with him because as I have read over the quotes, and I don’t want to read them all into the record because I know. (Interruptions) No, I don’t want to do that but I know that the Minister of Finance knows the financial challenges that our province is facing. He knows the challenges that the private sector is facing in our province. He knows that it is simply wrong to rebrand a failed policy and add more money to it to be handed out unaccounted for, without a business case. I look forward to him perhaps speaking on this piece of legislation. He may even want to speak of the new virtues of the Industrial Expansion Fund 2 - IEF2.

AN HON. MEMBER: The identical expansion fund.

MR. MCNEIL: The “identical expansion fund.” I’ve heard that before, or “the mean twin of the IEF.” Anyway, as I think you can tell, while it may have gotten the Auditor General’s Report off the table a few months ago, the government has failed at dealing with what has been a longstanding issue in this province, and that is the Industrial Expansion Fund.

I look forward to listening to the rest of this debate, as I’m sure members of the government will tell us why all of a sudden IEF2 is such a wonderful piece of public policy, when they criticized the IEF for such a long time. I look forward to members of government standing up and saying which of the members of this new committee are going to go against the Premier, because we know none of them are. We know none of them are going to suggest that he’s wrong. I wonder if they’re going to stand up and tell us who is on this new committee, what names are associated with the departments, and who’s going to have the courage to stand up to the representative from the Premier’s Office and say, no, that is not a good economic development investment. We may call it an investment in a community toward a new economic model, but it is not a good economic development investment.

I would encourage this government to rethink its rebranding of the IEF and reach out to the business arm of government called NSBI and find out if there’s a way to reshape that particular model so that those decisions would be made not at the Cabinet Table, based

on political need, but around the business table, made on a business case. With those few words, I look forward to hearing the rest of the debate.

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

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: I am pleased to rise in my place tonight to speak about Bill No. 65. The intent of the legislation may be to replace the Industrial Expansion Fund with a new name, overseen by a new Cabinet Committee, but it does nothing to improve the accountability and transparency as requested by the Auditor General. What this government is doing with this new fund it has created is nothing more than putting lipstick on a pig. It's nothing but a rebrand filled with buzzwords that this government will try to use to convince Nova Scotians that they are not destroying jobs in Nova Scotia, especially rural Nova Scotia.

In 2010 this government raised the HST by 2 per cent, and in the first year raked in an additional \$290 million. This tax increase is a broken promise Nova Scotian families could not afford. The increase to the HST came on the heels of the Cabinet funnelling a record amount of taxpayers' money through the Industrial Expansion Fund with no paper trail.

Nova Scotians deserve to know where their money is being spent and what the criteria are for having access to the government's investment fund. In 2010 the Auditor General made recommendations to improve the accountability of the fund. This minister had an opportunity to create a fund with clear, fair, and merit-based processes for investment decisions, but instead this government has chosen to further politicize its use. But I've got to give credit to the NDP for one thing: they know how to turn a political crisis into partisan advantage. They used the MLA expense scandal to get rid of third-party oversight of MLA expenses and take over control.

The Industrial Expansion Fund has been riddled with criticism, especially by members of that government when they were in Opposition. I'd be interested to know if the minister and the Premier agreed with the member from Halifax Chebucto when he labelled it a political slush fund, saying, ". . . well, it is obvious that the government intends to keep both spigots open. What is about to happen is that the Cabinet will maintain control of a slush fund that will not just be on occasion."

What is clear from this bill is that this government wants to keep both spigots open, to take control of InNOVAcorp, Nova Scotia Business Inc., the Farm and Aquaculture Loan Boards. Instead of a problem with political interference over just the Industrial Expansion Fund, now all spending partners will be subject to the same partisan scrutiny, masquerading under the guise of aligning government priorities.

Now I would like to switch gears for a minute, back to the political naming of this fund. By infusing the word "jobs" in the name of the fund, it does nothing to improve its

controls - this is nothing more than another example of this government's political spin. It appears this Cabinet and its committee will have up to \$400 million at its disposal to buy Nova Scotia jobs, with little controls to show the value of those investments.

The Auditor General wanted to see this government implement processes and plans for an industrial expansion fund and develop a set of assessments and proven mechanisms, and not just change its name from one or another bureaucratic Cabinet Committee. It's ironic to see this government's actions - on one side it's patting itself on the back for a publicity campaign for shipbuilding and on the other side it's applauding the non-politically based process used to award the contract. It's unfortunate this government did not take the opportunity and necessary steps to outline clear criteria for the fund and make fair, merit-based processes. Instead they have simply made things worse - more government bureaucracy, more red tape, and making life harder for Nova Scotia families. Thank you

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Glace Bay.

MR. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Madam Speaker, it's certainly my pleasure to speak on Bill No. 65, the Nova Scotia Jobs Fund Act. I truly am happy to rise in my place as the Critic for Economic and Rural Development and Tourism for the province. These are issues and things that I do have a bit of an affinity with - I enjoy the balance sheets and looking at the economics of organizations, companies and businesses and seeing where the issues are and where the opportunities and certainly the challenges are, so I'm looking forward to it.

I was thinking back on some of my work experience that is kind of relevant to economic development and, ironically, the most successful job I had in the private sector was one in Cape Breton where we trained people to work in Alberta. I think that is kind of at issue here fundamentally - that's not finger pointing or anything of that nature, but that's just the reality we live in. I think it is incumbent on the House to curb that and go in the opposite direction and bring our people home and keep them here, so that's certainly what we're looking for.

Again, as has been mentioned several times - and will be mentioned several times again - the Irving Shipbuilding contract, I can tell you, all the way down in Glace Bay that was felt and we're certainly jumping for joy because, again, that doesn't represent jobs in Halifax, that represents people coming home, so we're certainly proud of the Irvings and the Nova Scotia bid, and it's going to mean good things for all of us as Nova Scotians. So certainly good news, but of course we also have challenges and, again, this fundamentally breaks down to jobs and the issue of out-migration for employment opportunities elsewhere.

I had a really interesting meeting, visit, event, today at Feed Nova Scotia and I was joined by the members for Inverness, Cumberland North and Halifax Atlantic at Feed

Nova Scotia, where they released the numbers on usage of food banks. Those numbers are somewhat stagnant - it has a lot to do with changing demographics more so than an increase or decrease in the usage, but certainly when you look at the sheer number of people, kids, families, seniors using food banks in Nova Scotia, it's certainly something that is a challenge for all of us and, again, all of these things are interrelated to the economic development and the health of our province's economy.

Just to start about the unemployment in Cape Breton, currently the number is 15 per cent and I know that the honourable members who are from Cape Breton, all of us, would certainly attest if you really looked at what is happening on the ground - it's not even close to 15 per cent, it's probably upward of 20 per cent or more because people have just given up. The participation rate has changed, people have left the active workforce so they're not counted in those statistics that amass a 15 per cent unemployment rate. Certainly those numbers are bad and they are getting worse in terms of the job and economic outlook in Cape Breton. Once again, you take away the Alberta jobs, those people who work two weeks on and two weeks off, or 21 and 8, in Fort McMurray, then the people who are without work in Cape Breton probably triples the number that is recorded.

We certainly do have our economic development challenges, there's no doubt about that. This, to me, is where government policies become key. What the playing field is and how we create and develop a plan for economic development is what this is about. Again, economic downturns, shrinking economy, those types of things - it's not about always firing money and complaining that there's not enough money injected into economic development plans and policies. This is about how it's spent.

If you talk to any economist, worldwide, you will see that the worst time to pull public dollars from investment in economic development is the time when there's a downturn. We have to get all we can and muster up the dollars that are there and inject those into sound policies, ones we know are going to have impact and are going to affect our people on the ground every day. This isn't about cutting investment but it's pivotal to make sound decisions. That's where I hope these few words today will help impact this House and affect positive change for all Nova Scotians.

I did listen to the minister and I did see the bill prior to coming here today. I would honestly say that I am somewhat disappointed. The reason why is that this really, as far as I can tell - maybe I'm missing something and the minister and the government side can enlighten me on this - but it just looks like a remarketing or a rebranding of a program that's in place. The government speaks about better families and living within our means and making tough and necessary choices. Of course that's the case, but I don't think any meaningful changes were made. I just think it was simply renamed. Nothing in that bill would indicate otherwise. If we just rename it and virtually change nothing else that's part of this bill and part of this Act, then where are we in this? I'm not sure.

It's not a restructuring of the lending model or the funds; it's just calling it by another name and changing a few small pieces to the Act. What caught me right off the bat in reading the bill was Section 3.1 of the bill, which says:

“3 (1) The Industrial Expansion Fund established under the former Industrial Development Act is continued for the purpose of this Act as a special account in the office of the Deputy Minister of Finance to be known as the Nova Scotia Jobs Fund.”

It's continued as is and it's a special account and they are the words that sort of jump off the page. I don't know what's any different about this new bill versus the old IEF - I guess that's what the question is. I know the government is upset and doesn't like to hear that but I just can't see anything different. I was upset reading the Chronicle Herald this morning when the Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism was quoted as saying:

“It's going to work much the same way that the old IEF worked. The IEF provided incentives. The IEF provided loans, the IEF did things that created good jobs in the province of Nova Scotia.”

