



DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Gordon Gosse

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HALIFAX, WEDNESDAY, APRIL 4, 2012

Sixty-first General Assembly

Fourth Session

2:00 P.M.

SPEAKER

Hon. Gordon Gosse

DEPUTY SPEAKERS

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

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. Before we begin the daily routine, the subject for tonight's late debate has been chosen, and reads as follows:

Therefore be it resolved that with the announcement of a high school in Eastern Passage and expanded capacity in Cole Harbour High to train young people in skilled trades, this government is showing its commitment to putting Kids and Learning First.

It was submitted by the honourable member for Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage.

We will begin the daily routine.

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

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

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to present a petition on behalf of the people of Parrsboro and the shore area containing 356 signatures, including my own. The operative clause calls on the Nova Scotia Government to repair or if necessary replace the Aboiteau bridge in the Town of Parrsboro, and further calls on the government to work with all levels of government to repair the aboiteau itself. On their behalf I present this petition.

MR. SPEAKER: The petition is tabled.

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Community Services.

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, as Minister of the Department of Seniors, it gives me great pleasure to rise today to share with the House that this government continues to do the right things to make life better for seniors.

First, I would like to recap some of the province's important budget actions that will make life better and more affordable for our seniors. The province is helping seniors stay at home and in their communities longer, with more money for in-home nursing care as well as home improvements. The province is opening or replacing more than 500 nursing home beds so seniors have a friendly, caring place to go when the time comes; the province is protecting seniors from unfair drug prices, lowering the costs of generic drugs; and the province is investing more than \$3 million so more than 100,000 seniors do not have to pay more for their Pharmacare premiums and copayments.

The province is returning the provincial income tax for low-income seniors who receive the Guaranteed Income Supplement. That means that 17,000 eligible seniors, on average, get \$450 back to spend on their priorities.

I know all members in this House will want to share this good news in their communities, and today I want to share information on programs for seniors. Over the next week the province will be promoting three grants that help seniors stay active and remain in their communities. Through the Positive Aging Program Fund, grants up to \$10,000 are available to non-profit community organizations for projects that focus on health, well-being and community participation. Some past projects promoted physical activity and healthy living for seniors, or enabled them to explore their creativity in the arts. Other projects focused on lifelong learning, volunteerism, and better access to technology. As well, the Age Friendly Communities Grant Program provides two grant opportunities to help communities become more age-friendly.

When the Age Friendly Communities Grant Program was introduced, it funded projects that created or adapted infrastructure programs and services to be more accessible and inclusive of seniors. Then, in 2010, under our NDP Government, the department expanded the scope of the program to support municipalities with their strategic planning. I am happy to say this year the AFC Grant Program will also focus on helping municipalities with strategic planning and the development of age-friendly resources.

Municipalities can apply for funding that will help them create programs and services to respond to the changing needs of seniors and the unique local circumstances of communities. I will also provide funding for municipalities planning ahead to ensure their communities are more accessible and inclusive to seniors. This funding helps make life better for families in every region and provides financial support for communities working towards becoming more age-friendly.

In the other grant, municipalities are invited to apply for funding for projects through their Age Friendly Communities Grant Program that will help make their communities more accessible and inclusive to seniors with varying needs and abilities. Some of the past projects included building a shelter and resting area, developing new walking trails, installing benches along a walking path, and placing green gym equipment in recreation parks. Age-friendly communities offer their citizens of all ages and abilities an opportunity to feel included and valued in their communities.

These are a few of the things we are doing to make life better for seniors, to help seniors take part in local activities and stay mobile. We know that making life better for seniors also makes life better for their families and their communities. I invite you to promote these grant opportunities in your constituencies to non-profit groups in your communities and to your municipalities. Further information also can be obtained on the Department of Seniors Web site. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. HAROLD THERIAULT: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the minister's office for providing our office with the ministerial statement in advance. While the minister outlines various initiatives for seniors in her statement, she fails to point out several key points. While it is important to invest in social programs and keeping people in their communities, it's also important to ensure that seniors can simply make ends meet.

Where I am from, Mr. Speaker, I hear a lot of people worrying about their power bills and their food and the housing costs. Their health care costs are eating up more and more of their household budgets daily. I hear this every day from our seniors. There's a dire need for affordable housing for seniors but the minister doesn't mention this. Seniors in rural communities have little or no access to public transportation. It's another huge problem, especially in my area.

Seniors and their families are worried about the health care wait times that they have. They are also worrying about whether they are going to have a doctor the next time they go to a medical appointment.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to learning more about the age-friendly grant program and hope that the municipalities will work with the seniors in developing proposals that those very people who rely on these services will have a voice in how they are designed. Grants are wonderful but dignity in aging, the rising cost of living and the reduced health care wait times are the priorities we're hearing from our seniors in our rural communities every day. Thank you.

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

MR. KEITH BAIN: Mr. Speaker, I, too, would like to thank the minister for providing our caucus with a copy of her statement ahead of time. While the minister references a couple of good measures in her statement, there are some items that she neglects to mention.

For more than a year my caucus has been raising concerns about the government's approach to the change in drug pricings and the threat it poses to the sustainability of independent, rural pharmacies. We're seeing the result of that now in rural pharmacies closing. It's making it nearly impossible for seniors in some communities to access the drugs they need and the services they require.

Just earlier, in March, we saw the closure of the only pharmacy in the village of Lawrencetown. The Lawrencetown Pharmasave's owner said at the time that costs have kept increasing while the introduction of provincial drug reform has reduced the pharmacy's revenue. Their change has forced a small business to close its doors in an area that has seen some of the highest job losses in the province. Seniors and their families, with limited transportation who rely on the services of their local pharmacy, will pay the price. There were over 40 pharmacies and pharmacy owners who attended the Law Amendments Committee about that legislation but that government didn't listen to any of their concerns. Now, in this instance, seniors are paying the price.

As well, Mr. Speaker, in 2006 the PC Government unveiled a plan to build 1,320 beds in long-term care facilities throughout Nova Scotia. Distribution of new beds will be based on geographic disparity, population projections, community needs and current pressures on acute care services. This plan would have protected seniors. Now we're seeing seniors forced out of their communities, away from their families, because that government doesn't have its priorities straight.

Those same families that are struggling to get their parents into long-term care homes close by are also struggling to keep their kids from leaving home, but that's for another day. What that government is keeping from Nova Scotians is that they've made no

new commitments to building long-term care beds. There are over 400 beds from the original strategy that haven't even been tendered yet. It is leaving seniors with nowhere to go.

A number of areas that have previously been promised more long-term care beds have even been cancelled. Then, on an effort to deliver on promises to build more beds, that government cut over 40 respite beds to turn them into long-term care beds. Mr. Speaker, all that does is take pressure from one area and throw it into another, so although there are some good measures in the minister's statement, I brought forward two examples of how this government has, over its three years, actually neglected its seniors and their families and has, in fact, made things more difficult. With those few words, Mr. Speaker, I thank you and I take my seat.

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

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to rise in the House to recognize the appointment of the first board for Arts Nova Scotia. Artistic and cultural activities add to the quality of life enjoyed by Nova Scotians in communities throughout Nova Scotia. But not only do artists enrich our public life with their creativity and their excellence, they also create jobs and economic opportunities in the process.

Nova Scotia is a better place to live, work and raise a family because of the strong and active arts community and this government is focused on working with the sector to ensure it becomes even stronger. In February 2011, I was privileged to join the Premier to announce a five-point plan for developing and supporting the province's arts and culture sector. That plan is based on consultation with the sector held in the Fall of 2010 and is part of government's commitment to ensuring the voices of artists and the creative community help set the province's priorities for supporting arts and culture.

Mr. Speaker, an important element of the five-point plan is the establishing of Arts Nova Scotia, an independent body to oversee funding that goes to individual artists and the organizations that support them. The province has moved steadily to reach that goal since announcing the five-point plan earlier last year. Last Spring government appointed a transition committee to develop the terms of reference for Arts Nova Scotia and criteria for making board appointments. That committee included my colleague, the honourable member for Lunenburg, who has a strong connection to the arts community; Paul Caskey, a nationally known choreographer, dancer and artist director with Live Art Dance Production; Leah Hamilton, a respected arts administrator and consultant with Genesis Consulting; and Christopher Shore, an award winning playwright and the executive director of Theatre Nova Scotia.

Mr. Speaker, the committee worked diligently to produce its report last Fall, which set out the principles and goals for Arts Nova Scotia. Our government acted immediately on their advice by introducing and passing legislation for the Arts Nova Scotia Act, an

important in the transition for the responsibility of this new body. Last week I was pleased to announce the appointment of the first board for Arts Nova Scotia. The appointments were based on the advice received from the transition committee and they are diverse in the terms geography, artistic discipline, gender and culture. Mr. Speaker, the first board of Arts Nova Scotia brings together 11 incredibly talented and dedicated Nova Scotians who are committed to helping grow and develop Nova Scotia's arts and culture sector.

The first board is: Cory Bowles from Truro, an African Nova Scotian dancer, actor and musician; Claudia Buckley from Bayswater, a consultant and contractor coordinator of the Canada Council's Theatre Section's Flying Squad program; Mary Elizabeth Luka, from HRM, and arts consultant and award winning documentary producer and television director; Michael de Noncourt from Antigonish, an Acadian and francophone bilingual visual artist, sculpture and educator; Eric Mathis from HRM, personnel and production manager for Symphony Nova Scotia; Laura Schneider from Sydney, director and curator at the Cape Breton University Art Gallery; Susan Hanrahan from HRM, a respected arts administrator and executive director of the Nova Scotia Designer Craft Council; Barbra Richman from Chester, a respected arts administrator and executive director for Strategic Arts Management; Don Sedgwick from Petite Riviere, chairman and past president of Transatlantic Literacy Agency Inc.; Candace Stevenson from HRM, a retired executive director of Cultural and Heritage with the provincial government here in Nova Scotia; and finally, Mindy Gallant-Zwicker of Hantsport from Hantsport, an emerging Mi'kmaq artist.

This is an impressive group of Nova Scotians that brings a wealth of experience and knowledge to the table with Arts Nova Scotia. They had their first meeting last week and are beginning the process of transitioning responsibility for funding and prize programs that they will oversee. The appointment of the first board for Arts Nova Scotia is one more way this government is honouring its commitments to give the arts community a voice in setting priorities and developing and growing Nova Scotia's creative economy.

This government has listened to their voices. Their priorities are reflected in the five-point plan for arts and culture that the Premier and I announced last year. Their advice is incorporated into the legislation that creates Arts Nova Scotia. Their knowledge and expertise will ensure that artistic merit continues to be the basis for decisions on funding to artists through their work on the board of Arts Nova Scotia.

As the chair of the Creative Nova Scotia Leadership Council, Ron Bourgeois, noted last week when government introduced Status of the Artist legislation, this is an exciting time for arts in Nova Scotia. With the five-point plan introduced by the Premier and the strong involvement of the arts community in developing provincial policy, Nova Scotia will continue to see benefits from a growing creative economy.

In the addition to the appointment of the first board of Arts Nova Scotia, this government has also acted on other priorities in the five-point plan. That includes establishing the Creative Nova Scotia Leadership Council, which advises government on

arts policy, and also includes introducing Status of the Artist legislation, which I did last week, to reflect the importance of artists and ensure that they are treated fairly and with equity here in the province - legislation that was developed with the input of the sector through the Creative Nova Scotia Leadership Council.

That includes the work of the interdepartmental committee of the provincial government to coordinate and support funding for arts in Nova Scotia. That includes work on the cultural strategy for Nova Scotia, which will be led by the Creative Nova Scotia Leadership Council. That is all very good news for artists who are pursuing their creative passion here in our province. It is good news for communities across our province that benefit from a vibrant arts and culture sector, and it's good news for Nova Scotian families because it makes life better for them in every region of the province. Thank you.

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

MR. HAROLD THERIAULT: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise today and respond to the minister's statement on the appointment of this board. I want to thank him for the advance copy of his statement.

I'd like to congratulate the 11 members appointed to this board, because the arts are important to Nova Scotia's culture and heritage and the economy of this province. Congratulations to the board appointees, and we look forward to seeing the results of their hard work in the not-too-distant future. With that I'll take my seat. Thank you.

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

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, I too would like to briefly respond to the ministerial statement on behalf of the PC caucus. I am well aware of the importance of active support by government of the artistic community. Whether it's the performing arts, the visual arts, or cultural arts, they all deserve the active encouragement of their government and, indeed, of all members of this House of Assembly. The arts community is definitely a big part of building a modern, dynamic, creative, diverse society here in the capital of Halifax and throughout all of Nova Scotia.

I say that as someone who spent many years as a volunteer with the Neptune Theatre Foundation, including eight years on the board and several years as chair of that great cultural icon of Nova Scotia which is so well regarded - not only here at home but across the country and around the world - as a jewel of a non-profit professional performing arts theatre here in Halifax. It may not be well known to members of the House, but of all of the non-profit, professional performing arts theatres in Canada, Neptune probably receives about the least amount of government support from both the municipal and provincial levels, compared to its sister theatres across the country. It generates, by far, more of its own earned revenue from ticket sales and sponsorships than other theatres are required to.

I say that because it is a matter of fact that the modest operating grant that Neptune does receive from the NDP Government was cut by 10 per cent in the last budget and, of course, we're waiting to see what is in store for cultural icons like Neptune in the current estimates. With that note, Mr. Speaker, in pointing out the importance of providing actual and real support to the cultural arts, I just want to congratulate the new board members on their appointment and wish them well with their new responsibilities.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 8 - Entitled an Act to Establish Joseph Howe Day. (Ms. Diana Whalen)

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

Could I have the agreement of the House to revert to the order of business, Government Notices of Motion? No? I didn't call it, that's right, I skipped over it. My mistake. I'll have to call it because I skipped over it; I just went to Introduction of Bills, after Statements by Ministers, so I will now call the order of business, Government Notices of Motion.

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Premier.

RESOLUTION NO. 66

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 people of Aboriginal descent are the fastest-growing sector of Nova Scotia's population, making them important contributors to the future of our province; and

Whereas Cape Breton University's Purdy Crawford Chair in Aboriginal Business Studies, recognizing the value in inspiring Aboriginal youth to consider business studies, developed a program to inspire Aboriginal high school students and help them with the transition to university business education; and

Whereas on March 5th and March 6th the conference held at the Membertou Trade and Convention Centre began a two-year relationship among the 30 youth and their mentors as they take part in this unique program;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of the House join me in congratulating the youth, their mentors, and the Purdy Crawford Chair in Aboriginal Business Studies on successfully launching the Business Network for Aboriginal Youth program.

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.

RESOLUTION NO. 67

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

Whereas on Monday, March 26th, the Honourable John D. Embree, a Judge of the Provincial Court of Nova Scotia, passed away at the age of 58; and

Whereas Judge Embree earned his law degree at Dalhousie University, was admitted to the Bar in Newfoundland in 1978, served as a prosecutor for the Appellate Division in Halifax and went on to serve as a Judge of the Provincial Court for over 20 years; and

Whereas Nova Scotia's justice system will feel the loss of Judge Embree after his many years of long and dedicated service to our province;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House recognize the tremendous contribution Judge Embree has made to the justice system in Nova Scotia and express our deepest condolences to the family.

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 Labour and Advanced Education.

RESOLUTION NO. 68

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

Whereas Derek Charke is a musician and resident of Kentville who has through the years been commissioned to compose works for the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra, the Kronos Quartet, and the St. Lawrence String Quartet; and

Whereas Derek Charke shares his passion for music and the performing arts by teaching theory and composition at the School of Music at Acadia University in Wolfville; and

Whereas Derek Charke was the recipient of the Juno Award for Classical Composition of the Year on Sunday, April 1st, for *Sepia Fragments*, which combines the sounds of nature with acoustic instruments;

Therefore be it resolved that members of this House congratulate Derek Charke for his success at the 2012 Juno Awards and for focusing national attention on the performing arts in Nova Scotia, and wish him continued success in the future.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal.

HON. WILLIAM ESTABROOKS: Mr. Speaker, I would request an introduction if I may, sir?

MR. SPEAKER: Most certainly.

MR. ESTABROOKS: In the east gallery we have an honoured guest, and I'm going to be reading a resolution about her award in a moment, but I would like to ask her to stand and remain standing. Heather-Anne Gillis, could you please be recognized? (Applause) You know, Heather-Anne, every morning you tell me what to do, and I ask you to stand and remain standing.

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

The honourable Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal.

AN HON. MEMBER: En français.

MR. ESTABROOKS: En français, no.

RESOLUTION NO. 69

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

Whereas provincial government employees were recognized on March 27th by the Office of Acadian Affairs for outstanding contributions to programs and services en français; and

Whereas these Bonjour! Awards are an opportunity to celebrate Nova Scotia's Acadian and francophone culture; and

Whereas Heather-Anne Gillis, the receptionist in the head office of Nova Scotia Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal, was the winner of one of these awards;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House acknowledge the valuable and continuing contribution made by Heather-Anne Gillis as she goes above and beyond, in both official languages, as the first point of contact for our department. Heather-Anne, félicitation. How was that? (Standing Ovation)

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.

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, with your permission, I would like to do an introduction before I do my resolution.

MR. SPEAKER: Most certainly.

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, it's a great privilege to draw the attention of members of the House to the east gallery, where we are joined today by several of our province's extended-care paramedics. I would ask them to stand as I read their names: Mark Wheatley, Peter Rose, Rob Merchant, Sarah-Grace Brown, and Chris Norland.

Together, Mr. Speaker, these women and men have more than 70 years of combined experience. I thank them very much for joining us here today, and I would ask members to give them a very warm welcome. (Applause)

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

The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

RESOLUTION NO. 70

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

Whereas Nova Scotia's innovative Extended Care Paramedic nursing home program treats sick or injured seniors at home instead of the emergency department; and

Whereas since the ECP program was implemented in February 2011, ECPs have responded to nearly 800 calls for care, with 72 per cent of patients receiving treatment at home; and

Whereas the program, part of our Better Care Sooner plan, recently won a gold Public Sector Leadership Award in the health care category from the Institute of Public Administration of Canada, an award that recognizes organizations that have demonstrated outstanding leadership, collaboration and innovation by taking bold steps to improve their areas of endeavour;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly recognize this prestigious accomplishment received by the Extended Care Paramedic program and the important role it plays in providing seniors with better care sooner.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Seniors.

RESOLUTION NO. 71

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

Whereas Nova Scotians, particularly seniors, are known for being valuable and tireless volunteers; and

Whereas Bill Poole of Scots Bay holds many volunteer positions, including: vice-president on the board of directors of Community Links, member on the board of directors of Kings County Seniors' Safety Program, peer facilitator of Your Way to Wellness with the Annapolis Valley District Health Authority, and a volunteer with Healing Approaches to Seniors Abuse; and

Whereas the Department of Seniors is very pleased to welcome Bill's dedication and experience as the community co-chairman for the Nova Scotia Network for the Prevention of Senior Abuse;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this Legislature recognize Bill Poole for his contribution to Nova Scotians and wish him well in this new task as the community co-chairman for the Nova Scotia Network for the Prevention of Senior Abuse.

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. 72

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

Whereas Robert Wright is a registered social worker, a lecturer at Mount Saint Vincent University, and a Ph.D. student at Dalhousie University, where his research explores the experiences of African Nova Scotians who have been involved in the criminal justice system; and

Whereas Robert has been a champion for child welfare and racial equity in a number of fields, working within school boards, the Nova Scotia Barristers' Society, the North End Community Health Centre, and the provincial Child and Youth Strategy, among other roles; and

Whereas Robert was recently honoured for his many efforts as the recipient of the 2012 Distinguished Service Award for Nova Scotia from the Canadian Association of Social Workers;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly join me in congratulating Robert Wright on receiving the 2012 Distinguished Service Award and thanking him for his dedicated work on behalf of Nova Scotians.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Education.

RESOLUTION NO. 73

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

Whereas Dr. Hanna Rue, Director of Evidence-based Practice at the National Autism Centre in Massachusetts, is sharing her knowledge and expertise with about 140 educators from across the province today, April 4th, at Mount Saint Vincent University; and

Whereas the topic of her presentation, Autism and Evidence-based Practice, is vital to the province's mandate to provide educational services to children and youth with autism spectrum disorder, not only for their academic learning but also for those skills necessary for independence and personal responsibility; and

Whereas over the past 15 to 20 years, there has been an ever-increasing awareness and recognition of autism that has brought to the forefront the importance for educators and researchers to determine the most effective practices for the identification and treatment of autism;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of the House of Assembly thank Dr. Rue and all of our educators for their valuable work for the benefit of Nova Scotia students with autism spectrum disorder.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Seniors.

RESOLUTION NO. 74

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

Whereas Nova Scotia boasts many talented artists and inspiring sights; and

Whereas the Nova Scotia Seniors Art and Photo Gallery provides artists and photographers 50 years of age and older a central location to display and sell their works of art; and

Whereas this one-of-a-kind gallery located at the World Trade and Convention Centre is celebrating its 101st showing;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this Legislature congratulate the Nova Scotia Seniors Art and Photo Gallery on its 101st art and photo show and wish them much success in the future.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

RESOLUTION NO. 75

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

Whereas Mr. David Logie has served on the board of the Annapolis Valley District Health Authority for 12 years, including six years as board chairman; and

Whereas Mr. Logie's unpaid role as member and chair of the Annapolis Valley District Health Authority was to oversee and provide leadership of the affairs of the district health authority; and

Whereas after many years diligently and respectfully representing the best health interests of residents of Annapolis and Kings Counties, Mr. Logie has retired as board chair;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly applaud Mr. David Logie for his steadfast dedication to improving the health and wellness of Nova Scotians living in the Annapolis Valley by serving as chair of the Annapolis Valley District Health Authority Board and wish him all the best 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 Minister of African Nova Scotian Affairs.

RESOLUTION NO. 76

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

Whereas Sergeant Craig Smith of Halifax is an author, avid historian and community educator, alongside his active career with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police; and

Whereas Sergeant Smith has recently published a new book on African-Canadian history entitled *The Journey Continues: An Atlantic Canadian Black Experience*, which is a follow-up to his 1999 publication *The Journey African Canadian Resource Guide*; and

Whereas Sergeant Smith will be honoured on April 28th in Toronto at the Black Business and Professional Association's 30th Annual Harry Jerome Awards where he will receive the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration Media Award;

Therefore be it resolved that members of this House join me in congratulating Sergeant Craig Smith on receiving this well-deserved award, and thank him for his contributions in preserving and promoting Nova Scotia's diverse history.

