



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Gordon Gosse

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

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

Third Session

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 2011

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House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, MONDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 2011

Sixty-first General Assembly

Third Session

4:00 P.M.

SPEAKER

Hon. Gordon Gosse

DEPUTY SPEAKERS

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

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

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

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

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce a petition from the residents of Springhill. The operative clause reads:

“Petition to Increase the Number of Medical Staff at All Saints Springhill Hospital which will allow for 24 hour Emergency Service to be continued.”

Mr. Speaker, it contains over 1,000 signatures, and I have affixed my own signature thereto.

MR. SPEAKER: The petition is tabled.

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Deputy Premier.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the honourable Minister of Justice, I beg leave to table the 2010-11 annual report of the Public Trustee Program of Nova Scotia.

MR. SPEAKER: The report is tabled.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Education.

RESOLUTION NO. 2371

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

Whereas aging well for older adults means adopting positive health practices like being well, staying physically active, and staying socially connected and mentally engaged - which in turn limits injuries and promotes cognitive health; and

Whereas aging well is of particular importance to the 700 Nova Scotians who turn 65 every month and have the desire to live their lives to the fullest and stay active and healthy in the communities they love; and

Whereas through the collective support of the 12 regional aging well together coalitions - collectively called Community Links - seniors are working with seniors to encourage one another to be active;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House join me in celebrating November 20th to November 26th as Aging Well Together Week in Nova Scotia, and

commend the hard work of Community Links in their efforts to encourage Nova Scotians to be active and stay active at any age.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 106 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 254 of the Revised Statutes of 1989. The Libraries Act. (Hon. David Wilson)

Bill No. 107 - Entitled an Act to Develop a Multi-Year Funding Framework. (Ms. Kelly Regan)

Bill No. 108 - Entitled an Act to Abolish the Rules of Law against Perpetuities and to Amend Chapter 385 of the Revised Statutes of 1989. The Real Property Act, and Chapter 486 of the Revised Statutes of 1989. The Variation of Trusts Act. (Hon. Ross Landry)

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

NOTICES OF MOTION

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

RESOLUTION NO. 2372

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

Whereas on Friday, November 18, 2011, the government announced details of its pediatric insulin pump program, set to start in January 2012; and

Whereas New Brunswick is the fifth province to implement a publicly-funded insulin pump program, with Manitoba set to announce details soon; and

Whereas with Friday's announcement and with Manitoba's upcoming commitment, 61 per cent of Canadians live in a province where access to this lifesaving device is available to all and not just to those who are able to afford the costs or possess private health insurance;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House congratulate the Governments of British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Ontario, Newfoundland and Labrador, New Brunswick, and Manitoba for their wisdom in investing in a publicly-funded insulin pump program and encourage this NDP Government to implement a program for the benefit of Nova Scotian diabetics.

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

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

Is it agreed?

I hear several Noes.

The notice is tabled.

The honourable Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party.

RESOLUTION NO. 2373

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

Whereas each year one-third of seniors in Nova Scotia will fall, leading to unnecessary, and sometimes devastating, injury; and

Whereas today marks the first day of Fall Prevention Week, a week devoted to raising awareness and educating Nova Scotians on ways to help avoid the incidence of these accidents; and

Whereas winter is fast approaching and all Nova Scotians must take the necessary precautions to ensure their safety in the coming months, and year-round;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House recognize the importance of Fall Prevention Week, and extend a reminder to Nova Scotians to make sure they take the proper measures to ensure safety in their homes and on the go.

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. 2374

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 this June, Sport Nova Scotia hosted the 15th annual Ricoh Sport Awards in Halifax to recognize the achievements of more than 180 athletes, coaches, officials, sponsors, and volunteers from across the province; and

Whereas the Ricoh Sport Makes A Difference Award honours any individual, group, organization, committee, or similar body that creates, establishes or initiates an innovative program, competition or event, or demonstrates an outstanding example of fair play; and

Whereas this year the Sport Makes a Difference Award went to Paul Mason, Michael Rumsby, and the Cole Harbour Bantam AA boys hockey team;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House congratulate all the recipients of this year's Ricoh Sport Awards and wish them the best of luck in their future athletic 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 Leader of the Official Opposition.

RESOLUTION NO. 2375

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

Whereas we depend on our local broadcasters to tell us what is happening in our communities; and

Whereas we depend on the people who bring us our news to be fair, informed, and to give a true reflection of the issues and things that matter to us; and

Whereas CTV newsman Steve Murphy has spent more than three decades doing just that, as a journalist, talk show host, and anchor;

Therefore be it resolved that members of the Legislature extend their congratulations to Steve Murphy on the occasion of 25 years as host of CTV Atlantic, first on Live at 5 and currently as host of the evening news, and thank him for his service, his dedication, and continued professionalism in our Maritime neighbourhoods.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party.

RESOLUTION NO. 2376

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

Whereas Elizabeth Jones of Oxford is a first-year Bachelor of Science Nursing Program student at St. Francis Xavier University who has received financial support for health-care-related studies through Cumberland Health Care Careers Bursary Program; and

Whereas the bursaries are awarded based on the applications received and a careful review of the organization's future human resource needs; and

Whereas the bursary program, which is only open to Cumberland County students, requires all recipients to sign an agreement for a "return for service" equal to the number of years for which they received the bursary;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Elizabeth Jones on receiving the Cumberland Health Care Careers bursary, and wish her continued success in her future nursing 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 Halifax Citadel-Sable Island.

RESOLUTION NO. 2377

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

Whereas John Neville was born in England on May 2, 1925, and after serving with the Royal Navy, had a much-lauded acting career in Britain before moving to Canada in 1972; and

Whereas John Neville continued to build his exemplary reputation as an actor and artistic director at the Citadel Theatre in Edmonton, the Neptune Theatre in Halifax, and the Stratford Festival in Stratford, Ontario, earning the Order of the British Empire in 1965 and the Order of Canada in 2006; and

Whereas on Saturday, November 19th, John Neville passed away at Wellesley Central Place in Toronto;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly recognize the extraordinary life lived by John Neville, including his stewardship of our own Neptune

Theatre, and send condolences to his wife of 62 years, their six children and six grandchildren, other family and friends at this difficult time.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Clare.

RESOLUTION NO. 2378

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

Whereas many of our communities throughout Nova Scotia are blessed with a wealth of dedicated volunteers who enrich our communities; and

Whereas fire department ladies auxiliaries play such a fundamental role in the operation of volunteer fire departments across Nova Scotia; and

Whereas the Little Brook Fire Department Ladies Auxiliary will be recognized on November 26, 2011 at the department's annual banquet for their dedication and tireless commitment to the fire department and to their community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate the Little Brook Fire Department Ladies Auxiliary as they celebrate their 30th Anniversary.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Inverness.

RESOLUTION NO. 2379

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

Whereas the Boston Bruins entered the 2011 Stanley Cup playoffs with a hard-working team and Vezina Trophy-winning goaltending; and

Whereas Nathan Horton played an impassioned playoff season, scoring 17 points in 21 games and created a turning point in the final series when his team rallied around him when he was injured; and

Whereas Nathan's grandparents have roots in Nova Scotia - in Inverness with the Damas family, and in Port Hood with the Watts family;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly recognize Mr. Horton's success and congratulate the 2010-11 Boston Bruins team for winning the Stanley Cup.

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 Chebucto.

RESOLUTION NO. 2380

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

Whereas the Occupy Nova Scotia encampment linked Halifax with hundreds of cities internationally where similar protests and solidarity with the Occupy Wall Street

movement in New York are expressing concerns with the alarming escalation of economic inequality; and

Whereas the Occupy Nova Scotia protestors demonstrated great respect for the core values of our community by voluntarily vacating the Grand Parade in order to facilitate observances in connection with Remembrance Day; and

Whereas we are blessed in Canada to have a constitution that includes a Charter of Rights and Freedoms that includes protection of the freedoms of association, assembly and expression;

Therefore be it resolved that this House note with regret that HRM and the Occupy Nova Scotia supporters did not resolve their differences through ongoing discussions and negotiations.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Colchester North.

RESOLUTION NO. 2381

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

Whereas 18-year-old Francis Castein of Manganese Mines, Colchester North, entered a 10-year military contract with the Canadian Forces on July 14th; and

Whereas the contract consists of a \$40,000 scholarship for five years at the Royal Military College followed of five years of employment as a military logistics officer; and

Whereas other goals Castein has achieved include the Colonel Robert Perron Award for being the most physically fit cadet in Canada, making the top 12 top teens in Canada, participating in cadet and biathlon provincials, cadet nationals and a biathlon national event, representing Nova Scotia in the 2011 Canada Winter Games and winning

the Duke of Edinburgh Young Canadians Challenge Gold for her commitment to community services;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate this remarkable young woman for her numerous achievements and wish her well in her chosen career.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Victoria-The Lakes.

RESOLUTION NO. 2382

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

Whereas entrepreneurship begins at an early age at Middle River Consolidated School; and

Whereas Grades 3 - 6 classes at the school use their existing school garden to grow, develop and market products that they made themselves; and

Whereas some of the products made during this project include herb jelly, herb vinegar, pickled carrots and chow;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly recognize these future entrepreneurs at Middle River Consolidated School, applaud the teachers who have encouraged and supported the students, and wish them every 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 Halifax Citadel-Sable Island.

RESOLUTION NO. 2383

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

Whereas the Downtown Halifax Business Commission's Holiday Parade of Lights is a much anticipated holiday tradition for people of all ages across the Halifax Regional Municipality; and

Whereas on November 19, 2011, more than 100,000 spectators lined the streets of downtown Halifax for the 16th annual Holiday Parade of Lights with parade marshals from Chisholm Youth Services; and

Whereas the Holiday Parade of Lights encourages parade goers to bring new, unwrapped toys for children in need and non-perishable food items or cash donations for Feed Nova Scotia;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly recognized the Downtown Halifax Business Commission and all of the sponsors, volunteers, parade participants and supporters who are helping those in need while making the Holiday Parade of Lights one of the most popular seasonal events in the Halifax Regional Municipality.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Bedford-Birch Cove.

RESOLUTION NO. 2384

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

Whereas Mr. Wadih Fares arrived in Nova Scotia from Lebanon as a teenager from war-torn Lebanon, and proceeded to learn English and earn two engineering degrees; and

Whereas Wadih went on to open his own firm, WM Fares Group, where his word is his bond, as it is in all his dealings as Honorary Consul to Lebanon; and

Whereas Wadih was named the top CEO in Atlantic Canada by Atlantic Business Magazine in May 2011;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Wadih Fares on his latest award and wish him every success in his current and future endeavours.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Argyle.

RESOLUTION NO. 2385

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

Whereas on November 13th, after six decades, Wedgeport resident Gerard LeBlanc recorded a CD of music; and

Whereas the CD entitled, *Mom and Dad Christmas Memories*, was inspired by Gerard's parents from the 1950s and 1960s when they owned a dance hall where this type of music was played; and

Whereas Gerard LeBlanc has been singing in a 50s and 60s rock band for many years;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Gerard LeBlanc on the release of his CD and wish him success in this and future ventures.

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.

MR. JIM BOUDREAU: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to make an introduction.

MR. SPEAKER: Certainly.

MR. BOUDREAU: Today we have Laura Emery who is the chief librarian for Eastern Counties Regional Library which proudly serves the Counties of Guysborough, Inverness and Richmond. The library itself has seven branches, nine community link sites, home delivery and books by mail. The Eastern Counties Regional Library will be launching a new Web site on November 26th and they have an innovative project underway called the Path to Success which is introducing essential research skills and new technologies to youth. I would ask Laura, who is in the east gallery, to rise and receive the warm welcome of the House. (Applause)

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

The honourable member for Guysborough-Sheet Harbour.

RESOLUTION NO. 2386

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

Whereas EnCana Corporation, the owner and operator of Nova Scotia's offshore Deep Panuke natural gas project, has provided sponsorship to Eastern Counties Regional Library for the past 10 years by making an initial donation to the library's annual Share A Book fundraising campaign and then matching public donations up to a maximum of \$10,000 per year; and

Whereas this will be the tenth and final year for sponsorship by EnCana and the community has appreciated and supported this campaign in great part through the matching program; and

Whereas the fundraising campaigns have resulted in a significant increase in materials being purchased for the library that would not have been purchased otherwise;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly congratulate EnCana Corporation and their staff for their much appreciated dedication to furthering the interest in education, reading and literacy in the Counties of Guysborough, Inverness and Richmond.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Yarmouth.

RESOLUTION NO. 2387

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

Whereas on September 17, 2011, the YMCA of Yarmouth held its grand reopening, an event which included an open house where members of the public had the opportunity to tour the facility and see the recent renovations; and

Whereas the YMCA's motto is "we build strong kids, strong families, strong communities"; and

Whereas for many years now, the YMCA of Yarmouth has been doing just that in building strong kids, families and a strong Yarmouth through its many fitness and exercise, swim, community, and summer camp programs for children, teens, adults and seniors;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly congratulate the YMCA of Yarmouth on its grand reopening, recognize this facility for enriching the lives of the people throughout Yarmouth County and encourage everyone to experience one or more of the many programs offered by the YMCA of Yarmouth.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Cape Breton West.

RESOLUTION NO. 2388

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

Whereas members of the O'Neil Clan from Bateston, Cape Breton, recently hosted the fourth annual Ronnie O'Neil Memorial Ball Tournament; and

Whereas the money raised at the tournament is donated to the Cancer Patient Care Fund in memory of their brother, uncle and friend Ronnie O'Neil; and

Whereas the O'Neil Clan raised \$5,000 this year, bringing the amount raised in four years to the grand total of \$10,000;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate and acknowledge the O'Neil Clan on this gesture of remembrance for their lost brother, uncle and friend Ronnie O'Neil and thank them for raising funds for such an important cause.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Glace Bay.

RESOLUTION NO. 2389

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

Whereas this NDP Government has raised taxes, hiked user fees, and stood by silently as power rates skyrocketed, gas prices increased by over 25 cents per litre, and the price of a healthy basket of food for a family of four rose by close to \$100 per month; and

Whereas since the NDP took power in 2009, there are 12,500 more Nova Scotians without jobs and 14,800 more Nova Scotians have given up entirely and exited the workforce; and

Whereas under the NDP, rural Nova Scotia has been hit particularly hard in the past year, with 2,100 jobs lost in Cape Breton, 1,400 jobs lost in the North Shore region, 600 jobs lost in the Valley, and 2,500 jobs lost in the southern region of Nova Scotia;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly condemn the NDP for raising taxes and fees and standing by silently while power, gas, and food prices have risen by unacceptable rates and for their inaction on the 12,500 jobs which have been lost under their watch.

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

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

Is it agreed?

I hear several Noes.

The notice is tabled.

The honourable member for Cape Breton North.

RESOLUTION NO. 2390

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

Whereas the Johnny Miles Festival packed 28 events into a five-day festival built around hometown hero Johnny Miles; and

Whereas in 1926, at the age of 20, Johnny Miles won the Boston Marathon, breaking the record for the prestigious race and finishing a full four minutes ahead of the runner-up, all in a pair of 95-cent sneakers; and

Whereas the Johnny Miles Festival Society presented a jam-packed, five-day event based on the theme of fitness, culture, and music;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate the festival organizers and volunteers on an extremely successful festival and wish them continued success.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Kings West.

RESOLUTION NO. 2391

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

Whereas Dunachton Gale, a three-time winner as Atlantic Canada Horse of the Year, has a special place in the hearts of owner Dave Fillmore of West Berwick and Phil Pinkney, the legendary Nova Scotia trainer and driver; and

Whereas Dunachton Gale won 14 of his 16 starts as a three-year-old and was second in the other two races, was named Atlantic Canada Horse of the Year in 2006 and again in 2007, and was inducted into the Berwick Hall of Fame at their annual ceremony in 2011; and

Whereas Dunachton Gale was retired to stud in 2005 and now resides at Pictonian Farms in Pictou County, where his offspring will hopefully follow in his hoof-steps;

Therefore be it resolved that the House of Assembly recognize the outstanding accomplishments of Dunachton Gale, his trainer Phil Pinkney, and owners the Fillmore family of Berwick, and thank Carol Boylan-Hartling for reading the citation.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Victoria-The Lakes.

RESOLUTION NO. 2392

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

Whereas MacKenzie's Country Store, located across from the Little Narrows Ferry, is now in its sixth successful year of business; and

Whereas MacKenzie's is a true country store with a varied inventory that includes hardware items, groceries, lottery tickets, ice cream, and fresh, hot coffee; and

Whereas MacKenzie's Country Store is owned and operated by Louise MacKenzie, who also has some great help from Brian, Barbara, and Liz;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly wish Louise MacKenzie and the staff of MacKenzie's Country Store 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 Yarmouth.

RESOLUTION NO. 2393

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

Whereas Jeff Muise's cycling career has included many impressive highlights, including the 2002 junior provincial road racing title, a third-place finish in the Nova Scotia Provincial Individual Time Trial Championships, winning the Bicycle Nova Scotia Point Series Championship, and several other podium finishes in Atlantic Canada; and

Whereas on November 19, 2011, the 35th Annual Yarmouth County Athletic Awards banquet was held at the Yarmouth Lions Club; and

Whereas Jeff Muise was named 2011 Yarmouth County Athlete of the Year;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly congratulate Jeff Muise on being named the 2011 Yarmouth County Athlete of the Year at the 35th Annual Yarmouth County Athletic Awards banquet, wish him much future success in the sport of cycling, and thank him for his contribution to sport in Yarmouth.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Cape Breton West.

RESOLUTION NO. 2394

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

Whereas Morgan Shepard, son of Glenn and Eleanor Shepard of Louisbourg, was recently named Male Athlete of the Year at the George D. Lewis School; and

Whereas Morgan participated in baseball, basketball, hockey, and track and field; and

Whereas this is a great honour for Morgan to have received this award as he starts his high school career;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Morgan on receiving this award and wish him every success as he continues on in high 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 member for Clare.

RESOLUTION NO. 2395

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

Whereas Barb Everett, a resident of Tideview Terrace in Digby, has been a devoted fan for many years of country music superstar Reba McEntire and never had the opportunity to see her perform live; and

Whereas recreation student Julienne LeBlanc decided to contact concert promoters, the Cressman Sakamoto Agency in British Columbia, for complimentary tickets for Barb after Reba's Halifax concert was sold out and received three tickets, though the next challenge faced was to find a way for Barb to get to Halifax to attend the concert; and

Whereas after contacting manager Claredon Robicheau of Le Transport de Clare for assistance, the use of one wheelchair-accessible van and a volunteer driver were offered to help take Barb to see her country music idol in Halifax;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking Julienne LeBlanc, promoter Cressman Sakamoto Agency, and Le Transport de Clare in helping make Barb Everett's dream come true.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Cape Breton North.

RESOLUTION NO. 2396

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

Whereas Carol Bradbury, a North Sydney native now living in Alberta, took part in the 2011 Canadian Death Race in Grande Cashe, Alberta; and

Whereas the 125-kilometre course began and finished on a 4,200-foot plateau, passed over three mountain summits, and included a 17,000-foot elevation change and a major river crossing at Hell's Gate Canyon; and

Whereas the 36-year-old mother of two finished 85th place out of 360 competitors in just over 22 hours and finished seventh in the 30 to 39 age group;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly congratulate Carol for her determination and endurance and for her impressive finish in the 2011 Canadian Death Race.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Colchester North.

RESOLUTION NO. 2397

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

Whereas Hannah Martin, a student at North Colchester High School in Tatamagouche, Colchester North, took third place overall in the regional competition of the Canada-Wide Science Fair; and

Whereas Hannah's study on the relative health of local youth won her a cash prize, a school plaque, and qualification as a member of the team representing Nova Scotia at the Canada-Wide Science Fair in Toronto; and

Whereas Hannah won a bronze medal of excellence in the junior category, a cash prize, and an entrance scholarship to the University of Western Ontario;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Hannah for winning this prestigious award and for representing and bringing acclaim to 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 Argyle.

RESOLUTION NO. 2398

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

Whereas birthdays are an occasion for family and friends to gather together to celebrate the life of an individual; and

Whereas on July 23, 2011, Mrs. Blanche Doucet celebrated her 90th birthday; and

Whereas to have reached 90 years of age and continue to be active and share a lifetime of memories with your loved ones is a wonderful reason to celebrate;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Blanche Doucet on reaching this milestone of her life and wish her many more happy birthdays and continued good health.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Bedford-Birch Cove.

RESOLUTION NO. 2399

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

Whereas in 2011, Halifax's Maskwa Aquatic Club had an outstanding year, growing their paddling program to more than 260 paddlers and with the addition of nearly 50 more athletes, sent its largest contingent ever to an out-of-province Nationals competition; and

Whereas at the Nationals, Maskwa broke into the prestigious top 10 ranked clubs in the country, and the midget men came second in overall points and the junior women came third overall; and

Whereas the many volunteers who support the club's activities from fundraising to coaching have made it possible to provide the opportunities enjoyed by all Maskwa participants;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate all of the athletes and volunteers with Maskwa for the dedication that has propelled the club to triumph at home and abroad.

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.

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

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

PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 102.

Bill No. 102 - Trade Union Act.

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

MR. KEITH BAIN. Mr. Speaker, if I could ask how much time I have left to speak?

MR. SPEAKER: I think you have seven minutes - yes.

MR. BAIN: I'm certainly going to have to try to get a lot in in seven minutes because I know we all have a lot to say about this.

Mr. Speaker, on Friday, when I stood in my place, I said that I've never once had a constituent come to my office and tell me that Nova Scotia needed first contract arbitration. Well, I can let you know that I was home on the weekend in my constituency and again, no one came. Not even when I went to church or in the shopping centre, nobody said a thing about first contract arbitration on the positive side but I did have two or three constituents come and say, what is the government doing here? What are they trying to do? I only wish I had been able to provide them with an answer because I don't think anybody knows what this government is trying to do.

Today the Nova Scotia Chambers of Commerce expressed its disappointment with the introduction of this bill. Here we have an organization that represents approximately 7,000 businesses in this province; they say this bill does absolutely nothing to promote business growth or retention here in Nova Scotia.

Even worse is the fact that these businesses - large and small - that are members of the Chambers of Commerce have expressed their concern to the Premier and to this government, but it has fallen on deaf ears - the same deaf ears they fell on when Bill No. 100 was introduced. This same group and other groups among them presented to government their concerns. No one listened. They've never been given any rationale, Mr. Speaker, in why the government is putting forward this legislation. I guess what this does is speak volumes of the attitude of this government towards business in Nova Scotia.

Now, along with the Nova Scotia Chambers of Commerce, we also have the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, the Canadian Restaurant and Foodservices Association, and the Retail Council of Canada - all have expressed concern. It begs the question, again - who is pressuring the government to act in introducing this legislation? Where is the desire to put this legislation coming from? I certainly hope the members, who spoke across the floor to me when I was speaking on Friday, will stand in their place as time permits and explain to us where this is coming from. I mentioned that there certainly weren't any loud calls and there was nobody on the streets looking for first contract arbitration and I don't think there were any tie-ups of traffic over the weekend either.

Mr. Speaker, we know that this request has not come from business and we know the importance of small, medium and large businesses in this province, but again the government turns their back on business. This government has their priorities in the wrong

place, it says a lot about their priorities. At a time when the top priority of every single person in this House should be on creating jobs, those people across the floor have decided their top priority is to bring forward legislation that will kill jobs in this province, bring forward legislation that no one that we're aware of has ever asked for. Where is the priority?

I mentioned on Friday as well, Mr. Speaker, about businesses that want to come to Nova Scotia to set up and the uncertainty that they face - and I don't think we have to talk about businesses that come to Nova Scotia. What about individuals in this province that wants to set up business? In order to set up a business in this province, you have to have a business plan. How can you have a business plan when you don't know how many people you can employ or how much you're going to be paying them? It's pretty hard to set up business, whether you live within Nova Scotia or whether you've come from outside this province.

