



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Gordon Gosse

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Third Session

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 2011

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House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 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.

The honourable member for Cape Breton North.

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Yesterday, during Question Period, the Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism said in answer to a question: "I stand here in my place, week after week, and even with a new member representing Cape Breton North, I still hear words of bullying and intimidation. I will stand here, and that member over there, or any member over there, will not intimidate me; they will not bully me."

Mr. Speaker, the issue of bullying is a serious one and one that should not be made light of in this House at any time, but especially during this week, Bullying Awareness Week. Yesterday I asked the minister a simple question about the province's Signature Resorts and the people who rely on these resorts for their livelihood. His subsequent accusations offend my privilege as a member, and offend all Nova Scotians who are affected by this serious issue of bullying.

Today, through you, I ask the minister to withdraw his unparliamentary comments, and I ask that he apologize to me and to the Nova Scotians who are true victims of bullying, and those who work so hard to eradicate bullying in our province. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: I will take that under advisement and I will look at Hansard and report back to the House.

We will begin the daily routine.

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS

MR. SPEAKER: As Speaker, I am tabling the November 2011 Report of the Auditor General to the Nova Scotia House of Assembly, together with the summary of that report.

The report is tabled.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

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

RESOLUTION NO. 2268

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

Whereas every year during Operation Red Nose, more than 300 volunteers in the Halifax area transport hundreds of vehicles for drivers who have been attending holiday parties; and

Whereas these volunteers and their local corporate partners, including the Nova Scotia Liquor Corporation, Enterprise Rent-A-Car, Subway, HRM Police, Old Dutch Foods, Tim Hortons, C100/The Bounce, and The ChronicleHerald raise thousands of dollars for Safe Grad programs in HRM; and

Whereas this morning, as this year's honorary chair, I had the pleasure of attending at Halifax City Hall where Safety Services Nova Scotia held its official launch of Operation Red Nose;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House join me in acknowledging the efforts and commitment of all volunteers and sponsors of this life-saving initiative, Operation Red Nose.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

Before I go any further with Government Notices of Motion, I was thrown off my daily routine and schedule by the point of order and I forgot to mention the late debate topic for this evening. It was submitted by the honourable member for Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage:

Therefore be it resolved that members of the House of Assembly recognize and honour the tremendous sacrifice made by members of our Canadian Armed Forces currently serving, our veterans, their families, and supporting communities that serve and protect this great country, not just on Remembrance Day.

The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

RESOLUTION NO. 2269

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 Beacon Award for Social Justice Literature is a newly created prize for an unpublished novel, and the purpose of the award is to stimulate the creation, publication,

and dissemination of new works of fiction designed to ignite readers' passion for, and understanding of, social justice; and

Whereas the inaugural Beacon Award, including a cash award of \$1,000, but more importantly editing and publication of the winning novel by Roseway Publishing, will be awarded tomorrow evening, Thursday, November 17th, at a ceremony at the Just Us Café on Spring Garden Road; and

Whereas the winner of the inaugural Beacon Award for Social Justice Literature is Jim Williams, a resident of the north end of Halifax, whose winning unpublished, but soon to be published, novel is entitled *Rock Reject*;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly congratulate Jim Williams on winning the inaugural Beacon Award for Social Justice Literature, and thank Roseway Publishing and all those involved in establishing a new literary award which is certain to encourage literary contributions to social justice in years to come.

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 Seniors.

RESOLUTION NO. 2270

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

Whereas the Remarkable Seniors Award is presented to a deserving person for their leadership, community service, and volunteer efforts; and

Whereas Paula Keating of Halifax makes a positive effort in her community; and

Whereas Ms. Keating assists with fundraising events and many other volunteer social activities to help do all kinds of things like helping people stay warm and comfortable with the quilts, blankets, and bed jackets she makes for hospital patients;

Therefore be it resolved that Ms. Keating be congratulated by the members of this Legislature for her volunteer work to make life better in her community and for being recognized by her community as this year's recipient of the Remarkable Seniors Award.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Environment.

RESOLUTION NO. 2271

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

Whereas every five years since the tragedy in Walkerton, Ontario, the environmental organization Ecojustice has released a national drinking water report card, *Waterproof*; and

Whereas this report card evaluates water policies, programs, and legislation across the country and gives governments a grade based on how well they are protecting drinking water; and

Whereas on November 15th Nova Scotia received an A-minus, the second-highest result in Canada after Ontario, for its leadership in drinking water protection;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House congratulate Nova Scotia's Environment staff for their dedication to protecting drinking water for all Nova Scotians.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Seniors.

RESOLUTION NO. 2272

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

Whereas the Remarkable Seniors Award is presented to a much-deserving person for their leadership, community service, and volunteer efforts; and

Whereas John Peter MacEachern of Antigonish is known for being especially attentive to seniors and has been described as being a dedicated person to veterans through various executive positions with the Royal Canadian Legion; and

Whereas Mr. MacEachern conducts the veterans' funeral service, leads the colour party at the Remembrance Day service in Antigonish, and serves as president of the Club 60 and vice-president of the Seniors Getting Involved group in St. Andrews, Antigonish County;

Therefore be it resolved that Mr. John MacEachern be congratulated by the members of this Legislature for his volunteer work to make life better in his community and for being recognized by his community as this year's recipient of the Remarkable Seniors Award.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Premier.

RESOLUTION NO. 2273

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

Whereas today three courageous Nova Scotians received the Medal of Bravery for risking their lives to help others; and

Whereas Samuel Adams of Hilden, Winston Matheson of Enfield, and Nancy McBay of Wolfville acted without concern for their own safety and without fear of fire, car accident, or drowning to respond to those in dire need of assistance; and

Whereas without the actions of these brave individuals, the lives of these Nova Scotians and their families would have been irrevocably changed;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of the House recognize Mr. Adams, Mr. Matheson, and Ms. McBay for their bravery, courage, and acts of selflessness in order to save others, and acknowledge the proud fact that Nova Scotia is a special place where people look out for each other.

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. 2274

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

Whereas on Wednesday, October 19, 2011, in a ceremony at the Museum of the Atlantic, Big Brothers Big Sisters recognized Nova Scotians with the Inspire Award; and

Whereas the MLA for Timberlea-Prospect and the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal received the Inspire Award as a public servant who has gone beyond his responsibilities to not only improve his community, but to inspire others to do the same; and

Whereas the MLA for Timberlea-Prospect with his down-to-earth approach has been a mentor to young people and an example of involvement;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia Legislature congratulate the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal, the MLA for Timberlea-Prospect, on receiving the Inspire Public Service Award from Big Brothers Big Sisters.

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. (Standing Ovation)

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 100 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 300 of the Revised Statutes of 1989. The Municipal Elections Act, and Chapter 18 of the Acts of 1998. The Municipal Government Act. (Hon. John MacDonell)

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

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

MR. LEONARD PREYRA: Mr. Speaker, in the east gallery today are three women from the Women are Watching campaign and they literally are watching from the gallery today. They're here to promote the putting of women on the political agenda and dealing with issues that are important to all Nova Scotians and also affect women. They are Jeanne Fay - if they would please rise as their names are called - Soheila Hashemi and Mariela Ceron. I would like them to receive the warm applause of the House and thank them for the work they are doing. (Applause)

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

The honourable Minister of Education on an introduction.

HON. RAMONA JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to introduce a class from Horton High. The political science class is here today from the Valley, just outside of Wolfville, Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal. Their teacher, Brad Richards, is here escorting them. They've had a really wonderful day already from what I understand and we are really glad that you are here with us to watch us do the work on behalf of Nova Scotians. I'm hoping that everyone here can give them the very warm welcome of our House. (Applause)

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

Bill No. 101 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 77 of the Acts of 1944. An Act to Incorporate the Halifax Kennel Club. (Ms. Michele Raymond)

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

NOTICES OF MOTION

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

RESOLUTION NO. 2275

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

Whereas today is a sombre day in Liverpool and area as the unionized employees at the Bowater mill face a very tough vote on whether or not to agree to reducing their workforce by up to 50 per cent in order to help keep the Liverpool-area mill open; and

Whereas these workers not only carry the heavy burden of deciding the fate of their own jobs, but with this vote will help determine the fate of more than 2,000 other jobs that are supported by the mill; and

Whereas either way, the difficult decision these workers face will have a significant impact on the already fragile economy of the South Shore;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly recognize the significant burden faced by the unionized workers at Bowater and express our appreciation for the difficult decisions that they face.

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. 2276

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

Whereas Lions Clubs throughout our province each day strive to put their motto, We Serve, into action; and

Whereas the St. Margarets Bay Lions Club this Spring raised over \$6,000 at their annual road toll in Tantallon; and

Whereas these funds were used to purchase the club's 11th Seeing Eye dog;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia Legislature congratulate the members of the St. Margarets Bay Lions Club on the sponsorship of the Lions International Seeing Eye dog program with thanks for its continuing support.

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. 2277

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 33 years ago Marshal and Heather Hector began operating the Home Hardware Store in Hubbards, Nova Scotia; and

Whereas on Friday, July 29, 2011, Marshal and Heather advised the people of the community that they would no longer be operating the hardware store and were moving on to the next stage of their life, a well-deserved retirement; and

Whereas residents, friends, and former customers came from far and near to wish them well on their retirement and welcome new owners Vance and Lois Slauenwhite to the business community;

Therefore be it resolved that the House of Assembly extend best wishes, good health, and much happiness as Marshal and Heather Hector move on in this next phase of their lives.

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. 2278

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

Whereas chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, or COPD, will be the third leading cause of death in Canada by 2020; and

Whereas COPD has a higher hospitalization rate and higher hospital readmission rate than heart failure and angina, and 90 per cent of COPD cases are caused by smoking cigarettes; and

Whereas nearly two million Canadians are afflicted by this most preventable chronic condition;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in marking today as World COPD Day and show leadership in modelling healthy lifestyle practices and support organizations that help Nova Scotians with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.

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. 2279

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

Whereas Tideview Vintage Cider revives a Nova Scotia tradition that began with the French settlers; and

Whereas Tideview Vintage Cider recently won four medals at the Great Lakes Cider & Perry Competition held in Grand Rapids, Michigan, which included a gold medal, silver medal, bronze medal and an honourable mention for Best in Show; and

Whereas Tideview Vintage Cider is handcrafted in the Annapolis Valley with heirloom apple varieties grown at Noggins Corner Farm in Greenwich;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulate Tideview Vintage Cider for receiving four medals at the Great Lakes Cider & Perry Competition and wish them much 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 Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations.

RESOLUTION NO. 2280

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

Whereas food banks provide for the gap between when the money runs out and the next cheque; and

Whereas the Hants North food bank operates out of East Gore; and

Whereas on October 28, 2011, the Hants North food bank held an open house to the public to display its wares and to publicize its operation;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulate the volunteers and suppliers of the Hants North food bank on their willingness to address an important need.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

RESOLUTION NO. 2281

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

Whereas Chief Petty Officer 2nd Class Justin Cottreau was the recipient of numerous awards at the annual review of the 327 Unicorn Royal Canadian Sea Cadet Corps on June 11, 2011; and

Whereas Justin Cottreau was presented with the Navy League Medal of Excellence, the Royal Canadian Legion Medal of Excellence and was named the Top Sea Cadet in mainland Nova Scotia and was runner-up to the National Sea Cadet of the Year; and

Whereas Justin Cottreau, who is a Grade 11 student at the Barrington Municipal High School, is continuing his career with the 327 Unicorn Sea Cadets this Fall, with a promotion to Chief Petty Officer 1st Class;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulate Justin Cottreau for his many achievements and wish him the best in all his future endeavours as a cadet, a student and as a young Nova Scotian.

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. 2282

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

Whereas the Sackville Business Association runs the Sackville Cares food drive;
and

Whereas the Sackville Business Association collected 240 pounds of food in last year's Sackville Cares food drive; and

Whereas the Sackville Cares food drive received the help of 21 businesses in Sackville to raise 640.21 pounds in this year's food drive, benefiting the Beacon House food bank which supports nearly 1,400 community members per month;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly congratulate the Sackville Business Association on this year's Sackville Cares food drive for raising 640.21 pounds of food, tripling last year's drive, with the support of 21 Sackville businesses in aid of Beacon House Food Bank.

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. 2283

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

Whereas the Johnny Miles Running Event has been held in New Glasgow for 36 years and this year 1,860 people were registered to participate in the various races held during the event in June; and

Whereas this year's Johnny Miles full marathon was won by Dave MacLennan of Scotsburn, with a time of 2:48:23; and

Whereas this year's win at the Johnny Miles full marathon marked the eighth time that Mr. MacLennan has finished first in this marathon;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia Legislative Assembly congratulate Dave MacLennan on winning the Johnny Miles full marathon for the eighth time 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 Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage.

RESOLUTION NO. 2284

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

Whereas the Cole Harbour Stetsons and Spurs Youth Group is a program for ages 13 to 19 where RCMP volunteers teach the youth about the police vocation, law enforcement, and the criminal justice system; and

Whereas the youth have volunteered in many different activities such as Special Olympics, the Canada Games, church and school fairs, nursery schools, Cole Harbour Harvest Festival, air shows, bike rodeos, parades, Police Week, and Operation Scrooge - also known as Operation Hawkeye; and

Whereas members Nigel Beals, Isaac Berglund, Jessica Boutilier, Devanti Butcher, Orlando Butcher, Brittany Evans, Colin Gosbee, Nathan Hockley, Brianna Johnson, Tristan Pollard, Jessica Szczepanowska, Alex Totten, Keisha Lynn Vincent Cain, Liette Williams, and Ryan Willis, along with leaders Cst. Leslie Goode, Auxiliary Cst. Arlene Shepard, Debbie Bourque, Rodney Thomas, and Auxiliary Cst. Jessica Trites were instrumental in volunteering as flag bearers for the opening and closing ceremonies at the 2011 Canada Winter Games here in Halifax;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia House of Assembly commend the Cole Harbour Stetsons and Spurs Youth Group for their exceptional volunteer efforts at the 2011 Canada Winter Games and wish all of them many years of wonderful community experiences to come.

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. 2285

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

Whereas John Currie, a resident of Hopewell, is an active volunteer who works to create a stronger sense of community in the East River Valley of Pictou County; and

Whereas the volunteer work of John Currie through the Hopewell Ceilidh, the Eureka Fire Department and many other community groups has made a positive difference to the County of Pictou as a whole; and

Whereas John Currie was chosen as the Municipality of Pictou County's volunteer representative for 2011 and was recognized at Nova Scotia's Volunteer Awards Day last Spring;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly congratulate John Currie for his contributions to the community life in Pictou County's East River Valley.

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. 2286

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

Whereas in his career of over 50 years as a farmer, Antigonish resident Frank Thomson helped organize the Farmers Forum Program, was an organizer of the West River 4-H Club, and served as a board of executive member on many local, regional and provincial agricultural organizations; and

Whereas in addition to his many positions within the agricultural industry, Mr. Thomson also served terms on the school board and Antigonish Homemaker's Association; and

Whereas on October 18th, Frank Thomson was inducted into the Atlantic Agricultural Hall of Fame in Truro;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of the House of Assembly congratulate Mr. Thomson on his induction into the Atlantic Agricultural Hall of Fame and thank him for his commitment to the agricultural industry in 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 Cumberland North.

RESOLUTION NO. 2287

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

Whereas Fox Harb'r Golf & Spa ranked number one in Canada and number 16 in North America and Caribbean in the Golf Digest Magazine's Best Golf Resorts Survey; and

Whereas Fox Harb'r Golf & Spa was ranked on various criteria such as quality of golf, lodging, food and service by Golf Digest's course-rating panel that gave them an overall score of 83; and

Whereas Fox Harb'r Golf & Spa is a place where people can enjoy one of the most spectacular settings for golf in Canada;

Therefore be it resolved that this House join me in congratulating the Fox Harb'r Golf Resort & Spa on being ranked No. 1 in Canada, No. 16 in North America and Caribbean in the Golf Digest Magazine's Best Golf Resorts survey, and wish them continued success in 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 Hammonds Plains-Upper Sackville.

RESOLUTION NO. 2288

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 22, 2011, Gem Health Care Group opened a new long-term care facility for seniors in Hammonds Plains, a state-of-the-art facility that replaced the outdated Glades Lodge; and

Whereas this facility is part of Nova Scotia's comprehensive continuing care strategy, building a high-quality, client-centred, accessible and affordable system; and

Whereas the facility provides 58 new beds attended by 97 employees;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House join me in commending Gem Health Care Group and the Hammonds Plains community for providing more dignified living space for seniors by opening the White Hills Long Term Care facility and keeping seniors in our community.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Kings North.

RESOLUTION NO. 2289

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

Whereas Jacob McArthur Mooney, originally of Port Williams, Nova Scotia, is an award-winning poet, blogger and literary critic with two poetry collections and a novel in progress; and

Whereas Jacob Mooney has made the 2011 Dylan Thomas Prize shortlist, an international-scale prize of high honour that recognizes exceptional authors under 30, in all genres; and

Whereas the latest release *Folk* that put Jacob on the shortlist is a book of poetry that ties together the 1998 Swissair crash and life next to Toronto's Pearson International Airport;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia House of Assembly congratulate Jacob McArthur Mooney on being included on the shortlist for the 2011 Dylan Thomas Prize and wish him continued success in his literary career.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Lunenburg.

RESOLUTION NO. 2290

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 Small Business Award, sponsored by BDC, recognizes a small business in operation for at least two years, with staff of 16 people or less, with an established reputation for providing a superior level of customer service; and

Whereas the New Germany Building Supplies, located in New Germany, provides New Germany and the surrounding community with building supplies and expert advice, excelling as a small business;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulate New Germany Building Supplies on their nomination for the Small Business Award for the Lunenburg Queens Business Excellence Awards.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Guysborough-Sheet Harbour.

RESOLUTION NO. 2291

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

Whereas Guysborough County-raised and Saint Mary's Academy graduate, singer-songwriter Ryan MacGrath is known for his folk/pop repertoire; and

Whereas in 2006 he was a member of the band "Ryan MacGrath and the Woodenhouse" which later changed its name to "The Missing City Starlight" and now Ryan is performing as a solo artist; and

Whereas MacGrath made a guest appearance at the Goshen Community Centre to perform at a special Mother's Day concert and fundraiser in May of this year;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly recognize Ryan MacGrath's accomplishments, as well as his dedication to the area in which he was raised, and extend best wishes for his future career.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Colchester-Musquodoboit Valley.

RESOLUTION NO. 2292

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

Whereas Bob Sharples of Stewiacke East is a well-known bluegrass and old-time music player, supporter, and fan attending and volunteering at festivals throughout the Maritimes and Maine and entertaining, especially, with his broad repertoire of railroad songs; and

Whereas Bob has provided over many years a great deal of leadership within the United Church of Canada, participating in every facet of the life of Sharon United Church, East Stewiacke, including the filling of its pulpit and extending to his position of chaplain in Stewiacke for Branch 70 of the Royal Canadian Legion; and

Whereas the many friends of Bob Sharples are gathering on November 19th at the Stewiacke Community Centre to pay tribute to and acknowledge his ongoing contributions and service to the people around him;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia House of Assembly join with the friends of Bob Sharples in extending to him its recognition, appreciation, and respect.

