



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Gordon Gosse

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Third Session

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 30, 2011

TABLE OF CONTENTS	PAGE
PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS:	
Health & Wellness - Hants Commun. Hosp.: Dialysis Unit	
- Establish, Mr. C. Porter	4558
Health & Wellness: WKM Mem. Health Ctr. Outpatients Dept.	
- Changes Oppose, Mr. L. Glavine	4558
PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES:	
Law Amendments Committee,	
Hon. R. Landry	4559
Law Amendments Committee,	
Hon. R. Landry	4559
TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS:	
Lbr./Adv. Educ.: LMRC Study Day - Invitation/Attendance Lists,	
Hon. M. More	4560
GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION:	
Res. 2626, Order of Nova Scotia: Anniv. (10 th) - Congrats.,	
The Premier.....	4561
Vote - Affirmative.....	4561

Res. 2627, Tyson, Marian: Pub. Serv. (N.S.) - Recognize/Thank, Hon. R. Landry	4562
Vote - Affirmative.....	4563
Res. 2628, Mar. Sch. of Paramedicine (Sydney): Grad. Class (1 st) - Congrats., Hon. Maureen MacDonald.....	4563
Vote - Affirmative.....	4563
Res. 2629, African Cdn. Women Leaders - Gov't. (N.S.): Contributions - Congrats., Hon. P. Paris.....	4564
Vote - Affirmative.....	4564
Res. 2630, Nat'l. Awards for Tourism Excellence: Recipients - Congrats., Hon. P. Paris.....	4565
Vote - Affirmative.....	4565
INTRODUCTION OF BILLS:	
No. 121, Education Act, Hon. R. Jennex	4565
No. 122, Environmental Act, Hon. S. Belliveau.....	4566
NOTICES OF MOTION:	
Res. 2631, Thurber, Jim/Award Recipients - Digby Bd. of Trade Awards of Excellence Dinner: Real Draw - Congrats., Mr. E. Orrell.....	4566
Vote - Affirmative.....	4567
Res. 2632, Hfx. Explosion: Tragedy - Remember, Hon. Maureen MacDonald.....	4567
Vote - Affirmative.....	4568
Res. 2633, Zach Churchill & Friends Movember Team: Support - Thank, Mr. Z. Churchill.....	4568
Vote - Affirmative.....	4569
Res. 2634, White Point Beach Resort/Staff: CTHRC Award - Congrats., Ms. V. Conrad.....	4569
Vote - Affirmative.....	4570
Res. 2635, Saraj Bakery/Co-Owners: Commitment - Commend, Hon. R. Jennex.....	4570
Vote - Affirmative.....	4571
Res. 2636, Don Atkinson Trucking Ltd./Owners: Shelburne Bus. of Yr. - Congrats., Hon. S. Belliveau	4571
Vote - Affirmative.....	4572
Res. 2637, Muise, Evan - Destination Imagination: Participation - Congrats., Hon. D. Wilson	4572
Vote - Affirmative.....	4572
Res. 2638, Ahead of Hair/Owner: Pictou Co. People's Choice Award - Congrats., Hon. C. Parker.....	4573
Vote - Affirmative.....	4573
Res. 2639, Miller, Keith: Death of - Tribute, Hon. J. MacDonell	4573
Vote - Affirmative.....	4574

Res. 2640, Morash, Marie: East. Passage-Cow Bay Lions Club	
Cert. Of Serv. - Congrats., Ms. B. Kent.....	4574
Vote - Affirmative.....	4575
Res. 2641, MacKenzie, Phillip: Pictou Co. Photographic Inventory	
- Congrats., Mr. C. MacKinnon	4575
Vote - Affirmative.....	4575
Res. 2642, Casey, Kenny, et al - Pugwash Dist. Vol. FD:	
Serv. - Thank, Mr. B. Skabar	4576
Vote - Affirmative.....	4577
Res. 2643, Sackville Masonic Lodge No. 137: Anniv. (25 th)	
- Congrats., Hon. M. Whynott	4577
Vote - Affirmative.....	4577
Res. 2644, Foote's Farm Market: Anniv. (10 th) - Congrats.,	
Mr. J. Morton	4577
Vote - Affirmative.....	4578
Res. 2645, Lun. Santa Claus Parade: Keeping, Howard/Participants	
- Congrats., Ms. P. Birdsall.....	4578
Vote - Affirmative.....	4579
Res. 2646, Ryan, Alexander "Braz" Ellsworth: Birthday (107 th)	
- Congrats., Mr. J. Boudreau.....	4579
Vote - Affirmative.....	4580
Res. 2647, Logan, Heather: NSAC Teaching Excellence Award (2011)	
- Congrats., Mr. G. Burrill	4580
Vote - Affirmative.....	4581
Res. 2648, Noel Post Office - Stamp: Christmas Link	
- Congrats., Hon. J. MacDonell	4581
Vote - Affirmative.....	4581
Res. 2649, Kenney & Ross Ltd.: Export Achievement Award (2011)	
- Congrats., Hon. S. Belliveau	4582
Vote - Affirmative.....	4582
Res. 2650, Stutely, Taylor: World Youth Games (2013)	
- Success Wish, Hon. D. Wilson.....	4582
Vote - Affirmative.....	4583
Res. 2651, Greene, Andrew - Prov. 4-H Show (2011): Awards	
- Congrats., Hon. C. Parker.....	4583
Vote - Affirmative.....	4584
Res. 2652, MacCaull, Kaye: East. Passage-Cow Bay Lions Club	
Life Membership - Congrats., Ms. B. Kent	4584
Vote - Affirmative.....	4585
Res. 2653, Queens Manor: Anniv. (30 th) - Congrats.,	
Ms. V. Conrad.....	4585
Vote - Affirmative.....	4585

Res. 2654, Salvation Army (Kentville Corps): Serv. (125 Yrs.)	
- Congrats., Mr. J. Morton	4585
Vote - Affirmative.....	4586
Res. 2655, Guitton, Maurice: Floyd Award - Congrats.,	
Ms. P. Birdsall.....	4586
Vote - Affirmative.....	4587
Res. 2656, Boutilier, Joan/Fam.: Terry Fox Run - Congrats.,	
Mr. J. Boudreau.....	4587
Vote - Affirmative.....	4588
ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS:	
No. 499, Prem. - FCA: Debate - Curtailment Explain,	
Hon. M. Samson	4588
No. 500, Prem. - Law Amendments Comm.: Leadership - Assume,	
Hon. J. Baillie	4590
No. 501, Prem. - FCA: Moderate Approach - Consider,	
Hon. S. McNeil	4592
No. 502, Prem. - Power Rates: Residential Increase - Amount,	
Hon. S. McNeil	4594
No. 503, Prem.: Michelin Bill - Quality,	
Hon. C. d'Entremont.....	4595
No. 504, Prem. - Power: Hydro-Québec - Call,	
Mr. A. Younger.....	4597
No. 505, ERDT: Economic Momentum - Diversionary Tactics,	
Mr. E. Orrell.....	4599
No. 506, ERDT - Unemployment Rate: Calculation - Explain,	
Mr. G. MacLellan	4601
No. 507, Health & Wellness - Dialysis Unit: Windsor - Fund,	
Mr. C. Porter	4602
No. 508, Prem.: Lobbyist Registration - Legislation,	
Hon. M. Samson	4604
No. 509, Educ. - Hogg Formula Review: Sch. Bd. Funding - Effects,	
Hon. K. Casey.....	4605
No. 510, ERDT - CFS Shelburne: Auction - Costs Outline,	
Mr. Z. Churchill	4607
No. 511, Fish. & Aquaculture - Lobster: Low Prices - Address,	
Hon. M. Samson	4608
No. 512, Justice - Law Amendments Comm.: Presenters	
- Hearing Plans, Hon. J. Baillie.....	4609
No. 513, Prem. - Prov. Nominee Prog.: CAP - Amount Confirm,	
Ms. D. Whalen	4611
No. 514, Health & Wellness - Berwick Clinic: Hours	
- Reduction Explain, Mr. L. Glavine	4613
No. 515, Nat. Res.: Clear-Cut - Definition,	
Mr. A. Younger.....	4614

OPPOSITION MEMBERS' BUSINESS:

MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS:

Res. 1110, NSP - Rate Increase: NDP Gov't. - Oppose,

Mr. A. Younger.....	4617
Ms. V. Conrad.....	4619
Mr. C. Porter	4622

SPEAKER'S RULING: Speaker's Authority Over Proceedings in Committees

(Points of Order by Hon. Manning MacDonald &

Hon. C. d'Entremont [Hansard p. 4556/4557, 11/30/11])

Speaker does not exercise procedural control over committees	4625
--	------

[MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS]:

Hon. S. McNeil	4626
----------------------	------

Res. 1857, NDP Gov't.: Taxes - Stop,

Ms. D. Whalen	4628
Ms. M. Raymond	4631
Mr. E. Orrell.....	4633
Mr. L. Glavine.....	4636

ADJOURNMENT:

MOTION UNDER RULE 5(5):

Nat. Res.: Forestry Industry - Challenges,

Mr. S. Prest	4639
Mr. L. Glavine.....	4642
Mr. A. MacMaster.....	4644

ADJOURNMENT, House rose to meet again on Thur., Dec. 1 st at 12:00 noon	4647
--	------

NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3):

Res. 2657, Densmore, Brooke: NSSAF Award - Congrats.,

Hon. K. Casey	4648
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House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 30, 2011

Sixty-first General Assembly

Third Session

2:00 P.M.

SPEAKER

Hon. Gordon Gosse

DEPUTY SPEAKERS

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

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The subject for late debate has been chosen for this evening and it reads:

Therefore be it resolved that the House of Assembly recognize and appreciate that the serious challenges facing the forestry industry in Nova Scotia today stem largely from a lack of appropriate action on the part of previous governments to demonstrate proper stewardship of a key natural resource, our forests.

It was submitted by the honourable member for Eastern Shore.

We will now begin the daily routine.

The honourable Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage.

HON. DAVID WILSON: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday during debate on Bill No. 116, the member for Richmond referred to myself using the word “cowardly” and I believe that’s an unaccepted term on the floor of this Legislature. So I would wish that the member opposite would withdraw that word and I do apologize for not bringing this forward but I think I wanted to wait to ensure that Hansard reflected the language that the member used, or the term the member used.

MR. SPEAKER: The word “cowardly” is well understood to be unparliamentary and I would ask the honourable member to withdraw the word “cowardly”.

The honourable member for Richmond.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, I’m more than happy to stand in my place and withdraw the use of the word “cowardly” in referring to the minister who just rose and spoke.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, the matter is dealt with.

HON. MANNING MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I, too, rise on a point of order today. I think my preamble would reflect on the fact that it’s important to remember that Legislative Counsel works for the House of Assembly and not the government.

Mr. Speaker, I’m appealing to you to intervene in a matter that the Liberal caucus, the Official Opposition, considers very important and very serious and that matter is the rescheduling of the Law Amendments Committee previously scheduled for tomorrow. I believe there are eight presenters who are supposed to be here tomorrow and we have a list of seven who were scheduled for today. I will table that list.

Mr. Speaker, we just received notice today, sometime just before noon, that there will be no Law Amendments Committee tomorrow and that everybody who was going to the Law Amendments Committee will have to come today and if they can’t make it tonight, they’re out of luck. That’s what they were told today. They cannot go back tomorrow to the Law Amendments Committee, that they must be here tonight because the Law Amendments Committee procedure reflecting Bill No. 102, a very important bill before this House, is going to end tonight as far as the government is concerned.

Mr. Speaker, this is a matter of extreme importance to how we deal with democracy in this Legislature and because it’s an urgent matter, I would ask that you give a ruling on this in the next little while, even if you have to leave the Chair to give a ruling on this, because our caucus is prepared to sit at the Law Amendments Committee tomorrow to hear

those eight presenters who were denied the right to come tomorrow by an edict of the government.

Mr. Speaker, I had this discussion with the Legislative Counsel who simply tells me that he was ordered to do it by the government and I don't think that's in the best interest of democracy, nor do I think it's giving the people an adequate chance to be for or against Bill No. 102. (Applause)

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, we, too, stand on a point of order on this issue where it has been made aware that the Legislative Counsel has been calling around to the possible presenters for tomorrow's Law Amendments Committee on Bill No. 102, that they were going to either have to present today or not be able to present at all. We're made aware that out of the eight organizations that were to present tomorrow, a number of them still have not been able to be contacted, nor have they made aware that they can make it or not. I think this is a horrible affront to the process in this House of Assembly where this process is being shut down far before we've heard the opportunity from businesses in this province to voice their opinions on a bill that's important to this province and to this issue.

We would ask that you do look at this issue very quickly so that individuals, of course, would have the opportunity to present. Our caucus is ready to sit tomorrow, Friday, and whenever we need to be here, to make sure that all Nova Scotians have the opportunity to present on Bill No. 102, that apparently they're not ready to do.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage.

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, the rules are quite simple and presented in the Rules of the House as under Rule 61, the committees do have the ability to make decisions as a committee. (Interruptions) I would agree that . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. I would like to hear the honourable minister, as I heard everybody else. Go ahead.

MR. WILSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe the committee reports to yourself on the rules and the decisions that they make as a committee. (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. I will take that under advisement and I will meet with my staff very shortly, and I will get back to the House as soon as possible.

Now, we'll continue on with the daily routine.

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants West.

MR. CHUCK PORTER: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to table a petition on behalf of the citizens of Windsor, West Hants, and Hantsport. The operative clause reads as follows:

“Therefore be it resolved, we the undersigned, are calling upon the Minister of Health and Wellness to be more supportive to the concerns of the people of Hants West and establish a satellite dialysis unit at the Hants Community Hospital in Windsor as quickly as possible to alleviate some of the burden placed on dialysis patients in the area who currently have to travel great distances for treatment.”

Mr. Speaker, I have attached my signature and the total is 1,503 names.

MR. SPEAKER: The petition is tabled.

The honourable member for Kings West.

MR. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to table a petition on behalf of the residents of the Annapolis Valley. The operative clause reads in part as follows:

“We the undersigned submit our names as being opposed to the changes being made to the Western Kings Memorial Health Centre Outpatients Department . . . and that changes to this will be detrimental to the health of individuals, families and communities.”

Mr. Speaker, residents from Berwick, Greenwood, Kentville, New Minas, Cambridge, Coldbrook, and points in between, have recognized the significant impact these changes will have on the health care system throughout the DHA.

The petition has been signed by 3,241 residents and I have affixed my signature. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The petition is tabled.

The honourable member for Cumberland North on an introduction.

MR. BRIAN SKABAR: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure today to bring the attention of the House to the east gallery, to introduce to you the federal member of the Churchill riding, Niki Ashton. (Applause) Ms. Ashton is the member for the Churchill riding from Thompson, Manitoba.

I got to know her Dad back in 1981, when I was living in Thompson, and he has been the member of the provincial Legislature since then, to this day. I left there shortly after that - and I'd like to add that Ms. Ashton is also a candidate for the leadership of the federal New Democrats. (Applause)

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

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Justice.

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

Bill No. 81 - Identification of Criminals Act.

Bill No. 86 - Fair Automobile Insurance (2011) Act.

Bill No. 94 - Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority Act.

Bill No. 98 - Fish Harvester Organizations Support Act.

Bill No. 104 - Gaming Control Act.

Bill No. 108 - Perpetuities Act.

Bill No. 111 - Equity Tax Credit Act.

Bill No. 112 - Community Spirit Act.

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

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

The honourable Minister of Justice.

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

Bill No. 95 - Education Act.

and the committee recommends this bill to the favourable consideration of the House, with an amendment.

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

TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS

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

HON. MARILYN MORE: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table the Labour Management Review Committee Study Day Invitation List, and Attendance List.

MR. SPEAKER: The report is tabled.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Queens on an introduction.

MS. VICKI CONRAD: Mr. Speaker, I would like to make an introduction to the House today. In the east gallery, I'm very pleased to welcome Danny Morton, who is resort manager for White Point Beach Lodge - Danny, if you could stand up. Also with Danny is Donna Hatt, who is marketing and production manager for White Point Beach Resort. I just want to give them the biggest welcome here in the House.

If I could add, Mr. Speaker, the night of the very tragic and devastating fire of White Point Beach Lodge, as I was standing there just watching the shock and awe of staff and clients at the resort and guests, I heard the manager of the resort, Danny Morton, call out to staff - because there was a wedding happening at the resort that day - he called out to staff, in all of this craziness that was happening, don't forget their champagne. When he said that I looked to the person standing next to me and I just said, absolutely incredible, just total dedication to guest services and the guest experience at White Point, so thank you for coming in today. (Applause)

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

The honourable Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party.

MR. JAMIE BAILLIE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, in that spirit I also would like to make an introduction and that is to direct the attention of all members of the House - and you, sir - to the west gallery where we're visited today by Mr. Myles McKinnon of Prince Edward Island, who works in the Leader of the Opposition's office there, the honourable Olive Crane, and I ask you to welcome Myles to the House and extend all of our wishes on your behalf. (Applause)

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

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Premier.

RESOLUTION NO. 2626

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 the Order of Nova Scotia is the highest honour that the province can bestow upon its citizens, recognizing their outstanding contributions to the community and the province; and

Whereas this year's recipients are: the first African Nova Scotian MLA, Wayne Adams, business leader Sir Graham Day, political cartoonist Bruce MacKinnon, Mi'kmaq rights advocate Joseph Marshall, and author Budge Wilson; and

Whereas this marks the 10th Anniversary of the province inducting citizens into the Order of Nova Scotia;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulate and thank this year's recipients of the Order of Nova Scotia for their significant contributions to their communities and this province, and also the members of the advisory board and other organizers who have made the Order of Nova Scotia such a success in the past 10 years.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Justice.

HON. ROSS LANDRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to make an introduction with your permission.

MR. SPEAKER: Most certainly.

MR. LANDRY: Mr. Speaker, we have with us today, in the Speaker's Gallery, Marian Tyson and her husband, Bob MacGregor. Ms. Tyson is the Deputy Minister of Justice and has been since 2007. Deputy Minister Tyson has been an employee of the Province of Nova Scotia for just over 36 years and has recently made the decision, much to my chagrin, to retire from the civil service.

Ms. Tyson joins us here today after a long and remarkable career with government. I'd personally like to thank Marian for her service as Deputy Minister of the Department of Justice. She has brought a great amount of knowledge, expertise, and leadership to the department; while her retirement is well deserved, her presence will be missed. I must truly say, from the bottom of my heart, I've had the pleasure to work with many talented and gifted people over my career and Ms. Tyson, without a doubt, falls at the top of the list.

I would like to invite this House to give her a warm welcome and congratulate her on her dedicated services and on her last day of work, which will be going into the evening like she does many, many days. (Standing Ovation)

MR. SPEAKER: We welcome all our guests to the gallery and hope that they enjoy today's proceedings. Good luck and a good retirement.

The honourable Minister of Justice.

RESOLUTION NO. 2627

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

Whereas Marian Tyson has served with distinction in the Public Service of Nova Scotia for more than 36 years; and

Whereas Ms. Tyson has served as a lawyer, director of Legal Services, Deputy Minister of Community Services, and most recently, since March 2007, as Deputy Minister of Justice; and

Whereas Deputy Minister Tyson is beginning her retirement from the Public Service tomorrow, with today, November 30th, being her last day in office;

Therefore be it resolved that this House recognize and thank Marian Tyson for her years of public service to the Province of Nova Scotia and wish her well in her retirement.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

RESOLUTION NO. 2628

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

Whereas earlier this month the Maritime School of Paramedicine in Sydney celebrated the graduation of its first class, which consisted of 30 students - 20 primary care paramedics and 10 advanced care paramedics; and

Whereas this was the first time there has been a dedicated training facility for primary care paramedics and advanced care paramedics in Cape Breton, which allowed the local students to stay in their home communities instead of travelling to Dartmouth or out of province for training; and

Whereas paramedics provide Nova Scotians with exceptional health care through 811, 911, and emergency services, and are an integral part of Better Care Sooner;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating the first graduating class of the Maritime School of Paramedicine in Sydney and wish them all the best for a successful future.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of African Nova Scotian Affairs.