Mr. Speaker, I know that I have very little time left. I mentioned before what I heard over the weekend. It was absolutely nothing in favour of first contract arbitration but a lot of unanswered questions. I hope the members opposite have had their opportunity, over the weekend, to think about the negative impacts that this first contract arbitration will have. I don't think I need to make anyone in this House aware of where the Progressive Conservative caucus stands on first contract arbitration but I do look forward to the debate that will be taking place in this House over the next number of hours. I also look forward to hearing from the members on the government side, to speak of the wonderful things about this bill because we haven't heard anything yet. Having said that, I'll take my seat, thank you.

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

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to also join the debate on Bill No. 102. I noticed that during the introduction of the bill, the Government House Leader referred to it as the Trade Union Act, but the actual title is an Act to Prevent Unnecessary Labour Disruptions and Protect the Economy by Amending Chapter 475 of the Revised Statutes, 1989, the Trade Union Act - talking about amending the Trade Union Act.

It makes one go back to asking themselves, what unnecessary labour disruptions have we had in Nova Scotia? I think if you go back and look - and I think even government acknowledged this in many of their introductions talking in particular about this bill or answering questions in the House and at various times in the media, have talked about - really, we've only had three disruptions in the province on first contract and I'm not even sure, quite frankly, they were on first contract. But there were only three occasions - I think since 1997 - where we had a situation where it was deemed, one side or the other was bargaining in bad faith or not bargaining.

Interestingly enough, in Nova Scotia, what we have is a mechanism inside the Department of Labour and Advanced Education where either one of the two Parties can appeal to, which has happened, I know, and the minister's department has interfered, so it goes back to the basic question. I know that the member for Victoria-The Lakes was asking when I'd asked in the media about whether or not we supported this piece of legislation. I said, we would like to see government stand up and tell us what problem they are trying to fix. What problem are they trying to address with this piece of legislation?

When we talk about the fact that there have only been three unnecessary labour disruptions since 1997, you would think there would be more pressing labour issues in Nova Scotia, you would think there would be more pressing issues for government to be focused on. Mr. Speaker, when you think about the fact that 12,500 Nova Scotians have lost their jobs, you ask yourself, does this piece of legislation put anyone back to work?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No, no.

MR. MCNEIL: The answer I'm hearing in the House is "no". But I think when we asked Nova Scotians does this piece of legislation put anyone back to work? Equally as important, Mr. Speaker, there are thousands of Nova Scotians who have left the workforce - for various reasons. We have our own view; government has their view as to why they have left. The fact of the matter is they have given up looking. Does this piece of legislation at all give them hope? I don't believe so, Mr. Speaker. When we go back to asking ourselves what was the original problem that government was trying to fix, it won't put anyone back to work, it will give no one hope about future employment in the Province of Nova Scotia.

Mr. Speaker, we have many challenging things affecting our province that are causing businesses across this province to grow. Unnecessary labour disruptions isn't one of them; I think even government acknowledges that. I know that they have acknowledged it outside of this House, they acknowledged it in the House, that unnecessary labour disruptions have not been a problem in Nova Scotia. Yet, we are standing here talking about a bill that is just that, trying to fix a problem that, in government's own words, doesn't exist.

The other aspect and the other part of the title, which is very interesting - it says "Protect the Economy" of Nova Scotia. Mr. Speaker, this bill addresses a problem that doesn't exist so we ask, how is that protecting the economy? How is that making us more competitive? How is that giving the entrepreneurs of our community hope about investing in their business and operation?

Mr. Speaker, when I talk to business owners across this province about the challenges they face, the challenges inside of our province, unnecessary labour disruptions has never come up, it has never even been part of the conversation. I can tell you, I've heard an awful lot about power rates. Now, we have some real solutions facing that

problem that is affecting every Nova Scotian and every small business. That should be the kind of legislation we should be debating. That should be the kind of stuff, in my view, that we should be talking about in this House.

Mr. Speaker, that is a real problem facing all of Nova Scotia and all Nova Scotians. We've asked government repeatedly to do a performance value audit of Nova Scotia Power, to no response. Well they suggested there was too much paperwork, I hear. I can tell you, when business is looking at that and saying, why don't we focus on a real problem that is facing my workforce and my ability to be profitable, instead of talking about an issue that, quite frankly, doesn't exist in Nova Scotia - what is the answer? We're asking government to give them an answer. Why would we be addressing an issue that doesn't matter and isn't a problem, and ignoring one that is?

Mr. Speaker, we've gone through power rates to look for a 5 per cent increase - which is now before the Utility and Review Board - across the entire rate base. Lo and behold, before the URB even approves that, they're looking for a 3.2 per cent increase in the fuel adjustment mechanism. That will have a really negative impact on job creation and employment in the Province of Nova Scotia and that is a real problem being faced by the business community here. Yet we are talking about Bill No. 102 - an Act to Prevent Unnecessary Labour Disruptions and Protect the Economy by Amending Chapter 475 of the Revised Statutes, 1989, the Trade Union Act. The very title tells us it's not a problem.

Mr. Speaker, when we look at the fact that there have been three since 1997, why would we be addressing that? I'm hoping at some point that someone in government will address that particular issue - why would we be dealing with this bill and not the real problems facing Nova Scotians?

You know, Mr. Speaker, many of the small businesses talk about the taxes they're paying in this province and they also talk about the lowest income tax threshold - in the province it is \$400,000 where a small business starts paying, unlike in our neighbouring province where it's \$500,000. That's a real problem. That's one that if government brought it in and started talking about it, we could have a debate about it, because it's a real fundamental problem in our province. It's a problem that's being faced by every small business across Nova Scotia. This is not one of them.

Mr. Speaker, that would go a long way to protecting our economy. This piece of legislation doesn't protect our economy; it's dealing with a problem that doesn't exist in Nova Scotia. You know, that's what people want to know from government - why would we bring in a piece of legislation to address a problem that's not being faced by us, not being faced by our economy? It's not being faced by any small business across the province. (Interruptions)

THE PREMIER: It's not a problem.

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, that's exactly it. I hear the Premier say it's not a problem. That's my exact point - why are we doing it? Why aren't we addressing the problems? I look forward to the Premier standing in his place and telling all Nova Scotians why he's dealing with a problem that doesn't exist and not dealing with power rates, for example; not dealing with small-business tax, the low threshold in our province; not dealing with the 12,500 people who have lost employment under his watch.

Mr. Speaker, this piece of legislation will not put one of them back to work, not one of them, and it won't give hope to one of those 14,000 Nova Scotians who have given up looking for work. Nova Scotians just want their Premier to focus on a real problem that affects them every day. We've given him a number of options.

Mr. Speaker, they're crying out for someone to look at power. We've asked the Premier to do a very simple act and that's to do a performance value audit of Nova Scotia Power. He has ignored it, but I'm going to tell you that's a real problem for Nova Scotians. We've talked to him. (Interruptions) Under his watch he added the NDP electricity tax; he has added onto power bills. All we're asking him to do is order a performance value audit of Nova Scotia Power to make sure that they've done everything inside of their operation that every other small business had to do to protect the economy of Nova Scotia and not be focused on an issue that doesn't really exist in the Province of Nova Scotia.

Mr. Speaker, we've asked the Premier to live up to his commitment, when he was in Opposition, about decoupling the tax on a litre of gas. That is a real problem facing all Nova Scotians, and I'm going to tell you, it's a problem that exists in Nova Scotia. It existed when he was in Opposition and it still exists two years later while he's in government. I would encourage the Premier to start focusing on issues that really are a problem for Nova Scotians and not ones that aren't here, ones that don't exist across our province.

Mr. Speaker, if the Premier wants to start looking at how we are going to grow jobs in the Province of Nova Scotia, one of them is not bringing in a piece of legislation that - by his own minister's admission and his own admission - there isn't a problem for. I would encourage him to start trying to fix the problems that Nova Scotians are faced with.

I would agree with the member for Victoria-The Lakes. No one has come to my office in my constituency looking for first contract arbitration - not a single person. I'll tell you, I've had an awful lot of people come through my door talking about power rates. I've had an awful lot of people come through my door talking about the fact that gas prices are too high. I've had a few people - not a large number - come in and talk to me about why we're the only province still charging corporate tax. I've had that. Nobody has talked to me about first contract arbitration. Not a single person.

I ask myself, why is government focused on that? When I look across at the number of other bills that have been brought forward - very much wordsmithing in many ways -

there has been nothing of real housekeeping, nothing of real substance. I keep asking myself, why would we bring in a piece of legislation to address something that doesn't exist in Nova Scotia? I'm wondering, who would have asked for it?

I know I've asked the minister in this House, because there has been some belief in the province that somebody had directed the government to look at this, but in fact, the minister has said that she had actually directed the Labour Management Review Committee to look at it on her behalf. What we haven't seen is why. Why?

I hear the Premier say it's good legislation. I wish he'd focus on something that would actually deal with a real problem for Nova Scotians. He could be right, but I just wish he'd stand up and say why he's bringing it in and what problem it's going to fix. I wish he'd point to one Nova Scotian who is going to be employed by this piece of legislation. I wish he'd point to one business that will stay in business because of this legislation or one business that might grow. He can't. He knows he has had a conversation with Michelin and he knows they said that future investments could be hindered by this piece of legislation. We know, for one thing, that we can't point to one job, but we can certainly point to one occasion where potential growth may be stunted. That is the issue here.

This piece of legislation is not an issue facing Nova Scotians today. The Premier talks about the challenges being faced, blaming everything on what's happening globally - why there has been a downturn, why we've had one of the lowest-growing economies of all the provinces in the country, the list goes on. Why would he bring in a piece of legislation that would address none of our challenges while one that won't fix a single thing is in front of us?

I found it rather interesting as we were talking about this piece of legislation as a group, and we've had a number of presentations made to our caucus by small business owners across the province who are very concerned. More often than not, they keep asking, why now, and what are you trying to fix? No one has answered those questions.

I think it's incumbent on government, if they want to sell a piece of legislation to the people of the province, to answer those two very basic questions. We all talk about too much red tape; we all talk about too much bureaucracy. Well, here's a real example of bringing in a piece of legislation for the sake of bringing in legislation that doesn't fix the problem, because the problem is non-existent. So why would you do it? Is it an add-on to Bill No. 100 and what's next? Is there something to that? We deal with a labour bill as we go down through each session under this government, moving forward more and more and tilting the balance more toward taking away collective bargaining, quite frankly.

This piece of legislation is anti-collective bargaining, in my view. I was very proud and pleased to stand with health care workers against Bill No. 1, supporting their right to strike. I thought it was very important, and we as a caucus did that. I was thrilled to be part

of that. I think this bill is actually being the opposite, it's tilting the balance and taking it away from an employer's right to say no and have a third party to determine what that future arbitration may be.

I want to go back to what I hear an awful lot about. We talk about what's going on in the Strait, pending jobs; we're talking about what's going on in Queens, about the pending jobs losses; we talk Fundy Gypsum, Composites Atlantic, and the list goes on. I'm hearing names being thrown out all over the place. I can tell you, since 1997 we've had three labour disruptions where we had to bring the Labour Department in to fix it. I can tell you, every week we get three more companies telling us they are laying people off. Those are real problems and this piece of legislation will not fix that. What we're asking from government is to focus on things that will actually create jobs in the Province of Nova Scotia, will give business owners some confidence in investing in Nova Scotia, so that Nova Scotians can feel some comfort that there is a future in front of them here in the Province of Nova Scotia and not feel that their government has lost its way and is focusing on an issue that doesn't exist.

Mr. Speaker, one of things we've been all asking is the question of why. I had spoken to the minister, I think during Question Period, during a question we talked about the issue of what happened at the annual meeting of the Canadian Federation of Labour that you were at and the person stepped up to the microphone and it was quite a picture. The minister was at the mic and Rick Clarke was to her right and Joan Jessome was to her left and you could hear the voice in the background. To paraphrase, the statement was, we worked hard and campaigned for you, this is payback, and we're wondering what they meant by that. What do they mean by payback? It doesn't create a single job in the private sector. Not a single job is going to be created by this piece of legislation. There won't be one job; it won't give hope to one Nova Scotian who is looking for employment, but what would that union leader have meant by saying this is payback? What did they mean by that? I hope that's going to be addressed by what's happening.

This piece of legislation will have no impact on a union member across our province. This, quite frankly, will not affect one unionized member in Nova Scotia, all of whom have had their first contract behind them. This will not affect them, so what did they mean by it's our payday? What would they have meant?

AN HON. MEMBER: Michelin or a new mill.

MR. MCNEIL: Michelin could be it, it could be that it's easier to certify, perhaps, I don't know. I don't know but I can tell you, with all the people that I know who work for Michelin, the last thing they are focused on today is the union. They want to grow that company that has treated them well. They want to ensure that those 35 jobs exist for another generation of Nova Scotians, and equally as important, when Michelin International decides to invest in their operation, they want them to be able to look at Nova Scotia as a place to do business not a place to look away from.

Mr. Speaker, this piece of legislation doesn't allow that to grow the economy of the Province of Nova Scotia. So what was meant by payday? Who were they referring to? I think it's a legitimate question to ask. What piece of legislation is next? Who? What would come next? I think those are questions that government should respond to.

Mr. Speaker, we have talked about this, you've been forced to go through Question Period since the House sat through. We've talked about job creation. We've talked about responding to those 12,500 Nova Scotians who have been unemployed since this government has gone into power. I keep going back to the fact this piece of legislation provides them no hope. It doesn't put them back to work. It doesn't deal with the power issues faced by every small business and every home owner in the Province of Nova Scotia. It doesn't deal with the price of gas. It doesn't deal with their uncompetitive tax structure. It doesn't do anything to put someone back to work. So what would they mean by payback? It was rather interesting to watch that question because immediately Rick Clarke stepped in before the minister answered and said we had to wait. What were they waiting for? Ten days so they could ignore anything that has come in before the panel? What were they waiting for?

Mr. Speaker, I would be curious as we go through this and I hope the minister follows through on this debate, that we start talking, that they'll explain. Is there any other part of this package that is called payback that we should know about? Is there anything we should prepare for down the road? Is there anything else that Nova Scotia business owners should be worried about?

It is interesting because what is really interesting and every time we start talking about first contract, the Premier says this doesn't affect non-unionized workplaces. I would contend this piece of legislation actually affects every - that's all it affects, is non-unionized workplaces. They have all gone through first contract, Mr. Speaker. This piece of legislation allows certification to be easier and it won't create a single job, will not create one job in the Province of Nova Scotia.

What we are worried about and we hope as we go through this debate and as the people come before the Law Amendments Committee, someone stands up and I hope that maybe the person who said to the minister that this is payback or payday, this is our payday, I hope they come before the Law Amendments Committee and explain what they meant by that because if it's a legitimate reason, Mr. Speaker, we might support the bill - highly unlikely but we might, if they would come forward and explain that.

We are looking forward to anyone to come in and suggest that this is a good piece of legislation for Nova Scotians. I see the Premier paying attention - I would encourage anyone to come before the Law Amendments Committee and tell us why this is a good piece of legislation and explain to us how this is going to create jobs for Nova Scotians. (Interruptions)

Mr. Speaker, I'm looking forward to the member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island to say a few words. Fortunately for him, on this side of the House every member has a right to stand up and say a few words. I can't speak for that caucus, but I can tell you that in this caucus they don't have to ask me, their right was given to them by the people who elected them and they'll stand and speak. I would encourage that member to stop looking at the Premier and show the courage and stand up and say what he has to say so his constituents can mark him for what he wants to say.

Mr. Speaker, I want to tell you when this goes back, when we go out in the community and ask them, what are they being faced with, do you know what? They are worried about the uncertainty of their jobs. They are worried about the expenses their families are facing. They are worried about the fact that the wages have not increased. As a matter of fact, their buying power has dwindled under this government.

Mr. Speaker, when you think that we've increased the HST by 2 per cent, that's more and more money out of the pockets of Nova Scotians on each and every transaction they do. We've added the NDP electricity tax to electricity bills. That's another cost.

When you start going down the list, you can go from community to community to community about layoffs, not one of them look at this piece of legislation as any hope for employment. Not one person has said to us, this piece of legislation will fix the challenges faced by my business. Not one person has said to us, this will give us greater hope for finding employment in Nova Scotia. Not one business owner has said, this would cause me to invest more in my business in Nova Scotia.

Mr. Speaker, we're trying to find out what it is government wants to fix with that. If it's not to create jobs, if it's not to give people hope, if it's not to cause business owners and communities to invest in their businesses and operations, what is the purpose of it?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Payback, payback.

MR. MCNEIL: If it is payback, if it is payday, I want the minister and government to stand up and explain that to Nova Scotians. I would hope when someone says it is payday or payback, they mean it's our way to help grow the economy of the Province of Nova Scotia. Maybe they have some way of doing it through this piece of legislation that no one else knows about. If they do, share it with us. Let us know.

I am looking forward to the Committee on Law Amendments, as it happens. I'm looking forward to hearing from business owners across this province. I'm looking forward to hearing from union leaders to come forward to express why they believe this is a good piece of legislation for Nova Scotians. I hope they accept that challenge, I hope they come in and talk to the Committee on Law Amendments and explain to them why they believe this is such a good piece of legislation for the people of Nova Scotia.

I'm looking forward to business operators coming in and I encourage any of them who believe this piece of legislation is a positive thing for their business to tell us. I encourage them if they believe it isn't, to also tell us. Regardless of where I have travelled, there has been a lot of uncertainty and concern around first contract arbitration.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, first contract arbitration, which is part of this piece of legislation, there's about five or six different versions of it across the country. This version, which is based on Manitoba, has never been supported by a Liberal Party. The government has talked about first contract arbitration being brought in by Liberals. I can tell you it is a very different piece of legislation than this one.

It's very simple. (Interruptions) Mr. Speaker, we'll be more than happy to tell them the details. As a matter of fact, we might even be willing to fix a flawed piece of legislation that they have now. I hear the Premier suggest we bring in our own and I'll tell the Premier we're focused on issues that matter to Nova Scotians, not something that doesn't exist. We're trying to deal with problems that matter to Nova Scotians. Since he has been in power, 12,500 Nova Scotians have lost their jobs, that should be something he should be focused on. It's a pretty sad - the Premier doesn't have to argue with us, he can argue with StatsCan - 14,000 and he knows it. (Interruptions)

I heard the Premier say we're distorting the facts. This is one fact, the HST has gone up 2 per cent under his leadership and he never told Nova Scotians that. He also told Nova Scotians he was going to balance the books every year and that has not happened. Minor details, minor details. As a matter of fact, I will stand by our numbers any time with the Premier.

It's also that Premier who did 1,400 user fees that affect Nova Scotians' income every day. And not do it here. Get it outside, Mr. Speaker. One thing, they ask what we did, here's one thing we didn't do, we didn't mislead Nova Scotians. The fact of the matter is, Nova Scotians were hoping for change in June 2009. They were hoping for the government to focus on issues that matter to them, real problems being faced by them, their communities and the business people that live in their communities. What they have is a government focused on an issue that doesn't exist; payday for somebody and we don't know why. I hope that as government stands and starts talking about this piece of legislation, I hope when the minister closes debate at some point down the road, that she will lay that out.

I want to encourage government, I want to encourage all Nova Scotians to come forward and express their views on this piece of legislation. If they like it, tell us; if they think this will create a job in their community, tell us; if they think this will create hope in their community, tell us; if they think this will encourage someone to invest in their community, tell us.

Mr. Speaker, if I was in government, I wouldn't want to wait for that lineup to occur, because it doesn't exist and they know it. Not one of the people who have gone behind closed doors and told them this piece of legislation is an important piece will come forward. I hope the minister who asked this committee to look at this piece of legislation will tell us at some point who asked her to do that or if it was something she did on her own, something that had been pressing for her.

It is important for Nova Scotians to understand why in this House we're trying to fix a problem that doesn't exist when there's uncertainty from every community, from one end of this province to the other, for the lack of jobs, people who have given up looking for work, high power rates - another increase on the way - one of the highest motive fuel taxes in the country, and the list goes on. Those are real issues facing real people, facing every one of our constituencies. This piece of legislation will not address one of them.

It's my hope, as we move forward into the Law Amendments Committee, that Nova Scotians will come and send a very clear message to this government: start focusing on the things that matter to me and my family, not the things that matter to the people who knocked on the doors with you during the election campaign.

Mr. Speaker, with those few remarks, I'll take my place.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle.

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to stand and speak for a bit on the bill before us: FCA, or first contract arbitration.

Mr. Speaker, listen, let's put it up front. What is the most offensive aspect of this bill? Well, the most offensive issue is how it showed up in this Legislature - only a few short weeks after Nova Scotia rejoiced about hearing about the Irving Shipyard contract in Halifax, that it was going to be the recipient of a \$25 billion contract. Nova Scotia was well buoyed and happy with this announcement. The announcement was supposed to build a foundation for Nova Scotia to grow long into the future, with no end in sight to the new jobs and economic spinoffs that would accompany it. However, this has all been rocked with uncertainty due to the NDP's first contract arbitration.

Now, the member for Annapolis and the member for Victoria-The Lakes spoke of having no phone calls. Over the years, nobody has talked about first contract arbitration, knocked on our doors, sent us a letter, or approached us even once. Not once has that ever happened to anybody in our caucus, and by the sound of it, no one in the Liberal caucus has ever gotten a phone call that said, hey, this is something that we would like to see, this is something that is important.

So I'm just going to make the offer right now, dissuade me. Call my office, call the caucus office, and tell us why first contract arbitration is important and we'll judge right

now. We haven't been told one way or another that this is a good thing. Not one person has called and said, this is good, this is what we need, we need to do it quickly, or that this trumps any of the important issues that are facing Nova Scotia right now. Our Leader said it best - all this legislation does is raise a red flag over Nova Scotia. It tells businesses that this is a risky place to invest and we're really going to make the most of our new shipbuilding opportunity when we're not getting the full benefits of these new businesses - the new jobs and other positive economic spinoffs that they'll provide.

It is pretty clear, Mr. Speaker, that that answer is no. The government can try to hide it as much as they want, but the truth is that first contract arbitration is a job killer. Not only does it dissuade new businesses from setting up shop in the region but it presents significant challenges for those ones that are already in operation. These challenges can have devastating effects on the job creators and the employees, and in many cases can even result in a business closing and jobs being lost.

No two ways about it, Mr. Speaker, it is a job-killer - it is that plain and simple. And I know the Premier will say that's simply not true, but there are a number of examples across Canada that prove our point that it is a job-killer - so you don't have to take my word for it. There are cases around the country where first contract arbitration, in one form or another, has resulted in job losses and, of course, hardship for many ordinary families.

Last week the member for Victoria-The Lakes told us about Treats, a café or coffee shop in Saskatchewan that employed students. The owner of Treats found first contract imposed upon them and was forced to get out of the business shortly thereafter. That wasn't a one-off case, Mr. Speaker, there are others. (Interruption)

I'm going to have another example and if the member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island wants to take his hour in a few moments and dissuade me . . .

MR. LEONARD PREYRA: They didn't go out of business.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: No, but they don't have an operation in Saskatchewan. Is there a Treats - will the member stand and tell me if there is a Treats in Saskatchewan? I know what the answer is, there is no more Treats in Saskatchewan. So you can tell the people in Saskatchewan, oh, well, sorry, first contract arbitration was maybe good for others, but it wasn't good for you, sorry about that.

Maybe that member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island will want to speak for an hour, spend his time, explain to us on the Opposition benches why this is a good idea. I hope he'll take his opportunity because every member in this House of Assembly has the opportunity to speak to any of the bills and tell us why they feel one bill is good or why a bill is bad.

Mr. Speaker, I have another example why this is a bad piece of legislation and why this is a job-killer - cases around the country where first contract arbitration have resulted

in job losses. Let's look at the example of the Maloney Walmart in Gatineau, Quebec. We all know, of course, that Walmart . . .