If it's going to work “in the same way”, then what have we done other than renamed it and changed a couple of small components. If the old model worked so well - that's what we're going with, give or take - then why did the Auditor General hammer the IEF for not having tight controls and oversights? I'm sure those are the questions that Nova Scotians are interested in knowing.

Also, related to that, why did the AG suggest that the IEF be controlled by Nova Scotia Business Inc.? I think that's a reasonable suggestion and a reasonable idea for where these funds would go, but yet other than having one member as part of this oversight committee - NSBI has a proven track record of controlling and making good decisions, objective decisions, based on business plans not just at the whim of Cabinet at the time and that's where we have to change the playing field for these funds.

Again, the Premier said, in response to the AG last May, the IEF would be replaced. I just don't see how it is replaced. There are the questions I think I would like to know and I'm sure Nova Scotians would like to know. I truly do believe we've missed an opportunity to be open and transparent here because we've just changed the name and haven't done nothing else.

The minister did talk about increasing accountability and transparency but at the same time, it's very clear that the public doesn't have access to this information. If it's open and transparent, I'm not sure who it's open and transparent to. If the public can't look and scrutinize how these decisions were made and what business plans were applied and who the winners and losers were. What I see in a nutshell is that this has been called - by the

media, by members and by Nova Scotians - a political slush fund. What I see from this legislation is that this doesn't really do anything in terms of that relationship and that the government and the Cabinet don't want to relinquish control of these funds.

I think that the handling of these Acts and these funds is troublesome, in terms of where the government and the Province of Nova Scotia are heading with economic development. I truly don't believe that politicians make the best choices on economic development. What I do believe is that these things can ultimately be decided, or at least be presented in the private sector. It is private sector individuals, businesses and organizations that know these things. This is their job, this is what they do. If our economy hums and rolls along, then it is those businesses that created that and those businesses will benefit, like everybody else.

We have businesses that are willing to do those analyses and look at those market forecasts and consider all these business factors that go into the business environment to make decisions on where money should go. Public dollars, by the way, should go and I think that should be the brain trust that we are accessing here to make big decisions, major decisions that affect jobs in the province.

For a long time we've used a plan and a philosophy of one-off investments in projects and in opportunities that we see fit. Those one-off injections, if they don't work, although they should be considered to be sunk costs - actually what we've done over a long period in this province has said, well, we're already invested so let's go another \$2 million and let's do a payroll rebate and let's do another injection and call it some kind of different thing. That hasn't worked for anybody.

Obviously these things, the locations are political, how we make these decisions are political and again, that has been the philosophy for a long time, so I don't believe that's the best choice for public dollars, Madam Speaker.

Once we are pot-committed to these things and we keep pumping the money there, that's not the way to do it. What I do believe and I've shared before with the House is that we do - and the minister did mention it in his remarks today - we need a strategy based on core competencies within the regions. There are things that we all do, as regions in this province, there are things that we do well and let's take advantage of those.

For Cape Breton there are very simple, basic things that we could focus on tomorrow. It's one thing to stand up and criticize the government and suggest they should be doing things better and differently but what are the answers? Well, for Cape Breton, as one example, there are very specific examples and a very specific answer that the minister and the government side should be aware of. First of all, as mentioned by the member for Cape Breton North during Question Period, we are the number one island destination in North America; number three in the world, folks. There are tourism opportunities there. I know that the world tourism numbers are down and they have decreased over the last little

bit but that doesn't mean people aren't travelling. It means we have to do a better job in the marketing and in the targeting of those people who are likely to come to Cape Breton and come to Nova Scotia, that's the plan. Tied to that, we've got a very difficult environment for establishing and creating tourism infrastructure, because of the tax system, the red tape that businesses face, the power rates are very difficult for businesses starting up, entrepreneurs to deal with. Those things hinder tourism.

It's easy to just use the global numbers and say tourism is shrinking but specifically, that doesn't mean we can't carve out our own niche and make sure we're getting maximum tourism numbers, Madam Speaker. That's one example for Cape Breton.

Secondly, renewable energies, we've got them all. We've got tremendous opportunities with tidal, solar, geothermal, which we've seen in bits and pieces so far and will increase over time and, of course, wind. We've got all those opportunities in Cape Breton, in Nova Scotia, but there doesn't seem to be razor focus on those things and that's where the new economy is going and that's where we have to be. If that's the case then we'd love to see it, minister, so that would be fantastic.

One example that I'm proud of is opening this week, the Centre for Sustainability in Energy and the Environment at Cape Breton University. The things I'm talking about specifically, this centre will identify four specific research chairs that will look at these things specifically. It's easy to make the statement, well, we're investing in those things, minister, and you can certainly comment if I'm missing something here. You can certainly stand up and correct me because what I see (Interruptions)

What I see is that we've got to target it and work on very specific opportunities for these things and, again, it's one thing to research them but what the focus is that I think is a little different from the past at the CSEE, Cape Breton University, is that the focus obviously will be on the commercialization of this research and these chairs. So I think that they're tremendous opportunities that we don't want to let go by the wayside.

The other opportunity that we have in Sydney, in Cape Breton, is the port development and I think that what I spoke about earlier with the private sector is a perfect example. The governments, the levels of government have invested in this opportunity, have invested in this program. Now, it's not going to go any further unless the private sector dive into this thing and take ownership of it and understand what the markets are, understand what the infrastructure requirements are and market this thing to the world, to these international shipping firms and the industry itself to come to Sydney and use the port. So these opportunities are here and now but we've got to be on the same page and working towards these as common goals. (Interruption)

So it is about strategic environments and it is about the business environment and, again, if we're straddled with things in the business environment that make entrepreneurs less likely to take that risk, then it's hurting our economy and hurting the prospects of our

economy. So, let's identify those core competencies within each region and let's strategically invest based on merit and based on a business plan as opposed to the old practices that have been just secretive and closed doors, and injecting one-off things that we get committed to and can't get out of. Let's get the private sector the opportunity to make their own decisions and grow the economy and government can set that foundation and get out of the way. I think that all parts of the House certainly agree with that.

Just for the member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island, I do want to table and read some quotes from the Minister of Finance regarding the IEF. (Interruptions) No, I just thought it would be - he mentioned it several times, so yes. (Interruptions)

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please.

The honourable member for Glace Bay has the floor.

MR. MACLELLAN: Madam Speaker, "The government knows that it's the only fund with virtually no controls and when they want to spend a lot of money quickly, it's the Industrial Expansion Fund they turn to."

The second quote, "It's very worrisome to see the roof being blown off spending limits . . . it doesn't bode well for provincial finances." (Interruption)

The third, "Each individual project in itself is a worthy project but what they have done is they have allocated themselves . . . \$175 million when the budget says it was going to be about \$23 million . . . there's no new budget for the legislature. There are no plans, no discussions of options. They've just given themselves the money to spend whenever they want, however they want."

Finally, a quote from the Minister of Finance, "The problem here is that government can allocate itself a very large amount of money, in this case \$50 million, without ever informing the House, without requiring the approval of the House, without any accountability to the House . . . that can't be right and the auditor general has said so."

I will table those quotes from the minister. (Interruptions) So in closing - I do have more to say and I will simply say this - from what I can see reading the bill and understanding the information that's available to us, this bill is simply rebranding. There's nothing new in it. It's still Cabinet controlled. It's not open and accountable to the public. There's no increased accountability whatsoever so we are left with the IEF under a new name and I think, Madam Speaker, that the taxpayers of Nova Scotia deserve more. (Applause)

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Clayton Park.

MS. DIANA WHALEN: Madam Speaker, it's a pleasure for me to rise today and to have a few words to add to the debate on Bill No. 65, which is called the Nova Scotia Jobs Fund Act. That's a very slogan-y kind of an Act name, I must say. As has been said by the earlier speakers, we're seeing very little here in the way of substance, we're seeing a name change, and I think that we need to look a little bit further at how this came about and the kind of criticism that was brought by the Auditor General about the former fund. I think if we look at the bottom line, the major recommendation coming from the Auditor General was that the function of the IEF should really rest with NSBI, with Nova Scotia Business Inc., and not be a separate fund that operates behind closed doors, in secrecy and with no transparency and little accountability. That really is the bottom line here, and I think while we're looking at it we should remember that when the Auditor General went in to do the audit - it was in the report about two years ago - he was refused access.

In fact, it was less than two years ago, because the audit occurred under the NDP Government, under the current government in power, and they refused to give the Auditor General the information that he required to audit the accounts and the business of both the Industrial Expansion Fund and NSBI. It was the only time we've ever seen an audit come back here to the Legislature where the AG had to say that he was unable to give an opinion because he was denied access to the information needed. That came up very strongly in his report. The Minister of Finance at the time said that the Auditor General didn't have the powers that he needed, the powers for confidentially and that kind of discretion, and yet when asked, the AG said he had never previously heard of any other place in Canada where this had occurred, and that no previous government here in Nova Scotia had ever unilaterally denied the access to information that was done in this case.

Again, it was an unprecedented case of secretiveness. He said he had not seen it anywhere else in Canada. We had asked. It had never occurred that the audit hadn't taken place previously for economic development under the Progressive Conservative Government. There had been an audit and information had been made available.

