



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Gordon Gosse

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Third Session

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 2, 2011

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House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 2, 2011

Sixty-first General Assembly

Third Session

2:00 P.M.

SPEAKER

Hon. Gordon Gosse

DEPUTY SPEAKERS

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

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. Before we start the daily routine, the subject for late debate has been chosen and submitted by the honourable member for Guysborough-Sheet Harbour. It reads:

Therefore be it resolved that members of the House of Assembly recognize and congratulate all participants in the Ships Start Here campaign, who through their efforts raised the level of awareness of the importance of a National Shipbuilding Strategy to Nova Scotia, the Atlantic Region and all of Canada.

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester-Musquodoboit Valley.

MR. GARY BURRILL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg leave to present a petition from 142 residents, primarily from Colchester, Hants, and Halifax Counties, on the subject of hydraulic fracturing. The main clause of the petition is as follows:

“We the undersigned, in the interests of all residents of Nova Scotia, demand a province-wide ban on the use of fracking . . .”

Mr. Speaker, I have also signed my name to this petition.

MR. SPEAKER: The petition is tabled.

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, before I read my resolution, I would ask your permission to make an introduction, please.

MR. SPEAKER: Most certainly.

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Today is Take Our Kids to Work Day. Joining us in the gallery are several Grade 9 students who today are job-shadowing staff at the Department of Health and Wellness. I'd like to ask them to stand as I read their names: Dahn Balan, Emily Shields, Tori Bowes, Jacob Davis, Geoff Hebb, Kyle Murray, Dustin Watson, Chloe Thomason Huynh, and Luke Casey. I think probably a number of others, as well, may be accompanying their mums or dads to work today. I'd ask the members of the House to join me in welcoming these students here this afternoon. (Applause)

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

The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

RESOLUTION NO. 1938

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

Whereas on Wednesday, November 2nd, Grade 9 students across Canada will get to experience a day in the workforce; and

Whereas Grade 9 students here in Nova Scotia, while spending the day at work with a parent or guardian, will learn first-hand the type of work they do and provide insight into future opportunities; and

Whereas it is important to provide youth with the opportunity to experience many jobs alongside the many individuals who do these jobs, which may jump-start an interest in a future career;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House thank the many employers who have agreed to mentor our students today and welcome the very special guests who came here this afternoon to see us work as part of this year's Take Our Kids to Work Day.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Education.

RESOLUTION NO. 1939

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

Whereas the playing of our country's national anthem is a central part of the school day in Nova Scotia; and

Whereas the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation recently recorded five versions of O Canada, featuring Symphony Nova Scotia and 105 youth from children's choirs from across the province; and

Whereas the recordings were presented to the province at a ceremony at Southdale-North Woodside School so that all students could sing along to our national anthem performed by musicians from Nova Scotia;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly thank the Nova Scotia Choral Federation, Symphony Nova Scotia, the members of the youth choirs, and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation for bringing this generous gift to our schools.

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 Government House Leader.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, with the concurrence of the House, I would ask that the House revert to the order of business, Statements by Ministers.

MR. SPEAKER: Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Premier.

HON. DARRELL DEXTER (The Premier): Thank you for the opportunity to make a statement. I would like to begin by saying to my colleagues, the Leader of the Official Opposition, and the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party that I would have liked to have had a statement in their hands before, but as you will understand, this concerns a matter that has actually been developing over the last few hours. As such, I have just returned from Liverpool, in Queens County, after meeting with the representatives of the union, local management, suppliers, sawmill operators, and local municipalities, and I felt it was necessary for me to be in a position to report to the House of Assembly at the earliest opportunity so that you would be as well informed as possible.

I'll provide a little bit of background if you'll grant me the time. The reality is, a few months ago Abitibi officials met in my office with members of my office staff and me to inform us that they had made a decision to close the Bowater operations in Queens County. I indicated to them at that time that I felt this was an unacceptable position for the company to take; that this mill had been in operation, as I know very well, through three generations of workers; that it had provided a profit for successive companies over those years; that it had a good workforce, a good supply of fiber, a good asset base; and that there surely must be a way for that mill to continue to operate.

They indicated at that time that they didn't believe that was the case but they were prepared to listen to us. As you would know, as members know, a few months ago we set up a mills committee across the various departments of government to deal with what was happening in NewPage, and of course we turned our attention not just to NewPage but to the other mills in the province because they are all important to the communities in which they are located.

Over the last number of months we have worked with the Bowater management team, both local and international, and they have come to the conclusion now that there is a way forward for that mill. It will not be easy. It is not in the same position as the NewPage Port Hawkesbury mill. Obviously, that one went through a bankruptcy which puts it in a different category - it has an asset that needs to be sold.

This one is about a company continuing to operate an asset in the face of a number of difficulties. One is that the world price per ton of pulp and paper is declining. The second is that the demand for pulp and paper is declining in almost every market around the world; there are some very limited exceptions to that. Because of the downturn in the U.S. market with respect to lumber, the access to fibre for the paper mill has actually gone up by something like 30 per cent since 2008. So they're dealing with the increased fibre costs, increased electricity costs, labour costs that are not consistent with what they're getting in other places. All of these things completely through the supply chain are creating a problem for the mill.

We have said and we have pledged our commitment to the mill but I think more importantly to the community, to the people who work in that mill, to the families who rely on it, to do everything in our power to try to ensure that we take costs out of the supply chain from one end to the other in order to ensure that that mill, in fact, has a future. They have now said they are willing to consider that, but that if they are going to make another decision other than closure, that's going to have to be done soon.

So this morning, as I have indicated, I met with all of the stakeholders. I indicated that we needed to go through this planning process and we needed to do it as quickly as possible in order to be able to get a new plan before the management of the company - and remember, this is not the local management - to make the decision to continue. In that regard, I have extended to all the stakeholders an offer to co-operate; whether it is the Port

of Halifax with respect to shipping costs or whether it is the sawmills. As you may know, they also own Brooklyn Energy, which is an additional piece to this.

Throughout the supply chain we're asking for their co-operation as we are with the representatives of the employees who are there. The employees there have already taken a 22 per cent cut in their wages. So we're asking a lot for them to go back and take what is essentially another \$17 per ton out of labour costs from \$97 to \$80. We're asking suppliers to move the costs from \$537 a ton down to \$480 a ton. This is in order to be competitive.

What I wanted the members of the Legislature to know is that this is a very difficult day for the people of Queens County; indeed, right along the South Shore, this would have an extraordinary impact. It's a difficult day but there is a road forward. As with the NewPage Port Hawkesbury mill, I'm sure that all of you would want to co-operate in assisting us to get to where we have to be. We've made a commitment to do that. We're going to support that community. We're going to support their families. We're going to support the people who work there because we're all in this boat. Thank you for the opportunity to make this statement, Mr. Speaker. (Applause)

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

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, I want to first of all recognize and say to the Premier, we certainly understand why there was no written statement and recognize the challenges. There sometimes are decisions that come before government that are very difficult, and I want to acknowledge that to the Premier. While he may not represent that riding, it obviously has a very dear and close connection to him. It's the community he grew up in, and knowing not only the people who are working there presently, but knowing what it means to the community and to the families - not only in Queens County, as the Premier alluded to, but to families all across southwestern Nova Scotia.

I want to also say to him, as I said when the issue came on in Port Hawkesbury around NewPage, that this is one of these causes where I believe we do need to set aside our political differences and try to find some common goal and direction. These are not going to be easy decisions. We may not always agree on what some of the outcomes will be, but I think we need to always bear in mind that these are real people who are being affected today, who are hearing the news that no family wants to hear about the uncertainty of their own jobs - and quite frankly, into the future of their community. This is a major employer in Queens County and, as we said earlier, the ripples go right through southwestern Nova Scotia.

I would encourage the Premier - first of all I want to thank him and his staff for giving us a briefing before he came back today, but I would encourage the Premier to make us part of this conversation very early on. This is not - and I will sincerely say this, and I'm on the record in public - this will not be a political issue for me. We will help to try to find the common good for this community with you. The decisions we make obviously have to

be good for everybody, but we are more than prepared to try to find a solution for this mill and obviously the one in Port Hawkesbury. But we need to be part of the conversations early on so that we can find a collective solution.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I want to close by acknowledging and reminding, as I said earlier, that today is really about the families who are directly affected by the news that is coming down from Bowater. Our thoughts are with them, and I want to send to them a clear message that we will work with our Premier to try to find a workable solution for the entire province and for their community.

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

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: I want to start off by recognizing that this is indeed a very serious matter that the Premier has brought to the House here this afternoon. It is a matter that affects not only the community of Lunenburg and Queens County but an entire area of the South Shore of our province. In fact, all Nova Scotians share in this tough news this afternoon, and I just want to assure them that I know - that we know - that they deserve practical solutions from this House that are free of partisanship, that are free of ideology, that are free of politics. We in the Progressive Conservative caucus dedicate ourselves to being participants in any practical solution that comes forward, and may even apply some of our own ideas as to how we can get to a better day for the workers, the families, and the community of Liverpool and Queens County, and again, for all Nova Scotia.

After all, we know that today there are approximately 300 workers who are directly affected at the mill itself, who I'm sure are reeling at the weeks ahead and what lies ahead for them. I do want to acknowledge the fact that the workers there and their families have already made substantial financial and career sacrifice, whether it's in pensions or in wages themselves, and other concessions to keep the mill going.

I think we should be mindful of the fact that - somewhat different from the NewPage mill - there are a lot more foresters, silviculturists, truckers, and others involved in the industry throughout Queens County, even in NewPage. One estimate puts the number at close to 2,000 jobs that are directly affected throughout the South Shore area by the mill itself. That mill has a long history in our province and it also has an advantage that NewPage didn't: it is owned by a solvent and proven operator of paper mills. These are things that give us some hope today.

I think we should also point out that, just like the Irving shipyard, Nova Scotians - particularly Nova Scotians in the Port Hawkesbury area, and now we can add Nova Scotians on the South Shore - they are the best foresters and the best paper-makers in the world. It is the same in that sense.

Yesterday we celebrated the success of the Irving shipyard as the best shipyard with the best ship-makers in the world. Today we fear for the future of the best paper-makers in

the world. So I will just say today to this House and to the Premier what I said yesterday, that appointing committees and task forces are important and fine and we will participate fully.

Just like to take full advantage of the Irving shipyard, the same things hold true to do all we can for the mills in Port Hawkesbury and in Liverpool. Everyone in this House must dedicate themselves to ensuring that we do all we can with the levers that are under our control, whether they are taxes or the investment climate, electricity plans and so on.

I know we all have different views on that but it is time to all come together and make sure that we show true leadership, all members of this House, in those areas. So I ask again as I did yesterday, that we all dedicate ourselves to that in a non-partisan manner, so we can work together free of ideology, and show the people of the South Shore as we want to show the people of NewPage, and as we want to show the workers who are preparing for the ships, that we can work together on practical, non-ideological, non-partisan solutions. Thank you very much.

MR. SPEAKER: We will now revert to the order of business, Government Notices of Motion.

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Agriculture.

HON. JOHN MACDONELL: Mr. Speaker, I ask that when I've done my resolution, I'd like to do some introductions, please.

MR. SPEAKER: Most certainly.

RESOLUTION NO. 1940

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

Whereas generations of young Nova Scotians have benefited from learning self-confidence and practising a wide variety of life skills through the many opportunities offered by the 4-H program; and

Whereas more than 2,400 young people between the ages of 9 and 21 are learning the skills to become responsible, confident citizens at one of the 85 clubs in communities across the province; and

Whereas November is designated 4-H Month in Nova Scotia and across Canada as a way for members, leaders, and supporters to acknowledge and celebrate the positive impact the program has had in the lives of many young Nova Scotians;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly celebrate the month of November as 4-H Month and acknowledge the program's important role in creating the agricultural, business, government, and civic leaders of the future.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Agriculture on an introduction.

HON. JOHN MACDONELL: Thank you and I want to thank the Minister of Health and Wellness. To members in the House, it gives me pleasure to introduce the Provincial Host and Hostess for 4-H who will reign until next May, when the Host and Hostess for 2012 will be chosen. If they could stand when I call their names, Jacob Works and Talia Greenough are the Host and Hostess for 4-H for the remaining months. Accompanying them are Jacob's parents, Randy and Sue Works, and if they could stand and receive the warm applause of the House. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations on an introduction.

HON. JOHN MACDONELL: I want members to note in the east gallery a leader with a group of kids, employees of the Department of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations. Now I have Tracey Falconer so I don't know if they are still here, and a group of nine, but also from my communications staff, Deborah Bayer is here with her daughter, Sarah. Please give them the warm welcome of the House. (Applause)

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

The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

RESOLUTION NO. 1941

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

Whereas the third annual Ultimate Dream Job Contest, sponsored by The Learning Partnership and Scotiabank Group as part of the Take Our Kids to Work program, which is now in its 17th year, gives students across Canada the opportunity to prepare for the future by exploring career opportunities; and

Whereas more than 40,000 people nationally and internationally participated in this year's Ultimate Dream Job Contest; and

Whereas this year's grand prize winner is Jacob Halloran, a Grade 9 student from Chedabucto Education Centre/Guysborough Academy, whose ultimate dream job is to one day become a musician/guitarist;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House congratulate Jacob on his success during this year's Ultimate Dream Job Contest, and recognize the importance of the Take Our Kids to Work program that encourages Grade 9 students to contemplate their dreams and visualize their futures.

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.

MS. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce some folks who are here from my riding. Anne Marie Frasier and Arlene Gerrill took a group of teenagers to the Auditor General's office this morning, so I'd like Arlene and Anne Marie to please stand up and then I'll introduce the kids who have come along - and if they would please stand up as their name is called. Michael Gerrill, Andrew Frasier, Ben Boylan, Luke Zinck and, last of all, Harrison Regan, who did not spend the morning in the Auditor General's office but hung around with his mom - poor kid. Would you please all give them the warm welcome of the House. (Applause)

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

The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, with your permission, could I make an introduction that went with my previous resolution?

MR. SPEAKER: Most certainly.

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Thank you. I was remiss when I did my resolution. I understand that Jacob Halloran is actually in our gallery today and I would ask him to rise and receive not only the warm welcome but the congratulations of the members of the House for his success in this national competition. (Applause)

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

HON. PERCY PARIS: Mr. Speaker, I too would like to make an introduction. In the gallery opposite I'm very pleased to recognize - and I would ask him to stand - Caleb Mendel. Caleb is a Grade 9 student at Crichton Park Junior High School. He is here in the House today as part of career day, Take Our Kids to Work Day. His mom is a valued employee at the staff of the Department of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism. Caleb is learning about the work that Economic and Rural Development and Tourism is doing to support the Province of Nova Scotia. Thank you. (Applause)

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

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 73 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 293 of the Revised Statutes of 1989. The Motor Vehicle Act. (Hon. William Estabrooks)

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

NOTICES OF MOTION

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

RESOLUTION NO. 1942

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

Whereas the Duke of Edinburgh's Award recognizes the outstanding commitment and dedication of young Canadians; and

Whereas Ben Feltmate of Hubley was presented with the Gold Duke of Edinburgh's Award by Governor General of Canada David Johnston at Heritage Hall, Pier 21, in Halifax; and

Whereas this prestigious award is the result of several years of volunteerism, adventure challenges, and athleticism;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia Legislature congratulate Ben Feltmate on his Gold Duke of Edinburgh's Award, with best wishes in 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 Minister of Community Services.

RESOLUTION NO. 1943

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 on June 4, 2011, at Sir John A. Macdonald High School, the Bay Relay for Life took place; and

Whereas this year over 480 people joined in and raised \$43,000; and

Whereas over the past six years the Bay Relay for Life has contributed well over \$300,000;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia Legislature congratulate and thank all volunteers who helped plan the 2011 Bay Relay for Life, as well as everyone who participated.

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. 1944

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

Whereas the Province of Nova Scotia awarded its most important arts and culture prizes at the sixth Creative Nova Scotia Awards gala, held on October 28th and hosted by the Creative Nova Scotia leadership; and

Whereas photographer, visual artist, and filmmaker James MacSwain, who has been very active with the Centre for Art Tapes and with Visual Arts Nova Scotia, received the \$18,000 Portia White prize in recognition of his artistic accomplishments and work as a mentor, educator, and arts administrator; and

Whereas as this year's winner, Mr. MacSwain named Visual Arts Nova Scotia's mentorship program as his protégé, to receive a \$7,000 prize which will consist of program participants working with Mr. MacSwain over a 10-month period, during which they will benefit from an exchange of knowledge and expertise;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly congratulate James MacSwain on being the very deserving recipient of the 2011 Portia White prize, and also congratulate the mentorship program of Visual Arts Nova Scotia on the creative opportunity they will enjoy as Mr. MacSwain's protégé in the coming months.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Education.

RESOLUTION NO. 1945

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

Whereas the Fall Food Festival held Sunday, October 30th at Acadia University brought together guest speakers addressing a wide range of topics, including accounting, nutrition, diet, raising livestock, retail banking, government, and private-sector investing; and

Whereas the program also included 13 participants in a gentle “Dragon’s Den,” networking, enjoyment of local food, and a dinner with a keynote address followed by an auction to support participants; and

Whereas the Fall Food Festival organizing committee of Ann Anderson, Donna Crawford, Marianne Gates, Scott Lewin, Shannon MacLean, Susan Paddock, and Linda Best showed strong leadership and commitment in organizing the event;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly recognize the commitment and leadership of the committee, and congratulate them on a successful event that highlighted the importance of supporting Nova Scotia food.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Agriculture.

RESOLUTION NO. 1946

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

Whereas for over 26 years this House of Assembly has been blessed with the expert services of our Legislative Librarian, Margaret Murphy, who has revolutionized the Legislative Library, ushering in automation, digitization, preservation, and greater access to the public; and

Whereas on September 22, 2011, Margaret received the Dalhousie School of Information Management Associated Alumni's 2011 Outstanding Alumni Award honouring her commitment to special libraries and special librarianship, and her many years of work on numerous boards and executives; and

Whereas in the words of the people who nominated Margaret for this prestigious award, "In my view, she has done more than anyone else to raise the profile of legislative libraries in the larger law library community, and indeed the larger Canadian law library world.";

Therefore be it resolved that members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating Margaret Murphy on her receipt of the Dalhousie School of Information Management Associated Alumni's 2011 Outstanding Alumni Award, and thank her for her decades of dedicated service to this House and its members for over 26 years.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Agriculture on an introduction.

HON. JOHN MACDONELL: I'd like to introduce Margaret Murphy in your gallery.

MR. SPEAKER: Absolutely. Margaret, please stand. (Applause)

MR. MACDONELL: Mr. Speaker, we're going to re-write Murphy's Law that anything that can go right will go right.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you to Ms. Murphy for many dedicated years of service to this historic Province House, again, thank you very much.

The honourable Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

RESOLUTION NO. 1947

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

Whereas the members of the Nimble Thimble Quilt Guild in Shelburne have reached out to the victims of the massive forest fire that destroyed 40 per cent of the Town of Slave Lake, Alberta, in May 2011; and

Whereas the Nimble Thimble Quilt Guild members worked tirelessly to cut and sew pieces of colourful fabric into a total of 23 quilts to help bring comfort to those victims of the fire who had lost everything they had; and

Whereas the Nimble Thimble Quilt Guild was supported in their efforts by donations of materials and supplies from members of the community who also wanted to offer a helping hand;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulate the Nimble Thimble Quilt Guild for their humanitarian efforts to bring comfort and warmth to the victims of the Slave Lake, Alberta, fire.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Natural Resources.