MR. PREYRA: You would know baloney.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, Gatineau Maloney. Had he been listening, he would have known that I said "Maloney" and not "baloney" - like what is coming out of his mouth right now. (Laughter)

We all know that Walmart is a major employer in the country. Thousands upon thousands of Canadians depend on Walmart's success to keep food on the table. Like most major companies, Walmart has a business model that they follow to ensure success and to remain competitive. (Interruption) Mr. Speaker, you have something . . .

MR. SPEAKER: No, no, I'll address it at a future date.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: Okay, all right, thank you. If "baloney" is the wrong word, I retract that comment and, hopefully, the member opposite will retract his as well.

Walmart has a business model that it follows to ensure success, to remain competitive. Everyone knows that the Walmart business model revolves around their commitment to offering the lowest prices possible, and that makes Walmart such a draw for many Canadians. After all, for many, Walmart is a source of relief. Low-income families in Nova Scotia and across the country have come to depend on Walmart's competitive pricing.

In this case of the Gatineau Maloney Walmart, a tire and lube department covered nine employees - four full time and five part time - and these employees engaged in a variety of basic maintenance operations for vehicles in a department adjacent to the main Walmart store. The nine in the tire and lube department were represented by Local No. 486 of the United Food and Commercial Workers of Canada. In 2005, at the time for application for certification, the workers in the tire and lube department formed their own group for the purposes of collective representation by the Quebec Labour Relations Commission - ours is patterned after something very similar to that.

After all, while they had some things in common with other Walmart employees they worked with, the jobs required special training, a driver's licence, and other certifications that are unique to their positions. Additionally, they worked different schedules and their holiday planning was managed separately from the other employees.

In 2006 the union representing the Walmart tire and lube department applied for first contract arbitration. Initially, Walmart came to the table with an agreeable mindset and the two parties were able to work out almost all of their differences. In the end there were five outstanding issues - you probably can figure out what they are, we hear them very

often - length of the first contract, the pay scale, the rate of pay for work on Boxing Day, the continuation of a store performance bonus scheme for the unionized employees, and of course, wages.

Regarding the pay scale, Walmart argued that all tire and lube technicians are part of a store-wide wage scale in Canada. Their starting wage is subject to annual increases over 10 years with other incentives built in. Annual evaluations would accord increases between 20 cents an hour for a satisfactory performance and 50 cents an hour for an exceptional performance.

Walmart also has a policy respecting the differential within legal minimum wage rates across Canada. This means that, depending on the jurisdiction, the starting rate for employees may or may not be the lowest on the Walmart scale and employees may instead be bumped up the scale in order to match with the legal minimum wages in their jurisdiction. Of course, the comparisons amongst other businesses of similar business - Canadian Tire, Goodwrench, you can name a number of organizations that maybe do the same thing - they need to make sure they fall within a range of that.

So Walmart reiterated that their entire business model is dependent on offering a competitive price for goods and services so that they could not afford to pay much beyond the current wages. The union would not relent. Walmart eventually did express a willingness to grant 30 cents an hour more wage increase based on seniority, each anniversary of the date of hiring, widely seen as a concession on their part. However, if the arbitrator decided to alter Walmart's wage scale in Quebec, the company would regretfully be obliged to close the tire and lube department at this store.

Ultimately the arbitrator would side with the union on all of the controversial issues. The result, Walmart's business model - which had made it a success across the country and resulted in hiring of thousands upon thousands of Canadians - would have to be thrown out of the window with regard to the Gatineau Maloney tire and lube department; this would hinder Walmart's competitiveness.

In the end, the employees at the tire and lube department in Gatineau, at the Gatineau Maloney Walmart would receive a 33 per cent raise, 33 per cent from private business. But they wouldn't enjoy the benefits of it long. Two months later Walmart was forced to close the tire and lube department at that store, resulting in jobs being lost. Walmart noted that the wage increase would simply render their business model moot and they would have to increase prices. However, Walmart did offer concerned employees the possibility of a transfer to another store in the region with a tire and lube operation.

The events surrounding the tire and lube department at that Walmart served as clear evidence of the kind of damage first contract arbitration can do. Do you really think those workers are better off because they got a raise for two months? The answer, of course, is no. At the end of the day, Walmart realized they just couldn't compete with the terms the

first contract arbitration had imposed on them and they were forced to move and forced to eliminate those positions.

So who wins? The employees didn't win. Walmart doesn't win either. First contract arbitration ends up being a loser for all those parties involved in this.

Mr. Speaker, it's very obvious that the NDP doesn't get it. Despite having members of the PC caucus stand up here in this House and rhyme off examples of first contract arbitration killing jobs, they refuse to even slow down and talk about it, refuse to listen to reason. Instead, they are intent on ramming this job-killing legislation through the House as soon as possible so they can go back to their special-interest friends and say, look at what we did; see, we've got your back. I'll talk about that more in a few moments.

I'm going to talk to a quick piece of an article in The Halifax ChronicleHerald. This was in Saturday's ChronicleHerald, and I'll table it as soon as I'm done talking to it. It is an article that was called "First contract bill debate may drag on." I particularly wanted to go to what the Government House Leader said and it goes like this: "Government House leader . . . also the deputy premier, said he's finding some of the opposition's rhetoric a bit over the top." It is quotes like this, "It's little bit like the sky is falling, but it is what it is," he said. 'If they want to . . . filibuster, that's their right, but we all know at the end of the day, that it's a majority government. We know at some point in time this bill will pass.'"

Mr. Speaker, it goes to say, of course, they will be using their majority in this House of Assembly and ramming this bill through as soon as we're done speaking to it. Their minds are made up, which is unfortunate, because there are many people now who are starting to speak of this and are speaking negatively to first contract arbitration - in my community, speaking in church, speaking at the coffee shop - I heard many negative things about first contract arbitration and why this is job-killing.

Of course, they pretend the only people opposing their extreme anti-business agenda are us or other politicians. They are trying to pretend it isn't an issue outside the walls of this Chamber. If they actually believe that, they have their heads in the sand, Mr. Speaker.

We know this is an issue for the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. That organization, representing businesses from one end of the province to the other, has stepped up and very respectfully asked the government to reconsider their extreme position, just reconsider it, slow it down, think about it - consult.

Mr. Speaker, it is not just the CFIB, it's the business owners and operators everywhere. All they want from the government is to listen to them, just this once. This is an opportunity for the government to start to make amends, to show the business community that they represent them, too, not just their special-interest friends.

They didn't listen, Mr. Speaker, with Bill No. 100. We remember that with Bill No. 100 they ignored the business community. Well, this is their chance to say, okay, we do recognize that you are important contributors to our economy. They talk about this, let's talk about it and let's reach a better solution. But we know they won't do that, it's just not the NDP way. The NDP way is to provide no rhyme or reason for their misguided policies, to consult with no one, at least no one that we know of, and just to go ahead with their extreme agenda, like the one we're doing right now with first contract arbitration.

Now why do they refuse to provide rhyme or reason? Actually, are they refusing, or does their silence on the matter acknowledge that there is no rhyme or reason behind moving this legislation forward at this present time?

It's not just the members of the Opposition or the members of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business looking for reasoning behind this legislation; even today the Nova Scotia Chambers of Commerce has come out and expressed its concern about the legislation. I have the press release here and I want to read it into the record and be able to discuss it. The first line tells it all, "Nova Scotia Chambers of Commerce Disappointed with Province's Anti-Business Stance.

"The Nova Scotia Chambers of Commerce is very disappointed with the introduction of the First Contract Arbitration legislation by the Dexter Government. The NSCoC stresses that this legislation does nothing to promote business growth or retention in the Province of Nova Scotia."

The quote comes from my friend Chris Atwood in Yarmouth:

"I am very disappointed that despite the businesses large and small and several business organizations voicing their objection and concern to the Premier, here we are today with more anti-business legislation' says Chris Atwood, president of the N.S. Chambers. 'Bill 100 was brought in under the exact same circumstances.'"

"The purpose of the Trade Union Act is to respect the rights of employees to organize. It is widely recognized that since 2003, Nova Scotia's time lost due to work stoppages has been consistently below the national average and that 97% of bargaining does reach agreement during conciliation. The most compelling fact is that for the last 14 years the Labour Board has only ordered parties to bargain in good faith three times. That is one of the best records in Canada and speaks volumes that this legislation is totally unnecessary."

It goes further on to say:

“I have a great deal of concern that the FCA legislation could hurt future investment in this province,’ adds Atwood. ‘We can only hope that government will start listening to our concerns.’”

“The Nova Scotia Chambers of Commerce has never been provided with any significant rationale as to why this legislation is necessary and firmly believes there are much more pressing issues facing this province.”

And the final sentence is:

“The NSCoC is comprised of 33 Chambers of Commerce across the province representing close to 7,000 businesses of all sizes.”

I will table that one, Mr. Speaker. Let’s think about the scope of the Nova Scotia Chambers of Commerce for a moment - 7,000 businesses across the province. I wonder what the members of the government side will say to those Nova Scotia chamber members who live and run businesses in their constituencies. What will they say to the hard-working men and women who create jobs for people in their constituencies? I can tell you what this legislation says to them. Basically, it says: too bad, so sad. Once again this government has confirmed their anti-business positions. Their attack on job creators continues.

Earlier I mentioned the Gatineau-Maloney Walmart and how first contract arbitration resulted in nine of their employees being forced out of their jobs. It might be easy for the members on the government side to say to themselves, well, that’s only nine. Do they realize the true impact of that number? Do they realize that, of course, these nine individuals have nine families, have mouths to feed at home? When it come to the hard-working Nova Scotians being out of work in our own constituencies, I think all of us here in this House can agree that one is too many, let alone nine.

So my question to all the members in the back rows of the opposite side of the House is this, how can they justify supporting legislation that has evidence that has proved that it will kill jobs in their constituencies? We might be able to shrug off the loss of nine jobs at Walmart in Quebec, but would they shrug over nine jobs lost in Antigonish? Would they shrug over nine jobs lost in Lunenburg? Would they shrug over nine jobs lost in Amherst? I don’t think so. (Interruptions) We lost a heck of a lot more than that in Yarmouth. I don’t think so. So will these members do the right thing? Will they go to the Premier? Will they go to the Deputy Premier? Will they go to the Minister of Labour and Workforce Development? Will they talk to the Minister of Finance and say no, tell them that this is wrong for the people in the constituencies and wrong for the people of Nova Scotia?

In the past few days we’ve talked about this bill a lot. I’ve talked about it myself in my own constituency. I’ve heard a lot of people and they keep sending the same message - please tell them to stop. Please tell them to listen. We’ve tried everything. It’s a pretty

disheartening message. It's a pretty sad thing to hear. Where is the respect for these job creators? Where is the respect for the backbone of our economy? There is all kinds of respect for their special-interest friends who are pushing this legislation, but none for the people who actually create jobs here in Nova Scotia. That's backwards. Job creators, from one end of this province to the other, have the same questions for government; one of these questions continues to be why, why is first contract arbitration and why is it here now?

Nova Scotia's record on labour disruptions and work stoppages is pretty sound, like I said. Since 2003, Nova Scotia has been consistently below the national average and almost all of bargaining does reach agreement during conciliation. As a matter of fact, as the Nova Scotia Chambers of Commerce pointed out today, in almost 15 years, Mr. Speaker, the Labour Board has only ordered parties to bargain in good faith three times - three times. We need a piece of legislation because it happened three times. We have had a pretty harmonious labour situation in the province and that's something that we all can be proud of.

But if it isn't a problem, if Nova Scotia isn't dealing with crippling work stoppages and elongated strikes, why are we moving ahead with first contract arbitration? Why are we doing so much so fast, when there are other issues that we should be dealing with like the economy and job creation, that's the things that we should be talking about. So who's asking government to do this? That's a big question. As I said when I started off, I've never had someone come to my constituency office and ask me to get to work on first contract arbitration, get to work that's something that's extremely important to us. In the past few weeks I've had plenty of people come into my constituency office and asking me to do everything that I can to stop first contract arbitration. Pretty telling, Mr. Speaker, pretty telling. But I've never heard a single person say I need to move ahead with it.

As I said in my opening remarks, I have a constituency office, the phone number is 648-2020, the caucus office is 424-2731, call it anytime and tell us that we need to be working hard on first contract arbitration, and I'll apologize to my assistant Thérèse if she gets a flood of calls but I'm really not that worried that she will. I haven't got a phone call, a letter, an e-mail, nothing. Because it simply isn't an issue Nova Scotians want us to address at this time. Mr. Speaker, they do want us to address jobs, they want us to address power rates, they want us to address taxes, they want us to address health care, they want us to address housing, they want us to address diabetic pumps, they want us to address all kinds of other things that really - and MS treatments, the liberation treatment. They want us to address many of these things, they don't want us to address first contract arbitration. They don't have a desire to move ahead with first contract arbitration. But this fits with the pattern emerging from this government: if it's a waste of money throw more at it, if it's underfunded cut it, and in this case of first contract arbitration, if it works fix it.

So who is pushing this government on first contract arbitration? Who's greasing the wheels behind the scenes? Who's had a direct line to the powers that will be The Premier's office that is pushing this issue forward. The members of this House deserve an answer and

more importantly, Nova Scotians deserve an answer. I listened to the Leader of the Liberal Party talk about the day where the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education had her two counterparts standing beside her and saying this is payback. Well of course today, one of those supporters, the NSGEU, put out a press release and I thought I would read that press release. Let's read the press release of that supporter of the NDP in Nova Scotia. The brothers and sisters that went and knocked on doors for those members, the people, of course, that apparently they owe.

There have been months and months, if not years now, that I know that the Premier has been trying to separate himself from organized labour in such a way that it looks like, hey look at me, we're not that bad, we're not hooked up to organized labour, don't look at me when this happens. But we're seeing time and time again, people like Rick Clarke, Joan Jessome and others standing and saying, thanks, here's the payback, we need the payback, we supported you all these long years, what are you doing for me? And I'm going to tell you this is where this comes from. But I'm just going to paraphrase a little bit of this one. I will table this as well.

It's off their Web site: "NSGEU Applauds NDP's New First-Contract Legislation. NSGEU is applauding the provincial government for introducing a new bill that will help employees and employers in newly unionized workplaces. The Act to Prevent Unnecessary Labour Disruptions and Protect the Economy provides much-needed supports for both sides in the negotiation of a first contract." Joan Jessome, the president of the NSGEU, says: "This is good for all workers in Nova Scotia - 80 per cent of Canadians already have labour legislation like this. Our workers deserve the same kinds of supports."

So I'll table this one, but they can't go back and say, well, it's just a good idea, it's just something we thought up. They can't stand and say, we're not connected to organized labour, because that's false, Mr. Speaker. (Interruption) Well, your Premier has many times stood there, that they don't sit at our caucus table, that they don't tell us what to do. Well, I'm going to say to this one, to the Minister of Agriculture, that they are telling you what to do. This is exactly a payoff to them. It was exactly what was said at that meeting and, quite honestly, what's even more odd about this whole issue is the Labour Management Review Committee itself, which seems to have had a split decision on whether first contract arbitration should be brought into Nova Scotia. (Interruption)

Well, I'm wondering if Rick Clarke, who is the co-chair of that group, is payback as well. He's on that nice Labour Management Review Committee now. Not only is he sitting outside criticizing what government is doing, he's sitting inside and helping organize and helping develop legislation. Mr. Speaker, even by their own admission, this one is one that they couldn't come to an agreement on. So why didn't we spend more time, or let the Labour Management Review Committee spend more time, coming up with the right answer rather than the bought answer? This is the bought answer by the payback issue that we've talked about many times (Interruption) It's payback. What's it paying back?

If the Minister of Finance wants to stand to speak to this issue, again, I'll offer him some time to spend on this issue. (Interruption) If he wants to say a few words, I would be more than happy to sit and listen to what he has to say. I've got my time and he can take his hour, but this has been payback. This is what has been said over and over again. Apparently the video that was up on the site - whose site was that on? Was it the Federation of Labour or was that the department? Everybody was talking (Interruption) On YouTube, yes. It was basically talking about how "this is payback for us supporting you all these years."

Well, payback, it makes you think. So again, who is pushing the government on first contract arbitration? Don't let me come up with answers on this one. I'm sure Nova Scotians can come up with their own ideas on this one. Who's greasing those wheels behind the scenes, who has the direct line to the powers in the Premier's Office, and who's pushing this issue forward?

Mr. Speaker, as I said before, the House deserves an answer, and more importantly, Nova Scotians deserve an answer as well. I see the Minister of Finance gets really perturbed about the payback issue, and I see he's there talking to the Speaker. As I've said before, if the member wants to stand and say a few words, I would be more than happy to sit down and let him take his time - but he seems to be a little upset, maybe about that payback issue that was brought forward. I'm not the one who was saying it. It was one that those supporters of those unions had talked about. It was on YouTube, standing side by side with the minister. Where is that?

"Payback," "bought" - in my mind, they're kind of the same thing. However, this government isn't interested in giving Nova Scotians an answer. As the legislation proves, unless you're one of their special-interest friends, they're not even interested in talking to Nova Scotians.

Nova Scotians have an entrepreneurial spirit that we can be proud of. All of us here in this House can think of a business in our home communities and constituencies that has demonstrated leadership - leadership, Mr. Speaker - by employing people and doing everything that they can to help grow our local economies. First contract arbitration puts everything they've built and worked for at risk.

A good example of how businesses do so well in our communities is Comeau's Sea Foods Limited. For many years they've produced herring products for Nova Scotia and for market across the world. What they're doing many times, because the fish product only comes when Mother Nature says it's time to come and they had had trouble finding the hours for their employees to make their hours in order to qualify for employment insurance, for EI - I know on many occasions they find other things for them to do in order to fit that time. I thank the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture for his work on this one, and of course the government, for helping last season when other work had to be found for those employees.

Businesses actually care for their employees, but what first contract arbitration is saying is, maybe they don't think too much of their employees. Maybe they're trying to do something to their employees; maybe they're trying to take dollars away from their employees. That's why we need to put first contract arbitration in.

That's not giving a very nice portrayal of businesses in Nova Scotia. That's the same as, maybe you're not doing it right. Maybe we're going to have to find ways to punish you for not treating them right. (Interruption)

The Minister of Agriculture continues to try to influence what I'm talking about. I'd be more than happy for one of the government side, if it's the Minister of Agriculture or Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations - whichever hat you want to wear, I really don't mind. I think he's a pretty good guy and I think he can speak pretty well, and he might be able to explain why first contract arbitration is before us. I'm going to bet that I'm going to hear the same rhetoric that we've heard from others, the Premier included, on why this needs to be brought forward. There's been no good reason. Nova Scotians deserve an answer on how this works.

We feel that it puts our future at risk. Too many young people have decided to build careers away from home. The member for Victoria-The Lakes spoke of that, of his son in Calgary, and trying to find an opportunity for him to come work at home. This surely doesn't do it, especially in light of the Irving shipbuilding contract and working with a number of other companies that will have to provide services and provide building equipment and other items for the shipbuilding contract. There will be many companies, we hope, that will establish themselves in Nova Scotia to provide product for that contract.

What this is saying is, let's go set up a union. We don't like what's going on. Let's go and get a new contract. Let's impose something on it and throw a business completely off its pegs, not being able to provide that service or be able to pay the benefits for those employees. Where's the good in that?

Many young people have found greener pastures in other provinces, or in some cases, in other countries. With the recent shipbuilding announcement, we have a chance to bring them home. For the first time in many years, we have a chance to bring them home and to help them build a future and start a family here.

But Nova Scotians are telling us, don't take our word for granted, don't take our word for what it is. You're going to say, it's just the Opposition standing and talking. We're hearing this from Nova Scotians, we're hearing about this every day now. We're hearing of it at church, at the coffee shops. I'm getting phone calls against this issue. But with first contract arbitration, Bill No. 100 - and who knows what else is going to come? When Bill No. 100 came, this was so important - we need to have this happen, don't worry about it, this probably won't happen again. Well, a year later, bang. Here it is, an issue that has hit the business community between the eyes once again.

How can we expect any business to actually set up a shop here? How can we expect the jobs that we all desire for our children and grandchildren to exist? First contract arbitration creates too much uncertainty and it is too risky. We cannot allow it to damage Nova Scotia's future. For that reason and for many others, the Progressive Conservative caucus will be opposing this bill and I urge all members of this House who care about job creation and building a stable business environment, regardless of where they sit, to join us.

Why doesn't the Premier say this: Listen, maybe we don't own it all, maybe we don't understand it all and maybe I will offer a free vote in the House of Assembly, and see where the other members are on this issue. Will the member for Pictou East vote for it or vote against it? You know he's got some pretty darn good businesses in his constituency. The member for Pictou West, the member for Pictou Centre, they're a growing community with some great opportunities there. I'm sure there are businesses there that are knocking on their doors and saying, are you sure, is this the right time, why are you doing it?

I know I probably could go on a lot longer on this one, but I think I've conveyed my feelings; I think I've conveyed enough examples; and I think I've at least made, again, our point that first contract arbitration or first contract imposition is not for this time; it's not required. If, at the very least, the minister could listen and say, maybe we'll do some more consulting, maybe we'll talk to Nova Scotia businesses, maybe we'll go talk to the CFIB, maybe we'll go talk to the Nova Scotia Chambers of Commerce, maybe we'll talk to the Manufacturers Association, or maybe we'll talk to the Retail Association. Listen, this is not a few hundred businesses, this is not 1,000 businesses, these organizations speak for tens of thousands of businesses across Nova Scotia and across Canada.

This is my final comment - if the wheel isn't broken, why are we trying to fix it? There is no reason to bring this forward, the wheel is not broken. Let's not spend too much more time trying to fix something that is not an issue.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you for the opportunity and thank this House for listening to my comments this evening. Merçi beaucoup.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

MR. ANDREW YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, my voice is pretty well gone, so I'm not going to speak all that long - I'm sure the members opposite are really disappointed to hear that I will only have a few words to say on this.

I wanted to start by discussing some of the things that have been said by both the minister and the Minister of Finance in their heckles the other day. The Minister of Finance the other day was talking a lot about how 15 per cent of Nova Scotians are already covered by first contract arbitration - and I've heard 80 per cent and 85 per cent and the number always seems to change, of Canadians who are covered by first contract arbitration. That is true and it's not true. Outside of what the number is, it is true that a certain number of

Canadians are covered by a certain version of first contract arbitration, but there are no Nova Scotians who are covered by the version of first contract arbitration introduced by this government.

There is only one jurisdiction in the country that actually uses this version of first contract arbitration and that is Manitoba. In fact, it's worth noting that British Columbia used to use a version similar to this, but since changed it because it didn't work. It's interesting to look at the experience in Quebec, where this bill is intended to solve a problem which, as far as I can tell, doesn't exist and that's reaching the first contract. The Minister of Agriculture earlier was heckling across, saying this is about a first contract and he's right, that's what this legislation is about, it's about reaching that first contract. Interestingly, in Quebec, companies who settled their first contract through first contract arbitration were more likely to go on strike when they reached the negotiation of their second and third contract than if they had not settled through first contract arbitration.

So if you are looking for a method that actually improves labour peace over the long term, this actually doesn't do it - this doesn't seem to achieve that goal. It may prevent having that strike the first time around, but it actually seems to have the opposite effect when it comes to negotiating the second and third contract. So why would you go down that road?

I want to speak briefly to some of the other models in the country, just so we have an idea of how different it is. My understanding, in reading through this bill, is that this model, essentially of 120 days and if you don't reach the contact it's a no-fault system and you go to first contract arbitration - it's not entirely clear whether you applied for it or not but, either way, at 120 days I guess the employer or the union, it's either automatic or one of them can apply for it, either way.