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. 2293

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

Whereas emergency workers throughout our province provide a valuable service each and every day, 24 hours a day; and

Whereas on Sunday, October 2nd the churches of St. Paul's in Terence Bay and St. Nicholas in Hatchet Lake, under the leadership of Reverend Lisa Vaughn, held services recognizing emergency workers in our community; and

Whereas local firefighters, RCMP officers, Halifax Regional Police officers, paramedics, and members of the Citizens on Patrol were thanked for their commitment and dedication;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia Legislature thank Reverend Lisa Vaughn and all involved for these church services honouring local firefighters, RCMP

officers, Halifax Regional Police, paramedics, and members of the Citizens on Patrol, and offer their gratitude to emergency workers for their dedication and service.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Community Services.

RESOLUTION NO. 2294

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 every year the St. Margaret's Lions Club honours a fellow Lion who participates in as many events as possible, goes the extra mile in everything they do and who best exemplifies the principles of Lionism; and

Whereas the award for the Lion of the Year was given to Edward "Ebby" Johnson; and

Whereas the award is voted on by fellow Lions and Ebby won the award almost unanimously;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia Legislature congratulate Ebby Johnson on winning Lion of the Year and wish him all the best in years to come.

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. 2295

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

Whereas NovaAfrican Designs, Artifacts, & Cuisine, better known as NADA Cuisine opened on Gottingen Street in the north end of Halifax on August 24th; and

Whereas NADA Cuisine is owned by Shelly Muchayi, who was born in Zimbabwe, and who is serving delicious African cooking, including dishes from her native Zimbabwe to appreciative diners; and

Whereas NADA Cuisine is a welcome addition to the rich variety of culture, shopping and dining experiences in north-end Halifax;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly congratulate Shelly Muchayi on the successful launch of NADA Cuisine, and wish her every success in the coming 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 Education.

RESOLUTION NO. 2296

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

Whereas Gaspereau Vineyards is located in the beautiful Gaspereau Valley of Kings County, Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Gaspereau Vineyards offers wine sampling and informative guided tours;
and

Whereas Gaspereau Vineyards received six awards at the All Canadian Wine Championships held in Windsor, Ontario, which included two double gold medals, two silver medals, one bronze medal and a Best Category Select award;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulate Gaspereau Vineyards for their award-winning wines and wish them continued success.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Environment.

RESOLUTION NO. 2297

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

Whereas Chief Petty Officer 2nd Class Kaelan Hunt was the recipient of numerous awards at the annual review for the 327 Unicorn Royal Canadian Sea Cadet Corps on June 11, 2011; and

Whereas Kaelan Hunt was awarded the Lord Strathcona Medal, which is the highest award that can be bestowed upon a Canadian cadet in recognition of exemplary performance in physical and military training; and

Whereas Kaelan Hunt, who is a graduate of Barrington Municipal High School, was also the recipient of the Sergeant Kirk Taylor Memorial Bursary as well as the 327 Unicorn Sea Cadet Corps Peer Award;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulate Kaelan Hunt for his many achievements and accolades and wish him all the best 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 member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island.

RESOLUTION NO. 2298

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

Whereas Saint Mary's Elementary School has distinguished itself in Halifax for its annual Remembrance Day ceremony which includes inspiring music, poetry readings, posters, personal stories and the laying of wreaths; and

Whereas the students of Saint Mary's Elementary School demonstrate their appreciation of the sacrifices and achievements of our veterans each year by actively participating in peer mediation, peaceful schools, and anti-bullying programs; and

Whereas on November 10, 2011, the students and staff of Saint Mary's Elementary School organized a ceremony co-hosted by students Bruno Callahan-Cross, Sophie Twohig and Bailey Mauger, which included very moving presentations by Sergeant Wanda Ruth and Major Harry Crawford;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly commend the staff and students of Saint Mary's Elementary School for their dignified and heartwarming observance of Remembrance Day and for promoting and practising peace in their school.

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. 2299

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

Whereas Frankie Amos of Sackville took up the sport of curling more than 25 years ago while stationed in Europe with her military husband, and now curls out of the Mayflower Curling Club in Halifax, where she served as president in 2007-08; and

Whereas Frankie and her curling team won the Nova Scotia Curling Championships held in Sydney, Nova Scotia, in February 2011; and

Whereas Frankie and her team will represent the Province of Nova Scotia in the Dominion Curling Championship to be held in British Columbia from November 19-27, 2011;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly congratulate Frankie Amos of Sackville, and wish her and her team continued success as they represent the Province of Nova Scotia in the Dominion Curling Club Championship in British Columbia in November 2011.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Energy.

RESOLUTION NO. 2300

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

Whereas the Pictou County Chamber of Commerce held its first Best of Pictou County People's Choice Awards, with 800 nominations in 25 categories; and

Whereas the contest for Best of Pictou County People's Choice Awards voting was done on-line, and over 1,000 votes were received; and

Whereas this year's winner for Best Fine Dining was won by Piper's Landing, which is located in Lyons Brook and is owned and operated by Brenda and Matt Vohs;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia Legislative Assembly congratulate Piper's Landing and Brenda and Matt Vohs on winning the Pictou County People's Choice Award for Best Fine Dining.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage.

RESOLUTION NO. 2301

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

Whereas the Wall of Recognition, located at the Tallahassee Community School in Eastern Passage, is a community-based celebration of outstanding volunteers in the Eastern Passage/Cow Bay area and is an initiative sponsored by the long-standing community newspaper, The Beacon; and

Whereas the board of directors of The Beacon newspaper established the Wall of Recognition initiative in an effort to recognize those individuals who have enriched the lives of others; and

Whereas Jimmy and the late Edith Edwards were recognized for their dedicated service to the community, having worked tirelessly to help others and to make their community a better place;

Therefore be it resolved that this Nova Scotia House of Assembly congratulate Jimmy and the late Edith Edwards on being presented with the 2011 Wall of Recognition Award at the Tallahassee Community School in Eastern Passage on Thursday, October 13, 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 Antigonish.

RESOLUTION NO. 2302

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

Whereas the St. Martha's Regional Hospital Foundation was established to help secure supplemental funding to help maintain the expected high standard of service and care at St. Martha's Regional Hospital in Antigonish; and

Whereas on October 27th, Antigonish radio station 98.9 XFM teamed up with the St. Martha's Regional Hospital Foundation to hold the XFM Hospital Help Day, a day-long raffle with items donated by community members and businesses; and

Whereas the XFM Hospital Help Day raised \$65,410, funds which will go towards the purchase of a portable X-ray machine;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of the House congratulate St. Martha's Regional Hospital Foundation and their community partner, XFM, on the successful fundraiser, and thank them for the work they do on behalf of the Antigonish area 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 Hammonds Plains - Upper Sackville.

RESOLUTION NO. 2303

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

Whereas Fultz House Corner Restoration Society held another successful summer of Tuesday Teas in 2011; and

Whereas these events brought attention to the museum and the rich collection of history within it; and

Whereas these events allowed individuals and groups from the surrounding community to gather together in a friendly and comfortable atmosphere;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House join me in congratulating all of the organizers and participants of the 2011 series of Fultz House Corner Restoration Society's Tuesday Teas.

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. 2304

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

Whereas Kentville, centrally located in the beautiful Annapolis Valley along the scenic Evangeline Trail, was incorporated as a town on December 7, 1886; and

Whereas 2011 marks the year of Kentville's 125th birthday and the town has been celebrating all year long with community events and signature projects; and

Whereas Kentville has received recognition over the years, including being named the number one town in Nova Scotia by author Richard Rogers in his book, *Towns of Nova Scotia*, in 2006 and was honoured by Welcome Wagon as the best Atlantic Canadian community with a population under 10,000 for 2007;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia House of Assembly congratulate the Town of Kentville on 125 years of growth and prosperity and wish the town and its citizens every future 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 Lunenburg.

RESOLUTION NO. 2305

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 new 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 RUSafe Inc. - located in Middle LaHave, Nova Scotia - specializes in providing safety services to meet the needs of small and expanding companies, streamlining operations to increase efficiency while coordinating all safety requirements;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulate RUSafe Inc. of Middle LaHave on the nomination for the Export Achievement Award for the Lunenburg Queens Business Achievement Awards.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

There is a little bit too much noise in the Chamber this afternoon. I'd like to be able to hear the members' resolutions, so I'd remind you to take your conversations outside the Chamber.

The honourable member for Guysborough-Sheet Harbour.

RESOLUTION NO. 2306

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

Whereas 15-year-old Paige Jamieson of Philips Harbour competed for the first time at the 73rd New Glasgow Music Festival in April of this year; and

Whereas Ms. Jamieson scored an 84 in the Strings Scottish Solo and an 83 in the Strings Sight Reading; and

Whereas Ms. Jamieson will be taking advanced lessons with Fleur Mainville in order to prepare for the 2012 New Glasgow Music Festival;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly extend congratulations to Paige Jamieson on her most successful first competition results and wish her all the best as she prepares for future competitions, which will include next year's New Glasgow Music Festival.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Colchester-Musquodoboit Valley.

RESOLUTION NO. 2307

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

Whereas Gordon Crowe of Stewiacke has participated in virtually every facet of the civic life of his community and area over many decades, including membership in the school board, three periods of service on the Stewiacke Town Council, and his ongoing participation in the life of the Liberal Party of Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Gordon has throughout his life taken up significant roles within Holy Trinity Anglican Church, Stewiacke, and has served as caretaker for Holy Trinity Anglican Cemetery for nearly half a century; and

Whereas Gordon's civic contributions over the years have included participation in leadership in such organizations as the Stewiacke Volunteer Fire Department, the Colchester Regional Hospital Board on which he served as chairman, the Nova Forest Alliance, the Halifax County Exhibition, 4-H, the Maritime Herford Association, the

Antigonish-Eastern Shore Tourist Association and the Moose River Gold Mines Museum Society;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia House of Assembly joins the people of Colchester County and the Musquodoboit Valley in grateful acknowledgement of the lifelong contributions, to community and province, of Gordon Crowe.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Premier.

RESOLUTION NO. 2308

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

Whereas the annual Cole Harbour Harvest Festival took place on September 10th of this year and included the first-ever Harvest Festival parade; and

Whereas the festival celebrates the Cole Harbour community by showcasing its diversity, creativity and many talents, while encouraging community involvement, pride in the area and a sense of belonging; and

Whereas the event also promotes and educates the community on waste reduction through the reuse and recycling of everyday items;

Therefore be it resolved that this House congratulates and thanks the organizers and sponsors of this year's Harvest Festival, including Cole Harbour Place, HRM Community Development, Cole Harbour Recreation, the Cole Harbour Boys and Girls Club, the Salt Marsh Trail Running Club and many others in the community.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

As we begin Oral Question Period, I remind all honourable members that the use of BlackBerries, laptops and any other electronic devices is not permitted during Question Period, so they are to remain off during that time frame.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS

MR. SPEAKER: The time is now 3:03 p.m. and Question Period will end at 4:33 p.m.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

PREM. - JOBS: CAMPAIGN PROMISE - SHORTAGE

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. During the last election campaign the NDP promised to create 2,200 jobs per year. That would mean that this government should have created about 6,000 jobs by now. We consulted Stats Canada and they told us that since this government has taken power, Nova Scotians have shed 12,500 jobs. That would mean we are almost 20,000 jobs off their promise.

My question to the Premier is, can the Premier explain to Nova Scotians why he is almost 20,000 jobs short of his campaign promise?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, the manufacturing processing investments that we made in companies right across this province have, in fact, generated many jobs. As the member would know, we also face what is a very difficult international financial situation, one in which the county of Canada, in the last report of Statistics Canada, suffered one of the most severe job losses in a month-over-month basis in its history.

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, 12,500 jobs lost under this Premier's watch, but he doesn't need to take our advice. Here are the headlines from around the province, they'll tell the story: The October job numbers are called grim by the Canadian Press; in September the News, in New Glasgow, reported job losses confirm economy's downturn; in August the ChronicleHerald reported, Cape Breton call centre to close, the company had received \$1 million in provincial cash; the ChronicleHerald quoted, job stats worry

economists. In May, the ChronicleHerald also reported that 5,500 Nova Scotians lost their jobs in April.

My question to the Premier is, when will the Premier admit that his economic policies are killing jobs in Nova Scotia?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, quite the opposite, our economic plan is working and, in fact, is creating jobs. It is very unfortunate that the world economy is suffering through one of its most difficult periods. The U.S. housing market continues to lose a number of starts; and with economies not just in the western world but throughout Europe and other parts of the world, there is significant economic turmoil. We are not an island and we feel those results. When call centres close, unfortunate as it is, it's actually because of things that are happening in other jurisdictions, not what is happening here.

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, the Premier likes to cite that the unemployment rate is going up in this province, but it is an inaccurate depiction of what's happening to the Nova Scotia economy. We've lost 12,500 jobs under the Dexter Government, and 14,800 people have also left the workforce - that's why our unemployment rate is going down. That's 14,800 Nova Scotians who have given up on working in this province.

Those are families who are leaving and going down the road. How can Stats Canada and 14,800 people who left Nova Scotia be wrong? My question to the Premier is, how many more Nova Scotians have to give up on working in Nova Scotia before you realize you're taking us down the wrong road?

MR. SPEAKER: Order. Order, please. I remind all honourable members, again, about using the word "you" in the Chamber. I've asked everyone to refrain from using that and I constantly remind all the members, I don't know what else I can do to remind the members that's unparliamentary, and we will take it out; I will rule it out of order - but also on the topic there, you quoted from newspapers earlier, have they been tabled? (Interruptions)

MR. MCNEIL: I didn't read it out of the paper, I read them off here.

MR. SPEAKER: Well, they were quoted in the newspaper, right?

MR. MCNEIL: Yes.

MR. SPEAKER: They have to be tabled.

The honourable Premier.

THE PREMIER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, the Leader of the Official Opposition knows that what he's saying is just purely wrong. He knows that when people

leave the workforce, they leave for a variety of reasons. They retire, they go off on maternity leave, there are a host of reasons. (Interruptions) They laugh, Mr. Speaker, but that is true. That is all true. They leave the workforce for a number of reasons.

We are actually working hard to bring people back into the workforce. Those who currently don't have the skill sets that are necessary to get good-paying jobs in the province, we are working through the community colleges - that's another point, they go out of the workforce to go to school to upgrade themselves so they can get good jobs. (Applause)

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

AGRIC: MEAT SAFETY - MIN. ASSURE

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Agriculture. The Auditor General's Report was released today and it found that the Department of Agriculture is not ensuring compliance with the meat inspection regulations. This revelation will be a surprise and alarming to many Nova Scotians who rely on the department to inspect the food they eat and who remember, all too well, the food-related tragedies a few years ago in Ontario. The Auditor General says, "Many facilities are not taking meat safety as seriously as they should."

If there's one thing that minister should take seriously it is the food supply of Nova Scotians. My question to the minister is this: If there is one thing he can do, can he assure Nova Scotians today that our supply of meat that is processed in Nova Scotia is safe to eat?

HON. JOHN MACDONELL: Mr. Speaker, yes I can.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, I don't know how the minister can say that because the Auditor General found that there is no formal policy in place for auditing the food processing facilities of our province. There is an informal policy that says they should be inspected monthly, but do you know what? That's not happening. None of the facilities, zero, that are supposed to be audited monthly have been audited monthly. Not the slaughterhouses, not the meat processing facilities - in fact six of the eight that were reviewed by the Auditor General had not been inspected in more than a year.

The report of the Auditor General says, "If audits are not completed at the appropriate frequency, conditions which may result in the contamination of meat and meat products may not be properly identified." So my question for that minister is, how can he possibly make that assurance to Nova Scotians when those audits are not being done by your own department?

MR. MACDONELL: Mr. Speaker, what the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party, the point he's trying to make - I think he's confusing two things. One is

the issue around audits, the other one is the issue around inspections. One of the things that the Auditor General did say is that the provincial Meat Inspection Act requires that animals are inspected prior and after slaughter, and he indicated this is being done. He indicated that the staff have the training necessary to be doing this. In the legislation, that is a part of the Act, that they have to do that and they're complying.

The issue around the audit is not part of the legislation, Mr. Speaker, and before any plant can operate in this province, the inspector goes in and does a walk-through of that plant and tells them that they can start or not. So when he says some haven't been audited or inspected for a month or more, if they only do one slaughtering in a month, there is somebody in there that day to ensure that that plant can go. So the question around audits, we see that as a weakness and it's our intention to comply with the recommendations of the Auditor General.

MR. BAILLIE: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm sure all Nova Scotians will be rushing out to the nearest deli taking great comfort from that answer from the minister here this afternoon. The fact of the matter is that when inspections are done - when they are done - the Auditor General found that the department is not taking the appropriate action to ensure deficiencies are corrected in a timely manner. That is what the Auditor General has said today.

During his audit, he reviewed 133 deficiencies. Of those, 11 have been repeated two or more times; five have gone unresolved for a year or more - one of those five has been unresolved for two and a half years. That is the work of the minister's department. So there is no way to determine whether there are deficiencies in our meat processing processes or not, Mr. Speaker. My question to the minister is, why has he allowed such a casual approach to food safety to be undertaken by his department under his watch? If there's one thing to get right, it's food safety. Why is he not taking it seriously?

MR. MACDONELL: Mr. Speaker, not only this minister and my department but this government considers food safety and the safety of Nova Scotians as paramount. The thing that the member opposite did not indicate is what he means by deficiencies and the Auditor General couldn't find those deficiencies in those numbers if there wasn't some record system. He would never be able to indicate what plants, you know, had not had an audit or whatever.

I'm going to give the member some example of what a deficiency is; a Number 1 deficiency is when a light bulb is burned out, that's a Number 1 deficiency. If a hinge on a door is rusty, that's a Number 2 deficiency, Mr. Speaker. The member opposite doesn't indicate how that relates to food safety. So food safety is paramount and our department does see some weaknesses and we appreciate the work of the Auditor General but there will be improvements in those audits.

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

N.S. JOB LOSSES: PREM. - RESPONSIBILITY ASSUME

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL: Yesterday and again today the Premier blamed Europe for the job losses in Nova Scotia and he blamed global force problems for the lobster pricing yesterday. Every other province in Canada is subject to those global forces and this Premier blames them for his poor economic record.

Newfoundland and Labrador grew by 6.1 per cent despite Europe, Mr. Speaker, and Saskatchewan grew by 4 per cent despite the poor U.S. recovery. Alberta grew by 3.3 per cent despite the U.S. housing market. Nova Scotia grew by 1.9 per cent. (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition has the floor.

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, what distinguishes us from the rest of the provinces is that government sitting on the other side of this House. (Applause) My question to the Premier is, when will the Premier begin to take responsibility for the job losses in Nova Scotia?

THE PREMIER: You know, Mr. Speaker, when we have the same oil reserves that exist in Newfoundland, Saskatchewan, and Alberta, I'm sure we will be able to lead the country in economic data as well.