Now, this year we do have a new bill for the Auditor General, and the audit proceeded for the IEF and NSBI. The main recommendation was that NSBI should be given this kind of authority to handle the work that had previously been done by the IEF, again, as a secretive Cabinet-controlled fund. The term "slush fund" has been used, and was repeatedly used by the government when they were in Opposition. This is a fund that does not follow the rigour of a business case and didn't follow any kind of thoroughness in terms of recording their information or even documenting what was going on, to the point where the AG, when he was looking at cases, had to actually go through individual people's e-mails to get bits and pieces of the puzzle to piece together what information was available to Cabinet when decisions were being made. So it was being made without a checklist, and the minister today, in his opening comments about this bill, said that now they are going to make this unprecedentedly marvellous move of having a checklist of things that should be in place before you make millions of dollars of investment in private

industry in this province. That is just so basic that it's alarming that it was never done in the past.

What I really thought was important was that we look at why NSBI was set up in the first place. We have created a very large organization in this province that is responsible for many of the things that are mentioned in this bill. When we talk about international trade, trying to attract international business, trying to restructure our regions, offering help to industry sectors, pursuing regional and strategic economic initiatives - is that not exactly what NSBI is doing, and isn't that why they were set up? To be the business arm, to have the business expertise on their board and in their offices, that's exactly what they were to do. The government of the day then had the idea that they would set up NSBI to be that group that would provide business loans and support based on a solid business case and that they would have the expertise to do that.

The IEF, although they left it in place, was to be just a small tool, something that had shrunk greatly in size. What happened over time, of course, was the IEF ended up giving out and supporting business with more dollars than NSBI's budget, despite the fact that NSBI has a large organization - I think a relatively large organization - across the province that had this mandate to do exactly what we see before us in this bill.

Changing the name of the IEF and now calling it the Nova Scotia Jobs Fund Act, the Jobs Fund Act - it's hard to know which, because there are so many slogans on the go right now. I understand why the name has "jobs" in it, because you want to position it along with some of the other positive economic news that is going on right now. But this bill isn't positive economic news, it is more duplication and it's an unnecessary step. It should have been that the Auditor General's recommendation to hand this over to the NSBI should have been taken. Why on earth have we created the expertise and the organization with the skills of NSBI without actually giving them more control over these exact things? In the government's press release it names exactly what it is saying, that they will now be responsible for promoting economic growth. Well, that sounds exactly like NSBI.

Help restructure economic regions - well, we know there's an effort to help in some of the regions hardest hit, like the Yarmouth area, which has certainly suffered from a decline without the ferry; Cape Breton which is suffering with many challenges. In fact, we're talking about the out-migration from Cape Breton, the previous member, our Economic Development Critic, spoke about that. I think that it's a sad day when we see so many people heading out West.

I spoke to one of my constituents today who is planning to meet his daughter and her family in Truro, for a meal, before they head out with the U-Haul and the van and everybody packed up to go out to Alberta because they have jobs there and they've lost their jobs at the call centre in New Waterford. It's a sad day when you see that, they are saying good-bye to their family in Nova Scotia because of a lack of opportunity.

It was my understanding from the get-go that NSBI would be the organization that should be doing that. Under the management of this current government we've seen the IEF grow even larger than it had, as I said, to the point where it actually doled out more money to business than NSBI did, which makes a mockery of setting up an arm's length, skilled, well-informed and experienced organization.

I notice that the minister said this new Jobs Fund is going to share the same board. Somehow I guess there's going to be a sharing of the expertise of that NSBI board. I think that's a pretty lame way of utilizing their skills. Really and truly we're talking here about a fund that if it had outlived its usefulness, it was because it was secretive and it was taking place behind closed doors.

There will be no change in that. We won't, here in the Legislature, know anything more about the kinds of projects that are coming before the Cabinet through this new IEF - what did we call it - the imitator IEF. It is the same basic mechanism and the government has really just, in their own way, ensured that they have control over millions of dollars, that they can continue to pass out to businesses that they pick and choose from. I think that's really what the Auditor General took exception to and it will be better if there's a checklist and that at least companies provide some reasonable background in terms of financial information and projections and make a case for themselves.

We need to have the assurance that this is being done in a professional manner and setting up a Cabinet Committee that is now going to call itself the Economic Investment Committee is just another level of smoke and mirrors because there's no guarantee that members of Cabinet will have any of the expertise needed to be that Economic Investment Committee. They're going to be just as reliant on the kinds of information that are given to them and the information that they are provided with by staff. I just don't think it's going to be any more effective than having Cabinet themselves looking at this.

Again, it is politically expedient for the government to leave this in place and to just rename or rebrand the old program with this new name. If it had truly become too old-fashioned, I think you should have left the IEF in place and just changed the rules, tightened up the controls, gone about it in a more transparent way. This, again, gives the impression that something more serious is happening than indeed, is happening.

Our Leader of the Official Opposition here on this side of the House had raised the question about what really was the Department of Economic and Rural Development doing previously if we now are setting up this separate fund and giving them, through this bill, all of these very same obligations or mandate? When we see things like just promoting economic growth, we have a department that is supposed to do that. We already have this duplication in place and now we have formalized a third level that is going to be active in exactly the same areas. If one thing for this small province I think is clear when you travel, it is that a lot of businesses feel that they can't get any help from government, that because of the sector they're in, whether it's retail or food and beverage or some tourism operators,

they feel they have no access to any support from government. They get very little help, they complain that they don't get much business advice or support and yet we have so many different organizations that are working in that field.

We have field workers with NSBI, with economic development. We have different business support banks and so on, and yet a lot of the sectors that are active in this province are just not eligible for any of that support, certainly not for any financial incentives or any loans or guarantees that are offered to a lot of large employers.

I think all of us know that often the excitement that goes around with some of these announcements where we expect large employers to come in and create jobs often does not materialize and there are some significantly large disappointments in Nova Scotia's history of trying to do that. I hope we won't be seeing any more in the near future and I know that in light of the good news around shipbuilding, which we are all hoping will lead to other spin-offs, with that in mind, I really hope we will see no more of those fiascos that have emerged in the past.

Having a fund that can be accessed by Cabinet out of sight of the eyes of the public and out of reach of the Legislature, no oversight, no accountability here in the Legislature, that, to me, is a dangerous precedent. If anything, that is an old-fashioned idea that should have been shelved before we got to this point today. I think the important thing is that Nova Scotians realize there is no real justification for creating this new bill and renaming the old fund.

We had an Act in the past, we had a fund in place and the changes could have been made to that. This idea of rebranding it into some jazzy new jobs fund doesn't have any substance, is what I would say, Madam Speaker.

With that, I am looking forward to hearing what people may have to say at the Law Amendments Committee and hoping to see again where this goes as it comes back to the Legislature later. Thank you very much.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston.

HON. KEITH COLWELL: Madam Speaker, it's with pleasure and with disappointment I stand up and talk about Bill No. 65, the Nova Scotia Jobs Fund Act. I ran a business for a long time in this province and I can tell you, it was difficult to run a business then and that was about 20 years ago, I guess; it's even more difficult to run it today.

Actually, it's extremely difficult to run a small business in Nova Scotia. The present government has brought forward Bill No. 100, which has had a devastating effect and will have a devastating effect on small business in Nova Scotia. If you do your math and you find out who actually is employing people in the province on a long-term,

sustainable basis, it's small business; one-person business, five people, even up to 30 or 40 people, those are the people that are actually making the economy in Nova Scotia go.

It's nice to have the big contract that comes from the federal government for the frigates and the shipbuilding project they have and that's wonderful, we need more of those and they should continue. But the small businesses, the person that comes out and does repairs to your vehicle - it could be anything in the province.

The problem is, as we move forward with this new fund, which is supposed to be a new fund, it just appears to be the exact same fund as it was before, there's no more accountability in it or anything else. It makes you wonder why they're even bothering with this bill. Is it that the government doesn't know how to develop business in Nova Scotia? I think that's the problem. They don't have any idea how to do it.

They have not talked to the business community; they do a lot of talking to the unions and see what the unions want to do, but that doesn't necessarily generate any business or any confidence in Nova Scotia by business people to help grow our economy. You see, continuously, young men and women going to Alberta for a better job and guess what? They don't come back. You're losing some of the brightest young people and the hardest working young people out of this province. One thing when you go to Alberta - I've been told by friends of mine who have gone there and my friends' children who have gone there - they say, if you're from Nova Scotia, they'll hire you on the spot because you've got a good work ethic; that's one thing that Nova Scotia does have, we have a good solid workforce.

I believe that there are a lot of things that we have to readdress here in the province and this government is definitely not doing it. It's going backwards, actually, and you'll see how difficult it makes it for business to operate in Nova Scotia and as the businesses realize this - I still have many friends who run businesses and they're really seriously looking at moving to Moncton. That's a scary situation. You look at that and see what happens.

Many of the companies - one friend of mine has quite a large business and he tells me that his suppliers, major companies that were here in Burnside, in Dartmouth, that he has been dealing with for years, have actually moved their whole operation to Moncton. Why did they move to Moncton? Well, the reason they moved to Moncton was property taxes are lower, lower GST rate, lower gasoline prices, lower corporate taxes, lower income tax, and the list goes on and on.