RESOLUTION NO. 1948

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

Whereas Bill Keeping of Pictou, a model shipbuilder, has built a model replica of the three skysail yarder ship named the Warrior; and

Whereas the original Warrior was built in 1884 in River John and was the largest wooden sailing ship built in Pictou County, weighing 1,611 tons; and

Whereas Mr. Keeping's replica of the ship Warrior is currently on display in the foyer of the River John library for all to enjoy;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia Legislative Assembly congratulate and thank Mr. Bill Keeping for his creative talents in making a replica of the Warrior.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island.

MR. LEONARD PREYRA: Mr. Speaker, I believe that the Minister of Finance would like to make an introduction.

MR. SPEAKER: Whenever he gets in his seat. (Interruptions) Glad to see you're at your place.

The honourable Minister of Finance.

HON. GRAHAM STEELE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted to draw the attention of the House to a couple of familiar faces in the gallery: Peter O'Brien, formerly of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business; and Carol MacCulloch, formerly of the Construction Association of Nova Scotia. Very talented advocates on behalf of their respective organizations and now, in their retirement, they come here just for fun. (Laughter)

If I could, I would ask Carol and Peter to rise and receive the welcome of the House. (Applause)

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

The honourable member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island.

RESOLUTION NO. 1949

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

Whereas Bryony House is a 24-bed shelter in Halifax which has been offering a safe and secure refuge to abused women and their children since 1978; and

Whereas Bryony House provides shelter and culturally-sensitive support services including counselling to approximately 450 women and children, in addition to answering more than 2,500 distress calls each year; and

Whereas on November 3, 2011, Bryony House will host the Scarlet Soiree fundraising gala, which will bring together community members and police officers from across Nova Scotia in a show of support for women and children escaping from intimate partner violence;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly recognize Bryony House, its staff, volunteers, and supporters for their commitment to raising social awareness of partner abuse and helping women and children to live free of violence with renewed hope for the future.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Truro-Bible Hill.

RESOLUTION NO. 1950

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

Whereas Matthew Hunter won a silver medal in the 50-metre butterfly while representing Canada at the 2011 Special Olympics World Summer Games in Greece; and

Whereas Matthew Hunter has been swimming for 11 years, training with both the Special Olympics team as well as the Truro Centurions swim team; and

Whereas all the hard work and training that Matthew has put into his swimming culminated in being chosen to represent Canada in Athens, where he competed in the 100-metre backstroke, the 200-metre freestyle, as well as his best event, the 50-metre butterfly;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia Legislature congratulate Matthew Hunter for representing Canada at the 2011 Special Olympics World Summer Games in Greece and for bringing home a silver medal.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage.

MS. BECKY KENT: Mr. Speaker, with your permission I'd like to do an introduction first.

MR. SPEAKER: Most certainly.

MS. KENT: I'd like to take this time, and it's my pleasure, to introduce three students who are job-shadowing today with what I understand is their favourite MLA, and you'll understand that in a moment when I tell you a little story. If I could ask them to rise as I introduce them: Maria Godin from Eastern Passage Education Centre, Allison Merrick from Eastern Passage Education Centre and John Siteman from Astral Drive Junior High School.

If you could continue to stand, John, I just heard a quick story that I'd like to share with you very, very quickly. I understand that John was under the guidance of the honourable MLA for Hammonds Plains-Upper Sackville in a church camp and he took part in a contest about politics. I've known John from birth and John has been engaged in politics from when I can't remember and he was in a contest with our colleague and guess who won? John.

I think that's particularly relevant today and I'd like to ask the House to give him a warm welcome, please. (Applause)

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

The honourable member for Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage.

RESOLUTION NO. 1951

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

Whereas today, November 2, 2011, is Take Our Kids to Work Day in Canada; and

Whereas students in Grade 9 from across the country will be joining their parents, a relative, a friend, or volunteer host for a day of job-shadowing; and

Whereas Maria Godin and Allison Merrick, both Grade 9 students at Eastern Passage Education Centre, and John Siteman, a Grade 9 student at Astral Drive Junior High, all have a keen interest in politics and have chosen to receive an exciting introduction to Nova Scotia politics today by job-shadowing the MLA for Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly welcome Maria Godin and Allison Merrick from Eastern Passage Education Centre and John Siteman from Astral Drive Junior High School, and wish them an educational and exciting day of job-shadowing with a Nova Scotia MLA.

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

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

Is it agreed?

I hear several Noes.

The notice is tabled.

The honourable member for Pictou East.

RESOLUTION NO. 1952

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

Whereas Ross MacIntosh of Westville, Nova Scotia was named Male Coach of the Year by Special Olympics Canada, a group that honours inspirational community leaders who contribute to the success of the Special Olympics movement; and

Whereas Mr. MacIntosh had dedicated himself to working with those who have intellectual disabilities and in his first coaching experience at the world games, he and his four-person power-lifters - two men and two women - had astonishing results: 12 gold medals, one silver, and a world record in the squat competition; and

Whereas Ross and other award honourees are to be recognized for their achievements at an evening celebration at the Capitol Theatre in Toronto on Thursday, December 8, 2011;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly recognize Ross MacIntosh of Westville for his dedication and enthusiasm to the Special Olympics, and congratulate him on success in achieving this national award.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

MR. ANDREW YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The member for Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage had a resolution a few moments ago, and we had this discussion where I don't think anybody heard any Noes over here so I think that . . .

MR. SPEAKER: I most certainly did, sitting in the Chair. You're going to question the authority of the Chair are you?

MR. YOUNGER: No, I don't mean to, I just meant that perhaps . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Well, I did.

MR. YOUNGER: Well, okay I'm sorry for questioning your authority . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

MR. YOUNGER: But that was not my intention . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Would you like me to read the resolve again and ask for permission?

MR. YOUNGER: Yes, please.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you very much. There has been a request for waiver on the resolution of the member for Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Antigonish.

RESOLUTION NO. 1953

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

Whereas L'Arche, an international organization that creates home and day programs with people who have developmental disabilities, has been active in Antigonish since the 1970s; and

Whereas on August 3rd the honourable Minister of Community Services was in Antigonish for the grand opening of the L'Arche Antigonish's two newest homes, Dixie and Hope; and

Whereas these two new homes will allow eight individuals with developmental disabilities to live as independently as possible while having access to the support and resources they may require;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House congratulate L'Arche Antigonish on the opening of their two new homes and wish all the best to the new residents.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Lunenburg West.

RESOLUTION NO. 1954

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

Whereas Jenna Martin is a young lady from Bridgewater who, at an early age, was recognized for her athletic ability; and

Whereas Jenna Martin, during her high school years, continued to excel as a runner through a combination of hard work, relentless training and an indomitable spirit; and

Whereas Jenna Martin has been chosen to run for Canada in the 400-metres at the Olympic Games in London in 2012;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House congratulate Ms. Jenna Martin on her past and current successes and wish her good luck and continued success as she represents her province and her country at the 2012 Olympics in London.

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. 1955

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

Whereas Francis Smith was honoured by the province by receiving the Minister's Award for Leadership in Crime Prevention during a reception in Halifax in September 2011; and

Whereas Francis Smith has been recognized by the province for his success in developing, implementing, promoting and maintaining community crime prevention activities in the Amherst community; and

Whereas the people of Cumberland North have benefited from his work with Mothers Against Drunk Driving, Students Against Destructive Decisions, Minister's Task Force on Crime Prevention, Canada World Youth, 911 Senior Safety Net and his 33 years of dedication as a police officer in the Town of Amherst;

Therefore be it resolved that this House join me in thanking Francis Smith for his 33 years of dedicated service to the local police force, his success in community crime prevention, and wish him continued success in his endeavours.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Hammonds Plains-Upper Sackville.

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

MR. SPEAKER: Most certainly.

MR. WHYNOTT: Actually, two introductions. One is Mairi Campbell who is from the great place of Hammonds Plains. She is a Grade 9 student from Madeline Symonds Middle School so I would ask her to rise and receive the warm welcome of the House. (Applause)

As well, someone by the name of Baylie Veinotte who is Nancy Sheppard's daughter who is the EA to the Minister of the Public Service Commission. Baylie is a Grade 9 student at Ellenvale Junior High in Dartmouth. I would ask her to stand and receive the warm welcome of the House. (Applause)

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

The honourable member for Hammonds Plains-Upper Sackville.

RESOLUTION NO. 1956

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

Whereas on September 24, 2011, the residents of Sackville-Fall River and area enjoyed the third annual Sackville Kinsmen Community Bowl, a varsity football game between Sackville and Lockview High Schools that takes place amid other fun activities; and

Whereas this event helps raise funds for high school graduates to pursue post-secondary educational opportunities while also promoting healthy living in Nova Scotian communities; and

Whereas the Community Bowl is great fun for the students of Sackville and Lockview High Schools as well as the larger body of attendees;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House join me in congratulating all organizers, volunteers and participants in the third annual Kinsmen Community Bowl that was held on September 24, 2011, which is an impressive example of how Nova Scotia's communities can work together toward common goals.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Kings North.

RESOLUTION NO. 1957

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

Whereas Lloyd Smith, a Kentville native now living near Wolfville, has had a long, illustrious career representing the Annapolis Valley as a town crier; and

Whereas Lloyd Smith's career began in 1978 when he represented Windsor in the first international town crier's competition in Halifax, a career that has since expanded to include roles as crier or ambassador for Annapolis Royal, Kentville, Berwick, Hantsport, Wolfville, West Hants, and Kings Counties, New Minas, Kingston, Greenwood and the Annapolis Valley Apple Blossom Festival; and

Whereas Mr. Smith is one of only 11 town criers active in the Province of Nova Scotia, one of the longest serving town criers in North America and the recipient of numerous national and international honours;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia House of Assembly congratulate Lloyd Smith on 33 years as an ambassador for the Annapolis Valley and for striving, at all times, to add dignity, respect, pomp and colour to each and every community ceremony in which he participates.

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. 1958

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

Whereas the Lunenburg Queens Business Excellence Awards are presented annually to recognize, celebrate and inspire business excellence throughout the region with participation from seven different chambers of commerce and boards of trade throughout Lunenburg and Queens counties; and

Whereas the Export Achievement Award, sponsored by Nova Scotia Business Inc., recognizes a business that has demonstrated an increase in exports within the last year and can demonstrate a positive impact on the local economy; and

Whereas TecBox International Ltd., a custom-made shipping solution company based in Rhodes Corner that has been in operation for 16 years under the ownership of Rainer and Margit Bressmer and has seen two major expansions to accommodate their client base, won the award for Export Achievement;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulate TecBox International on winning the Export Achievement Award from the Lunenburg Queens Business Excellence Awards on October 18, 2011.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Guysborough-Sheet Harbour.

RESOLUTION NO. 1959

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

Whereas Darren Bennett of Hazel Hill was chosen as one of only eight artists from the 137 applicants vying to contribute to the Sharing the View calendar hosted by CBC's Information Morning; and

Whereas the Sharing the View calendar is used as a CBC fundraiser for Feed Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Darren was selected to submit a winter morning scene of the Commercial Cable Building in Hazel Hill;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly extend congratulations to Darren Bennett on this honour and wish him every success as he continues to document local history through his art.

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 Musquodoboit Valley.

RESOLUTION NO. 1960

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

Whereas Mary Cook of Middle Musquodoboit was honoured as Fair Person of the Year at the Halifax County Exhibition on August 24, 2011; and

Whereas this honour was extended in recognition of the many decades of Mary's contributions to the exhibition, beginning in the 1970s when she held the position of Superintendent of School Exhibits at the historic Harrison House; and

Whereas Mary's ongoing participation in her community has included her contributions to such organizations as the Musquodoboit Valley Memorial Healthcare Auxiliary, the Musquodoboit Valley Branch of the Canadian Diabetes Association and Middleton United Church in Middle Musquodoboit;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia House of Assembly join with the people of the Musquodoboit Valley in honouring Mary Cook's extensive contributions to her community as these have been symbolized in her receiving the designation of 2011 Halifax County Exhibition Fair Person of the Year.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal.

RESOLUTION NO. 1961

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

Whereas Glengary homeowners officially opened their new neighbourhood playground on Charles Street in Timberlea on Saturday, September 17, 2011; and

Whereas area residents of all ages showed their appreciation by attending the opening; and

Whereas this project was successfully completed because of the dedication of numerous volunteers under the leadership of Ken Hubley, Brian Johnson, John Feetham, Barb Shanks and Doug Wise;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia Legislature congratulate and thank Glengary residents for their initiative and thank them for their hard work in the building of the playground on Charles Street, Timberlea.

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 Fisheries and Aquaculture.

RESOLUTION NO. 1962

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

Whereas Shelburne County intermediate care paramedic Crystal Larkin was presented with an Exemplary Service Medal by Lieutenant Governor Mayann Francis on August 15, 2011; and

Whereas Crystal Larkin, who is in her 21st year of service, began her career as a volunteer, going on to become the first female seniors' operations paramedic in Nova Scotia, as well as the first female supervisor within Emergency Medical Care; and

Whereas Crystal Larkin is also a co-founder of the Emergency Medical Services Symposium that not only serves to better educate paramedics but also supports many worthwhile charitable causes throughout Nova Scotia;

Therefore be it resolved that the House of Assembly congratulate Exemplary Service Medal recipient Crystal Larkin for her many years of dedicated service as a paramedic 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.

The honourable member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island.

RESOLUTION NO. 1963

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

Whereas the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation has been a revered promoter of Canadian culture since its first radio broadcast in 1936, evolving into a full service broadcaster in French, English and Aboriginal languages; and

Whereas over the years the CBC has dedicated itself to providing quality regional programming as exemplified today in Nova Scotia by programs such as Information Morning, Mainstreet, and Maritime Noon which tell our stories which reflect the unique fabric of our province and its people; and

Whereas on November 2, 2011, the CBC will celebrate its 75th Anniversary as Canada's national broadcaster, marking a milestone in the provision of outstanding programming by, for, and about Canadians;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly recognize the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation for its commitment to both preserving and championing Canadian and Maritime culture and extend its congratulations on 75 distinguished years of national, regional and local programming.

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. 1964

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 on October 13, 2011, the Tantallon Library celebrated 10 years of service in the community; and

Whereas over the years, thousands of people have passed through the doors of the library; and

Whereas manager Elaine Murray hosted a party, complete with birthday cake and music, to celebrate the occasion with over 40 people in attendance;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia Legislature congratulate the Tantallon Library, Elaine Murray, staff, and volunteers, and wish them another successful 10 years.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage.

RESOLUTION NO. 1965

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

Whereas Walter Moyse is a science teacher at A.J. Smeltzer Junior High School in Lower Sackville; and

Whereas Walter Moyse was teaching Grade 8 students about the water resources around the world and encouraged them to raise money to build a well; and

Whereas Mr. Moyse's students raised \$650 to build a well in Garlapadu village in India;

Therefore be it resolved that members of this House of Assembly commend Walter Moyse, science teacher at A.J. Smeltzer Junior High School in Lower Sackville, for teaching his students the value of water as a global resource and for encouraging them to

raise \$650 to build a well in Garlapadu village in India, and wish him future success in his teaching endeavours.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Natural Resources.

RESOLUTION NO. 1966

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

Whereas Angus Swantee, a film producer and a native of River John, had two of his short films, *Discrimination of the Dead* and *Pawnshop*, screened at the Toronto International Film Festival in September; and

Whereas Mr. Swantee has been active in the Nova Scotia film industry as a producer, writer, and director since 1996; and

Whereas Mr. Swantee made his first film in 2005 and credits his success in the film business to great local talent and the support of Film Nova Scotia;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia Legislative Assembly congratulate Angus Swantee on having two of his films screened at the Toronto International Film Festival in September and wish him further 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 Truro-Bible Hill.

RESOLUTION NO. 1967

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

Whereas Margolians Maritimes Limited, a fourth-generation family business located in Truro, currently operated by Robert Sidler and his son Mark, will be closing its doors in January 2012; and

Whereas Margolians has served Truro and the surrounding area since 1929 - 88 years - from the same location on Inglis Place and has acquired many devoted, long-time customers during that time; and

Whereas over these many years of service to the community Margolians has developed an outstanding reputation for their large selection of quality merchandise and great customer service and was the recipient of the 2010 Business Achievement Award from the Truro and District Chamber of Commerce;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia Legislature acknowledge the outstanding contributions of Margolians Maritimes Limited to Truro and thank them for being a long-standing member of the downtown business 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 Pictou East.

RESOLUTION NO. 1968

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

Whereas Hilary Pelerine of Merigomish, Pictou County, has just entered her second semester of an 18-month cosmetology program at the Pictou Campus of the Nova Scotia Community College; and

Whereas at the age of 19 Hilary Pelerine was awarded Nova Scotia's only gold medal in hairdressing at the National Skills Competition held June 2nd through 4th this year in Quebec City; and

Whereas Hilary Pelerine has also been awarded the Best in the Region for her top scores on the Nova Scotia team;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly congratulate Hilary Pelerine for her outstanding achievement in hairdressing and cosmetology.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Antigonish.

RESOLUTION NO. 1969

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

Whereas Kevin MacDonald, CEO of GASHA, the Guysborough Antigonish Strait Health Authority, since 2001, recently announced he will be retiring early in 2012; and

Whereas Kevin MacDonald has worked in the health care system for 35 years and previously held positions as the Vice President of Human Resources for the former Eastern Regional Health Board and CEO of the Inverness Memorial Hospital; and

Whereas in addition to his work with GASHA, Mr. MacDonald serves on many health related boards, including as the Chair of the Diabetes Care Program of Nova Scotia;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of the House thank Kevin MacDonald for his many years of service and wish him all the best in his retirement.

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. 1970

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

Whereas Carolyn d'Entremont was honoured by receiving the Excellence in Collaboration Award during the Celebrating Communities Conference and Awards in Yarmouth; and

Whereas under Carolyn d'Entremont's direction, Maggie's Place has become an important resource for families across the county with programs that improve the health and quality of life; and

Whereas the families of Cumberland North have benefited from the preschool, school-aged children, teen and family programs as well as dental and health care for low-income families;

Therefore be it resolved that this House join me in thanking Carolyn d'Entremont for her commitment to families' health and quality of life across Cumberland County and wishes 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 Kings North.

RESOLUTION NO. 1971

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

Whereas Kings Transit Authority, sometimes known as KTA, provides public transportation services to thousands of riders each month; and

Whereas the combined vision of Kings Transit's owners, the County of Kings, the Towns of Kentville, Berwick and Wolfville, in partnership with the Municipalities of West Hants, Windsor, Annapolis and Digby Counties, has enabled KTA to expand coverage to include most points from West Hants to Weymouth; and

Whereas Kings Transit Authority recently realized its long-term goal of consolidating operations in a central location while also celebrating its 30th Anniversary in 2011;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia House of Assembly congratulate the board, drivers, administration and maintenance crew of Kings Transit Authority on 30 years of service to the Annapolis Valley 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 Lunenburg.

RESOLUTION NO. 1972

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

Whereas the Town of Lunenburg has a rich historical background of many different nationalities and groups who make up the unique cultural heritage of the town; and

Whereas Lunenburg is home to many Newfoundlanders who uphold the Newfoundland traditions through the group called Terre-Neuve Newfoundlanders and Friends Association; and

Whereas the Terre-Neuve Newfoundlanders and Friends held the 15th annual Newfie Days Festival this past October, celebrating their Newfoundland heritage with everything from moose soup to balling yarn to traditional Newfoundland music;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly recognize the 15th Anniversary of the Newfie Days Festival held in the Town of Lunenburg each October and organized by the Terre-Neuve Newfoundlanders and Friends Association.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Guysborough-Sheet Harbour.