MR. MCNEIL: So, Mr. Speaker, now it's not global forces. It's other provinces' good fortune that's the problem. Nova Scotians expect their Premier and government to make wise choices, particularly in times like these: We must focus on the steps required for Nova Scotia to be ready for the economic recovery when it begins.

Those aren't my words, Mr. Speaker, those are the words of the Premier on March 13, 2009. That's what we've been asking. We've asked for a tax review. We've asked for the government to stand up to Nova Scotia Power. We've asked them to take the tax off tax that he called an immoral tax when he was in Opposition.

So my question to the Premier is, when will his government take the necessary steps to reduce our taxes and the cost of doing business in this province to ensure that we can capitalize on the economic recovery when it happens?

THE PREMIER: It's this government that took the HST off of home electricity, Mr. Speaker. It is this government that put in place the lowest business taxes in 20 years, and it is this government that recognizes that we have a tax on tax on fuel because the Liberal Party put it there.

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, it is that government that increased 1,400 user fees. It is that government that increased the HST by 2 per cent, and it is that government that has

put the NDP electricity tax on every power bill in Nova Scotia. The Premier won't admit that the problem with Nova Scotia is his government. The Premier blames everyone and everything except for his government and his misguided economic policies, which are really to blame.

I'd like to quote our present Premier when he criticized former Premier MacDonald's effort to blame the economic hardship on global forces: "I think the attempt of the Premier to try and blame others is just a further admission of his lack of real leadership."

AN HON. MEMBER: What was the question?

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition on a new question.

PREM. - HST INCREASE: MISTAKE - ADMIT

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL: During the 2009 election campaign, Mr. Speaker, the Premier promised to balance our books without raising taxes. This government decided to backtrack on their commitment to Nova Scotians - they raised the HST by 2 per cent. He said this wouldn't hurt business - slow sales in the province and life is less affordable for Nova Scotians. My question to the Premier is, will the Premier admit that we were correct and that it was a mistake to raise the HST?

THE PREMIER: As a result of the adjustments that were made in taxation in this province we now have the lowest business taxes in this province in 20 years. We have provided an Affordable Living Tax Credit to low-income Nova Scotians. It is absolutely true that the HST is at 15 per cent, which is where the Liberals put it.

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, it is that government that raised 1,400 user fees outside of the Legislature, it is that government that increased the HST by 2 per cent, and it is that government that has added the NDP electricity tax to every power bill in the province of Nova Scotia.

This government is fond of pointing to the fact that retail sales growth is 1.7 per cent this year, but before raising the HST, retail sales grew by more than 7 per cent. This is further proof that the people have less to spend because of this government's poor decision on raising the HST. My question to the Premier is, given this data, will the Premier now admit that his HST increase is hurting businesses and making life less affordable for Nova Scotia families?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, when the Liberals were in government they raised the user fees in almost every budget and they put the HST in at 15 per cent. The retail sales numbers in this province are outstripping the rest of the country.

MR. MCNEIL: Where does the Premier come up with some of his information? Outstripping retail sales - Mr. Speaker, before you raised the HST we were at 7 per cent, now we are at 1.7 per cent. The Premier should be really proud about that. It is his government that has increased the HST in this province; it is his government that increased 1,400 user fees and it is his government that has added the NDP electricity tax to every power bill in Nova Scotia. Now sagging retail-sales growth is further proof that this government is making life less affordable for Nova Scotians. Taxes are up, power is up, fuel is up and people have less money to spend.

Yesterday Stats Canada reported that Nova Scotia had the worst year-over-year new motor vehicle sales growth in the country. This comes after last week's news that our province's economy grew less than any other province in the country, something that government should be really proud about.

My question to the Premier is, given the increased amount of data showing this government's decision to increase the HST is hurting our economy and hurting Nova Scotians, will this Premier decide to govern for our economy based on facts, not on political ideology?

THE PREMEIR: Mr. Speaker, the reality is that the retail-sales numbers continue to outstrip the national average in this province. Secondly, Mr. Speaker, in 2009-10 we had the second highest growth rate in the country, so the reality of our economy is we are more even. In fact, what we see in this province is the tremendous opportunity that has been created as a result of the investments this government has made in businesses right across this province, whether it is in Trenton, at DSME, or whether it is in A.F. Theriault & Son Ltd., or whether it's in the shipyards at Shelburne. These are good, long-term investments that will lead to productivity for our province.

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

FIN. - CNSOPB: AUDIT ACTIONS - STANCE

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Finance. Last Fall the minister brought in changes to the Auditor General Act specifically designed to give the Auditor General broader and more comprehensive access to information. That Act received the approval of this House and was granted Royal Assent on December 10, 2010.

Today we learn that less than one year later, a government agency is refusing to comply with the Act. The Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Board is an important agency that is responsible for regulation of our offshore oil and gas industry, including worker safety but the auditor general was forced to abandon his audit when they withheld important information necessary for its completion.

As a result, the Auditor General says he is “. . . unable to provide assurance to the House . . . or to the public, as to whether the Board is properly fulfilling its regulatory responsibilities . . .”

My question, does the Minister of Finance agree with the actions of the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Board that are frustrating the work of our Auditor General?

HON. GRAHAM STEELE: Mr. Speaker, the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Board performs a very important function in the public interest. Our government is disappointed that that board and the Auditor General have not been able to reach agreement on what should be audited and how.

The Auditor General Act that this House passed last year - and, if my memory serves, it was passed unanimously - clearly sets out the powers of the Auditor General, clearly sets out the dispute resolution mechanism and the two parties involved in this dispute, the Offshore Petroleum Board and the Auditor General's Office, need to get to it and resolve this issue according to the dispute resolution set out in the Act. They need to get it resolved as soon as possible, in the public interest.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, according to the Auditor General, the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Board is “. . . acting in contravention of the Nova Scotia Auditor General Act by refusing the Auditor General access to information in its possession . . .” This is an act that he says is unlawful.

The minister responsible has just told this House he is disappointed that they are acting in an unlawful manner, that he hopes the parties work it out - it is the job of the minister to enforce the Act, not the parties to hopefully “work it out.” So my question is, when will the minister stand up for Nova Scotians and enforce the very Act that he, himself, brought in?

MR. STEELE: Mr. Speaker, it is sad when in this House the Opposition Parties will misquote a minister and then challenge the minister to defend that misquote. He's just done it again - this is too serious for that kind of partisanship.

The Auditor General Act is clear. It says, “Where the Auditor General and the auditable entity are unable to agree as to what records are privileged records, either party may make an application to the Supreme Court to determine the matter.” I will table that.

The Offshore Petroleum Board has circulated a letter today in which they take strong issue with the characterization given to the matter by the Auditor General. Clearly there is a factual dispute - there is a question about what the duties of the Offshore Petroleum Board are, and that is exactly why this dispute resolution mechanism was put

into place. The two parties to this dispute, in the public interest, should get to it and get this issue resolved. (Applause)

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, what is sad here is that we have a minister in this very important situation who feels he has no role in enforcing his own Act. That's what is sad here today. The fact of the matter is that the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Board told the Auditor General that ExxonMobil and EnCana would not consent to the release of the information requested by the Auditor General. As a result, the Department of Energy says they will review "the pertinent legislation," a direct quote from their letter in response, and make recommendations. It seems so sad that we have a government that's more interested in the interests of ExxonMobil than the taxpayers of Nova Scotia.

My final question to the minister is, why should it take a review to enforce the law?

MR. STEELE: Mr. Speaker, in this case there is a dispute between the Offshore Petroleum Board and the Office of the Auditor General about what the authority is of the provincial Auditor General. The Act this House passed last year is very clear about the authority of the Auditor General and very clear about the dispute resolution mechanism. That mechanism is there for a reason and the parties involved in this dispute have a duty in the public interest to follow that mechanism and get this dispute resolved as quickly as possible.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Glace Bay.

ERDT - RURAL N.S.: POLICIES - FAILURE ADMIT

MR. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, rural Nova Scotia is in a tailspin under this government. All Nova Scotians are dealing with higher taxes, higher gas prices, and higher power costs. Hundreds of jobs hang in the balance for workers in both the Strait region and in Queens County, and communities across the province have to deal with job losses every day - every single day. Businesses and workers alike are faced with tough decisions today and as The ChronicleHerald puts it, "It's hard to stay optimistic when you don't have a job." I will table that quote.

Mr. Speaker, when will the Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism accept the fact that his policies are failing in rural Nova Scotia?

HON. PERCY PARIS: Mr. Speaker, as I've said previously, we do have a plan. We've implemented a plan, we are following that plan, and we've invested millions of dollars in rural Nova Scotia.

What I would like to offer is if the member opposite would like to make an appointment, come over to the office, I would be more than willing to have the appropriate

staff, along with myself, go over the jobsHere plan so he can have a full understanding of where we are headed.

MR. MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, NewPage, Bowater, Fundy Gypsum, Inverness Gypsum, Larsen's, and the Yarmouth ferry are just a few examples of jobs that are disappearing under this government. In the last year Nova Scotia had the third worst performance in manufacturing in the country, the worst in motor vehicle sales, and the worst growth of any provincial economy. The neglect from this government has hit rural Nova Scotia hard and people are voting with their feet - 2,300 have left the workforce in Cape Breton; 1,400 in the South Shore; 1,800 in the Valley; and in the southern region, 4,300 people.

Mr. Speaker, when will the Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism finally show Nova Scotians a real plan to grow our economy and will he make 14,000 appointments to come to his office and explain where the jobs are in this province? (Interruptions)

MR. PARIS: Mr. Speaker, I assume that that's a no to my offer. Having said that, there are some things that have happened in the Province of Nova Scotia, when it comes to jobs, that are not in the control of Nova Scotia. It would be nice if we did control everything. We can't take responsibility for what's going on globally and I'm curious as to what news media some individuals are listening to.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to table, and I would like to quote - this is by John DeMont, a business reporter for The ChronicleHerald, "Nova Scotia's exporting community is translating a gloomy economic period into a very impressive growth number." I also have another quote from the same article, "What Nova Scotia has going for it is that it is firing on all cylinders."

MR. MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, the minister keeps pumping money out through the IEF slush fund - hundreds of millions of dollars - and yet thousands of Nova Scotians continue to lose their job, leave the workforce, and leave this province. If Bowater closes that means 300 of the best paying jobs in the area are gone. In the southern region alone, 3,700 jobs have been lost to this government since this government has taken power and this isn't the end. Every community across this province is dealing with job losses under this minister's watch.

Mr. Speaker, a plan without targets is simply a marketing plan. When will this Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism dump this marketing strategy and tell Nova Scotians how many net jobs he's going to create in the very near future for this province?

MR. PARIS: Mr. Speaker, this government has invested money through their Productivity Investment Program. There have been 116 projects. What about Eyking

Brothers in Cape Breton? Is that member over there suggesting that we shouldn't have invested in them? What about Indian Brook Adventures in Cape Breton? Is that member over there suggesting we shouldn't have invested in them? (Interruptions) What about MacKeigan Insulation? Is that member over there suggesting we shouldn't have invested in them? What about Strait Supplies, another investment by this government. (Interruptions) Is that member suggesting we shouldn't have invested in them? What about Halifax Biomedical, is that another (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle.

PREM.: YAR. FERRY SERV. - SUPPORT

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, yesterday an economic analysis study suggested that a business case can be made for a Nova Scotia to New England international ferry service. The study completed by Gardner Pinfold Consulting supports the contention that a seasonal international ferry operation between Nova Scotia and the United States could be financially viable and contribute billions of dollars to the provincial economy.

On November 16, 2010 the Premier (Interruptions) I've been hearing lots of noise from the government here. They don't even want to hear about a report from Gardner Pinfold. I'll happily continue on here and maybe they'll listen.

On November 16, 2010, the Premier told the CBC, what we said to the municipal officials here is that we are perfectly willing to work with officials in Yarmouth to look for a service that will suit the region and one that is sustainable over the long term. The business community has satisfied the Premier's 2010 condition. Mr. Speaker, will the Premier fulfill his 2010 promise and support the community on the ferry project and provide some hope to our area?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I think the honourable member ought to actually take the study and read it. In fact what it says is that if the Canadian dollar should decline, if the U.S. economy should increase, if they are able to generate four times as many passengers on a new ferry as they did on the old one, then it will become a sustainable business.

What I have said is that we are prepared to participate in any service that shows itself to be a viable, continuing service for the area and we stand by that.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, in this House on May 11th the Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism said, "What we are also willing to do, and I've said this time and time again, if somebody comes forward to us with a plan with respect to - whether it be ferry service or anything else, we are willing to look at it and it will be measured on its own merit."

According to the Gardner Pinfold study, an effective marketing campaign combined with a creative tour package, could see a recovery of U.S. traffic exceeding 100,000 passengers in the first year of renewed Yarmouth-Portland cruise ferry service.

The minister has seen this study. We know this because he is quoted in the press release issued by the Nova Scotia International Ferry Partnership. He has seen the evidence and he knows that an international ferry has merit.

My question to the minister is, will he commit today to making the ferry project a priority for his department? Will he act quickly so that southwest Nova Scotia doesn't lose another tourist season and sink further into despair?

HON. PERCY PARIS: Mr. Speaker, what this government and what I will commit to, that if a viable, sustainable transportation system for the southwest region comes forward, this government has said we would look at it. It will stand on the business case that is presented with it and with its own merit. That's what I offered, it's a fair offer.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, the traffic forecast contained in the Gardner Pinfold study projects the ferry service could expect to break even, or even generate a modest positive net return and an annual revenue stream in the \$24 million to \$26 million range. Add this figure to the expected economic impact associated with the ferry service, \$16 million in annual gross tourism spending throughout the province, \$3.5 million - that's about 21 per cent - would be spent annually in the Yarmouth-Acadian Shore-South Shore impact regions, the creation of 260 jobs, the creation of \$8 million of labour income in the province and \$1.7 million in southwest Nova Scotia.

These figures represent a lifeline to a drowning region, Mr. Speaker. I'm just asking that this government doesn't blow this opportunity. They said a business case can be made for the Cape Breton railroad and they supported that project.

My question to the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism is, now that the minister has proof that the wanted ferry service is viable, will he act in his best interest for the people of Nova Scotia and southwest Nova Scotia, just as he did for Cape Bretoners?

MR. PARIS: Mr. Speaker, if someone comes forward with a business case, what the member is quoting is - he is quoting from a report. I think, and I said yesterday, that report is based on certain assumptions, which I may add, assumptions and conclusions that are very, very generous.

Mr. Speaker, if somebody wishes to come forward with a solid business case, as I said, we will look at it. It will be measured and evaluated on the merits of the business case that it presents to us.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

ERDT: YAR./NEW ENGLAND FERRY SERV. - RESTORE

MR. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, it's quoted today in The Halifax ChronicleHerald that the most recent economic impact analysis of the Yarmouth ferry, which I tabled in the House yesterday, concludes, "Some of the damage done to Nova Scotia's economy when the ferry service between Yarmouth and Maine was stopped two years ago may be reversible . . ." with a new ship.

In light of the fact that all of the evidence that has been provided to the public in this House proves that the NDP stance that there is not a business case for a ferry in Yarmouth is unfounded and completely false, and in light of the fact that this government's decision to cut the ferry has had a devastating impact on the province and on the lives of many Nova Scotians, will the Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism commit to this House to take immediate action to restore that vital economic ferry link between Yarmouth and New England?

MR. PARIS: Mr. Speaker, it's a known fact that The Cat ferry was decreasing in ridership for the last 10 years. I'll stand here in my place time and time again and say, bring forward the business case, present it to us, and we will evaluate it based on the merits that are in front of us. It's as simple as that. If the member is asking us to do something, I'm asking him to bring forward the business case.

MR. CHURCHILL: This minister and his government make a decision to cut a vital economic link to this province and then say it's up to other people to find its replacement. Shame on them, Mr. Speaker, shame on them. It's a joke. This minister has said in this House that the demand for the ferry connecting Nova Scotia to the United States isn't there, and I'll table a quote where he said that American travel abroad is down. However, as stated in the report that was tabled yesterday, there has been a growth in cruise travel from the U.S. to Canada over the past decade - a growth.

In fact, the report goes as far as to say that cruise travel from the U.S. is the fastest-growing segment of U.S. travel abroad. Despite this fact, U.S. visitation in Nova Scotia has gone down under this government - and I'll table those statistics - in part, obviously, because eliminating a connection to one of the biggest markets in the world has made it harder for Americans to get here. Will the minister act immediately to reverse this trend, capitalize on increased U.S. cruise travel abroad, and take the leadership role that he needs to take in order to restore that ferry service in Yarmouth?

MR. PARIS: Mr. Speaker, I'm going to pass that question off to the Premier.

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, the members opposite would know that, as a result of our funding of the task force in southwestern Nova Scotia, they canvassed more than 40

operators to come forward with business cases for a ferry. None of them would bring forward a case, and in fact, all of them said that they would require a subsidy in the order of \$5 to 10 million a year. One of them said they would not put forward a business plan unless the Province of Nova Scotia was prepared to guarantee a \$5 to 10 million subsidy for 10 years - so \$50 to 100 million.

I also will table for the House's information the Statistics Canada figures for New England visits to Nova Scotia in 2009, the year after the subsidy was cancelled, that show that visitorship to Nova Scotia from New England actually went up.

MR. CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, we still had a ferry in 2009, thank you very much, Mr. Premier. (Applause)

The fact is that it is very difficult for a private company to come forward and commit to something when this government won't commit anything. The fact is, there is an economic rationale to support a subsidy into a ferry. There is an economic rationale for it because Nova Scotian taxpayers get a return on that investment, just like they do when this Premier said he would fund every other ferry in the province and the rail in Cape Breton. He does it because it's an economic driver in the province. In fact, the people of this province and the people of Yarmouth don't know whether this government's going to commit to anything or not. Just yesterday, a member in that back bench said to me, stop talking about the ferry because it's not coming back. (Interruptions)

My question to the Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism is, once and for all in this House, will he commit his government to restoring our province's vital economic link, the Yarmouth ferry - yes or no?

MR. PARIS: Mr. Speaker, I've already committed. What I said and what I will reiterate, is that if somebody comes forward with a solid business case - well, with a business case, for us to look at, for us to consider, we will sit down, we will measure that business case. It will stand on its own merit.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants West.

AGRIC.: PROCESSING FACILITY - WATER INSPECTION

MR. CHUCK PORTER: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is for the Minister of Agriculture. The Auditor General outlined a number of serious issues within the Department of Agriculture's meat inspection program. One of the areas highlighted by the Auditor General was that of water testing. Each facility is required by regulation to have a supply of potable hot and cold water. Given the nature of the work done at these facilities and our knowledge of the risk associated with bacterial infections, the Auditor General's assertion about the importance of uncontaminated water to a facility's sanitation seems very obvious.