There was talk about the model - there was talk about Pierre Trudeau bringing it in; there was talk about a Progressive Conservative Government, a provincial government, I believe, bringing it in somewhere else. But they were different; they weren't this model. I think this debate may have been very, very different under a different model. It's hard to say - certainly the discussion with the business community would probably also be very different.

For example, the federal government, and in Quebec and in Newfoundland and Labrador, they have what is referred to as a fault system, where somebody has to be bargaining in bad faith. So of course you need to have a remedy if somebody is bargaining in bad faith; of course you need to - it doesn't matter what side it is - have some kind of option to say well, listen, we're not going to get a contract because either the union or the business is negotiating in bad faith and trying to hold up the process; and, of course, having some kind of remedy, whatever that may be, makes sense.

As we heard from the previous speaker, in Nova Scotia we have a system here that addresses that already and has had to address that only three times – only three times. So obviously the system has worked to address that issue - and it has only had to happen three times, which means that we don't have a real serious problem.

In Ontario and Saskatchewan it is by application after showing there is “dysfunctional bargaining” - the word they use, which I guess for the purposes here is the same sort of thing. So why would we do that?

In British Columbia, where they've gone through a couple of models of this over the years, they have a mediator-recommended system, which means that the first contract only comes into place after there is a strike mandate and after there is proof that bargaining has moved along with both parties. Interestingly, in the British Columbia system the mediator assigned to what is effectively a first contract system can actually recommend that the strike occur - so it's not just recommending a contract. They can recommend the contract, they can recommend the strike, or they can recommend the lockout - I don't know whether they've actually ever recommended either of those, but it's another system.

Now the Leader of the Official Opposition talked about the issue of free and collective bargaining, and when we had the debate around Bill No. 100 the government was insistent – insistent - that the preamble to Bill No. 100 be left in. So fine, Bill No. 100 now exists with that in there. One of the things it says is that Nova Scotia stands by the premise of free collective bargaining.

So how does this do that? This isn't about free and collective bargaining, this is about stand back, wait 120 days, and then somebody will impose a contract. That's not free and collective bargaining. Free and collective bargaining is the parties working together and if one of them is bargaining in bad faith, then you have an option later on. Maybe it's at the 120-day mark, or maybe it's another mark, but it's not, well, I don't like what they're saying so I can just wait 120 days and hope that the arbitrator will rule in my favour. That is not free collective bargaining. That is not what the government fought so hard to ensure remained in Bill No. 100. It's the complete opposite of it.

There's little incentive, Mr. Speaker, for compromise if you know that at 120 days somebody can just make a decision and go forward, and that has to be troubling when you're trying to do this sort of thing. So by contrast, when you looked at the British Columbia model I looked at before, they actually now have a 97.4 per cent success rate in getting a contract, without having to go to these sorts of situations. We have to look back and say - I can remember during some earlier Question Periods this session, or it was in the media comments, I'm not sure if it was the Premier or the minister, but there were comments that we're going to wait for the comments to come in, and I think November 4th was the date for the comments, and then we'll consider those comments, refer it to the Labour Management Review Committee for their comments, and then decide whether we want to do legislation, and then craft the legislation.

Well, that took all of 14 days from the time the comments were made to the time the legislation was in here. I haven't been here a long time but I've been here long enough to know that a bill like this doesn't get crafted in 14 days. I've also been here long enough to know that - I mean every time something comes up, whether it's the water strategy, or even the back to balance, it took much longer than that to come forward with what the response was going to be. We don't even have the government response to the MLA pension situation and it has been longer than 14 days.

It makes it difficult for me to believe that the decision hadn't been made from the beginning that this was the model that was going to be moved forward. It doesn't seem like the comments that would have come in would have been fairly considered and even the Labour Management Review Committee appears not to have come to a consensus over what should have happened.

Last year during the debate around Bill No. 100 one of the things that we had asked for, and was turned down on, was to have representatives of non-union employers on that review committee, and it was turned down. One of the reasons that it was turned down, the answer was, well, it's only going to deal with issues in unionized shops. So, fine, that seemed to - people went away and said, okay, if it's only going to deal with the issues in unionized shops then maybe it doesn't need to have that on there. We still thought it should be there but, fine.

The very first issue that they've been asked to deal with, or that we're aware they've been asked to deal with, is an issue that only affects non-unionized shops in the unionization process. So that troubles me because there are assurances that we were given in the last session around Bill No. 100 that seem to have not taken hold now that we're dealing with this and I think that that's something that we should be concerned about.

I think a number of people have made this point and I'm not - especially with the condition of my voice - I'm not going to go into any great lengths about this, but one of the things that really bothers me is nobody has stood up and said why this is necessary right now. Nobody has stood up and said this is why this is going to, or this is how this is going to improve the economy, this is why it's important that this missing piece is put in place, nobody has actually answered that question.

We're in a financial crisis and we can have the debate over whether the financial crisis is of our own making or if it's world markets. Fine, that's a legitimate debate to have but it's still important to understand what it is that this government is going to do to try to address and fix those issues. I'm sure there will be other legislation coming forward, too, but this is the big bill of the session, as far as we know - maybe there are other things coming - this is the bill of substance, and maybe the insurance one. We haven't seen a bill that has a plan to fundamentally address the fact that young people are leaving, the fact that many of the people I graduated with in high school have chosen to go elsewhere and haven't come back to Nova Scotia. We haven't seen a plan to address the fact that, as

important as the ships contract is, we may have now lost more jobs than are actually going to be created by the entire ships contract.

I don't think that one of the men or women at the Bowater mill, for example, who are losing their job, or potentially losing their job, are sitting there going, I thank my lucky stars that the government has brought forth first contract arbitration legislation, that will solve the problems around the dinner table, because it doesn't. That's what the important issue is at the moment. The important issue is that, if your situation is such that you have to be on community services support, power bills are rising faster than the community services payments and rising at a rapid rate. You have to be worried that that's impacting food costs and transportation costs.

We have to worry about the fact that some of our rural communities are depopulating and as much as we may say, well, there are all these new jobs created in Halifax, you know what? There are probably more people being forced to come into Halifax than there are new jobs being created. That's putting a strain on housing, driving up the price of housing in the city. Rural depopulation and the rural economy is as much an urban issue, because of the impact that it has on the urban area, as it is on rural areas. But this doesn't address that.

The title of this bill, an Act to Prevent Unnecessary Labour Disruptions and Protect the Economy, nobody ever said how this bill protects the economy. Nobody ever said how this improves the economy. While it might prevent some theoretical unnecessary labour disruption at first contract, the evidence appears to be, from other jurisdictions, that it may create unnecessary labour disruptions at the second and third and subsequent contracts. That question isn't answered and, Mr. Speaker, that's what troubles me most about this.

There is a real problem in the province and it's a job problem, it's an affordability issue, and it's actually being able to pay for the things that matter in life, to be able to pay to put a roof over your head, to be able to pay for food, to be able to pay for your electricity bill. In our constituency offices, we're all seeing people in situations where they're having trouble paying for those things. Every one of us is seeing those cases, every one of us knows of stories of people choosing to move elsewhere to take work because they can't find something here. Every one of us knows of stories where people may wish to come back to Nova Scotia but have recognized that coming back, their costs may be higher and their pay may be less. Those are real issues.

Nobody from the government benches has explained yet what real problem this addresses. That's what troubles me most about this is that there's a disconnect and in addressing a problem that does not appear to exist, the answer is to choose a model for first contract arbitration that is used in only one other jurisdiction. The only way the government can think to defend introducing it is to say it's in six other provinces, 85 per cent of workers, when it isn't even true because most of those people are under a whole different type of first contract arbitration than is proposed in this bill.

If you have to use misleading information around the type of first contract arbitration used in other places to defend the bill, then there must be something wrong with the bill. When I think about this, that's what really bugs me about it. I wonder, why is this bill so important that the Premier, when he stands up and answers questions in Question Period, has to say things like, well, it's in six provinces and the federal government when he knows full well that only one of those provinces has this model and all the rest have a different model. Why is it that this bill can't be defended on its own merit? The only answer could be is that there must be something fundamentally wrong with what's being proposed.

Madam Speaker, I want to leave the House with just a couple of thoughts on this and maybe I'll speak on it at another stage of the reading when my voice is actually working. We have problems in the province and we need to be focused on growing the economy. We need to be focused on getting people meaningful jobs and making sure people can afford to put food on their table and pay their power bill and pay for housing. We need to make sure we address the issue of housing shortages in the income bracket that is having the most trouble finding housing and meaningful housing. We need to make sure that they are real issues - those are some of them.

Last week we looked at the Auditor General's Report. Whether it is meat inspections or it is the fact that the Auditor General says he doesn't feel he can address offshore safety issues and environmental issues, those are real issues that actually deserve time, and are pressing issues. I will wait and I will hope that - I have a lot of respect for the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education and I hope that at the end of this debate, when she closes debate, that we will actually get an answer as to why this bill is important at this time. How is this bill going to grow the economy? How is this bill going to make things better?

What is it about this version of first contract arbitration, specifically, that makes this version of first contract arbitration the one this government has chosen when there's only one other jurisdiction that appears to have gone in this way, if they were going to do this at all? As far as I can tell this addresses a problem that doesn't exist; it addresses it with a massive sledgehammer that goes against the principles of free and collective bargaining and tilts the balance away from the goal of being even to a completely different model.

Madam Speaker, I look forward to the debate and the various views that will be expressed, but I do hope that as we go forward this will not be just treated as a majority government that can get whatever it wants through if it just waits its time - and it knows it can - but will actually provide the answers that Nova Scotians are looking for and will actually listen to the comments that come. Even if they don't listen to the ones that come from over here, listen to the ones that come through the Committee on Law Amendments and in the public so that they recognize there are concerns, there are answers not being given, and there are legitimate concerns from Nova Scotians about a government that is

focused on this, instead of focused on jobs and getting Nova Scotians back to work, when that really is the thing that matters more than anything else at all. Thank you very much.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Sometimes we rise in the Legislature and we wonder if our speaking efforts are in vain, that perhaps what we're trying to do here is not going to have any impact on the decisions that are made here in our province. I wonder if tonight is not just another one of those nights. I know how this Legislature works when there is a majority government, that if the government - whether it is in this Legislature or if it's well before it gets to this Legislature - wants to do something, Nova Scotians don't have much choice but to accept the terms and conditions that they are given.

I am sensing that this is a piece of legislation that is one of those pieces of legislation that is going through one way or the other. I have a sense that the members on the government side of this Legislature are so convinced that this is a good piece of legislation that they are probably not listening to one word that I am saying. I laugh a bit, Madam Speaker, but I can't help but think that that is likely the case.

I suppose that's part of the way politics works and the way governments work - you get groups of people that have some collective agreement on a matter and they choose to go in a particular direction, the one we're seeing with this bill. The decision has been made and all thought is complete and let's just get this bill passed and, well, whatever the Opposition is saying, maybe it's misguided or there are other reasons that are given. We know and I have no doubt, that's likely what they are saying; they feel this is a good piece of legislation.

What interests me is the fact that there are so many private-sector employers in this province who have been speaking against this legislation because they have fears about it, but the government is just telling them, don't worry about it. This is not going to impact you; it's not going to impact your business. But, Madam Speaker, these are the very people in our province who, in my mind, are the most important people in the province. I say that because they are the risk-takers and we don't have nearly enough of them here.

We need people taking risks to start businesses. Those people have insight that perhaps we don't have in this Legislature; they live with a great sense of urgency. I suppose we live with a sense of urgency come election time because we wonder if we're going to make it back to our seat here or if perhaps somebody is going to pull the seat from under us and we may not get back. There is some urgency in this profession, if I may refer to sitting in this Legislature as a profession, Madam Speaker.

A lot of private-business owners and small-business owners face a sense of urgency that we really don't see. They face a lot of uncertainty in their business, whether it is local

competition or whether it is competition from far away that impacts how much they can charge for their products or services that they are offering. Then, of course, they have to make decisions on their expense side and in some cases they may have to let people go. Not a very pleasant thing to do but it may be necessary to keep the business alive.

I have no doubt there are people in business out there who may be called greedy but I think most of our business owners in Nova Scotia are good people, I think, for the most part, they try to treat the people who work for them fairly. In many cases they have a personal relationship with them, they know their families, and when their workers go home on a Friday or a Saturday night, whenever their business closes up for the week, maybe it's even on a Sunday, I guess now, Madam Speaker, but for a lot of businesses closing on a Friday or Saturday, they're probably wishing their workers well and saying we'll see you on Monday, or Tuesday, whenever the next day is they're coming back into work. I don't think it's a callous relationship that these people have with their workers.

I know for a lot of these small-business owners, they don't have pension plans like we have in this Legislature, or like people working say in government have pension plans. So these business owners have to keep that - you can't blame them for looking out for themselves in that respect. So they have to put some money aside for their own pension and, of course, Madam Speaker, because they own the business, there's nobody matching that pension. There's no employer to match their pension so they have to do it all on their own. So when they're running a business, they're thinking about all these things and they're making sure that they're making payroll. They're making sure they're putting some money aside for their own retirement, and who could blame them, because many of these business owners are working much more than the standard 40-hour work week and one would hate to see them work hard all their life and get to a point where they want to retire, and maybe have difficulties transitioning their business, or selling off their business.

That's another risk that these people face, is there a succession plan for their business, can they sell their business, because many times if they cannot sell the business and all the goodwill that's attached to that business, that sale, if they can't make it, was going to form a big portion of their pension plan. So I can't help but feel for these businesses if they feel sensitive to this legislation, because the government is coming in and saying, we're going to set some conditions here in the work environment that is going to make it easy for employees to question you and question what they're being paid and whatnot. If there's pressure put on that business owner, it may cause him to have to go out of business. There were some examples already mentioned tonight about that.

So, Madam Speaker, we can't blame business owners in this province who have spoken up and have written letters. I have received letters. I've seen e-mails. We can't blame them for being concerned, for being sensitive. I know members from all political stripes in this House here tonight have those business owners in their constituencies and I hope all of us listen to them because those are the people who are really driving the economy of our province.

Yes, government expenditure and the number of people who work for government in the province is another component but they all depend ultimately on that sector of our economy that brings dollars in from outside our province and that's the private sector. If it weren't for them, we wouldn't have money to run government. We might last for a little while, but sooner or later we would start to really cannibalize ourselves because immediately you would have to start laying off people in government and you would get five paying people maybe for the first year and then the next year you would have to lay more off and so on and so on until the economy would dry up. I know that's kind of an extreme example, but in practical terms that's exactly what would happen if our private sector dried up.

We may not ever have to worry about it completely drying up, Madam Speaker, but I'm sensitive to it drying up and I want to see it grow. I'm fearful that this legislation could cause it not to grow and may also cause it to decline. We can't have that in this province. So this bill in my mind is really about encouraging people who work in private business in Nova Scotia to take an adversarial stand against their employer and quite possibly ask for terms of employment which may not be practical or even possible in that the very job they have may be lost if added costs drive their employer out of business.

This will all be done with this legislation without the risk, without these employees having to risk going on strike, picketing their workplace, spoiling relations with their employer, and quite possibly losing paycheques. If people are out striking, they are not working. the activity of the business is declining, revenues are declining and there is no money to make payroll. Quite frankly, if no work is getting done, we couldn't blame the Nova Scotia employer for not paying somebody who is maybe striking in front of their business.

Another point, Madam Speaker: if there are people striking in front of a business, is it not spoiling the goodwill of that business, of that business owner, and yes, those workers too, who have worked hard to generate that goodwill? Goodwill is essentially a relationship that businesses have developed with their customers. Goodwill is when people go back to a business to be patrons of that business again, to patronize the business, to say yes, I enjoyed my last shopping experience here, it was a positive one, and yes, I want to come back and do business again.

How do those customers feel? Do they not feel awkward if there's a strike happening right outside the business? What we'd be seeing is the goodwill of the business being spoiled and maybe lost. So when we think about a business owner in the province being sensitive to this legislation, we think about that. We don't blame them for being sensitive about things like that. They work so hard to generate that goodwill, to give good value to the people who come to their store or their place of business. That can be spoiled when people are making demands that - in fairness to them, they may not realize the impact of the demands they are making. They may not realize that the business owner may not be able to afford the demands they are making. So while they may not realize that, the

business owner has been put in a bad spot and the future health of the business may be put at risk.

Essentially, Madam Speaker, we see this bill as something that facilitates the creation of more unionized employment in Nova Scotia. There are many private sector businesses that will not be able to afford that form of employment. I can think of one in my own area, a call centre in Port Hawkesbury - the Minacs call centre. They are competing against call centres all over the world, in places like the Philippines. They have to make sure they pay a reasonable wage in this province to attract workers. They get payroll tax rebates - or at least they certainly have in the past, from the provincial government - to support their employment numbers. They are helping to give people work here who maybe wouldn't normally have work available to them in their area at this time.

When those people go to work, the people who compete against them are people who are working in call centres in the Philippines, in a country where you don't have to earn the same amount of pay each hour to buy the same kind of essentials in life, because the state of the economy there is different and while things are much more affordable in terms of how we live, they may not be there.

Ultimately the point I'm making, Madam Speaker, is that the Philippines call centres can pay their workers less and still have people showing up to work. Those people are still happy to come to work for those wages because in that economy they can buy the things they need to make a living. Those are the people we are competing against when we look at a call centre in this province. If a call centre faces action that comes from this legislation, that enables employees to take action against their employer, we could see lost call centres in the province.

I know that an organization that represents those call centres has spoken to us. I think it - I'm going to pull a number off the top of my head, and I may stand to be corrected, but I think it's somewhere in the number of 14,000 people in the province who work at call centres. I know some people could care less about call centres and they could say, well, to heck with those jobs. But you know what? I know if I, and I've spoken with people who worked at call centres before and I know that they like their work and I respect the work that they do, myself, personally. Obviously they're bringing value or there wouldn't be a need for those people.

Do we say we don't want those jobs in the province? I've heard some people say that and that bothers me because I think that there's dignity in work and people working at call centres are using a lot of important skills that are also transferrable to other careers and how great it is when there are companies like that, that choose to do business in our province, they give people a chance to work. In some cases, people who might have been out of the workforce for awhile, give them a chance to get back on their feet, get working again, build up the confidence and the skills.

Maybe they stay there; maybe they choose to move on elsewhere. The fact is, those are jobs and we need more jobs in the province. I believe those are jobs that will be put at risk with this legislation. I believe that because I've been told so by people who run the call centres in this province and because I've taken a keen interest in them and I've looked at the call centre in Port Hawkesbury and I've seen the numbers on it. I talk to the people in the industry and I see who they're competing against and the numbers don't lie.

We look at the restaurant industry. Restaurants in this province - obviously it's a very competitive industry. Even the government admits that. Governments of all stripes admit that and one sure fire way they admit it is by the fact that they don't extend loans to restaurants because restaurants come and go. I don't know what the average number of years, I know there are some restaurants have been around forever and other restaurants you see them here and in nine months or a year's time, they're gone. It's a very competitive industry. Maybe they reinvent themselves somewhere else.

But the restaurant industry, if employees got together and said we want to make more money, that's fine - you might start to see Nova Scotians choosing to eat out less in the province because all of a sudden if wages go up 20 or 30 or 40 per cent and the price of a meal goes up 20 or 30 or 40 per cent, most Nova Scotians are going to make decisions and they're going to choose to eat out less. Some of them may be doing that already, with the increase in the HST. People make decisions. We're no different in this Legislature and Nova Scotians are no different.

Look at the retail sector, very competitive industry as well. Clothing sales could be impacted if - really the sale of anything. I think of the retail sector and I think of the manufacturing sector. Our manufacturing sector is declining because, much like with call centres, we're competing against other areas in the world that have populations and have economies that will accept less. What manufacturing sectors we have left here in the province that are run by the private sector, with this legislation, do we want to expose them to the potential for their business plans, their business models to be uprooted overnight by demands for things like higher wages? We would never begrudge anybody for wanting a higher paycheque, but the reality is a lot of the Nova Scotia business owners that may be owners of small manufacturing businesses will not be able to pay higher wages.

I have no doubt that many of them would probably want to. If their business is doing well, they may be able to but at a time, especially like we're facing right now, where consumer expenditure throughout the world is dropping off, people are actually starting to save more because they're very fearful, they're fearful of what's going to happen next. We've seen the stock market crash, we've heard talks of a double dip, we hear that talks of European Countries, Madam Speaker, they refer to them as the "PIGS": Portugal, Italy, Greece, Spain - and Ireland, I missed one of the "i's". There is a lot of fear around the world right now and, at this point in time, why are we bringing forward - I shouldn't say "we", why is the government bringing forward this legislation? There is great fear right now because a lot of those countries - the PIIGS, if I may, Madam Speaker - those countries,

once they took on the Euro were able to borrow with Euros which carried a lot of creditability because they were backed by a central European bank.

It gave them better ratings - and we talk about bond ratings in this province and the importance of keeping good bond ratings so if we do have to borrow money to fund government that we can do so at a better rate - well, these countries now had a licence to borrow more money and borrow at very affordable rates, so it was very tempting for the governments of those countries to go ahead and borrow money like that. And, as we've seen, we've seen the economy crash and we see those governments who are so loaded up on debt, their economies have crashed, they're not generating the same the kind of tax revenues they used to be able to generate, and some of them are probably faced with having difficulty to make payroll. So they're coming out with austerity measures to reduce the number of people working in their governments and trying to find ways to balance their books, trying to find ways to make payroll.

There is not a lot of trust for these governments. Now there are countries, especially countries like Germany who have such economic strength, they are wondering why did we ever get into this mess, why did we ever link up with these other countries. Now countries like Germany, the state of the Euro is impacted by all of this fear, people don't want to own anything that is denominated in Euros because if the value of the Euro goes down, well so does the value of their investment.

All of this fear spread around the world is causing consumers to want to save money; they don't want to spend as much money. For Nova Scotia manufactures this is having an impact on what they're doing, so when the government claims to so innocently introduce a piece of legislation like this, that we have no doubt has strong backing from the union leaders in this province - and we don't blame them for wanting their members to earn more money, we don't blame them for things that have gone on in the past. I've read *The Company Store* - we don't blame them for having maybe a dim view of some employers and I'm sure, Madam Speaker, that that's been well warranted in the past, and maybe it still is today with some employers, but by and large I don't think our Nova Scotian employers are like that.

At a time when where we are in our economy we're seeing businesses close in this province, to me seeing the government come forward, supposedly in an innocent way to introduce this legislation and suggest, no, we should not be worried about it, and to suggest, no, to those Nova Scotian entrepreneurs who are working hard, taking the risks to make payroll, to say don't worry about this, this is not going to hurt you, to me that doesn't make sense, Madam Speaker - and to suggest if things should change and labour conditions in the province start to deteriorate we'll have this legislation to help us work through it.

Well we're certainly not there yet - I haven't heard anybody complaining about the labour situation in the province. It seems to be quite good right now, but to hear that this is exactly when we should make changes is when things are good. Madam Speaker, after

saying all I've said thus far, to me to say that, it almost suggests we'd kind like to make the labour situation worse in the province, we'd like to stir things up a little bit, rebalance the power, not in the hands of the small business owners, but in the hands of the workers. To do that is taking on a lot of responsibility and if the government's going to decide to do that, and it is going to, despite the concerns of small-business owners in the province, push ahead with it, despite anything that we have to say on this side of the House, if they're just going to go ahead and push ahead with it, I think that's going to cause problems in our economy.

It's going to lead other entrepreneurs to say, well, wait a minute, maybe I don't want to expand my business at this time. I've taken enough risks, maybe now is not the time to start expanding the business. Certainly if this legislation comes into force and first contract arbitration comes into force and we have an arbitrator telling a private business in this province that you're going to increase your wages by 25 per cent next week, you might see business owners say, well, you know what? I've been working too hard for too long. I think I'm going to sell this business and it's not going to be worth what it used to be worth because the new business owners are going to look at the cash flow and they're going to see that it's not the same kind of cash flow it was before the 25 per cent wage increase, and then they might have a hard time selling the business. The business might languish for a few weeks or a few months and then maybe nobody wants to buy it. You could start to see a loss of jobs in the province through something that's claimed to be an innocent piece of legislation brought into this Legislature.