RESOLUTION NO. 2629

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

Whereas close to 90 African-Canadian women of the Nova Scotia Public Service gathered for a session of networking, experience, and story sharing on October 18th, entitled Ascending the Ladder: Tapping Into the Potential of Women of African Descent in the Public Service of Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Her Honour, the Honourable Mayann Francis, Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia, the Minister responsible for the Advisory Council on the Status of Women Act, Marilyn More, the Deputy Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage, Laura Lee Langley, and Commissioner Kelliann Dean of the Public Service Commission attended, among others, and some shared their stories; and

Whereas the day was such a success, the group decided to formalize a networking advocacy group with the working name of the African Canadian Women in the Public Service;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly join me in congratulating African-Canadian women leaders in the provincial government on their contributions to public service in Nova Scotia and wish them success as they develop their network.

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.

I will remind the honourable member that when referring to a member of the House of Assembly you do not use their name. Use their ministerial portfolio or their riding. Thank you.

The honourable Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism.

RESOLUTION NO. 2630

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

Whereas the 2011 National Awards for Tourism Excellence were held in Ottawa last week and Nova Scotia came home a big winner with three awards and an honourable mention; and

Whereas the Waterfront Development Corporation, the Celtic Colours International Festival, White Point Beach Resort, and the Royal Nova Scotia International Tattoo were all recognized as Nova Scotia organizations that offer superior tourism experiences to visitors from across Canada and beyond; and

Whereas all of these organizations are helping to cement Nova Scotia's reputation as a world-class travel destination;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House congratulate the Waterfront Development Corporation, the Celtic Colours International Festival, White Point Beach Resort, and the Royal Nova Scotia International Tattoo, and celebrate their efforts in helping to provide exciting reasons for people to come and visit our beautiful province.

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. 121 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 1 of the Acts of 1995-96. The Education Act. (Hon. Ramona Jennex)

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

The honourable Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

HON. STERLING BELLIVEAU: Mr. Speaker, I ask for your permission to do an introduction, please.

MR. SPEAKER: Most certainly.

MR. BELLIVEAU: Mr. Speaker, in the east gallery today we are joined by Keith Phinney from the Mining Association of Nova Scotia. He is a member of the advisory committee that has helped us with the review of the Environment Act.

Also joining him are many members of our great staff from the Department of Environment. I ask all my colleagues to give the people opposite in the gallery a warm, green welcome. (Applause)

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

Bill No. 122 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 1 of the Acts of 1994-95. The Environment Act. (Hon. Sterling Belliveau)

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

NOTICES OF MOTION

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

RESOLUTION NO. 2631

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

Whereas last week the Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism boasted that he had rescued the Digby Board of Trade's Awards of Excellence dinner, telling MLAs, "They were having difficulties selling tickets, but guess what happened? They got me to be the guest speaker and they oversold. They oversold."; and

Whereas at the dinner the Digby Board of Trade honoured the Digby Neck & Islands Sea Scouts and Venturers, organizers of the Wharf Rat Rally, the Digby Courier, Digby's tourism committee, Fancy Jewellers, Wild Rose Farm, and Sissiboo Investments Limited; and

Whereas the Digby Board of Trade honoured former Municipality of Digby Warden Jim Thurber with the Life Achievement Award, who was recognized for fighting for the Digby-Saint John ferry and for his dedication to his constituents, despite profound personal challenges;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly congratulate Jim Thurber and the many worthy award recipients who were the real draw at the Digby Board of Trade and Excellence Awards dinner.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Community Services on an introduction.

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure today to introduce the following individuals who are great poverty advocates. I would like to thank them for the work that they do and it's a pleasure that I have the opportunity to sit and discuss with them the poverty issues that they face and that we can work as a team towards eliminating poverty in Nova Scotia.

Firstly, if you could stand up, I would like to introduce Kendall Worth, also Junior Barnes, and Patricia Heighton. I would like to ask everybody to give them a warm welcome and thank them. (Applause)

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

The honourable member Minister of Health and Wellness.

RESOLUTION NO. 2632

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

Whereas next Tuesday, December 6th, will mark the 94th Anniversary of the Halifax Explosion, the largest man-made explosion before the advent of the atomic bomb; and

Whereas the Halifax Explosion, which occurred at 9:04 a.m. on December 6, 1917, followed a collision between the Imo, a relief ship, and the Mont Blanc, a munitions ship,

killed 2,000 women, men and children, injured or permanently disabled 9,000 more people and devastated large areas on both sides of Halifax Harbour; and

Whereas the tragedy of the Halifax Explosion will be remembered and the terrible losses commemorated this December 6th with a memorial service organized by Halifax Regional Municipality at the Bell Tower in Fort Needham Park, and also with another memorial service organized by Halifax firefighters at the Fallen Firefighters Memorial on Duffus Street;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of the House of Assembly, as the 94th Anniversary of the Halifax Explosion draws near, remember this greatest tragedy in the history of Halifax and Dartmouth and express our ongoing gratitude to the first responders of 1917, who risked or lost their lives in the heroic performance of their duties, and to today's first responders who carry on the tradition and dedication of their predecessors.

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. 2633

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

Whereas today marks the final day of the 2011 Movember season where men grow moustaches and people fundraise to support prostate cancer research and awareness; and

Whereas the Movember team known as Zach Churchill and Friends - consisting of Yarmouth residents Luke Woodworth, Kevin Gobien, Alex Burton, Ryan Forest, Evan Kleiner, Gordan Gray and myself, along with the MLA for Glace Bay - grew Mos and fundraised over \$3,300 in support of Movember and changing the face of men's health; and

Whereas the Movember team known as Zach Churchill and friends received incredible support from the Liberal caucus, OTC Insurance Brokers, past and current

members and staff of the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA), the 2005-06 executive of the Saint Mary's University Students' Association (SMUSA), staff and faculty of Meadowfields Community School, the Gobien family, the Bishara family, the Burton family, the members of Y-Unit, and many other Yarmouth residents and Canadian citizens;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly thank all those who supported the Movember team known as Zach Churchill and friends, along with all those who supported the 2011 Movember season in our province and beyond in order to promote prostate cancer research and awareness and change the face of men's health in our communities.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Queens.

RESOLUTION NO. 2634

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

Whereas on Saturday, November 12th, the main lodge building at White Point Beach Resort was consumed by fire and the dedicated management and staff continued to care for and give primary attention to their valued guests; and

Whereas on November 24th, White Point Beach Resort received the CTHRC Award for Excellence in Human Resources Development at the 2011 Canadian Tourism Award ceremonies in Ottawa; and

Whereas the award recognizes White Point Beach Resort for demonstrating a commitment to professionalism in the tourism workforce and a commitment shown through professional recognition, training, and excellence in human resource management;

Therefore be it resolved that the House of Assembly recognize and congratulate White Point Beach Resort and all of their staff for receiving the CTHRC Award for Excellence in Human Resources Development at the 2011 Canadian Tourism Award ceremonies.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Education.

RESOLUTION NO. 2635

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

Whereas Saraj Bakery offers unique baked creations with unsurpassed craftsmanship, focusing on a tradition of old-fashioned value and an outstanding quality of products, which is reflected in their handmade breads and European specialties; and

Whereas Saraj Bakery started four years ago as a tiny bakery, making artisan breads and delectable desserts that customers could feel good about eating, by creating wholesome baked goods made from less-refined and organic ingredients that complement a healthy lifestyle, including food free of additives, preservatives, hormones, and enhancers of any kind, and Saraj Bakery can meet the needs of customers with specific dietary needs; and

Whereas co-owners Sanja Pahole-Novakovic and Iztok Pahole have expanded their business to provide their food at the Wolfville Farmers Market, have created the full restaurant Pizzazz Bistro in Kentville, and have recently opened the new Saraj Bakery and Café on Commercial Street in New Minas;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly commend the co-owners of Saraj Bakery and Café, Sanja Pahole-Novakovic and Iztok Pahole, for their uncompromising commitment to their motto, “Scrumptious and healthy for good health and clean living!” and wish them continued success with their growing business.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Environment.

RESOLUTION NO. 2636

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

Whereas Don Atkinson Trucking Ltd. was named Business of the Year at the Shelburne County Business Development Corporation and Shelburne and Area Chamber of Commerce 2011 Business Excellence Awards on October 20, 2011; and

Whereas over the past 30 years, owners Bill and Sherri Harris have built their business of transporting boats from a local operation to one that now employs upward of 15 people and transports vessels throughout North America; and

Whereas Bill and Sherri Harris are avid supporters of sustainable community development as well as local community organizations, helping to make their hometown grow and thrive;

Therefore be it resolved that the House of Assembly congratulate Don Atkinson Trucking Ltd. owners Bill and Sherri Harris for being named Business of the Year at the Business Excellence Awards on October 20, 2011.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage.

RESOLUTION NO. 2637

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

Whereas Destination Imagination is a non-profit organization that reaches more than 30 countries and is run as an after-school activity where students work in teams to solve challenges and go on to compete in tournaments; and

Whereas Evan Muise is a Grade 8 student at A.J. Smeltzer Junior High School in Lower Sackville and was one of seven students to take part in Destination Imagination challenge in Knoxville, Tennessee, in May, 2011 where his group gave an eight-minute presentation for community outreach challenge; and

Whereas Evan's group also started an after-school program at Hillside Park Elementary School in Lower Sackville, to promote exercise and healthy eating as part of a challenge to fight childhood obesity in Nova Scotia;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly commend Evan Muise for participating in Destination Imagination that promotes exercise and healthy eating as part of a challenge to fight childhood obesity in Nova Scotia, and wish him future success in his endeavours.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Natural Resources.

RESOLUTION NO. 2638

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

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

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

Whereas this year's winner for Best Salon was won by Ahead of Hair, which is located in Pictou and is owned and operated by Eva Sutherland;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia Legislative Assembly congratulate Ahead of Hair and Eva Sutherland on winning the Pictou County People's Choice Award for Best Salon.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Agriculture.

RESOLUTION NO. 2639

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

Whereas people who dedicate their entire lives to community service rather than personal gain are a rare and wonderful breed; and

Whereas Keith Miller of Lantz was a driving force behind many recreational facilities and initiatives, too many to name in the Lantz area, but notably, the ice arenas; and

Whereas on November 28, 2011, Keith Miller passed away after a long life of generous commitment for the betterment of his community;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly offer its condolences to the family of Keith Miller on his passing, and acknowledge with gratitude his lifetime of community service.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage.

RESOLUTION NO. 2640

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

Whereas Eastern Passage resident Marie Morash has been involved with volunteer committee work through the Lions Club over the past decade; and

Whereas the extent of Marie's volunteerism includes chairing committees such as Merchandise Bingo, Children's Christmas Party, Bursaries, Sick & Visiting, and Speak Out, and she continues to volunteer as a committee member for breakfast, the carnival and bingo; and

Whereas in the Spring of 2011, Marie received her 10-year Monarch Certificate of Service from the Eastern Passage-Cow Bay Lions Club at the 39th Charter Night;

Therefore be it resolved that this Nova Scotia House of Assembly commend Marie Morash for being awarded her 10-year Monarch Certificate of Service from the Eastern Passage-Cow Bay Lions Club.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Pictou East.

RESOLUTION NO. 2641

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

Whereas Phillip MacKenzie of New Glasgow has spent many years and thousands of dollars photographing many of the important moments and noteworthy people throughout Pictou County; and

Whereas Phillip MacKenzie has completed eight photo albums of over 2,000 people in various walks of life over a two-year period, and presented the collections to the various town councils throughout Pictou County; and

Whereas the photographic records created by Mr. MacKenzie are held within digital archives at the Pictou-Antigonish Regional Library headquarters and are available for public viewing on-line;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly recognize the quality photography of Phillip MacKenzie, and congratulate him for the contributions he has made to the historical inventory of Pictou County photographs now available to the world.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Cumberland North.

MR. BRIAN SKABAR: Mr. Speaker, before my resolution, if I may make an introduction?

MR. SPEAKER: Most certainly.

MR. SKABAR: In our east gallery we have a fourth-year political science class from Mount Allison University, and Senator Marilyn Trenholme, a former New Brunswick Lieutenant Governor and Senator for New Brunswick - if you would please stand and receive the welcome of the House. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: We welcome all our guests in the gallery and hope they enjoy today's proceedings - even the former captain of the Mount Allison football team.

The honourable member for Cumberland North.

RESOLUTION NO. 2642

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

Whereas local fire departments play an essential role in keeping Nova Scotia's communities safe, strong and healthy; and

Whereas the Pugwash District Volunteer Fire Department is well trained and well equipped with 30 firefighters, five trucks, lifesaving equipment, and a computerized command centre; and

Whereas Ken Casey has dedicated 25 years of service to the community of Pugwash as a volunteer firefighter, and Paul Mundle and Brent Wilson have dedicated 20 years each of service to the community of Pugwash as volunteer firefighters, helping to ensure that the province we live in is a safe place to work and live;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly join me in thanking Ken Casey, Paul Mundle, and Brent Wilson for their years of dedication and service as volunteer firefighters for the Pugwash District Volunteer Fire Department and for all Nova Scotians.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Hammonds Plains-Upper Sackville.

RESOLUTION NO. 2643

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

Whereas the Freemasons of Nova Scotia established Sackville Lodge 137 on October 8, 1986; and

Whereas the lodge has thrived in the Sackville community since that time; and

Whereas the lodge has been a source of upstanding moral character and positive community involvement throughout its tenure;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of the House of Assembly join me in congratulating Sackville Masonic Lodge 137 of the Grand Lodge of Nova Scotia on reaching its 25th Anniversary and its many more years to come.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Kings North.

RESOLUTION NO. 2644

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

Whereas Foote's Farm Market is a family business located in Centreville, Nova Scotia, owned and operated by Brad and Mike Foote and celebrating its 10th Anniversary in 2011; and

Whereas Foote's Farm Market has also been specializing in wholesale since 1991, delivering fresh fruit and produce to restaurants and stores from Halifax to Yarmouth; and

Whereas Foote's Farm Market is proud to support local Valley growers and sells a variety of fresh fruit and vegetables, local meats and fish, baked goods, eggs and dairy, ice cream, and much more;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia House of Assembly congratulate Foote's Farm Market of Centreville on its 10th Anniversary, for its continued commitment to local Valley growers, and for being a market that provides good quality and great prices to its many customers.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Lunenburg.

RESOLUTION NO. 2645

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

Whereas the 2011 Lunenburg Santa Claus Parade, organized by Lunenburg resident Howard Keeping, featured Santa Claus himself riding in a dory-styled sleigh; and

Whereas the dory-themed Christmas parade featured three parade marshals, including long-time dory fisherman Elias Parry, and the reigning International Dory Race women's champions Gladys Collicutt and Patieanne Verburgh in the celebration; and

Whereas this year's Lunenburg Santa Claus Parade featured 45 entries, including musical groups the Bluenose Fiddlers, the Bridgewater Fire Department Band, and the Centre Consolidated School Band;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulate organizer Howard Keeping and all participants in the annual Lunenburg Santa Claus Parade that took place November 26th at 3:00 p.m. in the Town of Lunenburg.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Guysborough-Sheet Harbour.

RESOLUTION NO. 2646

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

Whereas today, November 30, 2011, Mr. Alexander "Braz" Ellsworth Ryan of Canso, in the constituency of Guysborough-Sheet Harbour, celebrates his 107th birthday; and

Whereas Braz Ryan, born in 1904 and raised in Canso, worked as a fisherman, a deckhand on the trawlers and as watchman, taking time out to serve his country in the Merchant Marine, is a lifetime member of the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 46, loves a good game of cribbage, and is quick to share one of the many stories of his life with anyone who stops by for a visit; and

Whereas Braz is a well-respected and much-loved member of the community of Canso and will celebrate his 107th year with many family and friends at the Canso Seaside Manor;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly congratulate Mr. Alexander "Braz" Ellsworth Ryan on the celebration of his 107th birthday, and extend to him our very best wishes for many more such celebrations 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 Colchester-Musquodoboit Valley.

RESOLUTION NO. 2647

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

Whereas Heather Logan of Otter Brook, Colchester County, an instructor in the Companion Animal Enterprise Management program at the Nova Scotia Agricultural College, is the recipient of the university's 2011 Faculty Award for Teaching Excellence; and

Whereas Heather, as owner of Cloverfield Animal Behaviour Services, has offered five levels of obedience training classes to the public over a 25-year period and specializes now in behavior consultations, public lectures, and training services; and

Whereas Heather designed and implemented the Pawsitive Directions Canine Program for Nova Institution, the federal prison for women in Truro, a program in which women have an opportunity to build a relationship with a rescue dog and learn training methods readying the dog for placement with people in need of service dogs, a program which was awarded the Top Correctional Services Program in Canada designation in 1999, 2007, and 2009;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia House of Assembly applaud Heather Logan's selection as the 2011 recipient of the NSAC Faculty Award for Teaching Excellence, and acknowledge appreciatively her inspirational leadership both in and beyond the classroom.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Agriculture.

RESOLUTION NO. 2648

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

Whereas Christmas is fast approaching and there are many reminders of the season of goodwill; and

Whereas Canada Post recently issued a cancellation stamp for the Noel post office that has the community's name on it; and

Whereas postmistress Pam Starratt was instrumental in designing the cancellation stamp;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulate postmistress Pam Starratt and Canada Post for recognizing Noel for having a special link to the Christmas season.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Environment.

RESOLUTION NO. 2649

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

Whereas Kenney & Ross Limited was presented with the Export Achievement Award at the Shelburne County Business Development Corporation and Shelburne and Area Chamber of Commerce 2011 Business Excellence Awards on October 20, 2011; and

Whereas Kenney & Ross Limited, which has been in continuous operation since 1945 at the Port Saxon location, is a manufacturer of food additives, pharmaceutical and natural additives, exporting products to four European countries, as well as the United States of America and Japan; and

Whereas Kenney & Ross Limited provides year-round, steady employment for more than 50 people and is a well-established business with unlimited potential to continue growing in the world marketplace;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulate Kenney & Ross Limited for being presented with the 2011 Export Achievement Award on October 20, 2011.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage.

RESOLUTION NO. 2650

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

Whereas 15-year-old Taylor Stutely of Lower Sackville is a Grade 10 student at Sackville High School; and

Whereas Taylor Stutely has been competing in track and field since junior high, where she finished third place at her first provincial competition; and

Whereas Taylor Stutely competed in the Legion Canadian Youth Track and Field Championship held in Ottawa in August 2011, where she threw the discus 39.05 metres, to win the under-16 National Midget Championship in discus throwing, and is training to qualify for the 2013 World Youth Games in the Ukraine and the 2013 Canada Games in Sherbrooke, Quebec;

Therefore be it resolved that members of this House of Assembly congratulate 15-year-old Taylor Stutely of Lower Sackville, and wish Taylor future success as she trains to qualify for the 2013 World Youth Games in the Ukraine and 2013 Canada Games in Sherbrooke, Quebec.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Energy.

RESOLUTION NO. 2651

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

Whereas Andrew Greene of Durham, age 16 and a member of the Salt Springs 4-H Club, was named the Overall Showmanship Champion and reserved overall champion in judging at the 2011 Annual Provincial 4-H Show; and

Whereas Mr. Greene has been involved in 4-H for 11 years and has competed with various projects in both livestock and non-livestock; and

Whereas Andrew's commitment and dedication to 4-H has resulted in many awards over the years and it has also influenced his career choice in becoming a veterinarian;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia Legislative Assembly congratulate Andrew Greene for his awards at the 2011 Annual Provincial 4-H Show and wish him 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 Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage.

RESOLUTION NO. 2652

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

Whereas Eastern Passage resident Kaye MacCaull has been involved with volunteer committee work through the Lions Club for many years; and

Whereas Kaye is the secretary, the Chair of the Drug Awareness Contest, and has also worked on numerous committees in the club, such as the Breakfast, the Speak-Out and the New Year's dance; and

Whereas in the Spring of 2011, Kaye received a Nova Scotia Foundation Life Membership from the Eastern Passage-Cow Bay Lions Club at the 39th Charter Night;

Therefore be it resolved that this Nova Scotia House of Assembly commend Kaye MacCaull of Eastern Passage for being the recipient of the Nova Scotia Foundation Life Membership from the Eastern Passage-Cow Bay Lions Club.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Queens.

RESOLUTION NO. 2653

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

Whereas the Queens Manor in Liverpool exists for the main purpose of providing a home for the frail, the elderly, and people with chronic illness or disability while assisting and supporting the activities of daily living at a nursing care level; and

Whereas meeting the long-term medical, social, physical, psychological, and spiritual needs of our senior citizens is of the utmost importance in our society; and

Whereas the Queens Manor is celebrating its 30th year of providing these services to 60 residents;

Therefore be it resolved that the House of Assembly recognize and congratulate the Queens Manor on 30 years of continual service to those in need of long-term care.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Kings North.