Despite the known risks, the Auditor General points out, that the department does not have a policy concerning water testing. There does exist an undocumented policy which is not only inadequate, but is rarely followed by the facilities in this province. You would think given our recent memory of the listeria outbreak in Ontario in the summer of 2008 that every effort would be made to ensure the safety of our food. My question is, does the Premier concede that the department's casual approach - I'll redirect this now that I know the minister is here - does the minister concede that the department's casual approach to water testing at facilities in the province is putting Nova Scotians at risk of illness?

HON. JOHN MACDONELL: Mr. Speaker, the department does not take a casual approach to anything. Testing does occur once a year in these facilities, at least once a year and because these facilities are not open to the public, as other facilities might be, so there's a difference in that requirement. The member opposite mentioned listeria - that's the responsibility of CFIA.

MR. PORTER: Mr. Speaker, another chilling discovery made by the Auditor General was that there is still no policy that requires bacteria testing. The department explains they plan to require facility owners to test for bacteria, but they don't. Again, I must refer to the outbreak of listeria in 2008. If that didn't raise awareness for the department, then I'm not sure what will. My question to the minister is, now that Nova Scotians have been made aware of the lack of oversight we have in meat inspection program, can the minister tell Nova Scotians when they can have some peace of mind about the meat products coming out from within our province?

MR. MACDONELL: Mr. Speaker, in the interest of time - our process in our meat inspection facilities is set up to ensure that the product leaving the plant is healthy. The issue around listeriosis or listeria comes under the federal government. It's CFIA, it's not the province.

I want to make it clear to members opposite and all members of the House that there has never been an incident of food safety that has been linked to a meat inspection facility - I'll give this information to the members - since 2002. The Department of Agriculture has food safety specialists who are certified public health inspectors. They've investigated 623 reported suspected cases of food-borne illnesses and in all of those 623 cases, there has not been one that has implicated a meat inspection facility in this province. That's from 2002 to 2010. Thank you.

MR. PORTER: Mr. Speaker, in the department's responses to the Auditor General, they reiterate again and again the fact that there have been no issues. This is not only luck, but it is also an assumption. Rather than play Russian roulette with the health and safety of Nova Scotians, the department should take responsibility and understand that there's no excuse for this laid-back approach. My question to the minister is how can the department justify failing to respond to four of the recommendations to the AG, recommendations that could have serious public safety implications?

HON. JOHN MACDONELL: Mr. Speaker, the member just missed the point of my answer in the last question. We will act on all the recommendations of the Auditor General and I want to make it clear that the department investigates any issue that comes to the department - that's from individuals who call the department. We have the food safety specialists to investigate, they can come from the DHA, they can come from a physician, they can come from the Department of Health, any issues raised we will inspect. As a matter of fact, we will contact the individuals who got sick and we will trace back three days, we'll interview them and go back three days on where they've been eating, what they've been eating and try to trace what the source of the contamination was. In all of the ones that I mentioned earlier, 623, we have never been able to trace one back to a food inspection facility in this province.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

AGRIC. - MEAT INSPECTION PROG.: AG REPT. - DEFICIENCIES

MR. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General's Report today revealed some alarming deficiencies in the province's Meat Inspection Program. Within the first paragraph of the report summary, Section 3, it states, "... the Department of Agriculture is not doing an adequate job of managing the facility audit process." As a result the audit process is not sufficiently effective in mitigating all public safety risks associated with the slaughtering and processing of meat. My question to the Minister of Agriculture is, what is the department doing to rectify the deficiencies found in the Auditor General's Report?

HON. JOHN MACDONELL: Mr. Speaker, that's a pretty reasonable question. I don't know if I can tell the member exactly when the Act was rewritten, it was updated, but the regulations haven't been updated - I think they go back to 1990 - and my staff has raised that as a concern. With that in mind and with the report by the Auditor General, it is our intention to upgrade the regulations to bring them in line with newer legislation and to implement the recommendations of the Auditor General.

The issue around testing for bacteria, the department has been working on a HACCP program to be implemented and rolled out through all the plants and that would actually take care of that issue in itself. Thank you.

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, a very reasonable response so I'll get right to my next question. The Auditor General's recommendation, the updated regulations will not be ready for consideration until December, 2012. My question to the minister is, as an important health and safety concern, why wait until 2012 to consider the updated regulations?

MR. MACDONELL: Well I have to tell the member opposite, when it comes to regulations in legislation regarding my department, I have learned about the complications of trying to move regulation too quickly. With that said, it is our target to implement the

recommendations of the Auditor General by the summer of 2012 at the latest, and if it takes us longer to get the regulations up to date, that may happen, but certainly it is our intention to act on the recommendations as soon as possible. If it takes until the summer - that might be the case - anything we can move on faster, we will.

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, the audit highlights that there are facilities that go months on end without facility audits. Having toured about four of our slaughter plants in the province, what I found most disturbing was that there is no quality assurance process in place to help ensure inspectors are performing all their responsibilities appropriately. My question to the minister is, how is the department going to enforce regular audits now and in the future?

MR. MACDONELL: Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure if the issue around our inspectors not performing their duties appropriately - I don't think that was one that came from the auditor. If the member has something he wants to raise, I think I would be very glad to hear it. The Auditor General did indicate that our staff were trained to do the task they are required to do. One of the very first audits that is done is a walk-through, so those plants will not start if the inspector is not pleased about the condition of the plant. As a matter of fact, although the deficiencies are numbered one, two and three, we have a category we refer to as four and five, but those plants won't open.

One of the things that will shut it down would be no hot water. If the inspector goes in and there's no hot water in that plant, that plant doesn't operate that day or doesn't operate until that is fixed. There are lots of conditions in place for oversight.

The auditing and the continual upgrade to ensure that things are done, we see that as a weakness and it is something we definitely intend to address.

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

FIN. - AG: AUDIT INFO - ACCESS

MS. DIANA WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance. In the Spring of 2010 the Auditor General had to withdraw from an audit of the IEF and the Economic Development Department and to deny this government an audit opinion, which is a very serious matter for accountants. This was because the government refused to release information necessary for the Auditor General to do his work. The NDP response at the time was that the audit could take place after the government changed legislation to clarify the Auditor General's authority and role in conducting audits.

Since that time government did introduce a new Auditor General Act with great fanfare, so my question to the Minister of Finance is why, only a year later, are we in the same position as we were with regard to the Auditor General not being able to complete his work?

HON. GRAHAM STEELE: Mr. Speaker, as I was saying earlier in response to questions from the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party, the Auditor General Act, which was passed unanimously by this House, is very clear about the Auditor General's powers; it is very clear about the dispute resolution mechanism.

There is a dispute about the fact and the law in this case. That is exactly why that mechanism was created, and we would now like the two parties involved in this dispute, the Offshore Petroleum Board and the Auditor General's Office, to pursue that mechanism and get this issue resolved as quickly as possible, in the public interest.

MS. WHALEN: With the IEF having its concern of third-party information and again this current dispute also relating to third-party information, my question to the minister is why has he not intervened to see that this not take place again so soon after a new Act was introduced?

MR. STEELE: Mr. Speaker, the Offshore Petroleum Board is an arm's-length body that is not under the control of the Government of Nova Scotia. It is a joint federal-provincial board and we appoint some of the members.

The fact is, Mr. Speaker, I, as the minister most directly responsible for the Auditor General Act, found out about this dispute at the same time as everybody else. On behalf of the government, I can say that we are disappointed that the Auditor General had to abandon his audit. That is exactly why this House approved a new Auditor General Act with a dispute resolution mechanism, and the two parties have to follow that mechanism.

Both of those entities are created to serve the public interest, and it is in the public interest that that mechanism should now be used so that this dispute can be resolved as quickly as possible.

MS. WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, I can say that we are also very disappointed to see that at the first serious challenge to this Act we are in the very same place we were a year ago, with an impasse between the Auditor General and an entity where public monies are being spent.

At this point in time the Auditor General has said, and in his report it says, that currently oversight of the board's operations by governments is negligible - that's a serious situation for all Nova Scotians.

Mr. Speaker, my concern today as well is with the transparency of the government. We have the IEF which controlled and wouldn't release information a year ago. It is controlled by a secret slush fund. We have the changed secretariat where all of the messages from government are being controlled. The government tried to cover up an extensive report on the socio-economic impacts of gambling and, as well, the freedom of information requests that we've had, and others, are held up routinely by government.

My question to the minister is why is this Auditor General Act not providing Nova Scotians with more openness, transparency and accountability as the Auditor General intended?

MR. STEELE: Mr. Speaker, as I was saying in my earlier answer to the question from the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party, the Auditor General Act that was supported unanimously in this House could not be more clear. It says, "Where the Auditor General and the auditable entity are unable to agree as to what records are privileged records, either party may make an application to the Supreme Court to determine the matter."

Mr. Speaker, our message to the two parties involved in this dispute is get on with it and get this matter resolved.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

FIN. - AG: MIN. SUPPORT - DETAILS

MR. ANDREW YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, it seems the Minister of Finance's answer to the issues the Auditor General is having with the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Board, is go fight it out in court. I don't think that's acceptable to most Nova Scotians and he won't even admit that there are improvements necessary in his own legislation.

Mr. Speaker, according to the Auditor General, and I'll quote from the report that was tabled earlier today, ". . . we abandoned our attempt to conduct the audit after the Board, acting on the instructions of operators ExxonMobil Canada Ltd. and EnCana Corporation, denied us access to most of the information needed to conduct the audit."

So, Mr. Speaker, my question to the Minister of Energy is, does he stand by the Auditor General or ExxonMobil and EnCana?

HON. CHARLIE PARKER: Mr. Speaker, this falls under the jurisdiction of the Minister responsible for the Auditor General Act and I'll refer it to him.

HON. GRAHAM STEELE: Mr. Speaker, as I was saying in my earlier answer to the question from the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party, the Offshore Petroleum Board has circulated a letter today which I have seen, in which they take strong issue, very strong issue, using very strong language, disputing the Auditor General's version of what transpired and, in fact, the matter quoted just now by the member opposite, the member for Dartmouth East, is one of the statements with which the Offshore Petroleum Board takes particular issue.

So it is just possible, Mr. Speaker, that there is another side to this matter. That is exactly why this House created a dispute resolution mechanism and it is now the duty of those parties, both of which were created in the public interest, to follow that mechanism and get this dispute resolved.

MR. YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, I'm surprised the Minister of Energy passed that off to the Minister of Finance since the question was not about the Auditor General. The question was about the board which that minister, the Minister of Energy, is responsible for and it's a shame that minister doesn't recognize that he's responsible for the board. The question was whether he stands by the two oil companies that the Auditor General has pointed out or whether he stands by the Auditor General, it's as simple as that, and he didn't want to answer.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to follow up with the Minister of Energy and I hope that he'll answer it. The Auditor General also said he cannot ensure that "... offshore activities are being conducted safely and with due regard for the environment; and is ensuring the public interest is being protected."

So, Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Energy tell us what plans he has to immediately ensure that the public interest is protected and that the activities in the offshore are being conducted safely and with due regard to the environment?

MR. PARKER: Mr. Speaker, again, this very clearly falls under the purview of the Minister responsible for the Auditor General Act. So I'm going to ask that minister to reply.

MR. STEELE: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite, of course, has clearly mischaracterized the nature of the dispute. This is a dispute between the Offshore Petroleum Board and the provincial Office of the Auditor General about the authority of the Office of the Auditor General. That's why the dispute resolution mechanism was created and that is the mechanism that those parties should follow.

MR. YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, I think the only thing being mischaracterized here is what my question is. (Interruptions) There are issues raised that are not part of the dispute about whether they were audited. The Auditor General said - and I have read the response from the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Board, and they do not take issue with the fact that the Auditor General said that he can't actually determine whether issues are being done safely. I asked the minister what he plans to do to ensure that there is safety in the offshore. Well, apparently he has no plans.

The last question I'll ask - and either one of them can answer, because neither one of them can seem to decide who is responsible for it. It was said, "Currently, oversight of the Board's operations by governments is negligible. Given the Board's environmental and public safety responsibilities, we question whether this is in the public interest." The board,

again, has not disputed that finding in their letter. The question is what actions is the minister going to commit to today that will ensure that there is government oversight of that board in the future and that the public interest is protected?

MR. STEELE: I, too, have read the letter, and the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Board clearly does take issue with that particular statement by the provincial Auditor General. The best, clearest, simplest, most straightforward way for these parties to resolve the dispute is to follow the dispute resolution mechanism approved by this House last year. Our message, from this government to those bodies, those two entities, is: get on with it.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

HEALTH & WELLNESS: INSULIN PUMPS - FUNDING

MR. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health and Wellness, on April 6, 2011, indicated that her department was working with the Diabetes Care Program, who at that time had completed a scan of the type and level of financial assistance available for insulin pumps across the country. The minister also stated she would be looking at a program rollout in New Brunswick after they announced they would be funding insulin pumps. Given that the minister has been studying this issue for at least the last eight months and it has been an issue before the minister's office within the department for at least three years, my question is why have we yet to see this government take action around funding for insulin pumps?

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, as you know, diabetes is an illness that many Nova Scotians have. There are two types of diabetes, type 1 and type 2. A small number of provinces in Canada provide coverage for insulin pumps for children with type 1 diabetes. New Brunswick has adopted a program, and I believe they're in the process of evaluating the impact of that program. What I said last year still applies. We will await the results of the evaluation to look at what we can learn.

MR. GLAVINE: Better management of diabetes, whether it be through funding of insulin pumps or through funding for diabetic-related medications, is an investment. It's not a cost. It's an investment in patient care. It reduces visits to physicians; it reduces future costs associated with heart attack, stroke, blindness, kidney failure, and depression, all of which are risk factors associated with poor diabetes management. My question to the minister is when will the management of diabetes become a priority for her government?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: There are a variety of ways in which we can better manage chronic disease. I thank the honourable member for the question, because it gives me an opportunity to talk about our Better Care Sooner plan, which is the plan that we have to invest in primary health care and chronic disease management across the province. We are working very hard in our district health authorities around the province.

We have numerous new collaborative health care teams that are doing an amazing job in the area of chronic disease management. We will continue to invest in the primary health care area to better manage chronic diseases, including diabetes.

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I guess we need to remind Nova Scotians that in 2010 this government attempted to limit blood-testing strips to two strips per week in order to save money. Unfortunately, they were forced to reverse this short-sighted decision. This is a province where Type 1 diabetics earning the lowest incomes pay some of the highest out-of-pocket costs to manage their diabetes in the country. These are facts this government cannot ignore. When can Nova Scotians expect an announcement around some form of funding for insulin pumps?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I think I need to correct the erroneous statement by the member with respect to attempts to limit blood-testing strips. People who have diabetes do need to test on a regular basis. However, it's also true - and there is very good evidence - that the drug companies have promoted testing for people who do not need to be tested. The important thing is that we need to be using our health care dollars where the evidence is to support outcomes that will make a difference, not using our health care dollars for things that aren't going to improve people's health.

That's precisely why we're waiting to see the evaluation from New Brunswick to establish whether or not insulin pumps result in better management of diabetes for the individuals who have the pumps and for the health care system. We're not simply relying on the manufacturers' information - people who have a vested interest in having these insulin pumps adopted.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

JUSTICE - NUNN COMMN.: RECOMMENDATIONS - IMPLEMENT

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice. The tragic death of young mother and teacher Theresa McAvoy in October 2004 focused attention on protecting the public and helping steer kids away from serious trouble. Justice Merlin Nunn's report was a thought-provoking wakeup call, and the previous government publicly accepted all 34 recommendations.

Two and a half years later, this government has been caught by the Auditor General turning its back on key recommendations designed to protect the public and turn kids around before it's too late. Will this government commit to implementing all of the Nunn Commission's recommendations and to getting the job done now to prevent further tragedies from happening?

HON. ROSS LANDRY: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for that question. Absolutely, this government, the Department of Justice itself, has spent a considerable

amount of time reviewing and examining that report, and I'm very proud to say before this House that a majority of those matters have been taken and completed. But all things can't be done immediately. It takes a step process. We're committed to working through that. As this report pointed out, the majority of what was required in that commitment has been met.

MR. MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, in response to the Nunn Commission, the NDP Leader and now Premier said in a 2007 opinion piece in the weekly news that it is important for judges to have good options in front of them. He was aiming those thoughtful comments at options post-sentencing, but the same principles apply for issues of pre-trial detention or release. With a case-processing target of 98 days, youth in serious trouble typically go months on some form of release. The inability to have strong supervision leaves a huge gap.

Good options - if I may use the now-Premier's words - are needed. The gap identified by a monumental public report in this province must be addressed. Does the minister agree with the Premier that judges need good options to deal with youth who are in serious trouble?

MR. LANDRY: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for that question. I've had the pleasure to meet with my colleagues from across the country and also with the federal minister responsible, and there are a number of changes that are happening within the federal government that are going to make it easier for us to fulfill that very mandate. We're committed to that and we will continue with that, so we will see how that process rolls out.

I don't know if he's familiar with the work that's being done, but if he isn't, he can take some time, stop into my office, and we'll certainly see that he is briefed.

MR. MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, for two and a half years the minister has failed to complete the important task of implementing all 34 recommendations. Now the Auditor General outlined, today, the serious gap that exists between the options that Youth Court judges have between detaining a youth before trial and releasing them with limited supervision, a gap that exists in this province and through which many youth fall because the government backed off on implementing a bail supervision program. That gap endangers the public and causes youth who are poor and have fewer supervision options to be detained more often than others.

Will the minister commit to going back to Cabinet and advocating that the government protect the public and work with troubled youth by reinstating the Youth Bail Supervision Program?

MR. LANDRY: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for that question. Once again I'd like to point out that this government is committed to the safety of all Nova Scotians and to the dealing with our young offenders. That's why one of the projects that we have

committed to was investing more into crime prevention. I think that's an important area that is there.

Also on the issue of incarceration, or methods of dealing with that, we are consulting with a number of stakeholders in regard to that issue. We are also consulting with our federal and other provincial partners as to best practices that are going there and how to look at a unified approach to that issue.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

HEALTH & WELLNESS - VACCINATION PROGS.: REVIEW - DETAILS

MR. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, early in September the Canadian Paediatric Society issued a position statement recommending the second dose of chicken pox vaccine. At that time the department responded to the statement by stating all publicly-funded vaccination programs are being reviewed for the next fiscal year, and I'll table that article.

Given recent-day revelations about internal department reviews being conducted with the goal of reducing winter road maintenance budgets, for example, my question to the Minister of Health and Wellness, could the minister confirm whether her department's internal review is being conducted with an eye to reducing vaccination budgets?

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, when we conduct reviews of this nature around vaccination after there are new studies that come out, we rely very heavily on the health aspects, the impact on people's health, especially on children and vulnerable people. That will be the information that will be given priority and attention as we do the evaluation.

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, coincidentally in early September the Progressive Conservative Government in New Brunswick proposed the elimination of free flu vaccines for those individuals with chronic diseases between the ages of 18 and 64. What became clear in subsequent days was that external organizations such as the Medical Society of New Brunswick, the Canadian Diabetes Association, were not in favour of these changes. The Government of New Brunswick also committed itself to seeking public input into this particular change, amongst others.