RESOLUTION NO. 1973

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

Whereas director Devin Ashley, musical director Michael Robinson, and choreographer John Murphy, along with local musicians and community volunteers, joined together to help the students of Sheet Harbour Consolidated, Lakefront, and Eastern Consolidated schools stage a play; and

Whereas this teamwork by youth and community members culminated in over 70 student performers staging the Disney musical, Aladdin Jr., for community enjoyment in the Sheet Harbour Consolidated School gymnasium; and

Whereas the play and all of the hard volunteer work that went into it received an outstanding and enthusiastic response of delight from the audience;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly recognize the hard work that went into creating this excellent performance by Sheet Harbour Consolidated, Lakefront, and Eastern Consolidated teachers, students, and contributing community partners.

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: Question Period will begin at 3:22 p.m. and end at 4:52 p.m.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

HEALTH & WELLNESS: ER PROTECTION FUND - DISBURSEMENT

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Premier. Last May, the Minister of Health and Wellness stated in this House that the \$3 million Emergency Room Protection Fund was used to fund the Rapid Assessment Unit and to put in place more services for paramedics, and that it also funded other personnel in

the emergency room. On Monday evening in this House the member for Lunenburg West stated that the same \$3 million was established to hire needed doctors to keep ERs open.

I will table the Hansard which reflects both of those comments. So my question to the Premier is, can the Premier tell this House which member of his caucus is right?

THE PREMIER: What I believe the Opposition should know is that the Emergency Room Protection Fund was used to ensure that there are appropriate staff in place in the emergency rooms. They were used to transition some of the facilities in order to be able to provide better service. It's not a matter of which one is right or which one is wrong. It's a matter of the government using that fund in order to provide efficient emergency room services to the people of the province.

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, it's about being open and transparent. Government is about being accountable to the public. It's about being honest and up front on how a government spends its money. We have the minister and a member of government caucus providing two different spins when information indicates otherwise. A response to a freedom of information request submitted to obtain a complete list of initiatives funded through the Emergency Room Protection Fund indicated that the ER Protection Fund was not spent in 2010-11. So my question to the Premier is, why do members of his government, including the Premier himself just a few minutes ago, continue to tell Nova Scotians that they've spent the Emergency Room Protection Fund when clearly, according to department officials, they have not?

THE PREMIER: As I pointed out, Mr. Speaker, we are guardians of the entire Treasury of the Province of Nova Scotia. We spend the funds that we get in order to supply the services that people need, and that's what we have done with the provision of services in the emergency rooms - as we have with the transition of facilities and as we have in sending the money out to the district health authorities.

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure the Premier is getting it. Members of his caucus are standing in this House telling Nova Scotians that they are spending money to deal with emergency issues in their individual communities. There's absolutely no question members of his caucus are standing in this House telling Nova Scotians that they are spending money to deal with emergency issues in their individual communities. There is absolutely no question that emergency rooms across this province are still closing. Over 18,000 hours closed this year, and members of his caucus are standing in this House telling the people of this province that they are using a fund for that purpose when clearly they are not. They are clearly misleading the people of Nova Scotia. (Applause)

My question to the Premier is, why should Nova Scotians believe anything that is coming out of the front benches of this government when the Premier stands here and defends misleading the people of this province?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I'm not misleading anyone. I'm trying to give the Leader of the Official Opposition an answer. The reality is that we have, in fact, invested in improvements to emergency rooms. I was pleased to be with the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party at - I don't know if he was at all of them - but the openings in Tatamagouche, in Pugwash. (Interruption)What's that? Parrsboro.

Mr. Speaker, the announcements that were made there and the opening of the Parrsboro Centre (Interruptions) and we're using the funds for exactly those kinds of initiatives.

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

PREM.: FIRST CONTRACT LEGISLATION - REASONS

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Yesterday in this House the Premier described concerns about first contract arbitration as, “. . . much ado about nothing.”

Well, Mr. Speaker, in one sense he's correct. There is no need for this legislation. No one wants it but someone is asking for it. So my question to the Premier is this, why is the Premier fiddling with labour legislation that is neither needed nor wanted?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure what the position of the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party is. It's a very simple matter. We are always looking to improve labour relations in the province; they have changed a lot over the years. As I pointed out, when it comes to things like contract arbitration, it's in place, I think now, for more than 80 per cent of Canadians already. It's actually in place for 15 per cent of Nova Scotians who are covered by the federal legislation.

Mr. Speaker, it's good legislation in all the rest of the country. Why wouldn't it be good legislation here.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, God help us, the Premier seems determined to improve labour laws just like they're improving education, just like they're improving health care. Let's see what they're going to try and improve next, God help us all. (Applause)

The fact of the matter is, first contract arbitration is a job killer. We need to look no further than yesterday's arbitrated decision for Capital Health – a 7.3 per cent wage increase that by the admission of the Minister of Health and Wellness will result in an additional \$12.5 million in cuts to our health care system because of an arbitrator. My question to the Premier is, why does the Premier want to impose this same hardship on innocent, non-unionized workplaces in our province?

THE PREMIER: Well, first of all, Mr. Speaker, it doesn't apply to non-unionized workplaces. He keeps saying this, but it's not true. Secondly, of course, the former government brought in contract arbitration when they were in government. Contract arbitration is a standard feature in most jurisdictions in the country.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, the Premier should read his own briefing notes. This is first contract arbitration for companies that do not already have a contract. You have to have a union but, do you know what, they do have to have a union and that is the point, isn't it, because this is all part of a pattern.

Several years ago the Deputy Premier brought forward a bill, Bill No. 220, that says you don't even have to vote to have a union any more. This is part of an ongoing, systematic plan to unionize places that don't want to be. That's why they rammed through Bill No. 100 just last Fall. It's all part of a plan. They want it. No one else wanted it, but they are going to ram it through anyway. So my question to the Premier is, why doesn't he just admit that first contract arbitration is just the latest concession to his special interest friends?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I don't know what special interest friends he has who are motivating that question, I guess. The simple fact of the matter is there is a process underway, we put in place a Labour Management Review Committee so they could have an opportunity to look at labour relations, so there was an actual process for these things to take place instead of employers or employees being surprised by legislation that may not be helpful.

This is a good process. Not only does it include employer and employee representatives, but it calls upon the wider community for its input, as it did in this case with small businesses and with other interested stakeholders in the community. It's a good process and we look forward to the report.

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

FIN.: GOV'T. (N.S.) - ECONOMIC PROJECTIONS

MS. DIANA WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, my question today is for the Minister of Finance.

In recent days economic experts from across the country have been downgrading their growth forecast for the Nova Scotia economy. Four major banks have recently released estimates that have downgraded the prospects for the province. I have here to table today the four that I'm referring to, but I'd like to just point out that the Royal Bank has lowered their growth prospects to 1.3 and 1.6 per cent for the next two years; TD puts it down to 1.4 per cent for the next two years; Bank of Montreal is 1.6 and 2 per cent for 2012; and Scotiabank has it at 1.5 and 1.2 per cent growth respectively.

My question to the Minister of Finance is, is the minister going to revise the government's projections for economic growth downward from the current 1.9 per cent to better reflect the updated economic facts?

HON. GRAHAM STEELE: Mr. Speaker, of course the Department of Finance is looking very carefully at the international and national scene. Things are very volatile. Just in the last week, for example, we can have an apparent bond deal in Greece which sends markets up, and then a couple of days later, with the announcement of a referendum, we have the markets heading in the other direction because of the fear the bond deal is falling apart.

If people think that events in Greece have no impact here - they have a great impact here. They have an impact on bond markets, they have an impact on the rates at which we can borrow money, and they have an impact on foreign exchange rates. In this very volatile environment, we're watching things very carefully, and if we believe that an adjustment to our forecast is warranted we will be making that adjustment at the time of the next forecast update, which is currently projected to be around the middle of December.

MS. WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance is refusing, again, to revise Nova Scotia's economic outlook even though the major economists, research institutes and, indeed, the federal government themselves are revising their targets. It seems to me that the minister thinks he knows more than all of these experts. His continued refusal to heed their warnings puts the province at risk.

My question to the minister is, why does the minister continue to ignore the advice of experts and when will he publicly release the true picture, sooner than the next quarterly review?

MR. STEELE: Mr. Speaker, part of the process, of course, of formulating our forecast is looking at the full range of expert opinion and, frankly, not all the expert opinions are in yet. The federal government has not yet revised its forecast - they will be doing that as part of their next forecast update. Many of the provinces have not yet revised their forecast - they have a schedule that they follow about what information they will look at when they will revise the forecast. In the normal course, our next forecast update will be around the middle of December, and that is when we will be indicating whether - given national and international conditions - a revision to our growth forecasts is warranted.

MS. WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, the reason I raise this today is that the sooner we face the reality and make sure we have reasonable estimates, the sooner the government can respond and adjust their spending this year in order to make sure they reach their targets. There's a reason to do it sooner rather than later. Burying your head in the sand doesn't help at the end of the day.

Mr. Speaker, before they were elected, the NDP promised to balance the books. When that didn't happen, they raised taxes. My question to the minister today is, will the minister tell Nova Scotians, yes or no, if he'll be increasing taxes again this year, in the face of lower economic growth, in order to balance the books by 2013?

MR. STEELE: Mr. Speaker, when you are the Finance Minister for a provincial government which is a participant in the bond markets, it is very important that information be very carefully considered and that information be evaluated and released in an orderly way. We are doing exactly the same thing that every Liberal Government has done before us and every Progressive Conservative Government has done before us, and I am surprised that the Liberal Party would be calling on us to make what you can only call a knee-jerk reaction in such a difficult and volatile environment.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Clayton Park on a new question.

FIN. - FOOD BANK USAGE: GOV'T (N.S.) - EXPLAIN

MS. DIANA WHALEN: It is a new question, Mr. Speaker, but again it is to the Minister of Finance.

People across this province are finding it harder to make ends meet. Too many people are losing their jobs, finding it difficult to heat their homes and harder to feed their families. Nova Scotians have heard quite enough of the NDP rhetoric. If the minister will not listen to the forecasts from the private banks in this country, perhaps he'll listen to the food banks in this province. Will the Minister of Finance tell the people of this province, who cannot make ends meet, why this NDP Government is forcing more and more of them to turn to food banks?

HON. GRAHAM STEELE: Mr. Speaker, when it comes to rhetoric, nobody beats the Opposition. (Interruption) The question of the situation of the poorest among us is a very important, very sensitive topic. That is why this government has paid so much attention, through things like the Disability Tax Credit, the Poverty Reduction Tax Credit, the Affordable Living Tax Credit, taking the provincial portion of the HST off home heating fuel and, unlike the Progressive Conservative Party, keeping it off. All of these things are important ways that we have of supporting those among us who are least advantaged.

Mr. Speaker, on that score we can never do too much, but we are doing what we can.

MS. WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, the cost to a family of four for a healthy food basket increased by \$100 a month in the last two years. Power rates have gone up over 36 per cent in the last 10 years, and this minister continues to do nothing about that. Gas prices have

risen over 25 cents a litre since the NDP took office, and the minister refuses to make gas cheaper by taking the tax on tax off. No wonder more people are struggling to make ends meet under this NDP Government.

My question to the minister is, will the minister explain why his government chooses to ignore the rising cost of food, power, and gas, which together are forcing more and more people to the food banks?

MR. STEELE: Mr. Speaker, with respect to increase in prices, I just want to point out to that member, and all members of the House, that the recent rates of inflation have been driven by two things - one is increases in food prices and the other is increase in energy prices. When you take those things out, our inflation rate really is very similar to the rest of the country, but those are two very important things.

The one thing that the Opposition never seems to understand or acknowledge is that food is not taxed in this province, Mr. Speaker. So I don't understand how it is that they can blame an increase in food prices on anything in particular that the government is doing when food is not taxed.

The other thing, Mr. Speaker, it is this government - it's not the Liberal Party, it's not the Progressive Conservative Party - it is this government that took the provincial portion of the HST off home heating fuel and, unlike the Progressive Conservatives, we are going to keep it off.

MS. WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to point out to the Minister of Finance that power costs affect every single store that sells food and sells items in this province and transportation costs are significantly higher in this province because of the 15 per cent HST, so that is hurting all of us.

Mr. Speaker, the question relates to the HungerCount yesterday that was released for the food bank. It showed that 22,500 used the food bank here in Nova Scotia in the one month of March, 31 per cent of those were children, and overall this has increased 33 per cent since 2008.

Mr. Speaker, I would like the Minister of Finance to take some responsibility for those rising costs that are affecting people and driving them into the rolls of the food bank numbers.

MR. STEELE: Mr. Speaker, I think it's important to understand that the Affordable Living Tax Credit that this government instituted - the very purpose of that is to insulate people at the lowest end of the income scale from the effect of the sales tax. For people at that end of the income scale, the Affordable Living Tax Credit makes them better off than they were before.

The other factor, Mr. Speaker, is that people at the very low end of the income scale rely on the work of the Department of Community Services. That is one of the very important places that our tax dollars go. It takes nearly \$1 billion of tax revenue in order to support the poor and disabled in this province. Yet what do we hear from the Opposition? The constant drumbeat to reduce revenue.

They can't have it both ways, Mr. Speaker. They can't demand that the government reduce its revenue and yet not acknowledge that that very revenue supports the poor and disabled in this province. They don't understand it, but this government does.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants West.

PREM.: FIVE-YEAR PAVING PLAN - APPROVAL DATE

MR. CHUCK PORTER: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is for the Premier. Yesterday, serious questions were raised about a Cabinet Minister and paving work in front of his home. Nova Scotians deserve serious answers but the Premier chose rhetoric instead of serious answers.

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. The government claims it is on their plan but the plan uses language that hides the fact that no reasonable Nova Scotian could figure it out.

Mr. Speaker, having had a chance to reflect on his position overnight, will the Premier clearly state when the five-year plan - with the Renfrew Road paving item on it - was approved by Cabinet under his leadership?

THE PREMIER: Well, Mr. Speaker, again, I have no idea what they spent their time doing when they were in government but we did not bring a road-paving plan to the Cabinet. It wouldn't because the money is allocated under the budget. You get an opportunity to question that fully during estimates. I have no idea why they would waste the time of Cabinet with such a thing.

MR. PORTER: Mr. Speaker, the answer shows that the Premier is still trying to avoid answering a very serious question, so a simple question for the Premier but an important one. Under this Premier's leadership, the tone he sets is for the whole government. Did the Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations declare a conflict between his public duties and his personal affairs and absent himself from discussions about the Renfrew Road when the decisions were being made where to pave?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I always said that it didn't come to Cabinet so there were no discussions to be had. (Interruption) What's that? No, no discussions about it whatsoever. Thank you.

MR. PORTER: Mr. Speaker, I asked this yesterday and it's a very serious matter. The NDP Government has to be accountable. The Premier said he'd been out to the Montavista Road in 2008. I understand from a news story he knew his now-minister had a personal stake because the alternative he tried to avoid in 2008 would have cost him and his family \$90,000, by his own admission in The Enfield Weekly Press at the time. Regrettably, the fact that pavement enhances his property means he has a conflict of interest. Not pleasant to say, but it has to be said.

Where were all the steps that the Premier took to make sure that the Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations was not at Cabinet and not involved in any discussion that related to the paving of the Renfrew Road?

THE PREMIER: I'll reiterate it for the member. There were no discussions at Cabinet about this matter whatsoever, so there was nothing that the minister had absented himself from. There was a road-paving plan that was developed by the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal. They are the ones that are in charge of it. We published it so that you could see it in advance, which is, in our view, exactly the appropriate way for things to be done. I don't know how they did it in the past.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

**HEALTH & WELLNESS - NURSES' ARBITRATION:
GOV'T (N.S.) - COSTS COVER**

MR. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, yesterday Nova Scotians learned of an arbitration decision that not only sets a precedent for future health care workers' negotiations, but it comes with a price tag outside what government has been saying all along that it can't afford. It is this government that chose the arbitration route as a way to settle with Capital District nurses. It's time for them to now own up and pay the piper as a result of their decision.

My question to the Minister of Health is, will the minister assure the people of Nova Scotia, here on the floor today, that government will cover the full costs of this arbitrated deal and not download the responsibility to Capital District?

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to say how pleased I am that we did not have a strike in our largest district health authority in the province. (Applause) I also indicated yesterday that I and this government will work with the Capital District Health Authority as we analyze the financial implications of implementing this decision.

MR. GLAVINE: All districts, including Capital District, have been asked to cut 3 per cent next year. Now it's becoming clearer as to the reason why. The 3 per cent cut has absolutely nothing to do with health care reform and everything to do with amassing a pool of money for government.

My question to the minister is, is the minister asking for a 3 per cent across-the-board cut next year in order to pay for this arbitrated decision and future wage settlements, yes or no?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Don't be ridiculous, Mr. Speaker.

MR. GLAVINE: I'm not sure, Mr. Speaker, if that was referring to you or to whom. Well, we certainly know where health care is going because yesterday when the minister referred to health in 1999 under the Liberal Government, at least you could have orthopaedic surgery within 126 days. Under this government it's over 600 days.

Conservative estimates show that an overall 3 per cent budget cut for DHAs would yield savings of \$47.7 million. Realistically, with inflation and with all other wage pressures - which for the time being are at 1 per cent - this number is more likely in the \$79.6 million range. My question to the minister is, will the cuts she is asking for truly reform the health care system or simply pay for the arbitration decision and any future negotiated settlements?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: I think most members of this House realize that we're making great strides in changing and transforming our health care system into a much more effective health care system, with more access to primary care. We're bringing the emergency room to the front yards of people's homes with EHS and the RESTORE program. We're not leaving the health care system in the mess it was in the last time that Party was in government. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants West.

PREM.: CHIP-SEALING PROJECTS - PRIORITY LOCATIONS

MR. CHUCK PORTER: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is for the Premier. In 2009 the Premier campaigned on a promise to take politics out of paving. The Premier now leads the government, which bought expensive chip-sealing equipment. It maintains an expensive crew - about 20 people to operate it - on the government payroll. The justification for this was that some of the areas of the province have little competition for this kind of work and that this equipment could be used to bring the price down. That is information that has been put out there and I'll table that for this House today.

To the Premier, why under his leadership is this equipment being used in front of the home and family lands of the Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations

at great public expense, when his area, in the centre of the province, has plenty of competition for chip sealing, and has benefited from low prices contrary to the very justification his government used to get government into the paving business?

THE PREMIER: Well, Mr. Speaker, as I pointed out earlier, the analysis that was done of the chip-sealing program is that it will be less expensive, which means that more roads can be done. We're very pleased with that.

MR. PORTER: Mr. Speaker, in one year of paving - one year - the minimal chip sealing done by this NDP Government, crews were dispatched to gravel and grade the Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations' own road in July. But do you know whose road got paved - and it was on the NDP priority list - the very first to be paved? It was the Cove Road in Porters Lake. Where does that lead? To the home of NDP MP and former provincial Leader, Robert Chisholm. That was the NDP's first priority. (Interruptions) Looking after their own - and I'll table a photo of that.

I asked the Premier about his leadership. How does a government he leads, using expensive government equipment and a large crew of government workers paving the roads of prominent NDPers as high priorities, meet his commitment to get politics out of paving?

THE PREMIER: You know, Mr. Speaker, it's hard to believe that they could waste the time of Oral Question Period with such sad questions. (Interruptions) What a waste of time. We have a public road-paving plan that sets out, on the basis of engineering standards, what roads should be paved. We pave roads that need to be paved.

MR. PORTER: Mr. Speaker, one of the problems with creating government road crews to do chip sealing, aside from the way the NDP are wasting the expense on areas where there was competition, the NDP Government does not have to put work out to tender. If they did, there would be a paper trail. It would be fair - nothing in a tender at all about either paving the Renfrew Road or the Robert Chisholm - I mean the Cove Road. So I ask the Premier, will he commit now to instruct ministers to tender contracts in areas where there is competition, as promised, and to use accurate and complete information on all government documents so Nova Scotians can see with their own eyes just what this government is up to and which families really are they for?