One of the other things I've noticed, when you look at the unions that do exist - and I believe this legislation is trying to help more unionization - when you look at the unions that do exist, most of them involve government expenditure. Even when we look at the Irving shipyards, it's a unionized company and when you think about it, it's government money that's paying for those ships. If you look at consumers, in a lot of cases we see the reality that consumers don't want to pay that kind of money and I gave the example of the restaurant industry. If people had to pay 40 per cent more for their meal to pay for the added cost of a high union wage, people would stop eating out. You would see a decline in the restaurant industry and those jobs would disappear. I think that competition is one of the reasons that keeps that from naturally happening in that sector of our economy.

We see with things like the ships, which is a huge expenditure, \$25 billion - well the consumers are really the taxpayers and we don't really have much say in it. It's kind of ironic. We're very happy in this province but that's because it benefits us, and we are happy about that. But if you are a consumer, that you were actually going to be using that ship - I don't know what you'd use it for, I don't think you'd be using it for fishing - you might start to question, well gee, am I getting the best deal on that ship? With a military expenditure it's quite different because there's no competition and we're all in the military together for our country.

When you think about it (Interruption) Well I guess, Madam Speaker, I'm trying to make the point that this bill is probably going to create more unionized workplaces in the province and when you think about it, the only places that are naturally surviving for unionized workplaces, in a lot of cases, are attached to government expenditure, and the shipyard being one example.

I think about the Occupy Nova Scotia movement and I know all these Occupy movements have made a good point, that there is a class of super-rich, we may call them the one per centers, which compared to the rest of us would be the other 99 per cent, and they have a point when they say that. There are very few people on this continent who have an awful lot of money and they've made it by having the benefit of living in a society that has laws and that has support for lawful behaviour. It's not in a dictatorship or anything like that. So they've benefitted from a safe society and a society that has a government from democracy.

I see nothing wrong with the government trying to better redistribute wealth. (Applause) And I thank the member for clapping. You know, when we look at the super-rich, people who have billions and billions of dollars, really at some point how much do you really need?

If we come back to this piece of legislation, is this really going to redistribute wealth? Again, I made the point earlier, I would never begrudge somebody for wanting to earn a bigger paycheque but if that's what the goal of this bill is, is to redistribute wealth from Nova Scotia business owners, to put more dollars in the pockets of their workers, while it may be a laudable goal, is it really creating a better redistribution of wealth if ultimately it is meaning the closure of some of those businesses and lost jobs?

That's a fear I have and I know it's a fear that some small businesses have. That's why I'm expressing it here tonight in the Legislature. I think if all this bill does is extract more dollars out of the hands of hard-working small business owners in the province, I don't think we're accomplishing better wealth redistribution.

If we look at a company like Michelin, they compete in a world-wide marketplace - sorry for all the "ahs", Madam Speaker, it's kind of a long speech. When we look at Michelin, they're competing, they're actually making decisions. They've got plants all over the world. Consider the amount of tires that are produced for the North American market but imagine they are producing tires for countries all over the world.

I've had the chance to travel and I've been in cities like Bangkok and Tokyo and you look at the sheer number of commuters traveling on those roads and when you consider that Michelin is making tires for the world market. They are making decisions every day. They are watching the numbers penny by penny, to see where does it make sense to have their business operating. They've probably got numbers right up to the minute, to what their costs are to make a tire in each plant, wherever it is, anywhere in the world because

they've got plants everywhere. Maybe not in every country in the world but they have them all over the world, in different places.

When they are looking at Nova Scotia as a place to do business and they're looking at a piece of legislation like this, somebody in senior management that is not located in Nova Scotia, who is just looking at the numbers on a computer screen, if this legislation impacts a business like Michelin in Nova Scotia, somebody, far from here, may make a decision to say, well, I think we'll close those plants in Nova Scotia. They are not attached to this province; they maybe don't have relatives working at those plants. The decision will be made, those jobs will be gone.

Is it possible? I think it is. We see it in the pulp and paper industry. We see it with NewPage in my area. Those companies are competing in a global marketplace and, quite frankly, the people that are in charge of those companies, quite frankly, I don't think they care. That's why we in this Legislature have to care and do we have to do what we can to make our province a place where they want to do business. Unless we care about that, we can't expect them to care and to say oh well, yes, let's stay in Nova Scotia, those people are nice there, they have nice lobster suppers there. Or they might like music, they might like some kind of music from here.

Madam Speaker, we can't rely on that. We all know that we have to care about the economy that we're building in this province. We want companies like Michelin to stay in this province and we want local management of Michelin, when they travel up to their national and international meetings, to be able to walk into a room and proudly state that in Nova Scotia we make quality tires at a price competitive with anybody else and due to our efforts we believe that continued investment in the Province of Nova Scotia is something that we feel comfortable recommending to Michelin. If they've got the numbers to back it up, Madam Speaker, we'll have no worry of a company like Michelin that employs, I believe, somewhere in the neighbourhood of 2,300 Nova Scotians, that they will have no problem recommending to their company that they keep business running in this province.

So, Madam Speaker, I don't think that this bill is about redistributing wealth in this province and I've even seen one of the members opposite say it's not about redistributing wealth in this province. I think that the intent of it is, I think that they are trying to - I'm sure if you speak with some of the union leaders, they would say, you know, if there are some workers who want a better paycheque, we in the union movement want to support them for a better paycheque, and what is that but, in some people's eyes, a better redistribution of wealth.

As I've said already, I could never argue with somebody wanting to earn a bigger paycheque, life is expensive, but I think what this bill will mean and what it will lead to when it is passed - because I have a very strong feeling that the government is going to march ahead and pass it - I think this bill is going to lead to the closure of more businesses in Nova Scotia. It's going to lead to Nova Scotians losing jobs and it's going to lead to the

export of wealth from our province - not redistribution of wealth, Madam Speaker, but export of wealth from our province.

So you know, Madam Speaker, I would like to see - I come from an area that has the great history of the co-operative movement and what a great opportunity the union leaders in this province have, and they're probably listening to my remarks and laughing at them, tomorrow they may be reading about them, but what a great opportunity those union leaders have to take over management of companies. Oftentimes we see when the opportunity arises, when say a company may be going out of business, when a union leadership could rally the workers together to say, yes, we're going to take over this because they certainly have the expertise to run operations, they could certainly partner with people based on a business plan to help bankroll the business. They could certainly hire consultants if they needed help with a particular aspect of the business.

So I would encourage union leadership in this province to show leadership in industries like that when there are opportunities to say, we're going to take over this business and, do you know what, if we have to lower wages, but if we own this company and the employees now own this company, much like a co-op would be owned, we now have the ability if we turn a profit to pay those employees dividends that will make up for the loss in wages and, Madam Speaker, those dividends would be more tax efficient than the salary, than the added wages they would be earning back under the old arrangement with the company that had gone out of business.

So I think what a wonderful opportunity. You know, sometimes in chaos, there's the old - I think it's a Japanese adage or a Japanese symbol, that crisis also means opportunity. (Interruption) What did I say? I meant to say Chinese, I think I may have said something else (Interruption) I said Japanese, I meant to say Chinese. So there is opportunity and I would like to see union leadership come forth and to seize opportunities like this.

It might make their requests more reasonable and justified when they have a chance to take over a company and to actually grab the reins of the company and deal with the things that small business owners deal with - like having to make payroll. Deal with things like having to stay past the mandated number of hours of work that day. All these experiences would lead to a better understanding because we often hear about the need for employers to have a better understanding of what it's like to go to work each day as an employee of the company.

I believe we're all best served when both sides take advantage of opportunities to better understand. Ultimately, I think we would all agree in this House, we want everybody to earn a bigger paycheque. The best way to do that is by building a good economy where businesses can have success, they can make more sales and through better revenue and lower taxes, they can pay their workers more money. That's where success lies.

I also want to make the point that people in this province always have a way to control the wage they receive. Nobody has to sit back and say, I guess this is what I'm getting paid and I don't like it so I'm going to try to do something about it. I'm going to try to ask for more. People have a way to control the wage they receive, they have another way and that's to become an entrepreneur. We don't have near enough of them in this province.

People have an opportunity to start a business and if they took that opportunity, they would see challenges and they would see the realities of making sure that their business is making enough money, that they had enough sales - whether they had to go out there themselves to make those sales - to make sure there was enough money coming in to make their own paycheque count for the week, to make their workers' paycheques count and put money aside for things like HST rebates. We often hear of businesses getting into trouble and having difficulty to pay their HST rebates or their income tax quarterly payments.

These are all realities for business owners and if people feel very strongly out there about creating their own wages in this province, go out there and start a business. Get a better understanding of what it takes and then perhaps you would have people more reasonable about their asks. Then perhaps, we wouldn't be talking about legislation like we're talking about here tonight.

I guess the question that comes to my mind is what kind of an economy are we trying to build in this province? Especially at a time when the world economy is living in such uncertain times. I think about where we're going as a province and I think about, are we supporting the private sector in the province or are we just, to me and my mind, with this government, they're not supporting the private sector. They always like to rhyme off a few little tidbits and one of them is about the decrease in the small business tax rate.

Certainly, we agreed with that but in dollar terms it's not a major win for small business. We are certainly supportive of it and supportive of more. I know in the 2009 budget that was defeated in this Legislature, the last budget put forward by a Progressive Conservative Government, there were plans to implement a tax. There was a schedule laid out to implement it to reduce the small business tax. They like to throw out little tidbits like that but then when we see legislation like this come forward, this legislation comes at a cost to businesses.

We've yet to see it. We've been told that it's harmless, that this is not going to impact small businesses in the province. But the small businesses in the province have read the legislation and they've consulted with their lawyers and they're writing letters to us and telling us otherwise.

What kind of an economy are we building in this province if we are raising the alarm bells of the small business community? This is a time when we should be working with them, shoulder to shoulder, to the wheel, working with small business to help them

with whatever they need to have help with, to help make them more competitive; to make life a little easier for them so that they can shoulder this economic downturn, this economic uncertainty that we're living with right now; so that we see them come out of it, at the end of the tunnel there's light there, and that they come out of it still intact, still employing Nova Scotians.

I also think about how our choices, with respect to labour laws here in our province, affect our ability to compete globally, because when the government does things to empower groups of people to come forward and force an arbitrator to make decisions for a business owner that impact wages, as one factor, and that causes businesses to lose competitiveness in a global marketplace, I asked the question - what are we really doing in this Legislature, Madam Speaker?

We certainly have costs here in Canada and in this province of Nova Scotia that other countries don't have. There are costs for good things, things like health care. We have a population dispersed over a much greater geographic area. There are higher costs for transportation here than in more densely populated areas of the world. Those costs add up the cost of doing business here and we must be cognizant of that because other costs have to stay reasonable. Small business employers in this province are probably the best ones to ask and they are probably the best ones to determine what those other costs are - other costs associated with their business that this legislation will ultimately impact.

For the government to step in and say, here in Nova Scotia, we're going to put this nice, peaceful legislation in that's going to bring in an arbitrator to arbitrarily come into your business and tell you what you should be doing and to enforce changes in your cost structure so that you, competing in a global marketplace, where you are competing in a country that has higher costs because of our good quality, high standard of living - they're going to impact your business. Madam Speaker, I don't think that's fair to small business owners.

I think about - and this example is not really specifically related here, but I give the example because it's pertinent and I think everybody will understand it. This is an example of the global market place. When you look at auto manufacturers - we've all seen General Motors have to reinvent itself - I had read at one point in time where if you bought a Toyota, or really any Japanese car, you could buy an automobile with about \$2,000 more features on that automobile compared to a GM model, for the same price, so you're getting \$2,000 more value. A lot of it ultimately had to do with the liabilities associated with the pension plan that GM had because GM had been in business long before some of the Japanese auto manufacturers. The reason I'm making this point is that GM is competing in a global marketplace and they were a company whose costs got out of control. They were losing competitively because they were manufacturing cars with \$2,000 less in features, and we saw a North American population start to buy more Japanese cars.

I remember watching a movie one time, Madam Speaker, I was up here in Halifax and I was a young boy and there was a movie, I think it was called Gung Ho, and it was about a baseball game between American auto manufacturers and Japanese auto manufacturers. It's kind of a ridiculous story but for some reason I always remember that movie. There was a great hate by the Americans for the Japanese cars because, ultimately, this was a point in time in the 1980s when people choosing to buy Japanese cars was hurting American jobs, and really Canadian jobs because we certainly had a lot of GM, the big three North American auto makers manufacturing in Canada.

I raise this story because those Japanese cars were becoming better because they were more competitive. The same case is true with this legislation and in this province - if we want our Nova Scotia businesses to be competitive and we want them to be able to compete in the global marketplace, this legislation should not be introduced, especially if our Nova Scotian businesses are against it.

The government should take this legislation, fold it, and put it away somewhere high. If we end up creating a situation and an environment in this province where we become less competitive and we start to lose jobs, then, Madam Speaker, we are failing to do our job as political representatives in this province.

Government can't always create jobs. We've seen the federal government create jobs by investing in shipbuilding, but very often governments cannot create jobs. What government can do is create the environment for other people to create jobs.

One of the things in this legislation begs the question - one of the things the government has failed to do is define the term "impasse". Some people out there have been questioning if this term has been left open intentionally, that it may be a way for the Labour Board which this government has appointed - and there's been no secret, they've appointed people who are very pro-union. Are they leaving an opportunity there, leaving the definition of the word "impasse" open intentionally so that this Labour Board that they've appointed can interfere in private negotiations for little or no reason, for perhaps some trivial reason? So if there's a trivial dispute between an employer and their employees here in the province, the board can then go in and say, well, we have to do something about this impasse. We just have to do something about this impasse, even if it's a trivial matter.

That gives that board the ability to go in and make a decision that is going to impact the health of that business. Madam Speaker, seeing who is on the board, it doesn't leave us with a lot of confidence that they're going to have much insight or much sympathy for the small-business owner in this province.

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

MR. MAT WHYNOTT: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I really thank the honourable member for Inverness for giving me the time to do this introduction. Tonight we have the Hammonds Plains A's Mosquito AA Team here with us. They won the Bluenose League provincial championship.

What I would do is ask, when I name the team member, for you to stand and continue to stand until the House gives you a warm round of applause. We have Garrett Peterson, Max Turner, Nick Taylor, Luke Hubbard, Connor Hughes, Ryan Munroe, Billy Lorette, Jack Davidson, Cam Sullivan, Daniel Hashim, Dan McCarthy, Josh Brophy, and Cole Vardy, as well as the president of the Hammonds Plains Minor Baseball, Holly Lapierre, head coach John Simpson, and assistant coaches Brad Brophy, Barb Brophy, and Blane Sullivan - but unfortunately, he can't be here tonight. I ask the House to give them a warm round of applause. (Applause)

MADAM SPEAKER: We welcome all visitors to the gallery today and hope you enjoy today's proceedings.

The honourable Minister responsible for the Advisory Council on the Status of Women Act on an introduction, please.

HON. MARILYN MORE: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm very pleased to recognize, in the east gallery as well, Emery Foote - if you would stand, Emery. As you know, she's a resident of the constituency of Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage, but she's here this evening as a member of the Women's Action Coalition of Nova Scotia, as part of their Women are Watching campaign. I ask everyone to give her a warm welcome. (Applause)

MADAM SPEAKER: I welcome all the guests to today's proceedings.

The honourable member for Inverness has the floor.

MR. MACMASTER: Madam Speaker, I'm going to close up here because I know I'm running out of time. We remember when Bill No. 100 was brought into this Legislature, which was the precursor to this legislation. I recall looking through this thick document, I can't remember the number of pages, but I seem to recall it was about one-quarter to one-third of an inch thick and I thought, my God, am I going to go through all of this, am I going to read through all of this? We know when we're looking at legislation, it's all written, of course, in legal language and some members of the Legislature would have an easier time than others sifting through that. We started looking through it and there's a lot of information there.

All of a sudden somebody discovered there were a few clauses in the legislation that seemed a bit risky. We weren't quite sure what they were and upon further investigation and interpretation through legal advice, we discovered - not only "we" here as members of the Progressive Conservative caucus, but small-business owners in the

province were very concerned about the legal impact of those clauses. It almost would appear like they were just slipped in there innocently enough so that nobody would see it and we would pass the bill, nobody would know any better.

So now, you can expect if we don't feel too trustworthy, we don't feel very trusting of the government when they're introducing this bill because at the time, when we raised our concerns they said, don't worry, you have nothing to worry about. I even heard it in this Legislature during Question Period, we've even heard the Premier say it: we will not be interfering in private-sector matters. The very first sector of our economy that the government has chosen to target with that Bill No. 100 legislation and with this subsequent legislation is the private sector.

Madam Speaker, that about sums it up for me and my concerns. If the government decides to pursue this legislation further - which lucky we would be if it chose not to, but I can't imagine they won't, they will proceed with it - I may have a chance to speak again as it moves through the Law Amendments Committee and into third reading. With that, I will state my opposition to the legislation and I will take my place. I look forward to hearing from other members of the House.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester North.

HON. KAREN CASEY: Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise in my place today to speak on behalf of the constituents I represent. I do take that responsibility very seriously and so I will not be repeating what previous speakers have said, necessarily, but I will be sharing the concerns that have been brought to my attention as the MLA for Colchester North.

I do want to address these concerns to the members in the House and in particular to the minister. I certainly recognize that the minister is one who cares about all Nova Scotians and I believe she is a minister who will listen to the concerns that are raised. So with those initial comments I want to share with the members the concerns that have been brought to me from the Truro and District Chamber of Commerce.

There are 33 chambers around the province and they have spoken out about Bill No. 102. I would expect that every member in this Legislature has a chamber of commerce in their riding. I would expect that if one chamber is speaking out, that others may be as well. What I share may have already been shared with other members in this House. We know there was a press release that the Nova Scotia Chambers of Commerce put out today. They speak for all 7,000 businesses so it is a provincial issue. The correspondence that I will be sharing is, as I said earlier, from the Truro and District Chamber of Commerce but I believe it reflects the concerns that were stated. The member for Argyle was speaking about the press release and that speaks for all of the chambers.

Their concern is one that has been raised here. Their concern is, what is the intent of the legislation and what is it designed to do? I know the minister has heard that question many times and I guess what I'm asking is if there is an answer to that question that can be shared with the businesses around the province, I would ask the minister to do that.

When you have a question that can't be answered, there's an old saying that says in the absence of information, people think the worst. Rather than leave people with a question that's unanswered, I would encourage the minister and the government to answer that question. It will take away a lot of the fear, anxiety, a lot of the unknowns and a lot of the things that contribute to that, people think the worst.

If I could, I will table this document at the end, but I do want to refer to it as I'm making my comments. The letter was written by the president of the Truro and District Chamber of Commerce and it's asking the government to focus on strengthening the economy and strengthening it as much as possible. These members of the chamber recognize the importance of having a strong economy. They're all small businesses, some of them don't employ very many people but they are important to the economy of the particular area and so the Truro and District Chamber of Commerce would represent small- and medium-sized businesses that employ the people in that area. Their plea to the minister and the government is, please focus on something that will strengthen the economy and their thought is that this legislation does not.

The president talks about collective bargaining and I would expect that everyone in this House recognizes and values the importance of collective bargaining. We also recognize that because of that we do not have a lot of disputes, we do not have a lot of disruptions because we do bargain in good faith and employers and employees are able to come to an agreement. These small businesses are saying, we have collective bargaining, we have a stable workforce, we have an economy that needs to be attended to and strengthened and built and so they're putting that in as a plea to the minister.

They're also saying that this particular legislation, in their opinion, flies directly in the face of collective bargaining. If we have the members of this particular chamber and the press release that came out from all Nova Scotia's chambers believing that, then they are anxious and they are worried and they're wondering. Again, in the absence of information, people think the worst. Let's try to alleviate some of those concerns.

They also talk about questioning, why the need for change? Why not encourage more private investment? The president, on behalf of that chamber, is suggesting that the members of that chamber believe this will not only have the potential to negatively impact on the existing businesses but they're concerned that it may cause those who are contemplating a small business may be questioning whether it's really something they want to get into, is it something that they should do, and if we don't have small businesses, our small rural communities will suffer.

Many of us represent areas that don't have big businesses. They don't have the Michelins. They don't have the big businesses that employ hundreds of people. We have many little, small businesses that maybe employ eight, 10, 20 people, and those are the businesses that are members of this Chamber and they're the ones that fear for what this legislation might do. We have in Colchester North - because Debert is in Colchester North, because it is Truro and Area Chamber - we have many small businesses and there are not a lot of job opportunities in Colchester North. The workers can't afford to lose a business. The businesses can't afford to close.

So as I said in the beginning, I want to share that with the minister. I will provide a copy, I will table a copy, and I will also give a copy to the minister because it's not my concern, it's a concern that has been brought to me by my constituents and I believe that my responsibility, as a member in this House, is to bring that to the floor during debate, to make sure that the government and the minister, in particular, have a copy of that, read it, and determine for themselves whether there are ways that the questions that have been asked can be answered. These are the people who have said to me, we will be there when this goes to the Law Amendments Committee, and I think the minister needs to know that and I think the minister needs to be prepared for the questions that they will ask because the questions they will ask are the questions that are written in this particular correspondence.

So, Madam Speaker, we have heard people ask, what problem does it fix? And we don't have an answer. We've heard people ask the question, how will it benefit or how will it hurt small business? And we don't have an answer. The rationale for the legislation is the question that is on everyone's mind and we are expecting that when the minister gives her closing remarks, she will address that question because we are asking it, I'm asking it on behalf of my constituents, and I would like to be able to say to my constituents, the minister has answered the question.

With those few words, Madam Speaker, I want to table that document and I will provide a copy of that for the minister. Thank you very much.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cape Breton North.

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Madam Speaker, I rise in my place today to speak on this new bill, a proposed bill, Bill No. 102 - An Act to Prevent Unnecessary Labour Disruptions and Protect the Economy by Amending Chapter 475 of the Revised Statutes, 1989, the Trade Union Act. From what I'm hearing, Madam Speaker, and from what I'm reading, this is going to do just the opposite. It's not going to protect our economy; it's going to hurt it. This is the wrong legislation being introduced at the wrong time and for all the wrong reasons.

I spoke with numerous businesses over the weekend and they are not in support of this bill, just the opposite, they feel it's going to hurt their businesses in ways that they will have to lay people off or some of them may even have to close. If you open a newspaper

anywhere in this province, you'll see the same thing from Cape Breton to Yarmouth and everywhere in between, people in Nova Scotia are worried about jobs and job creation. That's their top priority, not reckless policies that only kill jobs. This just shows us about the government's commitment to job creation. We stand here day after day and talk about our jobsHere program. This is going to be our saviour, Madam Speaker, but people in Yarmouth, Cape Breton, Amherst - they're not seeing this as a saviour. Since this government has been in place there have been thousands of jobs lost all over the province.

As members of this House know, recently I ran in the by-election in the constituency of Cape Breton North. More recently than any other member in this House, I've hit the doorsteps and I've listened to people in my riding. They had lots of issues to discuss, like the NDP cuts to the front-line services in health care and ER closures. In the Northside General Hospital alone there were over 1,700 hours of ER closures last year, which, if you put it out into a day, is two and a half months of closures. Education cuts were high on the list. Certainly they wanted to discuss the NDP's tax hikes and what the higher HST has meant to homes and businesses. The 1,400 user fees were also a big topic of discussion. One thing that never came up, Madam Speaker, not even once, was the need for first contract arbitration in our province. Not once.