My question to the minister, who has, or will, this minister be consulting with externally when it comes to the review and potential changes to publicly-funded vaccinations?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, as you know, unlike New Brunswick, our government decided we would provide flu vaccine for free for anybody in Nova Scotia. We encourage people in Nova Scotia to get the flu vaccine.

With respect to the chicken pox vaccine and the two-dose recommendation, we are in the process of doing an evaluation with respect to that. We know there are a number of other provinces that are now looking at implementing the two-dose requirements and we will have a decision in due course, Mr. Speaker.

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, it does sound like very little consultation, in my view. If it wasn't for the Canadian Paediatric Society's position statement that promoted media to ask questions, Nova Scotians would not have known about the review of publicly-funded vaccination programs offered by the department. My question to the minister is what other programs are being reviewed within the minister's department?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: We are in the process of doing the work that's required for next year's budget planning. But Mr. Speaker, the Public Health Division of the Department of Health and Wellness, overseen by Dr. Bob Strang, who I know all members of this House consider to be a very capable leader in that position, are in constant conversation with their counterparts across the country. They take into account the latest scientific information, which has been brought to the attention of public health officials through the Canadian Paediatric Society. As I said, we are in the stages of evaluating and planning for the upcoming immunization season as part of our budget cycle.

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

COM. SERV.: PROV. HOME REPAIR PROGS. - INCOME LIMITS

MS. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, when many homeowners turn to provincial home repair programs they quickly discover that they cannot access the programs because their household income is too high. In some cases a household income of just over \$28,000 means they make too much to qualify. To put this into perspective, if two parents from Kentville each worked full-time, minimum wage jobs, they earn too much to qualify. Too many Nova Scotians are being left out of these programs. Will the minister commit to increasing the income limits so more Nova Scotians get access to emergency repair programs?

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: The Department of Community Services certainly understands the significance of that particular program and how it does help individuals throughout Nova Scotia. But there's more to that program, if the individuals sit down and talk to our caseworkers, there is often the opportunity there, it depends on how we're looking at their income. That's what I always encourage individuals to do is not just look at the application but to make an appointment so that they can have the opportunity to sit and discuss with the caseworker because often when we look at those income levels there is a variety of other items in there that can be taken into account in terms of what their eligibility is. What it is, is to encourage people to have that discussion.

MS. REGAN: Under this government families have been slammed by more user fees, increased power rates, a 25 cent hike in gas and a 2 per cent hike in the HST. The essentials are eating up more of the family budget. There just simply isn't money left at the end of the month to save for home maintenance and repairs. Mr. Speaker, if this government isn't going to stand up to Nova Scotia Power to decrease rates, if this government isn't going to remove the tax on gas, and if it isn't going to repeal the HST increase, can this minister at least ensure that programs designed to help are accessible to all who actually need it?

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: I'd like to thank the honourable member for the question because it gives me the opportunity to say that this government has done more than those other two Parties ever dreamed of doing over their terms in government. In the case of putting in, we've invested over \$100 million within two and a half years to help individuals in a wide range of programs, from housing programs, investments in that area, of public housing, accessibility, Poverty Reduction Credit, Affordable Living Tax Credit. I can go on. (Interruption)

I know it gets them upset because they are hearing all that we're doing and we have helped a lot of Nova Scotians and Mr. Speaker, we will continue to help. I find it amazing that they can often stand there - as we often said, it's during a very difficult time in this economy that we're dealing with. There are many things that we don't have control over but we do have control over helping individuals and we have. I've heard the other members saying it's federal money. Over \$100 million was not federal money. (Interruptions) See, they don't like it when you have a good answer. (Applause)

MS. REGAN: Mr. Speaker, when the Nova Scotia Child Benefit was introduced in 1998 - under a Liberal Government, I might add - it was meant to support children and lift children out of poverty . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. Order, please. Your microphone is off when I say order. Thank you.

I would remind the honourable members when somebody has the floor to please have some respect and decorum in the Chamber on all sides of the House.

The honourable member for Bedford-Birch Cove has the floor.

MS. REGAN: Mr. Speaker, when the Nova Scotia Child Benefit was introduced in 1998, under a Liberal Government, it was meant to support children and lift children out of poverty. Will this minister commit to letting the Child Benefit do what it was designed to do - to help children - instead of counting it as family income, thus keeping people out of emergency housing repair programs?

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, I have one answer to that. The Child Tax Benefit, the Liberals clawed it back. We increased it by 22 per cent per month, I may add. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

HEALTH & WELLNESS: DART. GEN. HOSP. - PRIORITIZE

MR. ANDREW YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. Two years ago, in fact, I asked the Minister of Health and Wellness to provide some indication as to the future plans for the Dartmouth General Hospital. She indicated she would get right back to us, and here we are two years later.

Today the residents of Dartmouth and surrounding areas are still waiting for that response promised two years ago. The hospital functions at 92 per cent occupancy all of the time, which is really good if you're a hotel, but not so good if you are a hospital. On Tuesday there were three patients in the ER waiting for a hospital bed. Today that number has grown to four, and as the minister is aware from previous Question Periods, I can go through pretty much every day of the week and give you the number of people who are waiting because it is overcrowded.

Unfortunately, it's business as normal, so my question to the minister is, after two years, would the minister please finally tell residents when the Dartmouth General Hospital will become a priority?

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, the Dartmouth General Hospital is a very important health care facility here in the Capital District Health Authority. I think as many members know - certainly the honourable member who raised the question and members who represent constituencies on the Dartmouth side of the harbour - when that hospital was constructed as a very important community hospital there was an entire floor of that facility left undeveloped. The demands on that hospital continue to grow as the population in the outlying areas around the Dartmouth General continue to see expanded growth.

Indeed, we are very aware of the pressures on that facility. I toured that facility. I've met with the staff there in the facility, and I know that they do phenomenal work, often under great pressure. We will be looking forward to the work that we can do with the Dartmouth General and the Capital District Health Authority to meet that community's needs in the future.

MR. YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the minister's answer. It's basically the same thing she said two years ago when she promised to get back to us and let us know what the plan would be. It's the same answer again two years later, and I think it's about time we had an answer.

It's my understanding - the minister is right, there's a vacant floor which could be used for a whole bunch of things, from handling patients waiting for hospital beds in the emergency room, or used if OR capacity has increased. And as it happens, there's an empty OR there as well at the moment which requires a very small investment in infrastructure and HR which would relieve strain on the entire system. Yet unfortunately, the hospital can't get an answer from the department - and this is going on two years now.

Mr. Speaker, the solutions are there and the only thing that's willing is the will for the minister to say to the community this is what our plan is for the hospital. In fact, those plans from the hospital to her department have been there for two years waiting for a response, so could the minister please give the residents of Dartmouth and all the communities that hospital serves, an idea as to when they can expect an answer from her on what the future of that hospital will look like?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, as members will know, we made a substantial investment in the rapid assessment unit at the Queen Elizabeth hospital, to increase the capacity of that particular emergency department to flow people through quickly, and literally thousands of patients have been able to avoid going through the emergency department there and get quicker access. We've recently announced the expansion of the ER hours at the Cobequid Community Health Centre and, in fact, adding greater capacity for the medical/surgical equipment.

Mr. Speaker, in times of great financial challenge we are in a very steady, straightforward way, step by step, improving the services that Nova Scotians can expect in their health care facilities around the region, including here in the Capital District Health Authority. I look forward to having an opportunity to see the Dartmouth General Hospital reach its potential and meet the community needs in the not too distant future. (Applause)

MR. YOUNGER: They'll be happy to know that when sitting in the emergency of Dartmouth . . .

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

MR. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Today, in Question Period, the Premier provided tabled information in the House and misrepresented what that information meant. He said that tourism went up from 2008 to 2009, which is true, however he told the House that there was not a ferry in the tourism season of 2009. I have the article right here which shows that the ferry was not cut by this government until December 2009, after the tourism season. But I will thank the Premier for showing that when there was a ferry in the Yarmouth Harbour, tourism went up, not down.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Premier.

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, had I been allowed to complete the filing of the documents that I had - I will also file this one that shows that road traffic from New England into Nova Scotia went up during that same period, which means that ferry traffic went down, leading to this very unfortunate graph which I will also table showing the continued plummeting of ridership on the ferry.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. It is not a point of order, it is a difference between two members on statistics. I thank the honourable members.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS' BUSINESS

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

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

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING

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

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 69.

Bill No. 69 – Transparency in Power Rates Act.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants West.

MR. CHUCK PORTER: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased today to be able to rise for a few minutes to talk about a bill that's very important to Nova Scotians, and certainly to all of us putting this forward - Bill No. 69, Transparency in Power Rates Act.

Mr. Speaker, it's important that Nova Scotians understand, with all that's going on today, all that is being said with regards to energy, the increased costs - we hear talk about green energy, which we support. I know it has been said otherwise but we started those initiatives some years ago and I guess that's what brings us to this piece today.

This has been tampered with, I guess is the right word, from what we started years ago. The government today wants to speed this policy up. Nobody knows the cost of this policy, although there have been numbers quoted as to what it might be, anywhere between \$5 million and \$16 million. I don't know how they came up with those numbers as nothing has been clearly put forward by the government as to what the high cost of the electricity plan that they want to put forward and debate.

This bill would compel Nova Scotia Power as well, Mr. Speaker, to indicate, and we think this is very important for transparency in itself - it would compel Nova Scotia Power to indicate what portion of any rate increase is caused by government policies. Now that's something I'm sure they would not want to have put forward on the bill. They probably couldn't get it put on the bill. The reason they couldn't is because they don't know the costs. We keep hearing about all of these wonderful initiatives but I can tell you that the reality of power rates and the increase in power rates is hurting families in this province.

I want to give you an example of a lady I know, she lives by herself in a home that she owns. Earlier this year she came to me with a very high power bill, it's been able to climb. She's a minimum-wage worker, works 40 hours a week. You can do the math and figure out that's not a lot of money.

There's a lot of people like that in this province, they need to know what they're paying, they can't keep paying more and more and more. This lady comes to me with a bill that's already out of hand and we have a pretty good relationship with Nova Scotia Power when it comes to trying to assist constituents with managing and trying to work out some kind of plan so that they are not cut off.

This bill was somewhere in the vicinity of a couple of thousand dollars, as you can well imagine, given that she heats with electricity as well. Through the winter months when it is cold, and it was last winter as it is most winters in this fine province, the bills get out of hand, they get too high. On minimum wage, you have to make decisions, are you going to eat or are you going to pay the power bill?

We tried to work something out for her, Mr. Speaker. Unfortunately in this particular case, we were unable to do that and her power was cut off. It's a tough day when your power is cut off for anyone, especially for someone who is working every day, trying to get along, trying to earn a living, trying to do the right thing - a very tough thing to go through for this lady.

Then there are further complications with that. It is not just as simple as having your power cut off because you can't pay the bill. Here's a lady who has a basement that has a sump pump in it and when it rains, as we know it rains here, too, and it is has rained a lot in the last year, weather patterns are so unclear these days, and all of a sudden she has the worry of now her home is going to flood - no power, no pump, and we're flooding. It just keeps getting worse, the stresses keep building.

What are we going to do about that? Well we haven't been doing anything except talking about raising power rates. It's the wrong way to go. All we've seen so far in the NDP's planned increases - here we go - 2 per cent more that they've put on and the "bite the bullet" plan that we keep referring to. The fact is that the Government of Nova Scotia and Nova Scotia Power, I should say - again, they don't know what the clear cost of this

project is going to be. They've got grandiose ideas, let's hurry and speed up the green energy plan. They've got all their eggs in one basket here, with this big plan in Newfoundland. Where is the signed agreement? That's not even in place yet, it may not even happen - \$20 billion we're hearing for 20 per cent. Where is that money coming from?

Well I can tell you where it is coming from because we were told, it's coming from the ratepayer and the taxpayer. We had a bit of a disagreement, I guess, or an agreement to disagree, in a committee meeting back some time ago, a few weeks ago, that the taxpayer and the ratepayer are not the same person. They are very much the same person, Mr. Speaker, we need to realize that. So we're going to invest somehow \$20 billion it's going to cost between who knows what - Nova Scotia Power we're going to assume. Where is that money coming from, though? That is coming out of the pockets of Nova Scotians, that's where that is coming from - ratepayers and taxpayers, if, in fact, it ever happens.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we want it, our Party worked with all the Parties and in a consensus with Nova Scotians to create a reasonable, balanced, green energy plan that would help diversity our renewable energy portfolio and reduce our emission targets that accompany economic goals. We need to get back to a balanced green energy approach, not one that is too quick when we don't know the cost - it's no good to get green too quick if you can't afford to get there; we need to have a better plan. We don't have any plan right now. This government is keen on patting itself on the back for having the most aggressive renewable targets in North America, no matter what the cost is to Nova Scotians.

It's tough economic times all around - all over the world, and certainly here in the Province of Nova Scotia. All we're doing is putting more stress on families who are already struggling - and these families aren't just people you might think are on the lower end of income, they are not; these are everyday working families, two people working who have a mortgage, a car, et cetera, families to feed. What are they doing? Where is the money coming from? They're struggling right now to put food on the table and you want to increase power bills and you can't even tell them by how much. Mr. Speaker, that's not acceptable.

At the URB hearing, under direct questioning, Nova Scotia Power provided numbers that ranged, as I said earlier, from \$5 million to more than \$16 million. Unacceptable, Mr. Speaker, we cannot afford these increases and here we are again and we're looking at - they just announced this week another 3-plus per cent for the coming year. Where is that money coming from? We only have so much money in our pockets - we keep seeing taxes go up, we see power rates go up, we see gas unfortunately still going up with the tax on tax that has not been removed. The paycheques aren't going up, there's less money in our pockets. Where are they going to get the money to pay the power bills?

I know all the members in this House, or a good lot of the members in this House I'm sure, deal with their constituents on a similar basis. People are struggling all over and, as I said, it's not just low-incomers who are having these problems. In all fairness this is all

income levels - unless you're well over maybe \$100,000. I can't speak to the exact amount, but I do know that there are everyday working people who have pretty good jobs who are struggling to get by and put food on the table.

In August we put together a Let's Talk Rates survey and we went out and we asked people - this just isn't me standing here or our Party standing here - we went out to Nova Scotians and we got their input and their thoughts, 850-plus people took part in that. We've had several phone calls, several e-mails besides, they want fairness and they want transparency - and that's what they deserve, fairness and transparency.

There is a way, and I can tell you if our law was ever to be passed it would require the cost of government policies to be shown on the power bills. We think that's a start; we think that that is fair. People should know what they're paying today all around, inclusive, they should know what they're being asked to pay tomorrow and into the future as we move on to what are green energy, more renewables, et cetera, which this Party believes in - we initiated that, we started that. We believe in the green energy system, we've never said any different, but at a pace that we can afford - it has to be something sustainable. If we can't sustain that pace, we don't have anything else, and we won't have to worry about the environment if we have no economy.

We can't afford to lose any more jobs. High power rates are going to cause job losses - the small business sector won't be able to afford to keep staff on, they're going to have to let staff go. It's going to be that decision time again - am I going to lose money or am I going to let a staff member go? Unfortunately it's going to be the staff member who goes - more lost jobs. This province cannot afford to lose one more job, let alone 5, 10 or 100 more jobs. We cannot afford to lose any more.

Mr. Speaker, I know I only have so much time today, and with those few words I thank you for the opportunity today and I'll take my seat.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Energy.

HON. CHARLIE PARKER: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise here today to be able to speak on Bill No. 69, an Act to Amend Chapter 380 of the Revised Statutes of 1989, the Public Utilities Act, Respecting Transparency in Power Rates. Certainly we've had quite a bit of discussion over the last number of days in our House around power rates, so it's good to have an opportunity again.

Certainly passage of this bill would mean that any rate increase provided to Nova Scotia Power be brought right here before this Legislature, to be decided by a vote here of the House. The Opposition is suggesting that this would bring more transparency to the rate-setting process. The process, I think right now couldn't be more transparent than what we have. Decisions are made based on evidence presented by an independent body of the URB and the arguments made by stakeholders through a very public hearing process that

considers all the evidence, and if they don't have enough evidence they'll ask an expert or specialist in the field to go out and get more information for them.

I understand there have been no really significant stakeholder complaints about the process since it was established back in 1992 when the Progressive Conservative Government of the day privatized Nova Scotia Power under the - I believe it was under Donald Cameron's premiership at that time.

Mr. Speaker, the process we have in place now is rigorous. It's designed entirely around the overriding focus of keeping costs to the consumer, to the ratepayer, down and I certainly believe that the system is working. The electricity pricing isn't rising in this province because we're not voting here in the House on the issue. If that were the reason, certainly I'm sure long before now this government or previous governments would have brought a bill forward to have a vote in the House, but obviously that hasn't happened so it's not the solution here to reducing electricity rates.

Electricity rates are primarily rising because of the high cost of fossil fuels and the biggest part of that is coal, our reliance on imported coal at this point in time. Long ago the Progressive Conservatives decided to rely on fossil fuels and then we've had rate increases of something like 40 per cent over the last 10 years. The price of coal has jumped 75 per cent in the last six years or so.

Mr. Speaker, in response to the bill that's before us here today, I think it's quite simple, why would we waste our time fixing something that really is not broken? That takes our time and our energy away from fixing the real problem on the electricity rate burden and that's increasing the cost of fuel.

We have an established process, Mr. Speaker, and it's enshrined in legislation, which requires Nova Scotia Power to justify any rate increases on any capital cost projects that they might have on an amount over \$250,000, and that has to come before the Utility and Review Board for consideration. It's an open process, it's transparent and I believe it works.

This process requires full public hearings. I know members opposite have had the opportunity to intervene at those public hearings and also there is a consumer advocate, there's a small business advocate; government, various stakeholders have the opportunity to come forward and present their point of view and say whether they think the rate is justified or not. It is a full public process and I commend anybody that has appeared before the URB in the past.

There is also a mechanism there, Mr. Speaker, for requesting more information. You can put a written request in and ask Nova Scotia Power, through the URB. It's a transparency process, I don't believe members opposite have done that through a written request. I stand to be corrected but I believe that's true. I know they presented and asked for

information but not on the written request. If you haven't, I certainly would encourage you to do so and that information is certainly there for the asking.

Mr. Speaker, Nova Scotia Power is a cost-of-service, regulated utility that operates under the Public Utilities Act and the regulations. It's regulated by the Utility and Review Board as defined by the Utility and Review Board Act and the regulations. It's actually obligated by law, and that law was passed right here in this House of Assembly, to serve all Nova Scotian loads at the lowest possible cost, while meeting its system reliability and meeting its environmental regulations. The URB ensures that will happen.

As I just stated, the process works, the 2012 settlement agreement reached during the public hearing process of the Utility and Review Board removed the ratepayer portion of the executive bonuses, something that has been a concern to a number of Nova Scotians. So that's gone; that's eliminated by the URB. It reduces the allowable rate of return that was taken down this year through the process, through the open and transparent process that is working, so that rate is lower. Also, this year they cut by \$27 million Nova Scotia increased revenue applications. So again, I believe the process is working.