THE PREMIER: Well, Mr. Speaker, when we were elected we promised to take politics out of paving. That's what we've done. We've published, publicly, the list of roads that we intend to pave, unlike the Progressive Conservative Party. I want to table for you a story that ran during the 2009 election in which the member for Hants West, who was campaigning at the time said, "I've proven, given that they call me 'Cheque Porter,' that I don't have to be in cabinet to deliver in my constituency." That's how they used to do it, "Cheque" Porter. (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester North.

EDUC.: CUTS - CLASSROOM EFFECTS

HON. KAREN CASEY: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Minister of Education. Throughout the whole debate on funding cuts to education, the minister continued to tell Nova Scotians that the cuts to public education would not have a negative impact on the classroom. In fact, on April 11, 2011, the minister stood in this House and said in response to a question in Question Period, "I trust that the impact will not be felt by students in the classroom." My question to the minister is, does the minister still stand by the statement that the impact will not be felt by students in the classroom?

HON. RAMONA JENNEX: Yes, I stand by my statement.

MS. CASEY: Mr. Speaker, I do hope the minister changes her position after she listens to what people have to say. The education partners across this province, including Alexis Allen, president of the Nova Scotia Teachers Union, who represents close to 10,000 teachers, along with parents, home and school associations, elected school board members, and school administrators have all spoken out against the minister's decision. They told her in September 2010 what the impact would be, she didn't listen; they continued to tell her during the budget-building process and asked her to be strong at the Cabinet Table and to fight for public education, and we know what happened; and they're telling her now, they see larger classes, they see fewer EAs, they see more combined classes, triple grades in elementary - and I could go on.

My question to the minister is, who should Nova Scotians believe - the minister who said there would be no negative impact or the front-line workers, our teachers, who work directly with students every day? Can thousands of parents and teachers who are seeing that negative impact all be wrong?

MS. JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to respond to that. I've had the opportunity of being in many schools this Fall and I've been talking to the front-line workers, who are the educational assistants and the teachers in this province. I have been very pleased to see that teachers have an average across this province of 21.8 class sizes. Across the province, the classes I've been in have all been under 20.

I've talked to teachers who have multi-age groupings, and the front-line workers, what I'm hearing, are very happy with the way things have rolled out this Fall. And I just want to remind the members that we have lost 30,000 students out of our school system in the last 10 years while funding was increasing by 42 per cent. We need to make sure that we align our resources, and we're making sure that we've increased per-student funding in this province. It is actually working and the front-line workers are very pleased with what has happened and it was an honour to be at many school openings this Fall, and I look forward to meeting more teachers.

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

ERDT - KELTIC LODGE: UPGRADES - INVESTMENT

MR. KEITH BAIN: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism. Keltic Lodge in Victoria County is billed as one of Cape Breton's most majestic properties and has been a source of pride for the local community since 1940. Unfortunately, the resort's sterling reputation is becoming tarnished. By the minister's own admission in this House last May 3rd, there are many deficiencies in the province's Signature Resorts, a problem he said could be fixed with an investment of between \$1 million and \$22 million.

My question through you to the minister is, what investment has been made to address the deficiencies in Keltic Lodge and boost tourism in the Ingonish area?

HON. PERCY PARIS: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise in my place and talk about the signature resorts. We, as a government, recognize those Signature Resorts are the economic engines in those regions that they call home.

One of the things that's fundamentally different about this government and the previous government is for 10 years those resorts were allowed to go into decay - a little bit of maintenance would have gone a long way. What we've done is we are approaching this in a very educated and systematic way, and one of the things we are not going to do because it would be a flaw to go out and start willy-nilly in doing things without a system in place.

What we are doing is we are studying this thoroughly, we have studied it thoroughly and I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, without a doubt, and for the member opposite, is that we will have a plan - we have a plan that will be going to Cabinet very shortly.

MR. BAIN: I don't know if the government will have a plan or they have a plan. The minister answered both but in the meantime while they're making their plan those buildings could be falling down.

Mr. Speaker, the government's neglect of Keltic Lodge has not gone unnoticed. I received an e-mail from an Ontario resident, Eric Birmann, who stayed at the lodge in September. He said, "The experience was indeed unforgettable and was quite frankly an embarrassment. . . . a sadly degenerated two star facility with five star pricing." After receiving this e-mail I checked the popular travel Web site, TripAdvisor, where reviews of hotels are posted by travellers. I was disappointed to see the once-celebrated Keltic Lodge is now being described as: "A big disappointment.", ". . . really unpleasant", ". . . in desperate need of renovations and modern updates", and ". . . a mediocre hotel."

Mr. Speaker, I will table a copy of the e-mail and the TripAdvisor reviews. My question through you to the minister is, what is the minister going to do to halt the embarrassing decline of Keltic Lodge and stop the damage to the lodge's and the province's reputation?

MR. PARIS: Mr. Speaker, I heard two words there. One was disappointment, the other one was embarrassment. I can tell you what embarrassment and disappointment is and it's sitting over there. For 10 years they sat and watched these facilities go downhill. We have a plan to enhance the tourism experience for those individuals visiting those signature resorts and if they will stand back, stay out of our way, we will get the job done.

MR. BAIN: This question is going to be quite simple but I sometimes wonder - what is this government's plan for Keltic Lodge? Why is the minister content to let the lodge and tourist dollars it brings to the area die a slow death, and will he table his plan in this House before the end of today?

MR. PARIS: Mr. Speaker, I keep hearing the same song and dance over and over again. I provided the answer and it obviously is, just stay out of our way, we will get the job done. It was when we came in that we recognized immediately - again, we are not going to do things willy-nilly, we are going to do awareness, understanding and the action is on its way.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

EDUC. - PRINCE ANDREW HS: RENOVATIONS - STATUS

MR. ANDREW YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, my question is actually for the Minister of Education. The minister is aware that I was pleased that her predecessor announced the long delayed renovations at Prince Andrew High School had moved forward. Now, the start was delayed but it finally started and we all thought the project would move forward in a regular and timely basis. Instead this government had strangled the cash flow for this project. In the Spring, I asked the minister about equipment the department had removed but did not replace - we still haven't had an answer.

Mr Speaker, it's much worse since then. Missing bleachers were minor compared to today's situation where, at Prince Andrew, teachers and students go into school every day wondering if they'll have power in their classroom. They wonder which cables and plugs will work on that day and which ones won't. They wonder which days they will have heat. A few weeks ago student services staff turned on a microwave and blew the lights in part of the school in the newly upgraded electrical system and the board says much of this is because the department is not providing appropriate cash flow to keep the project moving along. Will the minister please tell this House why she is not living up to her department's commitment on the timeline for this project and ensuring the board receives the necessary cash flow to keep the project moving forward?

HON. RAMONA JENNEX: Actually, Mr. Speaker, I'm disappointed to have this question today, because I would have hoped that the member opposite would have come to me much earlier with these concerns if he was really concerned about the students. I have not been made aware of the problems with the renovation, but I will tell you that the children's safety and their education is of the utmost importance to myself and to this government and I will be exploring what is happening with this situation.

MR. YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, I'm surprised by the minister's answer, since in a minute I'm going to table a letter from her from June indicating that she's aware of the issue that she just said she's not aware of. I guess somebody else must be writing the letters for her.

The minister knows well that the Tech Ed Program, for example, is an important part of the Options and Opportunities program, and many of those kids are kids who we're trying to keep in school and who might be looking at opportunities that could present themselves down at the Irving shipyard, for example. People signed up for the program on the understanding from this minister that the facilities would be in place in time for this year's program.

On June 22nd the minister wrote a letter to the school advisory committee chairman, saying that the Tech Ed program area would be completed over the summer. It was not, and no new work was done over the summer. In fact, on the date of that letter the minister should have already been aware that a week before, the school board had advised her staff that they did not have sufficient cash flow from her department to do any work that summer. Will the minister explain to this House why she was still telling people that work would progress on projects like the Tech Ed department when she and her department knew that no tender had gone out and the department had not even provided funding to the board to do it?

MS. JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, these projects are under the mandate of the school board, and as I said, I will do what I said I would do earlier, which would be exploring this situation. It is now November and this honourable member brings this forward at this point. I wish he had brought his concerns forward to me in September. It was my understanding that everything was on schedule.

MR. YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, I'm bringing it up today because working with the school advisory committee, who had contacted her department repeatedly and received inaccurate information from her department, and the school board, who has contacted her department repeatedly and complained about the issue - that's why now we're here today.

Teachers and students are going to school in a construction site - I'll table a photo of that - and much of the work isn't even being done right. The new gym floor that they just put in at significant cost is coming apart and isn't level; the badminton pole holes, for example, are the wrong size for the equipment; the new paint is already peeling; equipment

has been removed. Mr. Speaker, on the department's orders, not the board's, pencil sharpeners were removed from the classrooms and they were not returned because the board was told by the department that pencil sharpeners are not deemed necessary in the school. Yet one thing was installed properly - the sign with the names of the minister and the Premier on it, with a version of the NDP election slogan. (Interruptions) I'll table that.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. I understand you're tabling that. You can't hold it up in the manner of using it as a prop in the House, please. Just table it and continue on and ask the minister your question.

MR. YOUNGER: That went up a short time ago, and I'll tell you, if I was that minister or the Premier, I would be embarrassed to have my name on that renovation at the moment . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Question?

MR. YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, my question is, since they couldn't find the money for pencil sharpeners but could find the money to put this sign up, will the Minister of Education apologize to the students and community of Prince Andrew for putting a higher priority on getting a sign with her name on it than making the renovations move forward properly?

MS. JENNEX: Again, Mr. Speaker, I must say that I'm extremely disappointed to have this line of questioning when we could have worked through this if I had been notified earlier. Our students' education and their safety is of the highest priority. As I said - and I made a statement here with the second line of questioning - I said that I would definitely be looking into this. As this House knows, when I say that, I mean that, so I am looking into this. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clare.

JUSTICE: BILL C-10 - N.S. IMPACT

HON. WAYNE GAUDET: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice. The federal Conservative Government is pushing through Bill C-10, which would impose mandatory minimum sentences among other things. Other provinces have expressed concern over the impact of this bill. Quebec has publicly refused to pay for the resulting higher prison costs. Ontario has said that this could force the province to build new prisons and train more guards.

Mr. Speaker, has the Minister of Justice examined and identified the impact that this Conservative bill would have on the justice system in Nova Scotia?

HON. ROSS LANDRY: I'll pass that to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs because that question aligns better.

THE PREMIER: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We are well aware of the possible impacts of the bill on the cost structure of the province. We are monitoring that, as you know. Both Ontario and Quebec have already made certain declarations about their willingness or unwillingness to pay for those increased costs.

Undoubtedly, increased costs will be the case here in the province as well. We will go through a process to try and determine what that will mean for the province and then, of course, it's our position that if they're going to create increased costs in the province, they should bear the cost through the transfer program.

MR. GAUDET: Mr. Speaker, I welcome and I thank the Premier for his answer. This Conservative crime bill will certainly have a significant cost on Nova Scotia. Both Quebec and Ontario have expressed their opposition to the Conservative method of more prisons and more jails. In Nova Scotia we are already dealing with issues of overcrowding in our correctional facilities and the strain on the correctional staff.

Mr. Speaker, what steps has the Minister of Justice taken to ensure that this Conservative crime bill will not cause further problems in Nova Scotia and will not cause further strain on the Justice Department's budget?

MR. LANDRY: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I want to thank the member for the question and I am very pleased to answer this question. Upon becoming Justice Minister, I examined this issue as to the potential the crime bill might have on the province as a whole. That is why we did the very in-depth analysis on - for example, one area was the correctional facility. The decision that had been previously made would have cost the province more money, would have been a further burden on the province overall. So by building the facility where we did, in the manner in which we did, will deal with the capacity issue over the short term.

We are also presently working with all stakeholders and looking at issues dealing with the Justice Department. Our department has a very open dialogue with all stakeholders, whether they are in Public Prosecution, whether they are in the policing aspect, to look at ways of how this may impact.

What's very important here is that we get accurate information and not do what the Opposition wants us to do, which is to throw money randomly out in the open and to have a knee-jerk reaction. We need a very strategic focus and look at this in a systematic way, address the issues as they come forward and be very pragmatic of how we spend taxpayer dollars.

MR. GAUDET: Mr. Speaker, both Quebec and Ontario have already come out in opposition to this Conservative bill. They have already stated that this Conservative downloading will cost them big dollars. This will also cost Nova Scotia as well.

Mr. Speaker, is the Minister of Justice prepared to follow the Governments of Quebec and Ontario and publicly oppose this misguided Conservative Bill C-10?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I think I actually addressed that before. I'm not so sure that the governments of Ontario and Quebec oppose the bill. They oppose the cost transfer that will come with the bill, which I think is a distinction. We're obviously concerned about it as well and There are two parts to it. One is that we need to try to anticipate the costs, but the other is, of course, the practical aspects of implementation and trying to determine on the back end what the actual effect will be.

On the front end, we would like to see the federal government add more money into the transfers in order to support the program, if that's what they want to go forward. On the back end, we're going to have to do some analysis of what effect that's going to have, for example, on the facilities we have and our ability to potentially accommodate a new influx of prisoners.

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

COM. SERV.: COMM. MEETING - ABSENCE EXPLAIN

MS. KELLY REGAN: Yesterday, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Community Services declined to explain why her department didn't bother to show up for a meeting of the Standing Committee on Community Services. She claims they only want to make sure everyone understands what the changes are to the special needs regulations of the Employment Support and Income Assistance Act. She said yesterday that there's a lot of misinformation out there, and I'll table her remarks. Yet the department, when given a chance to explain what was going on, did not show up for this meeting - which they had asked to attend.

I'd like to give the minister another chance to explain. Why did her department not bother to show up to committee to explain to members of this House what the changes are?

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: As I said yesterday, Mr. Speaker, the standing committee had invited both Dalhousie Legal Aid and Nova Scotia Legal Aid to come and present their views on the changes, and we asked if we could come and present our views, because there's a difference in what both sides are seeing in terms of the changes.

However, since we are a government that consults and a government that wants to work with people, we talked with Dalhousie Legal Aid and Nova Scotia Legal Aid, and we

have come to an agreement that we're going to work together. That might be foreign to the Liberal Party or the Progressive Conservative Party, but not to us in the NDP because we strive to work together.

MS. REGAN: Since the minister well knows that members of this House are going to have to explain those regulations to our constituents, failure to explain that to us doesn't make any sense. In the August 8th announcement regarding the special needs changes, the department's news release stated that the department received requests for items like hot tubs and gym memberships. The release went on to say that 20 to 25 of these requests had been approved, and I will table that release.

However, in the departmental briefing provided to the Community Services Committee in advance of the department's cancelled appearance, absolutely no mention of hot tubs being approved was made, and I'll table that information as well. Can the minister explain to this House why her department chose to use language that implied that people in this program were getting hot tubs?

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: We said there were a variety of special needs that were not within the policy - never in the policy. Actually, there was a sauna that was approved in 2007. There were several gym memberships. There were several medical marijuana approvals, and we were also seeing a movement toward asking for grow-ops to be paid for by the people of Nova Scotia, which I do not think that the majority of people in the province would have been in agreement with.

So as I said before and as I said yesterday, we're talking about 25 cases that were not in the policy in the first place, that went through this appeal process, and that's over a 10-year period. However, we're also talking within that same period of time, that over 173,000 people in this province received their special needs through the Department of Community Services.

MS. REGAN: This minister always says she cares about low-income Nova Scotians, but when given the opportunity, she implied that taxpayers were funding hot tubs. This minister knew the media would pick up on the hot tub, this minister laid the groundwork for the poor-bashing that resulted, and how convenient was it that CRA was in the field when this was all going on?

Will the minister clear the air - did the department actually ever fund a hot tub or was the minister simply politicking?

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: I just said, in 2007 a sauna, which is similar to a hot tub, was covered. (Interruptions) They're similar. I was telling the truth. We were explaining the items that were covered over that period of time.

Definitely, there was absolutely no poor-bashing. I will table this - this government has put in, invested, over \$100 million in the last two and a half years for the most vulnerable people in this province. That's not poor-bashing, and I will table that.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

**HEALTH & WELLNESS: MS LIBERATION TREATMENT
- CLINICAL TRIALS**

MR. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. On June 29, 2011, the federal government of Canada signalled its intent to move forward with pan-Canadian trials on the MS Liberation Treatment. For MS sufferers in Nova Scotia this announcement was significant, as it was the last remaining excuse the NDP Government was grasping as to why Nova Scotia would not commit to the funding of a clinical trial.

My question to the minister is, now that this obstacle is removed, can the minister please outline what plans Nova Scotia has when it comes to funding a clinical trial for MS patients here in Nova Scotia?

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question because it does give me an opportunity to be very clear about what the situation is. The federal government indicated that phase one and phase two of clinical trials could proceed. They told the provinces this, indeed, as the honourable member indicated. They also told the provinces though that they would need until the Fall to develop some of the framework for provinces to be able to participate in this process.

We're still awaiting that framework from the federal government and I'm assuming that when the federal Health Ministers meet here in November with the federal Minister of Health, we have this item on our agenda for an update, so indeed we can move forward. I want to reiterate the position that I took back in June - when clinical trials are approved and ready to go, and we know how to participate in that, this province will indeed participate.

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, as you are likely aware, patients from Nova Scotia - and there have been hundreds of them - have made financial sacrifices to receive the MS Liberation procedure. They are the body of evidence, if you will, as to the efficacy of this treatment. Now that the federal government is indicating there is enough evidence to move forward with trials, will the minister please indicate whether her government plans to track and follow patients who have already received treatment abroad?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I have had conversations with the specialists who treat patients in this province with MS at the MS clinic here. They, in fact, keep very close track of patients who are leaving the province and very often they see these patients when they return. I am satisfied with the information they provided me with and

how it is that they interact with those patients. MS is a very difficult disease. We're very hopeful that research will enable us to provide more effective treatments, and I'm looking forward to hearing from the federal Minister of Health with respect to how Nova Scotia could indeed participate in the early phases of clinical trials.

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

ENERGY: WIND ENERGY/COAL ENERGY - COST COMPARISON

MR. ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, my question through you will be to the Minister of Energy. There is no question in the Province of Nova Scotia that green energy is important. Of course, it was our government that brought forward the original plan to have green energy used here in Nova Scotia and we have to move forward on that plan and that's what this government says they are doing.

My question to the minister is, his department has said that coal has gone up over 75 per cent in cost over the last six years, that was reported to our Resources Committee not too long ago. Can the minister tell me, what is the cost of wind energy compared to energy that's provided by coal?

HON. CHARLIE PARKER: Mr. Speaker, it's great to finally have a question I can respond to. I thank the honourable member for the question. Certainly over the past decade or so we have seen the fossil fuel prices - especially coal - rising much quicker than the cost of living. In fact, as you mentioned, 75 per cent over really the last five years is probably more accurate.

Unfortunately we had a policy in this province where really very little was done by previous governments to change the increasing cost of electricity. It impacts and affects all of us. This government has a solid plan to get away from fossil fuels and get on to renewables. Wind energy, tidal and natural gas and other renewable like biomass and hydroelectricity - this is a good direction, it's the way we're heading and renewables, overall, are probably about 1 per cent to 2 per cent on the cost of our electricity bills at the present time.

MR. MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, it was really nice that the Minister of Energy tried to answer that question. But the question was how much does wind energy cost over coal? For his education, I'll tell him - wind energy costs are two-thirds more expensive than coal. It's two-thirds more expensive to produce energy with wind than it is with coal.