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. 9 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 3 of the Acts of 1987. The Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Resources Accord Implementation (Nova Scotia) Act. (Hon. Charlie Parker)

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

NOTICES OF MOTION

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

RESOLUTION NO. 77

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

Whereas on March 9, 2012, Bill C-278 - an Act respecting a day to increase public awareness about epilepsy - passed third reading unanimously in the House of Commons in Ottawa; and

Whereas this bill establishes March 26th as Purple Day, a day each year when Canadians wear purple to raise awareness of epilepsy; and

Whereas Halifax West MP Geoff Regan introduced this legislation as a result of the efforts of young Cassidy Megan of Shad Bay and the Epilepsy Association of Nova Scotia;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this Nova Scotia Legislature congratulate Cassidy Megan and the Epilepsy Association of Nova Scotia for their great work in raising awareness of epilepsy by establishing March 26th as Purple Day.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Community Services.

RESOLUTION NO. 78

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

Whereas arts and culture contribute to healthy and vibrant communities across Nova Scotia and play an important role in making life better for families; and

Whereas the province listened to the arts sector and is ensuring their voices play a role in guiding our support for arts and culture through the creation of Arts Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Barbara Richman of Chester is an arts consultant and former executive director of Symphony Nova Scotia and Halifax Dance who has worked for over 30 years with emerging, mid-career and senior artists, and is an experienced arts management educator;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulate Barbara on her appointment to the inaugural board of directors of Arts Nova Scotia.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

RESOLUTION NO. 79

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

Whereas the Governor General's Awards in Visual and Media Arts were created in 1999 by the Canadian Council for the Arts and the then-Governor General to celebrate Canada's vibrant arts community on a national level and to recognize remarkable careers in the visual and media arts; and

Whereas the 2012 laureates of the Governor General's Awards in Visual and Media Arts received their awards, including a cash prize of \$25,000 each, at a ceremony at Rideau Hall on March 28, 2012, hosted by Their Excellencies the Right Honourable David Johnston, Governor General of Canada, and Mrs. Sharon Johnston; and

Whereas among the 2012 laureates is Jan Peacock, a faculty member at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design and a resident of the north end of Halifax, who has since 1977 been exploring the medium of video and developing a body of international award-winning work;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly congratulate Jan Peacock on receiving a 2012 Governor General's Award in Visual and Media Arts and express our pride in her accomplishments, and thank her for her important and ongoing contributions to Canadian arts and culture.

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. 80

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

Whereas the Acadia Axewomen's University Women's Basketball Team won the Atlantic Conference Basketball Championship in Antigonish on March 4, 2012; and

Whereas this year's win was the first time in 60 years that this team's name will be on the Jeannie W. Lesley Trophy; and

Whereas the team's leadership, hard work, and family atmosphere are a credit to the team's success;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulate the Acadia Axewomen's Basketball Team for winning the Atlantic Conference Basketball Championship for the very first time in 60 years in Antigonish March 4, 2012.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations.

RESOLUTION NO. 81

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

Whereas the village gas station became a fixture in the landscape in the golden age of the automobile in the 1950s; and

Whereas Don McNeill opened a garage and gas station at the Halifax International Airport in 1962, and later one in Elmsdale, the present location; and

Whereas Don McNeill Shell, now owned by Don's son Roy and daughter-in-law Beth, celebrates 50 years of operation in May;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly offer its congratulations to the owners, management, and staff of Don McNeill Shell on its anniversary and wish them continued success for the future.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Fisheries.

RESOLUTION NO. 82

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

Whereas South Side, Cape Sable Island, hockey player Brendan Nickerson, along with his Team Canada counterparts, captured men's ice hockey bronze in the Winter Youth Olympic Games in Innsbruck, Austria, on January 21, 2012, with a 7-5 win over the U.S.A.; and

Whereas the 15-year-old defenceman, who was the lone Nova Scotia athlete to compete at the Games, was one of 17 players from across Canada named to the national team, capping a year of major accomplishments in the sport of hockey for the young Canuck that also included playing with Team Nova Scotia at the 2011 Winter Games; and

Whereas Brendan Nickerson is an inspiring mentor to young hockey players in his home community, often volunteering to spend time with them during practices, encouraging them to reach for the stars;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulate Brendan Nickerson for his bronze medal win at the Youth Olympic Games in Innsbruck, Austria.

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. 83

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

Whereas Betty Lou Scott of Mount Thom, Pictou County, a retired teacher and co-owner of WindCrest Farm, has been awarded the Rosemary Davis Award for her lifelong involvement and commitment to agriculture; and

Whereas the Rosemary Davis Award is sponsored by Farm Credit Canada and awarded annually to five Canadian women who are active leaders in Canadian agriculture; and

Whereas Betty Lou Scott is the only recipient of the Rosemary Davis Award in Atlantic Canada in 2012 and received a trip to Boston to attend the 2012 Simmons School of Management Leadership Conference for women in April;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulate Betty Lou Scott of Mount Thom, Pictou County, on her winning the Rosemary Davis Award for her leadership and involvement in Canadian agriculture.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island.

RESOLUTION NO. 84

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

Whereas the arts and culture contribute to the healthy and vibrant communities across Nova Scotia and play an important role in making life better for families; and

Whereas the province is listening to the arts community and is ensuring that their voices guide our support for the arts and culture through the creation of Arts Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Eric Mathis of Halifax is the personnel and production manager for Symphony Nova Scotia and is an accomplished trombone player, educator, coach, and a leader in the creative community;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulate Eric Mathis on his appointment to the inaugural Board of Directors of Arts Nova Scotia and thank him for his contributions to all our artistic 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 Truro-Bible Hill.

RESOLUTION NO. 85

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

Whereas arts and culture contribute to healthy and vibrant communities across Nova Scotia and play an important role in making life better for families; and

Whereas the province listened to the arts sector and is ensuring their voices play a role in guiding our support for arts and culture through the creation of Arts Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Cory Bowles is an accomplished dancer, actor, and musician who currently plays in the band Aide-de-Camp, and has appeared as an actor in a number of films and television and directed a number of short films and music videos;

Therefore be it resolved that the House of Assembly congratulate Cory Bowles on his appointment to the inaugural Board of Directors of Arts Nova Scotia.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage.

RESOLUTION NO. 86

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

Whereas the residents of Eastern Passage agree with their government that schools are the heart of Nova Scotia communities and have been advocating nearly 30 years for a high school; and

Whereas the NDP Government listened, supported, and committed to bringing a high school to their community; and

Whereas the Premier and the Minister of Education announced Monday, April 2nd, that their NDP Government is meeting the needs of students and families in Eastern Passage by investing \$15 million to bring Grades 10 to 12 to the area;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly commend this government for making life better for the community of Eastern Passage and celebrate the occasion of

fulfilling a 30-year dream to bring a high school to this community through an investment of \$15 million.

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

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

Is it agreed?

I hear several Noes.

The notice is tabled.

The honourable member for Queens.

RESOLUTION NO. 87

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

Whereas arts and culture contribute to healthy and vibrant communities across Nova Scotia and play an important role in making life better for families; and

Whereas the province listened to the arts sector and is ensuring their voices play a role in guiding our support for arts and culture through the creation of Arts Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Don Sedgwick of Petite Riviere has worked in the Canadian publishing industry for 35 years and has served as a board member with the Nova Scotia Talent Trust and as a juror for the Canada Council for the Arts, and is currently mentoring journalists at the University of Kings College and completing his MBA at Saint Mary's University;

Therefore be it resolved that the House of Assembly congratulate Don Sedgwick on his appointment to the inaugural board of directors of Arts Nova Scotia.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Antigonish.

RESOLUTION NO. 88

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

Whereas the Coady International Institute at St. Francis Xavier University is a world-renowned centre for leadership training and community development; and

Whereas the Indigenous Women in Community Leadership program, one of the Coady's most recent offerings, is a four-month intensive program for Aboriginal women to gain skills to create change in their communities; and

Whereas the Indigenous Women in Community Leadership program was recently voted the winner of the ASHOKA Changemakers "Inspiring Approaches to First Nation, Métis and Inuit Learning" competition, an award that includes \$5,000 to help the Coady fund scholarships for the Indigenous Women in Community Leadership Program;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of the House congratulate the Coady International Institute and its Indigenous Women in Community Leadership program on receiving this award, and wish program participants all the best in their 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 Antigonish.

RESOLUTION NO. 89

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

Whereas arts and culture contribute to healthy and vibrant communities across Nova Scotia and play an important role in making life better for families; and

Whereas the province listened to the arts sector and is ensuring their voices play a role in guiding our support for arts and culture through the creation of Arts Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Candace Stevenson of Halifax is the retired director of Culture and Heritage with the former Department of Education and Culture and has extensive experience in governance, management, and policy and planning, and is now involved in community affairs and volunteer activities;

Therefore be it resolved that the House of Assembly congratulate Candace Stevenson on her appointment to the inaugural board of directors of Arts Nova Scotia.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Hammonds Plains-Upper Sackville.

RESOLUTION NO. 90

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 Canada Safety Council is an independent, knowledge-based charitable organization dedicated to the cause of safety; and

Whereas Millwood Elementary in Middle Sackville takes pride in its Kiss and Go rules, crosswalk safety, and talking to the kids about safety on the school property; and

Whereas the community's RCMP liaison officer, Constable McNaughton, presented Millwood Elementary with a Safety Award for achieving a child-safety accident-free year, from January 2011 to January 2012;

Therefore be it resolved that the House of Assembly recognize Millwood Elementary as a true example of both staff and students coming together to encourage safe practices at school, and congratulate them on being awarded a Safety Award for an accident-free year.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Kings North.

RESOLUTION NO. 91

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

Whereas Kings Point-to-Point Transit provides a valuable community service in Kings County by offering affordable, accessible transportation seven days a week; and

Whereas Kings Point-to-Point Transit has evolved from its inception as a service offering transportation to persons with disabilities to an expanded service which offers transportation for the larger community to any employment, appointment, or personal commitment; and

Whereas Kings Point-to-Point has experienced a 25 per cent growth in each of the last two years, while engaging an increasingly diverse clientele, and has re-branded itself to reflect that expanded role;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly congratulate Kings Point-to-Point Transit on its new name, its continued evolution and success, and for the valuable service it provides to all residents of Kings County.

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. 92

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

Whereas Mike Myra, Troy Brake and Anthony Crouse decided to start an archery club in the Lunenburg area in 2010, with the aim of learning how to run a club, attract members, and ultimately hold a shoot; and

Whereas the group decided to partner with the Lunenburg Rod and Gun Club, providing the opportunity to host both indoor and outdoor shoots, making archery in Lunenburg a year-round sport; and

Whereas archers of various ages, from teens up to seniors, get to participate and the club will be aiming to host the first open shoot, the Archers Edge Fall 3-D Challenge, on September 2, 2012;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulate the Archery Division of the Lunenburg Rod and Gun Club for bringing the sport of archery to new participants in Lunenburg County, and providing a year-round opportunity for sport and recreation.

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. 93

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

Whereas Ron Hutchinson of Stewiacke East has hosted widely-attended bluegrass and old-time jam sessions at his home every Thursday evening for the last 15 years; and

Whereas Ron is an accomplished multi-instrumentalist, playing and offering lessons in the Stewiacke area in, amongst others: guitar, bass, banjo, dobro, and mandolin; and

Whereas Ron has for many years been a great promoter of bluegrass and old-time music in and around Colchester County, organizing and hosting in particular fiddle festivals at Whistler's Pub in Stewiacke;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia House of Assembly join the people of Stewiacke and surrounding communities in grateful acknowledgement of the continuing wealth of Ron Hutchinson's musical contributions.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal.

RESOLUTION NO. 94

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

Whereas teenager Jordan Grondin of Beaverbrook, New Brunswick, is leading a campaign to erect a statue on Parliament Hill in Ottawa of New Brunswick native R.B. Bennett, Canada's Prime Minister from 1930 to 1935; and

Whereas others, including former Prime Minister John Diefenbaker, have failed in their efforts to get a Bennett statue on the Hill; and

Whereas Jordan has lobbied politicians of all political stripes to support a proposed private member's bill for this statue;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia Legislature recognize Jordan Grondin for his initiative and support his efforts to have a statue of R.B. Bennett erected on Parliament Hill in Ottawa.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Community Services.

RESOLUTION NO. 95

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

Whereas arts and culture contribute to healthy and vibrant communities across Nova Scotia and play an important role in making life better for families; and

Whereas the province listened to the arts sector and is ensuring their voices play a role in guiding our support of arts and culture through the creation of Arts Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Claudia Buckley of Bayswater, Nova Scotia is the former head of the theatre section of the Canada Council for the Arts and is currently a consultant and contracted administrator of the Canada Council's Theatre Section's Flying Squad program;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulate Claudia Buckley on her appointment to this inaugural board of directors of Arts Nova Scotia.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism.

RESOLUTION NO. 96

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

Whereas Theatre Nova Scotia recognizes excellence in theatre in this province each year with the Robert Merritt Awards which were awarded for 2012 in a ceremony held on March 26th; and

Whereas Walter Borden received the Merritt for Outstanding Performance by an Actor in a Leading Role and Linda Moore received the award for Outstanding Direction, both for their work on Valley Summer Theatre's production of *Driving Miss Daisy*, which was acclaimed as Outstanding Production; and

Whereas Walter Borden and Linda Moore are residents of the north end of Halifax, a hotbed of theatrical energy and excellence and are longtime collaborators who first worked together on *Driving Miss Daisy* at Neptune Theatre in 1991;

Therefore be it resolved that this Nova Scotia House of Assembly congratulate Mr. Borden and Ms. Moore and all the recipients of 2012 Robert Merritt Awards for their dedication to and achievement of excellence in the theatre and thank them for the pleasure and enlightenment that they provide to Nova Scotia audiences.

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. 97

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

Whereas the Acadia Axemen's basketball team won the Subway Atlantic University Sport men's basketball championship on March 4, 2012 in Halifax, making this their 17th AUS title; and

Whereas this win earned the team a chance to play in the CIS (Canadian Interuniversity Sport) Final 8 championships also held in Halifax March 9-11, 2012; and

Whereas Acadia defeated the Ryerson Rams in a consolation final to earn a 5th place finish in the CIS Championship game and a spot to play in the CIS championship taking place next year in Ottawa;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulate the Acadia Axemen's basketball team on their 17th AUS title and wish them success as they continue with their athletic and academic pursuits.

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. 98

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

Whereas successful businesses bring employment and vitality to our communities;
and

Whereas Mobile Valve has been active in the business field as a valve service contractor for more than 40 years; and

Whereas on March 21, 2012, the East Hants and District Chamber of Commerce recognized Mobile Valve of Mount Uniacke as Business of the Year;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly offer its congratulations to the management and staff of Mobile Valve on its award as Business of the Year and wish them continued success for the future.

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

MR. SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver. Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

RESOLUTION NO. 99

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

Whereas Shelburne County Special Olympian Andrew Hicks won five medals in the sport of snowshoeing at the Canada Winter Games in St. Albert, Alberta, from February 28 to March 3, 2012; and

Whereas Andrew Hicks posted bronze medal wins in the 11m, 200m, and 400m events, along with silver in the 4x100m relay and gold in the 800m competition, contributing to Team Nova Scotia's medal count of 40 at the national Winter Games, including 16 medals won by the six-member snowshoe team; and

Whereas this was the first national meet for the 24-year-old athlete, who was chosen for the provincial snowshoe team after a triple-medal performance at the 2011 Nova Scotia Winter Games;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulate Andrew Hicks for his stellar performance at the 2012 Canada Winter Games in St. Albert, Alberta.

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. 100

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 Consulate Inn, owned by Debbie Jardine in Pictou, was the site of the official book launch of *No Lying Quiet* by Scottish author Hugh G. Allison on March 29, 2012; and

Whereas the author, Mr. Allison of Scotland, stayed at the Consulate Inn while he was doing his research for his novel *No Lying Quiet*, which is largely set around the Ship Hector in Pictou County; and

Whereas Mr. Allison was happy to launch his novel at Debbie Jardine's Consulate Inn to thank the people of Pictou County for their support and hospitality that he received while researching his novel *No Lying Quiet*;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly thank Debbie Jardine of the Consulate Inn in Pictou for her hospitality and support of Scottish writer Hugh G. Allison during his visits to Pictou County.

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

MR. SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver. Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island.

RESOLUTION NO. 101

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

Whereas the arts and culture contribute to creating healthy and vibrant communities across Nova Scotia and play an important role in making life better for families; and

Whereas the province is listening to the arts community and ensuring that artists play a role in guiding our support for the arts and culture through the creation of Arts Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Laura Schneider of Sydney is the Director/Curator at Cape Breton University Art Gallery, where she is engaged in increasing the profile of the gallery as a hub for arts education and a valuable resource for research, inquiry, and enjoyment in the arts; and

Whereas Ms. Schneider is also responsible for coordinating the elective visual arts course at Cape Breton University;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulate Laura Schneider on her appointment to the inaugural board of directors of Arts Nova Scotia and thank her for her service to our creative community.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Truro-Bible Hill.

RESOLUTION NO. 102

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

Whereas The Royal Canadian Legion Branch 26 Ladies Auxiliary works hard to raise funds to support the Legion as well as providing a \$1,000 annual student bursary; and

Whereas the Ladies Auxiliary has a total of 80 members including 90-year-old Florence Hamilton, an active member for 63 years and Annie Lamont, 89 years old and an active member for 35 years, provide support to each other and to the community by cooking and serving meals for weddings, birthdays and banquets; and

Whereas a special evening was recently held to honour the Ladies Auxiliary and to celebrate their 65th Anniversary;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia Legislature congratulates the Royal Canadian Legion Ladies Auxiliary on their 65th Anniversary and thanks all the members, especially Mrs. Hamilton and Mrs. Lamont, for all of their hard work and dedication to the Legion and to the Truro community.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage.

RESOLUTION NO. 103

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

Whereas a \$25 billion shipbuilding contract is an economic game changer for Nova Scotia and our NDP Government is making strategic investments to ensure Nova Scotians are ready to take advantage of tomorrow's opportunities; and

Whereas recently our NDP Government announced a \$10 million investment in a state of the art skilled trade centre renovation for Cole Harbour District High School, and the establishment of a \$5 million fund to support skilled trade centres around the province; and

Whereas this fully equipped skilled trade centre will offer courses that link classroom learning to jobs such as shipbuilding by helping students think early about the opportunities in trades after they leave high school;

Therefore be it resolved this Legislature commends the NDP Government for their strategic \$10 million investment in skilled trade training in Nova Scotia schools and celebrates the announcement of a significant upgrade to Cole Harbour District High School.

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

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

Is it agreed?

I hear several Noes.

The notice is tabled.

The honourable member for Queens.

RESOLUTION NO. 104

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

Whereas it is important for youth in our communities to have a safe, confidential and fun space to socialize in, as well as to access clinical health services, educational opportunities and recreational activities; and

Whereas Teen Access Zone, a new youth centre, has opened at the Queens Place Emera Centre in Liverpool; and

Whereas Teen Access Zone aims to create a space where teens can access a number of resources, programs, and services to benefit their overall health and wellbeing;

Therefore be it resolved that the House of Assembly recognizes and congratulates Teen Access Zone for providing access to health, wellness, and positive social activity to the youth of Liverpool.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Antigonish.

RESOLUTION NO. 105

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

Whereas in early 2011, as part of its five-point plan on arts and culture, the government announced the creation, Arts Nova Scotia, an independent body to oversee provincial funding programs for artists and art organizations; and

Whereas the structure and mandate of Arts Nova Scotia were established through legislation introduced by the government in December, 2011; and

Whereas Michel de Noncourt, an Acadian visual artist, educator and sculptor from Antigonish, was recently named as one of 11 board members for Arts Nova Scotia;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly congratulate Monsieur de Noncourt on being appointed to the board of Arts Nova Scotia, and wish all the board members the best for their terms.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Antigonish.

RESOLUTION NO. 106

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

Whereas arts and culture contribute to healthy and vibrant communities across Nova Scotia, and play an important role in making life better for families; and

Whereas the province listened to the arts sector and is ensuring their voices play a role in guiding our support for arts and culture through the creation of Arts Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Mary Elizabeth Luka of Halifax is an arts consultant, award-winning documentary producer and director for TV, who is currently a Concordia University doctoral candidate where she is proving the meaning and potential of “creative citizenship,” including the roles of artist and creative producers in daily life and work;

Therefore be it resolved that the House of Assembly congratulate Mary Elizabeth Luka on her appointment to the inaugural board of directors of Arts Nova Scotia.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Kings North.

RESOLUTION NO. 107

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

Whereas Mermaid Theatre's Artistic Director Jim Morrow has delighted audiences around the world with his colourful and innovative puppeteering creations for 40 years; and

Whereas his work has been praised by international colleagues as being "simultaneously simple and complex," fusing "the verbal, the grounded and the imaginative"; and

Whereas Jim Morrow has recently been honoured with the Mickey Miner Award, given to distinguished artists who have made exemplary contributions to the lives of children around the world;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly congratulate Jim Morrow on receiving the Mickey Miner Award, and recognize Mr. Morrow for his many outstanding contributions to the field of theatre for young audiences in Nova Scotia and worldwide.

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. 108

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

Whereas Lower Rose Bay resident Max Rafuse began setting the 22 navigational buoys in Rose Bay in the channel behind his house in 1940, as he helped his father with the job; and

Whereas Mr. Rafuse took over the job full time in 1947 at age 19, after his father passed away, and would cut and paint the poles required, weight them down with granite rocks, and set the buoys in the channel each April, removing them each January; and

Whereas Max Rafuse continued this work for 63 years, finally retiring in 2009 at the age of 82;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly recognize a lifelong commitment by Mr. Max Rafuse to Rose Bay and the boats that navigate those waters, and thank Mr. Rafuse for the service to his community.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party.