RESOLUTION NO. 2654

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

Whereas the Salvation Army is a spiritual and social presence throughout the world; and

Whereas during 2011, the Salvation Army Kentville Corps celebrates 125 years of service to local communities; and

Whereas the Salvation Army Kentville Corps delivers programs that range from church services to community outreach to a food bank, assistance with home heat, and the coordination and delivery of assistance during the Christmas season;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly congratulate the Salvation Army Kentville Corps on its 125 years of service to the greater Kentville community and wish the corps continued success in all of its future endeavours.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Lunenburg.

RESOLUTION NO. 2655

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

Whereas Composites Atlantic was founded in Lunenburg under the name Cellpack Aerospace Limited in 1987 by Maurice Guitton; and

Whereas Composites Atlantic grew from a company with 10 employees to approximately 300 employees today, making significant contributions to the design and fabrication of advanced composites used in aerospace, defence, space, and security in commercial markets under the leadership of former CEO Maurice Guitton before his retirement in August of this year; and

Whereas Maurice Guitton received the James C. Floyd Award during the Aerospace Industries Association of Canada's 50th Anniversary Gala Reception in Ottawa, this Fall, for his great contribution to the Canadian aerospace sector;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulate Maurice Guitton for receiving the prestigious James C. Floyd Award and recognize his efforts as an entrepreneur, businessman, and community leader.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Guysborough-Sheet Harbour.

RESOLUTION NO. 2656

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

Whereas there was a Terry Fox Run held in Sheet Harbour on September 18, 2011;
and

Whereas this year there were three generations from one family who took part in the Terry Fox Run: Joan Boutilier; her daughters, Cathy Tibbo and Nancy Fleet, and grandchildren Mitchell and Matthew Tibbo and Kelsie and Laurie Fleet; and

Whereas the 18 participants were able to raise approximately \$2,400 for this annual event and Mr. Elmer Josey was this year's Terry Team Member for 2011;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly congratulate Elmer Josey, Joan Boutilier, her daughters Cathy Tibbo and Nancy Fleet, and her grandchildren Mitchell and Matthew Tibbo and Kelsie and Laurie Fleet.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS

MR. SPEAKER: The time is now 3:10 p.m. We will go until 4:40 p.m.

The honourable member for Richmond.

PREM. - FCA: DEBATE - CURTAILMENT EXPLAIN

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, we've been hearing from stakeholders that presenters on first contract arbitration who are scheduled to present tomorrow night have been told to move their presentations to the Law Amendments Committee to this evening or they are out of luck. The Law Amendments Committee is the opportunity that all Nova Scotians get to have their voices heard on the government's agenda and this Premier is now putting a muzzle on debate over this contentious issue.

We've been hearing from presenter after presenter, hour after hour, that the Premier is wrong to push this labour agenda and it seems that the Premier is tired of hearing from Nova Scotians about how we should focus on job growth and the economy rather than trying to fix a problem that simply doesn't exist. My question to the Premier is, why is the Premier curtailing public debate on first contract arbitration?

THE PREMIER: Well, we're not, Mr. Speaker. There is time in the committee to hear presentations today. None of the current presenters have had their time frames changed at all. They're all here in the regular order. (Interruptions) With the different time, we hope to be able to get through the presentations this evening and get on to amendments, and that, of course, is the work of the House.

MR. SAMSON: Well, in the words of the Premier, that's simply not true. Presenters were told that they would be heard on Thursday evening at the Law Amendments Committee only to get phone calls today from the Legislative Counsel Office, under directions from this government, telling them, get them in tonight or they're out of luck. It is clear that the Premier has grown tired of hearing from Nova Scotia's largest employers about their concerns that this legislation will have on the Nova Scotia economy at a time when we're hearing of record job losses around this province. The Law

Amendments Committee is the one opportunity that all Nova Scotians - regardless of their position on government legislation - have the opportunity to come forward and have their matters heard. My question again to the Premier is, why are you trying to muzzle debate from Nova Scotians and Nova Scotia's largest employers on first contract arbitration?

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. I will read a ruling in the edition of the House of Commons Procedures and I'll quote from that on Page 506, Chapter 11:

Questions seeking information about the schedule and agenda of committees may be directed to Chairs of committees.⁹⁰ Questions to the Ministry or to a committee Chair concerning the proceedings or work of a committee, including its order of reference, may not be raised.⁹¹ Thus, for example, a question would be disallowed if it dealt with a vote in committee,⁹² with the attendance or testimony of Members at a committee meeting,⁹³ or with the content of a committee report.⁹⁴ When a question has been asked about a committee's proceedings, Speakers have encouraged Members to rephrase their questions.⁹⁵

I'll ask you to rephrase your question. (Interruption) I will ask you to rephrase your question, please.

MR. SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, Nova Scotia's largest employers are coming out and expressing concerns over this government's move to change the labour laws of Nova Scotia at a time when they're seeking this government to show leadership on job growth and protecting the jobs that we have in this province. My question is, why is the Premier continuing to push forward on labour law changes at a time when Nova Scotia employers are clearly saying it is not the right time?

THE PREMIER: We are working with all of the companies across this province to build a strong economy, to create jobs. That's why you see projects like the Lower Churchill going ahead; that's why you see projects like the Irving contract to build the new combat vessels going ahead. That is why you see good, constructive legislation coming forward to strengthen our economy.

MR. SAMSON: In my 13 years in the Legislature - the same amount of time as the Premier - I have never seen Sobeys come before any committee of this House to raise concerns over government legislation. I have never seen Michelin take the time to express the concern over direction of this government and tonight we will have the opportunity. To date we have only heard a one-sided conversation the Premier had with Michelin, tonight we might get to hear exactly what was said to the Premier about first contract arbitration.

Mr. Speaker, it is clear that Nova Scotia businesses are concerned with where this government is going. They want to see the government focus on job growth and the economy rather than trying to fix a problem that simply doesn't exist. So will the Premier

advise today why his government is so determined to move forward on first contract arbitration in light of the opposition from Nova Scotia's largest employers?

THE PREMIER: Any of the employers that operate in any of the provinces outside of Atlantic Canada likely already operate in jurisdictions that have first contract legislation; 85 per cent of Canadians are already covered by first contract legislation, Mr. Speaker. What it does is it prevents unnecessary employment stoppages, it strengthens, it makes more productive the economy of the province. That's what the legislation does.

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

PREM. - LAW AMENDMENTS COMM.: LEADERSHIP - ASSUME

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, today is a shameful day in this Legislature when this government is determined to squelch the voices of those who want to risk capital, who want to create jobs, want to employ a few Nova Scotians; when they shut down the very mechanism that we use in this Chamber to hear the voice of Nova Scotians when it comes to legislation before this House. It's a shameful day but it is not the first time that this has happened. In a recent submission to the original sham committee - the Labour Management Review Committee - the Employers Roundtable, which represents thousands of Nova Scotia jobs, warned the government that this will be viewed negatively for companies looking to locate or expand in Nova Scotia. The Employers Roundtable includes Michelin, one of the very companies that today the government is trying to shut up.

But that's not all, just the other day Sobeys warned the government that this move would be a mark against Nova Scotia when they are considering investing and creating more jobs in our province. Sobeys currently employs over 1,000 Nova Scotians but wasn't even invited to the Labour Management Review Committee or their study day. These are the voices the government wants to shut up today, so my question to the Premier is this, will he take leadership and put a stop to these shameful behaviours of his committee chair, his minister and his government?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, we welcome all those who want to participate in the Law Amendments Committee. We are providing full, open and adequate time for them to bring their concerns before the committee. We hope that they take advantage of the time that the committee has. We are also hopeful that this evening we'll be able to get through any amendments that might come before the committee and we can report it back to the House where the representatives of the people can debate it.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, that is a shameful answer to a shameful and disgraceful conduct on the part of this government but more importantly it is insulting to the employers that that bunch is calling today to tell them they can't come tonight as has been scheduled because they don't want to hear from them. That is what's going on outside

this Chamber as we speak. When jobs are on the line the most offensive thing is that the Premier is shutting out the very people who want to come and tell his government why their plan is such a bad idea.

Companies like Michelin, Bowater, Clearwater are all part of the Employers Roundtable that have come forward to say their plans are a bad idea. When Sobeys was asked to participate in the Labour Management Review Committee, they were told no, Mr. Speaker. Those are voices they're trying to stifle here today and so my question to the Premier, if he's truly interested in good legislation, in creating jobs in this province, why does he shut out the very people who want to invest in Nova Scotia and create jobs?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, all the people he has mentioned have either communicated directly with government, have been before the committee, will be before the committee, and participated in the Labour Management Review Committee Study Day. All of them have had a full, ample opportunity to tell the government what their opinion is. What's more, as I pointed out, they all also operate in jurisdictions that have first contract legislation, why? Because we had decades of experience with first contract legislation. It creates a better working environment for both business and labour.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, that's a disgraceful answer. The Premier says that he has heard enough but there is a lineup of people wanting to coming and tell his government what they think of his legislation and he won't let them. That's what's wrong today but ultimately companies like Sobeys, companies like Michelin, they have lobbyists, they'll have their say. So what the Premier is trying to stop is that there are thousands of small businesses that don't hire lobbyists, that don't have someone to speak for them, they're the ones that government is calling on the phone today and saying don't come tonight, we don't want to hear from you.

So will the Premier, one last time, if not for Sobeys, if not for Michelin, at least stop this sham and let those thousands of small businesses that he says he doesn't want to hear from, come forward and have their say. Do the right thing.

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, this has been an open, transparent, comprehensive process that has invited everyone into the process, whether they are employers, whether they are unions, whether they are small business people, whether they are individual employees, it has been open to everyone. (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please.

The honourable Premier.

THE PREMIER: The very people that the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party says can't be part of the process are being offered the opportunity to appear before the committee, Mr. Speaker.

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

PREM. - FCA: MODERATE APPROACH - CONSIDER

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. The Premier has made it clear he intends to push through with first contract arbitration agenda regardless of how many Nova Scotians come before the committee and tell him it is the wrong agenda and it's the wrong time for our province. The Premier has also been misleading Nova Scotians by saying that 86 per cent of Canadians are already covered by this legislation - that is simply untrue. Only Manitoba has this type of first contract arbitration, which is 4 per cent of the Canadian population.

My question to the Premier - the Premier is intent on ramming his agenda through the House, that much is clear, but will the Premier consider a more moderate approach to first contract arbitration?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, what I have said is that 85 per cent of Canadians are covered by first contract legislation. Just for the record that's in Newfoundland and Labrador, that is in Quebec, that is in Ontario, that is in Saskatchewan, that is in Manitoba, and that is in British Columbia, All those provinces have first contract legislation. Why? Because it's good legislation. (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. Order, please.

The honourable Premier.

THE PREMIER: The reason why we're bringing forward the legislation is because it is the right thing for this province. It is the right thing for the economy, Mr. Speaker. It is the right thing for labour and industrial relations in this province. That's why we're bringing the legislation forward and that's why this House will pass it. (Applause)

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, with all due respect to the Premier, when an employer that has created 10,000 jobs for Nova Scotians comes and speaks and tells you this is the wrong piece of legislation for Nova Scotians, I believe Nova Scotians would side with that Nova Scotian and not the Premier, who has not created a single job in this province. As a matter of fact, since he has been Premier, 12,500 Nova Scotians have lost their job under his watch.

Mr. Speaker, the Labour Management Review Committee couldn't even reach a consensus on whether to recommend any model of first contract arbitration to the minister. So despite this lack of consensus on whether or not we should even have first contract arbitration, we decide to use the most restrictive model that's in the country. So my question to the Premier is, if the Labour Management Review Committee could not reach

consensus on whether we should even have first contract arbitration, why was the Premier pushing through the most regressive form of first contract arbitration in Canada?

THE PREMIER: Well, Mr. Speaker, first, to correct the Leader of the Official Opposition, we're pleased to see 3,000 more jobs created from June of 2009 to June of 2011. We're pleased to work with employers like Irving. We are pleased to work with employers like Irving, and we are pleased to work with Newfoundland and Labrador to sign the Lower Churchill agreement that will create thousands upon thousands of jobs in this province, the largest industrial opportunity in the history of our province. That's the list of accomplishments of this government, and we're proud of them. (Applause)

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, the accomplishments of this government are that 12,500 Nova Scotians have lost their jobs under their watch, and 14,000 other Nova Scotians have given up even looking for work under this watch.

Mr. Speaker, all we're asking is for the Premier to listen to the Nova Scotians who have been creating jobs in this province for decades. When an employer stands in front of a committee of this House and respectfully says that first contract arbitration is not needed in this province, but if the government is intent on pushing forward with it, let's look at a less regressive form of first contract arbitration.

For the Premier to stand in this House and arrogantly ignore that member of our province - the Premier has a responsibility not just to stand up for his union leader friends, he has a responsibility to stand up for every Nova Scotian who has lost their job. Mr. Speaker, my question to the Premier is simple - will you accept amendments to your first contract arbitration?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, first of all, the reason why the legislation is before the committee right now is because it is the right thing for every Nova Scotian. It is the right piece of legislation to help with industrial relations that have been in place for more than three decades in many provinces. Why should Nova Scotians be last? Why should we accept that there can be no progress with respect to labour relations?

No, Mr. Speaker, we say that it is time for industrial relations in this province to come into the 21st Century. I have been very clear - I have said that the job of the Law Amendments Committee is to listen to the presenters who are before them, and if there are good ideas that come forward in that committee then, of course, we're prepared to listen.

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

PREM. - POWER RATES: RESIDENTIAL INCREASE - AMOUNT

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. How much will power rates increase for residential customers on January 1, 2012?

THE PREMIER: Well, Mr. Speaker, as I understand it, it depends on the rate category that they're in, but for residential ratepayers I think that will be 6.1 per cent. Of course the reason for that is because we continue to be shackled with fossil fuels in this province, but fortunately we have a government that has one of the most aggressive renewable energy plans in this country. It is going to get us off fossil fuels and provide long-term stability for electrical rates in this province.

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, yesterday the URB decided to allow Nova Scotia Power to go back into the pockets of ratepayers for another 6.1 per cent increase, plus there is a 3.2 per cent increase on the fuel adjustment mechanism, plus Nova Scotians - every ratepayer in this province - is saddled with the NDP electricity tax which is also going up on January 1st. So, in actual fact, Nova Scotians are looking at a double-digit increase in their power bills come January 1st.

So my question to the Premier is, how much more gouging from Nova Scotia Power can the people of this province take under your leadership?

THE PREMIER: Well, Mr. Speaker, of course the structure of Nova Scotia Power and Emera were put in place by the Progressive Conservatives and Liberal Governments over many years. Their reference to the Utility and Review Board, the way that that operates, was put in place by those same governments. It is this government that has taken the HST off home electricity, something that that Party voted against.

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, it is that Party that increased 1,400 user fees outside of this Legislature; it is that Premier who has added the NDP electricity tax to every power bill in Nova Scotia; and it is that Premier who increased the HST by 2 per cent on every other thing Nova Scotians do in this province. Rather than trim costs and look for efficiencies, Nova Scotia Power is once again returning to the ratepayers. This monopoly is dictating the energy policies of this province and the Premier is standing by, letting it happen. Nova Scotia simply cannot afford another rate increase at 10 per cent. (Interruptions)

Mr. Speaker, I hear some people chirping at me from the other side. I would encourage them to ask their questions of the Premier to see if they can get an answer from him.

My question to the Premier is, will the Premier use any means necessary to break up this monopoly of Nova Scotia Power so that customers can finally have competition in this province?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I have to say I don't know what the Leader of the Official Opposition is referring to. What I will say is, the Utility and Review Board is a non-partisan, non-politicized, unbiased committee that looks through the rate filings put in place through Nova Scotia Power, that provides and relies on expert opinions, that relies on the opinions and the advocates of the Consumer Advocate office and the Small Business Advocate office, and comes to a decision that seeks to balance the various interests across the province.

None of us like to see rate increases - none of us. The simple fact of the matter is that the reason we have rate increases is because previous governments allowed us to continue to be shackled to fossil fuel prices. Coal prices have gone up by 75 per cent in the last six years and that's now being reflected in rates. It's unfortunate that past governments didn't have the vision that this government has.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle.

PREM.: MICHELIN BILL - QUALITY

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, we all know the Premier relies on the advice of people around him about the economy, advice that has seen us into catastrophic job losses and a crisis in rural Nova Scotia. One of the most prominent members of his economic advisory panel is long-time NDP supporter and career union boss Rick Clarke, President of the Nova Scotia Federation of Labour. The Premier made Rick Clarke co-chairman of the disastrous Labour Management Review Committee, who conducted a sham consultation that excluded the most important job creators in the province. The government will also hear from Mr. Clarke this afternoon.

My question to the Premier is, does he agree with his prominent economic advisor Rick Clarke, when he says the Michelin bill is a bad piece of legislation and it's not the Michelin bill keeping Michelin in Nova Scotia?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I don't know where the House Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party got the quote. What I can tell him is that I have a good relationship with Michelin. We work hard with them to ensure that we recognize that they're a good employer in this province, and I have said in the past that we have no intention of changing any of the elements with respect to that bill. We are not interested in fighting battles of the past. What we are interested in is ensuring that we have a healthy economy in our province.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, by now all Nova Scotians are aware of the NDP Government's reward to their union boss buddies' agenda - an agenda that they did not campaign on. First we had Bill No. 100, then we had this first contract imposition. Nova Scotians fear what's next, and no more so than the 3,500 Nova Scotians employed directly by Michelin, the thousands of others whose livelihoods depend on Michelin, and

the many other thousands of their family members. Michelin alone employs more people than the federal ship contract will at its peak.

My question to the Premier is, what's next on his agenda to reward his more radical friends at the expense of Nova Scotia jobs? Will he simply scrap the Michelin bill or just continue to pull an end-run around it, thereby risking the livelihoods of several thousand Nova Scotians for the sake of rewarding his buddies?

THE PREMIER: Well, Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party a few days ago talked about disgraceful behaviour. If there ever was disgraceful behaviour in this House, it's that kind of question.

The reality is that on this side of the House we work very hard with all the employers across the province. We have a good relationship with them. Many of the largest employers, through one way or another, sat on the Premier's Economic Council and they provide advice to this government. In fact, the jobsHere plan - which the Department of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism brought out - was a product of the work that was done by the very employers that the members opposite refer to.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, the Premier pledged that he would not raise taxes and then, of course, jacked up the HST. Rick Clarke told this year's Labour Day Rally that there would be no deficit if only the governments in Canada raised taxes. He pledged that he would not run a deficit, but he took a balanced budget and created a huge deficit.

He pledged that he would take the politics out of paving and we know, of course, how that turned out. Pledges he made with his eyes wide opened, Mr. Speaker, for the votes, and all promises he has broken time and time again. He claims to be fiscally responsible, and he isn't. He claims to consult - well, look at what's happening in Bill No. 102, Mr. Speaker. (Interruptions)

So my question to the Premier is, why should the thousands of Nova Scotian families, whose very livelihoods are at risk, trust him at all to protect jobs ahead of the interests of Rick Clarke and the other buddies on the Michelin Bill - or anything else for that matter?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, very proudly this government has kept every single commitment it made during the last election. (Interruptions) That is the truth, every single commitment. (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. (Interruptions) Order, please. Order. (Interruption) Order, please.

I've asked for order three times. The next time, I'm going to start removing people out of the Chamber.

AN. HON. MEMBER: We've asked for answers for months.

MR. SPEAKER: Well that's part of the parliamentary procedure here, so that's the last time I'm going to call order three times today.

The honourable Premier.

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, they liked it so much, I'll tell them again. We have kept every single commitment we made, every single one. (Interruptions) We came to government, where the previous government (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable Premier has the floor.