Have other members of this House heard their constituents demanding first contract arbitration? I don't think so - not the members on this side, anyway. I know I haven't been an MLA for long and many other members of the House have dealt with more issues and people in their communities than I have so far, but in my short time being here as an MLA, I've never heard about first contract arbitration - not in my campaign and not since. I've never heard a resident of Cape Breton North come forward and demand action on first contract arbitration. In fact, I've heard just the opposite. I've heard that we need more policies that will allow businesses to succeed in Cape Breton and more policies that will allow our economy to grow, not policies like this that will kill jobs and stall growth in Cape Breton.

Now, I know I wasn't the only person running in that by-election. There was an NDP candidate as well. His heart was in the right place and he's a nice guy, but I don't recall him talking about first contract arbitration either. No one during the by-election said to me, the NDP is talking about first contract arbitration, what are your thoughts? I didn't once have that discussion with anyone on the doorstep. The doorsteps had more issues - health care, taxes, jobs.

I also remember the general election in 2009. Granted, I was not a candidate or a member of the House at the time, but I did follow along and pay careful attention. I remember the NDP making a lot of promises. I remember they promised that they wouldn't run a deficit; I remember they promised they wouldn't raise taxes. I sure remember all those promises, Madam Speaker - promises that they broke - but I don't remember first contract arbitration. I don't remember the Premier, then the Opposition Leader, promising he would tackle first contract arbitration. Why didn't he make that promise then? Because

no one wanted it. There was no demand for it, just as there is no demand for it now. The reason there's no demand for it is simple: it's bad public policy. It was bad in 2009, it's bad in 2011, and it will be bad for years to come.

If first contract arbitration is so badly needed, if it's such a necessity, then I have to ask, why didn't the Premier come to Cape Breton North during my by-election and talk about it? Why didn't the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education come? Why didn't the Minister of Finance come? If it was so important you would think they would be lining up to come to Cape Breton and make the case for it, because at that time nobody wanted it, especially the businesses I spoke to. They say it's going to hurt their small businesses.

If this is such an important issue for the NDP, you would think they would have raised it during the campaign. Where was the first contract arbitration in their forum? Why is it only brought up now, while the House is sitting? This government has proven time and time again that they have an anti-business agenda, especially when it comes to labour laws in our province.

The Trade Union Act is supposed to protect our employers and employees and their ability to organize. My question is, why weren't they transparent about it? If they really felt the people of Nova Scotia were behind them on issues like Bill No. 100 and first contract arbitration, why wouldn't they put it in the context of an election? Because of who is behind it, Madam Speaker.

Business communities don't want it. I've spoken to people over the weekend, and that was the first thing out of one major employer who has about seven small businesses all over Cape Breton Island. He said the businesses don't want it. The Chamber of Commerce in Cape Breton doesn't want it.

If we look at lost time due to stoppages of work, it has been below 97 per cent since 2003. What problem is there to fix? I worked in the health care system for 24 years, and there was one stoppage, back in 1990. It was over wages that were negotiated and the contract was fixed, it was settled on its own. Now we see a new pattern with the NDP on these issues. They sneakily and underhandedly spring these things on us and then try to ram them through the Legislature as soon as possible. Why is that? It's because they know the people of Nova Scotia won't find this in their best interest, especially the small businesses in the rural areas of Nova Scotia. Maybe they're worried that they will kill the mood, after all Nova Scotians are rightfully pretty excited right now after learning we just had one of the big federal shipbuilding contracts. We won that on merit.

The Ships Start Here program - the government loves to remind us of that; they do it at each and every opportunity. What they don't like to be reminded of is job-killing, extreme labour laws that start here too and these job-killing labour laws put Nova Scotia's shipbuilding future at risk. Quite frankly, they run the risk of blowing it in regard to the

shipbuilding contract. This contract has energized Nova Scotians all over. There will be positive spinoffs from this project that will affect all of us, but now that's all in doubt.

One small business owner I spoke with from Truro - he owns a siding and window company - he's worried what effect this will have on his business if people decide they want to organize and pose first contract arbitration, he's afraid he won't be able to pay what they may be awarded and he may have to lay people off. That's far different from the job creation that we're hearing because of this.

The NDP, to date, hasn't given business a reason to invest in Nova Scotia and now, thanks to risky schemes like this first contract legislation, they're actually telling businesses to stay away because that's what this legislation will do. If it passes we might as well all put up a giant billboard at the border that says, closed for business. We shouldn't be worrying about this type of legislation; we should be worrying about tourism, education, health care. We don't want to be shutting business down we want to start creating jobs.

This is a backwards way of doing things, Madam Speaker. It's crucial that we make investing and growing a business in Nova Scotia as easy as possible because that's how we're truly going to leverage the opportunity this shipbuilding contract has presented us with. Instead, the NDP can't find enough ways to slow down growth in our province. When will they be satisfied? Do we have to wait until there's not a single, private-sector business left in the province before they'll quit their assault on job creators?

One business owner told me he treats his employees very well and because of that they treat him with respect and dignity as well. There's no need for them to have to worry about a strike and there's no need for them to worry about their salaries and benefits. He cares for his employees and he's wondering if the government does too. He owns a store in the Port Hawkesbury area and even with NewPage being shut down for the last number of months, he hasn't had to lay off one single worker because he has put enough into his business to keep them working.

Let's stop to think about what kind of message we're sending to the rest of the world with this legislation. We should be out there competing on the global marketplace and reminding job creators everywhere that with this shipbuilding contract big things are about to happen in Nova Scotia. But this is not the message of the Premier of this government; in fact, it has been just the opposite.

At this time first contract arbitration sends the wrong message. It tells potential investors Nova Scotia isn't ready to compete, not ready to take their business and support them in job creation. So maybe they'll set up shop somewhere else like in another region. Maybe they'll go to New Brunswick. We've already seen residents of Nova Scotia going to New Brunswick to buy their gas. They go to New Brunswick to buy some of their other goods because it's cheaper. If they go to New Brunswick that's where their government may appreciate the job creation; maybe they'll go to Newfoundland and Labrador, which

has one of the fastest-growing economies in the country right now. It's not like they don't have other options or it's not like Nova Scotians can afford to pass up on thousands of new jobs.

This government likes to claim first contract arbitration isn't uncommon in Canada. Let's look at it for a minute, look at some of the other areas that haven't enacted first contract legislation. New Brunswick doesn't have first contract arbitration, and they're our closest neighbour. If you're an entrepreneur looking to set up shop in Atlantic Canada, that's just one more reason to move your business to New Brunswick and not Nova Scotia. Does this government really think we can afford that? Alberta doesn't have first contract legislation - let's think about that for a minute. Alberta, the industrial powerhouse that we lose so many of our young Nova Scotians to, does not have first contract arbitration.

The other question the government has failed to answer is why, why now? Nova Scotia has enjoyed pretty harmonious labour relations over the past decade or so. A quick history lesson will remind us that, in most cases in Canada, first contract legislation has always been introduced with controversy to address a particular problem. Where's the controversy now in Nova Scotia? Where are the marchers in the streets that have impressed on all of us the need for this legislation? We know people aren't up in arms demanding first contract arbitration, so why is the government moving ahead with it so quickly? Who's actually pulling the strings here?

A Canadian Tire retailer in my riding, during the by-election, stated to me that even the little things that affect the bottom line, like the rise in minimum wage, impacts his ability to run his business in our small town in Nova Scotia. What would he think if first contract arbitration was imposed on his business?

I challenge the government to be honest and tell us the truth. Who pushed the NDP, behind the scenes, to move ahead with this legislation? Do they owe it to one of their special-interest friends? One of the biggest problems with this bill lies in the fact that it's so vague. According to this legislation, employers and employees must only reach an impasse before an arbitrator can take over and set wages and benefits; however, the government hasn't taken the time to tell us what an "impasse" is. They've neglected to define it or provide any context that may enlighten us.

That means one of two things must be the case: either the legislation is rushed and not ready for the House, or the government has left this bill intentionally vague. Which is it? It comes back to the question, who is the government listening to? Who is applying the pressure in this case? Why have they refused to listen to job creators in Nova Scotia? I know who they're not listening to - they're not listening to the thousands of small and large businesses in Nova Scotia. If they were, they would slow down and consult, and abandon this crazy idea and come up with a better plan.

Just today, the Nova Scotia Chambers of Commerce, with over 7,000 members, has come out and spoken about this legislation - and not in a favourable manner. And they're certainly not listening to Michelin - a company that employs 3,400 Nova Scotians - who, reports have suggested, may seriously consider leaving the province if the legislation is enacted.

Let's think about Michelin as an example for a moment. Do you think that Michelin would have ever set up shop in Nova Scotia in the first place if we had first contract arbitration in place at that time? I think the answer is a definite no. That would have been thousands of jobs passed on because of extreme labour laws. Is that really the kind of future we want for Nova Scotia and our children? Michelin has already said that they probably will not reinvest in Nova Scotia if this is passed.

All of us in the House have a responsibility to think about the next generation and how we can make things better for them, about how we can leave behind a robust economy that provides them with opportunities to be the best we can be here at home, but this legislation makes it more difficult.

We want to see good jobs here in Nova Scotia for our young people - jobs that will keep them here and allow them to thrive, but if we're going to expend all this energy on keeping job creators away, just how do we expect to do that? Our workforce is already shrinking - the NDP have to answer for thousands upon thousands of jobs lost since they took office. It's pretty clear that the state of the economy and creating jobs should be the top priority for this government. So I would like to ask them a question, how does first contract arbitration encourage job growth?

The businesses I spoke to on the weekend say that between the cost of electricity, the cost of transportation, the rise in utility prices over the last year or two, and if this first contract arbitration comes into play, it's going to hurt their business. How does telling a business that if they come up to Nova Scotia and set up shop a third-party arbitrator will step in and determine some of the most important aspects of their operation spur job growth? Most businesses want to know before they set up shop how much the shop will cost. Increased wages, power, and all the rest do not do anything to add to this economic growth. How will this increase the confidence of a business community?

A few weeks ago the Canadian Federation of Independent Business came out with their business barometer, and the results were not good for Nova Scotia. According to the CFIB, a trusted representative of job creators in this province, 19 per cent of small-business owners plan to decrease their full-time workforce in the next two to three months - up from 13 per cent in September 2010 and 11 per cent in 2009. Numbers like that make it pretty obvious we're on the wrong track.

Businesses just aren't confident in Nova Scotia right now, and how does first contract arbitration address that? If anything, it further decreases their confidence. After

all, not only are these businesses dealing with higher taxes and out-of-control power rates, but they now have to worry about the potential for a third party to step in and determine all aspects of their relationship with their employees - and let's keep in mind that the third party or the arbitrator who could be working on their particular case may have no knowledge at all about their business or their industry. I don't think the idea of someone who knows nothing about your operation setting the wages and benefits of your business inspires much confidence.

Part of the problem with this legislation is the control it takes away from employers and job creators. The legislation could result in employers being unable to make the kind of decisions necessary to keep them afloat. In all actuality, the important things that determine what kind of business they can run could be decided by somebody else. Is that the kind of thing that will draw new businesses here? I know lots of businesses in my constituency that are struggling as it is. They're dealing with higher HST, out-of-control power rates, and a government that isn't receptive to their needs. Those challenges are daunting enough; I'm not sure how much more they can take. My very real fear is that first contract arbitration will ultimately end up being the final nail in the coffin for thousands of businesses in this province.

The NDP has placed our economy in such dire straits that we can't afford to lose a single job. We have thousands of families that are struggling to make ends meet as it is. Imagine the impact closed businesses could have on rural Nova Scotia. Think about the thousands of small family-run businesses in our province; all of them make significant contributions to our economy, collectively employing thousands. But it's more than the contributions they make to the economy, it's also about the contributions they make to the community. Sporting teams, Scouting movements, volunteer organizations, Big Brothers, Kinsmen - all these people are the backbone of these organizations, and if they have no job here and have to leave, who will carry the torch for these associations?

We all know businesses give back to their local communities, particularly small rural communities. We all know of businesses that sponsor local teams, help employ students and youth, and raise money for local initiatives, all in addition to providing jobs for people in their area. With first contract arbitration threatening to drive them out of business, it also threatens the communities in which they operate.

What about the kind of businesses that people have come to truly rely on? What about communities that have the only gas stations or pharmacies for miles? What if they're forced to close shop because a devastating first contract is imposed upon them? Imagine what that would mean to people in the community. Let's use pharmacies for an example. We know that in many communities pharmacists are actually the first medical professional on call for the elderly or our children. What if the local pharmacy in a small rural community is forced to close because first contract is imposed on them? The consequences could be dire. Not only do we lose the expertise, but they could have to drive miles to get the services that they need and deserve.

Another issue is the misleading title of the bill - an Act to Prevent Unnecessary Labour Disruptions and Protect the Economy. This is a title that would be laughable if the situation was not so serious. Protect the economy - just how does this legislation do that? Protecting the economy would mean tackling the HST; it would mean taking real action on out-of-control energy costs and rewriting the bite-the-bullet energy plan, not moving forward with more anti-business, job-killing policies.

We could talk about energy, coal, how we can use coal to put people back to work. I'd like to see the government explain to the members of the business community who have made their concerns known exactly how the piece of legislation protects the economy. Maybe it's supposed to protect the economy in New Brunswick or Alberta, is that the intent? Because it certainly doesn't protect the economy of Nova Scotia and if the government thinks it does, it's time to get their heads out of the sand.

It seems to me, Mr. Speaker, this government has never taken the economy seriously. The idea that they know is a farce. First contract arbitration will only hinder the economy in Nova Scotia. It will drive away jobs and prevent new ones from coming here. Earlier I spoke about Nova Scotia's new shipbuilding opportunity and what it means for our province. It's so important that we get this right, we need to do everything we can to turn the economy boost into a long economic engine. The way we do this is by using this opportunity to grow the economy and bring new offset businesses here, businesses that will be able to stay here for the next number of generations. First contract arbitration impedes all the work and makes it harder to make them a reality.

Perhaps one of the most offensive aspects in this bill lies in the timing of its introduction; after all, only a few short weeks ago Nova Scotians rejoiced when they heard the Irving shipyard in Halifax will receive the \$25 million contract. This announcement was supposed to build a foundation for Nova Scotia to grow long into the future with no end in sight to the new jobs created and the economic spinoffs that would accompany it. However, now all of a sudden it has been rocked with uncertainty due to the NDP's first contract arbitration.

Our Leader has said it best, all this legislation does is raise a red flag over Nova Scotia. It tells businesses it's a risky place to invest. Are we really going to make the most of our new shipbuilding opportunity when we're not getting the full benefits of our new businesses, new jobs, and other positive economic spinoffs will provide? The answer is pretty clear, we don't think so. The government can try to hide as much as they want but the truth is first contract arbitration is a job-killer. Not only does it dissuade new businesses from setting up shop in our region but it also prevents significant challenges for all the ones already in operation. These challenges can have devastating effects on the job creators and the employees. In many cases they can even result in business closing and jobs being lost. There are no two ways about it, it's a job-killer plain and simple.

This legislation is going to make it harder for all of us to promote Nova Scotia across the country and internationally and this is really important. Unfortunately, first contract arbitration dilutes what could have been a very powerful message. Before the government introduced this legislation we could have travelled the world saying, ships start here in Nova Scotia and we're open for business. But because of first contract arbitration we're no longer able to say this with gusto. The government doesn't want Nova Scotia to be open for business. They don't want to attract new people and new investors. They appear content to allow us to squander this historic opportunity. In the PC caucus we're not, that's why we'll be fighting this bad legislation each and every step of the way. We need job creation and ways to protect jobs. We have it now, we don't want to lose this and we're going to fight this legislation. With that, Mr. Speaker, I'll take my seat.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston.

HON. KEITH COLWELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a great pleasure - I say a great pleasure and probably a little bit of apprehension that I'm standing up today to speak on Bill No. 102. As a small business owner in the past, before I got involved in politics, I'd be very concerned about this bill.

I've talked in the Legislature before about the economic climate under this NDP Government in the past a couple of times and I've been labelled by some of the government members as the member of gloom and doom. Well, I think that's a compliment because they really listened to me and maybe they'll understand when they go to the polls the next time, the guys on the back bench over there, and they're not here anymore, can understand what I was talking about when that happens. I've been here a long time and I can tell you I've seen a lot of people come and go here.

You know when you look at the bill, on the face of the bill it doesn't look too bad. It's first contract arbitration, ideally when a new union is set up, which Bill No. 100 allowed to have, Bill No. 100 set up for this bill on a previous day and when this bill moves forward, it will allow the first contract to be negotiated.

Well, as a business owner at the time, it depends on who the arbitrator is, how well this will work. I'm not convinced that an arbitrator will be too friendly to an employer necessarily, and they shouldn't be, and they shouldn't be friendly either to a union. They should be totally unbiased, but unfortunately that doesn't happen too often.

How are they going to compare the wages of one business to another business? Are they going to go outside and say, well, you know in Alberta they make \$35 an hour and the people here make \$10 an hour so that's fine, we'll pay them \$25 an hour. So instantly the company is probably going to be out of business.

There's a lot of things that really affect us. Some of my colleagues have already talked about the high cost of power in Nova Scotia - it has gone up 36.2 per cent since 2000

and there are two more increases coming, so that's going to make us less competitive in Nova Scotia.

When you look at competitiveness, it really is important to a business. If you can't compete - you've got to compete financially, you've got to compete on the basis that you have a superior or equal product and you also have to compete on the basis of performance. So if you say you are going to deliver a product on time, at a price - well, the number one thing, the customer wants it on time, they want it on budget and they want top quality.

Sometimes when a company is bogged down, especially a small company and if they have a union shop, and there's nothing wrong with a union shop as long as it's mutually agreed to. Now, with Bill No. 100, you don't have to do that anymore; it can sort of just happen. When you send it to first contract arbitration, what if you are partway through a major project and all of a sudden there's first contract arbitration put in place and the first contract arbitration decides, well, now, instead of your employees making \$20 an hour, they are going to make \$26 an hour. It doesn't sound too bad, does it, only \$6 an hour more but, in reality, you've got to charge that extra \$6 out of \$18. You've got to charge three times what that cost you.

So now you've got a problem - partway through a contract, probably can't finish it and then what do you do? You call your banker up and say, well, look, take my business because I can't finish this contract, I'm going to go bankrupt. Well, that's not really a good idea. You call up your customer and say, I'm going to put the price up because first contract arbitration was in our facility and they put the wages up and we can't finish the contract at what we quoted, we need more money.

Well, hopefully they had that negotiated in the contract but I can tell you, any customer that is worth their salt would not have that built into the contract. They wouldn't take that kind of a chance, they definitely would not.

So what is a business owner going to be faced with? Well, maybe he is far enough along in the project that it's not going to kill his company. They probably would have to go for a loss, it would be a loss if that's the case. But then what do you have to do past that? Then you decide, is it worthwhile continuing with this type of work in this province? I talked before about how they're more competitive in other provinces in this beautiful country that we live in, and more competitive means many, many things, as was talked about already. Again, it's labour quality, price of your product, whether you can deliver or not, and if indeed you have a really solid company with really solid employees - and that's really the factor.

At one time when you would negotiate a contract here in Nova Scotia, you'd be competing with the guy down the street. Maybe if you lived in Dartmouth you'd be competing with somebody in Halifax, or if it really, really got tough you might be competing with someone in Bridgewater or someplace like that, but now with the

technology of today you're competing with people all over the world. When you think about that and you look at Mexico - we've seen the Moir's candy factory over here close, some pretty well-paid jobs. Someone just in the regular labour force, I believe, was making about \$14 an hour, which is really good money, and a steady, full-time job, but they moved to Mexico.

Mexico probably pays less than \$2 an hour, fewer taxes - fewer corporate taxes, fewer property taxes, fewer regulations to go with - so why do you think they moved off from Nova Scotia? That was before this NDP Government got in and jacked up the taxes on our HST, adding 2 per cent more to everything we buy; also before the income tax effect is slowly creeping up, called bracket creep. I've talked about that here in this province. It makes companies less competitive and makes it more difficult to compete with someone outside the province. Now it's getting to the point that New Brunswick is more competitive than Nova Scotia. Hmm, that's not good. They have lower tax rates and lower HST. They've probably got much better power rates. The list goes on and on. So how long is a company going to stay here? How long?

We've talked about how there are 12,500 jobs gone in Nova Scotia, and that's reality. There are more being lost every day, and some of these jobs are very well-paid jobs. Especially if you're out in a rural area, if you lose 50 or 100 jobs in a rural area where you don't have many people or don't have many jobs, it's a significant blow to your community. If you've got some small company that maybe employs 20, 30, or 40 people, and they're going along quite well, they're not unionized, and all of a sudden they become unionized under Bill No. 100 and then they come to the first contract under this bill that will be forced through by the NDP - first contract arbitration - what will happen then? What if the wages go up 20 per cent, 30 per cent, 40 per cent? Then they've got a problem. That company probably can't compete in their market anymore. Now they may be a niche market, if they're really lucky, but there's nothing that's made, produced, or put together in this country that can't be reproduced somewhere else, and usually at a significantly lower cost.

At one time we had the best equipment, we had the best education, and all the things that gave us a real competitive advantage, so a little bit higher tax, a little bit higher cost, really didn't matter because we made up for it in productivity, through equipment and all of the other things. As we become more and more encumbered by unions - not that unions are bad all the time, they have their place and they definitely have made a better workplace for Nova Scotians anywhere unions have been, but if you get over-encumbered with this, the first thing is you become uncompetitive. When you do become uncompetitive, the first thing is you can't compete anymore. If you can't compete anymore, what happens to your business? You go broke or you quit - you just close shop and say, that's it, I've had enough, I can't do this anymore. Then you have some choices to make. Well, do I move my business with my niche product that I have out of Nova Scotia? If I was still running a business I could tell you I would be very seriously looking at that right now, although I don't want to leave Nova Scotia. I love it here, I love the people, I

love the province, but I would move. That's only me. I'm sure every business out there is looking at it the same way.

This bill will have a negative effect in other ways too. What about the little guy who fixes the appliances? I know we've had a very reputable company in my home recently doing some repairs to some equipment and appliances we have, and four or five people work at the place. If that gets organized and unionized and they go to a first contract arbitration, all of a sudden the cost is increased significantly to repair appliances. What's going to happen?

Are we going to have people decide it's not worth repairing that appliance? We'll buy a new one. Lo and behold, they go out and buy the new one and guess where it's made? In China. Well. That doesn't sound too bad either, except there are no jobs producing that product in Canada or even in the U.S. If we buy products that are made in Canada or the U.S., it really helps our economy, because we're so interconnected, but if it's made in China, Taiwan, Korea, it's outside our areas. So we look at that.

One of the advantages we had was the equipment that we used to use. We could buy the best equipment on the market and you put it to work in Nova Scotia and you usually can be competitive. That's not the case anymore. Guess where these machines are coming from? They're coming from Taiwan and China and Korea because they've set the manufacturing facilities up there to make this equipment because they can build it better quality and less cost because the labour cost is down and the taxes are down in the communities. We're disadvantaged immediately, so that means they sell it to anyone in the world, so now anyone in the world can get this equipment and compete with Nova Scotia.

Then, you say, we had the best education system. Well I watched a documentary here awhile ago when the children in, I believe, South Korea were going to school, they were going six days a week, 10 hours a day. Well, it doesn't take long to figure out that they're probably getting a lot better education than we are here now. They're actually bringing instructors and teachers over from Nova Scotia and other parts of Canada to teach these children English so when they go to the international markets they can speak English.

I remember years ago I was at an international machinery show in the U.S., the biggest one in the world, and at that time there were a lot of companies just starting to break into the U.S. market. A lot of gentlemen were there from Japan and they were more interested in learning how to speak English than they were to sell the equipment. On the surface, that doesn't make sense, but if you look at what was happening, they wanted to learn to speak English very well so they could sell more equipment when they could really understand the technology in terms that the North Americans understood.