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, I hereby give notice, as per Rule 43(2), that the business of the House be set aside for the purpose of discussing a matter of urgent public importance. As per the rule I sent you a copy of my request earlier today, and in accordance with Rule 43(1), we request that the emergency debate take place at the moment of interruption.

The matter is as follows: Skyrocketing power bills are causing real hardship for Nova Scotia families and is putting good manufacturing jobs at risk. The most recent increases, effective January 2012, are forcing too many Nova Scotians to make hard choices about which bills to pay - decisions like paying for groceries or the power bill, swimming lessons or the power bill, or fixing the roof or the power bill. Now we know that more unaffordable rate increases are on the horizon.

First, the Muskrat Falls project has become a subject of urgent debate in the Newfoundland and Labrador House of Assembly. As members know, that province's Public Utilities Board declared earlier this week that it did not have enough information to determine whether the Muskrat Falls Hydro project is the best long-term power option for Newfoundland and Labrador. In short, the board could not assess if Muskrat Falls is the cheapest green energy option. The board said there were gaps in Nalcor's information and analysis in several areas related to the project and noted that it was forced to use outdated information in carrying out its review.

Mr. Speaker, we know that whatever price Newfoundlanders are asked to pay for power from this project, Nova Scotians will be asked to pay more. MLAs in Newfoundland

and Labrador will discuss the planned mega project during a special debate there. MLAs in Nova Scotia should do at least as much.

Secondly, this week we learned that Standard & Poor's, the rating agency, revised its outlook for Emera from stable to negative. The negative outlook reflects the agency's concern that Nova Scotia Power's capital expenditure plan will mean more power rate increases here, increases that Nova Scotians cannot afford. Many Nova Scotians will consider the prospect of multiple power rate increases an emergency.

Mr. Speaker, I urge you and the members of this Legislature to allow for a full emergency debate at this time, at the moment of interruption.

MR. SPEAKER: I have received more than the two hours notice of the matter required under Rule 43(2). Under Rule 43(4) I am required to decide whether the matter is proper to be discussed. I have considered the factors set out in Rule 43(4A). This is a matter of grave concern to Nova Scotians and which concerns the administrative responsibility of the government and could come within the scope of ministerial action. I have no indication that this is likely to be debated within a reasonable time by other means. So I will read the motion and ask whether the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party has the leave of the House for the debate to take place.

The motion is that the business of the House be set aside for the purpose of dealing with an issue of urgent public importance and the subject of the issue has been described by the Leader of the Progressive Conservative caucus as the prospect of multiple power rate increases. Does the House agree to give leave for the motion to be debated?

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

Being agreed, leave has been given that the debate will take place today at the moment of interruption. As provided under Rule 43(1), it replaces the late debate.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS

MR. SPEAKER: The time now is 3:38 p.m. and we will end at 5:08 p.m.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

GOV'T. (N.S.) - POWER RATES: URB - RELIANCE

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, the NDP Government has sat quietly by while power rates have soared. People are struggling, businesses are closing, and the NDP Government has passed the buck to the Utility and Review Board. The government's lack of action is forcing Nova Scotians to decide between keeping the heat on or buying food for the families and the government is clearly out of touch with the priorities of Nova Scotians.

My question to the Premier is, why is the government content to hide behind the Utility and Review Board while power rates soar in Nova Scotia?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, the reason why power rates are going up is because the fuel that is used to create power in this province is fossil fuel and that has increased by some 75 per cent over the last seven years – more than a 10 per cent a year increase – and the reason for that is because past governments did not make it a priority to get off of fossil fuels. This government is.

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, the Premier is fond of saying his government took the provincial portion of the HST off power bills. However, he's not fond about discussing the new NDP electricity tax, a tax he opposed while in Opposition. This government's demand-side management fees are costing Nova Scotians more than \$40 million a year. This government is directly responsible for increased power costs at \$40 million.

My question to the Premier is, why did the NDP Government not tell Nova Scotians that, while they were going to give with one hand, they were going to take \$40 million out of their pockets with the other hand?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, what he is talking about is the demand-side management charge, which is returned to consumers through programming. What is the truth, though, is this: that the Liberal Party of Nova Scotia campaigned against taking the HST off home electricity. They put it on in the first place and they voted against taking it off. If they were in power today, power prices would be 10 per cent higher.

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, the Premier campaigned against the demand-side management tax, which he quickly put on. On June 9, a letter to the Utility and Review Board, written by the NDP Government about this electricity tax: "... places the burden of DSM-related improvements too heavily on residential users and other rates classes." Further down in the letter from the Premier, "... this surcharge on their power bills at this juncture would add unneeded and counter-productive costs to residential and business users." I want to remind this House and all Nova Scotians that since he's become Premier, power rates have gone up over 20 per cent.

This is a tax on the poor- and middle-class income families and small business owners, when shareholders could have paid the bill. So my question to the Premier is, why

does the Premier believe that Nova Scotian ratepayers should pay the NDP electricity tax, not Nova Scotia Power shareholders?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, as the Leader of the Official Opposition creates this fantastical imagery around the Utility and Review Board, he knows full well that the conservation measures are the most important way that people can actually reduce their costs. They get that money back in conservation programs. But what is also true is that if they had their way the price of electricity in this province would be 10 per cent higher than it is today.

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

PREM.: LOWER CHURCHILL PROJ. - COSTS/KILOWATT

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. This week the Public Utilities Board of Newfoundland reported that they could not conclude that the Lower Churchill hydro project was the best option for Newfoundland and Labrador. In fact, they said they could not determine whether it was the most affordable power source for Newfoundlanders at all. In Nova Scotia our Premier refuses to do a review of the same project because he has already made up his mind.

My question to the Premier is, how much does he know? How much will Nova Scotians pay in cents per kilowatt hour for power from the Lower Churchill project? How much is it?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, there have been numerous studies that have come out that have shown that this, in fact, is the lowest-cost option for power. It is only the Progressive Conservatives who could choose to gamble on future power rates instead of getting 35 years of power at a fixed rate.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, gambling is when you commit your province to something and you don't even know how much it is going to cost. A simple question - how much will it cost Nova Scotians? No answer from the Premier.

Mr. Speaker, I'll tell you, the best information available from Newfoundland and Labrador says that power from Lower Churchill will cost 16.4 cents per kilowatt hour, and I will table the document that makes that so. That is how much it's going to cost Newfoundlanders; that is at least 20 per cent more than Nova Scotians are paying for power now, and that is before we transmit that power by expensive subsea cable from Newfoundland to Nova Scotia.

My question to the Premier is, will he finally stand up for Nova Scotia ratepayers and review the project to see if it truly is the best, cheapest, greenest source of power available for Nova Scotians - yes or no?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I don't know exactly what the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party is getting at, but he knows full well there is a comprehensive review process, that the project, before it can be approved as capital expenditure for the utility, has to go to the Utility and Review Board. That is the appropriate process for a review.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, apparently the Premier feels it is somebody else's responsibility to decide whether this project is in the best interest of Nova Scotia or not. That is a shame because that is the job that the Premier was elected to determine. The fact of the matter is the Premier is fine with this project because someone else is going to end up paying the bills for it, and that someone else is the people of Nova Scotia who will pay the bills for this project. The Premier doesn't even know how much it's going to cost them. My question to the Premier is, how much do power rates have to rise before this Premier recognizes that his policies are making power unaffordable in Nova Scotia?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, the reason why power rates are where they are today is because the Progressive Conservative Government, over many years, refused to deal with the fact that we had a utility that was completely tied, chained really, to the fossil fuel market, to the international fossil fuel market. That's the problem we had, 10 per cent raises year after year; a 75 per cent increase in fuel costs over seven years - that was the mistake they made that we don't intend to repeat.

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

PREM. - EDUC. DEPT.: ADMIN. INCREASE - EXPLAIN

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL: Parents are concerned about their children's education. Over the past two years the NDP Government has slashed funding and downloaded costs to school boards. As a result, supports are being lost, teachers are being cut and students are losing their educational assistants. We know that positions have been added to the senior administration of the Department of Education. To be specific, on February 21st a new position was created, an associate deputy minister. My question to the Premier is, why is the Premier increasing senior administration at the department level while cutting funding to the classrooms and eliminating supports for students who need them?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, as I pointed out to the Leader of the Official Opposition yesterday, the number of FTEs in the Department of Education is actually going down. Just to correct the misinformation that the Leader of the Official Opposition was putting out, this year we will have the highest per-student funding in our history and among the lowest student-teacher ratio in the province.

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, the document that was presented in this House yesterday clearly shows that the senior administration level at the department is going up,

the cost of that is going up. While the Premier may be putting more money per student in public education, he's spending it in the wrong place: not in the classrooms but in the Department of Education.

As a result of this government's mismanagement of the public education system, school boards are having to cut educational assistants and resources for students with special needs. Children with learning disabilities will have even less support now. These students are not getting any extra support but the minister's office is. My question to the Premier is, why is the Premier so interested in providing support to the minister instead of students who need it the most?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I think the member opposite confuses inter-office transfers of secretaries, I think, with the actual number of FTEs in the department. The number of FTEs in the department is going down.

We're doing this at the same time that there are some 30,000 fewer students in the system, 300 more teachers than there were 10 years ago, and the Leader of the Official Opposition knows that no teachers lost their jobs last year at all.

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, what I know is that this government is cutting funding to classroom students at the same time they are raising administration costs in the Department of Education. It's very clear. If the Premier doesn't believe his Minister of Education can do the job without all this extra support, why does he believe classroom teachers can deliver public education to students with less funding?

My question to the Premier is, why is the government increasing senior administration at the department while, at the same time, we are asking parents of students with special needs to do more with less?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, it is exactly the opposite, we are reducing the number of FTEs in the Department of Education. We have protected funding for students with special needs and we are the government that set up the comprehensive plan for students with autism, it was this government.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester North.

EDUC.: STUDENT/TEACHER RATIO - TABLE

HON. KAREN CASEY: Mr. Speaker, in the last session I repeatedly asked the Minister of Education about real student-teacher ratio numbers. The minister struggled with a response and failed to provide the real numbers. The minister has now had some time to reflect on that request. The minister tabled a document but it did not include real numbers, nor was it a true reflection of the realities of our classroom.

School boards are announcing right now lost teaching positions due to the minister's cuts, so my question to the minister is, will the minister share with the members of this House and all Nova Scotians the true student-to-classroom teacher ratio?

HON. RAMONA JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, I am kind of confused about real numbers. I did provide real numbers. The ratio for teachers in the province is 12.9, one teacher to 12.9. Then, if we take out administrators from that mix, just to make sure that everyone understands that the 12.9 includes our music teachers and physical education supervisors and our administrators, take the administrators out of that, our ratio is 14.7.

Our average class size in the province in the elementary school is 21 and in junior and senior high it is 24. Those are real numbers. I did table a document last session, and I will definitely table that again but the ratio, based on the same kind of ratio that every other government has ever used in this province, is 12.9 to 1. Thank you.

MS. CASEY: Mr. Speaker, I'd be glad to clear up the minister's confusion. It appears she just doesn't get it but Nova Scotians do get it. In response to an article by the minister in the Kings County Register saying that the student-teacher ratio was 12.9 to 1, a letter to the editor stated otherwise and I will table this: "This number may look good on paper. However, it is not the reality of classrooms in the Annapolis Valley region, or much [sic] the province, for that matter. A more realistic average ratio, if you investigate actual classrooms, is closer to 25 to 1."

My question to the minister is, will the minister once again acknowledge now that the student-teacher ratio of which she speaks is not a true reflection of what is happening in our Nova Scotian schools?

MS. JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, I will repeat, the ratio for teachers and for staff for the province is 12.9. That is a ratio. That is the same kind of ratio that has been used historically and very clearly that is a ratio. Class size, however, is different, which I just explained; when you take out your administrators the ratio changes. The average class size in the province ranged from 21 for the elementary and 24.

I will find that information which I will table again but ratio is different than class size - two completely different things. Thank you.

MS. CASEY: Mr. Speaker, I want to be specific about the article that I just tabled. In the Kings County schools there are plenty of examples where the minister's ratio does not ring true. For example, from Primary to Grade 1, 27 to 1; in Grade 5, 30 to 1; in Grade 9 science, 36 to 1; in Grade 9 music, 54 to 1. (Interruptions) I'm sure that the minister would be welcome in that Kings County school.

Mr. Speaker, teachers and parents know the true numbers and they are not getting them from the minister, they are getting them from the actual classrooms. So final question,

again, will the minister acknowledge that a 12.9 ratio is not a true reflection of the realities of the numbers that exist in the classrooms in our province?

MS. JENNEX: The ratio is 12.9 to 1 and I will repeat a little lesson that I just gave the House; ratio is different than class size. I would say that across the province you are going to find different groupings in class size but based on averages, our class sizes are better than they have been in a generation.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants West.

ENERGY - KILOWATT HR.: COSTS - ACCEPTABLE LEVEL

MR. CHUCK PORTER: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Energy. Standard & Poor's rating services has revised its outlook for Emera and Nova Scotia Power from "stable" to "negative", pointing directly to their massive capital spending plans. Standard & Poor's protects Emera's investors; Nova Scotians are wondering who is protecting them. How much per-kilowatt hour does the Minister of Energy think Nova Scotia families can afford to pay for their electricity bill?

HON. CHARLIE PARKER: Mr. Speaker, I thank the honourable member for his question. Certainly we're all concerned about the volatile fuel prices, about the ever-increasing costs of coal and oil. We're doing something about that, we're trying to get off of fossil fuels and get on to more renewables, more conservation measures. We're really undergoing an energy transformation in this province and we're working in the long term to make the power rates not only more affordable today but to make it more affordable in the long term.

MR. PORTER: Mr. Speaker, Emera president and CEO Chris Huskison says he needs money to meet requirements of the NDP bite-the-bullet electricity plan. The NDP plan doesn't mention affordability as too many Nova Scotians are fully aware of. When will the minister rewrite his government's bite-the-bullet electricity plan and put people, small businesses and their ability to afford electricity back at the top of the decision-making pyramid?

MR. PARKER: Mr. Speaker, we have a renewable electricity plan that came forward in 2010 and we have an investment in our future through the COMFIT program that involves communities, through the IPP program in this province, providing renewable energy. Overall we have a strong plan to get off fossil fuels. We can't continue to bury our heads in the sand forever like the previous governments have done; we have to move forward with the plan.

MR. PORTER: Mr. Speaker, Standard & Poor's rating services analyst responsible for the outlook changes for the power company says: Upshot, Nova Scotia Power's ability to cover a growing debt load will depend on the size of rate increases. This is no upshot;

Nova Scotians cannot afford to bail out this government's bite-the-bullet electricity plan any longer.

My question to the minister is, how many people and jobs will this government drive away from Nova Scotia before it is willing to get off its high horse and review its bite-the-bullet electricity plan?

MR. PARKER: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, the status quo is not an option any longer, we can no longer continue to rely on fossil fuels. We need renewable energy in this province, clean, green, renewable energy. The estimated cost is somewhere between 1 per cent and 2 per cent a year over the next five years. That's an investment in our future, an investment in lower power rates for Nova Scotians.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester North.

EDUC. - MATH SCORES: IMPROVEMENT - MIN. PLANS

HON. KAREN CASEY: Mr. Speaker, math and literacy scores for students are important. They help us to identify the level of success our students are having in our public schools. We recognize that we can always do better and we always want to improve those scores. My question to the minister is, what steps has the minister taken to improve the math scores in this province?

HON. RAMONA JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, as part of our Kids and Learning First plan that we launched about two months ago, I think we have outlined that we are going to be moving to the western protocol. We recognize that our math curriculum has an awful lot of outcomes and what we're going to be doing is moving to the western protocol. That work has already started and I will continue on, I would imagine, with my second question. Thank you.

MS. CASEY: Mr. Speaker, the minister speaks about two months. I believe this government has been in almost three years, so I think that maybe waiting for two months prior to would suggest something should have been done. (Interruptions) I'll remember that, John. This government has done nothing constructive, nothing designed to improve those math scores; rather they have cut funding to public education, eliminated math mentors and forced school boards to reduce the number of classroom teachers. My question to the minister is, how would those cuts be designed to improve math scores?

MS. JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, we are investing in our students' education. Our per-student funding is higher than it has ever been and there's another piece here that I would like to remind the member opposite, that over a 10-year period we have had 30,000 students leave our system. Today, as we're standing here talking, there are 361 more teachers in the system today. Obviously there's a disconnect there and the department is

working very hard, making sure that our children are going to succeed. Our investments are strategic to make sure our students are successful. Thank you.

MS. CASEY: Mr. Speaker, I was pleased that the minister mentioned the western curriculum. Students in Nova Scotia are very young, bright people. Our classroom teachers are well trained, dedicated and hard working individuals. The solution the minister has referred to - she's going to do it now, two months she's decided - to adopt a new curriculum, in particular, the Alberta curriculum. Yet parents in the western part of Canada, in Alberta in particular (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable member for Colchester North has the floor.

MS. CASEY: Mr. Speaker, parents in western Canada themselves are concerned about this math instruction, about the outcomes and about the curriculum, and they've formed a group called WISE. This well-educated group is recommending to their own government changes in the Alberta curriculum that this minister wants to bring to Nova Scotia. My question would be, why would Nova Scotia adopt a curriculum from another province when the educators in that province are not happy with the curriculum they have?

MS. JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, we are working with the western protocol, which has shown to have benefits for the students in certain parts of the province. The students who are exceeding in math have been following the western protocol and this is something that has been adopted with consultation with our school boards that are looking forward to this curriculum being moved into our school system. Thank you very much.

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

PREM.: TAX PROMISES - BREACH

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. As all Nova Scotians are now only too painfully aware, the Premier promised when he was running to be Premier that he would not raise their taxes. As we also famously know now, shortly after the election he did just that. Now this week the Premier is at it again - making a new tax promise, but only if he is re-elected. Apparently the Premier thinks he can fool Nova Scotians twice.

In 2007, the Premier's own Minister of Finance spoke of the importance of keeping your promises. He said, "A new promise is a poor substitute for a broken one." I will table that quote for the Minister of Finance and for his Premier. My question for the Premier is, does he agree with his own Minister of Finance that a new promise is a poor substitute for a broken one?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, the answer to the question is very easy. The Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party should consider the increase in the HST the legacy of the Progressive Conservative Government.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, the Premier has been in office for under three years, and here is his legacy. Already, every Nova Scotia family, \$4,000 more paid in extra HST since he broke his promise; every Nova Scotia family, \$6,000 deeper in debt because his government broke its promise.

My question to the Premier is, how can he look those families in the eye after reaching into their pockets for \$4,000 more in a broken promise and tell them that he kept his commitment?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I do it by saying to them that I am profoundly sorry that the Progressive Conservative Government left us so far in debt.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, Nova Scotians know that that is not true. (Interruptions) The Auditor General himself - \$19.7 million surplus when those guys got in. A \$19.7 million surplus. What have they done? The Premier broke his promise; he raised their taxes; they watch as meaningful services to Nova Scotians, like health care and education, are cut, and while more jobs are added at the Department of Education, at the Department of Health, at the Department of Finance - something the Premier also promised not to do.

My question to the Premier is, how can he look Nova Scotians in the eye and tell them that he kept his promise after raising their taxes, cutting their services, and creating a deficit and more debt?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, four of the foremost economists in the Atlantic Provinces pointed out that the former Progressive Conservative Government left us with a \$1.4 billion structural deficit. The things that the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party says are true - it did cost people money, and it did so because of the mistakes made by the former Progressive Conservative Government.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

LBR. & ADV. EDUC.: POST-SECONDARY EDUC. CUTS - REVERSE

MR. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, this government recently signed an MOU agreement with universities that removes the cap on tuition in the Province of Nova Scotia. With university costs skyrocketing and the cost of living going through the roof, I think students need more. Will the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education stand in this House today and commit to reversing this government's deep cuts to post-secondary education and to begin to start lowering tuition costs in this province?

HON. MARILYN MORE: Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud that last year our government invested \$42.5 million, the single largest contribution toward making university education affordable and accessible in this province. We're continuing with our upcoming budget to make it more affordable for students. Thank you.

MR. CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, the fact that this government in investing in all these affordability measures tells me one thing - tuition isn't affordable in the Province of Nova Scotia. Tuition isn't affordable and instead of actually investing in the core funding of our post-secondary education system, this government has cut \$75 million out of our post-secondary education system.

The challenge here, Mr. Speaker, is that the majority of jobs that we are creating now require a post-secondary credential. So my question again to the minister is, will she commit in this House today to reverse these deep cuts to our post-secondary education system and lower tuition in the Province of Nova Scotia?

MS. MORE: Mr. Speaker, our Party has a long track record of trying to keep tuition affordable in this province. Certainly we supported the former government in freezing tuitions and we stand on our record of keeping tuition for undergraduate Nova Scotia students attending Nova Scotia universities at or below the national average.

MR. CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, I've heard this minister and this Premier say they are keeping our tuition in the province below the national average. According to Statistics Canada, our tuition in the province is far above the national average - and I'll table that - for undergrads. For graduate students it's even higher and I'll table this as well.

I think it's time that this government puts students before spin. The cost of rent is going up, the cost of food is increasing, the cost of electricity and gas is increasing, and when it comes to tuition, this government is actually making education more expensive.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the minister is, will she commit to reverse her government's deep cuts to our post-secondary education system and lower tuition costs in the Province of Nova Scotia?

MS. MORE: Mr. Speaker, our government is the first government in the history of this province to put a debt cap on students. We have a significant number, higher than many other jurisdictions, of Nova Scotians who are able to attend university. We're very proud of that. We're very proud to support 11 universities that make it an excellent opportunity right across this province. Both geographically and in terms of affordability, accessibility is something that we really hold dear and we will be watching the situation very carefully. Certainly we understand that there is a need for post-secondary education for, I believe, it's 75 per cent of new jobs coming open in this province.

We have a wonderful economic, educational and training opportunity here with all the new initiatives going on and we're going to support that with well-educated graduates who can go into those good paying jobs.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle.

COM. SERV.: SHYFT - FUNDING REFUSAL

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, this past week has been a dark one for the youth of Yarmouth, Digby and Shelburne Counties. The Minister of Community Services refused funding for SHYFT, a supportive housing option for youth. By forcing the facility to cut back their hours, the minister has shown her absolute disregard for our homeless youth. She took away the only option that many had for a safe and supportive place to sleep. In only 14 months, SHYFT had made a huge impression on the community. Students and adults all over the counties have gathered to rally against the department's decision. Yet the minister insists that, of course, she knows best.