THE PREMIER: Again, Mr. Speaker, we kept every single commitment we made during the last election. (Interruptions) What's worse is that we came to government with a government that had left behind a \$1.6 billion structural deficit in this province. We turned it around and we not only balanced the books, but we ran a surplus and paid down the debt they left behind. (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

PREM. - POWER: HYDRO-QUÉBEC - CALL

MR. ANDREW YOUNGER: My question is for the Premier, and I'm sure the answers will be just as entertaining, in what's turning into a comedy hour this afternoon. For the past couple of weeks the Minister of Energy has been unable to answer basic questions about his portfolio. In fact yesterday the Premier had to jump in to rescue him by answering a very simple question on the electrical tie between Nova Scotia and New Brunswick.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier wants to wait for Lower Churchill to be completed before contacting Hydro-Québec about importing cheaper power. The Premier said yesterday, "... once the Lower Churchill project is on track, is on-line, that will give us the ability to also negotiate with Hydro-Québec, and if they want to send us cheaper power, we'd be happy to take it." Yet, Hydro-Québec says they are waiting and eager for the call from this government to see what they can do to help bring cheaper energy to Nova Scotia today.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier must know that such discussions would take time and waiting for Muskrat Falls to be on-line will be too late. Will the Premier make that call to Hydro-Québec, to see what opportunities may exist to get cheaper, clean power for Nova Scotians from Hydro-Québec?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, the member misunderstands the manner in which the energy grid in the region operates. Indeed, Emera who, of course, is the parent company for Nova Scotia Power, regularly does business with Hydro-Québec; in fact, they've purchased from Hydro-Québec. When we have a call in this province for additional power, they go out into the marketplace, they look for power which they can import and, in fact, they do at times, bring in power from Quebec or from other, cheaper sources if they can access it. So, of course, we're always in the market to make sure that consumers in the province are receiving the best possible price for their power.

MR. YOUNGER: Well, Mr. Speaker, of course Nova Scotia Power and Emera bring in small amounts of Hydro-Québec power now and again, at a much higher price than the contracted price, which can be negotiated and even Emera has said, it requires the intervention of the Premier or the Energy Minister to make the call that Hydro-Québec has already said they are waiting for, that they haven't received.

Mr. Speaker, the Lower Churchill project is years away. There have already been delays, construction hasn't started and even when it arrives, it's only 8 to 10 per cent of our power. Maybe the Premier and the NDP Government members earn enough money to go through another 10 years of price increases from Nova Scotia Power and not worry about it but a lot of Nova Scotians don't. Hydro-Québec power, averaged into our existing power supplies, would actually reduce the cost to customers and there aren't many options that would do that. So why is the Premier content to do nothing while he waits for the Lower Churchill project to come ashore, rather than contacting Hydro-Québec today and at least looking at what possibilities exist?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I don't know where the member opposite gets his information, he's just dead wrong on it. The reality is that, as he knows, the transmission interlink between Nova Scotia and New Brunswick needs a substantial upgrade to bring forward any kind of substantial amount of power into the province. That inter-tie will go ahead as part of the negotiations that have taken place between New Brunswick and Nova Scotia.

He should know, that we, in fact, have already entered into a memorandum of understanding with New Brunswick and are exploring the capacity of those lines to do just exactly what he is suggesting, except we did that years before he suggested it.

MR. YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, first of all, Hydro-Québec says there is enough infrastructure in place to do it, so does the New Brunswick Government. Secondly, he can take all the credit he wants and I tabled that memorandum of understanding announcement yesterday, so of course I am aware of it. In fact, the Leader of the Official Opposition said that that was necessary during the election and this Premier laughed at him during the election for making that suggestion, so we're just glad he finally took that advice.

Mr. Speaker, the other day the Premier called Muskrat Falls a game-changer and just a few minutes ago in Question Period, he said it is going to create thousands and thousands of jobs. Well, you know what? We all know that it is a game-changer, for Newfoundland and Labrador. We all know that there will be thousands of jobs, in Newfoundland and Labrador. Yes, of course there are benefits to Nova Scotia from having more stably-priced electricity but the Premier is misleading Nova Scotians when he talks about thousands of jobs and so forth.

Mr. Speaker, if the Premier would be forthright with Nova Scotians about it, he might actually have some credibility on the issue. So why does the Premier refuse to talk to Hydro-Québec and continue to tell Nova Scotians all their energy problems will be solved when Lower Churchill comes ashore, when he knows it is years off and it is higher priced than what we're actually paying now?

THE PREMIER: Well first of all, Mr. Speaker, I don't refuse to talk to anybody, as he knows. He has already said that Hydro-Québec, in fact, already does sell into the marketplace. But I want to be really clear - I was in Cape Breton on Monday and I set out the terms, the memorandum of understanding, with the Lower Churchill project. There will be thousands of jobs created as a result of that - thousands of person-years of work - and Cape Breton companies are the best and most strategically placed in order to take advantage of that.

Mr. Speaker, they should be proud of this deal. They should be telling businesses in this province to make sure they get into that supply chain instead of being what they are, the nodding nabob of negativism.

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

ERDT: ECONOMIC MOMENTUM - DIVERSIONARY TACTICS

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, commentary on allnovascotia.com today says, after weeks of getting roasted over rural job losses, the NDP Government is desperately trying to build an impression of economic momentum. This week the minister celebrated the first anniversary of his failed jobs plan but the fact is the shipbuilding contract will not even bring enough jobs to fill the gap that the number of jobs that have all been lost under this government in rural Nova Scotia. If this government continues this way, it will screw up the important opportunity we have in front of us.

Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism. What diversion tactic will this minister use next to try to give the impression that he's building economic momentum rather than focusing on things within his control to improve our business climate in Nova Scotia?

HON. PERCY PARIS: Mr. Speaker, a year ago, over a year ago, in deep consultation - I can remember it very, very well - with Donald Savoie, a very well-known economist and researcher known throughout Atlantic Canada, if not throughout Canada itself - following his lead, we developed a very comprehensive plan. Yes, the member opposite is correct; it's called jobsHere. That is our way to grow the economy here in the Province of Nova Scotia.

Mr. Speaker, we are doing just that. I can remember yesterday I compared the unemployment rate when we took over as government as being somewhere around 11 per cent and I also mentioned yesterday that under our guidance and our leadership that unemployment rate now is at 8.2 per cent. So it is working.

MR. ORRELL: Yesterday the Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism said that members members from the opposite Party take the job losses, things that are out of the control of Nova Scotians, and use it for political gain.

Mr. Speaker, job losses are the reality in rural Nova Scotia. By ignoring this situation, this government has sent a message to them that they don't care about the people suffering in rural Nova Scotia. This minister is more interested in lecturing the Opposition rather than getting down to business and creating an environment for businesses to grow.

Mr. Speaker, my question through you to the minister is, will the minister put his own ego aside, recognize that we have a job crisis in rural Nova Scotia, and stand up to this Cabinet by saying it's not the time to ram more economic uncertainty down the throats of our job creators through its payback to special interest laws?

MR. PARIS: Mr. Speaker, you know, it's amazing when I hear members of the Opposition stand up and talk about egos. I would think that there are some members opposite who could write a book on egos. (Interruptions)

Mr. Speaker, we have a strategy. I'll stand here, time and time again, and brag and boast about the strategy that is working, and again I reiterate - no one, and I would like to think on either side of the House, wants to see a job loss in the Province of Nova Scotia, not one single job. However, I still maintain that it's certainly not appropriate, nor is it fair, for anyone to take advantage of those individuals who have lost jobs.

MR. ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, this government in the first two years of its mandate has been targeting small businesses and making uncertainty for entire industries like pharmacy owners, road builders, insurance brokers, and other non-unionized employers. Now big employers like Michelin, with its almost 4,000 jobs, and Sobeys, with its 10,000 jobs, are coming forward to take aim at this government's poor economic handling of our province. These major employers are saying they may think twice about future investments in our province because of this government's misguided policies, and this comes at a time when we cannot afford to lose another single job. My question to the minister is, will the

minister admit that he's failed job creators in Nova Scotia and the people they employ by not standing up for sound economic policies that will help our province's economy grow?

MR. PARIS: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to stand in my place and talk about the relationship that this government has with the Irvings of the world. I'm pleased to stand in my place and talk about the relationship that this government has with Michelin. We have a relationship with those companies that would be the envy of many other jurisdictions. We will continue to work with them, to collaborate with them, and to make Nova Scotia a better place to live, to raise a family, and to play.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Glace Bay.

ERDT - UNEMPLOYMENT RATE: CALCULATION - EXPLAIN

MR. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism has spent a lot of time discussing unemployment rates in this House, and he has mentioned them again today. We've lost 6,600 jobs in rural Nova Scotia and 9,800 people have left rural Nova Scotia's workforce in the last year. We are facing two significant challenges in this province, whether or not the Premier will recognize them: job losses and a shrinking workforce. My question is a simple one for the Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism: for the clarity of this House, will the minister explain how the unemployment rate is calculated in this province?

HON. PERCY PARIS: Mr. Speaker, what I do is like everybody else. I rely upon researchers, I do research myself, I rely upon Statistics Canada, I do all those things that we all have access to. I've mentioned here in the House that under a Liberal Government, in certain regions of the province, unemployment peaked to well in excess of 20 per cent. It's 8.1 per cent right now in the Province of Nova Scotia.

MR. MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, the minister likes glossing over the fact that 14,800 workers have left the labour force since he became a minister - 14,800 fewer people in the labour force since the government took office and 9,800 fewer people in rural Nova Scotia's labour force. We are losing people and we are losing jobs. My question for the Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism is, will the minister explain how he calculates the unemployment rate if he doesn't acknowledge our shrinking labour force?

MR. PARIS: Mr. Speaker, the lowest unemployment rate in Atlantic Canada exists right here in Nova Scotia.

MR. MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, we repeatedly hear the minister stand and say our unemployment rate is the lowest in Atlantic Canada, once again, yes (Interruptions) Congratulations. That's fantastic that they don't understand the relationship between the

number of unemployed and the total labour force. That's the definition you're looking for; that's what the minister should understand.

Our unemployment rate is low because we've lost people from our workforce. It's that simple. That's how that number is staying where it is. There is no way the government should be taking credit for this number. There are 12,500 fewer jobs and 14,800 fewer people in the workforce in rural Nova Scotia since this government took office. There were 6,600 fewer jobs and 9,800 fewer people in rural Nova Scotia's labour force last year. My question for the Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism is, will this minister explain how the unemployment rate is calculated in this province?

MR. PARIS: Mr. Speaker, I'm not convinced that everybody is aware that there's a global recession that has been happening around the world. We all know there have been job losses not only here in Nova Scotia but right across Canada and in Europe and the United States - all over the world.

There are things, when it comes to certain job losses, that are simply out of our control. We have no control over what is going on in Europe or in the United States of America.

Again, it's a reiteration of how it's rather unfortunate that we try to have political rhetoric around the misfortunes of certain Nova Scotians, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants West.

HEALTH & WELLNESS - DIALYSIS UNIT: WINDSOR - FUND

MR. CHUCK PORTER: Mr. Speaker, my question is through you to the Minister of Health and Wellness. The government announced recently that they are pumping money into renal dialysis in Halifax, yet the community of Windsor, which is much closer to home for a great many that raised money for their own dialysis unit, got nothing.

My question to the minister is, when will the minister learn that the people who, together with their families, have to undergo gruelling dialysis treatment can be much better served by making the investment close to them and not making them travel unreasonable distances?

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for raising a really important question. People who suffer with kidney failure and require dialysis are a really important population to provide services to in the Province of Nova Scotia. It is not the case, though, that this government is pumping money into Halifax and not the rest of the province. In fact, we invested more money into providing registered nurses in the satellite clinics across Nova Scotia, outside of Halifax.

What that means is that patients with complex cases who are being seen here in metro are now able to be returned to their home satellite dialysis clinic where they can be seen there. In addition, we are updating the renal dialysis program here in Halifax. This will enable a number of initiatives, including an expansion of people with complex cases that can be seen here. It will also allow us to do more training for home dialysis, so that people in Nova Scotia will be able to have dialysis right in their own homes - a very effective way to get dialysis for those patients for whom that form of dialysis will work very well.

MR. PORTER: Mr. Speaker, the Deputy Premier said in a government release, "Receiving this care closer to home will make life better for Nova Scotians living with kidney disease and their families."

Does the minister not agree with her Cabinet colleague? Will she acknowledge that the same point holds true for those in Hants County who have to drive right by their own local hospital to get to Halifax, which as far as I know is prepared to work with the organization in Windsor-West Hants to set up a satellite dialysis unit?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, we have 11 satellites around the province in addition to a number of regional sites and centres. We are identifying all the time through our assessment where people in the province who require dialysis live. We are trying to get a plan in place that ensures that people do not have to travel for any greater period of time than an hour from their home.

The establishment of new satellite dialysis clinics is something that certainly would require a significant amount of additional - not only financial resources but health, human resources into the system. As we stabilize the sites that we currently have and improve on the tertiary care site, we will be in a better position to determine where future satellites should be in the province.

MR. PORTER: Mr. Speaker, Dr. Tom Hewlett, chair of the Department of Medicine at the Cape Breton District Health Authority, said in a government release - and I will table it as there were two quotes from that - "We have always put a high priority on treating patients as close to home as possible." Dr. Hewlett also equates "... less travel and less expense for our patients and their families . . . will help reduce the burden of illness."

Mr. Speaker, my question through you to the minister is, when will this government abandon its stubborn refusal to apply the same principle to the people in Hants County who sacrificed a great deal to raise money for their own dialysis machine, and will this minister commit to coming out and explaining exactly that to these individuals?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, as I indicated, there are people all across the province who travel both to satellite clinics and also here into the tertiary care centre. We have a plan to improve and enhance dialysis services. We have invested several

millions of dollars into making those improvements, and we will continue to make improvements and evaluate the need for services on a go-forward basis. As I indicated, some of the money that we have invested in the tertiary centre here in Halifax will allow training for home dialysis. This province does not utilize that form of dialysis anywhere close to the national average and we are going to work very hard to ensure that people can get dialysis service not only as close to home as possible but where they can, medically, within their homes.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Richmond.

PREM.: LOBBYIST REGISTRATION - LEGISLATION

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, the Premier has indicated that he will be introducing legislation which will make changes to a lobbyist registration in our province. From all indications, these changes will leave a large loophole, specifically key Party operatives such as staff in the Premier's Office, ministerial aides, and caucus staff. These individuals will not be covered by any restrictions on lobbying government. So my question is, why would the Premier not include senior political staff in his changes to restrictions on lobbying in our province?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, the member is speculating about potential legislation and all I can say is he'll have to wait until the legislation actually comes forward.

MR. SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, this is an issue on the minds of Nova Scotians because we currently have the former provincial secretary of the NDP now lobbying the very government he used to work for, the NDP Government for which he held the top post for four years. Clearly he is a person who has the ear of the Premier, the Cabinet, and the top staffers within the Premier's Office. The Premier has publicly stated that Ed Wark does not have insider information, yet this is the same person that the Premier dismissed over the election financing cover-up from within the NDP.

Mr. Speaker, it is rich for the Premier to suggest that the person who failed to return \$10,000 in legal donations to the NDP is not in a position of conflict lobbying so soon after having been dismissed for violating the Elections Act. How can the Premier state that the ultimate insider would have no inside knowledge of the NDP Cabinet and its staffers?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, the person he's referring to never, ever worked for the NDP Government.

MR. SAMSON: I want to thank the Premier for allowing me to correct that because Ed Wark worked for the NDP Party for four years as their secretary and I want to thank my Leader for correcting me. It was not \$10,000 that the NDP accepted in legal donations, it was \$50,000 that they accepted in legal donations. The \$10,000 was the fine that they were

given from the chief electoral officer for violating the Elections Act. So thank you for the opportunity to be able to clear that up.

Mr. Speaker, Nova Scotians expect transparency in those who are lobbying government to try to obtain contracts or funding from this government. Nova Scotia was one of the first provinces to bring in a Lobbyists' Registration Act and yet, today, the Premier feels that someone who held the top position in the NDP Party somehow does not have inside knowledge of government or of the ministers involved that he was so closely aligned with before being fired by the Premier. My question is, will the Premier commit today to including people such as Ed Wark in any new changes to the Lobbyists' Registration Act in Nova Scotia?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, lobbyist registration usually refers to people who are actually employed by government, not employed by private organizations. I want to ensure, of course, that the record is correct and, of course, in fact, Mr. Wark, I believe, resigned and was not fired. Finally, of course, the findings of the Chief Electoral Officer was that the Party knew, in fact, nothing about the background or the receipt of any money - those are the facts.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester North.

EDUC. - HOGG FORMULA REVIEW: SCH. BD. FUNDING - EFFECTS

HON. KAREN CASEY: Mr. Speaker, my question, through you, is to the Minister of Education. In response to my question yesterday regarding the Hogg formula and the allocation of funds to school boards, the minister responded, “. . . the formula and the budget considerations are two separate things.” Mr. Speaker, I couldn't agree more and most people in the House would know they are two separate things. The issue is that the question made no reference to budget considerations.

For the information of all members of the House and for clarification regarding the Hogg formula, I would like to quote from the department's own document which describes the formula and it says, “The ‘Hogg’ formula was developed (by Bill Hogg) to allocate P-12 funding . . .” and it also goes on to say that whatever funds government commits to the P to 12 system is what's allocated through the Hogg formula. My question to the minister is this, now that we're clear on what the Hogg formula is and that it is the allocation of funding, what effect, if any, will the results of the current Hogg formula review have on the allocation of funds to school boards in 2012-13?

HON. RAMONA JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to clarify around the formula and the budget. The budget target is, for the want of a better description, the pie and the Hogg formula is the way you cut the pie. So the Hogg formula, at this time, is being revised with the collaboration of all of the school boards, we're still working on that tool, the tool that we'll be working with the budget that we will be coming forward with. That decision

has not been made. So the pie, the decision hasn't been made and we're working on the tool to cut the pie. Thank you.

MS. CASEY: Mr. Speaker, I don't know how many times we have to talk about the funding formula and the Hogg formula. You know, cutting the pie, to me, is allocating parts of the pie to school boards, so I think maybe we understand that the Hogg formula and cutting the pie are the same thing. (Interruptions) Motherhood and apple pie, right.

Proposed changes to the funding formula speak to isolated schools. At the Public Accounts Committee this morning, there was a healthy discussion about the definition of isolated schools and following my questions regarding that definition, I was keenly interested in similar questions from the member for Colchester-Musquodoboit Valley, who I know cares about small, isolated schools and small, isolated communities. Every board has isolated schools and communities, every board will be impacted by the definition of the word "isolated" used in the formula. My question to the minister is this, what is her definition of isolated school?

MS. JENNEX: As everyone knows the Hogg formula is now under revision, to make sure that we are allocating funds appropriately for our changing demographics. Also, the school boards have come forward with their focuses, how they would like to have the formula revised. At this time we are working on the issue of small and isolated schools.

I would like to add that I know that every member in this House values their small schools in the communities. We still have not made the definition of isolated, small, small-isolated schools. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

MS. CASEY: Mr. Speaker, I believe in the review of the Hogg formula, they separate small from isolated. There are two different categories of schools, small schools and isolated schools.

With the geography of Nova Scotia, we have many communities and we have many isolated communities. Students currently often travel up to 50 minutes, one way, to reach their school. Many times, the road conditions are not good, they are country roads, they are gravel roads, they are narrow roads. Many of them have twists and turns and in the wintertime, even though we have a wonderful snow removal program, thanks to the minister over there, when we get the graders purchased I might add.

My question to the minister is this, once the review is completed, we know that the minister will either reject or accept the recommendations of the Hogg formula. So my question to the minister is this, will the minister ensure that the definition of isolated school, when it becomes part of the Hogg formula, speaks to the age of the student on the bus, the student safety on rural roads, student travel time and distance? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. JENNEX: Thank you for highlighting those very important points. Nova Scotia is a very interesting province, we have very small, rural communities and there are major challenges of declining enrolment, too. I will make a commitment that, as this formula is being revised, that I am listening to all the voices from our school boards and all the considerations around any of the changes and revisions we make with the Hogg formula. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

ERDT - CFS SHELBURNE: AUCTION - COSTS OUTLINE

MR. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, Thursday the former Canadian Forces station in Shelburne was auctioned off for approximately \$125,000. This is in addition to SWSDA's remaining assets, which were also auctioned off that day.

Mr. Speaker, there are many questions which are still left with this whole issue which the minister has yet to address. Will the Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism outline how much was paid by the province with regards to auctioneers and legal fees and how much money from the auction the province expects to receive?

HON. PERCY PARIS: Mr. Speaker, off the top of my head, I don't know what the cost of that auction was but I can tell you this, my expectation is that, as a result of that auction, that I'd be very surprised if we receive any money whatsoever.

MR. CHURCHILL: Okay, did the minister say they weren't going to receive any money from the auction? (Interruptions) Okay. Well in the Spring session of the Legislature, it was brought to our attention that the NDP was using heavy-handed tactics to ensure that - I believe it was the Royal Bank - received money that was owed to them by SWSDA yet this government has yet to act to support the small local businesses that are also owed money by SWSDA, along with former employees.

Will the minister take action - what action is the minister taking to ensure that local businesses and the former employees are going to be compensated appropriately, with regards to the windup of SWSDA?