I can tell you, to get your bottom line solid in a business is very difficult to do and every dollar that is cost that's added, cost that you can't recover, it means that you're less competitive. It means you can't buy that new piece of equipment that you have to have to be competitive with someone outside the province. Today, in reality, when you're competing in Nova Scotia, you're competing with companies not just in New Brunswick or just in eastern Canada; you're competing, a lot of times, with companies in the U.S.,

Europe, even in Asia now. So with easy transportation and with easy communications today, it's so easy to do business any place in the world and I can tell you, I've done business all over the world. It was easy enough 20 years ago and I can tell you it's a whole lot easier now with the advent of the computer systems that have really made doing business outside the province and in other time zones a lot easier.

The province has not picked up on this. They have done nothing to help improve business in this province and help this economy grow. I would like to see nothing more than the young people who graduate from university and community college stay in Nova Scotia and help make our economy strong. We're going to have a crisis very soon for labour and the solution is - the government says the solution is immigration. Well, that's only a small part of the solution. The real solution is to train our young people here, train them properly, and get them to stay in Nova Scotia. The only reason they will stay here is if they've got a good possibility of a good, well-paying job that they know is going to be here for a long time. That isn't the case in Nova Scotia at the present time and it hasn't been for some time.

When you ask what the problem is, why isn't that the case? Well, the case is, if you've got a bad tax structure, a structure that is regressive, regressive not only to business but to the people who live in this province, all of a sudden you realize that, indeed, people can't operate businesses here. I can, quite frankly, tell you, and I will tell you this up front, if I were to run a business again, it would not be in Nova Scotia. It would not. I love Nova Scotia. I would like to be here, but I would not. I could not afford to run a business in Nova Scotia. It would be so much cheaper for me to operate a business in the U.S., in New Brunswick, any place but Nova Scotia and that's a sad thing to say, as a Nova Scotian.

I love Nova Scotia and I'll probably live here till the day I die, but the problem is, if I'm thinking like that, I'm probably not going to run a business in Nova Scotia again. Who knows? I may some day, but the businesses out there, the people who actually run these businesses, are thinking the same way and that's a scary, scary situation. Those are the people who are going to hire five people, 10 people, 50 people, and they can just as easily hire them in New Brunswick. They can just as easily hire them in New England or in the southern U.S. or any place else they want to live, because over the time we've seen the environment for business die in Nova Scotia. It's not good. It's really not good.

If you want your children to stay here - the members of the government over there in the NDP want us to have the children stay in Nova Scotia and work. I wonder how many of them over here - it's a question I've never asked - actually have their children working outside the province. It would be an interesting question to have answered and maybe someday when the Minister of Finance is deciding he's going to destroy the economy some more by raising more taxes, more fees, putting income tax up again and all the things that hurt business, will realize that indeed some of the young people from their own families are being hurt by this regressive tax regime and the regressive way in which business is operated.

There was some joking from the other side over there about the Yarmouth ferry - well, I can tell you it's no joke. They talk about the tourism industry dropping, and the numbers are in now - last year they said it was growing again; it's wonderful, it's beautiful. But now, guess what? The numbers are in and it's not good, it is not good and it's hurting. There were numbers quoted today from my colleagues in the Progressive Conservative Party about a 5 per cent reduction on the Eastern Shore in tourism - that's a huge blow to an area that really hasn't a lot of tourism.

I know some of the operators and I have been talking to them over the last couple of years. They say the Yarmouth ferry has just about destroyed their business. Bookings are down as much as 60 per cent in this area, in the area I represent. When you think about that ferry not being there, you think about just the immediate area around Yarmouth, but it has affected the whole province. Another regressive decision by this present government that has decided just randomly to shut this thing down; let's not do anything about it and everything will be just fine. It will be just fine - well, indeed, it's not fine and we're starting to slowly see the deterioration of the businesses.

The trouble with business is it takes a long time for regressive taxation or other policies that are put in place by government until the business finally says one day, this is it, we can't take it anymore, we can't do this anymore, we're going to have to lay people off, we're going to have to move, we're going to have to shut our business down - whatever the case may be. People in business make decisions every single day on what they're going to do so that at the end of the year or the end of that particular month they know they will make money, and if a business doesn't make money it cannot operate.

There are all kinds of basic principles in operating a business and I bet you I could ask the whole group over there in government, the NDP, and not one of them would know one of those principles. Not one of those principles, never mind all of the principles that you do need to run a business, and those things are all floating all of the time. When you work at the things that have to be - and I'm getting some comments over there what some of these things are and, actually, those are good things, but not the things you need to do to make money.

A business is about making money and if we don't work in Nova Scotia and create, as politicians, an environment for business, an environment that the businesses can thrive in and work here, export their goods or displace goods that are being imported into the province, our economy will not grow. Every single civil servant, every single politician, every single municipal councillor, every single person who works for government in any way, except the federal government in Nova Scotia - and I except them because their money comes from Ottawa which is an influx into the province, but anybody who is paid by taxes that are paid in Nova Scotia add absolutely zero to the economy, zero. Everybody gets after me when I say that, but it's true, all we do is recirculate money. With the government now being 43 per cent of the total employment in the province, we're going in the wrong direction.

After you don't generate any income into the province from all those 43 per cent of the people who are totally working in the province, then you add in the people who are, unfortunately, on social assistance for whatever reason, they absolutely add nothing to the economy. You add people who have government pensions - and we all talk about government pensions all the time that are from the Province of Nova Scotia or from a municipality - they add nothing to the economy. The ones who do add to the economy are the ones from the federal government because it's money coming into the province from outside of Nova Scotia - those do. But when you add all of that up, we've got a very, very dire situation happening in Nova Scotia.

People can laugh at me, they can say whatever they want, but I guarantee you it's coming and it's coming quicker than you would think. When we watch this deterioration happen, it's a job here, it's a job over here, it's another job over here; you don't really notice it, right? All of a sudden your neighbour decides he can't pay the mortgage on his house anymore because he lost his job in a small business. Now what happens? He then has to sell his house or let the bank take it back.

I can tell you what I'm seeing in my riding right now, and it's not good. I'm seeing people coming in on a continuous basis whose properties are being sold for property taxes in arrears, and that's a whole other issue. Some of these are only \$1,500. A house that someone has had their whole life, they are going to lose for \$1,500.

Why are they going to lose their house for \$1,500, you ask? I can tell you why: because the person doesn't have a job. The possibility of getting a job? They can't get one. Why can't they get one? Because our economy is in a mess; it's an absolute mess in this province. You can quote all the numbers you want, but government has increased spending, and to cover that increase in spending it has actually put taxes up - everything you can imagine. The GST, for every \$10,000 you clear, you have lost \$200 out of that \$10,000.

That doesn't sound like much, but to a family that has been struggling for years to make sure the power bill is paid, to make sure their insurance is paid, trying to pay their taxes, trying to have a vehicle that is good enough that they can get back and forth to work - just minor things - and if they are really lucky, have a vacation once in a while just in the province, never mind anywhere else, or go visit some of their friends or relatives somewhere in the province. They can't do those things anymore. Now they are struggling to see if they can pay their oil bill. They are not insuring their homes anymore, and I've seen that in my riding, too, where people come in, they have had catastrophic accidents happen, and they have no insurance. So it is difficult.

You see these things all happening, and you wonder why. We are in a regressive tax situation in this province. There's no plan for economic development in this province anymore, as you are already starting to see by the tourism numbers. I mean, I think it's probably the first time in history that the tourism numbers in this province and the tourism

dollars that this province generates - and those are real revenue numbers - have dropped quite substantially. I think that next year they are going to drop even more.

The excuses are that people aren't travelling as much as they were and all kinds of things, but why would they come to Nova Scotia? I can think of lots of good reasons - a beautiful province, really hospitable people here - but when you come up from, say, New England someplace to visit Nova Scotia and your gas is 84 or 85 cents a litre and you come here and we're really low today at \$1.25, they look at it and say, holy jumping, this is some expensive. Then they look at the GST at 15 per cent, and if you come from most of the states in the U.S. it's 4 per cent or 5 per cent - if there is any value-added tax.

When you look at these things - and then they have the fees for accommodations - the numbers go on and on. So they have one short trip to Nova Scotia and they say, well, it is a beautiful place, really nice people, the service is good, the food is good in Nova Scotia, but boy, we can't afford to come back. That really is unfortunate, because that means - and the tourism industry, we've got a lot of operators out there who are struggling to survive. We've already seen hotels close in Yarmouth, and there are probably more to come. That means a lot of people who, even with a seasonal job, can get through the year and they can look after their families and do the things that families deserve to have the right to do in Nova Scotia.

That is not what is happening here today. What is happening is we're seeing more and more people struggling, more and more people having difficulty paying their taxes, more and more people having difficulty heating their homes, paying their power bills, and doing all the things they possibly can. Even if they can do those things, what is happening is that repair you need done on your house, you can't get done anymore - you can't afford to do it. If you can't afford to do it, it means your home is going to go down in value. Not only that, it means the carpenter who used to come and do the work for you, you can't afford to pay him anymore, so he has less work to do.