Mr. Speaker, my question through you is for the Minister of Community Services. With the amount of backlash from the community, how can the minister justify her decision? Does she not believe that homelessness in rural areas is as important as homelessness in metro?

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, myself, as a minister and as a mother of a youth - this government, for the first time, has developed a youth plan for support services across this province. The honourable member is talking about an organization that I personally sat down with and talked to about the approach they were taking, that it was not only a band-aid approach but also a non-sustainable approach. We did not cut one cent from them because from day one we have been open, we have been honest. We said we would not be supporting it financially. However, the board of directors came to us many times with a deficit running \$20,000 to \$30,000 every two to three months, and because we did not want to see the youth in a terrible position, we kept funding it. We made an agreement with them and, unfortunately, they reneged on the agreement. Thank you.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Now the facility is no longer able to offer services 24/7; they have been forced to cut back to regular business hours, Monday to Friday. The minister knows that homelessness continues after the workday ends. Since its opening SHYFT has had 34 youth call their facility a home, the staff has helped reintegrate them back into their own homes and even helped others find a place of their own. Without a permanent address, these kids can't get jobs, apply to school or take any of the necessary steps to get back on their feet.

My question to the minister, what does the minister have to say to the six kids who, up until last week were staying at the SHYFT facility? What does she say to those vulnerable youth who need her help tonight?

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: Well in fact, Mr. Speaker, I visited SHYFT and I talked to the youth. I spoke to several of the youth last week and do you know what? It amazed me when I had a conversation with them, how brilliant and intelligent they are because they agreed with the fact that we were rolling out a new model that youth could access across the province.

The fact is that it was a supportive hub model and do you know what amazes me? Those youth are acting more adult than the adults who are fighting about what kind of service, when we had an agreement with the organization. What is happening is it is being played out - and I'm not talking about all the people in Yarmouth - I am talking about the politicians here who are trying to make political points out of a situation with the youth. It is very unfortunate that these adults, as politicians, want to get brownie points out of this rather than working together in a restorative manner, which the organization at SHYFT promised they would do. They are battling it out now in the media, rather than at the table where the youth sat and talked to me.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, I can't really believe my ears right now because we went to a meeting - the member for Yarmouth and I were invited to a meeting, and there were 100 or so people there, worried about what was going to happen to homelessness in Yarmouth. There was a rally where hundreds of students were able to express their disappointment with the government in front of town hall.

These aren't just the politicians, as she is trying to say, these are actual individuals and concerned parents who are very concerned about what is happening at the SHYFT society. So for her to say she doesn't necessarily have the information before her - and I asked that maybe she look into this just a little bit further and get the information, to make sure that these youth don't end up on the street tonight because that is exactly where they are going to end up.

Mr. Speaker, I asked the minister, what is she going to do to make sure that those individuals no longer have to stay on the street, or have to bed surf, or have to couch surf, or actually end up in dangerous situations where their lives may be at risk?

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, we have a plan and we have a strategy and we have partnerships. We also have placements for each and every one of those youth who are there. But you know it is so interesting how . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please, order. You know I think that things are becoming a little heated at this time and I think I'll just take a little deep breath and we can continue debate in this Chamber in a Parliamentary way for all, okay?

The honourable Minister of Community Services.

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, we have a plan in place. We have placements for the youth who would presently be going to SHYFT. We are caring about our youth. The Department of Community Services, that's what they do best, is to help children and youth, but as I mentioned, it is really incredible how this can turn into a political game because I would like to table an article that quoted the honourable member for Argyle and the article was titled, "Homeless in Yarmouth: Minister admits we have a problem." It says, "D'Entremont said he's not certain that such a . . ."

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. Order, please, order. You cannot use a member's name in this Chamber. You referred to the honourable member (Interruptions). The honourable Minister of Community Services has the floor.

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, I will say "the honourable member then", because I'm reading a quote, so I apologize for that, but I will insert "honourable member". It says the honourable member, ". . . he's not certain that such a place . . ." referencing SHYFT, ". . . is what the community needs." I will table that.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. Order, please. Order, please. I will ask the honourable member to come to order now or I will remove you from the Chamber out in the hall for the remainder of the day. Thank you.

Referring to a member by name is improper, to refer by any member by their name in any way during any proceedings in the House, including notices of motions, while reading from documents such as newspaper stories. Understood? Thank you.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

PREM.: WAIT TIMES - BUDGET INVESTMENT

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, yesterday's budget was yet another disappointment when it comes to addressing the challenges Nova Scotians experience from their health care system. DHAs who are responsible for delivering frontline patient care have been faced with their second consecutive year of budget pressures from this NDP Government and yet somehow are expected to do more with less. Given that the NDP was critical of health care wait times when they were running for election in 2009, could the Premier please explain why his government has delivered yet another budget that does precious little to address Nova Scotia's number one health care priority, wait times?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite knows, as the Leader of the Official Opposition knows, we have now moved the administrative costs in health care from being among the highest in the country to below the national average; we've been able to take those costs out of the system. We have participated with the DHAs in merger

agreements to ensure that the most cost-effective way of using the money in those district health authorities is used. When we make those savings, we roll them into patient care and that's why we're having success in improving our wait times.

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, what I know is he's closing emergency rooms across Nova Scotia and he's investing in senior administration staff for the Minister of Health and Wellness. The average wait time for a diagnostic mammogram at the QE II Hospital is now 97 days, in 2008, the same wait time was 70 days. The wait for lifesaving radiation therapy treatment for cancer patients in the Capital District is 36 days. In May 2008, the wait time in the Capital District was 14 days. Our wait times are going in the wrong direction. My question to the Premier is, can the Premier explain how wait times for these procedures are going to improve?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, first of all I would just like to correct what the Leader of the Official Opposition said. In fact, what is happening is we are keeping emergency rooms open right across the province, 24/7; that is what Better Care Sooner is achieving. It is achieving it through the collaborative emergency centres, a success that is going to be copied in other provinces. I would ask the Minister of Health and Wellness to address the specific questions with respect to wait times.

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I want all members to know that this government has made two very significant investments in the millions of dollars, both at the Cape Breton District Health Authority and at the Capital District Health Authority to expand radiation therapy. Construction is underway to accommodate bunkers for new equipment that is required to ensure that we meet the radiation treatment standards for cancer care across Nova Scotia. It is a significant investment, the patients and staff in those programs are very pleased for that investment. It will keep our wait times within the benchmarks that have been established nationally.

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, a good step to stay within those benchmarks would be preventing wait times from growing. We're going in the wrong direction. Ironically, the Premier talks about emergency rooms, I can tell you there are many communities across this province that understand and know that this government has been closing emergency rooms. He speaks of the Collaborative Emergency Centres; that's a new wait time for this government. They've announced five, and three communities are still waiting for the opening of those centres.

My question for the Premier is, the NDP Government campaigned to reduce health care wait times, yet yesterday when the budget was introduced, the wait time projects line in the budget had zero beside it. Will the Premier please tell Nova Scotians how wait times will be addressed given that the elimination of this budget line item would indicate it's not a priority for his government?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to address this question. As I pointed out, we said we were going to deal with emergency rooms. We're doing that, it's being done in a crystal clear fashion, a plan to address them right across the province. With respect to wait times, that's an easy one for me to answer, it's being done through the good management of the Department of Health and Wellness.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

HEALTH & WELLNESS: DHA BUS. PLANS - DETAILS

MR. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, nearly six months ago, actually, before we even started the Fall session of the Legislature, the Minister of Health and Wellness told the DHAs to cut 3 per cent from their budgets. According to the media release, the minister wanted more time for planning to allow for the best possible decisions. The reality, however, is that DHAs will be making cuts in order to adhere to the edict from this NDP Government. Given the increased planning time provided, why will members of the House be debating budget cuts without the benefit of the details contained in DHA business plans? My question is for the minister.

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, as members of this House know, it is under this government that my department has brought in the approval of business plans in the DHAs much earlier than has ever occurred in the past; in fact, at the beginning of the fiscal year. We will be doing that again this year. We've worked very closely with the DHAs and I want to take an opportunity here publicly to thank the DHAs for the hard work that they have done. It is a challenge in our province with an aging population, a population that suffers from high rates of chronic disease to control our health care costs and we are probably the province in the country that is leading the way with respect to having done so. It has been done through the very hard work and dedication of the men and women who work in the DHAs across our province.

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, South West Health has seen a budget decrease of close to \$1 million over last year's estimate. Pictou DHA is facing a \$1.4 million cut and GASHA will be asked to cut \$1.3 million from their 2011-12 forecasted expenditure. These are the examples on paper. All DHAs have been asked to do much more with less and yet we are not able to scrutinize the details. Given the minister stated in a news release on October 14th - I'll table that document - that the plan for approval would be submitted before the Spring budget. Will the minister confirm that she and/or her department are aware of DHA budget cut details as a result of approving the business plans?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I'm working through the final details of the district health authority plans before I bring them to Executive Council, which is part of the process for budgetary approval, and as soon as that process is complete, of course, we will be releasing those plans.

Again, I want to say that it's a challenge to control costs. We are working very hard. We've reduced administration in our district health authorities. We now have a merged-service initiative underway, which will see a further reduction in administration. We have gone through a process where we have protected patient care at the bedside. In this budget, we have been able to reinvest savings into strategic areas of priority for our health care system, and I'm looking forward to having an opportunity to have fuller discussions with members of this Chamber during the budget estimates, in terms of what the details of our investment in our health care system will be.

MR. GLAVINE: That was a very, very long "no" to my question. Mr. Speaker, six months of planning, 3 per cent cuts for the second year in a row, and no details. Last year in the Annapolis Valley, the Berwick clinic slashed its hours to save money in a budget freeze - zero dollars saved. That impacts patient care and puts pressure on the Valley Regional Hospital ER. Other DHAs implemented or increased user fees to deal with health issues at a time when life is less and less affordable for Nova Scotians.

My question to the minister is, will the minister please indicate whether she will formally approve and release the DHA business plans before the end of this House session, or has she now conveniently slowed down the process?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, my experience with that member is that member hasn't been all that capable of handling the details. He seems to get them wrong quite often, but he will have an opportunity to have those details as we work through the final iterations of the DHA budgets.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

COM. SERV.: SHELTER ALLOWANCE - INCREASE

MR. TREVOR ZINCK: Mr. Speaker, my question today is for the Minister of Community Services. The community of Dartmouth North is made up predominantly of 60 per cent multi-unit dwellings, and in recent conversations with private landlords our discussions centred around increases in power rates and upcoming increases in water rates, thus resulting in increases in rental costs. One of the conversations also centred around the fact that a number of landlords are more apt to not want to rent to individuals who are on income assistance because they simply don't have enough funding.

My question to the minister is, why does her NDP Government not agree to increase shelter allowances?

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: Thank you to the member for the question. I have referenced this in the past, and I know it's quite difficult in understanding the shelter rates, but history has shown, unfortunately, that when those shelter rates go up the rent tends to automatically go up. The landlords know that there's an increase. So what we've

been doing within our department is offering many different programs that people could access which would increase their income level, and we've done a very good job of that over the last several years in government. Thank you.

MR. ZINCK: Mr. Speaker, Poverty Reduction Tax Credits and Affordable Living Tax Credits are only good if you can wait every four months for funding. Nova Scotians are hungry now. Nova Scotians have to pay power bills now, and every month they have to pay rent. Interestingly enough, you don't qualify for those tax credits if you're actually homeless.

Does the minister recognize that her government's unwillingness to make appropriate adjustments to the shelter allowances is actually putting more Nova Scotians at risk of being homeless?

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, as I just mentioned, we have offered multiple-type programs that people can access. Now, for example, if you took a single parent with two children, because of the increases in the Affordable Living Tax Credit, the Poverty Reduction Credit, the increase in the Child Benefit that has continually risen, and also the increase on the monthly amount for income assistance, which is \$9 this time, it was \$15 last year, way more than previous governments - they were doing them at \$3 or \$4 a year. So that's substantially a lot more, but take for example that single parent, they would have now, after three years, \$2,300 annually more in their pockets under this government than they did under the previous government.

MR. ZINCK: Mr. Speaker, the real issue is that we're seeing more youth who are at risk of being homeless, or who are actually homeless. We're seeing more individuals - men and women - who are struggling, and at the shelter allowances now they simply cannot pay their rent. The majority of these Nova Scotians who rely on the minister's funding have to pay upwards of 60 per cent for their shelter out of their income. That is unacceptable, and this does not make sense when we're asking many of these individuals to deal with their addiction issues and mental health issues and overall well-being and health.

If we don't deal with these issues now, and the issue of shelter allowance, these individuals will find themselves relying on another system - one with a much greater cost, Mr. Speaker, and that's unfortunate for Nova Scotian taxpayers and those individuals.

So my question to the minister is, when will we see a real housing strategy come out, with the announcement last year of the federal funding, and will that housing strategy include an increase in the shelter allowances?

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, the housing component is very important to us. We've talked about that a lot and that we have invested millions and millions into housing with the assistance of the stimulus package. We just went through three years of upgrading and building new housing.

Once again, I said about the multiple programs that we are offering. I think another good example is you could take - and this is what we often term as working poor - a two-parent family with two children right now and there has never been anything to help individuals who would have been termed the working poor because we know that there is a distinction between people on income assistance and the people who are working for \$10 an hour. This government has put in a three-year period \$4,400 more in their pocket each and every year. So we're working very hard to be able to provide the financial supports that all Nova Scotians need.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

HEALTH & WELLNESS: WAIT LIST SYSTEM - BUDGET PRESSURES

MR. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, it is my hope at this time that the Minister of Health and Wellness will answer the question and not get personal. Nova Scotians expect better from their minister. (Interruptions)

Mr. Speaker, yesterday we heard the Minister of Health and Wellness attempt to defend the indefensible when it comes to child and youth mental health services, and I would like to table a letter the NDP sent to the Mental Health Coalition during the 2009 election. Contained in the letter is the following statement:

“The Conservatives decided if you can't fix a problem then you can pretend it doesn't exist. In 2005, Capital Health ordered a change in how wait times would be measured: they scheduled appointments far in advance and removed people from the wait list while they were still waiting. The number of people waiting appeared to go down when it was actually rising.” And I tabled the document.

Does it sound familiar, Mr. Speaker? It's no different than the wait list management system the minister is now defending as a best practice with the IWK. My question to the minister is if it wasn't good enough for the NDP during the 2009 election, why is it acceptable today?

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, mental health services are something we all want to see improved, I think, in this Legislature. What the IWK has decided to do is to fix a system that was broken, a system where a very small number of people got access to services but only if their situation became urgent, where everybody else sat on waiting lists and got no services.

They are adopting a new model and part of doing the change to the new model was doing an assessment of those who were on this very long waiting list, to determine who still was, indeed, waiting for services and bringing that wait list up to date. As a result of the work they've done, more than 600 families have had an intake assessment which would not have occurred without the work that the IWK has done.

Mr. Speaker, it's the right thing to do, it is not something that should be ridiculed. Thank you.

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, if this minister was in Opposition, she would be shouting from the rooftops about the injustice being done to child and adolescent mental health in this province. The attachment to the letter sent to the Mental Health Coalition in 2009 goes on to state that the NDP, if forming government, would work to expand both day treatment and in-patient services for adolescents. The IWK decision to move to a 24/5 model will result in 5,000 less in-patient days for children and youth.

My question to the minister is, will she now admit that pressures on budgets are forcing DHAs, like the IWK, to do the exact opposite of what the NDP promised they would do in the last election?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I've been very clear about what it is that we are supporting in terms of the IWK model. The IWK - and I circulated yesterday all of the various programs that they offer for mental health and addictions - are adopting more day treatment programs for children and adolescents who have behavioural problems. This is supported by the clinical research and evidence that it is the best practice; it is the best way to work with this particular population.

With respect to in-patient treatment, Mr. Speaker, in-patient treatment will continue at the IWK for those children and adolescents and their families who have acute and chronic psychiatric disorders and there is no change in those treatment programs.

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, my how the mighty have fallen. Unfortunately children and youth mental health services in this province are the victim of the fall. Faster assessments are great, if treatment is readily available to follow. Otherwise, children and youth suffering from mental health issues continue to wait and suffer.

My question to the minister is, given that in 2009 you committed to more in-patient services, why are you allowing the layoff of 22 front-line health workers?

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. I will remind all members that using the word "you" in a question is out of order. I explained that we are going to follow proper parliamentary procedure earlier in the House and I'll look forward to that going forward.

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I think the honourable member has proved my earlier point - he doesn't allow the facts to get in the way of a good story. The truth of the matter . . . (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness has the floor.

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: The truth of the matter, the facts, Mr. Speaker, are that we are organizing care for families, kids and adolescents, around the needs of families and those young people. We are not organizing services around the needs of health care workers and providers. That is what is occurring here. This is the model that we are adopting and more kids and more families will receive the care they need, in an earlier time frame. It is the Better Care Sooner that we committed to.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Glace Bay.

ERDT: RURAL COMMUNITIES - PROTECTION

MR. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, this NDP Government has done little to protect rural communities in our province. All regions outside Nova Scotia have experienced population decline since 2009. The provincial government has a responsibility to identify and address the specific problems that Nova Scotians face every day and no job, as a government, is more important than this. Three years in and we have seen no sign of a clear and well-defined plan.

My question is, will the Minister of Rural and Economic Development and Tourism explain to the people living in rural Nova Scotia why he has not provided a plan to keep them living and working in their communities?

HON. PERCY PARIS: Mr. Speaker, after 20 years of the lowest economic growth in the Province of Nova Scotia, when we came into government we recognized this. We developed a plan for all Nova Scotians; it is called jobsHere, which really addresses a large part of the issues that have confronted rural Nova Scotia. After the jobsHere plan has been rolled out now for over a year, the proof is certainly in the pudding.

MR. MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, since 2009 the Annapolis Valley has seen their labour force shrink by 8.6 per cent. This is on top of overall population decline in that area. People in that region are finding it harder and harder to get work in their communities and after a certain point, they simply leave.

My question to the minister is, how does the minister expect to reverse rural out-migration without a plan that will tell Nova Scotians what he plans to achieve and, more importantly, how he plans to achieve it?

MR. PARIS: Mr. Speaker, we do have a plan. I've stood here in my place many times during the last session, it is called jobsHere and we are proud of jobsHere. Under the jobsHere initiative we've created over - we saved over 2,000 jobs in the Province of Nova Scotia just in the forestry industry alone. Is that member suggesting that we shouldn't have invested in those jobs?

MR. MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, with the exception of Halifax, people are moving out of all regions of this province. It is simple to understand - no plan, no jobs. No jobs, people move elsewhere for work. If we look to southwestern Nova Scotia, we see an example of another disturbing trend and one that further explains why this minister needs to get a plan in place now. Since 2009, full-time employment has decreased by 6.7 per cent while part-time jobs are up 22 per cent.

My question to the minister, how many part-time jobs, with little or no benefits - how many part-time jobs does a person in rural Nova Scotia have in order to make ends meet and pay the bills?

MR. PARIS: Mr. Speaker, my first comment - and I will table this - this chart will show to you, will indicate the employment increase. We have more people employed in Nova Scotia now than at any time in its history.

We've made investments in rural Nova Scotia. Is that member over there saying that we should invest and build it in Cape Breton? Is that person saying that we shouldn't invest in Theriault & Son, in shipbuilding down in the southwestern region? Mr. Speaker, is that member over there saying we shouldn't invest in the Shelburne Shipyard? Is that person over there saying that we shouldn't have invested in Bowater? We've made investments and we will continue.

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

EDUC.: COLE HBR. SCH. ANNOUNCEMENT - EXPLAIN

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Education told the House she was looking forward to April 20th, the day she will receive the priorities of school boards. She said that's when decisions will be made. It seems to me that decisions have already been made and the minister made the decision without any opinions of the Halifax Regional School Board. Will the minister explain today why she did an end run around the Halifax Regional School Board and why did she announce a capital project based on political needs rather than the requirements of the school board?

HON. RAMONA JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to say that we are following the plan of Kids and Learning First and we are investing in our students, we are making sure they have opportunities so therefore there will be a skills trade centre in Cole Harbour. Thank you.

MR. ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, there's nothing about Kids and Learning First in this; it's votes and pork-barrelling first. It's funny the way the minister treats school boards. When something unpleasant has to be done, like millions of dollars in education cuts, she leaves it up to the school boards to do the work. But when it comes to making pork-barrel

political school announcements, she doesn't even give them the courtesy of hearing what the priorities are.

My question to the Minister of Education is, will the minister guarantee that the projects that are truly priorities for the Halifax Regional School Board won't be cancelled or delayed because she chose to pick a project from the NDP's re-election priority list? Will she guarantee that projects in Sheet Harbour and Hants County and elsewhere won't fall victim to her political agenda?

MS. JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, on April 20th the priorities of the school boards will be coming into the department. We will look at those priorities and we will make our decisions based on what our school boards are telling us they need in each of the jurisdictions.

MR. ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, if the priorities are coming out on April 20th, how come the announcement was made before that? One of the reasons the Premier gave, with a straight face, for building the new high school is to house some students when renovations to another school are being done. That's laughable. I know you don't build a new house when you need to remodel the kitchen. My question to the minister is, will the minister admit today that her boss, the Premier, overreached when he gave the flimsy excuse for building a new school? Will she admit that her decision to build a school was for votes and pork-barrelling first?

MS. JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, the Cole Harbour area was actually identified many years ago when Howard Windsor was the superintendent. I know there has been a call for either skilled trades or a flexible school in Cole Harbour. This has been something that has been a priority for many people, the issue of providing Cole Harbour with skill trades. Following along with my comments on Kids and Learning First, this is providing the opportunity for students in all the surrounding areas to be able to get skills trade development right in their own community. I stand behind this decision, this is a good decision for Nova Scotians.

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

COM. SERV.: HOMELESSNESS & HOUSING STRATEGY - RELEASE

MS. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, at a housing and homelessness conference held in Halifax last November, the Minister of Community Services announced that her department was developing a homelessness and housing strategy. Since that time, we have heard nothing outside of that conference. No one has seen anything about this strategy.