This was all done by agreement without ever coming to this House. It was done through a public process of a hearing rate application that the public had a chance to participate in and it wasn't necessary to come here. So why would we want to replace a well-established, well-proven, transparent process that leaves decisions here in this House, that would leave decisions here with the politicians? I think we have an open, fair, and transparent system right now, and surely the Opposition is not suggesting that we put it in the hands of politicians, where there would be a political influence. That's not what we need.

I know none of us here in this House are experts in these complicated financial matters, and neither are we any whizzes in electrical generation. I don't believe any of us here are electrical engineers, so I think we need to leave it with the expertise that's there available to the URB.

The province already has a rigorous public process in place that requires Nova Scotia Power to prove in detail that any proposed rate changes are required. The real debate in this House and across the province is about rising electricity rates. Escalating electricity costs certainly are a burden to all of us, whether it's a small business or a large industrial or a homeowner or those on a fixed income. It's certainly a challenge to each and every one of us.

The real fact is that coal prices have increased by 75 per cent over the last six years, and that's really what's driving our electricity costs. I believe that previous governments had the opportunity to do something about that, to alleviate the problem, but now we're paying the piper. The problem has come home to roost. It would have been good if

previous governments had done something about it, but this government does have a plan and we're working to change that.

We'll not be deflected from the real issue here by the legislation that's been brought forward that I really think is a waste of our time. It's trying to fix something that's not broken. The decision-making power of the Utility and Review Board is exactly where we should be putting our time.

Very recently, the Province of New Brunswick decided to undertake a review of their electricity model. They looked around at other jurisdictions and they said, Nova Scotia has a model that works; they have a strategy in place that's acceptable. They liked what they saw here in Nova Scotia. Obviously it's not just this government but it's other jurisdictions that feel we're on the right track.

The real issue that needs to be fixed in Nova Scotia is our reliance on coal. That is what's going to make a difference with our electricity rates into the future. I think we are the only Party that has a plan to fix that. Passing meaningless amendments to legislation in the House is not going to decrease our reliance on coal and it's not going to bring down the price of electricity. Increasing the generation of renewable energy and having a balanced and diverse energy mix is the best way to achieve affordable, stable electricity rates over time.

The Progressive Conservatives have brought this particular bill in here today, Bill No. 69, but I don't think it's going to solve the problem. In fact, I know the previous government, when they were there, they had a chance to do something about electricity rates, and what did they do? They raised the HST on home energy, and I know the Liberal Party also supported that.

The NDP has removed that HST from high energy prices, and that's saving ratepayers about 8 per cent on their power bills. I would hope that any future government would not bring that back, but I'm a bit worried that that certainly could happen.

I encourage the members opposite and those watching here this afternoon to take another look at our plan.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. Your allotted time has expired.

The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

MR. ANDREW YOUNGER: The minister doesn't need to worry. He'll get another 10 minutes shortly. Let me first start by correcting the fact - I don't know exactly where the minister gets his information, because last week he stood up and suggested that we had not appeared before the Utility and Review Board as interveners. We not only had, but had also asked questions in the hearing.

This week he suggested that we had not submitted a written information request, which, of course, we did. In fact, the Liberal caucus submitted more actual questions on the written question portion than almost any of the other interveners, with the exception of the board-hired consultants. It begs one to question the credibility of any of the information the minister says when he can't get those very basic facts correct.

Bill No. 69 that the Progressive Conservative caucus has introduced is an intriguing bill to me. It's intriguing because just a few weeks ago, while here they introduce a bill that would suggest having a public committee review the costs - I think this is the one that reviews the cost of, oh, no, sorry, this is the one that requires that any rate increase that is granted as the result of a provincial policy or action would require it to be spelled out in terms of the costs. That makes sense. That actually makes a lot of sense. However, the Progressive Conservatives couldn't be bothered to do that when they were in government with the legislation that they introduced and many of the members who were part of that caucus are still sitting in these front benches now talking about how great this bill is when they couldn't be bothered to do it just two years ago, a little over two years ago I guess.

Madam Speaker, that is troubling, but that doesn't take away from it. It doesn't take away from the need. The other thing is that they have stood up a number of times and complained it's the NDP's changes to EGSPA and the expansion of those environmental goals that are resulting in the increases right now. I don't dispute the fact they're going to result in increases later on but, in fact, the increases - and Nova Scotia Power said this at the board - the increases they're dealing with now are from the issues that the Tories put in the Act in 2007 and, listen, we all supported that Act, but it was the Tory Government that brought in the bill and the changes. The changes that are being dealt with and costed now before the board have not been (Interruptions) I'll just stand and wait because I get another 10 minutes later.

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please.

MR. YOUNGER: Madam Speaker, it's interesting that, you know, it's important if we're going to have a discussion about this, to have the correct facts. The Tories brought in EGSPA in 2007 which - listen, as I understand it, I wasn't here at the time but I believe all Parties supported that bill at the time. The issues on the renewable energy side that are being dealt with before the board now are costs that were in that Act in the early years, which have not actually been changed, much as I would like to blame the NDP for that, they're actually the costs that the Tory Government had put in for those early years - I can't believe I'm going to say this but the member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island is correct - that they proposed. I can't believe I just said that out loud.

So the problem with that is that the idea in this bill makes a lot of sense but some of the statements that have been made by the Third Party around this are simply pure rhetoric because we're dealing with the costs that they introduced and we're dealing with a bill, or

the origin of a bill, EGSPA, which that actual government, and at the time Minister Parent, didn't actually outline the costs at the time. I'm glad that they've had this change of heart and think that we should do this now. I actually think that it makes a lot of sense to do it but (Interruption) Oh, I'm sorry for that.

The fact is that any legislation, whether it's on energy, or it's in health, or education, it would make sense to do that for any provincial legislation or changes in regulation, to outline what the costs are going to be to future taxpayers, or ratepayers or, you know, whatever the case may be. That is just good government policy. That's responsible government policy to say, hey, we're introducing these new regulations or this bill and we believe that Nova Scotians deserve to know what the costs of that, or what we project the costs of that will be, understanding that that could change.

You know, I'm disappointed that the minister would stand up and it seems any time anybody introduces a resolution or a bill around the idea of energy rates or on changes to energy issues, it's well, that's not going to work, the sky is going to fall if you do that. It belittles the idea that some of these ideas may actually have merit and some of them may reduce rates. This bill obviously wouldn't reduce rates. I don't think the Progressive Conservatives have suggested this bill would reduce rates. I think this is really about transparency, which is a good idea. I think that there have been things - and for the minister to stand up and say this bill won't reduce rates, well, I don't think they ever said this particular bill would reduce rates.

However, there have been things introduced in this House that are working in other provinces. The Minister of Finance stood up in this House on Thursday and he talked about his auto insurance bill, and he said, we're copying this section from Alberta and this section from New Brunswick, and I think there was a section from Manitoba as well - and they're saying, because this works well in that province. Well, in the last session I introduced a bill that would allow renewable energy suppliers to sell directly to consumers and actually introduce competition on the renewable front. It is something that had been refused by the previous Progressive Conservative Government, and the minister stood up and suggested that the energy market in Nova Scotia would fall apart if we did that.

It has been the law in New Brunswick for years. In fact, the building right across the street that the Department of Energy is in buys their energy through New Brunswick now, as a result of them allowing renewable-to-retail sales. The New Brunswick energy market has not fallen apart. In fact, it has grown and prospered, and they have access to capital, which then addresses some of the cost-pressure issues on renewable energy.

I think there's no doubt - I don't think you would find too many people who would disagree that the price of coal and other fossil fuels is going to increase over time. They will; we know that. You can look at it. But coal is going to be part of our mix for a long time. In the committee hearing that the member for Cape Breton West and the member for Hants West and I were recently at, Emera even said - I think it was 35 per cent, when they

looked out for the foreseeable future, is going to represent coal. We're still going to have to address that issue.

The minister should not be saying that there is no role for the Legislature in talking about power issues. His Party certainly didn't say that in Opposition. They certainly didn't stand up and defend the Utility and Review Board when they were in Opposition. They stood here and they demanded that government after government after government of any stripe deal with those power rate issues. For the minister to now turn around and just dismiss any idea by either of the Opposition Parties as just a waste of time, and the URB is working perfectly - well, we know it isn't. It's not working for Nova Scotians. I think if you go and ask Nova Scotians about that they will tell you it is not working for them.

In closing on this particular bill - because I'll be back a little bit later to talk about Bill No. 92 - Bill No. 69, which in the simplest terms deals with requiring the government to actually put a price tag to any policy or regulation, does make a lot of sense. It's something we should not be only applying to energy regulations, but to any bill. It should be something that governments simply do as a matter of course to let taxpayers know what the cost - or savings, if there are savings - of any particular legislation will be. It's the responsible thing to do, and I think from that perspective it does make sense.

I only wish the Tories would have done it when they were in government. We probably would be a lot further ahead by now. Thank you very much.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Madam Speaker, I would think the government would welcome this legislation. The cost of energy is the most important issue facing our province today, whether your household depends on it or whether your job depends on it.

If the government, or if any government, cares about ensuring that we are getting the best value for our electricity dollar, they would welcome the ability to better understand the costs that determine the price we all pay for power rates. It would actually take the heat - pardon the pun - off the government. Nova Scotians would have a clear understanding of why they're paying what they are paying. People would understand government's impact on power rates, and if there was no issue with that, then there would be no issue and nothing for this government to feel defensive about.

Why not support this piece of legislation? If the government is responsible for causing power rates to increase, the people of our province will have a chance to hear that power rate increase debated right here in this Legislature.

Transparency - the NDP never had a problem with transparency. Now, in government, they hide the impact of their energy policy decisions. Now they often talk

about rhetoric but I am hearing it once again here tonight, Madam Speaker, on the topic of energy.

So let's shine the light on the cost inputs that generate electricity in this province. Coal, for instance, \$50 per megawatt hour, that's the cost to generate a megawatt hour of electricity through coal. Wind, as we know, sometimes replaces coal on the grid, when wind is blowing. This, of course, is because the province has legislation requiring that we move towards renewables. Of course that was put in place by the previous Progressive Conservative Government.

Now the thing with wind is that when it replaces coal to generate electricity on the grid, it does so at a cost of \$150 per megawatt hour. There is simple math, going from \$50 per megawatt hour to \$150 per megawatt hour. So if you, or if any Nova Scotian out there, went to a gas station and had the option of purchasing a \$50 tank of gas or a \$150 tank of gas, which one would Nova Scotians choose? I don't think there would be much debate.

Those are pure facts, Madam Speaker, and I'm hoping that the government members are accepting those facts because they are facts. If my numbers are wrong then please table some numbers that dispute them.

We support green energy but we accept that improvements need to be made in green energy technology. Renewable energy must also make economic sense. Yes, as the Minister of Energy has told us tonight, the price of fossil fuels has risen but they also have a natural, market-price corrective mechanism. Does anybody remember a couple of years ago when we were talking about \$200 oil? Everybody was saying the price of oil was going to \$200. What happened? It dropped down to about \$60 a barrel.

Now it has fluctuated, now it's up close to \$100 again, but yes, because the price of the commodity increases, the economy slows down, they have to drop the price of oil. The same is true for any other fossil fuel. That point should be recognized.

The impact on Nova Scotia households, Madam Speaker, is obvious because people pay their power bill and they see the price going up, but how is this affecting jobs? The world does not want to buy products and services produced in an economy that is expensive. That is pure and simple. Our own people here in Nova Scotia often choose products and services at a cheaper price.

That may not always be a good thing, Madam Speaker, but you know that is the reality. My grandparents used to have a small general store in Little Judique that was quite successful. They used to extend credit to people. They don't exist anymore - since a long time. Now people are probably buying the same goods, they are probably made in China and they are probably buying them through Walmart. That's the reality.

Now the minister has said, and in this case jobs in this province are still dependent, look at paper making. Do we want people to be making paper in the province? If we do, unless we want to export those jobs to China, then we have to accept that energy costs contribute to whether or not we can keep those jobs in this province.

The minister said that this bill is about politics but I don't believe that it is. I'm trying to speak sincerely this evening about what I believe with respect to what is causing the power rates to increase. Now the minister said it is caused by the price of coal. Well, yes, the price of coal has risen. He has also said that we should have done something years ago. Well right now coal is one-third - three times less expensive than wind energy, right now, today, and we know, as he said, that it increased 75 per cent in recent times.

Well, we also know that coal used to be a lot cheaper. So years ago when this government says that we should have switched sooner than we have now, they're missing the point that coal was even cheaper back then. Should we have exported those paper-making jobs years ago to places like China? I'm glad that we didn't, Madam Speaker.

This legislation that we're talking about tonight would help to bring clarity to what government can do to save jobs like those in the energy-intensive industries like paper-making, in this province. Yes, the demand for paper has declined but we're all still using it, the world still needs paper, and there's no reason why paper mills in Nova Scotia can't be the last man standing in this industry.

I look at NewPage in my own area, there are 4,000 jobs attached to that operation in and out of the mill. I spoke to a young teacher in the area and she told me that 50 per cent of the children in the school have parents who are employed in that industry. That industry will die if we do not do something about power rates - plain and simple.

We see that not only does it affect people who are working right now, but people who are retired. If that mill shuts down we are very likely looking at pension reductions in the neighbourhood of 30 per cent - that's very significant and I don't think the government is going to step in to top those pension plans up.

For mills to survive, they need - and this government needs to realize that power rates have to be competitive. At the very least this government needs to recognize that if our power rates are not competitive, especially in industries like papermaking, that puts downward pressure on wages. We hear of another mill in the province right now that's trying to find ways to stay alive - and what are they doing? They're asking for job cuts and wage concessions. So this bill would compel Nova Scotia Power to indicate what portion of any rate increase is caused by government policies.

Years ago our Party worked with all Parties to create a balanced and reasonable green energy plan that would help diversify our renewable energy portfolio and reduce our

emission targets that accompanied economic goals, and we need to get back to a balanced green energy approach. This government is keen on patting itself on the back for having the most aggressive renewable targets in North America no matter what the cost to Nova Scotia families - and I've just outlined what those costs are.

We believe that both the government and the power company must be clear about how much they are asking Nova Scotians to pay. That's a fair ask, and it's an ask I think most Nova Scotians are making. And since August almost 850 Nova Scotians took part in a Let's Talk Rates survey and they e-mailed us their thoughts. They told us they want fairness and they want transparency and that is what this legislation is calling for. Why not give the people what they want? Why not give the people of Nova Scotia more affordable lifestyles and more affordable energy rates?

If our new law is passed, it would require the cost of government policy to be shown on power bills. Nova Scotia Power's latest announcement of another 3.2 per cent increase, on top of an already expected 5 per cent increase, is a route to lost jobs and hardship for Nova Scotians. We cannot afford to lose any more jobs.

We hope that this government will do something that it doesn't normally do - and that is listen to an Opposition bill that makes sense. It offers Nova Scotians transparency about power rates, and we hope that they will support the bill so that we can shift our focus to a better balance between what Nova Scotians can afford and our visions for a greener economy. Thank you. (Applause)

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

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 92.

Bill No. 92 – Power Rate Reduction Review Act.

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

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to rise to launch debate on the Power Rate Reduction Review Act, Bill No. 92.

Mr. Speaker, without a doubt, power prices in Nova Scotia, electricity prices have become one of the leading issues, if not the leading issue facing both Nova Scotia families and single parents, seniors, and others who are on fixed incomes who are struggling to get by, who have seen the cost of too many everyday items increase over the past few years, but it's also important that we get electricity price policy right in this province because too many businesses, small and large, are now facing awful decisions about who to keep on, who to let go, as they grapple with higher and higher electricity prices.

There have been the headline grabbers like NewPage, like Bowater and others, that have pointed the finger specifically at the rising price of electricity in our province, but, Mr. Speaker, we also know, thanks to a survey by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, that this year 20 per cent of Nova Scotia's small businesses anticipate they will be laying off an employee or two somewhere during the year.

The reason that it's so important that we review where we are on power price policy in this province is for them. For those businesses, small and large, and the people that they employ. For those families struggling to pay their power bill. For that senior in their own home, who wants to stay in their own home, but is struggling to balance the household budget when the price of things like power is going up. For that young working mother who makes enough to get by today but knows that as power goes up and up, that it gets harder and harder to get by.

I understand, as many people do in the world today, that we all share one goal and that is to get to a future date where we have a greener economy, where we have sustainable, environmentally friendly sources of electricity. Every province in Canada, every state in the United States, every jurisdiction in the world, is dealing with that very issue. I want to be clear that the Progressive Conservative Party fully supports that initiative. In fact, when the PC Party was in government, it launched it with the Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act, which has become a model for other provinces and states across our continent. It is an act that set real targets, with the force of law, for greenhouse gas reductions, for renewable energy source targets, for mercury content and for any number of other important environmental indicators.

The great wisdom of that bill, which all parties in this House support, and which others across the continent are copying, is that it recognizes that very important principle - you have to integrate those environmental targets into a growing economy that creates real, sustainable jobs. No one should have to lose their job or go into debt in their household because someone else has set an environmental goal that is out of reach or unaffordable. That's why that bill remains the standard in North America for integrating environmental goals with economic goals and I do want to point out that just as there were specific goals for the environment, there were specific goals for our economy, including that we would grow the economy of Nova Scotia at the rate of the national average, or better, each year, and that all of the environmental goals were set, consistent with that goal.

Unfortunately, in the two and a half years since the NDP came in, many extreme changes have been made to those environmental targets without regard to their effect on the economy or jobs or household incomes. The bottom line is that Nova Scotians, their families, their grandparents, their mothers and fathers, are being asked to pay the price of someone else's desire to boast that they are greener than the other guy, and that is not right, Mr. Speaker, that one group says they want to be the most extreme at something and passes the bill on to everyday Nova Scotians who are the ones that have to pay the price.

Unfortunately, what we have here today, in Nova Scotia, is a horrible combination of a naive government and a for-profit monopoly that is incented to build up its infrastructure as big as they can possibly make it, to dream up big mega projects supported by the policies of this government and to build them as big as they possibly can because their profit is set as a percentage of the capital that they're able to accumulate and employ. That company, and the executives of that company who know that their bonuses are based on how big they can make that percentage, had before them in 2009, a naive government who had the common interests of putting in place extreme laws and regulations that would require the company to build up its capital as big as they could. It's Nova Scotian consumers who have to pay the price for that unhappy combination of an extremely naive, extremely naïve, extremely ideological government and an executive team at a company, that by law, is encouraged to go along for the ride financially.

Mr. Speaker, this is exactly the problem that this bill is aimed at solving. That by creating a Power Rate Reduction Review Committee, made up of the very people that the government tells them to bite the bullet and pay the price, to review all of the decisions of government, policy, cabinet directive, regulation, OIC - whatever action the government takes that is driving up their bills. They will get that list and every single one of them will come to this House of Assembly where it can be reviewed, and costed, and debated, and decided on in the full light of day. Because that fundamental principal must be respected, that those that are asked, or told, by their own government to pay the bills, deserve to have this ability to review those bills for themselves.