That being said, Mr. Speaker, at the Resources Committee meeting on October 20th, officials of the minister's department stated that by 2020, 35 per cent of the electricity that's needed in Nova Scotia would come from fossil fuels. He said, "We see coal and petroleum co-potentially as low as 35 per cent . . ." That's exactly what his deputy minister said.

My question to the minister is, if we still need coal in the coming decade, why isn't the minister demanding that Donkin coal be used instead of shipping coal in from places like South America?

MR. PARKER: Mr. Speaker, certainly when we reach 40 per cent renewables by 2020, we're still going to be relying on fossil fuels, including coal. The truth is, as time goes by, the renewables will become cheaper, fossil fuels most likely are going to continue to rise. In the Department of Natural Resources - I'll put that hat on for a minute - we're actually working with the folks at Erdene and Xstrata trying to see that the mine in Donkin is developed, and talking with Nova Scotia Power, and we'll see where those discussions will lead. It's true, fossil fuels will continue to be with us for a time but our goal is to get off fossil fuels and get on to much more renewable energy.

MR. MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, it's a good goal, I have no problem with the goal, but the reality is his department has said time and time again that, by the year 2020, 35 per cent of the energy needs in this province will be met by coal generation. My question is very simple to the minister: wouldn't it be better to have coal mined in Nova Scotia, by Nova Scotians who are paying taxes to Nova Scotia, rather than bringing in coal from South America?

MR. PARKER: Mr. Speaker, we in Nova Scotia have a balanced portfolio. We're looking at a number of renewables like natural gas, coal, biomass, tidal and wind and a whole mix. We're not putting all our eggs in one basket like previous governments did, we're really looking at a very diversified portfolio of energy sources and we'll continue to look at all of those as time moves on.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

ENERGY: NEWPAGE/ABITIBIBOWATER - DSM EXEMPTION

MR. ANDREW YOUNGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'll stay with the Minister of Energy. Last week the Utility and Review Board heard from NewPage Port Hawkesbury and AbitibiBowater on their load retention application. One of the lesser-reported portions of that application was an application to be exempt from the demand side management charge and the fuel adjustment mechanisms.

The minister will recall that this additional charge on power was first proposed by the Tory Government, opposed by the NDP during the election, and then added to everybody's bill during the election, or after the election in the first session of the Legislature. I'll table the application by AbitibiBowater and NewPage.

Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Energy agree that these two large companies should be exempt from the DSM charge since they can't access the funds from that

program, anyway, to improve efficiency as part of their operations and that this could be part of a solution to reducing power rates at these mills?

HON. CHARLIE PARKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the honourable member for the question. Certainly as Nova Scotians we're all concerned about the cost of power, whether it is our most vulnerable citizens right up to our small-business folks and large industrial users as well.

Really, the cost is settled by the Utility and Review Board and they take into consideration all the factors, all the information they have available to them, to come up with the fairest rate that all classes of ratepayers in this province will pay.

MR. YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, the minister isn't answering my questions any better than he answered the questions of the last member. The fact is that the Utility and Review Board didn't decide that those two mills should pay that rate, the NDP did in their legislation when they created it, and the minister is well aware of that. The minister is the only one - and the Utility and Review Board has said this - that can actually choose to exempt them from the demand side management charge which, of course, they do not have access to. That's really the issue, they don't have access.

Mr. Speaker, I recently received an e-mail from a small business in Nova Scotia - and I raise this because, of course, businesses in Nova Scotia have not benefited from the HST removal because they always got to claim their HST back on power - this business owner points out that they took advantage of the demand side management program, reduced their energy usage, only to find that it bumped them into a higher power rate. Now they use less energy and pay more for electricity.

Mr. Speaker, I wonder, what steps is the minister planning to take to ensure that businesses that actually reduce their power and take advantage of these efficiency programs don't actually end up paying more for power because they get bumped into a higher rate class? Thank you.

MR. PARKER: Mr. Speaker, over and over studies and reports have shown that the best way to save on our energy costs is through energy efficiency and converting to renewables. Those two combined will, over time, save us much more than the cost of fossil fuels.

Energy efficiency really is lower power bills in the long run. It promotes innovation; it reduces the harmful effects of greenhouse gases; it creates jobs. It has a lot of good things going for it, and I think most Nova Scotians agree that efficiency and renewables is the way to go.

MR. YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, I'm wondering if there is an audio program on that side that they can't hear the questions because that had nothing to do with the question. The

question was - and it was very clear - it wasn't saying the efficiency program is wrong, it is saying the efficiency program was actually having the impact of raising the bills of businesses in this province because it was bumping them into a higher rate class and what was he going to do about it.

Mr. Speaker, tomorrow Efficiency Nova Scotia is holding their next stakeholder consultation because of their new application to raise that tax once again on every low income, middle income, high income, every business in this province.

Mr. Speaker, the rate has already doubled, it's going up again and I think it's time for the minister to finally answer the question. How high is the minister prepared to see this rate go before he orders a freeze? Before he says it is the Utility and Review Board's decision, the Utility and Review Board can only consider the legislation that this government introduced, and that means they have to approve funding for whatever programs are proposed.

MR. PARKER: Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to meet with Efficiency Nova Scotia this morning. They tell me that so far there are 36,000 homes in Nova Scotia that have benefited from the energy efficiency programs - 18,000 alone this year. It's a small investment in our future. It provides more energy-efficient homes and it's absolutely the right way to go.

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

ENERGY - TIDAL ENERGY OPERATIONS: DIGBY - MIN. LOBBY

MR. HAROLD THERIAULT: Mr. Speaker, my question, too, is for the Minister of Energy. A recent study released regarding the service and maintenance for the tidal energy industry in the Bay of Fundy stated that Digby is at the top of the list for the locations to get this job done. My question to the Minister of Energy is, has the minister reviewed this report and will he lobby to have Digby as a location to service tidal energy operations for this province?

HON. CHARLIE PARKER: Mr. Speaker, certainly tidal energy has a tremendous potential. We have the Bay of Fundy with some of the greatest volume of water that comes in on every tide. In fact, I'm told more energy comes in every tide than all the rivers in the world. So we have a huge potential. We did the infrastructure study on the Bay of Fundy ports, including Parrsboro, Hantsport, Digby, and a number of smaller communities like Tiverton and Weymouth and so on. Each one of them has assets; each one of them has value. As we move forward there will be a role probably for each and every one of those communities.

MR. THERIAULT: Mr. Speaker, last Spring I asked the Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism if he would push this incentive at the Cabinet Table and

help bring much-needed economic development to Digby and surrounding areas in this new tidal initiative. His answer was yes.

My question for the Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism is, now that the Department of Energy recommends Digby as the port, will you continue your efforts and support Digby to be the service port for these renewable energy operations?

HON. PERCY PARIS: Mr. Speaker, my yes is unwavering.

MR. THERIAULT: Mr. Speaker, renewable energy is important, and so is economic development. It's important for Digby and it's important for the entire province that this area be selected to service tidal offshore wind and wave energy projects. The report states that Digby is the only reasonable location to launch and carry out maintenance for these projects. So my question to the Minister of Energy is, will the minister commit to meet with the port authorities and others from Digby in the near future to discuss this important project?

MR. PARKER: Well, for the member's information, I did have the opportunity to meet with the mayor of Digby, the warden of Digby County, and the chair of the port authority just last week. We discussed the value and importance of Digby as a community and the potential it has in the tidal energy field. I know they're interested in moving that project forward and seeing the potential they have. They're looking at the possibility of an infrastructure study, and we said we would certainly encourage them to do that. So I guess we're one step ahead. We've already had that opportunity to meet with them.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clare.

TIR - CHIP-SEAL OPERATION: LATE START - EXPLAIN

HON. WAYNE GAUDET: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal. Last week we were told by the Nova Scotia Road Builders Association that the NDP Government's chip-sealing operation was proven to be expensive and inefficient, and also that it started very late in the season and only surfaced a very small amount of road. So my first question to the minister is, why did the chip-seal operation start so late this year?

HON. WILLIAM ESTABROOKS: Mr. Speaker, I would like to bring the attention of the members of the House to the importance of having a chip-sealing program, because when we looked at the tender prices that were coming in, my first reaction was, what's the price in New Brunswick? New Brunswick at the time was bringing in much cheaper when it came to tender dollars. Much cheaper. So I asked staff what the reason for that was.

Staff got back to me with the idea of looking at reviewing the whole situation and the possibility that we should operate our own chip-sealing plant. I can tell you, I had the

opportunity this summer to visit the chip-seal workers, and they were trained and did a tremendous job wherever they worked. I want the member opposite to know that when it comes down to chip-seal dollars and the dollars that have been spent, they have been spent wisely. Time will prove when we review this, when we operate this again next summer, how widely accepted it is going to be. I can assure you that when it comes to this particular project, it has been exceptionally well received wherever this crew has been.

MR. GAUDET: Mr. Speaker, the lateness in the start of the province's chip-sealing operation only proves how costly this plan is to Nova Scotians. Government has said that they can perform this form of operation more cheaply, and I will table their own documents on this. My question to the minister is, can the minister tell us today how much the chip-sealing operation cost Nova Scotians this year?

MR. ESTABROOKS: Mr. Speaker, I have a great deal of respect for the member opposite, and I understand that he might have misunderstood. At no time as minister did I say we could do the job more cheaply. At no time. I want you to know that the cost came in at \$91,000 per kilometre in 2009. In 2011 the cost is \$40,000 per kilometre. The reason for that - is it just a coincidence that we have a chip-seal plant operating? I don't think it's just a coincidence at all. I want the member opposite to be aware of the fact that when we can save over \$1 million to be used in other projects around this province, that's how we're going to continue to do business in the Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal Department.

MR. GAUDET: Mr. Speaker, my final question to the minister is, will the minister undertake to table a list of the roads that were chip-seal surfaced this year by the government's chip-sealing operation? Will he undertake to table that information, please?

MR. ESTABROOKS: Mr. Speaker, to the member opposite, if I had the time I could perhaps do it here, out of the five-year road plan. That's a sensible question; it receives a sensible answer, and that information will be forthcoming. Thank you for the question.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle.

HEALTH & WELLNESS - DHA CUTS: FRONT-LINE SERVICES - EFFECTS

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, this government is putting front-line health care in serious jeopardy with its lack of direction associated with decreasing funding and rising costs. The Minister of Health and Wellness asked the district health authorities to cut 3 per cent out of their budgets for next year. Out of a \$1.6 billion budget, this amounts to a \$45.5 million cut, as the minister defensively pointed out to the member for Kings West yesterday in Question Period.

My question to the Minister of Health and Wellness is, with the upward pressure on costs and the downward pressure on funding, how does the minister expect this to not affect front-line health services?

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, the district health authorities and the IWK are exercising great leadership in terms of the way they're identifying ways to find efficiencies within the health care system. There are a number of initiatives underway where we are combining purchasing and the functioning of different administrative pieces of the health care system. I've asked the district health authorities, as they do their budget plans for this year, to ensure that they protect patient care and that they protect Mental Health and Addiction Services. I will work with the district health authorities as they develop their proposals.

I want to point out that this is the earliest that the district health authorities have ever had their budget targets. It allows them an opportunity to have discussions among themselves and to look at how they can find efficiencies by collaborating across DHAs rather than only looking internally, inside their own budget envelope.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, nurses are vital to primary care in our province and deserve to be fairly compensated for their hard, demanding work. However, yesterday when we learned of the arbitrator's ruling for NSGEU nurses in the Capital Health Authority of a 7.1 per cent wage increase over a three-year period, retroactive to November 1, 2009, we can only conclude that this will set a trend for increasing labour costs across the province.

AllNovaScotia.com, which I will table in a couple of seconds here, is reporting today that the increase in wages to nurses will cost about \$12.5 million. Also, Mr. Speaker, in an article on southshorenova.ca, which I'll also table, South Shore Health says the cut will amount to \$2.1 million. The CEO, Alice Leverman, told board members in October that the 3 per cent does not include increases on several contracts, including with NSGEU, CUPE, and NSNU, and she felt that this would increase that cut to about \$4 million.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to ask the minister, does she understand the complexity of what she is asking the DHAs to do? The number is actually far larger than a 3 per cent cut.

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, we've had the health care budgets grow, in some cases at a rate of 10 per cent annually, year over year. This certainly is not a situation that can be sustained. I think it is particularly concerning that we weren't necessarily getting the kind of health outcomes that we require. We are now working with the DHAs to say that we need a sustainable health care system and that we need to improve the quality and the outcomes of the health care that we're getting.

I recognize that it is a challenge, and this is why we proceeded in a very thoughtful way. This year the DHAs weren't given any additional funding. We've given them their

budget targets for next year earlier than has ever happened before. We've been in conversations with the DHAs around a range of options that they will need to work through and consider and bring me some concrete plans on.

Mr. Speaker, I've watched what that member had to say. He indicated that he thought the deep cuts should have been made in health care in the first year of our mandate. That's not our approach. That may have been the plan that that Party had, if they had formed the government, but thank heavens, they didn't. We're taking a much more thoughtful approach.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, we're just trying to find answers to a large question here. I know the minister has said on many occasions that the 3 per cent amounts to \$45.5 million, but when you look at all the other things that are being asked of the district health authorities, the things that they are going to have to so-called "eat" as it rolls around - that is wage increases, that is cost of living increases, that is fuel, that is lights. That's everything else that goes with it.

In a press release on October 14th, which I will table, the minister calls the cuts an opportunity. It says we know that this is a challenge, but it is also an opportunity.

My final question to the minister is, in what we estimate, with all the added pieces to it, it is close to a \$100 million cut, because they're going to have to take in a whole bunch of other issues. How can she call that an opportunity when things like dialysis, oncology, surgery, and a whole bunch of other programs that are important to patients in Nova Scotia might have to be - maybe not cut completely, but maybe shut down for other reasons?

Mr. Speaker, I'm just again wondering, how can she call that an opportunity?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, we do indeed have an opportunity to have a health care system that is more responsive, where every dollar that we are expending for health care actually provides health care. It's not giving us more administration; it's not giving us other things. In fact, it goes directly into patient care.

We have seen the stroke strategy, for example, in the province result in the collaboration across district health authorities and improvement in the quality of care that stroke patients get. Rather than duplicating that care in every district health authority, but at a lower quality, we have now centres of absolute excellence for patients who have strokes, who are able then to return to their home district for the ongoing care having had this specialized service.

Mr. Speaker, there is a way to provide better health care sooner to Nova Scotians and certainly that is what this entire focus is about.

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

MR. HAROLD THERIAULT: Mr. Speaker, I didn't know whether I was in Question Period there or late debate. I think the two members could bring that up in late debate, I believe they need the time to do it. Anyway, my question is for the Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage.

Mr. Speaker, we've received correspondence from professional, living artists of Nova Scotia stating the great difficulty they've had in dealing with the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia. This group went to get efforts to follow proper procedure, submit documents and send correspondence, yet the gallery took an unacceptable amount of time to make contact with this organization. My question is, are you aware that the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia has dragged its heels on this issue?

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

The honourable Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations on a quick introduction.

HON. JOHN MACDONELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and I will be quick. In the west gallery, at least I hope because I can't see there, but the members of Victoria County Council are here: Warden Bruce Morrison, Deputy Warden Fraser Patterson, Merrill MacInnis, David Donovan, Larry Dauphinee and John Buchanan. I wonder if members could please give them a warm welcome to the House.

MR. SPEAKER: Minister, also, in the east gallery we have the member for the Cape Breton Regional Municipality, Mae Rowe is also with us today.

The honourable member for Victoria-The Lakes on an introduction.

MR. KEITH BAIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Liberals for sharing their time. The minister has already introduced the councillors from Victoria County but I also want to recognize the CAO from Victoria County, Sandy Hudson.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS' BUSINESS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Opposition House Leader. (Applause)

HON. MANNING MACDONALD: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, to that thunderous applause. Would you please call the order of business, Private Members' Public Bills for Second Reading.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Opposition House Leader.

HON. MANNING MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 66.

Bill No. 66 - Ratepayer Protection Act.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

MR. LEO GLAVINE: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Bill No. 66 is the Ratepayer Protection Act and just to outline what this bill will require of Nova Scotia Power: to conduct a biannual performance and value-for-money audits, which will be made public; to publish estimated and actual costs on a regular basis; require public settlement meetings before any proposed general rate hike; and it will prevent millions in executive bonuses and regulatory costs from being passed on to ratepayers.

Mr. Speaker, over the last nine years electricity rates have increased six times by 36 per cent and now Nova Scotia Power is seeking another large increase on the backs of consumers. We have seen power rate increases dig deeper into the pockets of Nova Scotians. Nova Scotians have faced down continued rate increases from Nova Scotia Power and added electricity taxes, courtesy of NDP and Progressive Conservative Governments, all of this with no accountability.

There is simply no more revenue for Nova Scotia Power to take from the people of this province. Increasing power rates mean increases in just about everything from food to property taxes. They are an attack on the standard of living of Nova Scotians, and this is why the Liberal caucus has introduced the Ratepayer Protection Bill. It's just one step of many that our Party would take to ensure Nova Scotia Power is accountable to Nova Scotians. If passed, this bill will reduce power rates for Nova Scotians and will give all Nova Scotian homeowners and businesses direct access to what their rates actually pay for.

Nova Scotians and the province's business community are pushed to the brink by already sky-high power rates and aren't able to withstand the further electricity increases being sought by Nova Scotia Power. We saw today, Mr. Speaker, a statement from the Premier, the Leader of the Official Opposition, and the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party, about the impacts that electricity costs are having on the pulp and paper industry in this province. NewPage is currently in a shutdown mode and, in Liverpool, AbitibiBowater is looking very, very shaky.

MR. SPEAKER: Order. Order, please. Chatter is getting a little high. If you have conversations, I would like you to remove them from the Chamber.

The honourable member for Kings West has the floor.

MR. GLAVINE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We see the possible high increases already taking their toll here in the province. Over the past year as well we've seen

businesses that were giving consideration to building and locating in Nova Scotia also putting their plans on hold because of the extreme power rates that we currently have. As a province we are becoming rapidly uncompetitive when compared to our neighbouring provinces. The NDP Government's only answer has been to trumpet the removal of the HST from electricity bills. However, this did not benefit small business; it did not benefit mills like NewPage and Bowater. In fact the NDP, in co-operation with the Tories, did everything they could to hurt those businesses when it came to power rates.

For the NDP to keep talking about the HST removal as a solution is an insult to everyone in this province who runs a business. While the HST removal had no benefit to those mills, the Tories while in government proposed a new electricity tax which mills like NewPage, along with every other electricity consumer in the province, from businesses to low-income families, would be forced to pay. The NDP then opposed that tax during the 2009 election, but promptly implemented it in their first session after becoming government - with the support of the Tory caucus. They literally called it a Christmas gift to Nova Scotians. Yet right now, NewPage and Bowater, as I mentioned earlier, are before the Utility and Review Board fighting for their corporate lives, and one of their demands is to be freed from the shackles of the taxes that have been put on in the last two years.

Instead of the Progressive Conservatives and the NDP deciding Nova Scotia shareholders should pay for efficiency costs, they decided low-income Nova Scotians and struggling businesses should pay those costs.

Power rates, as I said earlier, increased by 36 per cent over the last 10 years and now Nova Scotia Power is seeking another 20 per cent increase over the next three years - a tough, tough reality. The last 10 years brought a series of Progressive Conservative and NDP Governments that failed to stand up to Nova Scotia Power. Both the Progressive Conservatives and the NDP had the opportunity to rein in power rates that increased by 36 per cent over the last 10 years, but both failed to do so.

Our work begins with Nova Scotians knowing whether they're getting value for money or whether the parent company - Emera - is simply bleeding Nova Scotia Power dry - and that's what this Ratepayer Protection Bill is indeed prepared to do.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I take my place.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Energy.