Homelessness and housing advocates in Nova Scotia all agree that we're in a housing crisis - 1,700 families are waiting to get into public housing and they would also

agree we're in a crisis. My question to the minister is, when can the people of Nova Scotia expect to see this alleged housing strategy?

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, the whole issue of housing and homelessness is very dear to us as a government. We have put many initiatives in place over the last three years to address that. The fact is, what they don't understand on the other side is that it takes time to strategize and build a very strong foundation to go forward with any initiative. They don't know what the word "plan" means, they don't know what the word "strategy" means, everything in the past for them has been on an ad hoc basis and so that is why we take our time, so when we have the opportunity and we go forward with our plan it is a solid plan.

MS. REGAN: Mr. Speaker, under this government families are finding it harder to make ends meet. Homes are more expensive, rent is going up, power bills are unmanageable, it has become more and more difficult for families to keep a roof over their heads. Housing organizations are working with the private sector to increase access to affordable housing, but people are looking to this government to come to the table and make a meaningful commitment. Will the Minister of Community Services commit today to work with community housing and homelessness organizations to increase access to affordable housing in this province?

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, I don't have to make a commitment because we've been doing that all along.

MS. REGAN: Mr. Speaker, 1,700 families would beg to differ and that number does not even include the many families who are renting, but they don't know where their next rent cheque is going to come from, those who are couch surfing and not sure when they're going to be tossed out on the street, and those who are worried about losing their family homes because they simply cannot make ends meet under this NDP Government. Will the minister tell members of this House today what she is going to do to get these 1,700 families into homes?

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, we have been doing a lot. What we've been doing is investing in affordable housing, we have been developing strategies, we have been meeting with the shelters, we have created new shelter programs with hub supports that have never been in this province before. As I said earlier, you take a family of two parents with two children, because of this NDP Government, they have \$4,400 more dollars, that's an increase of 23 per cent more in their income and they would never even touch something like that or even consider it and that is from all the good work that this government is doing.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford-Birch Cove on a new question.

LBR. & ADV. EDUC.: GENDER WAGE GAP - MIN. CONCERNS

MS. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, the gap between what men earn and women earn is increasing here in Nova Scotia - it's decreasing across Canada. Women and families are finding it harder to make ends meet. My question, did the Minister responsible for the Status of Women raise any concerns with her Cabinet colleagues about this increasing wage gap and how this government is making life more difficult for women and families to make ends meet?

HON. MARILYN MORE: Mr. Speaker, certainly for generations we've known that there has been a wage gap between men and women. Despite claims to the contrary, actually in Nova Scotia the wage gap is shrinking. Certainly when we look at the statistics available through Stats Canada, between 2008 and 2010 the median hourly wage for women increased by \$2, whereas the median wage for men increased by \$1.15. Now, that's not to deny that a lot of our service and domestic and lower-paying administrative and service jobs are predominately staffed by women, and that's one reason that our government is up-skilling, providing all kinds of training opportunities so that more and more women can move into the higher-paying full-time jobs in this province.

MS. REGAN: Just so the minister is aware, her government was not in in 2008. If you look at the Stats Can figures for 2009 on, in fact, the wage gap is increasing. Mr. Speaker, this government has slashed health budgets, and women make up over 80 per cent of the health workforce. These cuts affect women's employment and women will have to take on more caregiving responsibilities as this government puts off doing anything to reduce wait times.

I'll ask my question again. Did the minister raise any concerns with her Cabinet colleagues about the impacts these health cuts are having on women and their families?

MS. MORE: I think we've always recognized that policy, budget, and legislative decisions impact differently on women than they do men, and that's one reason that our government has strengthened the gender-based analysis on all policy changes and recommended strategies in this province. We look very seriously at that lens and do that analysis. We have invested heavily in programs that support women going into non-traditional fields that often have higher-paying wages. Certainly this is a complex issue, and we are looking at a breadth of different solutions in order to increase women's prosperity in this province. Thank you.

MS. REGAN: Over the past two years this NDP Government has slashed public education funding by \$65 million. Women make up nearly 70 per cent of the education workforce. Women's employment is being affected by these cuts. When schools are looking for more volunteers to deliver the services, it's women who are going to end up filling that service gap, and above all, women are concerned that their children's education is suffering under this NDP Government.

Mr. Speaker, my question, for the third time. Did the Minister responsible for the Status of Women raise any concerns to her Cabinet colleagues about the impact cuts to education have on women and their families?

MS. MORE: As I've mentioned earlier this year, we have strengthened the membership of the Advisory Council on the Status of Women. They are giving good advice on impacts on policy and other government decisions. Certainly the breadth of factors that are taken into account when any decision is made by this government is as thorough and carefully analyzed as possible, and we are taking steps to mitigate any negative impacts. We have increased the breadth of up-skilling, of training, and of education programs for women and girls in this province. We are very encouraged with the uptake. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston.

SNSMR: HEATING ASSISTANCE REBATE PROG. - INFO RELEASE DATE

HON. KEITH COLWELL: Mr. Speaker, the NDP waited until November 2011 to inform Nova Scotians about how to apply for the Heating Assistance Rebate Program. The information on how to apply should start earlier so that recipients have ample time to apply for the badly-needed rebate.

My question to the Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations is, why did the minister wait until November before starting the information campaign for the Heating Assistance Rebate Program?

HON. JOHN MACDONELL: I think the member is probably starting off where he left off last Fall, when he raised this question and got an answer then. The way the program works is that for anybody who has actually ever used the program, the application forms go out to them automatically.

AN HON. MEMBER: About how many?

MR. MACDONELL: Many, many. All the MLAs actually get applications that go to our offices and practically every community organization in the province gets notification of those as well.

Mr. Speaker, we also put out a press release last Fall on this and it did not get picked up by the media. So we do what we can. Certainly people can't really apply until January 1st and we made it quite clear that, certainly after that date, that the program was in place. I have to say we don't hear much as far as a negative comment on the advertising on this program.

MR. COLWELL: Mr. Speaker, the government needs to let the public know about the program so they can apply for relief from these high energy costs under this NDP Government. In the past the budget has been underspent because the NDP did not ensure that Nova Scotians knew about the program in a timely manner.

My question to the minister is, was the budget for the Energy Assistance Rebate Program underspent this year, again, as well?

MR. MACDONELL: I could try to confirm that. It's my understanding that it was but I could verify that for the member.

MR. COLWELL: Mr. Speaker, the Liberal caucus has questioned the minister repeatedly to make sure that Nova Scotians knew about this program. The people of Nova Scotia need to know much earlier, allowing them the time to access this really important rebate. My question to the minister is again, why did it take a sustained attack from the Official Opposition to force the NDP to inform the public?

MR. MACDONELL: I think the honourable member better do more advertising on his sustained attack because I didn't know they had one.

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

MR. KEITH BAIN: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education. Propeller Brewing Company is a local Nova Scotia success story. In allNovaScotia.com today we learned that its workers are waiting to find out if they will become unionized. For the last six or seven years . . .

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

I will now recognize the honourable member for Kings West on an introduction.

MR. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I would like to draw the attention of the House to the west gallery where Kelly Murphy, an IWK mental health worker and NSGEU board member, is present today for the proceedings. Could we give her a warm welcome? (Applause)

OPPOSITION MEMBERS' BUSINESS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Opposition House Leader.

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

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Opposition House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 3.

Bill No. 3 – Sales Tax Act.

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

MR. HAROLD THERIAULT: Mr. Speaker, I'm just going to be brief but I would like to move second reading of Bill No. 3. This bill provides a rebate of the portion of the provincial income tax to people who have to bury loved ones in this province.

This bill has been around this House for five years. This is the fifth time it has been reintroduced into this House, which I said the other day, and it came about on December 10, 2007 - the first submission or first time it was tabled by this Party. It has been five times since then but this was brought to me by a gentleman - and I'm just going to be quick - who could not afford to bury his wife but she didn't want to be cremated. His name was Johnny Thibeau. He ended up having to borrow the money to bury his wife and I think to this day he's still paying it off. His comment was to me, when he came to me with the bill of \$6,000, which was the cheapest funeral he could find at the time, rather than cremation which she didn't want, the tax on that bill was approximately \$900 on a \$6,000 funeral, which that man, after having 12 children brought on this earth, into this province and not two pennies to rub together, had to go out and borrow that money and pay this province \$900 in taxes and is paying it to this day.

I told Mr. Thibeau that I would do my best and work to see if I can help other people in this province who don't have to pay this tax. With that, Madam Speaker, I'm taking my seat and I'm hoping that this bill continues forward.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Queens.

MS. VICKI CONRAD: Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Digby-Annapolis for bringing this Private Member's Bill forward, the Sales Tax Act respecting the rebate and/or removal of the sales tax on funerals. I also want to take the time to acknowledge the many Nova Scotians who have gone through and will go through the grieving process of a loved one while, at the same time, some of those families also struggle with the burden of funeral expenses and related costs.

I also would like to remind the member that it was in 1996, when the then Liberal Government actually brought in the harmonized sales tax which included sales tax on funerals and their expenses and other related costs. You know certainly back in 1996 and certainly since 1996 when the then Liberal Government brought in the harmonized sales

tax, we do know that there was some broad public consultation on what that sales tax would exclude. Unfortunately, funerals were not discussed at that time.

I also want to acknowledge, Madam Speaker, the many members of this House over the years who have also advocated for some sort of tax relief for families who are paying the financial burden of funeral costs. I want to remind the members of this House that this government, when we came into a position in 2009, that we recognized that we were facing some significant financial challenges in this province, to the tune of \$1.3 billion in debt. That's what we were facing in this province.

This government has put in place a path to get us back to balance. I can't stress that enough, certainly in light of the budget that was released to members of the House yesterday. That certainly demonstrates we certainly are on that path back to balance.

I also want to remind members as well that the Premier has indicated that as we move forward to 2013, seeing our books back to balance, that perhaps the sales tax on funerals could be an option on the list of many things that we will review, as a government, when we have more fiscal flexibility. Again, that is when we are back to balance, that is possibly to review the tax on funerals as one of the many things that we will review.

I'm going to read a quote of one of the many endorsers of our provincial budget yesterday. This one is from Leanne Hachey with the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. I will table this after I read the quote, Madam Speaker:

"Spending restraint is the star of the show, 2nd year in a row. I've lived through 7-8 budgets, never seen spending cuts in the level this has been kept at. Something to be said about discipline, and DEFINITELY this government has shown discipline in spending. Also, unexpected tax relief: small biz tax reduction, we applaud, also modest tax reductions for families, is again good news. Also promise to reduce HST to where it was, is good news."

That was recorded media interview, April 3, 2011, and I will table that, Madam Speaker. Not only Leanne Hachey with the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, but many, many people around the province are now recognizing that we are certainly keeping our commitments to getting us back to balance.

Because I'm speaking to Bill No. 3, the Sales Tax Act, I want to take the members in the House here through the number of tax initiatives that this responsible government has put in place in this year's 2012-13 budget. We are committing and have committed through our budget \$7.5 million in personal income tax credits. The budget 2012 sees an increase in the dependant amount to \$8,481 to match the basic personal amount which will provide savings of \$1.4 million with an average benefit of \$99 for about 14,000 tax filers in Nova Scotia. We're also demonstrating that personal tax credit for the increase in the

spousal amount to \$8,481 to match the basic personal amount. This will provide total savings of \$4.6 million with an average benefit of \$103 to approximately 44,000 tax filers in Nova Scotia.

We're also increasing the disability amount to \$7,341 and that's an average benefit of about \$75 for about 20,000 Nova Scotians, and that will provide a total savings of \$1.5 million. I want to say that this non-refundable credit is claimed by filers who are disabled and/or have a dependant with a disability. This responsible government in this 2012-13 budget is also increasing the Affordable Living Tax Credit in the amount of \$255 for individual adults and \$60 for a dependent child, and that's helping approximately 240,000 Nova Scotians. We are also increasing the Poverty Reduction Credit to \$250 a year, which is helping approximately 15,000 families.

We're also offering a tax reduction for small businesses. We're continuing to look after our small businesses across the province - for the first time in 20 years. Since this government has been elected we have been gradually reducing the small-business tax credit, and this year \$10 million for the 2013 year will be seen in savings for small businesses from one end of the province to the other. We're dropping that small-business tax to 3.5 per cent, effective January 1, 2013, and I want to remind members of this House that when this government was first elected the rate for small businesses was 5 per cent. We have kept a very important commitment to many of our taxpayers out there, and those small-business owners know that.

Madam Speaker, we're also seeing a tax reduction from many large corporations to the tune of \$16.3 million. The province will keep its commitment to eliminate the large corporation tax on capital of non-financial institutions as of July 1, 2012 of this year.

Madam Speaker, and members of the House, I want to tell you that approximately 2,700 large corporate tax filers will benefit from the elimination of this tax. Another very important tax and I'm sure all members of the House will agree, and certainly my good colleague, the member for Digby-Annapolis will recognize the tax reduction for many low-income seniors to the tune of \$7.7 million. The province is committed to ensuring that seniors receiving the Guaranteed Income Supplement will get a refund if they pay provincial income tax. Seniors do not have to apply for the refund and there is no form to fill out; however, it is important that seniors receiving GIS file their tax returns annually in order to receive this very important tax reduction. It will put a minimum of \$50 or an average of about \$450 in provincial income tax back into the hands of about 17,000 low-income seniors receiving the Guaranteed Income Supplement.

Madam Speaker, and members of the House, I want to remind you this is a government that is on the path back to balance, we are acting very responsibly. We recognize as a government that we cannot do everything at once in the first couple of years.

I also want to tell you about another very attractive tax incentive and that's the Graduate Retention Rebate. That's costing government \$11.2 million and this is going to provide an incentive for new graduates to live and work right here in Nova Scotia. We're also providing an Equity Tax Credit and Labour-Sponsored Venture Capital Tax Credit of \$6.6 million. The Equity Tax Credit and the Labour-Sponsored Venture Capital Tax Credit were scheduled to expire on February 29, 2012, and they both have been extended for a 10-year period, to February 28, 2022.

Madam Speaker, again, I will say that this is a government that is being very responsible. We are on the right track; we have a very logical course to getting ourselves back to balance. The Minister of Finance, yesterday, in his Budget Address indicated to members that, indeed, we are on the right path. As much as I know that the member for Digby-Annapolis's heart is in the right place, absolutely - he has stood on his feet time and time again in this House advocating for the members in Digby and his constituents, as we all do - the reality is, as I said earlier in my comments, government can't do everything that it wishes it can do.

I can assure you that the Premier is very committed in reviewing all of those things that we would like to see in the back-to-balance budget in 2013. As the Premier had indicated in previous comments, we are committed in reviewing that sales tax portion on funerals. Again, I will remind members, it is a review of all things that we would all like to see at some point in time as a governing body responsible for the finances of the province.

Madam Speaker, I am very proud of this government and the path that we are on. We've faced some very significant challenges. The fact that we had to raise the HST in our first year was a very difficult task for this government to undertake but it was recognized at the time that we had to come up with a forward-thinking, hard-nosed plan to get us back to balance. We intend to finish what we started and we are committed to seeing that reduction in the HST at the end of bringing our budget back to balance. We are committed to that.

The Premier announced yesterday that we take this role of governing very seriously. We are committed to making lives more affordable for families and families going through whatever struggle they happen to be facing. We are standing there with them, Madam Speaker. We are standing with the families in Digby-Annapolis; we are standing with the families in Queens; we are standing with the families in every constituency across this province.

The tax reductions that I pointed out to you in my delivery here over the last several minutes certainly indicate that we do have the best interests of Nova Scotians at heart, Madam Speaker. I thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to speak to this very, very important Private Member's Bill.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants West.

MR. CHUCK PORTER: Madam Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today in my place and talk for a few minutes on a bill that I believe to be quite important, that has been put forward in this House by the honourable member for Digby. It was interesting listening to his comments earlier on about that family. That is something that is all too often heard around this province.

I know that we all have funeral services provided, one or two in each of our respective communities; in my case I have three. When you look around, you look at the people, they are seniors. We've heard discussion about seniors today and how much the government is doing for seniors. This would be a big step, but apparently one that the government does not agree with in helping out the senior population and allowing them to plan, going ahead knowing what those costs are going to be.

It's easy to say one thing and then do nothing, I guess, because that does appear to be what the situation is here. They talk about saving Nova Scotians, and I believe the campaign slogan last time was "a better deal for today's families." Well, we've seen that go by the wayside and other things come along. Unfortunately, that is the reality of the NDP in this province. It's hardly a better deal - a very bitter deal.

I know that the other members are heckling over there because they know that it is the truth and the truth often does hurt. We've heard that old saying, Madam Speaker, that the truth does hurt. I do know that it's tough to be on the other side and to make decisions, but you know, there will be an opportunity. We all know that we hear the talk about the HST and how hard it was to put on. It wasn't that hard. They did it almost immediately after they got there, so it couldn't have been too hard. I'm sure that it was well thought out prior to getting there - you know, we'll promise anything to get into the government bench - and that certainly seems to be the case, because we've not paid any attention to real Nova Scotians and the issues in this province.

Now I'm going to have a lot more to say as the weeks and the months go by in this House on this very issue, but for the time being, Madam Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to join in on this debate. As I said, I know it's going to go on and on some more. So with those few words, I'll take my seat.

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

MR. GARY BURRILL: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to begin addressing some comments to this bill just by expressing my respect for the project that the bill represents and my essential accord with the proposal that underlies it. In speaking to it from this point of view, I want to begin by saying that last evening I attended the annual meeting of the Arimathea Funeral Cooperative. Arimathea is the organization which has been pressing about this issue longer than any other, as far as I am aware. Arimathea is the oldest funeral co-operative in Nova Scotia.

The hall was full of the interested people of the Stewiacke Valley and the Musquodoboit Valley and surrounding area who participate in and support that co-op. One of the first things that was mentioned by Don Kennedy, a very able leader in the community of Upper Stewiacke who chairs that co-op, as he chaired the meeting, was to take note of the fact that the meeting was being held on a day when another budget had come and gone without there being a measure fulfilling the thing that the funeral co-op had pressed for so long, the elimination of the funeral tax. I want to assure the proponent of this bill that this is a matter that has been very close to the advocacy and the interest of many people in the funeral co-op movement for a long, long time.

Perhaps I should begin by saying a few words just about the funeral co-op movement and Arimathea Funeral Cooperative as a background to their advocacy, to the point that is presented in this bill.

I was very interested in the account the member for Digby-Annapolis gave of his friend and the difficult position his friend had with the paying of the tax. I would say the funeral co-op movement in Nova Scotia began with an experience of another friend. It happened in the early 1990s that a man who had worked for a very modest income all of his life in the woods, in the Musquodoboit Valley, passed away. I was, in fact, the minister called to preside at his funeral. While the family was gathered at the graveside following the committal service, one of the things his wife said to me was, you know Reverend, that box cost more than any car we ever drove. I was led to think about this for a long time and to take up an interest in the leadership which the Roman Catholic Church had given in the Diocese of Prince Edward Island to the establishment of funeral co-operatives in order to bring the prices of funerals to a more sensible level in that province.

The first funeral co-operative in Prince Edward Island was in a community called, Palmer Road, it was begun through the Roman Catholic Parish in Palmer Road by Father Eloi Arsenault who is really the kind of grandfather of this movement in the Maritimes. Father Eloi then conducted a short course for myself and some other people in the Musquodoboit Valley who had acquired an interest in whether or not it would be possible in Nova Scotia to have a movement that would be able to address the serious problem of the high cost of funerals. I would remind listeners that this was in the early 1990s, which was at a time of unprecedented concentration in the international funeral business. There was a period when large amounts of multinational capital were invested in family funeral homes in areas like the rural Maritimes.

Over a short period of time, we went in the Maritimes from having dozens and dozens and dozens of families owning funeral homes to, in fact, a small number of companies. There was one company in particular called the Loewen Group, which acquired an ownership position in the family funeral homes all throughout Nova Scotia. Not, I think, coincidentally, it was in this same period that the price of funerals over a short time, in fact, more or less doubled. At that time there was a kind of conundrum in Nova Scotia and that was that there were funeral co-ops across Canada trying to conduct burial

services in a dignified, simplified, less expensive way. The question was, well why are there none of these in Nova Scotia?

Part of the answer was that there was a peculiarity in Nova Scotia funeral regulations that at the time prohibited Nova Scotians from undertaking the kind of initiative that had been undertaken in Prince Edward Island. In Prince Edward Island, the regulations in the funeral industry were such that any interested person, the minister of a church, a representative of an organization, could organize a funeral, could take care and custody of remains on a family's behalf and see to the arrangements. But in Nova Scotia, in order for a person to take on that responsibility, it was the case, as it still is today, that first a person must have a licence as a funeral director. Of course you can understand that in parts of the commercial funeral industry there was not an enthusiasm that co-operatives would be coming to Nova Scotia, therefore, amongst licensed funeral directors there was a reticence to offer their services, potentially, to what would be the first funeral co-operative with an eye to what might be their potential employment prospects in the future.

This created a terrific log-jam, but it happened in 1994 that a group of citizens in the Stewiacke and Musquodoboit Valleys decided - they were organized through their churches - that this had become such a problem in their communities that they would approach the government and seek some way around this regulation that would allow the churches to bury their own in their communities on a non-profit basis. An accommodation was found with this application which allowed, in November 1994, the first funeral co-op in Nova Scotia, the Arimathea Funeral Cooperative, to open. It remains amongst Canadian funeral co-operatives, which is now a large movement, a very unique funeral co-operative in that it is organized entirely through churches.

It is organized through what are called sponsoring congregations. It was originally organized for six sponsoring congregations, although today it has 30-some and serves an area of a radius of about 50 or 60 kilometres around where it has its premises on land leased from St. James United Church in Upper Musquodoboit.

It was an interesting thing that happened at that time. When the first funeral co-operative opened in Nova Scotia, one might have expected that customs of this sort would take many years to change. In fact, the opposite happened. In the Musquodoboit Valley, within the space of less than six months, it was as though the people had all turned to one another and just nodded and said, yes, this is a better thing, we will do this. The funeral practices changed within a very short time so that the vast majority of the funeral observances in the Musquodoboit Valley, and a very considerable percentage of them in the communities around the Musquodoboit Valley, are carried out through funeral homes in the co-operative tradition and organized on a non-profit basis, to the point that today, as was reported at last night's annual meeting, the Arimathea Funeral Co-operative has over 1,300 members and oversees the dispensation of assets over \$600,000.