MR. PARIS: Mr. Speaker, with respect to SWSDA and the auction, there's a legal process that's in place and we're allowing that process to play itself out. We will not interfere with the legal process in this province.

MR. CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, I'm wondering if that process was in place when this government paid the banks off, before they paid off the small businesses and the employees in Yarmouth. There are over 50 small businesses that are owed money from SWSDA and today, this government hasn't done anything to support them. For once, will

this minister do something to support small business in the province and provide help to these businesses that need to have their money returned to them?

MR. PARIS: Mr. Speaker, this government came to power and recognized that there were some issues with SWSDA, and we took action to remedy that; something that previous governments would not do while they were in power. Furthermore, what we've done is we've authorized a forensic audit of SWSDA, trying to reveal where those monies have gone to; taxpayers' money that we have devoted and dedicated to SWSDA, which didn't go to the causes that they were dedicated for.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Richmond.

FISH. & AQUACULTURE - LOBSTER: LOW PRICES - ADDRESS

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, with the 2011 Fall lobster season now underway, Nova Scotians who depend on this lucrative fishery are already concerned about the predicted low price of lobster. My question is what is the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture's plan to address low prices for lobster in Nova Scotia?

HON. STERLING BELLIVEAU: I respect the question. As the member opposite knows, low prices are being affected all along our coast. District 35 in the upper Bay of Fundy has just recently been involved with very high catches, historical highs. Our neighbours to the south, through the September-October season are also in very soft prices. I'm very aware of this, but we are working with our lobster council and we are very aware of the different options that are available to the industry. The industry is discussing these options as we speak, as these other districts open up, and there is ongoing dialogue. I look forward to assisting them in any way. Thank you for the question.

MR. SAMSON: As the minister well knows, this is not a new issue to Nova Scotia. When it happened a few years ago, the price of lobster was much lower, efforts were undertaken to try to identify new markets to look at value-added for the lobster industry because we all know, it's in our whole province's interest that lobster fishermen get a good price for their lobster because our economy relies upon it. My question to the minister is what new initiatives has this government put in place to identify new markets or value-added initiatives to get a better price for Nova Scotia lobster?

MR. BELLIVEAU: Again, to the member opposite, there is a lot going on as we speak. There are discussions with the industry Atlantic-wide with our five provinces, including Nova Scotia, regarding the lobster council and all the different options available to the industry. Yes, I agree with the member opposite. Since 2008 the industry as a whole has suffered very low prices, what we see in the marketplace. There is a lot of work being done by our department, whether it's nationally or internationally, about developing markets in Asia and China, and all this is going on as we speak. Again, I look forward to

having these discussions with the industry as we move forward. Thank you for the question.

MR. SAMSON: When the NDP were in Opposition they continued to ask governments of the day for a plan on how they were going to deal with problems. I know that the government in limited instances has tried to present plans on how they're going to deal with certain problems. We have differences of opinion as to how they're succeeding, but the question I have is that in light of the problems that exist with the lobster industry, that this is not something new but something that has been tackled by the previous government and now this government, will the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture present a plan to this House as to how his government plans on dealing with low lobster prices in Nova Scotia?

MR. BELLIVEAU: To the member opposite, I very clearly remember sitting on that side of the House in Opposition and asking the Third Party presently to introduce a task force to deal with these issues as we speak. This minister, this government, took action. We got the discussion going regarding the lobster council. There is discussion going on with our Atlantic friends and these are options that the industry needs to explore, needs to digest. I look forward to taking that leadership role and we'll make life better for Nova Scotians. Thank you very much.

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

JUSTICE - LAW AMENDMENTS COMM.: PRESENTERS - HEARING PLANS

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Justice. Outside this chamber, in the Legislative Counsel Office, confusion is now reigning as those who wanted to appear before his committee, who this morning were told they can't appear before his committee . . .

MR. SPEAKER: I just ruled that as out of order a little earlier, so for the second time, I'll not allow it.

MR. BAILLIE: I'll rephrase it.

MR. SPEAKER: No, thank you very much.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Justice. Can he tell the House whether those Nova Scotians who wished to speak up this afternoon and were told no are able to do so on the original schedule now, with tomorrow?

MR. SPEAKER: It's still out of order. You're asking the committee chairman to answer a question that I just ruled on earlier. It's out of order. If you want to rephrase the

question, go right ahead, but you can't ask the question of the chairman of the committee. I ruled that out of order earlier.

MR. BAILLIE: I can't ask the chairman . . .

MR. SPEAKER: No, I ruled that earlier. I gave the ruling. If you want to check Hansard after the sitting, feel free to do so.

MR. BAILLIE: I'm just seeking clarification.

MR. SPEAKER: Well, reframe the question or that's it. I'll move on.

MR. BAILLIE: Is it just an issue of who I'm asking or the phrasing of the question?

MR. SPEAKER: Yes.

MR. BAILLIE: Would the minister inform the House of what the plan is to hear from those Nova Scotians who wish to speak on this important issue?

HON. ROSS LANDRY: I thank the member for the question. This evening we will exhaust our list as best we can, and for anyone who has had their name on that list, who does not get the opportunity to speak tonight, I'll be more than pleased to see that we get the opportunity to meet with them tomorrow and hear their points of view.

MR. BAILLIE: I'm obviously pleased to hear that, but I do want to follow up and ask the Minister of Justice, who told him to change it the first time around and who told him to put it back this time around?

MR. SPEAKER: It's out of order again, because - I'll read the same thing again and maybe we can digest it here this afternoon, okay? I'll read it again: "Questions Concerning Matters Before Committees . . . When a question has been asked about a committee's proceedings, Speakers have encouraged members to rephrase their questions."

Do you understand what I'm saying?

MR. BAILLIE: Yes, I do.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you very much. Would you please rephrase the question?

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, how long do these people have to present?

MR. SPEAKER: It's still out of order. I'm going to move on to the next question. The honourable member for Halifax Clayton Park.

PREM. - PROV. NOMINEE PROG.: CAP - AMOUNT CONFIRM

MS. DIANA WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, my question today is going to be for the Premier. As the Premier is aware, the single most important tool that Nova Scotia has with regard to increasing immigration is our Provincial Nominee Program. These tailor-made nominee programs have been successful in attracting immigrants in other provinces that traditionally have had challenges in doing so, and they've enabled those provinces to both enrich their communities and improve their economies. The Nova Scotia level has been capped in recent years, as we know, and just in the last year.

The Premier said that he had spoken to the Prime Minister and met with the Citizenship and Immigration Minister when he was in Ottawa recently. My question to the Premier is, given the efforts of the Premier to date, will the Premier confirm that the Nova Scotia cap on the Provincial Nominee Program for 2012 still remains at 500?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for an appropriately-phrased and well-put question. What I can say is that I have had the opportunity, as was indicated by the member, to meet with both the Prime Minister and with the minister responsible. I have pointed out in very similar words what the member of the Official Opposition has said in relation to the program. I've asked him to consider a series of changes recognizing that this was the first year we actually hit the 500-nominee target so that Nova Scotia would be able to recruit more immigrants.

He has suggested a number of other streams which we are investigating as well. Obviously in the end the question is, how do we encourage more of the immigrant population to come to the province and we're working diligently to try and make sure that that happens.

MS. WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, I was looking to see, if indeed, he could confirm the 500? I'm not sure that was entirely confirmed. My understanding is that we are capped again for 2012 at 500 nominees or nominee families. The Premier knows full well that the Nominee Program allows the province to go out and market itself to the world. There is no other stream of immigration that enables the province to control its own destiny and ultimately its success in immigration.

I would like to be able to table the only letter that was sent by any member of this government, with regard to raising the cap. It's a joint letter from the four Premiers, dated months after the federal government implemented the cap, and nowhere does the letter specifically request an increase in the cap allotments for Nova Scotia or, for that matter, for any of the other three Atlantic Provinces. My question to the Premier is, why did the only letter sent by the Premier not specifically request an increase to Nova Scotia's provincial nominee cap?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, there was the joint opinion of the Premiers of Atlantic Canada that the caps on immigration on the Nominee Program would be detrimental to all of the provinces in the region, so that was sent for that reason. With respect to the submissions that were made to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, they were made personally, by me, asking them to increase the nominee level to the province.

I should explain to the member opposite the reason why the cap, which is in place and whether or not it will be renewed - I don't think a final decision has been made on that, but if it will be renewed, here's why. The federal government has capped overall the number of immigrants that it intends to bring into the country - they are not going to expand that pool. What they have said is that all of the provinces and territories have their own levels that have been set and the federal government has the level that they have set. Any increase in any of the numbers, any of the cap, means that the province must either take from the federal government or take from one of the other provinces which, as you can see, would not be acceptable to either the federal government or the other provinces. What I can say is that the province has got allocations of additional seats or additional numbers, that have not been used by the other provinces.

MS. WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, we certainly know and the Premier knows as well, that this is one of the most important issues facing our province because we have demographic problems - we have an aging population, we have out-migration, which we have talked about here a great deal around the jobs. The Provinces of Manitoba, Alberta, Saskatchewan and B.C., just to name four, have had significant increases of 400, 600, 300 - B.C. has 300 more nominees as well. Those provinces understood the same formula, those provinces lobbied hard and got what they needed for their province - that's an increase in numbers within the pie, as the other minister likes to speak about. All achieved it because their provinces and the governments in their provinces fought. My question to the Premier is, given that Nova Scotia has seen no increase and will again in 2012 see no increase in our nominee allotment, what will it take to make the Premier recognize the current strategy is failing?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, as I understand it, the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism has announced that all of the nominee programs have been capped and not changed, for any of the provinces. In fact, the simple fact of the matter is that, until last year, the Province of Nova Scotia did not use the number of nominees that it was given. This government was the first government to actually use the number of nominees that were allocated. In addition, there are nominee quotas that have been assigned to the other provinces and this year, because some of them were not used, the Province of Nova Scotia was able to access some of the unused Nominee Program in other provinces.

The Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism is well aware of the desire of this province to increase the overall number of nominees. Ultimately, though, it is a decision of the federal government.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

**HEALTH & WELLNESS - BERWICK CLINIC:
HOURS - REDUCTION EXPLAIN**

MR. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, 3,241 residents of the Annapolis Valley signed a petition, and thousands more have spoken. They recognize that changes to physician coverage in the Berwick clinic, which the Minister of Health and Wellness approved, will have an effect on the health care delivery system throughout the entire Valley.

Since the Berwick clinic was functioning well, was serving 22,000 patients a year and, most importantly, was a model of collaborative care and was reducing pressures on the local and regional emergency rooms, my question to the minister is, why did the minister approve a reduction of hours in a medical clinic she simply wants to see more of in this province?

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. I was pleased to have an opportunity to go to Berwick and tour the clinic, meet with staff, meet with people from the community. That was after I had already met with the delegation from the community, earlier.

Indeed, the Berwick clinic is a very impressive, small facility and it is of great importance to Berwick and surrounding communities. Mr. Speaker, it is still not a model of collaborative care, although I'm hoping it will be now that our government has approved a nurse practitioner to be added into collaborative practice there.

What was occurring, Mr. Speaker, was that physicians were closing their doctors' offices during the day and operating the clinic during the day. What we have done is we have approved a plan where doctors will be back in their offices during the day and working in the clinic in the evenings and on weekends, extending those hours. When the nurse practitioner is recruited, then a more collaborative model of practice will be able to be in place in that clinic.

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, if only it were working. Health dollars saved as a result of this decision, on paper are \$125,000, in this half year; \$250,000 for a year; even board members have indicated this won't be realized. Cost pressures associated with clogged emergency rooms will be far greater than costs saved. On September 16th the Minister of Health and Wellness met with officials from Berwick and, at the time, the minister committed to full consultation on the issue prior to changes made to the operation in October. Since that September meeting, the community heard nothing and officials were

not consulted. My question to the minister is, why did the minister commit to further consultations when, in fact, nothing took place?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I'm just trying to remember who was at that meeting. I don't believe the honourable member was at the meeting. I don't know why he thinks I committed to full consultations. My recollection is that I encouraged the delegation that I met with, of which the honourable member wasn't a part, to return to their community and collaborate with the Annapolis Valley District Health Authority which delivered the services there. I indicated to the delegation that I would encourage the district health authority to collaborate with those individuals.

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, for those who are listening to this important question today, I want to clarify that I was indeed with the minister and the deputy minister on that day, heard exactly what was going to take place and there was going to be additional consultation, which did not take place. It did not take place from the DHA.

The damage is being felt as we speak. The changes have occurred; local emergency rooms are closing, three times since the new beginnings at Berwick. Wait times at other ERs have increased. Over the last two weeks some patients waited seven to 10 hours - one, needing a cast, waited six hours one day, and 10 hours the next day. And let's not forget, 22,000 patients who were receiving excellent care now have to find their way into other more expensive components of the health care system or go without care at all.

My question to the minister is, will she admit that the decision to change the hours at the Berwick clinic was short-sighted, and commit to reviewing this decision?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, this is a very well-functioning clinic; it will continue to be a well-functioning clinic - there are additional resources being put into that clinic for a nurse practitioner.

Mr. Speaker, I want to remind the honourable member that that was once a well-functioning hospital, and that hospital was closed by the Liberal Government. If anybody did damage to the communities of Berwick and surrounding areas by withdrawing services to local people, it is not this government, it was a former Liberal Government.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

NAT. RES.: CLEAR-CUT - DEFINITION

MR. ANDREW YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. Would he please tell us his definition for a clear-cut?

HON. CHARLIE PARKER: Mr. Speaker, it must be the last question of the day, I think we've come to this but, you know, we certainly know that clear-cutting has gone on in the province for far too long at too high a rate. In fact, it is around 96 per cent of clear-cutting and that's what Nova Scotians said they no longer want. We had a full review through the Natural Resources Strategy and Nova Scotians told us over and over they wanted a change in the clear-cutting practices in this province, and that's exactly what we've done through *The Path We Share: A Natural Resources Strategy for Nova Scotia*.

We've come up with two definitions - one is a layman's term, basically the removal of all trees on an area except for those that are under the watercourse regulations, and if I have time I'll get into more details as we go along.

MR. YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, it's surprising the minister would make light of such an important issue to so many people. (Interruptions)

Mr. Speaker, the fact is the former minister committed to reduce clear-cutting by 50 per cent and ban whole-tree harvesting. Yet the definition that the government has introduced for clear-cutting pretty much allows anything; there's very little that's considered a clear-cut. I will table an image depiction that has been done by a professional forester showing the difference between a clear-cut and a non-clear-cut according to the NDP Government's own definition - there's very little difference.

Mr. Speaker, the fact is that they have not lived up to the commitment that people thought they would live up to. So why did the NDP mislead Nova Scotians about their intentions to reduce clear-cutting, when their true intentions were really to define clear-cutting in such a way that anything would still be allowed?

MR. PARKER: Mr. Speaker, you know, Nova Scotians care about their woodlands and care about their forests. This government cares about our forestry practices in this province and we had a very comprehensive three-phase strategy session that listened to Nova Scotians, listened to experts in the field. As you know, we came out in August with *The Path We Share: A Natural Resources Strategy for Nova Scotia, 2011-2020*, and it lays out clearly there that clear-cutting practices in this province are not acceptable and that we have a goal now of 50 per cent clear-cutting only within a five-year frame.

The clock is ticking on that and we are working on it so we have a clear definition of where we're going - we have a vision for forestry in this province, and that's exactly what we're going to do.

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

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. On May 20, 2009, the Premier said - and I quote from *The Chronicle Herald* - "We're not going to raise taxes." On

April 6, 2010 - less than a year later - I have a budget bulletin here which says, "The 2010-11 provincial budget outlines tax changes . . . including a restoration of the harmonized sales tax (HST) to 15 per cent . . ."

Mr. Speaker, three times in Question Period today the Premier has said he has kept all of his promises. That is clearly misleading and I ask that he withdraw those remarks.

MR. SPEAKER: I'm sorry, but that is not a point of order, that's a disagreement between two members over facts.

HON. MANNING MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, on a point of privilege. The discussion that has taken place regarding the Law Amendments Committee, there seems to be some confusion in government's responses to the questions asked today. It is still unclear how many the government has relented on that will be heard from tomorrow. I put this in written form, so you can rule on it at your leisure and there will be a form for the Clerk.

The government's move to curtail debate at the Law Amendments Committee is violating the privilege of freedom of speech provided to all members in this House and it could be argued that it is also violating the same privilege afforded to witnesses at the Law Amendments Committee, as they are guests of the Legislature while they are witnesses to the committee.

On the first point, the most important privilege granted to members is that of freedom of speech within debate. This is the most essential element of debate in the House and has been recognized as such for hundreds of years within the British parliamentary system of government. For the government to curtail debate at the Law Amendments Committee at the last minute and to restrict presentations to the committee means that members will not be able to effectively present the opinions and facts of Nova Scotians. If I am not able to hear from all Nova Scotians, I am not able to fully debate this issue in the House - no member in this House is.

On the second point - I'll be brief, Mr. Speaker - witnesses to committees are afforded similar privilege when called to testify before a committee. If they cannot fully prepare due to the last-minute curtailment, it could be argued that their privilege has been violated as well. Presenters will not be able to effectively prepare and present their facts and opinions fully and openly to the committee.

Mr. Speaker, I'll end up with a quote from O'Brien, "This right is also extended to individuals who appear before the House or its committees in order to encourage truthful and complete disclosure, without fear of reprisal or other adverse actions as a result of their testimony." Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: I will take that under advisement and report back to the House as soon as possible.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS' BUSINESS

MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Opposition House Leader.

HON. MANNING MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Resolution No. 1110.

Res. No. 1110, re NSP - Rate Increase: NDP Gov't. - Oppose - notice given May 5/11 - (Hon. Manning MacDonald)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

MR. ANDREW YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, I think, my understanding is we're going to adjust the times by a minute or so all around, so everybody has nine minutes instead of 10, I think, not that it makes a lot of difference.

I rise today to talk about energy rates. I think that it's an important day to discuss this when we had the Utility and Review Board decision come down yesterday. The Leader of the Official Opposition, in one of his first questions today in Question Period, asked the Premier how much residential power bills are going to increase between December 31st of this year and January 1st of next year. The Premier got it wrong. He seemed only aware of the 6.1 per cent increase when, in fact, the total increase is in the double digits. There is the 6.1 per cent announced yesterday; there is the 3.2 per cent fuel adjustment mechanism; there is the increase in the demand-side management tax that the NDP added to the bills that was first proposed by the Tory Government; and then on top of that there is the deferred fuel adjustment mechanism charge from last year.

I think all Nova Scotians should be concerned when their government claims to be concerned about energy issues and the cost of power, and the Premier doesn't even know how much bills are going to go up by. That's a problem.

We heard the Premier recently talk about Muskrat Falls and go to Cape Breton to make an announcement about how this was going to be the saviour for Cape Breton and this was going to be the saviour for Nova Scotians - in fact, he was reported as saying that it would bring cheaper power to Nova Scotia when, in fact, we know that the price point, the landed price point, is 14 to 16 cents, which is more than what we're paying now.

Emera has confirmed that the price for the Muskrat Falls power will be similar to other renewables in Nova Scotia, so, more expensive than coal, more expensive than many

of the other options. I'm not suggesting that we go back to a coal-based future, but the fact is it's misleading of the Premier to suggest that that will reduce power rates.

Then he went on further, saying that it will create - and he did it again today in Question Period - thousands and thousands of jobs. There will be thousands of man-hours created in Newfoundland and Labrador in the construction of the dam structure, that's absolutely correct, but it is absolutely misleading to say there will be thousands of jobs created in Nova Scotia from the Churchill Falls project - in Nova Scotia, it's absolutely incorrect.

Yes, there are Nova Scotia companies that will have the opportunity to bid, as secondary bidders to Newfoundland and Labrador companies. That is in the memorandum of understanding - secondary to Newfoundland and Labrador companies. If Nova Scotians get work out of that project it will be work in Newfoundland and Labrador, not work in Nova Scotia, and the Premier, as much, had to admit that by the time I asked questions in Question Period. That's an important distinction, because it's no different than sending people to Fort McMurray to work, if you're sending people to another province.

The Premier has been misleading Nova Scotians on that project and his best answer is to come back and say that Liberals are against efficiency or they are against Churchill Falls, or all kinds of ridiculous statements when, in fact, if we look at efficiency programs, for example, we have argued that the costs of Efficiency Nova Scotia should be borne by their shareholders - not that efficiency programs shouldn't exist but that they should be borne by shareholders and not ratepayers, who are already paying too much.