HON. CHARLIE PARKER: Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity here to have a few minutes to speak on Bill No. 66. It's really an opportunity to speak on energy and electricity prices in our province, and that topic certainly is an important one for all Nova Scotians and certainly is one of the key priorities of our government.

Having access to affordable electricity is central to everything that we do in Nova Scotia and it's of particular concern I know for our most vulnerable in this province. It's a concern for small businesses and it's a concern for our large industrial customers.

Unfortunately, we've seen the cost of power or electricity escalate significantly over the past number of years. The biggest driver in those electricity cost increases have been coal - coal that comes from outside our province, from outside our borders, and often has come in from as far away as Columbia, in South America. In fact, until very recently, 80 per cent of the electricity consumed in Nova Scotia came from coal.

I know, Mr. Speaker, that's of particular interest to you and we had talked about in Question Period and it's an issue, that one time all of our coal came from Nova Scotia and perhaps that will be seen again someday. That was before we knew much about coal and about the environmental aspects of the mineral, but technology is changing some of that as well.

Right now, we're spending millions of dollars each year - that's coming from outside our borders and, I mean, that's where the money goes. So it's making us vulnerable to increasing costs and to concerns about our stability of supply. In fact, in the last six years, as has previously been mentioned, coal prices have gone up about 75 per cent. The truth is that previous governments have done very little to address our reliance on fossil fuels, including oil and coal.

This government has a concrete plan to take our energy into the future and to really put it into our own hands. It's one that we're well on the way to implementing. Our renewable electricity plan sets some of the most aggressive targets in the world and, by 2015, we'll be at 25 per cent of our electricity produced by renewables - right from our own province - and by 2020, we'll be hitting the 40 per cent from local and regional renewable sources.

The bottom line is that we have a plan to break away from our reliance on fossil fuels, and I think that is a good thing. Truthfully, as I mentioned, governments in the past have done little to break that dependency. They did nothing to stop the 75 per cent increase in the fossil fuels under their watch. Really, I heard good support from some sources for our Lower Churchill hydroelectric project and other, I guess it's been more wishy-washy support, but that's a project that's secures for Nova Scotia access to cleaner, renewable electricity for 30 years at a stable cost - and it may even decline, the cost to ratepayers over time.

So now there is a solution there that will get us off fossil fuels and onto many more renewable, and why there's wavering or wishy-washy support for some of those, I'm not too sure why.

I think overall, the legislation that the honourable member for Dartmouth East has introduced, I think that in some ways it does not address the real problem of escalating fuel costs and in many ways it doesn't make sense. Instead of a plan with a vision or for real change, the Official Opposition has the idea that we just spend more money scrutinizing the balance sheets, and adding additional layers of costly bureaucracy, will somehow make the problem of higher electricity rates go away.

The Liberal Party says they're looking for transparency, and I'll make the argument that I think we've never had a more transparent system than what's available to us right now. The system that we have now is rigorous and it's designed entirely around the overriding focus of keeping costs to consumers as low as possible. That's the goal; that's what we all want to see.

Since Nova Scotia Power was privatized in the year 1992, the legislative and regulatory framework regarding the governance of Nova Scotia's electricity sector continues to be defined by the Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board Act and the regulations under the Public Utilities Act and Regulations. The Utilities and Review Board mandates that Nova Scotia Power remains a cost-of-service regulated utility, with a mandated obligation to serve all Nova Scotia loads at the lowest possible cost while meeting a system of reliability and its environmental obligations. The Fuel Adjustment Mechanism - the FAM I guess it's commonly referred to - provides regular public reporting of Nova Scotia Power's forecast and the actual fuel cost. Fuel costs account for about half the cost of running the overall system. The recent increase, I think, was 5.1 per cent, approved by the URB. Over half of that was because of the cost of coal.

Nova Scotia Power also has an Annual Capital Expenditure Plan and that's approved by the URB. It is required to approve any expense over \$250,000 so, Mr. Speaker, they can't just ask for it. They have to prove that they need an increase in order to continue to provide Nova Scotians with the lowest cost electricity possible.

The honourable member, in his Bill No. 66 here, also talks about audits. The URB can and does audit Nova Scotia Power any time they feel the need, and they've done that in the past. Nova Scotia Power has accomplished all this while keeping the increase in electricity prices in line with the cost of CPI since privatization in 1992.

New Brunswick has seen the good things that are going on here with our URB and they recently announced in their energy strategy, that they are going to emulate the model that we have here in our province. So the rate increases we are seeing today are the result of previous governments' inaction and I don't really see any solutions being offered here in this particular bill. The approach, as I see it, is to keep the rates down, but it is just another layer of bureaucratic oversight and essentially doubles the work that is already being done and really adding more costs to the system. That's why we have a URB. The recent decision on 2012 took away the executive bonuses, it reduced the allowable rate of return and it cut \$27 million from Nova Scotia Power's increased revenue application.

I believe that the transparency the Opposition is looking for is there right now. If they want to take the time to do the work, the process is already in place. So stakeholders are encouraged, at the URB hearings, to ask questions. I understand that neither Opposition Party was there this Fall during the rate hearing to ask those types of questions. Our Premier spoke on this matter over the last number of months and there has been no stronger advocate for vigilance over the process on power rates. (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The minister has the floor.

MR. PARKER: It isn't the time for an increase in return in equity and the bonuses should be included in the rate base, so I think we're on the right track with renewables, with energy efficiency. We've taken the HST off and thank you, Mr. Speaker, for your attention.

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

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Before I begin addressing the bill at hand, I just want to provide a little clarity to the minister who just spoke. The fact of the matter is that at the URB hearings, both Opposition Parties were present and asked questions and probed and prodded Nova Scotia Power. In fact, the only Party that did not show up at those hearings was the New Democratic Party of Nova Scotia who sent officials but didn't actually attend the hearing. (Interruption)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please, order. The honourable Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party has the floor.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, all Parties in this House agree that we need to move towards a greener, more prosperous future with a portfolio of energy sources that include a variety of fuels. That was one of the foundations of the Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act of 2007, which very specifically integrated our economy goals to grow our economy at the rate of the national average, or greater, every year. It integrated those economy goals with some true, real, measurable force of law; environmental goals, including percentages of renewable; and greenhouse gas emission targets and so on. It was an integrated balance.

Mr. Speaker, that Act, which is now being copied in other provinces and states across North America, received the support of all Parties in this House. It set Nova Scotia on a path that could allow for both jobs to be created and the economy to grow, and to get us to a greater, greener, more renewable day. But the NDP were not satisfied with that reasonable, practical, balanced approach. When they got into office, they wanted to throw it out of balance. They have changed the renewable goals, multiplying them in order to meet somebody else's view of what our province should do and how fast it should move to that greater day.

They did that without any accounting for what it would do to the price of electricity. They did that without any accounting for what it would do to the economy goals that the bill originally contained. For example, the original bill that was so practical and balanced had renewable targets that were 20 per cent by 2020 - sorry, I correct myself, I mean 18.5 per cent by 2013 and 20 per cent by 2020. They have now decided it should be twice that, 40 per cent by 2020, throwing the balance between growing our economy and creating jobs - and getting to that greener future that we all desire - well out of whack.

They changed the mercury emission caps, as we all know, and I'm sure that will come up later. They changed some of the other goals, taking only the green and renewable side to an extreme and putting the economy and job creation side at risk. Now, as we know, they took it a step further and they wrote their electricity plan, which now so famously tells Nova Scotians that the NDP believes now is the time for Nova Scotia to bite the bullet, quoting directly from the plan, and pay more.

What's interesting is that in the plan the NDP never told Nova Scotians how big a bite or how big a bullet. They left that unanswered. They set their clear, extreme targets, but didn't have the courtesy to tell Nova Scotians how much those new extreme targets would cost. Interestingly, now, today, in this House, the Minister of Energy says well maybe it's 1 per cent to 2 per cent more on your power bill. That's on your power bill, Mr. Speaker; on the power bills of everyone in this House; on the power bills of every household in this province; and on the power bills of every industry, including NewPage, including Bowater, including every other company that employs Nova Scotians.

Now we at least have a start at trying to understand how much of a bullet the NDP wants us all to bite to meet their new extreme targets that don't take into account the effect that they will have on jobs or the economy.

I think the time has come for all Parties to renew their commitment to that greener future by renewing their commitment to the goals that we put in law, in 2007, under the Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act. Only then will we know that we've put our province on course to a greener future and a future that includes new and growing businesses and new and more plentiful jobs for Nova Scotians.

The fact of the matter is power rates will have a lot to do with whether we have jobs in the future, whether we can afford to pay our power bills in the future. Power rates are at the core of a job creation and economic growth strategy. That's why it's such a shame that the NDP, when they talked about their great goals on the environment side, have totally forgotten that they need to be integrated with economy and job goals at the same time, as they had voted for in 2007 before they got elected. They threw it completely out of whack after they got elected.

That's exactly why we have a bill like the bill today and other bills before in this House, to try and do something about power rates. Getting power rates right and getting

into that greener, more renewable future, is crucial to building the economy of today and tomorrow that Nova Scotians deserve. For example, bizarrely, the NDP continues to defend the fact that when Nova Scotians pay their power bill, they have to pay for a lot more than electricity - they're also asked to pay for the executive bonuses of Nova Scotia Power.

If I've heard one thing over and over again from Nova Scotians, it's that when I pay my power bill I just want to know it's going for power and not for million dollar bonuses. They defend those bonuses. We here on the Opposition's side of the House say they're right, it's not fair; the shareholders should pay for those bonuses. That's why it's so important that we have a transparency in rates Act that says that every decision, every regulation, every policy, every Cabinet directive - from that government or any future government that will drive up the price of power - has to come to this House and have the full light of day shone on it and be subject to a vote so Nova Scotians know exactly who is driving up their power rates.

We'll take it a step further and make sure they see it on their power bills too. That is how we are different, on this side of the House, from the NDP on that side of the House who always believe that they should set these lofty goals without any desire to see what it would do to our economy and expect somebody else to pay the bill - to tell somebody else to bite the bullet, but not have the courage to tell them how much of a bullet they're supposed to take because of NDP policies.

That's why we need bills like these that are coming forward in this session to get those bonuses out of the power rates, to shine the light of day on the government decisions that drive up our power costs, and to make sure that when power rates are set, they're set in a way that is affordable to Nova Scotians and they know what they're paying for.

With those few remarks, Mr. Speaker, I will take my place. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

MR. ANDREW YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, I certainly want to thank the members who have spoken and thank the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party for pointing out to the minister that both of these Parties were there; in fact, I don't know how the minister can be unaware of it since I submitted (Interruption) Well, I guess, yes, because he wasn't there, but I submitted pages and pages of questions as part of the initial hearing and our Leader, the member for Annapolis, spent considerable time personally questioning Nova Scotia Power executives at the hearing over this. So it baffles me - and I've also attended personally every other hearing over the past few years that Nova Scotia Power has held.

So it's strange to me that the minister would even suggest - anyway, you know, it's a shame that the minister dismissed the bill just out of hand, and it's no different than he

has dismissed one of the other bills that I brought forward on energy which would open renewable energy markets in Nova Scotia and allow competition, which he dismissed out of hand, saying it would destroy the marketplace, destroy the energy marketplace, when in fact New Brunswick has done exactly that and it hasn't destroyed their energy marketplace - in fact the building that his office is in, and the office of the Liberal caucus and the office of the Progressive Conservative caucus, now buys energy from New Brunswick because you can't buy energy here through the competition. The only option is to buy it from there. So it didn't destroy the energy market like he suggested that bill would, and in fact it has worked just fine there - and it would work fine here.

Mr. Speaker, this bill is not intended to solve all the problems of energy increasing. We know that there are challenges with fossil fuels increasing; we know we need to address new environmental rates. We understand that, but there are things that can be done and this bill presents three of those ideas. It addresses the issue of saying, you know, people don't want to see the executive bonuses paid for by ratepayers - and there's a reason why. If you will read the list of reasons why Mr. Bennett or any of the other executives get bonuses, it's all about shareholder value, and so the shareholders should pick those up.

For example, the CEO this year of Nova Scotia Power did not get his full bonus, and one of the reasons was that the new building they're building on the waterfront wasn't completed on time. Well, whether it's completed on time or not has no impact on ratepayers, because the Utility and Review Board already ruled that any cost or time overruns would have to be borne by shareholders; they already ruled that. The only beneficiaries of that being done on time are the shareholders, so why should ratepayers pick up bonuses? And the only reason you wouldn't support that element of it is if you believed that ratepayers should be paying these millions of dollars in bonuses, and we certainly don't believe that.

We have repeatedly asked the government to look at auditing - regular audits - and the response from the Minister of Energy and the response from the Premier in the last session was the Utility and Review Board can order that. Well, that's not the complete truth. The fact is the Utility and Review Board does do regular audits on fuel costs as part of the fuel adjustment mechanism process which comes a couple of times a year to the board. It's absolutely right that the fuel costs are audited - and we saw significant savings when those audits began because what happened is they found out that Nova Scotia Power's fuel costs methodology was out of whack.

The Utility and Review Board can ask for, and order, certain audits on certain very specific items of Nova Scotia Power only when they come for a general rate application - and Nova Scotia Power avoids general rate applications as often as they can because they try to make up for it in other ways. We all know that all three Parties have talked about that issue before - and even then it's not a regular audit through the organization.

Mr. Speaker, what we're proposing here is that Nova Scotia Power remains under constant scrutiny and this bill provides - you don't audit the entire corporation every year, it's a rotating audit through various departments, no different than the Auditor General here, no different than the auditor for the municipality.

This government brought in legislation last year that municipalities asked for for a long time, to add an Auditor General for the Halifax Regional Municipality. The cost for that Auditor General's Office, the whole Auditor General's Office, was under \$1 million.

Now, let's just assume for a second that the audits we proposed would cost that much, let's assume. I mean, it's ridiculous that they would even be that high, but let's assume that they do. Well we addressed that by the fact that the bill actually reduces the amount of regulatory costs - \$15 million over three years is what Nova Scotia Power spent - reduces the amount that is passed on to ratepayers. So even if you only reduced that by \$1 million to ratepayers you've still already covered the cost of the audit, plus you get whatever savings.

This is about providing real savings to ratepayers, real scrutiny and real transparency. Mr. Speaker, here's the thing, Nova Scotia Power is a monopoly. They're not like - you know I've got a cellphone with Bell; if I get fed up with Bell or if I don't like their rates I can go to Virgin or I can go to Rogers or any of the numerous other companies that are coming up. If I don't like my cable service I can go somewhere else for that.

I can't call somebody else to provide power service, so Nova Scotia Power must be under a different scrutiny than an unregulated, non-monopoly and I think that's only fair. Nova Scotians deserve answers and they deserve transparency.

The minister believes that the current system is working, which is amusing because his Party didn't believe it was working when they were in Opposition. Nothing has changed in the Utility and Review Board system to have made them change that decision, except for the side of the aisle they're on. So you have to wonder why the system wasn't good enough when they were over here and now suddenly it's a perfect system and offers all kinds of transparency, when that system actually hasn't changed.

This is about providing fairness to Nova Scotians and providing opportunities to get savings. Is it going to mean that people's bills drop by 20 per cent? Of course it's not and we haven't suggested that. What we have suggested is that sometimes you need to tweak things and when Nova Scotia Power was privatized I'm sure that the people who crafted the legislation thought they had covered everything. Guess what? They hadn't; things have changed, the world is changed.

The minister wants to make a big deal about Churchill Falls and this is going to change the world. Well, you know, the Churchill Falls project is a great project but Emera and his own department say it's only going to provide about 8 per cent of the energy of

Nova Scotia. There is still 92 per cent of the energy in the province that has to come from somewhere.

That's not going to solve all the problems in the world. A whole bunch of wind turbines isn't going to solve all the problems. All the coal out of the Donkin Mine isn't going to solve all the problems. A combined effort to look at energy issues is going to solve the problems and it is going to provide stability, that's what we need.

We need diversity, we need stability but we also need, as we see rates going up, as people need to address new environmental regulations, some of which come federally, we need to address those in a way that is transparent and people need to know that they are getting value for money. They need to know that money that ratepayers pay goes to electricity and delivering that service because that service is a need. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Opposition House Leader.

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

MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Opposition House Leader.

HON. MANNING MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Resolution No. 1869.

Res. No. 1869, re DNP Gov't: Taxes/Power Rates - Increases End - notice given Oct. 31/11 - (Hon. W. Gaudet)

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

MS. DIANA WHALEN: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It gives me a lot of pleasure today to rise and speak about this resolution, which was just read on Monday here in the House, when the House opened. This resolution has the operative clause:

“Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly strongly urge the NDP Government to end their campaign of high taxes, increasing power rates, high prices for gas and remind the NDP Government that they cannot continue to tax Nova Scotians into submission.”

This resolution was read by my colleague, the member for Clare, just a couple of days ago. It really relates to the affordability for Nova Scotians at this point in time in our

province's history. Things have been rising at a tremendous rate. I mentioned it today in Question Period that the cost of food has risen tremendously. In fact, the academics and others who study the cost of food and what it costs to have a healthy diet have estimated now that it costs \$100 per month more for a healthy diet in our province than it did two years ago. That speaks loudly to the thousands of people who are depending on social assistance, first of all, who can't afford to buy a healthy diet. We know there's a tremendous discrepancy there, and there was in the past as well. It speaks to people who are struggling to feed their families and look after themselves, keep themselves healthy. That's just one price that's gone through the roof.

The minister essentially said today that he had no control over food prices, but I would counter that and say that the cost of the HST which was added to everything in this province by another 2 per cent, bringing us up to 15 per cent HST, makes us the highest tax jurisdiction, not only in all of Canada but in North America for our tax regime. Saying it's uncompetitive is just not going far enough. When you have the highest tax package in the whole country, you're really putting your province at a tremendous disadvantage. Right now we're at a point where we are celebrating the shipbuilding contract that's going to come to our province. If we're going to attract other spinoff businesses that will want to locate here because of that, it's absolutely crucial that we look at the affordability and the taxation bases of this province.

The Liberal Party has been calling for several years for a comprehensive tax review. We said the only way that we can get a handle on this is to look at all of the taxes we collect and see which ones are hampering business growth, are tying the hands of our small-business owners and the people that actually create employment in this province, and which taxes are stifling our creativity, essentially, and driving people to other provinces. Some of those are clear, and certainly an increase in the HST has hit Nova Scotians - every single Nova Scotian - in the pocketbook and made it harder to make ends meet, because that's a 2 per cent increase on everything they've purchased, before any outside forces that we have no control over come here and take advantage and have an impact on our province.

I recognize that there is world instability, that there is a financial crisis that we were struck with in 2008, and that is, again, possibly coming our way with changes in Europe and other places. We are not immune to that, but our own government sets the tone and sets the competitive nature of our province through the tax regime. If we don't have a competitive tax review so that we can actually see what we can do to stimulate investment, to improve productivity - which is what our employers in this province are calling for - we can't adjust our taxes so that people will choose to live here. Even with this big contract and jobs coming up in Nova Scotia, we have to remember that there is a tremendous disparity in the cost of living here in Nova Scotia compared to living in other jurisdictions.

Our personal taxes are higher and our personal exemption on our taxes is much lower. We're taxing our businesses at a much different level, and everything you purchase, when you're buying it at the retail level, you're paying an extra 2 per cent HST. That alone

has crippled many, many people's buying power and hurt us in a time when the economy has been shrinking. Right off the bat we need to control that and we need to get a handle on these higher taxes, and that's why this resolution speaks very loudly to ending the campaign of high taxes. We have to find another way to stimulate the economy, grow jobs, and grow our business sector so that provides the extra revenue that's going to fuel and fund the growth in this province.