For 10 years Arimathea was the only funeral co-operative in Nova Scotia. There is now a funeral co-operative in the Annapolis Valley, there is another in the Lake Ainslie area, there are now three in the province; but one of the very first difficulties that was faced by the fledgling funeral co-operative movement was the very problem addressed by this bill, the problem of the funeral tax.

The funeral co-op had not been established for very long when the government of the day introduced the HST which extended the number of the parts of a funeral service which were subject to taxation. Prior to the establishment of the HST, the old PST was applied to some minor elements of things that were purchased to do with funerals. I think it was only the - as it's called often in that world - the rough box. I think PST applied to that, but not to anything else, at any rate, only to a minor corner of the matter.

Under the new blended HST, the HST applied to the entire money that was transacted, goods and services. This was a particular problem because it happened within a couple of the months of the time when the federal government brought in the very dramatic and drastic cuts that they brought in during the mid-1990s to the Canada Pension Death Benefit. Prior to the mid-1990s cuts, the Canada Pension Death Benefit maximum was \$3,500 or so. In one move, the federal government changed it to a maximum of about \$1,000 less. This meant, in the funeral co-operative movement, that between the cut to the death benefit and the increase in the taxation - whereas prior to this from the time the funeral co-op was established, when a person passed away, had they worked throughout their adult life, the Canada Pension Death Benefit, to which they would have been entitled, was enough for their burial to be conducted through the Arimathea Funeral Cooperative and we were, in those years, 1995 and 1996, able to stop the situation that used to happen where when someone passed away in the family, the next day you would see their car at the credit union because the family needed to take out a loan. Now, for the first time, the CPP death benefit was enough to cover, as it was done on the non-profit co-operative basis, the bills that had to be paid, but after the blending of the HST, this was no longer able to be done.

So it was a significant undermining of the mission that the communities had come together in order to establish. So the Arimathea Funeral Cooperative petitioned the government, as it did over a number of years, from this very point of view - calling for an end to the funeral tax as this bill does. Their position was taken up by the Truro presbytery of the United Church of Canada which called for the same thing - neither of them to any avail.

So I simply want to say that this is a movement now to eliminate the funeral tax that has been going on for 15 years. Part of that movement is that this is an issue that has been pressed continually throughout that period within the New Democratic Party. It is an issue that has been raised in connection with every one of the budgets during the period in which we have been privileged to govern. It's an issue which has been considered in the deliberations for every one of those budgets during the period we've been privileged to

govern and we all, on this side of the House, and I'm sure we are joined in this by our colleagues on the other side, we all look forward to the day when the principle in this bill will be able to be implemented in Nova Scotia's financial regime. (Applause)

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Antigonish.

MR. MAURICE SMITH: Madam Speaker, my friend, the proponent of the bill, the member for Digby-Annapolis talked a little bit about the history of this bill, but not very much because I'm new, of course, as you know, to the House and I wasn't here at any of those other times, or the five other times I guess, or the four other times when this bill was introduced. I'm just wondering, given that this bill has been before the House, this is the fifth time we're told, there must have been other opportunities to look at this and to assess it and to weigh it and other governments presumably did that and said, no thank you.

I just wonder, particularly, I guess, if we go back five sessions even, we would be under the previous government's regime. So, obviously, they had an opportunity to look at it. When I heard my friend, the member for Hants West, saying, you know, that we haven't accomplished anything while we were in government, if this bill was before the House when that Party was running the show, why is he standing up now and saying, well, we should do it when they didn't deem it a worthy bill?

I raise that as something that I think it's easy to say when you're in Opposition, I suppose - oh, well, yes, you fellows should do it. We didn't bother doing it, but we'll let you do it. We've heard that on other bills. I think particularly of the legislation dealing with the grandparents legislation; when opportunities for both Parties were present for them to take the initiative, nothing was done, and yet now we're told, okay, well, you fellows should do that. I'm interested in, as well, when the bill that we're looking at, Bill No. 3, an Act to Amend Chapter 31 of the Acts of 1996, the Sales Tax Act - well, the Sales Tax Act came in, my understanding is that prior to, and even my friend has indicated already that perhaps there were small portions of funeral expenses that might have attracted some tax, but it was in 1996. The regime in power at that time had the opportunity, when the tax was being put in place to look at what they didn't want to tax and yet for some reason they, at that time, included funerals as part of the goods, I guess, or services that would attract this tax.

So, again, we have the previous government saying, well, we didn't bother to do it, you should, and we have the government from 1996 had an opportunity to exclude it and they didn't. So let's look at what they're asking us to do. I have no idea, totally, what the tax collects - we collect on funerals in Nova Scotia - but it's a substantial amount of money, I would suggest. We're in a situation where (Interruption) Well I attend a lot of funerals so I think I know that funerals are - you look at the list in The ChronicleHerald each day, of the people who have passed and it's a goodly number.

Taxes, yes I've buried family and I have a good idea of what you pay in tax on a funeral. What I wanted to say is, you know, we get the Opposition coming at us from both Parties saying, well, you're cutting education or you're cutting health and complaining about that. Now they want us to cut the very taxes that support the programs that we're delivering. We're in a situation where, because of previous spending commitments that were made by previous governments . . .

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Madam Speaker, on a point of order. I'm just curious if the member for Antigonish - I know he said he wasn't here prior to the last election - but I'm just wondering if the researchers made him aware that his Premier, while Leader of the Official Opposition, said that he would remove the sales tax on funerals as well. His own Party called for this when they would be in government.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Madam Speaker, I don't presume to give you counsel, but it's interesting. His non-point of order was probably longer than their speech on the very bill that they're supposed to so sincerely want to represent. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you. I recognize that that would not be a point of order.

The honourable member for Antigonish.

MR. SMITH: Thank you, Madam Speaker. So we're in a situation where we're being asked to cut taxes and taxes are the income we have to support the programs that we're also told they want. So I would ask my friend, what else would he be willing to give up in order to have - what other program would he be willing to cut or to have disappear in order to have the tax on funerals dispensed with?

Now I think that's a legitimate question. You can't have it both ways. You can't say we want you to cut taxes and we want you to increase programming or to support every program that is there. You've got to realize that the deficit we have is because programs were put in place and the money isn't there to pay for them, so that's the situation we are in.

It's unreasonable, I suggest, at this particular time to be bringing this bill forward, particularly when both Parties, in their time, had an opportunity to do the very thing that this bill is suggesting needs to be done.

There is no question that this is something we would all like to see happen and maybe on some sort of sliding scale for people who are in the position that the member for Digby-Annapolis suggested, who just couldn't afford it. There might well be, at some time, a way of handling that kind of request. But today we are in a deficit position and we're going to be in a deficit position at least until next year. After that time, there is going to be

some relief with reference to the HST. In the first year it's going to be reduced by 1 per cent, the first year after balance, and in the second year another 1 per cent after balance. So at least incrementally, these costs that my friend is concerned about will be coming down.

It is an issue, and I thank my friend from Richmond for pointing out that there was a history of support for this kind of legislation passing from this side. I would expect that when we are in a position to respond in a positive way that this will be one of the items that will get some attention. I think that very soon you will be pleased to see, I think, once we are in a position to look at these kinds of things, some positive movement being made in these directions.

I think basically, in addition, this bill, Bill No. 3, talks about the costs of having this plan, this scheme put in place that's suggested by the bill - the rebate process and all the rest of that - that's also going to be a cost that has to be addressed in some fashion, another expense that they want us to incur and reduce taxes at the same time. I'm suggesting that it's inappropriate to be making these kinds of suggestions at this particular time. The time to do it, I suggest, is when we are in a position to respond in a positive way and that would only happen, I suggest, after we are back to balance.

That is a situation that I'm told from listening to my colleagues, and again from the honourable member for Richmond, that this is something that is likely to be a very high ticket item when we have an opportunity address it. I think we will be pleased to look at it again when we're in that position. Now I understand my friend from Pictou East wishes to make some comments, thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

MR. CLARRIE MACKINNON: Mr. Speaker, I do have to say that when serving in Opposition, I was in support of looking at this matter in relation to sales tax on funerals and I certainly feel the same way now. But what we have to deal with is the structural deficit that has been left to us, the horrible legacy that has been left to us. (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Order. Order, please.

MR. MACKINNON: Mr. Speaker, I do have to say that the member for Digby-Annapolis is one of the favourite members in this House. I know that we all respect him for who he is and what he represents. I do hope that he will run in the next election and I hope he is one on the opposite side who may survive. If the performance in the last few days is any indication of where they're coming from, not too many of them will in fact survive the next election. (Applause)

You know after next year we're going to be able to talk about post-balance and when we're talking about post-balance, this is one thing that I think that we should be

looking at but we can't be looking at things now because of the deficits that exist in this province in relationship to the level of debt.

Now I know the member for Digby-Annapolis is very concerned as I am about roads because he and I have talked about roads on many many occasions. Now where are we going to take the money for all the we-want-to-dos? I know that in the situation of roads, there is a \$3 billion structural deficit there. What we have are roads that were paved without any base, they were paved in pre-election with two inches instead of four inches. We have so many things that relate to why we can't do things like this situation with the Sales Tax Bill. (Interruption)

I'm dealing with that bill and I'm trying to explain why we can't do all the things that we would like to do. (Interruption) Does the member realize that in 1974, the Province of Nova Scotia only owed \$500 million - half a billion dollars. Do you know where we would be right today if that "crowd," as the Finance Minister says, if that crowd were still around we would be at \$17 billion.

Now we can't afford to do things like what is being talked about here, but with that Bill No. 3, if we didn't have the debt that was racked up, three-quarters of it racked by the Progressive Conservatives and one-quarter racked up by the Liberals, if we didn't inherit those things we would be able to look at this and many other matters.

We have plans, we have vision. There were no plans, there was no vision. In fact, we have a plan in relation to roads for five years, a five-year building plan. We have a plan in relation to getting back to balance. We have a plan in relation to Better Care Sooner; we have a plan for Kids and Learning First. We are on our way to a new era in this province. (Applause)

When we get to post balance, when after next year we are talking about some of the things that we can do, some of the things that we want to do. . .

AN HON. MEMBER: Unshackle . . .

MR. MACKINNON: Yes, as we unshackle ourselves from what was imposed upon us, after we get rid of the 2 per cent sales tax - 1 per cent and 1 per cent - after we get back down to 13 per cent, we will be able to look at Bill No. 3 again. In many respects I hope the member for Digby-Annapolis is in fact one of the few who do survive, that he is perhaps in the House to deliver this Bill No. 3 for a sixth time.

I think he has to realize that in 1996 when the Harmonized Sales Tax came in, I think he knows who was in power at that time, and was there any consideration for delivering on this matter at that time? We've had all those years, all those Liberal years, all those Progressive Conservative years, and nothing happened. Five times - five times that

was introduced. I believe something will be considered in the future when we clean up the mess, that fiscal structural deficit that we inherited, because we are moving forward.

Bill No. 3 is something that I do have a lot of feeling and compassion for. We're seizing great opportunities versus 20 years of the worst economic growth that this province has ever seen. We're looking at sustainable health care through reduced administration versus the Tory waste and the Liberal cuts to the front-line services. Do you remember those cuts to the front-line services? (Interruptions) Yes. Fire them all. Fire them all.

MR. SPEAKER: Order. Order, please. Time allotted for Opposition Business has expired.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, that concludes the Opposition business for today. Thursday's hours will be from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. After the daily routine and Question Period, if time permits, we will call Bill Nos. 5 and 9.

I move that the House do now rise to meet Thursday at the hour of 9:00 a.m.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is that the House now rise to meet again tomorrow at the hour of 9:00 a.m.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

We will now proceed with the emergency debate.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION UNDER RULE 43

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

ENERGY - POWER RATE INCREASES

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, I rise on the matter of the emergency debate today, which is the skyrocketing price of electricity in Nova Scotia. I will point out that one of the reasons that it is so important that the House deal with this matter as the Progressive

Conservative caucus has proposed is because we want the House of Assembly, this body, to be focused on matters that really matter to Nova Scotians, that are real issues in real time.

I can tell you as an MLA, having received many calls and visits to my own constituency office from people in Cumberland South, that what is really important to Nova Scotians at this time is the skyrocketing price of their electric bills. I am sure that is true of all members of this House. I know it is true of my fellow members of the Progressive Conservative caucus. We know it's true from the public media.

I hope that in some way we've done a favour for members on the government side who, as MLAs, surely are hearing from their own constituents who are struggling to pay their new and higher power bills, who are making those awful decisions between paying that power bill and cutting back on something else, who opened their power bill in January after the most recent increase and saw the 9 per cent increase - or in some cases even greater than 9 per cent increase - and don't have the money to pay for it. This emergency debate is for them.

Secondly, there are many, many manufacturing jobs in our province that in the long term have been created and maintained because they rely on a reasonable price for the electricity that they use in making their products. Some of those manufacturers are in the constituencies of members of the Progressive Conservative caucus or in the other Opposition caucus, but I can also tell you that many of those employers, those manufacturers, reside in the constituencies of members of the government, whether it be Stanfield's or PolyCello or Bowater or NewPage or any of those companies who exist in part because they rely on a province to have electricity prices that make their jobs meaningful. Of course, behind those companies are the thousands of workers who have real, meaningful, sustainable, high-paying manufacturing jobs because in the long run this province has been a place where those kinds of jobs can be maintained, in part because power prices were affordable.

In the past year we've already seen jobs at risk or lost at important rural manufacturers like Bowater and NewPage, where they point very specifically to the skyrocketing price of electricity as one of the reasons they're not able to maintain their operations. We can go on with the NDP Government approach, which is to accept the high price of power or put in place policies that jack it up higher and then place expensive band-aids over those employers to try to keep them going.

There is a better way. For example, today we asked for the emergency debate because despite the power price increases that we've seen already, we now know that more increases are on the horizon. That is why it's time to have an emergency debate about what we can do to put affordability back into our power prices.

Just this week the Newfoundland and Labrador House of Assembly and the Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador agreed that the time had come for them to debate the future of the Lower Churchill power project.

Now, we all hope that that project in some way will turn out to be an affordable, sustainable green option for Nova Scotia like they do in Newfoundland and Labrador but until the Premier of Nova Scotia can answer the simple question of how much will power from Lower Churchill cost Nova Scotians, we cannot know whether it is the right way to go or not and that is the conclusion that the Public Utilities Board of Newfoundland and Labrador came to, that they cannot answer the question, the simple question of how much that power will cost for Newfoundland and Labrador.

So now the MHAs of Newfoundland and Labrador are going to have a debate about whether to proceed because no one can tell the people of Newfoundland and Labrador how much they will pay for power from Lower Churchill. Some estimates have priced the power from Lower Churchill at 16.4 cents per kilowatt hour. That is a lot more than Nova Scotians are already paying and we have the added burden of paying for and constructing an expensive undersea cable to go from Newfoundland and Labrador to Nova Scotia and putting that into our rates on top of the rate to get that power to Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, we all hope it works but surely this House, and in particular the Premier of Nova Scotia, has a duty to know how much that power will cost to those who have to pay the bills, to the people of Nova Scotia, to the manufacturers of Nova Scotia, before he signs on the dotted line, but he has already made up his mind. He has already said it's the way to go and he doesn't even know how much it's going to cost.

Let me put it this way, Mr. Speaker. Imagine that you own a car. You own a Honda Civic, admittedly a gas guzzling Honda Civic, and a salesman comes up to you and says, do you know what? You should really buy a hybrid. You should buy a hybrid because they are cleaner and greener than your Civic. Now, what do you think the first question that you would ask of that salesman would be? How much is that hybrid? How much does it cost so I can compare that to what I'm paying now? Now, imagine if the salesman said, do you know what? Never mind the cost, it doesn't matter what it costs, I'm not going to answer that question. You should just buy it because it's green.

Would you buy that car, Mr. Speaker? Would you ask every single Nova Scotian to go buy that hybrid just because? Would you tell them never mind what it costs, I don't know what it costs, I'm not going to ask what it costs? That is the policy of the NDP Government of Nova Scotia that we should just buy it and do you know why? It's because they know that it's somebody else who's going to end up paying the bill and that somebody else is the people of Nova Scotia and that is not right. Or worse, the Premier says we're going to look to someone else to tell you how much it costs. We're going to wait for the Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board to make that calculation.

Well, Mr. Speaker, it is the job of the Premier of Nova Scotia to find the lowest priced power, the lowest priced green power, and tell Nova Scotians truthfully how much it will cost so we can make the right decision about power in this province. That is the way we end up with clean, green and affordable power but that is not the way that this government is going and that is why we need to have this emergency debate. Hopefully, it will be more than a debate. Hopefully, it will lead to a day when this House makes decisions that put affordability back into our power rates. Unlike that salesman who says never mind how much the hybrid costs, unlike our Premier who doesn't know how much Lower Churchill will cost, we need to know the cost before we go any further down that road.

The second new development this week, Mr. Speaker, is that, believe it or not, Standard & Poor's, the credit rating agency for Emera and Nova Scotia Power, has actually issued a credit warning. Now, many Nova Scotians at this point would say who cares, that credit rating agency is responsible for looking after the interests of the shareholders and the bond holders of Nova Scotia Power, but the reason this is important is because Standard & Poor's says that they are concerned about the future earnings of Nova Scotia Power because they have a gigantic \$1.5 billion capital plan that they have to finance. The reason they have that big, gigantic, expensive capital plan, according to the CEO of Emera, Mr. Huskison, is because they have to meet new regulations imposed on them by the NDP Government of Nova Scotia.

We know that every cent of that capital plan, that \$1.5 billion, is going to flow through into our power bills and all Nova Scotians will pay for them in more expensive, future increases in the price of power.

Standard & Poor's is worried about the bondholders and shareholders, that is their job. Our job in this House and ultimately the job of the Premier of Nova Scotia is to be worried about the people who will have to pay those bills, the people of Nova Scotia themselves, the families in Nova Scotia that are going to have to make even harder choices about their budget if we don't change course, even harder choices about pay your power bill or the grocery bill, pay your power bill or the rent, pay your power bill or send your kid to those swimming lessons. Those are the choices that are being made now and are going to be made harder. It is a shame that it takes a bond rating agency, like Standard & Poor's, to tell us that. They are standing up for the interests that they are paid to stand up for. We need a Premier and a government in Nova Scotia that stands up for the people that we are here to represent, which is the people who ultimately pay the bills. That is why this emergency debate is so important.

At its heart, Mr. Speaker, all of this is about taking the worthy environmental goals on renewables and on emissions that were in place under the original Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act and make sure that they are matched up with that other important principle, that most important principle that is missing from the NDP plan, that is at its heart our power policies have to be rooted in what Nova Scotians can afford. That is

what they have lost in their enthusiasm to embrace a big project like Lower Churchill, in their enthusiasm to take renewable targets and jack them up as high as they can go.

Affordability has to be matched with those goals. That is what has been lost. In fact, Mr. Speaker, we, in the last two sessions of this House, have brought forward a number of important initiatives to try and get affordability back into our power rates, in ways that are big and small; symbolically big or small in dollar terms, big or small. Like once and for all getting those executive bonuses out of our power rates, something that should have the unanimous consent of this House but doesn't. Just the threat of that bill got them out for one year only and saved Nova Scotians almost \$1 million in power rates because there are no executive bonuses in them, at least for this year, or ensuring in law that when Nova Scotia Power proposes a big, new, expensive project, whether it is Lower Churchill or anything else, that it is the job of the Government of Nova Scotia to do a proper cost-benefit analysis to ensure that it is the lowest price green option for Nova Scotians.

Mr. Speaker, that shouldn't have to be a matter of law, that should be a matter of common sense but in this House, with that government, that doesn't put affordability in their own plan, we're going to have to make it a matter of law that when expensive new projects come forward, they are put through a proper cost-benefit analysis and compared to all the other options out there - like hydro power through Hydro-Québec, which may mean an investment in transmission but should be compared to these other options so that Nova Scotians know they are getting the best deal. That is what they deserve from their government, the best deal.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Energy.

HON. CHARLIE PARKER: Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to speak on the matter brought forward by the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party.

Our province is coming to grips with years of inaction of a previous government to deal with fossil fuels. This is a topic of importance to all Nova Scotians and one of our government's key priorities. It's one of the other messes our government was left by the previous government, certainly in addition to the structural deficit that came along.

Certainly, having access to affordable electricity is central to everything that we do and of particular concern to everyone from our most vulnerable families to our largest industries. Unfortunately we have seen the cost escalate significantly over the past number of years. The biggest driver of those increases in recent years has certainly been the rising cost of imported coal. In fact, until very recently, almost 80 per cent of electricity consumed in Nova Scotia came from coal or petroleum coke or oil. That made sense, I guess, in the days when we were supporting an industry digging that coal from our own earth in northern Nova Scotia or in Cape Breton, before we understood the full environmental costs associated with that practice.

Now, most of the coal that we burn is imported from the U.S. and South America - that's millions of dollars that's going outside our borders each year. That's a practice the previous government chose to ignore and really did nothing about. Today we're all paying for that inaction. It makes us vulnerable to increasing costs and concerns about stability of supply. In fact, in the last seven years, coal prices have increased by 75 per cent. I'll say that again - in the last seven years, coal prices have increased by 75 per cent. That's huge.

Previous governments have done nothing to address the fundamental flaw in our system, a flaw that dates back to the 1970s and 1980s, a policy they championed and spent taxpayers' money to enact. Nova Scotians are tired of the effect that volatile fossil fuel prices have on their electricity bills. They want the government to pursue sensible, long-term alternatives, alternatives that provide long-term stable prices - prices that over the long term will save Nova Scotians greatly on energy costs.

Our government has a concrete plan to take our energy future into our own hands and it's one we are well on the way to implementing. Our renewable electricity plan was announced in the Spring of 2010; the plan recognizes the transition away from fossil fuels that is necessary to provide stability and predictability in the cost of electricity. An approach made necessary - as I said before and will say again - by years of inaction from the members now deservedly sitting on the other side of the House.