It just absolutely multiplies over time, but it's a slow death. The death is on the way, it is like having some kind of a bad cancer that is eating at your body and you can't do anything about it; you know it's there, and you know that if there was some kind of treatment, you should be able to get it resolved.

In this case there is treatment there. There are ways to fix this economy and there are ways to work and improve the economy in Nova Scotia, but I can't see anything that this government has done to do that - nothing. Indeed, they've gone the other way, and this bill, the Nova Scotia Jobs Fund Act, I have no idea why they put this bill forward. It's just the old Industrial Expansion Fund under a different name, where political decision can be made and controlled. The Auditor General talked about it already, many times. The Premier says he's going to get rid of it, so what does he do? He changes the name on it. I guess that's getting rid of it in Nova Scotia.

I wonder how many jobs in Nova Scotia the present government got rid of. It has got to be interesting when the tally finally comes down and you see the negative growth. I remember, I think it was the Bank of Nova Scotia form I read a little while ago and Nova Scotia showed the job growth in Eastern Canada, Nova Scotia was the only one in a negative situation, all the other provinces were positive. Some of them weren't very positive, but they were still positive, but Nova Scotia was a negative, an absolute negative number. That tells you what's going on here is really, really hurting our local economy.

Now, in the Halifax Regional Municipality the economy pretty well can run on its own, it's big enough that it can. You take enough businesses out of Burnside, though, by the Lakeside Industrial Park, and all of a sudden that's going to change because those are the people who pay a huge amount of property taxes, a huge amount on their businesses. That will mean there will be less services and also that the property tax will have to go up to provide the services that already exist, never mind any new ones.

The whole issue of economic development is really complex. I know the present government hasn't got an idea in the world how to create jobs in this province. Thank goodness the federal government saw it wise to put the shipbuilding contract here, but I can assure you it's nothing that the government did on the other side of the House. It was a decision that was made because the Irving shipyard does very good, quality work and has a history in building ships. I think that the Minister of Defence said it best when he said something like: \$1.5 million dollars, almost - might as well flush it out the harbour as far as the contract goes. I don't know if that's true or not but that was quoted in the newspaper.

It just makes you wonder, what is this government going to do in this new Nova Scotia Jobs Fund? It's almost like the signs that we see on the road. I have a couple signs up in my riding that have the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal's name or the Premier's name on it: making jobs for Nova Scotians. I think there were a couple potholes in one that they fixed and put a big sign up for it. It cost more to put the sign up than the work they did. So that is creating jobs, I guess, making signs, putting the signs up, but sure didn't do very much to get anything done.

I want to challenge people in the province to call in, tell our caucus what's going on when you see one of those signs - here it is, better jobs for Nova Scotians, here they are with the Premier's name and the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal's name on the sign - and tell us what's going on in that spot. I can tell you some pretty tiny little jobs are happening but the signs are big - sounds great, but the local people in the area sure aren't getting any benefit from it. Maybe they are getting a big pothole fixed somewhere, some of the projects are a good size. Question Period talked about a couple of them today, one in particular today. It will be interesting to find out, when that all shakes out, what is happening there.

When you look at the things that need to be done - I talked before - we have the highest, high-speed Internet, highest speed of Internet in the world, in Nova Scotia, in the

world. Are we capitalizing on that? I don't hear the government talking about that anywhere, nowhere, don't talk about it at all. It's here; all we have to do is capitalize on it, not any idea about it. I've mentioned to people before and they didn't even know it existed.

The previous government put in an aggressive bill on taxation of windmills, the most ridiculousness thing I've ever seen, and the worst thing is this government didn't do anything to fix it, absolutely nothing. They talk about renewable energy and how things are going to be great and wonderful and here we go. We've got bills like that going on and it makes you wonder why the economy is not going. It's obvious why it's not going, it's just obvious. You put all these things together and see what happens.

Talk about wind energy - in Porters Lake they have a windmill up for the Superstore and everybody in the community just loves the thing. It's a good thing and I find out that, indeed, it helps reduce the cost, helps the greenhouse gases that they would have to do, but I also found out - and I would be corrected on this if I'm wrong - but I believe somebody, somewhere in Dartmouth, complained about this windmill in Porters Lake, and they don't even live out there. Because the Superstore was going to put these up all over the place and they complained, HRM passed a bylaw that you can't put a windmill up by a grocery store.

Well, it makes me wonder what's going on, it really makes me wonder. Now, there are some reasons you shouldn't have windmills in some places and that's fine, but if we're going to have renewable energy, energy that we can afford in this province, and keep our families and our land clean and environmentally sound, we have to look at things like windmills, and many more things are renewable energy, because renewable energy goes in a big package, not just one thing.

I know when you look at economic development, this job fund they're talking about here, there's not a program in the province would make a lot of jobs for really solid improvements in insulation in homes. Now they have some programs there, but I can tell you, some of their programs that are out there, the federal government's got one now, you have to spend \$5,000 or \$6,000 or more and you have to finance it yourself up front and do the work, wait for the money to come in - and you're a long, long time getting it back. I can tell you, I know all kinds of people who cannot afford to do this; they can't afford to do it. These are the people who really should have this done to their homes so their heating costs go down, and it also helps the environment because we don't need to burn so many fossil fuels in order to heat homes.

You talk about putting solar panels on a home. I've done a lot of work on my home in the last few years myself, and with some help, and I can tell you now that I've insulated the home properly, a solar panel will work. But before that, it would not have worked; it would have been wasting my time to buy one. So you have to have the two things go together. There are lots of opportunities for manufacturing these pieces of equipment in Nova Scotia, but with the regressive tax structure this government has put in place, and

continues to put in place, and the labour laws are getting so much out of line, and so far out of line, that nobody is going to want to run a business in Nova Scotia.

My question is when all this transpires, when it finally comes to the day that we don't have enough businesses in the province generating good revenue that can indeed pay their taxes and not just recirculate money - not just government jobs, because they just recirculate money, and there is nothing wrong with government jobs, don't get me wrong, as long as there is a reasonable need for them, it just recirculates money with government jobs - who is going to pay the bills? Nobody.

How are you going to pay the huge debt that's in the province? What happens if the interest rate goes up on the debt in this province? Think about that - if the interest rate goes up in this province and goes up substantially on the long-term debt in this province, we can no longer pay the debt. We can no longer pay the debt, so then what happens in the province?

From what I understand, New Zealand went through that a few years ago and they had some pretty serious things happen. They brought a receiver in and the people that had government jobs they thought would last forever and ever and ever were escorted by the police out of the building and the only thing you could take was the clothes you were wearing and any personal things they had, and that was the end of their job. There were no severance packages, there was nothing - just eliminated, gone.

Is that where we're headed for in Nova Scotia? Maybe. Who knows? I hope not; I certainly hope not. But I guarantee you, with some of the things that are happening here now, it's unbelievable. We have some of the highest workers' compensation rates in the country. When you look at all the costs in Nova Scotia, if you take the cost of running a business in Nova Scotia, if you look at the payroll on an individual in Nova Scotia, it used to be at 14 per cent, but I'm probably guessing now - and I haven't reviewed it in a while - it's around 17 per cent, maybe 18 per cent, and that's by a business that runs a very smooth, clear business. In the civil service it must be around 22 or 24 per cent, the cost to keep an employee - that's just overhead cost, over and above wages.

So when you take all those things into consideration and you look at what it costs to run a business in Nova Scotia, it is not a place to work here; it is not a place to run a business. The only thing that used to save us was our resource industries. Well, the codfish are gone. Thank goodness the lobster is up for now - they were down in price. So that means that there's less money coming into the province for the same amount of lobster caught, and now the forest industry is dying. The old MacTara at Middle Musquodoboit Harbour just had a big auction on Saturday. It cleaned up whatever was left of the equipment. It's gone. Hopefully some of it stayed in the province, but I'll bet you a lot of it didn't.

When you look at these things all happening - and the mining industry has almost shut down in the province. Some of it should be, some of it shouldn't be. People have to realize that we have to have businesses. They've got to be environmentally sound and they've got to be safe, but with all these resource industries gone - that was the fallback that Nova Scotia always had and those are going by the wayside.

We've seen the big paper mill in Port Hawkesbury close down. Hopefully they'll find a new operator, but one of the problems with the mill was it didn't have a market for their product - no market for the product. Now, that could be serious. It could be very, very serious, and those were well-paid jobs in a rural area that really made a significant impact on the economy of the whole province. Those people in that area were building homes. They were buying vehicles. They were going on vacations - even if it was just to Halifax for a weekend, it put money back in here, or if they were going to some other place in the province for a vacation, it kept money in Nova Scotia. It was money that was solid money in the province.

As we see these manufacturing jobs vanish, what kind of jobs are they replaced with? Well, there are some IT jobs out there, but they can be done from anywhere. I mean, you can run an IT business from anywhere in the world you want now and your customers can be anywhere in the world. It doesn't matter. For most of the new younger generation, distance doesn't matter; it does matter what kind of product they have and who their customers are. That opens up a wide spectrum of businesses, so why would you operate in Nova Scotia with higher income tax, higher GST, fees higher on everything, high property taxes? The list goes on and on and on.