Right now, in the last month, I've seen the retail growth figures. Nova Scotia had the slowest growth in retail sales in all of Atlantic Canada. That means that our neighbouring provinces are doing significantly better than we are. Although there was growth, it was small, and that's not going to help our retailers. My feeling is it's grown slowly because of power rates and because of the cost of transportation, which is hiked up by that HST, and if we're going to transportation we'd better look at the motive fuel tax, which is on every litre of gasoline that's sold - but we compound it here in this province, Mr. Speaker. The problem is compounded by a very unfair practice, and that is adding HST on top of that motive fuel tax. We tax a tax that's already built in.

We've calculated the difference that would come if you took the tax on tax off. The difference is nearly 4 cents a litre and that is something that would make a difference, particularly to the people in this province who are in the transportation sector or would have to ship in the products that they're selling, which is just about everything that we move by road, and we need to pay for the fuel costs. So we could have a tremendous impact on the costs of the items that people are buying if we would take that tax off gasoline - that is, take the HST off - because we have already got a motive fuel tax and we're already collecting a big amount of money on every litre sold. That's why it's more attractive in other jurisdictions.

Our price of gas is among the highest in the country and, as I said, that affects every single item that people will buy and with the kind of costs that we're getting from Nova Scotia Power - and I know we've had a previous debate here on power just a few minutes ago - but the kind of power costs we're faced with, again, is just driving up costs everywhere. For a business to be open, and whether you're a manufacturing business or a retail operation you have to keep the lights on, you have to keep the heat on, and that's costing a lot of money. You know, the power rates are too high in this province and since Nova Scotia Power was privatized they have sent an awful lot of money out of this province to their parent company, Emera, to buy plants in other places, other jurisdictions, other countries, and we're funding it. We're the cash cow for that kind of expansion.

I think the government - that's the NDP Government - needs to step up, look squarely at the affordability that's facing Nova Scotians, and recognize that it's driving more people to food banks, more people into poverty, and that we have to make this province a more attractive place to live. The place to start is by lowering taxes and controlling some of these very big costs that are hurting every single individual. Is my time

up, Mr. Speaker? Thank you very much. I hope to hear from the government in their response.

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

MR. LEONARD PREYRA: Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to get up to say a few words today in response to this resolution. I know the members opposite are interested in mythology; I spent a great deal of time today in Question Period listening to them. So I would start by telling a little story of Greek mythology, Mr. Speaker. I wanted to say a little bit about Hercules and his adventures.

You know, the fifth labour of Hercules was to clean up the Augean stables. For those of you who are familiar with Greek mythology, you'll know that Augeas was a king and he had been given a huge amount of cattle as a gift from his father and many herds of cattle, in fact. The livestock, as you would have it, were divinely healthy - immortal in fact - and produced an enormous quantity of dung and these stables had not been cleaned out in 30 years. There were over 1,000 cattle that lived there. Hercules was able to divert the rivers of Alpheus and Peneus to wash out that filth and wash out that dung, and he did it in one day.

Well, our story, Mr. Speaker, is really about 250 years of building up that kind of stuff and we have a Herculean task ahead of us to clean up that mess that has been left behind by all of that horse manure that has been left to us. (Applause)

The members opposite talk about making life less expensive for Nova Scotians. They could have made life less expensive for Nova Scotians if they hadn't piled up that huge debt. They could have made life less expensive if they hadn't saddled the next generation with \$1 billion in interest payments every year. Imagine what Nova Scotians could get, imagine what kind of community services we could provide if we didn't have to pay \$1 billion in debt. The Department of Community Services' budget is equal to the interest on the debt. So we won't take any great lectures from the members opposite about making life less expensive. It's the years of neglect and the years of piling up of that stuff that has brought us to this place today and has made life more expensive for Nova Scotians.

The first thing we're doing really is living within our means, something that they couldn't do for over 250 years. So in trying to do it, Mr. Speaker, we won't do it in one day but we will do it by the end of our term and certainly we will work towards cleaning up that Augean stable that they left behind.

I'd like to be more specific, Mr. Speaker, the resolution refers to making life more affordable, making life less expensive. I would like to talk about some specific measures that this government has done. Unfortunately I don't have that much time to list all of them, but let me just remind the members opposite of what we have done. (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. Order. The honourable member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island has the floor.

MR. PREYRA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Let me just remind the members opposite of what we've done since we were first elected. In 2010 our government introduced a new Affordable Living Tax Credit to help low-and modest-income households. In the last budget, we continued and extended this credit and indexed it to keep pace with inflation. This credit benefited 53 per cent of Nova Scotian households; approximately 225,000 households. During the 2010 fiscal year, this credit put \$53 million in households in Nova Scotia. That's how you make things less expensive.

We introduced the Poverty Reduction Credit. The Poverty Reduction Credit helped approximately 15,000 Nova Scotians living in poverty. That program provided a benefit of \$2.3 million in 2010 and in the last budget we continued that credit and indexed it again. And for the first time in over a decade we increased funding for women's shelters and we introduced tax reduction for low-income seniors.

We know that our seniors are a very important part of our communities and they are a growing population. We kept our commitment by eliminating security deposits charged to seniors in long-term care facilities, and we removed the provincial tax on Guaranteed Income Supplements, refunding about \$9 million. About 18,000 seniors benefited from that, Mr. Speaker. (Interruption) Yes, I know, there's a lot more. Our government rolled back the 8 per cent tax increase that you guys imposed on Nova Scotians - the very thing you are complaining about today. I heard the member for Dartmouth East talk about Nova Scotia Power and how it was set up as a monopoly - well they set it up. They set it up, Mr. Speaker. (Laughter)

Yes, we are helping those who need it the most - that is precisely what we are doing. We are cleaning out that Augean stable that was left behind. We've introduced programs for people with disabilities, low-income Pharmacare. We increased the child benefit by 22 per cent per month per child. That's a \$4.8 million investment, Mr. Speaker, and that will help tens of thousands of families. We increased foster care rates and we invested \$1.3 million to add 250 child care spaces. (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. Order. The honourable member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island has the floor.

MR. PREYRA: I know that the member for Cape Breton South says that this is one of life's great mysteries, Mr. Speaker. I know that life itself is a mystery to the member for Cape Breton South sometimes. (Laughter)

And we increased the personal income tax for people, and we're fixing (Interruptions) I could go on, Mr. Speaker, but this has been an Augean task that we have been left and we've made life more affordable, less expensive for Nova Scotian families. And I haven't even started talking about Better Care Sooner, and I haven't talked about education, and I haven't talked about the environment . . .

MR. SPEAKER: You have 10 seconds.

MR. PREYRA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to return sometime to continue this list, but I'm happy to have a chance to speak today. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, I never got a chance to meet my father's father, my grandfather, because he passed away before I was born, but he was a Gaelic speaker. I have no doubt that if he had heard this talk of this Augean stable, he would say that it was only a pile of cach.

MR. SPEAKER: I would advise the member for Inverness to be very careful with his language. I'm assuming that "cach" is a lot like "dung," so we'll move on.

MR. MACMASTER: Yes, Mr. Speaker, you're quite accurate in your assessment.

This resolution that we're debating talked about life becoming more expensive for Nova Scotians. I can think of three everyday items that people are not shielded from: pop, gasoline, and telephone usage. Do lower-income Nova Scotians not like to have a glass of pop? Do they not use telephones? Do they not travel in gas-powered automobiles? Those are just three examples that Nova Scotians are paying more HST on.

Not only is life becoming more expensive in the province, but the costs to run businesses are rising in Nova Scotia because of the energy policy put forth by this government. It's quite ironic that we opened our discussions today on speaking about Abitibi and the situation there. We know that mills are very energy-intensive operations, and Abitibi is no different. I know my honourable colleague from Cape Breton West asked a couple of questions about wind energy, but we did not receive any clear answers on why wind is here to replace coal. We also didn't hear what the cost of wind was.

I can't see how wind energy can become cheaper, because once you put up the windmills, they're there. The costs have to be amortized over a number of years and the wind is not going to blow any longer on average, so we can tell how much it's going to cost for wind. Right now we know it costs about two and a half times as much as coal. I know the government members will say, yes, but coal is rising. It rose by, I think, 75 per cent. That's fine and that's true, but there are a couple of points that need to be pointed out. One,

all fossil fuels have self-correcting mechanisms in their price. As the price rises, demand drops off and the price has to drop.

The world is using more and more fossil fuels, but when you think of wind energy - just as one example - as being two and a half times as expensive, it's going to take a lot of inflation for coal to catch up with wind. I found it interesting too that the members today were blaming past governments for not taking action to guard against the price increases of fossil fuels. It's an interesting point, but when you consider what is happening now in our province, where we have our pulp mills on the brink of extinction, it makes you wonder. What if we'd moved more aggressively in the past toward these renewable energy targets that they're talking about today? Maybe we would have lost those pulp mills 10 years ago.

Another fact I want to put on the table here is, is the government's energy policy really impacting power rates? The question was asked of Nova Scotia Power and they said, yes, 25 per cent of the upcoming rate increases are due to government energy policy. That is policy that can be changed.

I think of another announcement that was greeted with great warmth in this Legislature - the Churchill Falls project, which is supposed to help with more renewable energy. But I bet you very few and maybe no members in this Legislature know the actual cost per megawatt hour of that source of energy. It's going to cost an enormous amount of money to put the infrastructure in place. I guess the point I'm trying to make is that we can't just blindly say, that seems like a good source of renewable energy, let's go for it.

Unless we start talking about numbers in this Legislature - and if we have no fear of the truth then we should be willing to share numbers. I would encourage the Minister of Energy to share numbers in this Legislature. I think it really comes down to the cost per megawatt hour for a unit of energy. I don't have any problem with the province investing in renewable energy, investing in renewable technologies from the perspective of developing those technologies, but we need to get to a point with those technologies where they make economic sense. A very quick example and I'm going to get into this more later - would you go to the gas station and pay two and a half times more for your fuel? Most people wouldn't. So why would we do the same on our energy bills at home?

Where I'm getting those figures is wind energy. If we were entirely supported by wind energy in this province, with no longer any reliance on fossil fuels, we'd probably be paying two and a half times more on our home energy bills. What Nova Scotians out there would want to do that? I don't think too many. So, I think we need to be truthful and transparent about policies and how they impact power rates.

I want to talk a bit about NewPage. We know that NewPage is affecting a number of ridings in here, specifically, and in actual fact, it's affecting constituencies all across the province. I think most of us would probably have a business that's - that's a shame Mr.

Speaker - I'm running out of time and I have so much more here. You know what? Since I only have two minutes left, I may save that for another time.

I just want to read to you. We talk about actual facts and figures around energy rates. I have a contact in the energy industry and I was speaking with him the other day and I was trying to determine, what is the cost per megawatt hour to generate electricity in this province? We see coal, which is much loathed for its environmental consequences, but coal's cost per megawatt hour is \$50. Wind is between \$100 to \$150, so it's two to three times more expensive. Tidal, they hope, is in the neighbourhood of \$150 per megawatt hour. That's only hopefully, because we're not there with it yet. We look at natural gas - that's between \$20 and \$100 per megawatt hour - it's volatile though, because the price changes a lot. Crude oil is obviously volatile as well, we see that at our gas pump, that's about \$100 per megawatt hour. And if we look at solar, I've heard estimates of up to \$800 per megawatt hour.

Those are some facts and figures and bringing it back to the debate here that we're debating, is life getting more expensive in Nova Scotia? I believe it is. We see at the announcement this week, HungerCount, the food bank, Feed Nova Scotia - they were talking about how more people are using the food bank. These are because of real decisions made by government. They can be tax increases but they can also be increases in our power rates, which do affect everybody, including low-income Nova Scotians. With that, I will conclude my remarks. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Glace Bay.

MR. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and it's certainly a pleasure to rise in my place today and speak to this resolution and I do want to, quickly, address one of the statements from the members opposite with respect to the previous governments. The member, oftentimes, will suggest that, well, it's the Liberals, it's the Tories, it's your fault and you're the reason we're in this mess. The reality is, if the member would like to think that, that's fine. That doesn't affect me and it doesn't affect my constituents. I'm here now and my constituents are judging me based on what I do right now. These eight minutes will matter for the people of Glace Bay and what I can tell you is those people and the constituents that you represent, and that everyone represents, are judging the previous government.

My point in saying this - you've had your two years, the government side is proud of their record, so let's go on that. Let's use what you've done, let's use what you think that you've accomplished. We'll make our points to counter those and then we'll let the voters decide and I can tell you, I'm in Hansard, I'm on the record, so if I'm lucky enough to ever be on the government side and in Cabinet some day, I'll stand by everything I say and if it's bad news, then I'll take the bad news. Certainly I'll stand on what I say so let's raise the level of debate here and talk about where we're at right now.

I can tell you, where we're at right now comes down to affordable living. It's what people can afford and I know it doesn't matter if you're in metro, if you're in Guysborough, if you're in Cape Breton, if you're in Yarmouth. Wherever you're at in this province, people are struggling to make ends meet. Every one of us represents many of those people who are struggling and I know you've all heard this, the same statement - I'm paying more. The government is expecting more. We're getting less. That's not a target at the current provincial government or any of the levels of government, that's the reality. People feel they're being short-changed by the political system, by their representatives and I think when it comes to affordability, they may have a point and that raises the reputation for all politicians and all representatives because we all wear that, when people don't believe they're getting their money's worth and that is their tax dollars.

People are also not concerned about the buzzwords we put on their realities. They don't care about the words "economic downturn". They don't care about a transitional economy. They're not worried about the times of - the new word that we use all the time is austerity, measures of austerity, you hear it here, you hear it internationally. People don't care about that. What people care about is, they have a certain amount of money that they bring in and they can't cover the basic needs they have. We're not talking disposal income, we're not talking the luxuries in life, we're talking about basic things. Again, we all represent those people and it's a cliché but it's a true one, we have to make those tough choices.

People really are struggling in any end of the province, anywhere you go. It really is true - as a society and as a nation and as a continent, we're losing our middle class. We've got two polar ends. We've got people who can afford to do things and have the luxuries in life and people who literally have to choose, and we all see it, between food and between keeping the heat on, particularly in the winter. That's something that we all have to look at, that's not one side over the other, that's everybody. We talked about working together and doing those things - well these are the type of things that we have to look at.

The previous speaker, the member for Inverness mentioned the Feed Nova Scotia results that were put out yesterday. That is a clear indicator, and I've mentioned this before in my place here, that people aren't making ends meet. If you're going to food banks for food, that means you're making choices. That's not anything new, the numbers are stagnant over the last couple of years but this is basically a snapshot in month versus month. Basically things aren't getting better, they're certainly staying the same at best, but that's the reality. This affects families, the food banks, the usage by families and seniors. Seniors are using food banks at an increasing level. Children are using food banks. They're getting access to their food through food banks at an increasing level.

If you think about it, we're all connected to children in one way or the other, imagine a child that has an empty belly going to school in the morning, how difficult it is. What kids face these days, with the challenges and those things, it's a tough reality to know. Food banks are doing great things in the communities but they still don't fill the

fridge, they don't fill the cupboard so even at the food banks, they still have to make choices to what they're going to take. All of these things are truly interconnected, it's the basic necessities of life that we're talking about and what I think this resolution speaks to and that's what's important.

We can talk about government policy and what the plan is moving forward. No one in this province can tell me that people aren't affected every day by power rates, they are. It doesn't matter what your feeling is, they're affected by this. Seniors are racking up high interest VISAs because they don't want to choose between a decent meal and heat and power, so they use their VISA cards. They're on a fixed income, where are they getting those extra dollars to pay it? The reality is they're not, but who cares because it's February and you've got \$400 in your overdraft or \$400 left on a credit card. I'd fill the oil tank too, I'd pay the light bill and the heat bill too, so they're choices people are making.

The taxes do affect us, they affect us at the very grassroots level of all our communities and it hurts. As we've talked about many times, as mentioned in the House today, that basket of food, that index, continues to rise for consumer prices, they're affected by taxes. The fuel costs, of course, are rising and hurting people all the time. I get many complaints, I've heard a lot of things in Glace Bay about the extra charge, a dollar extra to park at the hospital. That seems insignificant but you tell a senior that they pay an extra \$150 a year to park to go to their dialysis, they're upset and you can understand why. What we're talking about here is affordability and the ability to live comfortably and the quality of life and really people are struggling out there.

In closing, I just want to say things aren't better for a lot of people and it's incumbent on the 52 members here to make things better. Food, fuel, taxes, power rates, user fees - all those things affect our people and they demand better, and they expect better and we've got to make that happen. With those remarks, I'll take my place.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Opposition House Leader.

HON. MANNING MACDONALD: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. That completes the Liberal Party's business for today. I would now ask the Government House Leader to give us the business for tomorrow.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, after the daily routine we will be calling Resolution No. 1846 and Bill Nos. 65, 72, and 73.

Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now rise to meet from the hours of 2:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is that the House now rise to meet again tomorrow between the hours of 2:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

We are now at the moment of interruption. The Adjournment motion was submitted by the honourable member for Guysborough-Sheet Harbour:

“Therefore be it resolved that members of the House of Assembly recognize and congratulate all participants in the Ships Start Here campaign, who through their efforts raised the level of awareness of the importance of a National Shipbuilding Strategy to Nova Scotia, the Atlantic Region and all of Canada.”

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION UNDER RULE 5(5)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Guysborough-Sheet Harbour.

SHIPS START HERE CAMPAIGN: PARTICIPANTS - CONGRATS.

MR. JIM BOUDREAU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to rise here this evening to address this very important topic. October 19th marked one of the most important days in Nova Scotia's history when Irving shipyard was awarded the right to negotiate the federal government's combat vessel contracts, worth \$25 billion. These contracts will change the economic landscape of Nova Scotia. These contracts will mean an additional 11,500 jobs for Nova Scotians. These contracts will increase the province's GDP by almost \$900 million during peak production years. These contracts will grow the Canadian economy by an estimated \$1.5 billion, with 4,500 jobs created outside of Nova Scotia.

An economic impact report prepared for the Greater Halifax Partnership, which I'd like to table, indicated that the local yearly impact will be 420 new housing starts, approximately 750 new cars, \$38.5 million more grocery sales, and much, much more spinoff in the economy of Nova Scotia - not just in Halifax, but throughout the province.

Over the past eight months the Ships Start Here partnership - including leaders like Don Bureaux at the Nova Scotia Community College, Valerie Payne from the Halifax Chamber of Commerce, Rick Clarke from the Federation of Labour, and countless others - have worked to ensure that word got out about the very clear message of the impact of these contracts to all Nova Scotians.

Individuals from all areas of Nova Scotia and all across Canada posted Ships Start Here signs on their lawns, painted Ships Start Here messages in their shop windows, “Liked” the Ships Start Here Facebook page, used the tag line, embedded the icon, played and posted the video - all participating in the vision of a more prosperous economy in Nova Scotia, a place where our kids can stay and find work or come home with their kids, our grandkids.

In places like Canso, Mulgrave, Sheet Harbour, and Spry Bay, my constituents went out and supported this project by putting up signs and organizing events to basically support and create a positive atmosphere.

The Ships Start Here campaign was about more than public engagement and information. It was about creating a vision, getting people to understand the tremendous opportunity, building a dream, and creating hope in a province beleaguered by the politics of the past. Already stories are being written and told. On CBC Radio this morning we heard from Guy Boutilier, MLA for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo and formerly of Cape Breton, who was excited about the prospects for the many, many Nova Scotians in Fort Mac who are looking forward to opportunities to come home to work in Nova Scotia.