The plan we put forward set some of the most aggressive targets in North America. As Nova Scotians endorsed during the last election, they turned away from 20 years of failed Liberal and Progressive Conservative economic policies. We, on the other hand, have set a goal of 25 per cent electricity from renewable sources by the year 2015. In the Fall of 2010, because of the leadership of our Premier and the former Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador, Danny Williams and the present Premier, Cathy Dunderdale, an historic agreement came together and was made possible by those individuals.

Emera, Newfoundland and Labrador's Crown Corporation, Nalcor, included an agreement to bring Muskrat Falls power to market. Because of the 170 megawatts of firm renewable energy, Nova Scotia was able to extend the renewable energy target to 2020 and increase our target to 40 per cent.

Here's a little lesson in banking for the former banker on the other side of the House and his colleagues. Because the cost of building renewable energy assets is largely up front and can be amortized over time, renewable energy has a stabilizing effect on electricity rates over the life of these projects. This is unlike the volatile fossil fuels policy they favoured which have a destabilizing effect on rates.

We've estimated the cost of investing in these kinds of projects will add an average of about 1 per cent to 2 per cent on electricity rates over the period of implementation. It also makes our energy supply more secure and helps build good jobs and to grow our economy, particularly in rural areas of this province. In fact, the resulting benefits from

projects arising from our plan will pay local property taxes to municipalities, increase income and corporate taxes to the provincial and federal governments, and perhaps most importantly, create and maintain jobs.

The bottom line is that we have a plan to break away from our reliance on fossil fuels, particularly coal. That plan is working. Coal was responsible for more than 80 per cent of our electricity generation in 2006 and today that number is less than 57 per cent. In fact, Nova Scotia has experienced a record amount of wind generation, in fact only just a couple of weeks ago. Over the weekend of March 23rd to 25th, 30 per cent of our electricity needs were generated from wind energy - 30 per cent.

Governments before us did nothing to break the coal dependency. We are now into a new world of renewables. Previous governments did nothing to stop the 75 per cent increase in fossil fuels under their watch. And, Mr. Speaker, they've been rather wishy-washy, and I feel that's probably a generous description on the Lower Churchill hydroelectric project. It's a project that secures Nova Scotians access to clean, renewable, dispatchable electricity for 35 years, at a fixed, up-front cost to ratepayers.

Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the PC Party, in his motion to the House here this afternoon, said that whatever Newfoundland and Labrador pays for its Lower Churchill power, Nova Scotia will be asked to pay more. Well that's just not true. All MLAs present at the Resources Committee last October when the CEO of Emera spoke about this project, heard him say that the price is in the ballpark - the Leader of the Third Party mentioned in this House today - and I think he said 16 cents or somewhere in that range per kilowatt hour is just not on. That's from the CEO of Emera. It would be at a price that is competitive with the cost of wind and other large scale, renewable alternatives today.

Mr. Speaker, that will be a great deal for all ratepayers. Imagine if today we were paying the 1970s or 1980s prices for electricity. We might look back more fondly on the government of those days if that had been true, but we think about the provincial debt instead.

Nova Scotia Power is an investor in the project and we receive 20 per cent of the power for 20 per cent of the cost. That is for 170 megawatts of power. No other deal offers that kind of benefits to Nova Scotia. The transmission infrastructure just isn't in place to take significant amounts of power from Quebec. The line is already maxed-out. Investing the hundreds of millions of dollars to build that capacity just doesn't make sense without a long-term price guarantee, something Quebec Hydro just doesn't do.

We are confident the URB will give the Lower Churchill deal a comprehensive going-over when it reviews the project in 2013. That is the appropriate forum, we believe, for that discussion. It is fully transparent and it is open to the public. There's lots of room for contrary opinions to be expressed and it has the ability to analyze detailed information with expert help as they require it.

Now the Leader of the PC Party says in his motion that a government he leads would ensure a thorough review is done of the project. Well, isn't that what we're talking about with the URB? Don't they have the mandate to look at this process? Why would we want to do it twice?

He also says that Newfoundland and Labrador is going to take a hard look at the project. Well, Mr. Speaker, I suggest that the people who have looked at the deal to date - including the consumer advocate for Newfoundland and Labrador, and independent reviewer Manitoba Hydro - determined that it's a good deal for Newfoundlanders as well.

The federal government is a supporter of the project and is committed to put a loan guarantee in place that will back that up. The system that we have now is rigorous and designed entirely around the overriding focus of keeping costs to consumers as low as possible.

Now since the privatization of Nova Scotia Power in 1992 in which both Parties across the aisles were participants, the legislative and regulatory framework regarding the governance of the Nova Scotia electricity sector continues to be defined by the Nova Scotia Utility Review Board Act and the regulations and also by the Public Utilities Act and regulations. The URB mandates that: Nova Scotia Power remains a cost-of-service regulated electricity utility with a mandated obligation to serve all of Nova Scotia with loads at the lowest possible cost, while meeting its system reliability and environmental obligations.

Something else that has been talked about is the FAM, the fuel adjustment mechanism. It provides regular public reporting on Nova Scotia Power's forecast and its actual fuel costs. Fuel costs account for approximately half of the cost of running the overall system. They also file an annual capital expenditure plan. The URB approval is required to approve any expense over \$0.25 million, or over \$250,000. Mr. Speaker, they just can't ask for that, they have to prove that you need it in order to continue to provide Nova Scotians with the lowest cost of electricity possible. In fact, our neighbouring Province of New Brunswick has looked at our system and they've said that it is working and in their energy strategy just recently, their model of governance, they're going to structure it after Nova Scotia's.

Mr. Speaker, the rate increase that we're seeing today is the result of previous governments' inaction and the Opposition Parties - I don't think they're offering any solutions at all. The approach they recommended last session to keeping rates down was adding another layer of bureaucracy, another layer of oversight, essentially doubling the work that's already being done and why do it a second time.

That's what the URB process is for and it works. The 2012 settlement agreement removes executive bonuses, it reduces the allowable rate of return and it cut \$27 million from Nova Scotia Power's increase revenue application. In fact, Mr. Speaker, if you

listened to our Premier speak on this matter, you will know that there's no stronger advocate for vigilance over the process that sets power rates. During the last rate case, he was clear that now isn't the time for an increase on the return on equity and bonuses, and bonuses should be included in the rate base.

Need I remind the members opposite, Mr. Speaker, that we were the Party that removed the provincial portion of the HST off energy; that's a 10 per cent savings for Nova Scotians. Mr. Speaker, who voted in favour of that? Well members on this side of the House voted in favour of that. Members on this side of the House said, well, they on the other side of the House imposed the HST in the first place, they voted to put the HST back on home energy after they had briefly removed it and they voted against the NDP approach of taking the HST off home energy.

This government's electricity plan is about real change. Our balanced portfolio approach, I believe, is the best way to achieve stabilized, affordable electricity rates over time. It has three main elements: becoming more efficient about how we use electricity and avoiding unnecessary use; decreasing our reliance on expensive imported coal; and increasing the amount of electricity from clean, local, renewable sources and enhancing the use of natural gas.

Mr. Speaker, in closing I want to say that we have a real plan to achieve electricity price stability and to keep rates lower over the long term than they would be with the members opposite, or as they said they're stuck in the old ways. I think it's a very pragmatic approach, it's a very realistic approach that combines environmental responsibility with affordability while helping to grow the economy and making life more affordable for Nova Scotia families. You know, really, that's what Nova Scotians want. They want affordable rates, they want a plan, they want to see us get off of the expense of fossil fuels and get on to more and more renewables all within reasonable rates.

Mr. Speaker, I know my time is limited and I do want to table a couple of documents here with you. There's been a lot of talk about coal prices are going nowhere but up, up and away and, like I said, they have increased by 75 per cent over the last seven years. The cost of renewables, I'll take an example - the member for Argyle and his area down in the Pubnicos, the wind farm down there. That is a stable rate, it's set for a long-term, for decades and actually now the price of coal is higher than the wind farm in that area. In 2003 it was set around seven cents a kilowatt hour and today coal is above that price, so I'll table that.

Finally I want to table a chart on the historic cost of coal. This has been the Progressive Conservative plan for too long. It's showing that coal has gone up from \$20 a ton; today, it's well over \$60 a ton. We have to get away from fossil fuels and get on to more and more renewables. Thank you very much Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL: Thank you Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to join this debate on energy pricing. As you know, we've been raising this issue in this House for a number of years, and we've laid out some concrete steps which government could take to kind of rein in the power increases that are affecting Nova Scotia families.

Mr. Speaker, we've talked about doing a performance value audit before any other power rate increases can happen inside of this province. We believe it's critically important that Nova Scotia Power be forced to look inside their own operation to find savings before they come out to the ratepayers of this province to pick up the extra increase in costs. It's why we oppose - it's why we were opposed to the recent rate increase that took effect on January 1st of 10 per cent. I was very interested to listen to the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party talk about that rate increase, when he sat in a closed-door meeting with Nova Scotia Power and some other interveners, and he came out of that meeting and said that's a win-win for all of Nova Scotia - a 10 per cent increase in power in this province is not a win-win for anyone except for the power utilities.

Mr. Speaker, a couple of times today I listened, in reference to a question that was put to the Minister of Energy from someone in the Progressive Conservative caucus, the Minister of Energy talked about having cheaper power. Let's be clear. Let's be clear - it will not be cheaper power. Nova Scotians are trying to get to a day when they're going to have stable energy pricing. Let's not mislead the people of this province that connecting to Newfoundland and Labrador will lead to cheaper power. What it will do is lead to a more stable energy market to allow businesses and families to plan so that they can look out in the long term, as opposed to the situation that we're faced with now - a 40 per cent-plus increase in energy over the last 10 years. How could any business make concrete plans looking towards the future when you're in that kind of an energy market?

Mr. Speaker, one of the things that we believe this government could do today to provide substantive relief to Nova Scotians is do what they said they were going to do before they became government - that was oppose the demand-side management tax that they have added to every power bill in this province. The NDP Government is taking about \$40 million a year out of the pockets of Nova Scotians because they have instituted a tax on every power bill in the Province of Nova Scotia. What they should be doing is forcing Nova Scotia Power to do their own demand-side management and asking shareholders to foot the bill for that, and not ratepayers.

Mr. Speaker, while I agree with the Minister of Energy on this front, we need to get to a place where we have a better energy mix in Nova Scotia; we need to get to a place where we're not relying on foreign fuel to drive and produce our energy; and we need to get to a place where we start controlling our own energy market. I believe that's one of the attractions with Newfoundland and Labrador. Everyone in this House I'm sure knows that there has been no deal signed between Emera and Nalcor - there has been a memorandum of understanding.

Mr. Speaker, as was talked about today, there is a debate going on in Newfoundland and Labrador, but they are opposed to this deal because they believe they're taking on all the risk. That's not our issue; that's the issue of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. They're concerned all the overruns that are happening in this project are going to be picked up by the taxpayers of Newfoundland and Labrador - well, that's not our issue, that's an issue for them.

Mr. Speaker, when we look at this deal with the interconnection between Newfoundland and Labrador, it will allow about 20 per cent of that capacity of that energy to come to the people of this province over a 35-year time frame. It is important for us to understand what the cost of that energy will be and, when that agreement is signed between Emera and Nalcor, we'll know that. Then it will be presented to our Utility and Review Board and I hope that members of this House show up and ask questions, stand up for ratepayers and ask, is this truly a good deal for the people of this province?

Mr. Speaker, we need to get to a situation where we're no longer an energy island. Let's suppose that we do not connect with Newfoundland and Labrador. Let's suppose that doesn't happen - what do we do? How do we improve the transmission system inside of our own province? How we improve it is Nova Scotia Power invests money in infrastructure, they go to the ratepayers and we pay every last dime of it. The people of this province, the people who are paying power bills will pay every last cent of the investment into that utility - every last cent.

Under this agreement, if it continues down the road it is, the transmission capacity that will be built in this province will only cover a portion of it. The shareholders of Emera will cover the remainder of it. It is important that as we look at connecting with Newfoundland and Labrador we build transmission capacity not only inside of our province but with our connection to New Brunswick. It is important that Nova Scotians have the opportunity to buy energy from Quebec, to buy energy from wherever they can buy it for the best deal for the people of this province.

One of the things that's being lost in this entire debate is that we do not have the transmission capacity to deliver that energy now. Our connection between New Brunswick and Nova Scotia is weak. It's small. It's about 350 megawatts in one direction. It's half of the Lingan power plant. If that plant shut down, we could not supply ourselves with energy today. That's the reality of where we're at. Lingan is about 600 megawatts - surprising.

We need to get to a situation where we connect ourselves to the rest of Atlantic Canada. We need to get to a situation, in my view, where we move beyond this debate about how our monopoly in this province is starting to continue to set energy pricing. When we build this transmission capacity we need to do another thing: we need to break the monopoly of Nova Scotia Power and open this up for competition and allow renewable energy producers across the globe who want to sell power to customers in this province to have the right to do so; equally and more importantly, to allow residential customers and

business customers to buy power from the cheapest possible place and not be forced to deal with the monopoly inside this province.

It is important that we have a broader discussion about the future energy outlook in Nova Scotia. It is important that we move away from this - what I consider to be a false debate about whether or not we're going to have renewable energies. What happens when we harness the Bay of Fundy? How do we maximize our true potential to that energy? Do we have the capacity in transmission today? I think most people would tell you no. We do have the capacity to link it directly into New Brunswick and ship it elsewhere. How does that benefit us? It doesn't.

They're talking about this project in Newfoundland and Labrador and all the spinoff jobs that will be associated with it. Those jobs will be in Newfoundland and Labrador, but we can't get caught up in that debate. What we need to understand is what the long-term benefit to the people of Nova Scotia is. The long-term benefit will be, yes, energy that we can get at a stable price, and the fact that we will have built transmission inside of our own province that we will then be allowed to open up to a renewable energy sector inside of this province.

Without doing that, as this contract and deal unfold, as we see the final arrangements set before our Utility and Review Board, the things we need to look out for - here are the things the people of this province should be watching. How much of that transmission capacity is going to be the responsibility of Nova Scotia Power? Is it 20 per cent? Is it 30 per cent? Is it 40 per cent? What percentage of that transmission capacity will be the responsibility of Nova Scotia Power? In turn that means it will be the responsibility of ratepayers. What portion of this transmission connector will be the responsibility of Emera? That will be the responsibility of the shareholders for Emera.

As we look at that, we need to identify, okay, what is the cost to the shareholders of Nova Scotia, and what is the offset potential to the capacity that will be built on the opposite side of the transmission that shareholders for Emera will be paying for? Will it improve our connection to New Brunswick? Yes, it will. Will it allow us to bring in energy from Quebec? Yes, it will. Will it allow us to open up the energy market in the province? Yes, it will, because we need to appeal to the National Energy Board, who will set a tariff price to allow anyone to put energy across that transmission line.

That is how we're going to move this province forward and create a stable energy situation, to create an environment where businesses are going to be able to predict their energy, to create an environment where capital will come into this province wanting to invest in renewable energy. We can create a situation where the rest of Canada will look at our province, in my view, as the renewable energy capital of the country.

Look at the geothermal potential that is happening in Springhill, the potential that is in Cape Breton Island. Look at the Bay of Fundy, look at the options that are there, linking

that to our educational institutions when it comes to research and development, we could truly maximize the resources that are here in our province when it comes to renewable energy.

We can't be short-sighted; we can't mislead the people by suggesting they are going to get cheaper energy, that's simply not true. We're going to get to a point where we need to get stable energy but before we can truly assess this contract between Emera and Nalcor, we need to see it. We need to ask these tough questions, what percentage of that contract are the ratepayers of this province going to have to pay for and what opportunities will exist with the rest of this project as it unfolds? Those are some basic questions that we need to get answers to.

In the meantime, before we get to that point, this government has a responsibility to act, to try to rein in power rates in the Province of Nova Scotia. Mr. Speaker, they added \$40 million to the power bills of Nova Scotians. How is that improving the lives of Nova Scotians? How is that making life more affordable for Nova Scotia families? How is that making life better for Nova Scotia families?

Mr. Speaker, how is that making it for the entrepreneurs of this province to grow jobs in and around an energy market where the government takes \$40 million out of their pockets by one simple decision? What is even worse is they opposed that when they were in Opposition. The Premier actually wrote a letter to the Utility and Review Board opposing it. He gets elected and, like so many other things, he has a change of heart.

He suggested many times in this House and the Minister of Energy talked about taking the provincial portion of the HST off energy. What he forgot to tell Nova Scotians was when he was giving with one hand, he was robbing a lot more with the other hand. Mr. Speaker, they tell only half the story.

In order for us as a province to gain control of our own energy future, though, we need to begin to mix our energy production in this province. Mr. Speaker, I want to give you another idea which I think we should consider as Atlantic Canadians. We should consider separating generation and transmission completely in all of our provinces and creating one transmission operator for the entire region, allow generation to happen on one side and separate it from transmission on the other.

In many jurisdictions now, Mr. Speaker, they do that. They separate transmission generation because they don't want the very people who are producing the power to have control on how we transmit the power. They want to have some authority and control over their own destination on building an energy sector inside of their own province. It makes sense.

There are challenges faced with that, Mr. Speaker, because of the different utilities that are in our provinces. What needs to happen is we need a Premier who is going to have

some vision towards the long-term health of the energy in this region. This potentially could be a win-win for every Atlantic Province, by coming together and saying we will build one energy transmission network, one that we will then allow the energy production to happen on the other side.

Mr. Speaker, the beauty for us, as a province, when we move to that we could then finally break the monopoly of Nova Scotia Power. Imagine when we have a separate transmission operator, not the utility but a separate transmission operator. We could open up our market to allow capital to come in, to allow people to invest in renewable energy projects that would provide us with stable, long-term, secure energy. Imagine, Nova Scotia finally getting control of its own energy future.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to the rest of the debate not only in this province, but as the debate unfolds in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. This is an important conversation that we should be having, not only today on the floor of this House but in the months to come. I hope members from all caucuses show up at the Utility and Review Board when this is presented in front of them and make sure that they stand up for the ratepayers of this province and not shareholders of Nova Scotia Power or Emera.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants West.

MR. CHUCK PORTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll start off by saying that it's good to hear the Leader of the Liberal Party in that speech, it was just great because it has been said before in this House right here, by the people in this caucus right here. You would swear that he has been sitting at the meetings we've been having and the discussions we've been having. He's obviously listening.

So, Mr. Speaker, that's a good thing. We are going to reach something here today, something very important in this debate, and that is that people are paying attention. All Nova Scotians are paying attention, the small business owners, the large business owners, and more importantly and just as importantly, the everyday residents who are saying - and they've got to be saying this not just in my constituency, Mr. Speaker, but in yours and the Minister of Energy's. I'm sure the people of Pictou West where that member represents, has people coming into his office, especially this past winter, saying we can't afford to pay our power bill and feed our families, or my power has been cut off, how are we going to get the power reconnected? What's the mechanism for that? We're hungry, we're cold, and we have no lights.

These are the realities of the people living in rural Nova Scotia and all throughout this province. This is no laughing matter, and this is not a joke. This is not something that we stand here and say, this is the reality of what's going on in this province. The minister stands here, the Premier stands here and that entire government stands in its place. Today in Question Period, Mr. Speaker, you heard me. I asked three specific times - in my original, in my two supplementaries - what will the cost be?

That's important to Nova Scotia because the cost is what they can't make right now. These aren't people living above their means, they're not even able to live within their means. A lot of seniors who are pensioned, I ask them all the time, I say I don't know how you survive. I don't know you eat and pay your bills - the small amount of money that they are making. That's the reality in this province and a lot of those seniors, as well as others, unfortunately, low-incomers, own their own homes and they're trying to manage. They're trying to buy gas, they're trying to buy food, they're trying desperately to pay their power bill, and they're trying to have some kind of life outside of paying bills. That has become very difficult.

It's important to this caucus, to our Leader and this Party standing here, our ability to stand here and represent everyday Nova Scotians and ask the important questions and the important questions are, quite frankly, what will the cost be because that is what matters to them. We are a Party that has always favoured green energy. We started this process. Let's not forget who put that bill in and also let's not forget the members in this House that supported it. It came from all sides of this House not just one, not just the government.

That was okay then, that was a good, well thought out, defined - many people worked on that plan and that bill that was put forward and it was supported and it was a good plan. It was a plan that was within the means of this province. It was affordable. We don't even know right now - and yes there's only an MOU signed, thankfully, it's not done yet. Let's see this review go through in Newfoundland and Labrador.

The member for Annapolis did speak and he said quite clearly that he didn't think what went on over there would affect us here. I have to differ a bit there because I do think that if there are cost overruns, that cost is going to come back. It's going to be part of a deal that's worked out. They are going to pass it on to somebody, Nova Scotia Power, whoever's going to make an arrangement, whatever the deal will be. If there is some more money to build that cable that means they are coming to us, coming to the taxpayer, coming to the ratepayer, who by the way are the same people although the CEO, Chris Huskison, of Nova Scotia Power, Emera, will tell you, oh no, they are not the same people. I don't know where he gets that but anyway they are the same people. It is going to come back.

I sat in those meetings and I'm not afraid to say it. I went to those stakeholder meetings, I sat there. Why did I go to these meetings? I'll tell you why I went to those meetings. I went there for a reason to speak on behalf of everyday Nova Scotians because I want to tell you, Mr. Speaker, that wasn't being done.

You can say what you want about the stakeholders sitting around that table, people from the Department of Energy, people from Nova Scotia Power and all they cared about, Mr. Speaker, was this; Nova Scotia Power said this is what it's going to cost and the ratepayer in this province is going to pay for it. That's all that they wanted to know, where is the money coming from? How are we going to get there? And every day, every meeting that I went to, I said hold it. When it was my turn to speak, and I spoke every day in there,

what about the everyday people, not just the business people, they are all one in the same. People living in this province own big business, small business, et cetera. They're trying to pay their residential bills; we're trying to pay as a government. We see the bills associated with the heating costs in schools and all the other public buildings, owned by the taxpayers, by the way, who are footing the bill and what's being done about it? Not a lot.