A lot of these taxes have been put in place by the government that's sitting over there now: the NDP Government. So much for a "better deal" for Nova Scotians or today's families - I think that was the slogan. I don't know what the deal is, but it's not a good deal when you look and all of a sudden you see how it's unfolding, and you see how difficult it is for families when they see the young people from their families move out West.

Another thing that's happening in Nova Scotia now that's quite unusual - I don't think it has ever happened before - is that a lot of people who have retired with an average income in their retirement funds are actually moving out of the province. I know some people who have looked at this situation and said that if they move to Ontario - two people with a reasonable pension; not a huge pension, a reasonable pension - they can save \$6,000 a year in personal income tax. Think about that. That's \$6,000 a year over Nova Scotia they can save by moving to Ontario. Now, if they moved to Alberta, they would save even more. That has nothing to do with the GST or property taxes or anything else - \$6,000 a year.

If you've got a couple who's retired and they can save \$6,000 a year in income tax, that means they've got \$6,000 a year of disposable income. What will they do with that disposable income? They can invest in their home. They could invest in travel. They can invest in all kinds of things, but it means that that money that they get - which won't

change, it will stay stable the whole time - over a 10-year period, that's \$60,000 they have to spend, and never mind all the other things that are cheaper there.

So if we get the people who are retired here, especially if they've got a government pension - a Nova Scotia Government pension - we're not even recirculating the money anymore. It's going outside of the province. It will be spent in another province, in another location where, indeed, they're going to benefit from it, but Nova Scotia is going to end up paying the bill and the taxpayers of Nova Scotia are going to pay the bill.

It's hard to believe we've had no real attempt for economic growth in this province - none. There are a few little tokens that the present government has put out there that really don't do anything. I have a friend who started a business a while ago and wanted some training. He called me up and he was shocked, absolutely shocked. There were some training programs that were available. He was quite interested in them, actually, because he never ran a business before and he wanted to find out about it. He said some of the courses that are given, mandatory - mandatory - have to be given by the unions to small business. There's something wrong with this story. What's going on here? He couldn't believe it. He said, well, needless to say, I'm not going to take any of these courses; I'll have to find out some other way.

So it makes you wonder what's going on. Is it payback time from the last elections, the previous elections? I don't know. That question was raised today here in the House, in Question Period, about payback for some of the people who contributed to the NDP during the last election, the previous elections. It makes you wonder, when you're going to take a course that's provided by the province, and the province is telling you the union is going to give you this course. I can't imagine - I know a lot of people in unions, I've got a lot of respect for unions - what a union would know about running a business. They don't. They represent employees. Employees don't know how to run businesses, they don't. They help run the business, they help generate a good business but they don't know how to run a business.

Running a business is a very difficult task and very few people survive at it. I think the failure rate in the first two years of business is like 80 per cent or something like that and the next two years is 65 per cent above that. So it's very, very difficult. Some people learn how to run a business very quickly; some people never learn. A union represents employees, how do they know how to run a business and help a business person run a business? They don't. Yet, the province is mandating that that has to happen. So there's something wrong with this picture.

When you add this all up and there are rumours of a new bill coming in here that would make it even more unionized in the province. How is a small business going to survive? How? Let's take a southern U.S. company manufacturing some kind of a gadget, and their gasoline is 84 cents a litre roughly. Ours is \$1.25 today and it was \$1.30. So they get a disadvantage there. Property taxes here, on the building here, is probably \$40,000 or

\$50,000 a year; in the southern U.S., probably \$1,000 per year. Your employees make less money, probably one-half of what they make here. They have lower income taxes. They have lower corporate taxes. When you put all of this together, and making the same widgets, so you go to the same trade show, and your widget is worth \$500 and their widget is worth \$500 but they're charging \$250 for it, guess who's going to sell the widget? It won't be you at \$500. It will not be.

I can tell you, anyone that has done this - and I've done this. I've gone and I've manufactured products in Nova Scotia and I've exported them all over the world. Nobody over there has done that, nobody. They don't even know what I'm talking about. None of you have done that, none.

Now I can tell you, it's difficult to do. You sit down at a table in a meeting with someone in Europe who wants to do business with you, boy, you'd better know what you're talking about because those guys do. You talk to someone in the U.S., they know what they're doing. Here we are in Nova Scotia, taxing people to death. Regressive taxing, not encouraging the growth of businesses, and you wonder why all the kids are going to Alberta. Why? It's obvious - they can't get a job here because there are no businesses here that will hire them because we don't have the businesses.

Wait, just wait a little while, all the electricians, all the plumbers and all the bricklayers in this province are getting very near retirement and very few young people, for the young people are going out West. We're going to have a crisis in the trades like you wouldn't believe. I can tell you what's going to happen: if your plumbing acts up in your house and you don't know how to fix it yourself or you don't know someone else that can help you fix it, you're going to have to hire a plumber - not at \$65 an hour, not at \$90 an hour - you're going to be paying \$200 an hour for a plumber to come in and fix it, if you can find him. That's going to be pretty serious. It's the same if their heating system fails in the middle of winter. That fails and you can't find someone to fix it, because these young people are leaving; they're leaving the province. They get trained here and they're gone.

You can't keep the people here if you're charging them more income tax, if you're making it more difficult for businesses to work here and that's what's happening. It is happening. Anyone who realizes how difficult it is to get a tradesperson now - I have a friend of mine who is a contractor and he is building a home. He tried to get a bricklayer, the same guy he used for years and years and the guy says, look, I just can't do it. He said, all my guys who work with me have gone out West, I have only one or two guys working with me and I've got enough work just for us and I can't do your job for you. He tried four different companies that he dealt with before and not one of them could do the work. Fortunately he did find a small guy who works by himself and with one other guy who just happened to be between jobs. Now that's fine, you've got the small guys working but most of the bulk of these guys are gone. As these guys retire out of the business, who is going to take their place? The apprenticeship program takes a long time - it takes a long time to train a tradesman. It takes eight years to train a machinist - eight years.

Anyone who has a machine shop and a machinist walks in the door, 99 per cent of the time they will give him a job on the spot - no interview, nothing, because they can't get them. That has been the case for 50 years in this province. The only difference is that now there are fewer machine shops, a lot less work.

It is more difficult to get the people and the young people are going out West, again, where they can make two or three or four times as much money as they do here. The businesses out there are making money and they are reinvesting in the economy, and when they reinvest in the economy that gives the province, particularly Alberta and even some of the other provinces now, a lot of money to work with.

Indeed, they pay lower taxes, but if the economy is growing you are getting it from a bigger tax base so you are probably getting more taxes anyway.

As you go through the process and see what is happening in Nova Scotia, I can see the housing deteriorating in a lot of areas where people can't afford to keep them and a lot of difficulties happening.

Madam Speaker, I'll wrap up today, but I want to continue at a later date.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you. Is the honourable member adjourning debate?

MR. COLWELL: Yes.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Thank you, Madam Speaker. That concludes the government's business for today. Tomorrow we will meet from the hours of 2:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. Now I turn it over to the Opposition House Leader to call the business for tomorrow.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable Opposition House Leader.

MR. MANNING MACDONALD: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Tomorrow, as the Government House Leader has said, the House will meet from 2:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. Following the daily routine, we'll be calling Bill No. 66 and Resolution No. 1869.

I move that we do now adjourn, to meet again tomorrow at 2:00 p.m.

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

The motion is carried.

We are now at the moment of interruption. I now call under Rule 5(5), as read earlier today, a resolution put forward by the honourable member for Hants West. It reads:

“Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly urge the NDP Government to stop downloading their financial hardships to the backs of hard-working Nova Scotians and admit that the broken MOU is just another hidden NDP tax.”

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION UNDER RULE 5(5)

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Queens.

NDP GOV'T. - MOU: HIDDEN TAX - ADMIT

MS. VICKI CONRAD: Madam Speaker, thank you for allowing me to rise in my place to speak to this resolution this evening. Nova Scotia is a great place to live, work, and raise a family. We are working hard to provide better health care sooner, create good jobs, grow the economy and make life more affordable for families, while also living within our means.

This government is committed to those principles and we understand that all Nova Scotians and all levels of government have a role to play. This government continues to engage with and listen to Nova Scotians to find ways we can work together to make life better and ensure our communities throughout the province remain strong.

Recently the province celebrated the announcement of the shipbuilding contract awarded to Irving's Halifax Shipyard. This project will mean a more dynamic economy for the entire province and thousands of jobs for Nova Scotians for decades to come. That means our skilled workers can stay in Nova Scotia to start or to continue their careers. It means families can stay together, building their lives, in vibrant communities, here, in Nova Scotia. Mr. Speaker, even in the midst of celebrating last month's announcement, we recognize that we must continue to change in order to address the serious challenges confronting the province. Many Nova Scotians are coming together to find solutions to the real challenges facing our communities.

With regard to the MOU, the Opposition continues to interject misinformation and inaccurate statements that only serve to derail true progress and confuse government's discussion. Municipalities have been paying the fees for education, housing and corrections since the 1990s, which was a result of a service exchange with the Savage Government. The MOU would have seen these costs downloaded to the province. We have stopped that process so that the municipalities will continue with these costs and not a

download to them. Actually, they will pay, collectively, \$4 million less per year for corrections than they did before entering the MOU. We realize that some municipalities are having a tough time with declining populations and a reduced tax base, while other municipalities, such as HRM, are dealing with increased pressures to provide services to a growing population.