Mr. Speaker, I ask every MLA in this House today, to consider this bill and to move forward to get it passed and adopted because there is a sense of urgency today. One of the reasons for that sense of urgency is that we do have 1,000 jobs at risk in the Strait Area at NewPage, both at the plant itself and in the forestry industry that surrounds the plant; and 2,000 jobs at risk in Queens County, both at the plant itself at the Bowater Plant and in the forestry industry that surrounds it. That's 3,000 Nova Scotians who are already counting on the government to do what it can, not to make matters worse by driving up their electricity prices but to go one by one through the policies of government that are actually the root of the problem and reversing them to make things better, to save those jobs, to save that plant.

The second reason there's a sense of urgency, hopefully a more positive reason, is that we do have this great shipbuilding opportunity coming our way. The Irving shipyard, on the basis of merit, is going to bring to Nova Scotia - coincidentally or not - 3,000 jobs building ships for the next 30 years. It's important that the government not blow that opportunity, not screw it up, as they are on the path to do, by driving the price of electricity ever higher. As much as they have admitted, under questioning, that their policies are going to add as much as 2 per cent to our electricity bill today, it is also true that the most extreme of their targets have yet to kick in and that Nova Scotians, small and large, businesses small and large, are faced with future compound percentage increases year after year after year if the government stubbornly stays on the same path.

That's why we need this committee of those that are paying the bills, not just to save the jobs that are at risk today but to make sure that the government does not screw up this great opportunity that Nova Scotians have, that they don't blow it or we'll be looking at ourselves several years from now and wondering how on earth, when all the tough things are going on, that we have one good thing going for us. Never mind debating how we got it, and we messed it up by stubbornly sticking to an extreme agenda that is disrespectful of the people that pay the bills. That is disrespectful of the people that create jobs in our province. That is disrespectful of the need to recognize that the economy and the environment have to work in concert. That is disrespectful of the original principals of that Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act. We want to create jobs and grow the economy of our province at the national average or better and we want to get to that cleaner, greener economy that every single one of us knows we have to get to, at the right pace. Thank you Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

MR. JIM MORTON: Thank you Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to stand here this evening to speak to Bill No. 92, Power Rate Reduction Review Act. I'm pleased to speak to it because I recognize it for Nova Scotians, whether they're individual Nova Scotians, whether they're people who are looking after their families, whether they are individual Nova Scotians, whether they are people who are looking after their families, whether they are a business, do have a burden to bear and that is the cost of electric heating.

I think it's not only electricity costs that have been increasing. If we look at the last year, the cost of oil has increased by something like 20 per cent; the cost of natural gas has increased by 14 per cent. Because of those factors, perhaps, and transportation costs, the cost of firewood has increased. It is a burden for Nova Scotians and that's exactly why we've done several things to try to mitigate those costs.

We've removed the provincial part of the HST from home heating costs. We've created the Heating Assistance Rebate Program that allows low-income Nova Scotians to claim rebates of up to \$200 per year and we're using Efficiency Nova Scotia to make sure that Nova Scotians throughout our province are able to find ways to conserve energy and reduce their costs through making their homes and businesses more efficient.

Madam Speaker, I think it's somewhat ironic that the Progressive Conservative Party, the Party that sold the power utility in 1992, is now the Party that thinks we should be using another layer of administration and bureaucracy in government to manage power rates. I think the Third Party has, in this approach in Bill No. 92, is in a sense showing its failure to recognize the emerging issues that relate to the costs of energy, and certainly chief among those costs is the rising costs of fossil fuels.

That is related, Madam Speaker, those rising costs and declining supplies, to the more difficult extraction costs for fossil fuels and increased demands throughout the world.

Those costs will continue to rise. They've had an effect, as the Progressive Conservative Party should recognize through the time it was in government, they had been rising for a long time and in 2009 electricity costs increased by 9.4 per cent, in 2007 by 4.8 per cent, in 2006 by 8.6 per cent, in 2005 by 6.1 per cent, just to use some examples. The price of coal, as the Minister of Energy noted earlier, has increased by about 75 per cent in the past five years.

Of course it's not only a rising financial cost that we need to be concerned about, we also need to be concerned about the costs of using fossil fuels in our environment. I was a social worker by training and I was noticing in an article I was reading very recently, the psychiatrist mentioned - I think it was in something like 1978 - that the pressures on the world environment through growing population and shrinking resources and harms that we've been doing to our environment were actually increasing. So we've known in every different field for a very long time about the costs of continuing to burden our environment through the use of fossil fuels.

I think the previous 10 years, when the Third Party was in government, created an opportunity to do something about those problems but, in fact, it was a lost opportunity.

Bill No. 92, Madam Speaker, seems to hope that another layer of decision making will somehow remove all these imperatives of cost. It seems to be looking for another kind of quick fix to the problem of electricity and heating costs. But on this side we have a vision. We've developed a renewable electricity plan that points us in the direction of creating 40 per cent of our electricity through renewable resources by 2020. I think that's a remarkably important direction that we've enshrined in legislation.

We built on that plan not simply by talking among ourselves but by seeking public consultation and expert input. The Opposition has been talking about biting the bullet, well, we've done that and we've done that in a way that we think will include reasonable costs. Our vision includes increasing the ways that we generate electricity, through wind. I think we've been finding a number of ways to do that. We're now building Nova Scotia turbines in Trenton, which will help fuel our own market, as well as markets in other parts of the world, creating jobs in the future and also currently.

In the county that I live, Kings County, we recently approved regulations that will allow large-scale wind farms to be located on the North Mountain, a place where wind energy is quite viable. On a windy day in Nova Scotia, even now, even today, we can count on 20 per cent of our energy being created through wind power.

We've been focused on finding a solution to the problem of harnessing Fundy tidal power; for more than 100 years now we've been thinking about this. Acadia University has papers on file which show that research was being done on that project since 1910. We're committed to work with partners - four corporations at this point are working on being

ready to put turbines in the Bay of Fundy. We're committed to seeing whether it's possible to generate clean electricity, safe electricity, in the Bay of Fundy.

We've been thinking about how to use biomass more effectively, we've heard about that, of course, a lot in relation to the pulp industry, but there are other ways to think about that too. I was in Digby, just recently, talking with folks there who we've made an investment with on a study that will look at a power plant that will use biomass from local, private woodlots that may create the biomass through silviculture, and people there are extremely excited about the possibilities of fueling maybe hospitals, businesses and other institutions using that kind of approach.

While we've paid less attention to this, one of the things that is also possible as we move forward is solar power. I was talking with a plumber friend of mine recently who owns a business in the Annapolis Valley. Ron Martin's Plumbing & Heating, for the last two or three years, has had a solar technician on staff because they know that there are opportunities that keep building in that area.

Of course, doing this work involves collaborating with partners everywhere, particularly with citizens, the community feed-in tariff, and net metering possibilities, which means that it is indeed possible to work with people to build small supplies of safe, clean, renewable energy.

Bill No. 92, the Power Rate Reduction Review Act, again seems to suggest that Nova Scotians are without advocates when it comes to electricity rates. As the Minister of Energy was pointing out earlier, perhaps the Leader of the Third Party has forgotten or failed to mention in clear ways the function that the Utility and Review Board plays in this province. The URB has a solid record of protecting ratepayers' interests. The URB has placed limits on how much salary can be paid to NSPI employees.

The URB has a duty to look - and I'm confident that it will continue to look - at every expense that NSPI proposes. All forms of expenses that NSPI proposes are, in fact, under the purview and review of the URB, whether that's the cost of fuel to generate electricity, whether it has to do with the capital costs that the utility might be considering, whether it has to do with profit margins or return on equity, whether it has to do with salaries and benefits or executive bonuses that might be paid to employees. These should be closely examined by the URB and I'm sure that they will be because that's the way things have been happening.

Premier Dexter has also said - and not so long ago - that now is not the time for NSPI to look at increases in return on equity and I'm glad to see and was pleased to see that that's indeed something that NSPI understood as well.

As we look at Bill No. 92 and if we're to make progress - real, meaningful progress - I think we need to focus and move from fossil fuels to renewable. That is what we've been

doing; we've been doing that aggressively. We're harnessing wind energy, we're working with partners on building hydro. I think I failed to mention already Churchill Falls and the interesting and very important project that is happening there. We're working with partners to harness Fundy tidal energy; we're helping Nova Scotia use less electricity through conservation methods - many of them, in fact.

Finally, Madam Speaker, I'd like to suggest that Bill No. 92 is cumbersome, it's out of touch, and it's tinkering with electricity costs when we need to understand the burden - the long burden - that Nova Scotians are carrying. That's why we're moving toward a future that involves renewables.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

MR. ANDREW YOUNGER: Thank you. It's funny - it's amusing to listen to the member for Kings North suggest that the Opposition is out of touch on energy issues. The fact is, when the NDP were in Opposition, they were railing about how the URB was not working for Nova Scotians and how Nova Scotia Power was not working for Nova Scotians. Now it is actually the complete opposite that they are saying. It's like night and day. It isn't even a slight shift - it's the complete opposite end of the spectrum. You kind of wish you could have a time machine and have gone ahead in time and had these quotes - this is what you're going to say if you ever get in government. Boy, oh boy.

I would like to just comment on a couple of things the member for Kings North said (Interruption) Yes, some of the things that were prepared for. He mentioned that Premier Dexter had come out and said - and he congratulated him for saying - that the return on equity should be reduced and that bonuses of executives shouldn't be charged to ratepayers. He's right, he did. Unfortunately, they were the third Party to say that after both Opposition Parties had been saying that for months and the public had been saying it for months. Finally the Premier came out and said it, and that's great that he finally did, but let's not forget he was the last in a very long line of people to come out and say that.

The member also talked about removing the HST from home electricity. Let's talk about that for a minute. When the Leader of the Third Party stood up, he talked about some of the challenges businesses have. That removal of the HST had zero effect on the price that small businesses and large businesses in the province pay, because they always had - they didn't have it removed and it wouldn't have mattered, because they always had HST as a flow-through expense, as any business owner knows.

It did not solve the issues associated with the increase in electricity for small, medium, and large businesses, family-owned businesses. They are still paying the cost they had before, yet they are dealing with customers who are paying a higher HST on all the goods and services that they want to buy from their store.

It didn't have the kind of effect that the member is suggesting. Not only that - I think it was around June 3, 2009, in the dying days of the election, that Dan O'Connor wrote a letter to the Utility and Review Board on behalf of the current Premier saying that the NDP opposed the implementation on ratepayers of an electricity tax, a demand-side management fee. He wrote that in a letter during the election. Of course, the NDP won that election that week, and then what was one of the first things they did? In the very first session, they added that tax on to electricity bills.

We all know that was a tax originally proposed by the former member for Cape Breton North when he was Minister of Energy, and the government fell, so that got dropped. It was at that time that Mr. O'Connor wrote that letter, and he said we oppose this - during an election. Not only was it introduced, but that rate has been increased every single year since it was introduced and there is an application now before the board to raise it again. For many, that will wipe out much of that HST increase.

The promise wasn't we'll remove the HST from home electricity bills - oh, and by the way, we'll add another tax. There was no little caveat on the end of that, but that's exactly what happened. For businesses that didn't benefit from that HST reduction, they are also paying that new electricity tax on the bills. We can call it a fee, we can call it a tax, but it was the current Premier and the current Finance Minister who said a fee is a tax. I'm going to use their words and call it a tax. That's what they said it was.

I think it's important to understand that, yes, there have been some movements. Yes, there are certain things I absolutely agree with the government on. I agree that renewable energy prices will be a more stable energy price over the long term. I absolutely agree with that. I also think they need to recognize that, even by Emera's own numbers, we're going to be into 35 per cent electricity. It's no different than the Third Party has to recognize that it's their federal counterparts who have indicated that coal plants have to be phased out across the country. There are a lot of bits to this energy puzzle that are sort of being left aside in the discussion and unless you have the whole discussion, it makes it difficult, which brings us to this bill which talks about creating this independent panel of consumers to look at the policies that contribute to the cost of energy. (Interruption)

Listen, the last bill was fine. I agree that government should always be saying what the cost of legislation or regulation has been that they introduced, I absolutely agree with that. But to set up a panel of consumers and have these public meetings, that sounds great but if it was so important, why then, a few weeks ago, did the Third Party participate in secret meetings with Nova Scotia to raise power rates? We chose not to. We didn't participate in it. We said, listen if you're going to hold those meetings in secret, we're not going, but the Third Party chose to participate in them and then the Leader of the Third Party put out a statement to the media afterwards saying he was happy with the solution, he was happy with the 5 per cent increase. Well I'm glad he was, I'm not. There were lots of others who were in that meeting who weren't happy with it and opposed it before the board following.

We recognized, as a caucus, that coming on the heels of this was going to be already another increase in the Efficiency Nova Scotia tax on January 1st. Also coming was a fuel adjustment mechanism increase on January 1st, plus the two deferred increases coming January 1st - we are into one heck of a whopper of an increase already on January 1st, 2012. I think one of the challenges is that Nova Scotia Power has been so good at taking those numbers and spreading them out and saying, oh it's 3 per cent, it's 5 per cent, it's 2 per cent and they keep getting reported individually in the media. If you actually add them up and compound all those increases for what's coming January 1st - because nobody's talking about the two increases that were approved as deferred fuel increases from last year, which is already about 3.5 per cent, plus the 3.2 per cent, plus this 5 per cent - you're already over 10 per cent before you even add the increase from Efficiency Nova Scotia, all coming this January 1st. It's not a 5 per cent increase January 1st, it's not a 3.2 per cent increase, it's all of this on top of one another.

You can imagine, all 52 of us are going to have the calls from that next group of people that falls off the area where they can afford power bills. That's really important, we're all going to be faced with the issue that there are people who are just struggling to cover the cost of food and everything else now, who will not be able to afford it come January 1st. It will be the next group of people and those are the people we need to worry about because how are we going to help them.

The member for Bedford-Birch Cove has asked the Minister of Community Services whether her department had any plans to provide additional assistance with that - no plans. So what is the plan? Are we going to say to people, I'm sorry you're going to have to pick food or heat because, sorry, your food costs are going to go up too. The cost of food and the cost of services - all of that goes up when power goes up. Your property tax bills go up when power rates go up, and we all know that. Every municipality in this province lists power rates as one of their risk factors when they set their property tax and they always sit there and say, note that that is one of the things because they have to pay for things like street lights and their buildings. All the efficiency upgrades in the world aren't going to solve that.

So you look at things like - we had advocated that Efficiency Nova Scotia be funded through shareholders. The Premier wants to say all the time, oh, we're against efficiency - he knows that's false. We said from day one that we agreed with efficiency, but we said it should be paid for by shareholders not ratepayers. It was the Premier - and the Premier's chief of staff said that during the election, same thing, but afterwards he decided it was low-income families and businesses and everybody else that should pay for it instead of shareholders. That's a choice and the Premier can't back away from the choices that he's made. At the end of day, power rates are a major issue and we all have to get behind it and we all have to come up with solutions to solve that. Thank you Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cape Breton West.

MR. ALFIE MACLEOD: Thank you Madam Speaker. I sat here with great interest in the debate that's going on today about power rates. I'm listening to the member from Dartmouth East saying that the Leader of our Party said that he was happy with 5 per cent - and I'm sure he will be happy to table the documentation to prove that that is indeed exactly what he said. But that's only part of what we're here about. We're talking tonight about power rates and the impact that they have on the people of Nova Scotia.

Madam Speaker, there is not one person in this House who would dispute the fact that power rates are having an impact on our province, on our economy, and on our homes and our households. All of the members here understand that this is a major issue and we all want to find a solution, but we seem to be taking different roads, which is not uncommon when you have three Parties in the House trying to find solutions.

The thing that I want to make clear, perfectly clear, is that we in the Progressive Conservative Party support green energy. Green energy is very important to us. It is where we have to go and it's where we want to go, but that road is a long road, Madam Speaker, and we have to take that road one inch at a time to be sure we get there in a way that it has an impact on our carbon footprint here in the Province of Nova Scotia but, at the same time, isn't too big that it will hurt the small businesses of this province or the homeowners of this province.

The increase in power rates is killing jobs. Again, that's not a surprise to anybody in this House - it certainly is not a surprise to the people who are working at NewPage or the people who are at Bowater Mersey. But what is interesting, Madam Speaker, is all the people who, in small industry, are saying that indeed they are being affected - 20 per cent of the people who are involved in the Federation of Independent Business are saying that they are probably going to have to lay off one to two people just to make ends meet, so they can battle the cost of power in their operation. So we have to keep that in mind. We need to do something - that's important.

Now, I've listened to the Minister of Energy and the member for Kings North talking about this expensive coal and they're saying that that's the reason we have such a problem with our power rates. As a matter of fact, the minister on August 13th, he put out a press release and it said "... imported coal is costing our consumers dearly". I would like to table that, Madam Speaker.

There is a cost for coal, no question, and my colleague, the member for Inverness, went through the costs, but his very own department, the Energy Minister's Department, told the Resources Committee regardless of what took place, in the best-case scenario, 10 years from now, 35 per cent of the needs of electricity in this province is still going to be met by coal - and that's in the best-case scenario. Nova Scotia Power, when they're putting out their platform, they'll tell you that they're going to need coal for the next 20 years, and we need to have power - we need to reduce it.

Now, the thing that we have to remember, Madam Speaker, is that there are technologies and new ideas coming on how to burn coal cleanly all the time. There are people all over the world using it; as a matter of fact, in the U.S. they're converting back to doing more coal-firing and they're looking at different ways of cleaning up the coal-fired generation.

Now I've said in this House and I've said many times, and I've had the Premier even sneer at me when I said we should be burning Cape Breton coal. He said we don't have any mines - that's what he said when he was sitting across there. Well, do you know what? We have the potential of one of the biggest mines in North America in Cape Breton, a mine that could supply coal to Nova Scotia Power and it would also make meteorological coal for markets in India and China.

Now, here's the question that I have problems with, and I can't understand when the Minister of Energy keeps talking about this expensive coal. If we're going to have to burn coal anyway, Madam Speaker, if we're going to have to burn it, why is it we're not trying to get jobs for Nova Scotians mining that coal rather than giving those jobs to people overseas, in other countries? If we're going to have to use the product, and we have the product, then I don't think it's a far-fetched idea to say we should be using Nova Scotians to mine it. We should be having those Nova Scotians paying taxes. We should have a company, according to the minister's statement in the press release, he said it was expensive imported coal. Well, this company would be a company that is dealing in Canadian dollars, selling to a company that is buying in Canadian dollars, so that would help negate some of that factor.

The other thing that's going on is that when we're bringing shiploads of coal in from overseas, Madam Speaker, they are not full ships because, at present, they can't get into the harbour in Sydney with a full load, so they're taking smaller loads. So you're going to increase the amount of coal that you are going to be able to get because you'll get it here.

Now in the rate hearings, we heard that Nova Scotia Power went \$40 million over and above in their energy fuel costs and part of that was because they had coal on the ground that was too wet. Well, Madam Speaker, if you had that coal being supplied right here in Nova Scotia, by Nova Scotians, for Nova Scotians, then you wouldn't have the issue of it getting wet by being stockpiled on the ground. That would not take place.