In fact, Dan O'Connor from the Premier's Office wrote a letter on behalf of the NDP during the elections saying the same thing, saying the NDP opposed putting such a tax on power bills. So instead of the Premier saying, sorry, he changed his mind - which would be the right thing to do and which people could reasonably understand the debate - he refuses to acknowledge that that letter was even written during the election, despite the fact that we've tabled that letter over and over in this House.

You know, Mr. Speaker, it frustrates me that in raising the very important issue of how power rates are hurting our economy, how they are hurting people of all walks of life, how they are increasing the costs of goods, how they are making it more expensive for people on community services and people who are just struggling to get by on minimum-wage jobs, and even middle-income families, it frustrates me that instead of the government addressing the real issue of increasing power rates and instead of the government addressing and listening to the suggestions of Opposition Parties and Nova Scotians, the best response is insults.

As a caucus, we've introduced legislation that we believe furthers the discussion on trying to address power rates, and I know that the Third Party has also suggested legislation that they feel would make a change. But instead of having an open and honest discussion

about what ideas might work, where the future might be, the best that the government members can do is throw insults at the Opposition over it.

That doesn't get us anywhere; that doesn't make life more affordable for Nova Scotians. Power rates are rapidly becoming the most significant household expense for families of every single income group in this province, and the fact that the government chose a time of increasing power rates to add a new electricity tax onto the bills of every single homeowner and every single business in this province should be of concern to every Nova Scotian. It is a cost that should be paid by shareholders.

Mr. Speaker, in my last minute or so I just wish to address the fact that power rates have been rapidly increasing. Before yesterday's increase they had gone up by 36 per cent; now we almost have an additional double digit increase, and we know that there are future increases in the years to come. It's a real issue. We look at why food prices are going up or we say, why have clothing prices gone up, or why have any number of goods or services gone up? Well, one of the contributing factors is power rates. Anybody in this House who has run a business or worked in a business in a capacity where they have to pay those bills, knows that they have to incorporate those bills - the cost of power - into the cost of their goods and services. I know that there are members on both sides of the House who have run businesses, who run businesses now, and know that. So to ignore the fact that increasing power rates cause a hardship to families - and actually result in getting hit over and over again - is to ignore a very serious issue.

Increasing power rates do not only increase our expenses at home. They result in higher property taxes. They result in higher expenses for the government, which the government has to absorb. Increasing power rates are increases for our hospitals, our schools, all of those things, and it's something that has to be taken seriously. There are people who honestly cannot put food on the table and also pay their power bill at the end of the day, and we need to be concerned about that. I don't think that there is enough concern being shown in the Legislature by government over the real impact.

It's not enough to keep referring it to the Utility and Review Board and saying it's up to them to solve the problem, because it's not up to them. We were elected to this Chamber to make life better for Nova Scotians, and the biggest challenge that Nova Scotians are facing is power. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Queens.

MS. VICKI CONRAD: I'm pleased to rise in my place to speak to Resolution No. 1110. Mr. Speaker, it's absolutely true that nobody like to see electricity rates go up, and that is why I'm so proud that when we formed government the first thing we did was we removed 8 per cent of the HST on home energy. There's no question that over the past few months we, as Nova Scotians, realized just how much of a critical role power rates can play, whether it's for large pulp and paper mills or an individual homeowner.

The URB decision provided a modified rate to the mills. That will give them a degree of price stability and certainty over the next three years, and that will be one positive factor here in the province that will help see those mills stay viable. That means rates will be slightly higher for everyone because of the rate approved for mills; however, the alternative of losing those mills, of losing the associated jobs and their share of electricity costs, would result in even higher rates.

Our government truly does understand the burden of rising electricity prices on the pocketbooks of Nova Scotians, and that is why when we took office we took the HST off energy. I can tell you this government cares about Nova Scotians and our most vulnerable. Since being elected, our government has implemented many programs to benefit Nova Scotians and their families.

Our Energy Rebate Program, which is an automatic rebate, equal to the provincial portion of the HST on energy bills, was implemented by this government. The Heating Assistance Rebate Program, which is a rebate of \$200, for eligible applicants, who heat their home with oil, electricity, wood, propane, pellets, natural gas or coal. Mr. Speaker, that demonstrates our commitment and our caring for Nova Scotians and their families. Free home energy upgrades for low-income homeowners, who heat with electricity, through the Efficiency Nova Scotia Program. Our Department of Community Services has implemented income assistance programs for our most vulnerable and there are many charitable organizations that also offer assistance for our most vulnerable, such as the Salvation Army and the Good Neighbour Energy Fund.

Mr. Speaker, it is initiatives like these that truly help take the burden off Nova Scotian families. Our government is also moving away from volatile fossil fuels and that, in turn, will help reduce the impact of sudden price changes on Nova Scotians. That is why we have legislated and are developing some of the most aggressive, renewable, energy targets in the world. I did say “in the world” and that is something we, as a Nova Scotian Government and Nova Scotians, can be proud of.

Mr. Speaker, the cost of coal and other fossil fuels keep rising each year and Nova Scotians end up paying more and more for that electricity. It is more important than ever that we Nova Scotians get ourselves off of the heavy reliance on coal and fossil fuels and that we move to cleaner, renewable resources which will mean more stable energy prices for Nova Scotians in the future. If governments of the past would have dealt with the province’s reliance on fossil fuels over 15 years ago, when costs started to increase, we would not be in the position we are today. That’s why our government is aggressively moving forward with the Lower Churchill project and other renewable projects like wind and tidal power.

If our government does not act now, Mr. Speaker, and ensure that we move from fossil fuels to more renewable electricity, prices for Nova Scotians will continue to increase year after year. Nova Scotians’ dependence on imported coal and the failure of

previous governments to implement a plan, to bring stability to electricity prices, is reflected in our electricity bills. The price of coal has increased 76 per cent - that's 76 per cent - in the last five years. Our government, Mr. Speaker, is doing something about that.

Our vision for Nova Scotia's energy future, is no secret to this House. It is outlined in our renewable electricity plan, which was released in April 2010. This plan clearly states, that there are upfront costs associated with developing more renewable sources of energy, possibly an average of 1 per cent to 2 per cent on electricity bills in the short term, but it is an investment, that we Nova Scotians, cannot afford not to make.

Our plan is about making life more affordable in the long run; doing nothing will cost us far more in the future and for our future generations. Renewable electricity prices do not go up over time in the same way as carbon-based fuels will. Moving towards local renewable energy sources will help stabilize energy prices in the future and protects consumers from the volatility of world markets and energy supply shortages. We cannot keep our eyes closed. Our plan will also support as much as \$1.5 billion in green investments and create an estimated 5,000 to 7,000 jobs in this province, Mr. Speaker.

We are taking a balanced approach to transforming our electricity system in the best interests of all Nova Scotians. Our plan is based on an intensive process of public and expert input that includes consultation with Nova Scotians on how to stabilize rates through increasing renewables. Our approach will create jobs. It will stabilize electricity prices and it will reduce our environmental footprint. We have a plan and this government is implementing it. (Interruption) I have two more minutes.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot express the importance of this government's plan in implementing our Renewable Energy Plan for the future, for the future of your children, my children, our grandchildren, for the stability of electricity prices throughout the province, for the environment of the province.

Mr. Speaker, you know I'm not now speaking off of my crafted notes here. Our government does care about Nova Scotians and we have provided relief for high energy costs on electricity bills. For that I am very proud to be part of this government; 8 per cent off home heating is not insignificant. That is one of the commitments that this government said they would make and this government kept that commitment to Nova Scotians. We are very concerned about the most vulnerable Nova Scotians in the province and we will continue to provide relief for those most vulnerable Nova Scotians.

This is the most aggressive government in putting forward plans to assist Nova Scotians who are most vulnerable, unlike previous governments that just didn't see the bigger picture. They didn't see the vision for moving forward to a cleaner environment, getting ourselves off of coal. I am very proud to be part of this government that does have a vision for the future of renewable electricity and I'm proud to be a member of this government that has a vision for our future generations. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants West.

MR. CHUCK PORTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I am very glad to have an opportunity to speak to this resolution tonight and be part of the debate. I'm happy that the member who just spoke is proud to be a member of the NDP who is actually - well, we're still waiting to see about those other thousands of jobs that they have been bragging about. I just heard - I believe the quote was 5,000 to 7,000 jobs - and I would be interested in whether or not that member could table that information as to where exactly those jobs might be, what sectors, where in this province because that's good stuff. If she can put that out today, we're pretty happy about that and we want to see it. Somehow, we don't see that. What we do see is people leaving here, unfortunately, people struggling every day because they can't afford to pay their power bills.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to tell you a little story about people who come into our offices - I'm sure yours and every members' in this House, in all honesty, or most of the members in this House. We've had people coming in and saying, we can't pay our power bill. You know what? They are embarrassed so they wait. They don't know what to do. One month goes by, when they should come in and they should talk to you then and they should say, can you help me now, and my bill is maybe \$300 or \$400 or maybe a little more, but they don't. They wait, and two months go by, and you know what? Then they start thinking, now it is \$1,000 and now they're getting notices in the mail saying disconnect, disconnect. They're pretty lenient. You'll go another month, usually, and then here you are, you've got a couple of thousand dollars before you that you owe and unfortunately it's almost always this time of year, when people are struggling. It's cold, they've got to have heat and what do they do? They're trying to figure out - how am I going to pay this bill.

So they come in and they see us, Mr. Speaker, and they want us to try and work something out for them. Now in some cases - I'm going to give Nova Scotia Power credit here - they have a great lady working in that office that we have contact with, and a lot of times you can make some arrangements. That's what our job is, and I say that unfortunately, that we have to be doing that in this day and age.

That's the reality, Mr. Speaker, we're still doing it and we do it because it's what we were elected to do, look after our constituents. But they're saying, I can't afford to pay or I can't afford to feed my family. That's the reality. People think that's just a saying that's being repeated here. That's not just a saying. Those are the facts, the reality of life in Nova Scotia today.

It's tough times. Everybody knows the jobs losses. We've seen them. We've seen major layoffs at Fundy Gypsum in the last couple of years - 150 jobs are gone there. We've seen them in all kinds of other areas in this province. Minas Basin just laid off 13 people. Now, 13 people may seem like an insignificant number, or small, but not in the town of Hantsport, not in the constituency of Hants West - 13 jobs, good-paying jobs. What will

those people do? Let me tell you, those people who were laid off at Fundy Gypsum, they went on the EI program for a year when they couldn't find anything else and then that runs out. What do they do?

The whole time the bills are still coming in. Phone bills with increased HST on them, other regular bills that would come into a household, and the purchase of food and the necessities in life, with extra taxes put on by a government - which was a joke today. The Premier stood in this House and said that they stayed committed to every promise that they made. That may be paraphrasing, Mr. Speaker, but that's exactly what he said. We already know he promised the people in the last campaign in 2009 that we would not raise taxes. He's done worse. He's raised taxes and he's allowed the power bills to go up.

This is, and and I hope I have time to go into it - unfortunately, we only have a few minutes here - we keep saying that the government has nothing to do with Nova Scotia Power and their rates. They keep passing the buck off to this little unit they call the URB. Here's an interesting thing, we have Nova Scotia Power, which is a private industry, and Emera, their parent company. They're the only company that I know that's a private company in this province that depends on a government - an arm's-length government, call it whatever you want, but a government entity - that says, oh, we'll set the rate for you.

How is that not the responsibility of government? It is very much so. The board's decision that was put out this week reads, "The objective of having informed consumers is a worthwhile goal." We believe that. "However, the board considers that the decision of how to inform ratepayers about the impact of government regulations and programs is a policy decision to be made by the province." It says right there that the board agrees that government is responsible for that body, that government should have some control that allows - and they can. It's a swipe of the minister's pen. Say yes or no to rates.

Now this Party, we've put forward three pieces of legislation in this House in this session, talking about transparency in power rates, talks about eliminating bonuses from the power rates Act, but we weren't able to get through there for this year. We're going to have to do it all again next year. We're going to have attend meetings and we're going to have to take the people's points to those meetings and to those companies and to the government and say, this is not right. We need to look at how we're going to be doing things in a fair and equitable manner when it comes to increased rates.

We hear a lot of rhetoric in this House all around, I'll give it that. We hear this Party's got the right idea, that Party's got the right idea. If there were ever a time in this House where members had to come together and work together on a plan for Nova Scotians, it is certainly now, around the energy sector and where we're going into the future. We can stand in this House and we can all claim that we've got the best idea. I don't think - and I heard the minister over there, and previous members in this House, state that no one Party or any one member has all the right ideas or the best ideas.

But there is a time, and I can tell you right now, in talking to the people who come into my office and the coffee shops around the streets, they're saying it's time for all of you to grow up, to come together, to negotiate, to work hard to make things better, to make life better in Nova Scotia. But what they're seeing, Mr. Speaker, is not quite exactly that. They want to see Opposition Parties work with the government Party, member work with member, committee work with committee - whatever it takes to put on the table a plan that will work to reduce the cost of energy in this province in the long term. But we're not getting that.

We hear about the honourable member from Dartmouth East who stood up and said they could get power here or get power there, in Newfoundland and so on. Well, those are years out. He's right. That's a long way away. Deals are not finalized; things are not done. What's being missed here is that every 10 minutes, I believe, Nova Scotia Power's measuring energy consumption in the province. They are buying by the hour, or even less than that, all the time. There is no reason that that can't be looked at in more detail. Maybe we do need to buy from other places. Is that the answer? Is producing more the answer? We talk about fossil fuels - well, there are other ways off fossil fuels. We hear about coal - coal this and coal that. You know what? We've got all kinds of it. We talk about jobs - if that member wants to stand up and talk about jobs, let's talk about the reality of jobs. Let's talk about the coal in Cape Breton.

You want to put good-paying jobs on the table? Great, employ some people in Cape Breton and start bringing coal out of that mine. Do you know what? You've got a lot of technology today, no problem, there has to be some way of making that coal cleaner. They say, it's not as clean, it costs more - I don't think so. Do we care about the jobs here in this province or do we care about buying it from Brazil and other countries and giving them the money? If you wanted to talk about the increased costs, maybe there would be some increased costs when it came to hiring people and putting them to work, which has itself a turnover. Working people are taxpayers, taxpayers are a good thing in this province, they keep the economy going. Are we even thinking about that? No, we're just going to continue to buy from foreign countries and we're going to continue to let, unfortunately let, Nova Scotia Power have the right of way because the URB, in all honesty, through the government, is letting the URB have a right of way in telling Nova Scotians what they're going to pay a private company. Mr. Speaker, that's wrong, that's not right.

There needs to be some revision, if it's a legislative change, if it's a policy change, whatever it is. You need to sit down and you need to start looking at this in a broader spectrum. The bigger picture here has got to be a better deal for today's families. If I recall, that was the promise in 2009 on all the signage I read with NDP stickers on them, a better deal for today's families. We know that's not the case, it can't be. Taxes are higher, there are less jobs, it's just not a better deal. Times are tough, what are they doing? They're talking about this and they're talking about that. That was a wonderful speech somebody wrote, again, somewhere over in utopia or wherever it came from, that's not the facts in this province.

The fact of the matter remains, prices of energy are high and there's no plan. We need to have a plan. Somehow, the government has to be able to take control and the legislation that we have put forward would allow a lot of opportunities. But the government, in their infinite wisdom says no, the Opposition Parties don't know what they're talking about. Why call one of their bills, that might make sense? That might even be working together to call an Opposition bill, especially a bill with something as important to do with energy. No, because we are here in Nova Scotia and we are here in this House, we can't do that, that's just not the way business works. Oh, Heaven forbid, we work together.

Mr. Speaker, unfortunately because I am running out of time, I'm down to seconds, I hope we're able to come together in this House, somehow, and put together a plan that will work in the long term for Nova Scotians. With those few words, I will take my seat.

SPEAKER'S RULING: Speaker's authority over proceedings in committees. (Points of order by Hon. Manning MacDonald and Hon. C. d'Entremont [Hansard p. 4625, 11/30/11]) Speaker does not exercise procedural control over committees.

MR. SPEAKER: I would like to now make a ruling with respect to the points of order raised earlier by the members for Cape Breton South and Argyle, both House Leaders for their respective Parties. I have now had the opportunity to review Beauchesne and previous Speakers' Rulings.

The question of the Speaker's authority over the proceedings in committees generally is dealt with in those authorities. Simply put, the Speaker does not exercise procedural control over the committees. A previous Speaker ruled on this very issue with respect to a dispute over proceedings in the Law Amendments Committee. I have that ruling here and I will read two passages from it:

"It is a fundamental proposition that problems arising in a committee of the House should be dealt with within that committee and, only after the proper procedures that have been followed in the committee, should a matter come to this House.

This issue is also canvassed in Beauchesne, which states on Page 222:

"The Speaker has ruled on many occasions that it is not competent for the Speaker to exercise procedural controls over the committees. Committees are and must remain masters of their own procedure."

There is also a practical problem with that I hope that members will recognize - the meeting of the Law Amendments Committee has not happened yet. While it may come to pass that tonight is the last time for the presenters on Bill No. 102, that has not yet happened, so I'm being asked to rule on something that may not happen. The proper

sequence, should that occur, is for the members of the committee to raise the procedural issues at the meeting that is taking place this afternoon. The proper forum for this is in the committee itself. If the Law Amendments Committee votes to not hear further presenters, an appeal of that decision may be made to the House pursuant to Rule 61.2.

Accordingly, I rule that the circumstances do not give rise to a valid point of order and I encourage the members of the Law Amendments Committee to deal with these concerns at that committee.

The honourable member for Cape Breton South.

MR. MANNING MACDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate your ruling and it sounds to me like it's coming from a very learned Speaker, quoting Beauchesne and I didn't hear Sir Erskine May, but perhaps we'll get that on a future day.

Anyway, I do appreciate the ruling, I don't necessarily agree with it, but there is such an uncertainty about what's happening here. We just came from committee and over there they're bending over backwards to say that they're going to be working tomorrow on Bill No. 102. They're scrambling to take credit for the change. Anyway, the change in government policy actually negates the ruling but I hope on the order of privilege that I may have a better result.

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

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, I do thank you for that response and just to continue along that issue, there were a number of things going on that the committee members were not made aware of, that we were hearing from those presenters but, of course, your ruling is such that you cannot see what is going on in the future. It seems like the government has made a change so I guess by bringing it up we did get the result that we were looking for, which was changes to that committee to make sure people were being heard.

[MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS]

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

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise for a few minutes on Resolution No. 1110. I want to congratulate all the speakers on this particular resolution on how passionate they are in speaking about the energy issues that are facing Nova Scotians. All of us, regardless of where our constituencies are, whether it's in rural Nova Scotia or urban Nova Scotia, understand the pressures that are being faced by families today in meeting the rising costs of energy.

As we had talked about today during Question Period, there's a misconception out there that energy costs are going up 6 per cent. They are actually going up about 10 per cent when you add on the 6.1 per cent rate, the general rate increase of a 3.2 per cent increase on what is the fuel adjustment mechanism, and then the additional doubling of - as we affectionately call it over here - the NDP electricity tax, it will take an increase of about 10 per cent across the board for Nova Scotia consumers.

Mr. Speaker, something has to be done. I have made many suggestions in this House. I believe it is time, quite frankly, that we break the monopoly. I think it is time that we now allow renewable energy producers to sell directly to customers. It wasn't all that long ago, long before I was in this House, when there was the issue around telephones and phone service. There was a monopoly in this province and when it was deemed that we needed competition, what happened? Everyone said it was going to be the collapse of phone service in the Province of Nova Scotia.

Mr. Speaker, the only thing that has happened is the consumers are getting competition and getting a better price. Phone service today is cheaper than it was 10 years ago. We should be allowing that same issue when it comes to energy. I for one have trumpeted for quite some time and have talked about the Lower Churchill project. It is, I believe, a good project. I believe it will create a lot of jobs in Newfoundland and Labrador. It will create a few jobs in Nova Scotia but it will create a possibility of creating a transmission infrastructure inside our province that will allow us to have a renewable energy sector that will be able to sell into the grid and my view and hope is that they'll be able to sell directly to any customer in the Province of Nova Scotia or, quite frankly, anywhere they choose to, to be able to distribute that energy across the board.