Programs at Nova Scotia Community College to provide specific training for shipbuilding trades will be starting soon. This government has been working and will continue to work with our Nova Scotia Community College partners to maximize employment benefits. Shipyards throughout the province will benefit from contracts that spin out from the larger umbrella. Manufacturing and processing industries across the province will have opportunities for new business, sustained and consistent work. The construction and housing sector will be one of the industries which will benefit the most, not just in Halifax but throughout Nova Scotia, as rural industries obtain steady contracts and experience real growth.

Optimism abounds, Mr. Speaker, and there’s nothing wrong with optimism, and the history of Irving Shipbuilding somewhat sets the stage. According to the economic impact study commissioned by the Greater Halifax Partnership, the Irving Shipbuilding supply chain included a total of 630 suppliers in 2009-10 - 37 suppliers of over \$1 million; 21 suppliers at \$500,000 to \$1 million; 78 suppliers at \$100,000 to \$500,000. These were relatively lean years compared to what we can expect.

The opportunities are all here, all throughout the province. Aerospace and defence-related companies will benefit from increased business, including information and technology applications, simulation technologies, composites, ship and military maintenance repair and overhaul. Exciting and innovative research and development will arise which may produce new patents, new collaborative partnerships, new opportunities to commercialize the important research that goes on in our fine universities and colleges.

Again, as I said, Mr. Speaker, we can articulate and identify these strategic areas for potential because of the work that was undertaken through the Ships Start Here partnership. These benefits will translate to every corner of our province but don't just take it from me that the Ships Start Here program has instilled hope and vision in our rural communities.

I quote from an article in the Truro Daily News of October 21st in which journalist Harry Sullivan quoted Mr. Ron Smith, executive director of the Colchester Regional Development Agency. Mr. Smith said, "The needs of companies supplying a contract this huge, simply cannot be met by HRM alone. From digital animators at the Truro campus of the community college to our steel fabricators and computer experts, Truro and Colchester stand to benefit."

In the Lunenburg County Progress Bulletin - and I will table this as well, those two - journalist Robert Hirtle wrote, "Both Lunenburg Industrial Foundry and Engineering Limited (LIFE) and the ABCO Group of Companies have long and reputable histories in the shipbuilding, ship repair and metal fabrication sectors." In the same article, Mr. Hirtle quotes Peter Kinley, president and CEO of LIFE, who said that Irving's innovative Ships Start Here program ". . . speaks volumes for the legacy of world-beating shipbuilding prowess that we share as Nova Scotians."

From Springhill, Nova Scotia - and I will table this one as well - Christopher Gooding, journalist for The Citizen-Record wrote, "Locally Surette Battery is one of those industries that could become involved with the shipbuilding contracts." Keith Corcoran, journalist for the Progress Bulletin in Lunenburg also wrote, "Bridgewater Development Association manager Ida Scott forecasts a potential boost in the local housing market. The shipyard's \$25 billion deal announced October 19 translates to the creation of thousands of jobs, so these workers are going to need places to live."

Mr. Corcoran went on to quote Ms. Scott again when she said, "The next opportunity I see is the one for like businesses to form consortiums in order to take advantage of shipbuilding project components such as sheet metal fabrication, electrical and boatbuilding skills." I can tell you for a fact that Mulgrave Machine Works is one of these businesses that is looking at that opportunity. In the same article, Mr. Corcoran wrote, "Andrew Button, executive director of the Lunenburg Queens Regional Development Agency, predicts the contract's impact in rural Nova Scotia will be huge."

Greg Bennett of The Yarmouth Vanguard wrote, "Although the majority of jobs will be focused on the Halifax Shipyard, the Irving owned Shelburne Ship Repair is part of the plan and company officials have said the local facility will have 'tremendous ship repair opportunities.'" The Cape Breton Post says, "A lot of the work's going to happen in Halifax, but when you're talking about something so big, there's going to be times when they might not be able to handle all the work . . ."

Businesses - this is very important - organizations, suppliers need to see themselves in a chain of opportunity and they need a vision. On the day of and days immediately following the shipbuilding announcement communities, businesses and individuals around this province could identify and articulate how these contracts could benefit them. They understood the impact, they were ready, they were hopeful, they were optimistic and they had a vision. That is worth more than any money can buy.

I will use the words of the late Jack Layton, and I hope the Opposition side will listen. "Love is better than anger. Hope is better than fear. Optimism is better than despair." I think that's very important as we move forward and we learn to work together in this House so that we can each make Nova Scotia a better place to live, work, play and raise our families. Thank you.

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

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Thank you for the opportunity to stand here tonight to discuss the importance of the Irving Shipbuilding contract that was awarded on October 19th.

Being from a small town, North Sydney in Cape Breton, I realize the importance of the shipbuilding and shipping on the industry in an area. North Sydney had a local, a vibrant shipyard, it had a lot of ferry traffic and it had a lot of fishing industry boats in the area. That shipyard employed thousands of people, from the people who worked on the boats, to people who worked repairing the ships.

I was so excited to learn that Irving was awarded the well-deserved recipient of the \$25 billion federal contract to build the new ships for the Royal Canadian Navy. For over 50 years, the Irvings have been building and fabricating ships and have built one of the most prolific shipbuilding industries in the country. Saint John Shipbuilding was the flagship of a collection of eastern Canadian shipyards building tankers, freighters and passenger ferries.

One of the most exciting parts for me was watching the announcement and seeing the joy and exhilaration on the faces of the men and women currently employed at Irving Shipbuilding. Knowing how much it affected our area in the past, I know this contract will mean a lot to Halifax and the rest of Nova Scotia.

Irving Shipbuilding owners, employees and supporters deserve all the credit for this amazing honour. They poured their hearts in ensuring they highlighted their facility as a world-class site and the best place in Canada to build our Navy ships. The merit-based process with clear government direction, free from political interference, allowed Nova Scotians the opportunity to compete to be successful. When given a level playing field, we know Nova Scotians can compete. We always knew the Irving yard here in Halifax would

be the yard to beat and I know that all Nova Scotians are very proud of the excellent work done there.

There's no better way to win than win impartially. This was made possible because the federal government had a clear objective - to build its ships in Canada and that it set out clear criteria that the successful participants could use to submit their best possible application. The criteria for each group were then assessed by a fair process, free from political interference. This allowed the best possible yard, Irving Shipbuilding, to be successful.

While I agree with the government's role in helping rally support and raise awareness about the Irving Shipbuilding bid, I do not support the method in which the government used the expensive Ships Start Here campaign for its own political posturing. That money could have been better spent on training and upgrades to the yard that will be needed. We all know that because the Irvings have already said that. I am pleased to see this government is supporting the shipping industry, but taking the credit for any part of the winning contract is simply inaccurate and this government should be giving credit to the people who actually had something to do with the success in securing the contract.

It's also true that this government's actions almost crossed the line as lobbying, which was not permitted and could have hurt Irving's chances for its successful bid. This contract is so important for our province and this government almost put that in jeopardy.

The contract is so important because it gives stability and security for an industry that was struggling to survive in their area. For 30 years the industry can be certain that it will have steady employment and will be able to make investments to its employees in the yard and continue to grow its world-class facility. This is one of those times when we truly have an opportunity to make a generational change, not only for Halifax and the Halifax yard, but for all of Nova Scotia. It's so important the next generation of shipbuilders in our province would not have to be looking over their shoulder worried about when they would receive their next layoff slip because the work has run out, like the generations in the past have had to do.

The positive spinoffs will have a substantial ripple effect throughout the entire province. I understand the effect that shipbuilding contracts will have on the economic development in the Halifax area, and hopefully the rest of the province from Yarmouth to Sydney Mines. For centuries Maritimers have been part of building ships with origins dating back to the 1600s. We build the best ships in the world - in the past, the present and we know 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.

The Premier announced the continuance of the Ships Start Here partnership. This government should focus on creating the right business climate, the right tax structure and

the right education system to encourage workers and create meaningful jobs that will last a lifetime. It is imperative that the government make the most of their opportunity and not waste it. I hope that we all dedicate ourselves to that worthy goal, in a nonpartisan way, and continue to make ships grow and ships built here in Nova Scotia. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston.

HON. KEITH COLWELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, it's with great pleasure I stand up and speak on this very important topic. The NDP Government has been touting this as the biggest thing that's ever happened in the province, probably in its history and indeed it's a very important contract and I want to thank the Irving Shipyard and the people at Irving for the fine job they did preparing their bid and securing this contract because that is who secured the contract, not the NDP Government. That was made very clear by some of the statements that were made by the federal Defence Minister recently.

The real truth about this program, as the Premier said himself the other day, is that Irving Shipyard was awarded the right to negotiate - right to negotiate. The Irving Shipyard doesn't have this contract yet. So hopefully in the next year, as we negotiate this process - that's a year away till this thing gets underway, and again these are the timelines that are being quoted by the Premier, in 2012. Then, if indeed they are successful, the design and engineering stages will begin. Well, it's going to take two to three years prior to any construction starting to get the design and engineering part of the vessels completed.

It will take a long time, that's a normal process. So we're looking at four years before we see any actual construction in the shipyard, four years. Now in four years there's going to be another federal election, might get a new government in there, maybe an NDP Government that will probably cancel the whole thing anyway. I wouldn't want Nova Scotians to get too excited about getting a job at the shipyard at this point. I truly hope that they come forward. I hope that Irving is successful in negotiating an agreement with the federal government to build these ships. Hopefully they get the design work to do as well and the thing goes properly.

The NDP has been touting 11,000 new jobs. Let me quote exactly the number of jobs that are going to be in the shipyard, and these are from Irving. What I've heard so far, the Irving Shipyard, right now in Halifax, has approximately 800 employees, that's a regular level, anywhere from 800 to 1,000 employees working on projects on an ongoing basis, ship repair and all the other work they do. When the Premier talked about this - they're going to peak in 2020, the employment - the employment of 2020 at the actual shipyard is going to be 2,700. That's a 1,900 job increase, not 11,000 - 1,900. I understand about spinoffs and all the other things that go with it, and there will be spinoffs. When the program gets fully in production, it will be 2,400, so it is going to drop 300 jobs when it hits the full production between 2022 and 2035.

They tout all the houses that are going to be built, all the things that are going to be done. Hopefully the government is successful and the company is successful keeping the paper mills. If they do not keep the paper mills, there's going to be no net gain in this province for employment, none.

Now when you talk about spinoffs, I can tell you I was in a military manufacturing business and my honourable colleague doesn't clearly understand what it is to be an approved military supplier. I can tell you that I went through that process; it's very, very, very difficult. It's a rating you get and it takes anywhere from two to five years to get this rating and you have to have a customer in place before you can get the rating. It's very complex, you have to have a very high level of quality control, you have to have a very high level of manufacturing capability to even bid on these contracts and guess what, the generators for these ships which are huge costs for each one of these ships, will be manufactured in Europe, the only supplier in the world, the only supplier. The engines for these ships will come out of Europe or China or someplace else, not out of Nova Scotia, not out of Canada.

All the weapon systems most likely will come out of the U.S. We have no manufacturing capability to do this in this country today, none. Now these are the high-end, big-profit items that are going to go into these ships. Now they'll bring a few people in here to install them. I guarantee you they are not going to set up shop here to do a few ships, they are just not.

As you look at the spinoffs that come with this thing and you look at the development policies that HRM put in place, well, if you're going to build 400 new homes in this province you want to make sure you get your application in to put your new house up very quickly in HRM because you're not going to get it. You are not going to get it because they've changed the rules for development so badly in this municipality that it takes years to get a subdivision approved.

Is the government going to do something about that? Are they going to tell HRM they had better change their policies and make it possible so we can make the economy work better here? I doubt it.

As you go through this whole thing, and I'm going to say it again, we're going to have a net gain - and these are Irving's own numbers - of 1,900 people who are going to work directly in the shipyards, at the peak of the contract and two years later they're going to reduce the work force by 300. And they talk about a spinoff and all these suppliers and everything. These are very specialized ships, they are very specialized equipment. There are maybe only one or two manufacturers in the world for each piece of equipment that goes on here and none of them are in Nova Scotia and none of them are in Canada, so the spinoff for that and a major part of that \$25 billion that supposedly is going to do this thing is going to be spent outside of Canada - no spinoff for Nova Scotia, none.

Then we find out that the Irving Shipyard is already negotiating to build part of these ships in Prince Edward Island, which is good for Prince Edward Island but there won't be jobs here - possibly in Quebec and other areas, to make sure that they can supply these ships on time and under budget.

When you look at all these things, the number \$25 billion looks like a lot of money and it is a lot of money but you look at the actual money that is going to be spent here in Nova Scotia, improving Nova Scotia to make Nova Scotia a better place to work and to live in and really moving the economy, it's going to be a small amount; small amount of that \$25 billion is going to be spent here.

If you think you can get suppliers in Nova Scotia qualified in time to do this contract, you don't know anything about manufacturing. I can tell you that I was qualified and I did this work and I worked for companies like Raytheon in the U.S., I worked for Litton Systems and I worked for Pratt & Whitney, the companies that you've got to work for. It's a really complex process and the government hasn't talked about that, they talk about the community colleges. Community colleges don't know anything about getting quality assurance for military contracts.

I was one of the very few suppliers in this province who was qualified for this. There is only a handful in New Brunswick and a lot of them in Ontario. So the people who are qualified will be the people who get the work. The government has to understand this - and they're probably going to run election campaigns saying they've got this wonderful job here, all these jobs for Nova Scotians, but the reality is that it's not going to happen the way they're saying it is - hopefully, hopefully.

And I'm still not sure. On these contracts, when you start negotiating these contracts - because I've negotiated with some of these contracts before, not of this size of course, but contracts - you never know you've got the contract for sure and what the value of it is until it's actually signed. I'll believe this when it's actually signed - and guess what? That won't be for another year, and when that happens the rumours are that the New Democratic Party is going to run an election on this, right? That's the rumour. Well that could be a big mistake on their part, because in a year's time a lot can change, and the people of this province are going to start realizing just how much downloading there has been, all the extra taxes they're paying, and how serious a problem it is, and the companies that are leaving the province, not because they're going bankrupt or anything like that, but because they realize it's too expensive to work in Nova Scotia.

There was a lot of discussion today about the higher tax bills, the higher income tax in the province, and all the other things in this province that makes it impossible for business to operate here. So you're going to hang your whole future and the future of the province on one contract. And if these paper mills shut down you're going to have no net gain. Just with those two facilities, with this contract that you've got now - and the suppliers to those pulp mills are local companies, they have real economic spinoff, a lot of

these ones are going to be from outside, they're going to be from outside the province and that's not going to help anything.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to speaking on this again.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you very much.

The motion is carried.

We stand adjourned.

[The House rose at 6:22 p.m.]

ANSWERS TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS**NOTICE OF QUESTION FOR WRITTEN ANSWERS**

Given on May 16, 2011

(Pursuant to Rule 30)

QUESTION No. 1

By: Mr. Chuck Porter (Hants West)

To: Hon. John MacDonnell (Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations)

(1) The government recently imposed a series of user fees that will put an additional \$3.4 million into general government revenues for 2011-12. How much consultation was undertaken with the variety of Nova Scotians who will be forced to pay these extra charges, before the government made the announcement about this price gouge on March 25th ?

QUESTION NO. 2

By: Mr. Chuck Porter (Hants West)

To: Hon. John MacDonnell (Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations)

(2) An e-mail from a long-time motor vehicle inspector in the Windsor area says the recent \$3.62 hike to get a safety inspection for a trailer is literally putting him out of business because, as it stands now, they are only allowed to charge \$10.50 to inspect a trailer. How does the minister explain driving motor vehicle inspectors away from inspecting trailers?

QUESTION NO. 3

By: Mr. Chuck Porter (Hants West)

To: Hon. John MacDonnell (Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations)

(3) The only trailer in which a local inspector can really make any money on right now is the u-haul trailer where an inspection can be done in less than half an hour. Any other trailer size, the recent hike is forcing local rural inspectors literally out of business. What is the minister planning to do to correct this growing problem and to avoid having certain areas of the province be without inspection coverage for trailers?

ANSWER: The department is aware of industry's concern with respect to remuneration for inspection of trailers. Staff has been reviewing the situation and will be providing me

with advice in the near future.

ANSWERS TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS**NOTICE OF QUESTION FOR WRITTEN ANSWERS**

Given on May 17, 2011

(Pursuant to Rule 30)

QUESTION NO. 4

By: Mr. C. Porter (Hants West)

To: Hon. C. Parker (Minister of Natural Resources)

(1) Will the Minister of Natural Resources provide background information, if any exists, so when a hunter travels on land he does not own and is looking for deer, and encounters a sign while he is hunting reading “Hunting with Permission Only”, can the minister advise whether the landowner has any rights or is the hunter free to do whatever hunting he would like?

QUESTION NO. 5

By: Mr. C. Porter (Hants West)

To: Hon. C. Parker (Minister of Natural Resources)

(1) The former Progressive Conservative Government in 2000, established a detailed trespassing policy which clearly states that hunters are not allowed to enter private land. Is the minister aware of any legislation overriding this trespassing policy?

QUESTION NO. 6

By: Mr. C. Porter (Hants West)

To: Hon. C. Parker (Minister of Natural Resources)

(1) Section 15 of the provincial Protection of Property Act - “No person may be prosecuted for contravening any notice given pursuant to this Act prohibiting entry or prohibiting activity on forest land if that person is hunting as defined in the *Wildlife Act*, fishing, picnicking, camping, hiking, skiing or engaged in another recreational activity . . .” Mr. Lee Watson of Falmouth believes he has little rights as a forested land owner and I would like to know if the minister might possibly have any solutions for Mr. Watson?

ANSWER: *As you referenced in your question, access to private lands in Nova Scotia is addressed in the Protection of Property Act. This Act allows for individuals to engage in a*

number of recreational activities, including hunting, fishing, picnicking, camping, hiking, skiing, and the study of flora and fauna, on forested land without the permission of the landowner. However, engaging in these activities in gardens, orchards, lawns, vineyards, golf courses, land used for agricultural animals or crops, railway lines, active for agricultural animals or crops, railway lines, active forest harvesting or Christmas tree operations, or enclosed/fenced areas, all require the landowner's permission. "Forested land" means a wooded area, forest stand, tract of land covered by underbrush, barren ground, marsh or bog. It does not include tree plantations, Christmas tree management areas, forestry study areas, areas where forest products are being harvested, or commercial berry growing areas.

Section 38A(2) of the Wildlife Act does allow landowners to prohibit trapping on their forest land by posting a sign prohibiting trapping without permission. The sign must contain the name and telephone number of the landowner/occupier. This provision does not apply to hunting since Section 15(2) of the Protection of Property Act prevents the prosecution of hunters and persons engaging in other activities mentioned above. To protect the safety of land occupiers and the public, a number of restrictions exist on the use of firearms and bows within prescribed distances to dwellings, schools, places of business and other areas where a risk may exist.

These laws recognize that there must be a balance between protecting landowners rights and providing access to public resources such as wildlife to accommodate the interests of landowners, non-hunters and hunters. The current approach seems to be a reasonable compromise for Nova Scotia's land ownership pattern, and citizens' rights to access wildlife resources.

NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3)**RESOLUTION NO. 1974**

By: Hon. David Wilson (Communities, Culture and Heritage)

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

Whereas Allison Munro is a dentist who studied at George Brown College in Toronto, has been licensed since 2008, and is a member of the Nova Scotia Dentist Society; and

Whereas Allison has worked as a dentist and recognized the need for a denture clinic in Lower Sackville; and

Whereas Munro Denture Clinic celebrated its grand opening in May 2011 at The Plaza, located at 668 Sackville Drive, Lower Sackville;

Therefore be it resolved that members of this House of Assembly congratulate dentist Allison Munro, member of the Nova Scotia Dentist Society, on the May 2011 grand opening of Munro Denture Clinic in The Plaza at 668 Sackville Drive and wish her future success.