They were very clear to say that. They were sent there by their companies, with hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of equipment sitting around them, they said if you

can sell some equipment, we'll be very happy, but if you learned how to speak English, we'll be happier. This is the way it's going.

The more obstacles - and this is an obstacle - this is an obstacle you place in front of a business and you tell a business you can't do this, you can't do that, you don't want to do this or you don't want to do that, all these things in place, and all of a sudden the business says, is it worth it? We talked here the other day about the credit unions, the Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism was always saying the fantastic thing they have with the credit unions, with a 75 per cent loan guarantee on the loans, when you get a loan from the credit union. It is a good program; I personally refer businesses to it, but until recently I didn't realize what interest rate they were charging.

If you have a business, usually you can get 0.5 per cent, 1 per cent, 1.5 per cent above prime for all your loans, that's your operating loans and some of the long-term loans you can get an even better deal. The credit union is charging between 4 and 7 per cent above prime rate. That, right now, is anywhere from 7 to 10 per cent interest on these loans. That makes a company less competitive because they're spending so much money paying these loans back.

It's very difficult to get loans when you have a small business. Anyone who hasn't run a small business wouldn't understand this or even have any idea how difficult it is, but you have to immediately give a personal guarantee for everything that you owe them plus you have to give them all the assets of the company, all the receivables of the company, everything that's of any value they want to take as collateral. I don't disagree with that. The problem is with a small business, something like 60 or 90 per cent of them - it's a huge number - go bankrupt in the first two years, and in the next two to three years another 50 or 60 per cent go bankrupt again. So when you start out with 10 companies at the beginning, you're probably only down to one or maybe two companies in five years time that have actually succeeded.

Now, if you throw in another variable, like this first contract arbitration, you're going to have a serious problem on your hands. You're going to have a serious problem. You're going to see businesses fold faster or decide not to start here. You're going to see companies that maybe were going to start a branch office, a large company, say, well, Nova Scotia is not the place to do business because the first thing you know, we're going to be unionized. Then we're going to have to go to first contract arbitration to settle a wage dispute and we have fixed costs that we have to deal with, and how are we going to contend with that as we move forward and we decide that maybe we want to expand here, I don't think it's going to happen. We already see that we've lost at least 12,500 jobs in this province and there's a lot more to come, a lot more to come, unfortunately.

I talked before in here about seeing people in my constituency who are struggling every day, people who are working are struggling every day to pay the bills. When I say the bills, I'm not talking about cruises or big vacations, or anything like that, I'm talking about

people who are having trouble paying their power bill, which has gone up drastically, paying their oil bill if they have oil heat, gone up drastically - paying for gasoline, when this government went in office, it was \$1 a litre for gas, now it's \$1.23, and we're down a little bit, it was almost \$1.28 the other day. So when you go through all that and you see what the costs are, also the price of diesel is up, that's the fuel that everything moves with, and as you see the cost of things increase, the cost to the consumer increases, the more increases to the consumer, the less competitive we are here.

When you look at what you have to do to run a business, unless you've run a business and understand what it is, it's impossible to explain it to somebody. People have this attitude, you know - businesses have all kinds of money, they can afford this, can afford that, but really they can't and if they're real lucky at business, if they make very good money, they will reinvest in their business. They will reinvest in their employees. They will reinvest in the community. They will help the organizations. Just a few minutes ago here we were talking about hockey, you know, the kids playing hockey and the baseball teams of kids, and all the organizations that are out fundraising today. They're trying to get money to do the things that are so important to our communities and to the people in our communities.

If businesses don't make money, they can't contribute to that and if the businesses don't contribute, there's not going to be enough money to run these organizations and some of them will fold. So what's going to happen then? Will it mean that, well, this organization that maybe was getting wheelchairs for somebody in the community who really needed wheelchairs and couldn't afford them, now can't get the wheelchairs? So that means that somebody that could have maybe gone to work can't go to work anymore, or they won't get a job because they're not mobile, or they just can't get around. They can't even get out and go to the grocery store and buy groceries.

So this has a long-reaching potentially devastating effect on our whole province and as we go through the process and see how all this works and will work as time goes on, then there are going to be a lot of people here who are going to be very disappointed in this government. Unfortunately, they're going to have to find out that the hard way and it's very unforgiving as you go through the process of seeing how a business grows, prospers, and indeed puts things back into the local community, and usually small businesses that put things back in a local community, some are within a very short distance from their office, and they don't go very far away because they want to support the people who support them.

So when you see this transpire and you talk about a bill like this, Bill No. 102, and any businesses out there that have the time to watch tonight are probably not aware of what this bill is potentially doing to their business. So they should start paying attention. They should be in here at the Law Amendments Committee and really telling this government what it means.

I know the NDP has huge financial support from the unions in this country. I know during my last election campaign, one of my campaign workers was pretty astute and he said, those two guys don't look like they are from here. I'm going to go ask them. So the NDP candidate - a very wonderful lady who was running against me, a very credible candidate - she goes over and asks these two people, where are you from? Both from Ontario. They had their clipboards, they were down here. How long are you down here for? The term of the election. I'm sure that never showed up in the expenses for the election, so who paid for their travel to here, their lodging here, and all the costs and all their meals and everything while they were here? That's a good question. Maybe it's something that should be investigated.

With that kind of debt owed to an organization or organizations by this government, it's pretty scary. They talk about businesses supporting our Party and the Progressive Conservative Party - what's the difference? It really makes you wonder. So when you look at these things and you see, why is this government pushing so hard for this bill? The bill is really deceiving, right? An Act to Prevent Unnecessary Labour Disruptions and Protect the Economy by Amending Chapter 475 of the Revised Statutes, 1989, the Trade Union Act - protect the economy from what?

The economy works well if we're competitive, building quality products, and building them in a reasonable time. In order to do that you have to have very skilled people, very diligent people, and you don't want to be bogged down, often trying to negotiate contracts partway through what is happening.

I remember a lot of times - and the unions just don't believe that a company is going to close if they don't settle a dispute. When they do find out that, indeed, the employees there - those aren't the people negotiating; someone comes from away, usually, from what I've seen, to negotiate these big contracts - oh, don't worry, you'll have your job, you'll have your job. At the end of the day when the company closes, these guys take off to Toronto or wherever they are from. They've still got their jobs, but the small guy, the guy who is just trying to make a living, doesn't have his job anymore. So you tell me that that really works? It doesn't work.

So you've really got to look at the possible impact - or not "possible", the probable impact of this bill. Long after we're gone, someone is probably going to have to amend this bill. They're definitely going to have to amend Bill No. 100 to make it more realistic for Nova Scotia and the economy in Nova Scotia, to get this thing in place. They're going to remember the legacy of this NDP Government for a long time, and probably the damage they're doing to the economy right now, with 12,500 jobs gone so far and we're still counting. That's after only a couple of years. Imagine what it is going to be like in three or four years time, or two years time. They'll probably call an election before then, to ensure that the people in the province don't really realize what is happening to them.

When you go through that and see it, when people come in and they talk about the financial problem they have and they can't understand why, I tell them, for every \$10,000 you clear, you've lost \$200 to the GST. That's \$200 after-tax money. Oh, by the way, that \$10,000 isn't worth \$10,000 anymore because last year your income tax was put up. It was increased last year. It's called bracket creep - every year, so that's gone. So your \$10,000 is not worth \$10,000, plus you're going to take \$200 off that.

You take the over 30 per cent or over 40 per cent - soon over 40 per cent - that your power rate has gone up in that time, the 25 per cent increase in your gasoline, the huge increases in grocery costs, and the list goes on and on. So that \$10,000 you had two years ago - just two years ago, when these guys took power - it doesn't buy \$10,000 worth of goods anymore. It doesn't. It might buy \$7,000, maybe \$7,500 worth of stuff.

So where did the other money go? What are you going to do to make up that money? What are you going to do? Very soon your savings will be gone. I see people every day - you can't pay your property taxes, possibly, can't pay your power bill, can't pay your heat bill. Maybe you can't quite buy all the groceries you need, so if you've got a family of four with two people working and two children, you're not going to go to a food bank - although some people have to go to a food bank, with two of them working. It makes you wonder why this is happening. You see very quickly what is happening to our economy.

I also spoke before about the fact that this province now has 43 per cent of the total workforce works in government. When government generates things, it generates nothing back in the economy. It takes tax dollars away from people to spend the money to provide services. Now those services are very important to Nova Scotians, but when you look at what really brings money into the province, it's the small businesses that export outside of Nova Scotia, even if it's just across the border to New Brunswick, even if it's just to Prince Edward Island - that's export. Each export dollar, several years ago, was worth \$7 in economic spinoff. For every dollar they sold, it meant a \$7 really net gain for the community that that export was sent from or the province, whichever the case may be, either way.

When you go through and you look at that and see what kind of impact that is - so we lost 12,500 jobs from industry, we haven't lost any from government. Actually the government has grown under this government, so you add nothing into the economy with 43 per cent of the people in this province adding nothing to the economy. Now that's just the people who are working. Then you get a large group of people that for whatever reason, cannot work - disabled, all kinds of issues - and that's part of our society and that's fine, so you have another percentage of the economy who are not contributing anything. Then we have a lot of people who retired. Now if the pensions are coming from outside of Nova Scotia, it's a federal government pension, that's fine, the money is coming from Ottawa and it does help our economy. If it's a provincial pension here for provincial civil servants, or teachers or anybody like that who is in this province, that's not adding anything to the province, nothing. That is money that is just being re-circulated through the system.

Those pensions are important to people, but more and more people are realizing that it's cheaper to live outside of Nova Scotia, but still live in Canada, it's cheaper. Your income tax is much higher here than it is pretty well anywhere else in the country. Well, it is higher than anywhere else in the country. So why would you live here after you retire? Why would you live here? Family here? No, probably not because your kids are probably gone to Alberta to work because the economy is better there, there are lots of jobs and indeed they don't have the problems there with the taxation that we do and all of the other issues. You might pay more for a home out there, but you would clear more money every year so it's easier to pay for the home.

As you look at all these negative things that are happening in this province, this could be the final nail that goes in the coffin and totally kills the economy in this province. There are a lot of naysayers out there saying, oh no, that won't happen. I remember the cod fishing industry in this province and in Atlantic Canada. That will never go away. Guess what? There's no cod fishery in Eastern Canada now. Even a sport fishery for cod is strictly restricted, as it should be, indeed if it ever comes back, so don't say never happen, it could possibly happen and probably will happen unless the taxes are eased off in this province and make it more competitive for people to do business here. We need better training in this province. We have reasonably good training, but not up to the standard it should be for manufacturing.

As we go forward and we see all the things that are happening in this province . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. I recognize the Minister of Environment on a point of order.

HON. STERLING BELLIVEAU: Mr. Speaker, I would like to call a point of order on the speaker who suggested there is no cod fisheries on the Atlantic East Coast. I bring that to your attention, there is a cod fishery on the East Coast of Canada.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you very much, Mr. Minister, for your interesting observation, but it's not a point of order. The honourable member for Preston.

MR. COLWELL: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the minister for that intervention. He, himself, being a fisherman, he would know that indeed the cod fishery isn't the fishery it was, and indeed there was a major crisis in this province and in this country over the cod fishery in the East Coast - and there still is a crisis, although there are a few fish back now.

It's quite interesting to see the minister's point of view. That same minister probably thinks that this is going to really, really help the economy in the province and all Nova Scotia is going to be working because of this fantastic bill we're putting forward. Well, if you believe there are all kinds of codfish in Nova Scotia still, or off Nova Scotia's coast, you'd probably believe that. But the people in the industry who had to get rid of their

licences, lost their boats, and everything else in the industry may disagree with this Fisheries and Aquaculture Minister - I can remember him being at meetings that I held when I was Fisheries Minister. Indeed they were pretty concerned about the fishery.

So it's quite interesting to see that kind of comment. That's encouraging the other members over there who don't believe that what I'm talking about is real or possibly can do anything. To make a point of order, as well, it's going to be quite interesting to see what kind of stuff they come up with. (Interruption) It would be interesting, no? They could get up and speak on this bill and say how wonderful it is for their union buddies and work away at that, and how it's going to really help the economy of a little small town that's almost dying now in Nova Scotia, as people have to move to Halifax Regional Municipality to work.

It's just so unbelievable that this government has brought this bill forward to further reduce the efficiencies and competitiveness of businesses in Nova Scotia - that is what it comes down to, bottom line. So I guess maybe they want everyone to work in government, that way they'd belong to the unions, everybody would be unionized and we'd really be in good shape. Well, every place that has all been unionized, it's just a matter of time and it's not in good shape, it's not competitive, and things aren't as rosy as they paint it to be. It's going to be interesting to see - as time wears through on all this, and the legacy of this government, this one-term government, goes through - just exactly how much damage they've done to the Nova Scotia economy.

It's going to be very serious and as we watch it unfold - fortunately I'm at the age now that I don't think I'll ever run a business again, but who knows? When I finally decide to give up being a politician - and that's going to be some time away . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: It won't be you who decides - the people decide.

MR. COLWELL: It's going to be interesting. I've got more time in here than 99 per cent of the guys on that side of the House are ever going to have - especially when Nova Scotians figure out what's going on here. (Interruptions) I think that maybe they woke up over there all of a sudden, you know. They've been asleep at the switch and when the people take their revenge on them at next election time they may not be so happy a crowd over there.

It's pretty interesting, when I talk to business people today - and you know business people are pretty intense, they work hard, they take big risks, and they see things happen - I won't say exactly what they say about this NDP Government, because that would be out of order in this place, but it's not very pleasant, let's put it that way. They say, can we get rid of them now? I say no, you've got to wait until the next election and you can get rid of them then. And they say, well, don't worry, we're going to. Then when you talk to their employees, their employees are saying the same thing.

It's pretty interesting; pretty darn interesting. Especially the employees who don't have jobs anymore - businesses get a little bit less competitive so they have to lay off one or two people, or three people, or four people. Where do those people find a job? They don't. They don't.

We got this big shipbuilding contract here that's going to save everything. The Premier was telling us how he got this contract - he's going to save the whole world, right? Come to find out, I made a mistake here; I made a mistake and I said it was going to be an increase of 1,900 jobs - that was a guesstimate on my part based on the workplace that they had talked about.

AN HON. MEMBER: The king of doom and gloom.

MR. COLWELL: Well, I'll talk about that in a second. But the Irvings came on the radio and said, we're only going to have 1,200 - that's 1,200 new jobs in our facility, not 11,000, not 11,000 - 1,200, that's the real number from the people who got this contract, not this government that's going through this crap. When you go (Interruptions)

AN HON. MEMBER: That's unparliamentary.

MR. COLWELL: Oh, that's awful, isn't it? We've got this five-year plan, this five-year highway plan . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. I would just remind the honourable member that the language just used is unparliamentary and if he could omit it from the debate tonight.

The honourable member for Preston has the floor.

MR. COLWELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will withdraw that comment - I withdraw the comment, let's put it that way. Anyway, as we go through this whole thing, I was talking to a gentleman the other day and he said, you know, all this huge influx of people are coming for this contract that Irving has, which is a great contract and Irving did a great job in getting it - Irving, I stress, not this government - he said, where's the highway plan to move all these people? All these people - where's the plan?

There is no plan because the government knows that they're not going to need new highways. So if there's only this, there are going to be 11,000 new jobs travelling to downtown Halifax, this province should be hopping on the bandwagon and saying, okay, we have to build some really innovative ways to move people around. Not a word about that, not a word. So, you know, when you go through the whole thing and you really look at what kind of an economic impact that's going to be, it's going to be quite interesting.

My colleagues opposite there, they should be getting up and talking about this and just see what kind of stuff they're going to feed us and what they're going to tell us about

this thing. It's going to be interesting to see what's going to happen as it plays out. The federal government's doing major layoffs right now in their departments. Well, they have to balance the books, they say. I don't see this government balancing the books that way. They keep hiring more and more people at more and more cost to the taxpayers.

Every time that everything goes up, the cost goes up, who pays it? The people who work in business and as that continues you see the business become less and less competitive because they have to pay more and more and more taxes to feed this government's interesting approach in trying to grow the economy - again, 12,500 jobs gone. Gas has gone up almost 25 cents, 25 cents - a buck and a quarter for gas. In the U.S. it's about 84 cents. So can we be competitive? No way. Electricity rates, some of the highest in the country, yet this government allows Nova Scotia Power to put out \$1.06 billion to Emera, right outside this province. It's gone, gone!

I want to hear more information on this but I understand Emera may be having some serious financial problems because of some dealings they've had outside the country. I don't know that but that's a rumour that's around. Hopefully, that's not true. If it is, are Nova Scotians going to have to pay more than the \$1.06 billion that they've already paid to Emera? Is that going to happen? How much more are the power rates going to go up? How many more people are going to not be able to pay their power bills? Already I'm seeing people in my office that can't pay their power bills and they don't know what they're going to do this winter. So what's going to happen? People desperately looking for work, they can't find work.

The growth in Nova Scotia's economy is dismal, to say the least, dismal. Why is it dismal? Because of the policies of this government. I heard honourable colleagues say that this shipbuilding contract over there, that people in Spry Bay are going to be working. I remember that. Well, my family is from Spry Bay. Well, I'll tell you, we'll be darned lucky if anyone in Spry Bay gets a job from the shipbuilding contract, quite frankly. The honourable member for that area should go down and visit the people and see what they say about that.

When you go looking and see what's happening and you add this first contract arbitration to a company, is it worthwhile setting up in Nova Scotia? No, probably not when you look at the taxes that this province pays, income tax. The Premier says all the time about the corporate tax. Well, the corporate tax is low, but if you don't make any money, a corporate tax reduction doesn't mean a darn thing. The way the costs are here, you can be darn lucky if you make any money in this province when you start working and you go through the thing, so tax cuts to small businesses don't mean a darn thing. Again, it's the same as anything: if you make a lot of money you pay a lot of tax; if you don't make any money you don't pay any tax. So in reality it hasn't done anything.

So we look at the job creation this government has done to help smooth the economy. They've got a cut in small business tax. Well, if you're a smart business owner in

this province, you'll make sure that you probably don't pay very much corporate tax because you invest in new equipment and you do other things to ensure that you don't do that so that down the road you can make more money, make the company more valuable, and indeed use the tax system to your advantage. So you really don't save very much money in your corporate tax. In the meantime, your personal income tax is going up every year through bracket creep, but they haven't addressed that.

I talked already about the small business loans through the credit unions; again, 7 per cent to 10 per cent when the prime rate is now 3 per cent or below. When you look at that, it's a very, very poor environment for business to run. Those guys over there on the other side, I don't think any of them have really run a business, a business of manufacturing or anything like that, they haven't done that, they don't know what it's like to do that. If you go and see that (Interruptions) If I heard from over there someone said they might have done that, they don't like to hear what they have to say, I hear what they have to say, how this is going to affect the business in this province. It makes you wonder what's going to happen as this whole thing comes forward.

Well, I would tell anyone out there that's listening, to listen very carefully to what's happening here by this government. Remember, when your children have to leave now to get a job and that's what's happening with the jobs that have been lost and a lot more to come, it was indeed the regressive taxes that this government put in place and the poor plan for economic growth in this province. Again, when you come in dead last in economic growth, there's something seriously wrong.

This is a wonderful province, we've got a lot of natural resources, we've got very good people working here, very hard-working people. That's why when you go out West, if you're from Nova Scotia or Newfoundland and Labrador or New Brunswick or Prince Edward Island, they'll probably give you a job immediately because they know the work ethic here, a very good ethic and an ethic that wants to make very good products that are quality and make them on time, which is very difficult to do.

As we see more and more automation in places like China, well, you know they say China has got second-grade equipment and all this sort of stuff, that's not true. I remember when I was buying some drill bits for my business and some large ones and a local company at that time had just started buying some from China and they said look, you can buy the Chinese one for \$16 and it's \$120 for the one that's made in the U.S.A. What we found out is the one from China actually works better than the one for \$120-some. They said, why don't you try it and if you don't like it bring it back and we'll sell you the one for \$120. I said okay, I'll take it and try it.

I did have a lot of the other ones made in the U.S.A., so after I used the ones from China, that's the only ones I bought because those were the ones that worked better, they cut better and they worked better at a fraction of the cost. I could afford to buy a whole set of these drills and these are large drills, very expensive, so I'd have them in my shop and

they worked better than the U.S.A.-made ones. That's an awful thing to have to say, I'd prefer to buy the U.S.A. or Canadian-made products to help our local economy and get our economy going. But in reality, I was in a competitive environment, and I had to do everything I possibly could to compete with my closest competitors. At that time they were in Europe and the U.S., so indeed, I had to make sure I cut every cost I could without cutting quality or productivity in my shop.

So you see how this unfolds. It's very difficult for young people in this province to stay here and live here. We can't all be working in the health care system, we can't all be schoolteachers, and we can't do all the things that are the most attractive jobs for young people here today. We need plumbers, electricians, machinists, sheet metal workers. We need them here producing products that were either imported to here that we're displacing or we're shipping outside the province.

It's hard for people to understand how much of an economic impact that is. You know, you get somebody here who is repairing something that came from away - that's very important rather than buying a new part that is shipped in from China or Japan or some other place. You'll notice now when you go to buy things in your local stores, they are made in Germany, they are made in China, they are made in Japan, they are made in Korea, Taiwan - all over the world. Those same products used to be made in North America, but they're not anymore.

One thing that I'll give the Americans credit for is, you look at buying a new car in the U.S. and it shows you how much content is actually made in the U.S. It tells you the exact content of that car, what percentage of that car is made in the U.S. That's very positive if people realize that, indeed, that's what they should be buying because they're supporting jobs in Canada and the U.S. When they get there and they see this sort of thing that is happening with this Bill No. 102, it makes you wonder how the local companies can compete. They just can't when they go through the process.

When you look and see how this, over a long period of time, will negatively affect our economy, it's pretty easy to see what is going to happen here. Will this government force Bill No. 100 through, against objections of businesses? This is the next step, Bill No. 102, and I'm not sure what the next one is that they have planned, but I'm sure it's another bill that they're going to bring forward that, again, is going to hurt our economy. (Interruption)

As we move forward and we see this - you know, the members of the government joke about this and say, what bill are you talking about? Well, you can go and explain to your constituents when they don't have jobs. You can tell them, we supported this bill, it's our bill, it's the NDP bill that did this. That's why you don't have a job here. Oh yes, it will happen. As that all transpires and goes through and you see your neighbours moving away, that probably had your sign on their lawn the last time - they've realized what happened to

them and happened to their families - they will be saying, you know, we really don't want your sign this time because we're not going to support you again.

All this joking and everything aside, and all the stuff that the government is saying - I say I've been here a long time. I've seen a lot of elections; I've worked on a lot of elections before, and I'll probably be here as long as I want to be here. But when there's a group of people in your government who decide that they're going to make these laws and rules that affect the economy of our province, the people who are going to suffer are the people in the back benches who didn't speak up loudly enough in caucus to stop some of this stuff. That's going to be interesting when that transpires.

So it does hurt; it really does hurt them. But that's all right, they'll joke and go on and all that stuff. The next election, when they're not in government anymore and almost all of them are gone, they'll be going to the unions, getting a job in the union hall, maybe negotiating contracts for some of the small businesses that will promptly close after the deal is made, and wonder why they're not doing well in their community and what's going on.

The other thing with this is, according to the Senior Citizens' Secretariat, we have 1,000 people a week turning 65. That's a lot of people every year, that's 52,000 people a year that are going to come out of the workforce. It's going to be interesting when that expertise disappears in industry and see what happens as things go on. Everybody wants new roads, everybody wants a road fixed, everybody wants a guard rail and they want drainage problems fixed; if we don't have businesses making money and paying taxes, they're not going to have the money, they have no money now to fix this stuff, they're going to have even less money.