The fact is, while recognizing the challenges facing all levels of government, we are seeing that our municipalities are doing well. In the last three years we have seen an overall reduction of municipalities facing deficits. In 2010, Nova Scotia municipalities totalled a combined net surplus of \$141 million. Mr. Speaker, this is encouraging news and we will continue to work together to keep the economies growing.

One way we are addressing the changes we face is through the fiscal review. The review is being done in the context of the province's current fiscal reality and our target of getting back to balance by 2013-14. It has been 10 years since the province engaged in a collaborative review of programs. It is important that together we review funding programs and services for municipalities, to ensure they are meeting the needs of our communities, while supporting government's efforts to live within its means.

Madam Speaker, the Towns Task Force has been meeting and will continue to provide advice, ideas and direction on how we can continue to meet the needs of our communities and the families who live in them. Members of the task force are looking at ways to deliver services at lower costs and potential areas such as partnering to share services, and new areas for economic development. The province will continue to do its part; for example, we have improved the Seniors Property Tax Rebate which was increased from \$400 to \$600 for eligible seniors. We are taking steps to make life more affordable for Nova Scotia families by removing the provincial portion of the HST on home electricity and children's clothing. We have also offered support to low- and modest-income families and many other senior citizens and retired Nova Scotians by helping with the cost of home heating, through the Heating Assistance Rebate Program known as HARP.

The government has also helped protect home owners facing annual assessment increases that often translate into higher taxes. By continuing the assessment cap many Nova Scotians have been helped to remain in their homes, particularly senior citizens living on fixed incomes. In the final analysis, our effort to return Nova Scotia to a balanced budget and reduce the provincial debt provides long-term benefits to all Nova Scotians of all ages.

The future of our municipalities should not be viewed as a political playing field in which to score points and win favour. All Nova Scotians are committed to working towards a bright and productive future; it's too bad the Opposition does not wish to join in the conversation in a helpful way. With regard to the MOU, I will provide a few points of clarification. No agreement between the province and the municipalities was torn up,

thrown away, or otherwise disregarded. The MOU was written to take into account the financial position of the province and our ability to contribute to municipal costs.

Our current economic position does not allow us to continue to take on these additional municipal costs. With a clause in the MOU allowing the province to move out of the agreement, we gave the municipalities a one-year notice of the change, at the request of the president of the UNSM, Mayor Billy Joe MacLean. We must get Nova Scotia back to balance. The political rhetoric of the Opposition cannot change the facts.

The fact is, the changes to the MOU did not download provincial costs to municipalities. These costs were, and still are, the responsibility of municipalities. The MOU was not cancelled. It still exists and continues to support municipalities. Now is the time for collaboration, communication and understanding. All three of those things are made more difficult when valuable time must be taken to correct misinformation and inaccuracies.

We, as a government, will continue to work with municipalities to help keep them sustainable. By amending the MOU this government did not introduce a hidden tax. In fact, some municipalities have indicated a tax rate reduction for next year and not an increase. Even when the MOU was signed, the government of the day realized that there could be changes to the agreement in the future depending on the province's financial ability to meet the MOU. Nova Scotians are working hard to make ends meet and this government is committed to working with them to make life better. Despite attempts to distract us from the facts, this government is committed to staying focused on the needs of our communities and the people of Nova Scotia.

Recently many of us read about our small towns and rural communities in the Chronicle Herald. While the stories spoke about the difficulties facing us, you could hear the pride and sense of connections Nova Scotians have to the towns and rural communities where they live. The people of Nova Scotia expect us, all of us, to provide leadership to help our towns and rural communities remain strong.

Again, this will require our collective efforts. It is the responsibility of this government to implement our mandate of fiscal responsibility by working to get our province back to balance. We must not pass that burden on to our next generation which includes my children, your children and the future grandchildren of the province. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: Before I recognize the honourable member for Inverness, I do want to apologize for the error of starting late debate with the government. I should have started with the Progressive Conservative Party and I do apologize for that. I will now recognize the honourable member for Inverness.

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Thank you and I appreciate that. If we listened to the comments of the member opposite, you would think that the only people who play politics is everybody except the NDP. To suggest that municipal leaders are running around spreading this information, I'd like for that member to go and visit the UNSM conference that's happening this week and say that.

We've been called here to urge the government to stop downloading the financial impact of their decisions on municipal governments. This government is pushing costs onto municipalities who will have no choice but to increase taxes because they cannot run deficits. We know that because of the Municipal Government Act. The municipalities are not allowed to run deficits.

So today, delegates from 55 municipalities will begin gathering in Halifax for the UNSM's 106th Annual Conference. At this conference municipal leaders will come together to discuss common issues and develop solutions. I am sure in the hallways and in the receptions, they will be talking about what happened last April. Last April this NDP Government informed municipalities that it would not honour an MOU, which the province had agreed to pay for services such as corrections, education and public housing. Additionally, the NDP Government would also roll back funding to 2010-11 levels.

Now, the logical result of this broken promise is increased costs for municipalities. What does that mean for anybody who is a property owner? All things being equal, they're going to have to pay more taxes because the municipalities can't run deficit budgets. Now, the president of the UNSM, Billy Joe MacLean, said at the time that he was shocked and dismayed with the government's decision and he added that the dismantling of the MOU is a major step backward for municipal-provincial relations in this province.

So, Madam Speaker, I think it is quite clear how the UNSM felt about this. The downloading to municipalities that the broken MOU represents will inevitably result in increased property taxes. It's another hidden NDP tax, a tax imposed by this government in a roundabout way.

One thing I find common in this Legislature, Madam Speaker, is how often the government members like to blame everybody else. I heard a couple members of the Liberal caucus today being blamed for something that happened back in the 1990s and I was looking across at the members. Those members weren't even in high school the last time the Liberal Government was in power in this province and it's just ridiculous that they continue to blame others. It's interesting that they don't like to take responsibility. So, in this case, with the breaking of the MOU, they've made a very uncomfortable situation for the municipal leaders in this province, to put them in a bad spot with respect to their budgets, and now those municipal leaders are going to have to face the brunt from their constituents if they have to raise taxes.

Now, we have heard the minister say that the MOU is not an IOU and we heard the minister say that here; I remember hearing him say that last Spring. But, Madam Speaker, if our provincial government signs an agreement, what good is the word of this Legislature if we refuse to honour it? Another minister refused to concede that the actions of this NDP Government had any effect on municipalities and we've heard it today by the member opposite. If any members of the NDP Government want to visit the UNSM conference this week, I bet you they will hear otherwise.

I must also touch on the Minister of Finance's comments. I know he was quoted as saying, and this is kind of the every man for himself explanation, Madam Speaker. (Interruption) We love quoting the Finance Minister because he's such a man of contradiction in this Legislature:

“What this government has done is, we have said to the municipalities, we do not have the financial capacity at the moment to continue to accept an uploading of costs. If there's any increase in municipal taxes, it is 100 per cent due to decisions that will be made by municipalities. It will not be due to anything that this government has done.”

So, Madam Speaker, what I would say to that is this Finance Minister that we have in our province is lucky that the Conservative Government in Ottawa continues to honour our agreement on transfer payments. What would happen if the federal government all of a sudden decided they were going to change the agreement that's responsible for 36 per cent of our revenues to run this province? We would be in a tremendous state of affairs and we know that these NDP members opposite would be complaining about that, and they would be giving it to the federal government for that, but they can't give it to themselves here because they don't want to blame themselves because they always blame everybody else.

So, Madam Speaker, I want to say that it's good the Conservatives keep their word, that they can be trusted and actions speak louder than words. I want to give one recent example that's very important in our province and that's the \$35 billion shipbuilding contract that we've heard the members speak about tonight. Now, the Conservatives promised to keep politics out of it and they did. Despite pressure from the NDP who had encouraged the government to split up the contracts around the country, the Conservatives stuck to their word and Nova Scotians benefited from that. We benefited from that by gaining a \$25 billion contract based on merit because of the workforce that we have at Irving shipyard, and the company, Irving, and all the work that everybody put into that from this province. The Tories said they'd keep the politics out of it and they did and Nova Scotians benefited with a \$25 billion tender project.

Madam Speaker, we urge this government tonight to stop blaming others for the responsibilities you do not want to accept. Balancing a budget is not easy and we saw how the members railed against it when Premier Hamm was in power and when he was balancing the budget for the first time in 40 years. They did not want to see the province

balance its books. We asked this government to stop raising taxes, we've seen the HST increase, and we've seen increases in property tax. We asked that they start living within their means because this is what Nova Scotians want. Nova Scotians want more affordable government and there will be rewards for this because the members opposite could walk over to that conference this weekend, the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities conference and hold their heads high and shake the hands of the mayors, wardens and councillors from around our province and be able to say that we're treating you fairly and we're not going to dishonour agreements that have been made by the province and change things for our benefit and at their expense.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston.

HON. KEITH COLWELL: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and I'm glad you got the speaking order straightened out there; that was interesting.