One of the interesting things, and I know I only have a few minutes, but transmission is the major issue here. While there was lots of talk about renewable energy, Mr. Speaker, you cannot put another wind farm in southwestern Nova Scotia on the grid. It doesn't have the capacity. There's no capacity. We can harness the Bay of Fundy but we can't put it on the grid in southwestern Nova Scotia. While we all like to stand around and get our pictures taken with turbines because it looks good, the key is transmission and the interconnecting of Atlantic Canada to ensure that not only when Lower Churchill comes on-board, but the fact that we can bring in energy from Quebec, the fact that we can buy some energy from New Brunswick, the fact that when we harness the Bay of Fundy, that we as a province can become the beneficiaries of that energy by allowing it to be distributed across our province.

That is the key for energy security not only in this province but in Atlantic Canada and I hope, as we move forward, that not only do we talk about the link into Newfoundland and Labrador, that we look at the entire transmission system in Atlantic Canada and across our region, Mr. Speaker.

[Res. No. 1857, re NDP Gov't.: Taxes - Stop - notice given Oct.31/11 - (Hon Manning MacDonald)]

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Clayton Park on Resolution No. 1857.

MS. DIANA WHALEN: That's right, Resolution 1857, thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, do I have 10 minutes, as per the original schedule?

MR. SPEAKER: Yes, you do.

MS. WHALEN: Very good. Thank you so much and I'm very pleased to be able to rise today, which is the Liberal Opposition Day, to continue a theme that I haven't had enough chance to speak about, but our members certainly have, and that is the theme of affordability and about, basically, Nova Scotians surviving economically in these tough times.

I know that the members on the opposite side of the House have indicated to us that they are tired of this theme; they don't want to hear us continue on it, but this is a very important issue for Nova Scotians. This is so much more important than some of the bills that are before us here in the House today because the issues that we're hearing about every day in our ridings are about affordability, about being able to pay your power bill, about being able to continue to meet all the needs that families have, in terms of the costs and the pressures upon them.

This is all being done at a time when many people feel uncertainty about their businesses, if they are business owners. The level of business confidence is not strong right now because there are a lot of uncertainties. The government themselves like to talk about the world-wide uncertainties, but the business owners deal with those and the local uncertainties, the uncertainties that are brought to their doorstep by decisions of the government and sometimes by an abdication of their responsibility. I think that's often what happens when the government uses the URB as the excuse that it's arm's length and they can't influence it when, in fact, the URB is now making decisions which are hurting Nova Scotians, hitting them hard in the pocketbook, and really not protecting our consumers. I think that's very important.

Mr. Speaker, the resolution before us today, this Resolution No. 1857, in the operative clause speaks to the taxing of Nova Scotians and the NDP Government's attack on Nova Scotians, in terms of their tax policies. I think this points, very clearly, first of all to the increase in our consumption tax, which is the harmonized sales tax as we know it, the HST in Nova Scotia.

When the rest of the country has enjoyed a decrease in the HST as a result of the federal government lowering it by two cents over the first couple of years of their mandate,

what the Government of Nova Scotia did, the NDP Government, stepped in and said oh, there's extra capacity there, we're used to 15 per cent and there's an ability to bring it back in so let's do that.

I think they did it based on some really false information, suggesting that we were on a course of disaster if this was not done. That's how it was sold to Nova Scotians, that we were on a disastrous path to being out of whack, let us say, and that we were going to go into billions of dollars more debt. But, in fact, the very year that this is brought in, the government sees a surplus that was in excess, Mr. Speaker, in excess of the HST, beyond what the HST brought in. The surplus would have been seen anyway, with or without, so there's quite a difference.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable member for Halifax Clayton Park has the floor.

MS. WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, those numbers speak for themselves. The amount that would have been raised from the HST that can be directly attributable to the HST is part of that surplus and, in fact, the surplus went beyond it. So it wasn't alone what brought us into surplus, there were other factors.

It tells Nova Scotians that the HST increase, at least that year, wasn't necessary. Maybe it is in the future, maybe there are other times of uncertainty, but I would say the government brought it in year one of their mandate for one reason alone, because they wanted the extra revenue and they wanted it four years before they faced the electorate again. If they waited to raise the HST later, when maybe the urgency was greater, it would be something that the electorate will remember. I'd like to remind members of the House that that would be our job during an election, to go out and speak to Nova Scotians and to point out where things were done that have harmed them financially, that were entirely not necessary.

Now in the same budget a few small items were exempted from HST and I'm sure that those items are appreciated when people are buying children's diapers and a few other things that were covered under that. I think what is important to know is that every single purchase is now 2 per cent higher than it was previously. The justification for that has not borne out in fact. There's number one.

Number two, I would go to gas prices, Mr. Speaker. The gas prices that we have in Nova Scotia, again, are being regulated by a price-fixing system, a regulation system that's being monitored and input dictated by the URB, which used to be within government. But government didn't like that because then they had some direct control and responsibility - it was better to throw that off and make it an arm's length arrangement with the URB. That is one more area where the government is abdicating their responsibility, not governing, not taking control, but allowing some outside, arm's length agency to do it for them, and to say they have no control.

We just heard a debate here that was more than half an hour of discussion about power rates. Power rates, again, are regulated by the Utility and Review Board, not by government - by the URB. Government says they are only just listening, they're just bystanders in the whole process. Mr. Speaker, the people of Nova Scotia can make the connection between increased costs and this government that is sitting in power today in Nova Scotia.

I think that is the important thing that we need to remember, that the people of Nova Scotia are smart - they listen, they read the papers, they read the blogs and the tweets, they're following the news on television and they know, they can connect the dots. The government is hoping that they won't do that, but our job here in Opposition is to make sure that we tell the story as we see it, that we've seen an increase in our HST of 2 per cent and that people who come into our offices are telling us how difficult it is to make their mortgages, to make ends meet, to pay for the costs that are essential in their lives. They understand what the impact of 2 per cent more is in their budget every single week, and they do connect that directly back to a policy instituted and brought in in the first years of the mandate of the NDP Government.

I wanted to speak on gas prices because the government members and now ministers and the Premier had clearly said in Opposition that it was wrong to keep the tax on tax which is on our mobility tax. So we include a mobility tax - sorry, a motive tax, a motive fuel tax on every litre sold at the pump, and on top of that we add HST at 15 per cent, not 13 per cent, but 15 per cent because the government added two cents to that as well. So now we have, again, the continued tax on tax at a higher rate than we would have previously seen it and no indication whatsoever from government that they will even review that, even though in Opposition they said it was immoral, it was wrong, it didn't belong. So that's one thing.

Regulation, again, is another point that is affecting our tax prices and we have spoken out here in the Liberal caucus from day one when the Progressive Conservative Government introduced regulation and we said it just doesn't work. Even the Progressive Conservative Government of the day said this won't keep our prices lower, but we hope it will provide some stability - it was about stable prices. But the government now, the NDP Government, has maintained that despite the cost to do so and that is a cost over to the URB now because those provincial employees who did do the work are moved over to the Utility and Review Board and the Government of Nova Scotia has given up all responsibility for it.

The people of Nova Scotia ask why they elected us if we're not here to make some of the tough decisions and if we're not going to take responsibility - they wonder why we have ministers who have very small portfolios, who don't even have ministries under their control. In fact, we have ministers with no budgets - how can that be? I think the idea of a new department, the Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage, is a really nice idea, but where's the money behind it, where's the mandate, what are they doing, or is it

just a make-work project for another ministry? We wonder that and we want to see the connection between good government and taking responsibility and the cost to people living in this province today.

Our big concern - I know my time is running out quickly - in the Liberal caucus are the job losses across this province, people losing faith in the government, people leaving our province because they can't find work, and the negativity and lack of confidence in the business climate, and all of that coming back to an uncertainty for individual employees, people not sure of their jobs, not sure of their future. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

MS. MICHELE RAYMOND: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the chance to respond to that because I find it very difficult to perceive an attack on Nova Scotians when a government has inherited a \$13 billion debt and a \$1.4 billion structural deficit. That's the part of a debt that sticks like chewing gum and it's the part that you don't just stick under the desk for the next generation to inherit, which is what previous governments have done. It's really hard to perceive it. (Interruptions) We don't want your used chewing gum, that's right, and we're not going to leave it to the next generation. That's not unparliamentary, is it? (Interruptions)

We're not going to leave that for the next generation. It's hard to perceive it as an attack, when the same government that has inherited those debts and that has determined that it is going to get rid of that structural deficit, is at the same time going forward to remove the HST on energy and to institute a \$200 home heating energy rebate for low-income Nova Scotians. (Interruption) That's right, that's the part that allows them to stay in homes.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please.

The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic has the floor.

MS. RAYMOND: All right, has instituted that home heating rebate, that's the part that allows low income Nova Scotians to actually keep the roof over their head. That's the part that allows low income Nova Scotians to keep the energy account without which they're not otherwise going to be able to keep the lease. This is the same government that has raised the basic personal tax exemption, has raised the Nova Scotia child tax benefit by 22 per cent, per child, per month. This is the government that has added 250 new child care spaces - allowing 250 more families to work, to earn livings. This is the same government that is enabling those working people, who unfortunately, still find themselves reliant on income assistance because of the paucity of their wages, to keep more of that income and this is the government that is working to stabilize costs, in an ever more volatile global economy.

I've always been curious that 2008, that was a year that was predicted to be the year of peak oil, somehow turned out to be the first phase of a recession that we don't necessarily know for sure is over. When we look at the global economies around us, it doesn't seem any too certain that the rest of them have been able to eliminate their structural deficits and that the decisions that they have undertaken, in the face of heavily energy dependent economies, are actually going to be decisions that they're able to follow through with. Some are in much, much worse shape than we are.

Fossil fuels have become the lifeblood of our society and fossil fuels are going to be more and more and more volatile and this is the government which, in our own way, is doing its best to stabilize those costs. This is the government which is working to reduce dependence on gasoline, which is working to improve alternative transportation on public transit. It's a government which, sorry, I have to look at this, is working not only to stabilize those costs but also, to reduce the dependency on transportation modes. I remember being a resident of Nova Scotia in the same year the HST was introduced, that free trade was introduced, that municipal amalgamation was introduced, and these were crippling. These were absolutely crippling and this was the same time when electricity costs began to skyrocket. I was not the only Nova Scotian who suffered under those.

Transportation costs have, as the Liberal Party says, become a larger part of our lives than ever and we are working to mitigate that. The withdrawal of services from rural Nova Scotia began with municipal amalgamation under the Liberal Government, as huge municipal zoning entities determine where workplaces, health services, entertainment venues and residential areas will be permitted. That has made us ever more dependent on those fossil fuels for transportation because when you can't walk to those places, somebody has got to take you there and if it's not safe to ride a bike or walk, somebody is going to take you there. As it stands at this point, that's going to be a fossil fuel dependent entity.

If those entities don't invest in services or public transit in a given area, it's a choice of winners and losers and they're winners and losers on a large scale. Those are decisions that were set in place some 10 to 12 years ago and we are working to do what we can to counterbalance those. I see this as a government which is working to stabilize, not only transportation costs and the dependence on transportation, but, in fact, municipal property taxes, those which have become an ever larger property tax assessments skyrocketed after municipal amalgamation, or a bigger and bigger part of the property tax burden on that one taxpayer that we always talk about. This government has kept the tax on property tax assessments and that helps not only homeowners but tenants, because it means that at least the cost of living increase and inflation increases are some kind of a stricture on otherwise unlimited assessments.

When Nova Scotia Power was privatized in 1992, it wasn't under an NDP Government; and when it was reorganized in 1998 into the entity that we now know as Emera, a multinational, in fact, based in Nova Scotia, it wasn't under an NDP Government.

Everybody talks about a monopoly, and the Leader of the Official Opposition talks about a monopoly, he says it's time to break it. I wouldn't presume to speak on that but I can say that that monopoly was not created under the NDP and the transmission grid was not locked into private hands under this government.

But it's this government which has mandated the most aggressive renewable energy targets in the world, and renewable means renewable. There isn't peak wind and there isn't a day, so far, when we see the tides drying up but it takes money and it takes energy and it takes imagination and the kind of energy and imagination that we are putting into a creative economy, that we are putting into our universities and research institutions, that's the kind of money that it takes, up front, to put forward a stable future for Nova Scotians. That's the kind of future that all Nova Scotians can benefit by.

I'd like to think of rural economic development as rural stabilization as well, and we're working to stabilize rural Nova Scotia which has been decimated in previous years. We're looking at instituting collaborated emergency centres in communities where hospitals have been closed. We're working to develop a formula which will protect small and isolated schools, which will allow people to have the kind of education which has sent Nova Scotians forward as creative, energy-giving people around the world for hundreds of years, and which we expect will continue do this.

No, there is not a short-term solution to this. It's going to take quite a long time to get rid of that structural deficit and it's not just a financial deficit, it is, in fact, a deficit of imagination, and it is a deficit of the autonomy which people need to make use of the energy that is at their own hands. It's short-sighted and narrow-minded to say that these are the only things which we have right now, because if we're going to tax imagination and if we are going to tax Nova Scotians out of their ability to make the best use, not only of their own educations, their children's futures, then we will have done far more damage than has been done in years past. But we are not going to do that, Mr. Speaker, and I believe that we are not taxing Nova Scotians into submission. It may have happened in the past but we hope that we are setting them free. Thank you.

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

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I hear the honourable member talking chewing gum, that's a gum that's cost everybody in Nova Scotia 2 per cent more since this government has come into office. And they talk about re-chewing the bubble gum, well most families today have to re-chew that bubble gum in order to make it worth their while to buy. That's what we're debating here today.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP love to stand in the House and pretend they are working for the people of Nova Scotia. I believe that the slogan I heard was a better deal for today's families. Well, Nova Scotians don't feel like they are working for them, they feel like they are being taxed to death; they don't feel like they're getting the bang for their buck, more

tax on most things they buy and use today. They feel the health care system is getting harder to access. I know in my own riding in 2010 - 1,700 hours of emergency room closure - that's two and a half months if you total it all up. We heard today of the dialysis unit in Hants West.

They worry about our education system and how the cuts will affect their children and our grandchildren, and how it will affect the future of this province. They worry about jobs and will we have one for our children and our grandchildren and for future generations. Will they be able to survive and remain in this province to earn a living and to raise a family? Mr. Speaker, they worry about economic development and our small towns being able to sustain themselves. With the increased taxes and the decreased payments to areas of the province in rural Nova Scotia, they're starting to suffer.

Now, with first contract arbitration, employers and employees throughout the province are concerned. We're hearing in the Law Amendments Committee that they are concerned about how it will affect their business and how it will affect their jobs. Will it kill jobs in Nova Scotia? Why are we pushing this through? Why now, when there has been no labour unrest in the province? We've heard about the stats over the last number of years. There's no reason to go through them again.

I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, they're also not working for our seniors. Seniors are facing a harsh reality when it comes to access to long-term care beds. There are 1,700 seniors in Nova Scotia waiting for access to long-term care beds, and a report last week told us there was over a 400-day wait for seniors in long-term beds in Cape Breton. That waiting list is growing. It's not getting any shorter.

It's unfortunate for all those waiting that this government has cancelled a program that was creating more beds. It was supposed to create 1,320 beds. The previous government had a long-term care strategy, but this government cut it short by 200 beds. It has been said that Nova Scotia wait lists have grown 35.5 per cent from April 2010. That is just unacceptable, and the blame rests at the feet of this government.

It's not just the seniors. It's all working Nova Scotians, those Nova Scotians who go to work every day, those who are fortunate enough to have a job, those who pay taxes, and those who have helped fund the province. There have been 5,400 fewer full-time jobs in Nova Scotia since the NDP took office. In the same time frame, 8,400 people have just given up and left the workforce. They either left the workforce or they left the province.

This government is promising jobsHere; well, rural Nova Scotians are asking, "jobsWhere"? Where are the jobs in rural Nova Scotia? They are not in Cape Breton, they are not in Yarmouth, and they are not in northern Nova Scotia. It's rural Nova Scotians who are feeling the negative impact of this government's bad policies the most. Cape Breton is down 2,100 jobs, the North Shore is down 1,400 jobs, Annapolis Valley is down

600 jobs, and southern Nova Scotia is down 2,500 jobs. That's a total of 6,600 jobs, Mr. Speaker.

The government keeps trying to sweep this information under the rug and pretend it doesn't exist, but it does. We all know, especially those of us who live in rural Nova Scotia, it does exist. Ask the former Yarmouth ferry employees, ask the former NewPage employees, Signature Styles, and the list could go on and on.

Last week in the House the minister had the nerve to state that we're going to stand by the strategy, that we'll let it wind its way through and continue to create good jobs, good opportunities for Nova Scotians in every region of the province - every region of the province but what we just stated.

Halifax has grown - and rightfully so, it's the capital of the province - but rural Nova Scotia is suffering. No one else believes that propaganda but the minister and the Premier and the government.

Last week this government was asked directly, what are you going to do about the job loss crisis in rural Nova Scotia? The answer: they didn't believe there was a crisis in rural Nova Scotia.

The Premier says he disagrees that there is a crisis, but people in rural Nova Scotia are faced with it. They live it every day - no jobs, and with the passage of time it seems like it is going to get worse. Time is not on their side. Hope is fading for lots of people in rural Nova Scotia.

This government is out of touch with reality - the reality that we all face every day, such as higher taxes - 2 per cent since they went and took office, and we're told today that they promised they wouldn't raise taxes. The Premier said that he didn't make that promise.

Higher user fees - 1,400, to be exact. Everything from drivers' licences to trailer licences to fishing licences. Their bite-the-bullet electricity plan - not that we're not for greener energy, Mr. Speaker - our government introduced green energy - but the targets have risen. The cost to the taxpayer is being passed on on these higher energy costs, and most recently their misguided approach to labour laws.

Bill No. 102 has not gone over well with small businesses in rural Nova Scotia. We've also heard from people in urban Nova Scotia who own small businesses that this is not going over well. These are a couple of more issues that illustrate how the government is not working for Nova Scotians. All of those combine to make Nova Scotia uncompetitive. They are job killers. We're hearing it all over Nova Scotia, from all aspects of life, from big business to small business; I have spoken to some of them myself. The effects are being felt

from Yarmouth to Sydney. Businesses are struggling to stay competitive, they're struggling to stay open; they're struggling to keep their employees.

The NDP Government is refusing to acknowledge that high taxes, higher user fees, higher power rates and job-killing labour laws are negatively impacting Nova Scotians. So let's just recap, we're leading in all the wrong ways. We're leading the country in high taxes, leading the country in higher power rates, and now we're leading the country on the cost of living. Nova Scotia's consumer price index is a full percentage above the Canadian average. It's getting harder and harder for Nova Scotia families. Wages have not kept up with these rising costs, they had a 0 per cent growth in the past year. The NDP seem like they are just not on the side of families and jobs.

As I pointed out earlier today, there are 5,400 full-time jobs in Nova Scotia lost since the NDP took office. Bit by bit the policies and the direction of this government are killing our economy. Instead of trying to fix the problems that Nova Scotia doesn't have, they're doing this with first contract arbitration. The NDP Government should focus on the declining standard of living occurring under their watch. A job puts food on the table, puts your kids through school, and hopefully puts a little bit of extra money in your pocket.

The members opposite are looking a little skeptical. I even hear a little giggling. If they had only asked their colleagues to sit in the Law Amendments Committee, the last few days have seen business after business plead their case that FCA is going to hurt them, not only their ability to employ Nova Scotians but to compete globally. They also state that it will hurt the possibility of new business setting up in the area. It will cause them to set up in areas like P.E.I. and New Brunswick, and maybe even go to Maine.

On top of their misguided labour legislation, we're the highest-taxed jurisdiction in the country. That plays a massive role in job losses. The NDP's higher HST has resulted in higher costs for families and employers. As I stated earlier, the NDP's job destruction path doesn't leave any corner unturned. It starts at one end of Nova Scotia and carries all the way through to the other. Because of the NDP, Nova Scotians from Cape Breton to Yarmouth, and everywhere in between, are struggling more and more to make ends meet. They have a responsibility to make things better for Nova Scotia, to create jobs, not to destroy them, but they are failing.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I'll take my seat.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

MR. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased this evening to join the debate on Resolution No. 1857. I always like to put the debate in context and I know that several speakers now have addressed the resolution, but the resolution went something like this:

“Whereas Nova Scotians are paying more taxes every day thanks to the decisions of this NDP Government; and

Whereas Nova Scotians are paying higher and higher power bills . . .”

And paying more at the pump every day; and the third area is more taxes as a result of the HST. That’s the context, the basic premise of the resolution that we have before us today.

I think also, just to point out a couple of things the member opposite had to say, when the member talks about stabilizing rural Nova Scotia, well, I think if government, when this House breaks, decides to travel rural Nova Scotia in January and February, they’re going to see a tough reality that is upon us here in Nova Scotia. There is no stabilization going on. We continue to bleed jobs in rural Nova Scotia. Maybe in the new year there will be some bright spots of mills re-opening - it’s a possibility - and perhaps we may see other businesses that will take on expansion, but at the current time, there is no sign of stabilization.