What's going to happen then? Who are you going to tax? Who's going to be left to tax? You're going to have a hard job finding anyone that can answer that question because the people aren't going to be there to tax. If you don't have the tax revenue coming in, you can't do these things. How are you going to service the debt? How are you going to do that? It just makes you wonder how you can possibly conceivably do some of these things this government is doing.

They went on a platform of not raising taxes. Bang, right away, up goes the HST. Up goes all the user fees, 1,400 of them. I believe, registering trailers or something went up twice in one month. I remember when the Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations, again, a very straightforward and honest man, when I questioned him in the Red Room during budget debate, I said, how do you justify the cost on these things? Because there were 1,400 of them and they went up like 2 per cent or 3 per cent, whatever the cost was and the Finance Minister said, no, it's because the cost has gone up.

I said, it can't be. It has to be that each one of them has a different cost. It costs more to administer some of these fees than it does other ones, what are the costs? He couldn't tell

me, his staff couldn't tell me. Finally, when I questioned him more and more, he finally admitted it was a directive from the Minister of Finance, a directive from the Department of Finance to put these fees up. It's a tax increase - a tax increase; that's all it was, a tax increase.

When you go through this over and over again, all the little fees that are increased, all little small things, as time goes on, it nickels and dimes the regular taxpayer, the person that's working at the local garage, the guy that's working for the plumbing outfit, the guy that's doing the carpentry work - all these people, it's taking their disposable income away. If their disposable income goes away, what happens? They don't have the money to buy the goods they would normally buy. They may not go buy something from their local garage they would have normally bought and help the jobs there. They don't do that anymore.

They don't do the other things that they do; maybe some entertainment things that they go to local theatre, they don't go to theatre anymore. They're now struggling to buy groceries and pay the oil bill, pay the gas bill, pay the electric bill, pay your property taxes, they don't do renovations - better deal for today's families. Absolutely right, better deal; we'll tax you to death, a better deal for today's families.

Put those taxes up, really help you, make your family better. We'll make sure there are no jobs in Nova Scotia so your kids can go to Alberta and work where there are less taxes. That helps. That helps a better deal for today's families. A better deal for today's families has a worse and worse ring to it all the time. As people realize this fantastic deal that they got from this NDP Government, the NDP Government is going to be gone and gone soon, I hope, really soon.

They shake their heads and all that stuff. I've seen that before. I've seen it over and over again. The guys in the back aren't allowed to say anything, the ladies in the back aren't allowed to say anything anyway, they're not allowed to get up on the floor and talk about anything. The Finance Minister and the ministers in the front row has them all quieted down so they can't do anything. It will be interesting to see as time goes on how are they going to say anything? What are they telling their constituents? You're not allowed to speak in the House? Your taxes have gone up, it's okay though, because it's not really affecting you, but it is affecting them. It's going to be some interesting explaining to do as this thing goes on.

How much time do I have left? (Interruption) Five minutes? I don't have more time left than that? Well, I'm very disappointed. I would really like to talk about this for several hours and keep this going. I'm sure with the unanimous consent of the House, it would allow me to speak longer. I don't think the NDP likes my conversation, I really don't. They're worried, you know, they're worried over there about their seats and how they're going to survive the next election but, anyway, time will tell and time will tell how difficult it's going to be for Nova Scotians to live when these guys are finished with them, you

know, a better deal for today's families and higher taxes, lower services, and all the great things that the NDP is doing for them, all the great things.

Great for the unions, great for the guys who give them money to run the election campaigns, that's a good deal for them but, you know, when their union bosses disappear to Ontario, or wherever they come from, who knows, they're gone and Nova Scotians are left to clean up the mess, the mess that's going to be left by this government - in the process of being left - it's going to be pretty serious for Nova Scotians. So you think now we're seeing so many young people going away and outside the province, the people we need to make our economy grow, it's going to get worse. If you take all these jobs away and, as I said, so far we've counted 12,500 gone in Nova Scotia, it's not going to get better.

I looked at all the things that Economic and Rural Development and Tourism is doing to try to grow jobs in this province. Well, it's a pretty miserable small list of things that have been done and really nothing on that list I could see, nothing I could see as a former business owner, that would help grow the economy in the province - absolutely nothing, zero. So how are you going to grow the economy? Put taxes up, that helps - it helps business become less competitive, a better deal for today's families.

I talk to constituents in my riding and they come in and they say, well, you know, I can't pay my oil bill. I said why can't you pay your oil bill, well, I don't have as much money as I had last year but I'm still making the same money I did. I've talked about this before, you know, the reason they don't have as much money is because they're being taxed to death. As you get more and more costs and businesses become less and less competitive, they're not going to have the money to invest in the province like we've seen in the past. The hockey teams are going to have a difficult time getting money enough to operate. Well, of course, I guess there will probably be fewer hockey teams because a lot of people are going to have to leave the province to find a job anyway at the rate things are going. Pretty soon everything is going to be shut down and probably shut down for good, a lot of the businesses.

If anyone thinks that business owners today are going to say to unions - we've already seen a pulp and paper mill go to the employees and say we need massive concessions. The union - luckily, hopefully - made the right choice and gave them that concession because they know and they're convinced, and rightfully so, that if they don't get the concession, if that company doesn't get the concessions it needs, it's not going to be in Nova Scotia anymore, and that's going to be a lot of really highly paid, really good jobs that are going to be gone from this province. They're gone, they don't come back, they're gone. They'll make paper somewhere else, somewhere else that's less expensive to do so.

It's always cheap to ship things around the world now, it's so cheap to ship stuff, and with the computerization now, you can deal with your customer anywhere in the world, anywhere in the world that you can imagine, and you can do it instantaneously,

absolutely instantaneously. It's not like years and years ago, you had to put letters out, wait for letters to come back, and all the things that today are just instantaneous.

You know, Mr. Speaker, with those few words of encouragement for the government, with their better deal for today's families - which is awful, the deal they've bestowed upon the people - I will take my seat and listen to the learned colleagues from the Third Party and see if they share our opinion on this bill that I think is going to kill the economy in Nova Scotia, given enough time.

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

MR. ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, it gives me some pleasure to still stand here today to speak on Bill No. 102 - an Act to Prevent Unnecessary Labour Disruptions and Protect the Economy by Amending Chapter 475 of the Revised Statutes, 1989, the Trade Union Act. Now where did you get a name like that, Mr. Speaker? I know that they ran on this whole thing about a better deal for the families of Nova Scotia, but do they listen to anybody here in the Province of Nova Scotia? An Act to protect the economy - well, if they were doing all the things they were doing, if the job they were doing on our economy was as good as they say they were doing, you wouldn't have to protect it because it would be strong anyway. Apparently, they think that they can make legislation and that legislation will make the world a better place. This legislation, according to the people of Nova Scotia, the ones who talk to us, won't do that.

As a matter of fact, you don't have to take my word for that. Today, and I will table this, but the Nova Scotia Chambers of Commerce have said today that they are very disappointed with the introduction of the first contract arbitration legislation by the Dexter Government: "I am very disappointed that despite businesses large and small and several business organizations voicing their objection and concern to the Premier," - has not heard us - "here we are today with more" - more, Mr. Speaker - "anti business legislation." And that's what Chris Atwood, the president of the Nova Scotia Chambers of Commerce said, "Bill No. 100 was brought in under the exact same circumstances." Look where we're at today."

Now Mr. Speaker, it goes on to say in this press release:

"It is widely recognized that since 2003, Nova Scotia's time loss due to work stoppages has been constantly below the national average" - below the national average, Mr. Speaker - "and that 97% of bargaining does reach agreement during conciliation. The most compelling fact is that for the last fourteen years the Labour board has only ordered parties to bargain in good faith three times."

Now Mr. Speaker, here we are, we have a piece of legislation that says we need to do this now, but in 14 years only three times was it required for that type of conciliation.

Then, of course, we have our comments from our Deputy Premier and he's quoted, Saturday November 19th as saying - and this is from Government House Leader, Frank Corbett (Interruptions).

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please.

MR. MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I was quoting from the paper but I know better and I apologize and I retract my statement.

MR. SPEAKER: I thank the honourable member and I recognize the member for Cape Breton West.

MR. MACLEOD: Again Mr. Speaker, my mike may have been off so I do want to apologize for naming that member. I do know better and I was reading the direct quote out of the paper, so I do want make sure that the apology is there.

The Government House Leader, also the Deputy Premier said:

“ ‘It’s a little bit like the sky is falling, but it is what it is,’ he said. ‘If they want to . . . filibuster, that’s their right, but we all know at the end of the day, that it’s a majority government. We know at some point in time this bill will pass.’ ”

You know Mr. Speaker, that is kind of disturbing and I'll tell you why it's disturbing, because we have a process in the Province of Nova Scotia, one that we should all be quite proud of. We've been a House here, the oldest House in the country, we have some of the best legislation in the world and yet now we hear - the process has always been there's a first reading, there's a second reading, Law Amendments and there's the third reading. We always believed, in this House, that when you went to Law Amendments it was to give the public an opportunity to speak on the bill and to give their input.

I think sometimes, some of us in this House, maybe the ones in the benches on the other side, forget the reason we're here. The reason we are here - and I heard them make t comments before about, it won't be up to you if you get re-elected or it won't be up to you. But the reason we're here is, indeed, because we were elected by people. (Applause) We were elected by the people of the Province of Nova Scotia.

I will say this, Mr. Speaker, there are 52 of us here and you know what? I truly believe that the 52 members of this House are here because they want to do what is right for Nova Scotia. I have no problem believing that, none. What I do have a problem with is that they don't respect the very reason why we're here. We're here to do the bidding of the people who elected us. We're not here as individual MLAs, to tell the people who elected us what is good for them. We are here to listen to them, to hear what they have to say and then translate that into legislation that will make this province a better place for all of us to live.

Mr. Speaker, when you say we have a majority government and it is going to happen anyway, that isn't giving the system the respect that it is supposed to have. The whole process (Interruptions) - now listen, Mr. Speaker, there are people over there who are yammering on and if they want to get up and speak - oh, right, they're not allowed to, I forgot, I'm sorry. But if they want to get up to speak, I'm sure that if they talked to the Deputy Premier that he will allow that but right now it's my time to speak and I would appreciate the opportunity to pass on the information and the message that was given to me by the constituents I represent on the weekend.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the whole thing here is about respecting the institution and respecting the people that we represent. We've heard today from representatives of 7,000 businesses. They are saying this is not good for us, this is not good for the economy of the Province of Nova Scotia. The Nova Scotia Chambers of Commerce said that.

Now, Mr. Speaker, can they all be wrong? These are the people who are driving our economy. These are the people who, up to this point, have made sure that the economy of Nova Scotia survives. They provide employment to a majority of Nova Scotians and we're saying that we shouldn't listen to them? They are saying that they know better? Well, the representation that they are supposed to be getting, they are supposed to listen to them, take that information and listen to it and then develop legislation that is good for the Province of Nova Scotia.

It doesn't appear to be that way. It appears that we're going to have this legislation because they have a majority government. Maybe they have to listen to some special groups. Maybe there's something else going on here that the small business community of this province doesn't understand or know about. I'm not sure, Mr. Speaker, but there are the five w's - who, what, where, when and why? There are a lot of questions surrounding this government's intentions for first contract arbitration and who it will benefit. Who has put this government up to this? Who wants it? Who has been asking for it? Who is expected to help and who benefits from it? We know it's not the business community and the people they employ so who is it?

What problems is it trying to solve? What are the real benefits to the people who are out there who are out of work or whose wages have stayed the same or gone down, while the cost of living continues to grow? What is it going to fix, Mr. Speaker? There is an imaginary problem that this government has created and there is no real reason as to why this legislation is needed.

Mr. Speaker, it's all smoke and mirrors with this government in order to push through their hidden agenda to help their special-interest friends. It's not for the majority of Nova Scotians, who they were elected to serve - who we were all elected to serve. Another big question is why? Why now, and why first contract arbitration? At a time when jobs are disappearing, when power rates are continuing to climb, when the government made it harder for families to scrape by from their decision to needlessly raise the HST to get their

one-day wonder surplus, why now? Why create further uncertainty for our business community?

Last month I had a constituent who came to the office with an electricity disconnection notice, wondering how he was going to pay his power bill and put food on the table. He said, I'm barely able to make ends meet with my family, and every year it's getting increasingly bad. I work harder and harder, but at the end of the day there's nothing left in the bank and I don't know what I'm going to do.

This person has worked hard his entire life and he's got more pride than anyone I know. He's got deep calluses on his hands, but he's struggling to even provide the necessities of life. First contract arbitration was the furthest thing from his mind, and this government has made up a problem on productivity and work stoppages - it's just that, a made-up problem. He is worried about his children's education. He's worried about his wife's health care and his parents, who have been waiting for long-term care beds. He's worried about their next meal and stocking up on wood this winter because they won't be able to afford to turn on their electric heat. So it begs the question, who is pressuring the government to act on this? Where is the desire for first contract arbitration legislation coming from? It certainly hasn't been a public demand. There haven't been loud calls for it that I've heard.

On the weekend I was at several different events, and the only thing that came up about first contract arbitration was, make sure you vote against it, we don't need it, it's hurting my business. We had other people who said, I don't know what it is, but from what I'm reading it's not going to be helpful for me. Mr. Speaker, that's what we're supposed to do. We're supposed to go to our constituencies, we're supposed to listen to the people who we represent, and then we're supposed to come back here and share that information and do what's best for all Nova Scotians, not just for special-interest groups.

It's clear, in my opinion, that this government puts special interests ahead of the public interest. Unfortunately, I guess we shouldn't be surprised by this because we've seen it before - we all remember Bill No. 100. Bill No. 100 was another extreme piece of anti-business legislation that put special interests ahead of our public interest. Remember the small business operators who lined up and pleaded with this government not to move ahead with their extreme labour agenda. Well, this government bullied ahead anyway, and now we see the same thing is happening here.

Between this experience, the Bill No. 100 experience, and countless other instances, I think now it's crystal clear that this government is, simply put, anti-business. They're committed to destroying the private sector here in Nova Scotia, and make no mistake about it, that's what this bill can do - it can destroy the private sector in Nova Scotia. You don't have to take my word for it. There are examples of this very thing happening in other jurisdictions that have been imposed by first contract arbitration.

AN HON. MEMBER: Under the cloak of darkness.

MR. MACLEOD: I'll take a few moments to speak about one of those issues. I'd like to talk about the devastating effect that first contract arbitration had on Treats, a franchise coffee and snack shop in Saskatoon. I hear the member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island over there saying, do we have to hear that again? He does have to hear it again because the first time he couldn't hear it and he didn't listen, the second time he didn't comprehend and I'm sure when I'm finished, he still wouldn't know what the real world is about. (Applause)

I am waiting for the day that he has the courage to stand up there and tell the people that he represents why this is such a good bill for him. I can't wait for that moment, but then again we know he won't be allowed to stand up, he won't be allowed to say anything because this government knows what's best. They have a majority and it will be what it will be. They're in the cone of silence over there, Maxwell's Market is right down at the back. (Interruptions) Anyway, I'm going to continue on as much as it disturbs the member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, order. The member for Cape Breton West has the floor.

MR. MACLEOD: Thank you. I'm happy the member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island likes recycling because he will never be recycled again.

Treats operated at a university campus and mostly employed students on a part-time basis. We all know the challenge many students face in finding part-time work during their studies. That member, of all the members on that side of the House, should understand that, considering what he used to do for a living. Any businesses that make a point of employing them and engaging them in their economic fabric should be commended. I think all members of this House would agree to that.

In the case of Treats, the Canadian Union of Public Employees was certified as their bargaining agent. The bargaining of their agreement went on until only wage and monetary issues were unresolved. At that point the employer made it known that he simply couldn't pay higher wages, the losses would be too great and he wouldn't be able to make ends meet. The business would close and the students would be out of work.

That wasn't good enough for that union. They pushed back and they demanded the employees at Treats be paid the same wage as the university's unionized cafeteria employees. Let's not forget that Treats was a small business that happened to be facing the same challenges that we know all businesses are facing here in Nova Scotia. Many small businesses simply can't afford to pay union wages. In many cases it means their business closes, their employees are left out of work and their families are left struggling.

While Treats and the bargaining agent remained at odds, the labour board intervened and imposed a first contract agreement that increased the workers' wages by almost 31 per cent, almost one-third more. During that 14-month ordeal, the employers at Treats simply acknowledged that they could no longer make ends meet with a first contract imposed on them and they ended up having to sell their business.

Mostly, employed students on a part-time basis are employed by a small business. We know they all face challenging times trying to get their education. Businesses, when given a productive working environment with a strong economy will help train, will help educate and promote employees to be stronger members of our society. They employ students who are struggling to pay their tuition fees and they seek out additional occupational therapy and equipment upgrades so all members of society can be contributing their special and unique abilities to our economic landscape.

First contract arbitration further jeopardizes businesses' ability to make these important investments in our people and in our society. It creates uncertainty, it creates unease, it creates hesitation, and it creates doubt at a time when Nova Scotia needs to be on the top of its game with respect to being investment ready and business friendly. (Interruption)

Mr. Speaker, I just heard a comment that somebody else said that already, and the only reason it was said before was because it was right then and it's right now. As many times as we have to say it, until that crowd over there starts to understand how important it is - maybe then we won't have to repeat it so often.

Many businesses in this environment, all they need is a moment's hesitation or one reason to choose New Brunswick or Prince Edward Island or Europe to spend their investment dollars in rather than Nova Scotia. First contract arbitration at a time like this is all they need to change their minds. I bet this will be great for labour lawyers. One can only anticipate how they're going to increase and have a high demand for what they need.

Has the government even considered what this could mean for its own bottom line? Groups on the government pay scale, who are not unionized but could organize and go to an arbitrator to impose a settlement on the government and further cripple the struggling taxpayers of this province - imagine if we had first contract arbitration in Nova Scotia. All of us in this House know small businesses in our constituencies that would be forced into submission. They would go down the tubes the same way that Treats did because of this first contract arbitration.

HON. GRAHAM STEELE: You haven't read the decision, have you? Treats didn't go down the tubes. You haven't read it, have you?

MR. MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, when the Minister of Finance wants to get up and give his final summation, or whatever he plans to do, he will see that that business of Treats went out of business. The company did.

MR. STEELE: It did not, Alfie. You haven't read the decision. I've read the decision.

MR. MACLEOD: Well, let's get the Minister of Finance up and let him tell us how the world operates according to him because, do you know what, he has nothing to say when there's any time for him to speak.

MR. STEELE: This is about getting your facts straight, Alfie.

MR. MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, do you know what, I'm getting caught up in the rabbit tracks and that's not a good thing. I congratulate him for doing that, though, because one thing I've got to say is I respect someone who can do that. (Interruptions) I may not always agree with the Minister of Finance, but I do respect him.

I would urge the members of this government to stop and consider the impact that this will have on businesses in their own constituencies, but it's more than just the businesses. Think about the people who depend on these businesses for the success of their own livelihoods. We know that small business employs nearly half of all Nova Scotians, and that's just small businesses. This legislation puts people's futures at risk (Interruption) Whether it's in a script or whether it's not in a script, it doesn't matter. We're putting people's lives and their whole livelihood at risk because we're putting in a piece of legislation that nobody wants, that nobody needs. In 14 years we only had to use three times - three times that it had to go to conciliation. (Interruptions)

Why are we so concerned about it, is the question that I hear from across the House. It's amazing, Mr. Speaker, how much information they need to get. They don't even understand it. They have to ask us to explain it to them. (Interruptions) They shouldn't be asking us. They should be asking the people who elected them. They should be asking the people they represent. They should be asking the small business people who employ over half the working population of this province. That's who they should be talking to, instead of sitting there and acting like trained seals. (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. I'll ask the honourable member to stick to the debate on the bill.

The honourable member for Cape Breton West.

MR. MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I'll take your guidance in the good spirit that it was meant and I do apologize for saying 'trained'.

We know that this legislation puts futures at risk: the future of thousands of businesses - the future of hundreds of thousands of Nova Scotians and collectively, the future of our entire economy. Our economy can't take much more of this NDP Government.

We already have a fragile business environment in Nova Scotia and the NDP have proven they only know how to make matters worse, not better. From one end of this province to the other we've seen job losses and we've seen businesses close. We're on shaky ground - far too shaky to consider a policy as risky as first contract arbitration. Under the NDP, a staggering 8,400 Nova Scotians have already been forced to leave the workplace. The NDP cannot truly believe this is the right time to pursue further job-killing policies.

This government has proven that they're very good at losing jobs and with first contract arbitration we're about to see us lose a whole lot more. When this government tells us first contract arbitration would result in job losses in Nova Scotia, how can we trust them? This is a government that said that ERs were going to be open 24 hours; that power rates were not going to rise; that the HST wouldn't be raised. We were told by this government that when the federal government decides to go ahead with the MS treatments and allow for trials in MS that they would be right there on board. We all know that none of this has happened. They were not there.

They also said that they wouldn't run a deficit, and guess what? They have. This is a government who promised better care for seniors, but stopped building long term care beds. With the ever-growing list of broken promises, why should this NDP Government expect Nova Scotians to believe that they will not kill jobs with first contract arbitration? They can't. Their track record proves that the families in Nova Scotia can't believe one thing that comes out of the NDP Government's mouth. This is a government that's more keen on wasting taxpayer dollars on self-serving and ad campaigns, paying back their special interest friends and beefing up and getting ready for the next election. They are definitely not acting in the best interests of Nova Scotian families; the people that they were elected to serve.

I believe that one of the key elements and responsibilities government has is to build a strong business environment and to attract jobs to the Province of Nova Scotia. If you look at the government's track record it's clear that they are very good at spending taxpayers' money and then, at the same time, losing jobs. Just look at the Industrial Expansion Fund. This NDP Government spent over \$100 million in their first year through this fund, and we're still losing jobs. First contract arbitration sends up a big red flag for businesses that are looking to settle here in Nova Scotia. This legislation, if it could talk would say, don't set up shop here, we're too risky. Don't come to Nova Scotia.

This government is intent on driving jobs away. How absurd is that? How absurd is it, in a province like Nova Scotia, to drive people away, to drive jobs away? Nova Scotia

should be ready to take advantage of the major opportunity that lies under our nose with the shipbuilding contract, and yet this NDP Government says, I think we'd rather drive away investment and chuck waves of uncertainty through our business community than to do something that is positive. It says a lot about their priorities.

At a time when the top priority for each and every member of this House should be creating jobs, the government has decided that their top priority is to bring forward misguided, job-killing legislation that no one even asked for, no one except for their special-interest friends at the top of the labour union pyramid.

It has become evident that the NDP priorities are not Nova Scotian priorities. Just ask the folks at NewPage or Bowater, what are their priorities? Ask the people in Yarmouth who lost their ferry, what are their priorities? Ask the people in the call centre in New Glasgow or those at the New Minas pulp and paper mill, what are their priorities? They will tell you it's having a good climate so they can work, because Nova Scotians want to work. They don't want to be unemployed. They want to be proud and be able to supply good food, a good place for their families to live and, Mr. Speaker, I can guarantee you one thing: not one of them will say first contract arbitration. They'll say jobs and policies that protect jobs, or power rates - finding ways to reduce their power rates - those are their concerns, never first contract arbitration.

This government knows that this could be one of their one and only term in government, their only term in government, and they need to appease their special-interest friends. We need to get the members on the government side of the House to listen to the people that they are elected to represent, to listen to the small business community that has been the driving part of our economy for so many years.

I think at this moment I would like to move adjournment of the debate and maybe finish off a little more at a later date.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is for adjournment of debate on Bill No. 102. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, that concludes the government's business for tonight. After the daily routine we will be calling Bills for Second Reading, Bill Nos. 94, 95, 96, 98, 100, 102, 104, 106 and 108.

Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now rise to meet again tomorrow between the hours of 12:00 noon and 6:00 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is for the House to adjourn.

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 House is adjourned.

[The House rose at 9:40 p.m.]