I'm pleased that the Progressive Conservative Party brought this forward. This MOU has very serious impact on municipalities and it indeed is something I've spoken about in this House before. Pretty well what we've been talking about here in the Opposition Parties is that it's coming true. It makes you wonder why the government took this drastic step. In HRM alone you're talking about \$44.7 million more they're going to have to pay than they anticipated if the MOU had stayed in place. Now \$44.7 million, what does that mean to a property owner in the province? It means probably less services and higher taxes.

We can't afford any more taxes in HRM, they're way too high right now and it's getting to the point that I'm seeing a lot of my constituents and other areas around in HRM, people's properties are going up for property taxes, they're being sold, municipalities selling them and they are really selling them. People didn't believe at first but they sure are. Even if they can't sell the property if it goes for sale and they can't sell it, guess what, they put it up for sale again and they keep trying to sell it and eventually they just take ownership of the property. That's someone's home gone, someone that probably had struggled and struggled and struggled to build the home or to pay the mortgage to keep it and simply because they don't have employment or whatever the case may be, they can't pay their property taxes anymore and are gone. So that's what happening in HRM.

I've been around the province to talk to quite a few municipal councils in my role as a critic for municipal relations. All of the municipal councils I've talked to so far said, we're having a really difficult time making our books balance and providing just the basic services we should, just the basic service. Now the basic service of each municipality is drastically different and that's fine, but no matter what the services are they're having a very hard time doing it. One of the things that they keep coming back to is that MOU; it was cancelled and they budgeted based on the MOU being in place. That means that some projects that they were going to do can't be done. Also, they're looking at tax increases and some of them are looking at very substantial tax increases.

So you have a rural area of Nova Scotia that really doesn't have a lot of employment, doesn't have a lot of businesses; even fewer businesses because of the regressive tax regime that the NDP has put in place and the new labour laws that are really going to cause trouble over a long period of time in the province that'll make us less and less competitive. There are fewer jobs there and it means that the jobs that are there probably aren't as well paid as they should be. So if you put that in place and you see what happens at that point and then people can't pay their property taxes, the property goes up for sale, hopefully someone can afford to buy the property, but lots of times they can't.

What happens to that family, the family that's worked so hard to get that home - sometimes two or three generations - and now it's gone. The municipality had to sell it because they had to get their taxes, and one of the impacting factors on this MOU being cancelled by this government, and quite honestly the amount of money that they saved by doing this, really wouldn't make a whole lot of difference to the huge budget that the province has, but it would have made a huge difference to regular Nova Scotians.

I keep hearing this thing in my mind - this better deal for Nova Scotia families, is it? I think that's what it was, in the NDP platform. Well, it's a better deal all right - your taxes have gone up and then they put your taxes up again and they put them up again and they put them up again. Well, I'm just thinking about them. Now the MOU means your property taxes are going up, thanks to this government cancelling the MOU. Not many people understand the memorandum of understanding that was going to be in place to take the downloading of education and Corrections and housing and some other things off the backs of the taxpayers in the municipality.

Actually when I was on municipal council, I had them put them separately on the tax bills so people would know what they were paying for; hopefully all the municipalities do that. Then you look at another municipality that is having a tremendous amount of financial difficulty and I can't understand why the government hasn't stepped in and straightened it out, or helped them straighten it out in whatever way it has to be done.

The Cape Breton Regional Municipality, the second biggest municipality in the whole province, they have hundreds of homes there that have to be taken for taxes, whatever the case may be. There are a lot of vacant homes, they have a huge problem and then download this memorandum of understanding that they have in place and it's going to have a huge impact. Just in 2012-13 alone, they're going to be \$3.1 million and another \$2 million as a result, that they're tracking down now in the same time. Now that's a lot of money out of one municipality. In HRM it is only \$9.6 million and HRM is a huge municipality in comparison to the tax base that the Cape Breton Regional Municipality has.

When you look at that and the impact it is going to have on the economy - the economy is already suffering in Cape Breton, suffering drastically, and it is going to be suffering here in HRM soon, it is just a matter of time. Every time you raise taxes it has a ripple effect, and it takes a long time for those things to come out.

I said before, when I was talking about Bill No. 65 where they're going to change everything and haven't really changed anything - I don't even know why they bothered bringing it in here - but for every \$10,000 you clear after taxes, the 2 per cent increase in GST has taken \$200 away. If you add the impact of your property taxes, if you are fortunate enough to own a property - maybe not so fortunate anymore - see what that does to it.

Then, if you have a car, which you have to have in this province, your fees have gone up to register your car; the fees have gone up for your driver's licence, and twice in one month they have gone up if you have a little trailer, the fees on that; if you need a birth certificate, the fees have gone up; if you need a death certificate the fees have gone up. The fees have gone up for everything, so when you add those - oh yes, and I forgot about the income tax increase in this province, every year the income tax increases in the province, it makes it more and more and more expensive to live here - so when you add all these things up, that \$10,000 that you used to clear, just two years ago, just two years ago, now you probably, when you take the other taxes, you are probably another \$600 or \$700 that you've lost out of every \$10,000 you clear.

Think about that, so if you've got a family minimum waged, both people working, now they've got to decide. You see the ad on TV, the guy flicks his light on and the shelter disappears. He turns the light back off, bang, his building is back. That is reality in Nova Scotia today and it is going to become more and more real.

When you think about that and how it is going to affect the economy, people have to leave if they are going to survive in Nova Scotia. That's a pretty scary thought. They talk about the 11,000 jobs, 11,000 jobs that the federal government has put here in Nova Scotia and everybody, the NDP over there is going to save the whole province, 11,000 jobs. We've probably lost 20,000 jobs since they took power and 11,000 jobs are going to save it? It's going to help; it's going to help a lot. But you know those jobs in reality, in reality, will not come here for two to three years. It's going to take at least that long to design the boats, at least that long to design them, and there will be no construction until then - that's two or three years out.

So with the economy in a slump, tourism is in a slump - and they talk about the MOU, that's another thing, the tourism operators have higher property taxes now because of this MOU being cancelled. You add all these things up and you have a serious problem happening here in Nova Scotia.

You're going to create 11,000 new jobs - and this government sitting over here, the NDP, did not create these jobs. They did not create them; this is a contract the federal government put out, and the Irving Shipbuilding company, which had a lot of experience doing this, got the job. It's because of their reputation, because of the package they put together - and nothing this government did got these jobs. Let anyone out there think that this government created these jobs - they didn't. These 11,000 jobs are going to be great,

wonderful, but we need 100,000 jobs to fix this province - not 11,000 - to make the province prosper and grow as it should so our children can stay here.

I was just talking to two MLAs here a minute ago. One of them still has their children working in the province; the other one has five children - and guess what? Not one of them is in this province - not one. And all well-educated, well-trained people who make substantial salaries. How many more? I would like to know from every MLA here, how many of your families are staying? I'm very fortunate, two children, both in Nova Scotia. But what's going to happen with regressive, continuous tax increases by this NDP Government?

A better deal for today's families: tax them to death, kick them out of their homes, and don't let them work anymore. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: Seeing no other speakers for late debate, I would like to thank everyone for participating.

The House will now stand adjourned until tomorrow at 2:00 p.m.

[The House rose at 6:26 p.m.]

NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3)**RESOLUTION NO. 1935**

By: Hon. Jamie Baillie (Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party)

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

Whereas Springhill residents Tina and Justin Simons are once again bringing fright and delight to children and adults alike during their annual haunted house for the Halloween season; and

Whereas the Simons have been transforming their home and property into a ghostly wonderland since 1996 and have added attractions and new ideas every year since; and

Whereas the Simons have hundreds of people visiting their property over the Halloween season where they ask only for a donation for either the food bank or a monetary donation towards a local charity;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Justin and Tina Simons on this outstanding community event and wish them continued success in the future.

RESOLUTION NO. 1936

By: Ms. Kelly Regan (Bedford-Birch Cove)

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

Whereas the support and security of a permanent home is critical to children's development and their ability to reach their potential; and

Whereas there are nearly 350 children in permanent care and custody currently available for adoption in Nova Scotia; and

Whereas adoptive parents welcome children into their homes and families and hearts;

Therefore be it resolved that during November, Adoption Awareness Month, this House recognize the families of adopted children and the need to increase awareness around adoption to find permanent homes for all children in Nova Scotia.

RESOLUTION NO. 1937

By: Ms. Kelly Regan (Bedford-Birch Cove)

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

Whereas Charles P. Allen High School music teacher Nathan Beeler has proved to be a creative teacher, sharing his love for music and advocating for his students and for Canadian content in their high school curriculum; and

Whereas Mr. Beeler has pushed his students to look beyond their perceived limits whether that results in a project like “904”, a multi-dimensional, music-art-dance-drama creation that commemorated the Halifax Explosion at Nocturne 2010, or whether that results in annual cultural exchange/performance programs for his students to Cuba during March break; and

Whereas Mr. Beeler secured a \$5,000 grant from the Nova Scotia Department of Tourism and Culture to commission a new Canadian music piece, *Qawwali Party* by composer Dinuk Wijeratne, which saw his students working with professional, world-class musicians as this new creation came to fruition;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly congratulate Mr. Nathan Beeler on winning a Prime Minister’s Award for Teaching Excellence on October 5, 2011, in Ottawa, and wish him many more years of sharing his musical gift with his students and fans alike.