What we would see would be Nova Scotian coal being used by Nova Scotian consumers who are paying Nova Scotian taxes. Now to me that doesn't sound like an outrageous idea. Again going back to the Minister of Energy's statement, 35 per cent under the best-case scenario of our energy needs are going to have to be by coal for the next 10 years and Nova Scotia Power says even longer.

Why is it that we don't want to burn Cape Breton coal? It makes no sense to me. There is some Nova Scotia coal being used now, why couldn't it all be Nova Scotia coal?

I know that we have to move off the coal but it is the Department of Energy that is saying that it's not going to happen right away.

Now we've seen job loss after job loss, after job loss and here we have an opportunity to actually create jobs, help our economy and put people back to work. The net loss of jobs that we've seen in Cape Breton has seen our unemployment rate rise significantly. We have an opportunity now to change that.

I don't know why the minister keeps pointing at this coal and keeps saying that it's the reason that the power rates are going up because regardless of what happens, we're still going to have to use that coal. So I must be missing something here because I want to put Cape Bretoners back to work, I want those Cape Bretoners to then pay taxes to the Province of Nova Scotia, to the Municipality of the CBRM, so that indeed, we have an opportunity to see some economic growth and impact. By the way, the coal that would come out of the Cape Breton mine is a better quality coal than any coal that they are bringing from overseas. It is about 1,500 to 2,500 BTUs better than anything they're bringing from overseas, which would mean that they wouldn't have to burn as much to create the same amount of energy as they are now.

So, to me it makes a lot of sense but then I guess it's not about sense, it's just about the fact that somebody on that side of the House over there wants to pound their chest and say, we're going to be the Green Giants of the world. Well, you know what, they may be the Green Giants but the morning they wake up and they can't turn on their lights or take a shower, that's the day they are going to know that Cape Breton coal is part of the solution, not part of the problem.

Eventually, if all goes well (Interruptions) You know the minister of culture and whatever it is, heritage, over there, he's over there saying . . .

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable member for Cape Breton West has the floor.

MR. MACLEOD: I would ask that member to get up and explain who it is like this because he and his government, Madam Speaker, have already said his department, his colleague in Cabinet have said, we have to burn coal. So now he's over there saying - so he's saying it's better to give the jobs to people overseas than give it to Nova Scotians. That does not sit well with me or anybody on this side of the House. If we're going to put people to work, it should be Nova Scotians and not people who are on the other side of somewhere else. Nova Scotians deserve to get work. That government deserves and needs to give them that work and they're not doing it. They're putting people out of work, they're not putting people at jobs. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable Progressive Conservative House Leader.

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Things are just starting to warm up but unfortunately I'm going to have to say that concludes Opposition Business for today and I pass it over to the Government House Leader for our work tomorrow.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Madam Speaker, after the orders of the day tomorrow, we will be calling Public Bills for Second Reading - Bill Nos. 86, 90, 93, 94, 95, 96 and 98. I move that the House do now rise to meet from the hours of 2:00 p.m. until 6:00 p.m. tomorrow.

MADAM SPEAKER: The motion is that the House do now rise to meet tomorrow, November 17th, 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 have now reached the moment of interruption. The late debate tonight is:

“Therefore be it resolved that members of the House of Assembly recognize and honour the tremendous sacrifice made by members of our Canadian Armed Forces currently serving, our veterans, their families, and supporting communities who serve and protect this great country, not just on Remembrance Day.”

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION UNDER RULE 5(5)

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

CDN. ARMED FORCES: SACRIFICE – RECOGNIZE/HONOUR

MS. BECKY KENT: Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise this evening to speak about the tremendous sacrifice and, equally important I think in today's world, the contributions that our military families, whether they are currently serving or had a family member who has served in the past, or maybe contemplating serving in the future, have on our communities. On the heels of a week of remembrance that we all took part in, celebrating and honouring and recognizing, it always raises a question in my mind of how

can I, as a person who is so proud of the military traditions and presence and friendships that I have in my community, how can I encourage people to think about these sacrifices and these contributions every day, beyond the day of November 11th ?

Mr. Speaker, on the heels of a tremendous milestone in Nova Scotia history around the awarding of the military contracts to Irving shipyard, it also gives me - it lends to my thoughts around what does this mean to Nova Scotia about these contracts. We hear about the doom and gloom on the other side of this House about how it may not pan out. We've heard from a member on the other side talk about how Nova Scotians aren't going to benefit and I think, do you know what, we already have benefited. When we think about the pride that was evoked, the united element, how everyone in Nova Scotia united together to celebrate and cheer on, if nothing else, cheer on the Irving shipyards for that contract, because when I think about those shipbuilders who have made their mark, proven their ability and have achieved this award, they are friends and families and loved ones of the military as well.

So I know that they are taking more pride and they look forward to the pride that they will feel when they're building these ships, to know that someday they're actually going to be in our harbour. I think that has united us, again, in a ray of hope that we haven't had before. So, again, these are the kinds of things that I've been thinking about over the last little while as these good things have been coming forward. There's no better time, in my opinion, to continue to pay tribute to our military service men and women, our veterans, the families that support them, and the communities that support them.

I don't think it's a stretch to say, Mr. Speaker, that just about everyone in Nova Scotia, young and old, and anywhere in between, knows someone in the military. They are our sons and our daughters; they are our nieces and our nephews; they are our brothers and our sisters; they are parents; they are our friends and our neighbours. I think it's clear to all of us here in this House, because I've heard so many good things talked about when we hear resolutions and when we hear even other debates on the floor, when people talk of our military, they talk of pride.

I was at a recent event at Shearwater, at 12 Wing Shearwater, which is housed in the community of Eastern Passage, at an event, and I learned something that I didn't really have a full grasp of, although I know that I see the military families and the service men and women all around me, but I'm not sure how many people know that the Atlantic Provinces actually make up 18 per cent of our population of Canada - 18 per cent - yet those same Atlantic Provinces contribute 25 per cent to the military personnel who are military armed forces here in Canada. That's significant, and that's why I'm talking about these kinds of things tonight.

The most obvious way that our military men and women who are serving or have served in the past are making these sacrifices is their day-to-day routine. They work every day to protect our rights and freedoms. They defend our communities. They work with our

allies to keep peace for the betterment of man, all the while knowing that at a moment's notice, they could be in harm's way. They could pay that ultimate sacrifice.

At the same time they are in our communities, knowing on the one hand that they are poised and ready to take on whatever it might be - if it's a deployment to Haiti to help other people, if it's a deployment into a war zone - they're ready, but at the same time they're living here. They're in our communities, engaged. They're building better communities for us and with us, who are not in that service. They're in our service clubs, they're coaching our children in sports, they're in our communities role-modelling what it is to be someone in service. They're volunteering at events. They're advocating for change in our communities and bringing forward issues that we can talk about here in the Legislature and make decisions that affect all Nova Scotians.

A perfect example of that, I think, is our cadet programs here in Nova Scotia. They don't just run themselves. They require volunteers and they require service personnel to bring their expertise to the table, to teach and mentor and nurture our young cadets along. They're our young leaders. They're good citizens in this program. They're developing good citizens. These cadets may or may not move on to a career in serving the military, but they're developing these young people into hopefully making good decisions, giving back to their communities in the future, and that's what I'm talking about. They're helping build Nova Scotia to be what it is.

A recent event that I hosted here at the Legislature was the second annual Sea, Army, Air and Navy League Cadets Day, and it reminded young cadets about their future. Their future is bright in Nova Scotia, and the message for them that day, from Rear Admiral Gardam, was that you never know where you're going to be in your future. That reminded them of our honourable Premier, who was a cadet himself and who was a naval officer, and that he brings that knowledge - and I'm proud to be part of that team - to governing this province: that they could potentially be in that role someday, if that's something that they aspire to do.

For another example of the way that they give back, I think about Corporal Glen Johnson at 12 Wing Shearwater. Every day, he works day in and day out at his job in the military, but every day he also brings back a collection. He's on council. They've created an environment which is the city council for 12 Wing Shearwater - a community that used to be very transient. It can be, but they're giving these families a sense of united - a sense of roots every time they come into the military housing there.

I think about a proud Nova Scotian who wrote an e-mail to me recently, who lives in New Brunswick with her husband - a senior couple - who spent many of her years in Eastern Passage with her family. Her dad was a military serviceman at 12 Wing. Her dad helped develop Hartlen Point Golf Course. That's an icon of my constituency, and that's a way that they've contributed. He's spent his whole life serving, but he brought that to our community as well, and she then married a military officer. They've raised their children in

an environment of service and hope and of giving back, giving to the country and the communities that you are proud of.

They contacted me because she wanted to fly a Nova Scotia flag in New Brunswick. I was so pleased to get that e-mail because I think it identified to me, at a time when people would argue in here that things that are going on in Nova Scotia aren't good, but they are good. Someone who is living in New Brunswick wants to fly that flag proudly to say, I am Nova Scotian, I'm proud to be a Nova Scotian and I want to show it.

Mr. Speaker, I could stand here probably for hours and talk about the benefits of having the military in our lives. For me, I am blessed to have friends who have shaped my life because of my insight into the sacrifices that they make supporting their service men and women as husband and wife. Thank you very much.

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

HON. MANNING MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to join the debate this evening on the motion that was put to the House by the member for Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage and I want to thank the member for bringing this to the attention of the House and it's a very important subject. I want to say at the outset that there are a number of things you could talk about in this motion, it's pretty well wide-ranging, but it lends the opportunity for those of us who are interested in the future of the people who have served Canada over the years and what happens to them in the future and also, those of us who are interested in affairs of a military nature.

I know the member for Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage mentioned that the Premier was a sea cadet - I would hope it was a sea cadet, she mentioned a cadet - and was also a Naval officer - she didn't mention how long, but it was for three years - and he distinguished himself in that capacity. I, too, was a sea cadet for some seven or eight years and following that, I was a Reserve Naval officer for 15 years and proud to have a Canadian decoration to show for that. For part of that time, I worked with the regular forces way back in another life, like 100 years ago, I guess now, back so far that it was the RCN when I was there. It was the Royal Canadian Navy and now it's back to the Royal Canadian Navy, so I've come full circle with that. I was there during the famous or infamous Halyard decision to integrate the armed forces. What a blow that was to the Navy and the white ensign on the stern of the ships in those days.

The Sergeant-at-Arms, for example, has some Navy time too. He was involved and attached to the HMCS Scotian, as was I for some time during those heydays of the RCN and the early days of integration. A couple of us in this House have a history with the Navy anyway and I'm proud to associate myself with the Premier in that regard and I'm glad to see the Navy curl back again on the uniforms, which was so rudely taken away when the forces were amalgamated.

However, I do want to spend a few moments talking about the voice, I guess, of the veterans today and the one that I'm more familiar with is the Royal Canadian Legion and in particular, Branch 138, Ashby, which I'm proud to be a life member in and the work that they do on behalf of veterans and indeed on behalf of the community people who need help on many fronts and also work on behalf of the youth of the community. A lot of the veterans who have come back from overseas years ago or have been involved in recent conflicts are now doing their thing, giving back if you will for the Legion, particularly for things like the Poppy Campaign. I can tell you that the Poppy Campaign in our Branch 138 is a sacred thing, the money raised by the Poppy Campaign goes towards assisting veterans in need and goes toward assisting families of veterans who are in need.

I'm sure that I could speak for the other Legion branches as well in my area, but on Remembrance Day I take the opportunity to visit the Whitney Pier branch, which is the branch of the Speaker of this House and also I was down in New Waterford, which is the branch of the Deputy Premier and also I was in the Downtown Branch 12. In all of those branches, you get to talk to some of the veterans who are still living and you get to reminisce a little bit about their service and what they've done for the country over the years and what they are now doing in their various Legion branches.

In my own particular branch, there's a history there too. The Zone Commander of the Legion in our area is a gentleman by the name of Mel Crowe, whom you would know, doing a very good job, and is a past president of Ashby Legion, and his brother Lowell Crowe is the current president - and their father was a former president of the Ashby Legion when it was first established some 50-odd years ago now. They are doing yeoman service for the Legion and for its veterans and for its members - as well as Joe MacNeil who is the Poppy Campaign chairman, and he's done that for years. He has over 50 volunteers who are out there every year at Remembrance Day selling poppies and collecting monies to keep those programs going in our branch for veterans and for the families of veterans, and for the youth of our community.

I take exception to the recent statements made by the federal government regarding the Veterans Affairs cuts that are about to take place. I'm one that looks at that and I say, why cut a couple of hundred million dollars out of it simply because the veterans are reducing in numbers, why not keep the budget at its current level and give the veterans more? That would seem to me to be the realistic thing - you don't have to increase the budget, numbers are going down, but you could increase the benefits for those veterans who are there who are still needing the help, and there are new veterans coming home from Afghanistan and other hot spots throughout the world.

When I had the opportunity to speak on Remembrance Day at my own branch, I made reference to the fact that here we have veterans who are returned from the great wars, we have veterans who are now returned from Afghanistan, and we have a situation where we shouldn't now say we're beyond all of that because I made reference to the fact that the

last century was probably the bloodiest century in the history of mankind - the 20th Century.

And the 21st Century is not starting out too well either. I have to tell you that with the situation going on in Iran these days, with more talk of nuclear weapons, the situation going on in North Korea, and the ominous sounds coming out of that whole corridor - and then you have the situation in the Middle East still festering over there with great uncertainty, and I make these points because I made the statement that if we, as Canadians, forget the horrors of the past, we're doomed to repeat them.

This I've said time and time again - not only should we respect our veterans coming back, but we should pay homage to their sacrifice, what they've done over the years, but we should also remember unless we're very vigilant about the future in our country and maintain an adequate Armed Forces and maintain an adequate respect for the veterans, and keep telling young people today that they are the people who kept our country from being invaded over the years, they are the people who went off to war rather than war coming to us - I hope that in the future there will be no wars, but we can't rest on the fact of what we're hoping will happen, we have to ensure that it doesn't happen, and in order to do that we have to keep reminding people about the past and the past history of our veterans and how important they were to Canadian life, and the tremendous contribution they have made to keeping us free.

I tell the story wherever I go, that when they say you were in the Navy, were you? I say, yes, most of it in the Reserve Navy, but a small portion of it working with regular forces at the time, the Royal Canadian Navy, and had great fun doing it. They said you must be a war veteran, because they saw my Canada Decoration on my Legion jacket and I said, look, the only contribution I made to the Second World War was to be born during it. Thank heavens, by the time that I started cadets, we were at peace, but I can remember when we thought that was the war to end all wars, along came Korea. I can remember Korea, because when the Korean War broke out I was just starting cadets and so I felt at that time that, hey, I didn't think we could ever have another war, but we did, and then on and on through the other conflicts, other hot spots, over the past number of years.

I say, Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, that we must remember our veterans, we must remember their contribution, we must continue to support them, and if I could say anything to the federal Department of Veterans Affairs, don't cut their benefits. As a matter of fact, use the money wisely to enhance their benefits so they can live in a manner that we can all respect. Thank you very much.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to rise here for late debate tonight. Really there's no debate on this subject. The members of the Progressive Conservative caucus understand the value of honouring the tremendous sacrifice made by

our Canadian Forces, year-round, and not just at Remembrance Day. After all, we have armed men and women serving overseas at this very moment, representing our country with pride.

We can look to the current mission in Afghanistan, and others that are happening across the globe, as examples of the dedication and professionalism of our men and women in uniform. Children everywhere are benefiting from the Canadian Forces. In Afghanistan, boys and girls, who otherwise would never have had the chance, are having the chance to be educated at school.

Sometimes too much emphasis gets placed on the actual fighting and the combat roles that members of the Canadian Forces assume. We can't forget about the important humanitarian contributions and the infrastructure work that our men and women take part in. We can again look at the example of Afghanistan where Canadian men and women are playing a key role in important achievements like poverty reduction, fair and free elections and new economic opportunities for the local, domestic population. These achievements are victories for the Afghan people and they are victories that Canadians can take some credit for. I can't help but think that maybe someday people in Afghanistan will look at Canadians in much the same way as the people of Holland do today, with great respect, remembering the liberation of their country in which Canadians played a strong role, Mr. Speaker.

These missions have allowed the Canadian Forces to emerge as true leaders and they allow our standing in the world, as Canadians, to grow more and more with each passing decade. Today the men and women of the Canadian Forces are respected across the globe and they have been able to build on the successes of those who came before them, in important missions like the one just concluded in Libya. The taking of Tripoli by rebel forces was materially assisted by Canadian C-18 fighter planes. They were used to clear away Gaddafi's weapons and this is only one small example of the roles Canadian Forces played in Libya in recent conflict.

It is not just about combat missions like those in Afghanistan and Libya that the members of our Forces can be proud of. We all remember the tragedy that struck Haiti. This happened last January when they were struck with an earthquake. Within hours of that earthquake, Canadian Forces were deployed to help manage the humanitarian response. It was no small undertaking and again Canada proved that it was a leader, all due to the efforts of our brave men and women in uniform.

How great it is that we have a government in Ottawa that is committed to making sure our Armed Forces are the safest and most prepared. We have the best Armed Forces in the world so it only makes sense that they should be the best-equipped Armed Forces in the world.

We looked, recently, to the announcement for shipbuilding, which of course our province has been the benefactor of. It will be a tremendous investment in our province and those ships will certainly help our Forces. We are proud of the bid that was put forth and Irving shipyard that won the bid. We congratulate them and wish them the best. We hope all goes well with that significant contract that is going to bring a lot of dollars into our province.

So thanks to historic investments like those made by our federal government, we're investing more in our Armed Forces than at any other point in the last 50 years, a true commitment by the federal government to our Forces.

I don't mean to limit recognition to events of the present or past few years. The Canadian Forces have had a long and proud legacy in our country, one so great that I can't fully do it justice here today. We should mention the Battle of Vimy Ridge, in France, in 1917. This historic battle represented a turning point on the world stage. This victory marks a moment when Canada ceased being a junior partner and became a leader.

Mr. Speaker, I know that back home in my area we just have to look at the monuments. We have one in Judique, the community where I come from. I look at all the young people who served at that time and who did not come back and I often think Judique is a little community but had an extraordinary number of people who went to serve in the First World War. I often wonder if the population of Judique today would be larger had they had a chance to come back and start families. They paid the ultimate sacrifice for our freedom and security and it is important that we honour them on Remembrance Day, and also that we remember them in our hearts and minds forever.

Day in and day out, we stand in this Chamber and we have debate, and we're not really having much debate tonight because we're all in agreement on this subject. But the very reason we're able to stand here and have the democracy we have, which I believe is the best form of democracy in the world - sure, there are shortcomings with it, as I'm sure there are with every kind of system. The system we have here in Canada is the best in the world, and it's all because of our Canadian Forces and the times that they stand up for Canada. So all of us in this House have an important job to do for our Armed Forces, we need to take each and every opportunity to remind them that we are with them and that the people of Nova Scotia are with them. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you and I want to thank all members of the House for their debate here tonight.

The House will now rise and meet again tomorrow at 2:00 p.m. We are now adjourned.

[The House rose at 6:21 p.m.]