There was a job posted in Digby last week - a minimum-wage job being a part-time receptionist in a massage therapist’s office - and 71 people applied. Places like Digby have been devastated since the closing of Convergys, and again, the impact that we’ve seen on small businesses as a result of the changes in southwestern Nova Scotia.

I want an explanation, and maybe the member opposite will send me a little note about how her government is working to improve greater amounts of public transit, because just last week, Metro Transit said their ridership is down. They’re looking at ways to increase ridership and help get some of the congestion off the streets of the HRM. Where is the program that will assist it? The reality is that right now we have greater congestion going on in the HRM. Maybe there is a new program going to be announced in 2012. I look forward to seeing people using public transit, because I know in my part of Nova Scotia, Kings Transit has been a leader in many ways.

People are being taxed to the point of hurting in this province. The reality is that in July 2009, which was really the first full month of the NDP Government - and these are not guesstimate or estimate statistics, these are the real statistics - 461,900 Nova Scotians were gainfully employed in this province. As of the end of October 2011, 449,400 Nova Scotians were employed in this province . . .

MR. SPEAKER: I would ask the honourable member to table that document when he’s finished reading it, please.

The honourable member for Kings West has the floor.

MR. GLAVINE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I certainly will, and just to add to that, the labour force, having contracted by 14,800 - because on taking office, there were 506,400 Nova Scotians available to be in the workforce and the most recent number is 491,600 Nova Scotians available to be in the workforce.

We have those numbers, which I know are very discomfoting and very unsettling for government, but it's the people who face, work, and have to live with these realities every day that - I think we all need to be coming to this House to take part in real debate and work on a consensus of ideas on how to move the province forward, not bring in a bill like Bill No. 102. I'd like to see real debate on how we can improve the well-being of more and more Nova Scotians.

In just two years - from 2009 to 2011 - on January 1st, when the price of electricity goes up by 10 per cent - it's going to be at least 10 per cent. It's broken down by the 6.1 per cent announcement yesterday . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The chatter is getting a little bit high. If there are conversations you'd like to take outside, that would be fine.

The honourable member for Kings West.

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, 3.2 per cent from the fuel adjustment mechanism and then the carryover from last year to distribution of an increase over the three-year period with what we've now been calling the Efficiency Nova Scotia tax added onto the electric bill, will bring us over 10 per cent. So we're getting very close to 20 per cent increase in electrical rates in just two years and Nova Scotians are really feeling that and impacting again on making decisions about keeping the lights on, keeping the heat in their home and having to make choices around food, medication, clothes for children, all these kinds of areas.

It's little comfort that as these prices increase, those that live in poverty from day to day, again a reality that we were reminded of in this House with a small protest outside Province House today. I think what many of us find the most troubling is, of course, hearing of 14,000 youth in our province who live each day of their lives below the poverty line. Those of us who have had those children in front of us in a classroom, we know their struggles with learning, we know how they are affected and we know that schools and the communities have jumped in to help out with at least one nutritious meal a day.

The face of the power rates, the food increases - you know, I thought for sure that with what the NDP had said in Opposition around the tax on tax on gasoline, and now moving the setting of rates over the URB, which is costing us more than when Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations handled this. These are areas that - they are small amounts but they trickle down because we know the cost of gasoline and diesel also is pervasive throughout the province. That is added on when our food providers bring food

into the province, these distribution costs. All of these costs are added on and that food basket, the nutritious food basket, is becoming very, very costly.

Mr. Speaker, to wrap up - I know all of us as MLAs as well, we know the use of food banks in our areas or many of us have some idea. Again, they are at an extremely high rate and those are the face of the hurt in this province that I believe is the face of the affordability crisis and jobs are going to be the answer and we can all hope and work for a day when more and more Nova Scotians are able to head to work.

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

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Acting Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. MAT WHYNOTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That concludes the government business for today. After the daily routine tomorrow and Question Period, we will be calling Bills for Second Reading, Bill Nos. 118, 120, 121 and 122. We will also be calling the Committee of the Whole House on Bills, Bill Nos. 72, 81, 86, 93, 94, 95, 98, 104, 108, 111 and 112. The House will sit between the hours of 12:00 noon and 6:00 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now rise and meet tomorrow.

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

The motion is carried.

We have now reached the moment of interruption. Tonight's debate was submitted by the honourable member for Eastern Shore:

"Therefore be it resolved that the House of Assembly recognize and appreciate that the serious challenges facing the forestry industry in Nova Scotia today stem largely from a lack of appropriate action on the part of previous governments to demonstrate proper stewardship of a key natural resource, our forests."

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION UNDER RULE 5(5)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Eastern Shore.

NAT. RES.: FORESTRY INDUSTRY - CHALLENGES

MR. SIDNEY PREST: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to give a little history, going back a few years on my involvement in the forest industry, both in the pulp mills,

lumbering, as a landowner, a producer, a sawmill operator - I've pretty well done it all. I'm not here to criticize or lay blame on previous decisions that were made by previous governments, but I have to refer back to 50 years ago when the destruction of our forestry industry started.

Now, possibly everybody who made and was in part of that decision felt it was the proper decision at the time. It has been proved it has taken 50 years to get to where we are, and it's going to be a long-term project to get it straightened out and get back into a state of good forestry that our future generations, children and grandchildren, can depend on having a quality forest. One of the decisions made in 1960 was for the permission to clear-cut. It took many years to realize the effect of it. Our own family, which has been in the forestry business since 1933, has never practised clear-cutting and we can go on our land today and anybody can see the positive results of selective harvesting and protecting certain species that exist on the land.

Now, it's hard to get people's attention about the forestry and what it provides, but it's not only a fibre-producing area. It is habitat and home to wildlife, it's for clean water, our air, our quality, and recreation. There are so many uses, but the only value we seem to put on it is the fibre value. If I had a brick of gold here, a pound of gold, it would be worth roughly \$20,400 on today's market. I could have \$20,000 of standing timber on my land and people would go for that shiny piece of gold. At the same time, the forestry and the trees would be growing more in value. So people have to understand and get a better sense of what we've got.

It gives me great pleasure to stand here and talk about this subject, and I just wish that every seat in the Chamber was filled and I wish every seat in the gallery was filled, so I could get my message across. But, Mr. Speaker, as I start, I wish to borrow something from the Nova Scotia Woodlot Owners and Operators Association, which is a very important group of landowners in this province. Their Web site says: "Woodlot ownership is so much about understanding the past, respecting the present, and being unafraid to envision a future of sufficiency for all beings."

Mr. Speaker, I agree with that statement, and I want the woodlot owners to know that our government agrees with that statement, which is why we have developed a provincial forestry strategy. Forestry is by no means a new industry in Nova Scotia, but it is forever changing. The industry is unique and spans across several sectors. The increased demand for newsprint in the 1920s propelled the pulp and paper sector forward - it is a sector that we still see at work in Nova Scotia today.

Nova Scotia has long been in the wood products business and sawmill business, from large companies to small, family-owned businesses. These sectors help produce a variety of special products. You know, when you stop and think that probably the first hockey sticks that several of you people in the audience may have used, came from out of

the woods, and the repair of the famous Bluenose schooner, which is using wood products from our woods, it's quite a comparison and quite a difference in what we do.

Of all the different species in the woods, each species has its own unique use and we've discovered that there's wood, like a yellow birch species, that will take the place where steel won't, so it's very useful in the right concept.

In the 1980s some of the mills had to shift focus from selling green, undried lumber in the United Kingdom and instead started to kiln-dry lumber and it was sold to the Canadian and American markets. This resulted in more dry, white residual chips which helped the pulp industry control their costs.

During the 1990s, the pulp and paper industry in Nova Scotia slowed down, which was partly due to decreased global demand for newsprint. The sawlog harvest was increased at that time while the pulpwood demand declined. The result was greater co-operation and cohesion between the pulp and paper sector and the sawmills. It's like today, we can't control the world markets on newsprint, but we can control the fibre that we produce right in this province today. That is the main focus that we should be going with our forestry strategy and that's why it's good that we're heading that way.

There are some sectors which have historically not been used to their fullest capacity and there's a history in this province of clear-cutting in the past. The industry did not regard the clear-cutting as a major concern. There was a lack of guidance, direction and there was a lack of leadership there. There was no plan for future generations. It's unfortunate, but what we have learned from the past is that there were some serious mistakes made with regard to the management of our forests.

We all know we can't change the past. What we can do is learn from our mistakes and move forward in the future. We all know that Nova Scotia has a long history in the forestry industry and we'll have a bright future now that we have the Natural Resources Strategy in place. The strategy, which was released in August of this year, is built on the following four goals: collaborative leadership; sustainable resource development; research and knowledge sharing; and good governance. I wish to take a moment to further explain to this House, as well as all the woodlot owners in Nova Scotia, how much these four goals will help our precious forest industry.

In order to move forward we must ensure we have collaborative leadership. This strategy will help build a culture of collaboration, innovation, mutual accountability and equips our government to implement the Natural Resources Strategy and equips all woodlot owners with the necessary resource to sustain their business and their surrounding environment.

The most important goal in my opinion is sustainable resource development. I'm proud to say that our government has developed a strategy that will help manage Nova

Scotia's forests to achieve a sustainable balance of economic, environmental and social benefits to current and future generations of Nova Scotians. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

MR. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I'm glad he left me an additional 30 seconds to give me an opportunity to tell him how much I respect his views and regard his views on forestry. We have talked on several occasions about forestry and what it has meant to him over the years and also the kind of knowledge and insights that he does bring. I know he speaks with great passion for how best forestry practices should be implemented on the widest scale in this province.

To put the issue in context, we are struggling to keep our mills open - and we will find ways, I believe - but the real issue will be whether or not we will have the wood to actually keep the mills going. Let me put it in the context of Danny George from Guysborough, a woodlot owner and contractor. I'll table this. He said:

With all the focus on saving our paper-mill jobs, no one has addressed the state of the producers or the standing fibre resources in Nova Scotia.

The people who own and harvest this fibre have no benefits or pensions, and they carry the liability of land and machinery. We had prices for softwood pulpwood reduced from \$51 to \$37 per tonne, not because of a drop in kraft prices; meanwhile, still operating mills are subsidized by our government. The price being paid for random hardwood at the biomass chip site is \$25 per tonne, down from \$35 a tonne before the NewPage closure.

We have been pushed back to the mid- to late-1980s prices for fibre.

Now here is the crux of what I want to talk about:

Not calculated in this is the threefold increase in expenses or the fact that in the mid-80s, on average, it took about 17 or 18 trees per cord, and now it takes 35 to 50.

There is our problem.

Mechanization enabled us to keep producing fibre cheaper, but realistically, it enabled the industry to cut the next generation's resources - similar to catching the last cod.

Now while the honourable member opposite talks about the implementation of the natural forest strategy, let's be very clear and honest about this. To date, not a single move has really been made to implement the forest strategy. The forest strategy that Nova Scotians wanted and that Voluntary Planning put such a tremendous amount of work into does not exist. What those people who came out to Voluntary Planning - and what the experts said as well - and what was finally delivered are two very different realities.

First of all, of course, it has been delayed by a couple of years, and now we don't have targets and goals within the strategy. The strategy released in August was not what was recommended even by the committee assembled to deliver the thoughts, the ideas, and the suggestions to government on how to move forward with our precious natural resources. The committee spent thousands of hours with little or no benefit to themselves, travelling the province, talking with Nova Scotians, hearing from the very people the NDP Government claim to represent. Much of that information was actually dismissed along the way.

They literally cherry-picked the few miniscule recommendations. They pushed out a strategy that was a year late. They did not recognize the true problems faced with our resources. They did not provide a real definition of clear-cutting. They did not give targets or goals. It was a wasted document meant to try to curb the anger around the NDP Government's reluctance to act when Nova Scotians want them to. For the member opposite, the NDP Government, to suggest that past governments are the reason for the NDP Government's inactivity on this important file is a bit dismissive. I guess that's what we've come to expect.

Mr. Speaker, with a very limited amount of time, I think that it's time that the Department of Natural Resources gave that full true accounting of what is taking place in our forest. I had one forestry expert talk about unlocking the doors, an e-mail in the last couple of months as she saw what was happening with NewPage and with Bowater and still gave voice to the great concern about whether there would be sufficient fibre as these mills reopen.

In her words, it was time to get a true account of an annual allowable harvest, give Nova Scotians some idea of how much Acadian forest is actually left and to get some sense - and I think from the Letter to the Editor from Danny George, we know the state of our forests - but we really should have a clear picture of the age structure of our fibre.

We have moved from a time when there was no fibre coming into Nova Scotia and the day on which NewPage closed, just to keep our mills going, 7 per cent had to be imported from other provinces. So I think it's very important to have that real picture of what the state of our forests is. I think that would serve us very well.

I believe there's a real concern and a red flag around the fact that if our mills open and our logging industry, which we hope there is some improvement in, because it is

well-distributed, our logging industry is well-distributed across the province, it does support the small woodlot owners, and we hope to see some of that come back.

If the mills don't reopen, I worry about a full-blown effort to make biomass, and the export of biomass, a major industry in this province. I do have great worry and concern. I think a few of the things that have even happened in Ontario, as Ontario lost a good number of their mills in the northern part of the province, they saw it as an opportunity to diversify their industry. In diversifying their industry, they've had a rebound. They've had other, smaller, value-added, other ways of cutting less but gaining more value. I think we need to take a look at some of the expertise that guided that initiative.

You know right now - and this is another concern I'd like to raise in late debate - the small woodlot owner is now being told that they have to be educated and will somehow correct our forest industry woes. Well, I believe nothing can be further from the truth. I think if you want the real picture of the state of our forests and the good work that our small woodlot owners have been doing - I know there is one in the riding of the member for Kings North, Steve Bezanson, who put in place a managed woodlot program a number of years ago and again, with the diversity of his woodlot, he is doing very well. That is duplicated right across this province.

I believe we have to take a look at alternatives to develop a vibrant forestry industry in this province. I don't look at the gloom and doom of what's happening with our mills, I like to see that we can change the course in the province and do a better job in the years ahead. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. The honourable member for Inverness.

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and it was a pleasure to hear the member for Eastern Shore this evening; I'd like to hear more of him here in the Legislature. When I was looking at this resolution a particular part struck me and that's the proper stewardship of the resource. I guess if you want to do something with wood, people need to find products that we can make, that are competitive and if we can't find products that can be made competitively and sold, then we don't really have a problem with wood because we can leave it standing.

It's funny because just before I was preparing my remarks for this evening, I came across a news item about the Nova Scotia woodlot owners and they have a program that is subsidized by the government, to encourage sustainable forest managers. They're suffering right now because they don't have a mill to take their higher priced certified wood. It's kind of ironic because I know the government is subsidizing this effort to try to eliminate clear-cutting, yet our industry in the province is dying because there are a number of things that aren't competitive. So I think that while we have to certainly have stewardship of resource - and the member who just spoke mentioned an interesting point about how a lot of the wood that was cut years ago is causing us to need to cut more, a quantity of wood

now to get the same amount of wood fibre. I know that's probably a lot because of the mechanization of the industry. I don't want to start speaking about too many things here but I guess my point is it's important to have a good stewardship of a resource but we can't even use the resource if we're not competitive in bringing the products to market.

I think of NewPage in my area, that was a great purchaser of wood and was a responsible corporate citizen, being FSC-certified, the preferred certification of environmental organizations. They had a good record of responsibility in the industry and really the best that any company could have, it's in the paper making business.

I asked a question to the Minister of Energy yesterday about how many windmills it would take to power NewPage. As we know, power rates are significant; the main costs that they face. He wasn't quite sure and I know I probably caught him a bit off-guard with that, but by my calculations, there would be a requirement from somewhere between 700 to 1,000 windmills to power NewPage, which if we looked at the distance between here and Point Tupper where the paper mill is located, you'd be looking at somewhere between two and three windmills per kilometre. It would be a giant threshing machine for birds.

I guess the reason why I asked the question was just to show the practicality of - would it make sense to have that many windmills in the province, and, by extension, trying to highlight the fact that if we're going to make decisions around power rates and the inputs that are going to generate electricity, what is the practicality of it? Do we go out and construct 1,000 windmills between here and Point Tupper to power that mill? Does that make sense, especially when we know that it costs three times as much to generate energy, electricity, from windmills as it does from coal?

I think, Mr. Speaker, when we look at this - and I don't want to be moving off topic, but I know it's all connected - another reason why the NewPage mill is going to face higher costs here than their competitors elsewhere in the world is because we now have more selective harvesting techniques that have been required, as policy. I respect and we must respect that there are other uses for our forests, like for wildlife and whatnot - I certainly respect that and support that. I know an area in my constituency, Cape Breton Highlands National Park, which is set aside for wildlife and that's very important.

What I'm hearing now from foresters in my area, is that the price they're getting paid from their wood - because there is now a glut of wood on the market - is about \$37 per ton. They can't pay their costs to cut that wood and pay the stumpage on the wood. So what we're seeing, Mr. Speaker, while we want to see stewardship of the resource, the economic conditions in the province because of power rates and because of more selective cutting, especially right now - it's really killing the industry which is killing demand for the product, which, if the goal is greater stewardship of the resource, we are ultimately going to lead to a point where we're not going to have an issue. We can leave all the wood standing because we won't have any use for it.

I know that - I've heard it today - they have referred to us as the dukes of doom on this side of the Legislature, Mr. Speaker, but what I know, what I'm trying to talk about, is reality. I know there is great fear in my area and it's frustrating for me because one of the things I wanted to do when I was running for office is try to help our economy. I often talked in this Legislature, and on committees, about the potential - what would happen if NewPage dies? It's very ironic now that a few months later, that's actually the situation we're facing.

Mr. Speaker, one of my goals is to help my area economically. To lose that paper mill because of things like power rates, because of more selective harvesting practices right now, how can we not recognize the reality that those factors impact the viability of the mill? Right now the government is trying to support more sustainable harvesting practices of wood and there's a, I think it's a 75 per cent subsidy, that's what I just read, for a 10-year forestry management plan but now, once the government has subsidized that activity, we see with this news item that I referenced, there's no market for this wood.

It's very disappointing and it's discouraging to be representing an area that's facing this kind of stress. I say discouraging because day in and day out we speak, in this Legislature, about things like power rates, about things like the piece of legislation that's being discussed in the Chamber and the Red Room tonight, Bill No. 102. We are told don't worry; it's not going to hurt business, Bill No. 102. Power rates, well, we should have done something about them years ago but, Mr. Speaker, the reality is there are decisions being made in this Legislature by the government. They're passing bills. They're making energy policy that's impacting power rates, and they are affecting us in a real way. Certainly in my area they're affecting us in a real way.

Last night when we were talking about Bill No. 102 at the committee, I happened to be sitting in and I heard comments like, well, the Opposition is just fear-mongering about this bill, that business owners just don't understand it. Mr. Speaker, what I would counter that with is, do the members opposite have an understanding of what it takes to run a business? I don't think some of them do, especially by their comments. Do the members opposite understand that their decisions are impacting the success or failure of business in the province? I don't think some of those members do and the reason is because we've got people in the business community who are coming forward and telling us these things and we're trying to reverberate that message in this Chamber, but the government is not listening. We have members of the business community across the hall in the Red Room tonight saying these things, and the government is not listening. That's very frustrating, Mr. Speaker, because if anybody should know, it's these business people.

I think I'm about running out of time anyway, Mr. Speaker, but I do call upon the government to recognize and to start listening. I mean I'm all for respect for selective harvesting, stewardship of the resource, but where is the humanity in standing passively by and letting a community die? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you and I want to thank all members for their participation in tonight's late debate.

We are now adjourned to meet again tomorrow from the hours of 12:00 noon until 6:00 p.m.

[The House rose at 6:29 p.m.]

NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3)**RESOLUTION NO. 2657**

By: Hon. Karen Casey (Colchester North)

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

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

Whereas the Nova Scotia School Athletic Federation annually organizes the Celebration of School Sport to honour participation, fair play and service to school sport, and to reinforce the significant role interscholastic athletics plays in education; and

Whereas each school chose a female and male student athlete and a coach who exemplify the qualities the NSSAF strives to develop through participation in school sports;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Brooke Densmore, a student at Central Colchester Junior High School in Colchester North, for being a recipient of the female Nova Scotia School Athletic Federation Sport Award for 2010-2011.