Rate requirement, that's what they called it, rate requirement, that's what mattered. Where is it coming from? Well this year they told us how much that was going to be and we saw that in January, tax upon tax, more tax, higher rates, more tax. HST that went up a couple of points might not mean much to you and me, maybe it does, probably it does, but it sure as heck means something to those people who are already getting their power bills cut off and the disaster that that's creating in their lives and how are they going to crawl out of that.

Again, these aren't people who are living above their means; they can't even live within their means, Mr. Speaker. What is this government doing for those people? Not much, they can't even tell them. The minister stood over there and he read a wonderful speech, I don't know where it came from, don't know who wrote it. He never spoke fact at all. Another work of fiction, as bad as the budget, another work of fiction.

There's nothing in that to say to Nova Scotians, everyday Joe and Jane, people on the street, homeowners, taxpayers, ratepayers, this is what it's going to cost you. Couldn't tell us. Again, not for lack of trying to find out because we've been asking. Why is it important to have this debate? It's important. We need to know what's going on in Newfoundland and Labrador, we need to know what the deal will be at the end of the day. That is important to us here in Nova Scotia. If we're going to go into a long-term agreement, 30 or 35 years and God knows how many billions of dollars, what is that going to mean?

Somewhere down the road government says things will stabilize. When? Tell us how many years? If you can't tell us what the cost of power will be, then can you tell us what year the rates will stabilize? Can't even tell us that. Why can't they tell us that? Well, of course they can't because they don't know the cost. How is that good for us as Nova Scotians? It's not good. Not good at all.

Who sets the rates? Every year we talked about this rate-setting bit and how hard that has become on everyday families. A better deal for today's families - not. Not happening, not going to happen. We'll let the people decide how good the deal has been in the near future when we go back to the polls. We know we're going, we can see it, it's all getting lined up. That's fine, we expected that. No problem. We'll get there, we'll let them decide because they're the important people. The ratepayers, the taxpayers, they're who matter in this province. We can't forget that.

Sometimes it seems as though - it has been mentioned - when they were in Opposition there were some great spiels then, some great speeches given. Funny how that short hop of maybe 10 or 12 feet across the way and attitudes have changed. Ideas, decisions and policies have changed. Promises have changed and been forgotten. Nowhere near what was being said in the campaign. A better deal for today's families, where did that go? Right out the window and it moved that way. How soon we forget.

The Premier and the minister and the government are really good at saying, the URB, arm's length. Depends on how long your arm is maybe. Arm's length from government - no, not really. Where else do you see a government body deciding what the profits will be for a private company? What's wrong with this picture? It's totally wrong. It has been wrong for a long time and I've been talking about this for a long time and that's no secret either.

It doesn't matter who is in government, that needs to be changed. It needs to be a full review of how this process is done. We're going to go and listen and figure out what the deal is going to be in Newfoundland and then we're going to commit ourselves unfortunately. Or, fortunately if the price is right and we are looking for a good deal, there's no question about that because Nova Scotia's what matters, not Newfoundland, not New Brunswick, not anywhere else. Nova Scotia is what matters when it comes to the cost of what we're paying for power and it needs to be a solid deal put in place, long-term and it doesn't matter where we're buying from. Let's buy where we need to buy from.

Power is bought and sold every 10 minutes, I believe they told me at Nova Scotia Power at one meeting I was in. It's monitored constantly, we're buying or we're selling and we're trying to get the best deal. That's an interesting process when you're buying and selling from yourself. How is that a good deal for Nova Scotia? It's not a good deal either.

We need to be able to go out there, we need to be able to open the borders, we need to be able to buy from wherever we want. Right in my backyard - Minas Basin Pulp and Power, here they are. Sitting there, nothing's happening. They put forward plans for tidal power, they've been working on that and we haven't heard much about it. There have been investments made at Minas Basin in 2008 or 2009, the previous government made a large announcement down there with regard to green energy sources and where has that money gone?

In talking to the president and CEO and asking and trying to get updates, well, things have been stalled. Come to find out through other sources down there that maybe that money is not even there anymore. That money has been hauled off the table for future investment in other sources of energy. What a shame that is. Funny we don't hear much about that. Those are important people down there too. That's an important company in this province, a very large industry, the Jodrey group of companies are now known as the Scotia Investments Group of companies that own multiple businesses in this province, put

many hundreds of people to work. Yet we just walk away from it. How come? It's hard to understand.

We see investments being made in other areas, South Shore, a big investment down there, some free money given down there. We see money being held in NewPage keeping that plant on hot idle. Hopefully something will happen there, who knows what will happen? There are no buyers knocking on the door from what we see, but we continue to keep it going. A couple of hundred people get laid off in Hantsport, nobody hears anything about it. They come to the table, they're trying to negotiate and say what are you going to do? How are you going to help support us? Where's that at? Gone. Never hear a thing about it.

It's funny how all these industries, depending on where you come from, are different. Is that fair? Nope. That's what government is doing though in this province and it's all related to power. Here we have a government that has said, well, we're going to invest in wind, and we've got these wind things popping up all over the place. Pretty soon Nova Scotia is going to be fully decorated with wind towers. Well, you know, there's a certain amount that's probably good in wind. There are certain places for them that people aren't going to mind where they're at, that they do things.

I know there are some environmental concerns in places where they've gone up. There are environmental concerns right now that I'm hearing about, not too far from my constituency. It actually borders it. A very small piece of it is in Hants West and the rest is in Lunenburg County. They're looking at a development in wind. It's going to put together some jobs for a short period of time while that's being done, and then it will leave two or three people to work. That's what the return will be on that. There's nothing wrong with creating jobs. That's all good. There's nothing wrong with creating green energy.

This Party has supported and continues to support green energy in the Province of Nova Scotia. Everybody, again, is under the understanding green energy is supposed to be cheaper - truly misleading. Green energy is not cheaper. It doesn't matter who you talk to, and I talk to people all the time at community halls, at events, and what are they talking about? The cost of power. In coffee shops, they're talking about the power. What are you going to do about the power? It's a great question.

The government has a plan. Well, what's it going to cost? Don't know. When is it going to be hooked up? Don't know. What's the deal? Don't know. All they see is what they see on the news, and how misleading is that at times? There's no detail in these wonderful announcements. It's great the Premier goes and waves the flag and says, yes, here we go, we're going to invest however many billions of dollars over the course of so many years. The question is, who's going to pay for that investment? Well, the answer is simple: the taxpayer, the ratepayer, one and the same, are going to pay for that investment. What's the cost going to be? Don't know. How come we don't know? That's a great question too. Somebody must know what this is going to cost. They've been to the table.

They have an MOU. Surely to God, if they've said we're going to make this many dollars and put it on the table and invest it over the course of this many years, surely they have to know what the cost of that is.

Are we going to continue down the road of the monopoly? Right now it appears as though we are. We're not hearing the government talk about any other options, about transmission, about generation, other than killing the coal and the other - what we'll call the "dirty industry," I guess is what they like to call it - the fossil fuel industry. Maybe there's a plan 20 years out or so before they come off-line, if they're even on time. Where are the details around that? Are they coming offline? Are they not coming off-line? Nobody seems to know.

What happens then? Do we know what happens then? Do we know what the costs will be for the everyday Nova Scotian then? No. We know what it is today. We have a mechanism in place where the URB sits up there and listens to everyone speak and put forward their thoughts. We've been there at past meetings, and I know others have been there. I didn't see the minister there. I didn't see the government there, offering any comments talking about why this was a good program, talking about why this rate was okay. Yet - it has got nothing to do with us, that's arm's length, we'll just let them do their thing.

I hardly call that fair, Mr. Speaker. Again I ask you, where does a government anywhere else in the world set the rate - the profit margin is what it is - where else does a government set the rate of return and profit margin for a private industry? Nowhere else in this province. What a sweet deal that is. Then you wonder why you can pay nice bonuses. You wonder why the executives can take home \$2 million in bonuses a year. How nice is that?

Well, I can tell you how nice it isn't, Mr. Speaker, and I'm sure in your riding or your constituency as well there are people who are cold and hungry and their power is getting cut off. I know. They're coming to mine, and I know they have to be going to yours and other members' in this House. This is not just one little piece of the world that people are coming out and saying, we can't afford to pay the bill. What do you think those people talk about in the coffee shop and on the street and after events, at birthday parties and so on and so forth, when they hear and see what people are taking home in bonuses?

Now, our Leader spoke to it a few minutes ago. We put forward a bill in this House. We have put forward a number of good bills in this House that could see changes to how that is done. We saw the impact of just putting a bill forward: it never even got brought up. It never even got past second reading in this House - a little bit of debate, and the power company says, oh, maybe we should do something. Now, politically, it's probably the right thing to do for them, as far as they're concerned. Oh, we'll take a little hit.

Take it out of the shareholders. They've got all kinds of money. That company is making millions, tens of millions, hundreds of millions of dollars a year. What are they doing? They're transferring it over. Oh, we're reinvesting in Nova Scotia. Where? We don't see that. Reinvest in the ratepayer; reinvest in the taxpayer. Let's get a decent rate. Let's find a way to make it work. This government is not doing that at the present time.

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

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to have an opportunity to participate in the emergency debate tonight. This isn't the kind of thing that I normally have an opportunity to talk about and I certainly claim no great insight or expertise into energy policy but I sure know a fair amount about the struggles that people have paying their electricity bills. In fact, I was involved in making a video back in the 1980s, called *Disconnection, the Credit and Collection Practices of Nova Scotia Power*. I made that videotape with some other people who I worked with at Dalhousie Legal Aid, a service for low-income families in the Gottingen Street area in the north end of Halifax, which I'm very proud now to represent. Because I had been working in this legal aid clinic for a couple of years and on a regular basis, I had to deal with disconnection notices and, in fact, the disconnection of electrical services to families, over a period of time and then negotiating with the power company.

At that time the power company was a Crown Corporation and (Interruption) The good old days, that's right. It was really difficult. One of the things that I did leading up to the making of the videotape was pulled all of the files we had over a period of time, where families had been disconnected. I did an analysis of those files, Mr. Speaker, and I found that, disproportionately, the disconnection notices went to households that were led by women with young children in those households. What that told me was that the people who were having the hardest time paying their power bills were often single mothers with young kids.

There was the occasional senior and I'm privileged today to represent a very large number of seniors. I still see, occasionally, constituents who come to see me because their power has been disconnected or is about to be disconnected but I don't see very many seniors. It is not because seniors have lots of wealth and they are able to pay their power bills, it's because they make great sacrifices with the small amount of money they have and they plan often.

I know that it is the case that people watch the costs of power very closely and in many cases people can be very challenged, especially people on fixed and low and small incomes. I think that this issue of price stability in the electrical services for people in our province is something that is of great concern to all members of this House, including myself, as the representative for people who live in the north end of Halifax and central Halifax. Certainly this is a topic for conversation in our caucus.

This is why our government has, in fact, looked at what are the contributors to the growing rates of electricity and how do we address that. I think listening to the Minister of Energy, it has become clearer to me, there are no easy fixes in a province like Nova Scotia which is so dependent on external fuel sources for the generation of energy. This has been the case in our province for some time; we don't have any big waterfalls, for example, to generate the kind of hydroelectricity that is available in Quebec, is available in Newfoundland and Labrador. We don't have oil reserves. We are without some of the resources that other provinces have been able to rely on to generate electricity using their own resources. We have been very much at the mercy, I suppose, in some ways, of external sources of fuel.

Mr. Speaker, as you very well know, we have for a period of time been able to rely on coal in our province historically for the generation of electricity, but as we all know, coal has increasingly presented problems in terms of clean energy and the international agreements that we as a country have entered into around lessening greenhouse gases and addressing climate change. A sensible approach has to be a diversification of the fuel sources that we use in terms of generating electricity, one that will move us away from those forms of fuel that result in greenhouse gas emissions beyond levels that are part of any agreements that we have adopted as a nation and put us in a position where we can generate more acceptable forms of energy in terms of our greenhouse gas emissions. That's kind of a very layperson's understanding of a really complex issue.

As I listened to the Minister of Energy earlier I knew that the cost of coal has increased quite substantially and this is contributing to the growing price of electricity. I'm also very aware that we have embarked on a series of initiatives that will help us diversify the source of fuel that we use to generate energy, such as tidal, solar, wind power. These are all opportunities, but they will not yield overnight solutions to, first of all, our dependence as a province on fossil fuels. Secondly, the development of these diverse areas of energy sources requires a significant investment, as I understand it, on the start-up end of things.

I have the Ecology Action Centre in my constituency and they do a fair amount of public education around different sources of energy production. It has been my regret, actually, that as Minister of Health and Wellness my time is so consumed quite often in the issues that I deal with in the Department of Health and Wellness that I don't get to as many of the forums that are sponsored by these folks as I would like to. They have access to people with a great wealth of knowledge, quite often from all over the world.

I remember meeting with a woman from Germany who came a number of years ago - I think she had headed up one of their fairly significant, perhaps an arm's-length body in Germany that was assisting the German Government in terms of their dependence on fossil fuels and their movement away from fossil fuels as the sole source of energy into more clean energy technologies.

This woman was fascinating for me, as a layperson, to listen to. She had such a depth and wealth of knowledge. I look at countries like Germany, a much larger population but with similar features in terms of their energy dependence on fossil fuels. I know that some of these European countries have even had atomic energy as one of their main sources perhaps of energy generation, and are wanting to move away from their reliance on this form of energy.

So there are many, many issues that need to be considered when we look at this growing issue. I certainly accept that the growing costs of electricity in our province are an issue of concern to many families. I can only imagine when I think back to my earlier working life, making this videotape about the credit and collection practices of Nova Scotia Power - as I said, it was called "Disconnection" - and trying to demonstrate why electricity is not a frill, it's a basic necessity of life. Certainly our government is very aware of this, and we are working hard and the minister is working very hard to develop alternate sources, fuel sources, alternate technologies, green energy.

As people are aware, we have taken the HST off home heat for people who heat with electricity - this is certainly a great benefit.

I think the one thing that concerns me about the debate so far is that I haven't heard any concrete suggestions from the Opposition in terms of what the magic bullet is that they see beyond diversifying energy sources into a more sustainable future for Nova Scotians.

Also, I remember very well when the Tory Government of the day decided to privatize Nova Scotia Power. As I said, I was involved in making this videotape about Nova Scotia Power when it was still a Crown Corporation - I had no real love for Nova Scotia Power when it was a Crown Corporation, but (Interruption) The member asks about the tape. I have to say the tape won an honourable mention at the Atlantic Film Festival; I'm always quite proud of that. It was quite good, and it had a great opening with Ry Cooder doing the introductory music. But, Mr. Speaker, I digress. I shouldn't allow them to go down the tracks of the rabbits.

I think that we will continue to work hard. We recognize the challenges that people have facing growing electricity rates, and there will certainly be a payoff in the initiatives that the honourable Minister of Energy has undertaken.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

MR. ANDREW YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise to speak to tonight's emergency motion related to electricity rates. You know, I believe that this is an extremely important issue and I hear this frequently from my constituents. I hear it from business owners, I hear it from families that are in receipt of community services payments, I hear it from seniors and I think we've heard today that we've all heard those kinds of stories.

I think the fact that rising electricity rates are a real emergency in this province is not an understatement. Just a half an hour ago I was at my son's birthday party and I sort of left the house and came back here quickly to make sure that I could be here for this debate because I think that this is one of the most important debates that we can have.

I have said for longer than I've actually been in this House, in fact I also said when I chaired the energy committee for the Regional Municipality of Halifax that it is, in fact, electricity rates and rising electricity rates that will be among the greatest challenges to economic development in this province. We can talk about the fact that there's this great ship contract that Nova Scotia has won and I think that we are all thrilled that Nova Scotia has won that contract but let's not forget the amount of electricity that they use down on the waterfront.

We were all there for tours of their facilities and saw the electric cutters and everything else that they use and every bit of electricity that goes up in this province will also affect the ability of Irving to deliver that contract. It will affect the ability of all of the subcontractors. It will affect the person that runs the hair salon that ends up being one of the spinoff businesses. It affects the price of everything and it's a trickle-down effect to the cost of goods and services in grocery stores and on the shelves in independent stores, in convenience stores and all the way up the chain to the Walmarts of the world. So you pay over and over and over.

We are in the process, or just about to enter the process, of debating a provincial budget where some of the greatest cost pressures on places like schools and hospitals are electricity prices. As a taxpayer in this province, you pay the electricity bill when it arrives at your home. You pay for it in a lower salary in your workplace because your employer can't afford to pay you anymore because of the pressure of electricity prices and you pay it in increases on the cost of goods and services at every place you shop in this province. When we add that to things like the higher HST, higher gas prices, higher gas taxes, life becomes rapidly more unaffordable in Nova Scotia when we compare ourselves to other provinces. It means that the old adage of people choosing between food and shelter, or food and electricity becomes more and more real for more and more people.

The Premier would like to blame this on previous governments. Is that really the truth? Is that really completely accurate? There's no question that previous governments and the people of Nova Scotia, with the advocacy of the NDP I might add at many times pushed for the development of coal and fossil fuels in this province. People were less worried about the environmental costs of that and coal was the cheapest price. We've seen the impact of that as fossil fuel prices have risen.

Isn't it funny that the Premier, who will stand up and say that he's got to move us off of coal and fossil fuels as quickly as possible, is the first person to sign a deal with the federal government to extend the life of the coal plants. You can't have it both ways. He can't stand up and criticize Opposition Parties for saying that coal is part of the mix,

criticize them for saying that and then sign a deal himself to extend the life of the coal plants. It just doesn't make sense. He is part of those decisions and of course it is part of the mix. Nobody is going to go and close all those coal plants tomorrow, or in five years or in six years, that's not going to be done.

So the Premier talks about the opportunities that come from Churchill Falls. The Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party today quoted a price that he had heard in Newfoundland and Labrador of 23.5 cents. Well, we've heard here that the landed price in Cape Breton, before transmission costs, will be at least 17.5 cents per kilowatt hour.

When the deal was announced, my comments at the time, the comments of the Leader of the Official Opposition at the time, were, you know this is good, it's part of the mix. However, we have questions about what the price is; we have questions about what the impact will be. And the response from the government benches was that we must be against it.

Now look at what has happened. In the months since that time, investigations in Newfoundland and Labrador have raised questions. There have been questions raised in Nova Scotia, yet we still believe that that is part of the mix, but we don't believe that Churchill Falls, being part of the mix, is an abdication or reason to abdicate examining and fully investigating this so that we know what the impacts are.

It is not enough for the Premier to stand up and abdicate his responsibilities to the people of Nova Scotia to the Utility and Review Board, an unelected board. Yet over and over, we see this government move one thing after another to the purview of the Utility and Review Board instead of having him take responsibility for that. That's not right.

The Premier is at risk with this. Like so many other things, he has called this project a game-changer. But if it does not have the oversight that it deserves from government, the game-changer will be bankrupting companies across this province and putting people into poverty with power rates they can't afford, which is why, over the past year and even beyond that, but especially over the past year or two, the Liberal caucus has promoted a number of ideas to bring stability to rates and bring cost control to rates.

We have advocated for bringing Hydro Quebec power into the mix, which I might add that Nova Scotia Power already buys a little bit. But the Premier stands up and says, well, you need the interconnect between New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. Of course he's right; the Leader of the Official Opposition talked about that during the election and the Premier said, we're building that. Well, if we're building that, then that is not a hurdle. With the interconnect not a hurdle because the Premier himself says it is being done, then we can be negotiating to bring Hydro Quebec power to Nova Scotia.

Mr. Speaker, I will table an article that appeared on April 1st in The Globe and Mail that talks about the problem of Canada's fragmented electricity market and points out the

exact problems that exist because provinces are not talking to one another and, independently, provinces are choosing higher-priced electricity alternatives instead of sharing their knowledge, sharing their rates and partnering on transmission.

We have also, many times, and certainly the member for Richmond before me has introduced legislation that would open the renewable energy market to competition, to break the Nova Scotia Power monopoly, to allow renewable energy suppliers to sell directly to consumers.

I might add that this is already done in New Brunswick and it was recommended by studies from the Department of Energy. Now a few moments ago my colleague from the Progressive Conservative caucus talked about a desire to buy from places like Minas Basin Pulp and Power and from other producers of electricity. I'm glad that the Tories have finally seen the light on this issue because as recently as the Fall session of the Legislature - and I'll table this - the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party spoke against that idea, and I will table that. So I'm quite happy that finally, a few months later, after refusing it in government, after refusing it in the last session of the Legislature, they're finally speaking in favour of moving in that direction because I think they understand now that there is an opportunity here. The other opportunity that exists in this case is when you do that, you open capital markets to renewable energy suppliers.

You know, it's a shame that at the moment there are a number of hearings before the Utility and Review Board and while all the Parties jumped onboard to become part of the general rate hearing just a few months ago, the Liberal caucus finds itself lonely once again at the Nova Scotia Power hearings on the renewable energy independent power purchase agreements, which is going on right now, the demand-side management charge, all of which we've been actively involved in at hearings in the past few months. Why is that significant? That's significant because at the moment, the board is having a debate over whether they should charge rates in excess of even what Nova Scotia Power wants to be forced to charge and passed on to consumers.

One of the reasons that those rates are needed, say some, is because the independent power producers cannot access capital markets because they can't go out and sell power directly themselves to people who want it. This bill, or the bill that we've introduced many times that would allow renewable energy suppliers to sell directly to consumers, solves that problem in many ways. It allows people to have choice. It allows businesses in this province to have choice and there are many other hurdles that we shouldn't forget, not least of which is the fact that when we examine things such as, what is the diversification of our supply? Well, of course, we need to be producing electricity in Nova Scotia because that's a security issue. It's important for provinces to have some of their production produced within the province for energy security but it's equally as important to have that come from elsewhere. It's also important for people to have access to the grid and for Nova Scotia Power not to have sole control over who can get on that grid.

As much as there have been some small changes to that and Nova Scotia Power has been forced to put a map on-line saying where there might be access, Nova Scotia Power still has that first right to access that grid and nobody - nobody - can make Nova Scotia Power upgrade that grid.

I'm sure we will hear from the minister's department at some point over the next few weeks, maybe today, talking about how things are working and now Lingan has shut down two of its units, and that's great, but let's not forget that this isn't the first time Nova Scotia Power has done that. Last year I was at Point Aconi while Point Aconi was shut down for the summer, and that's part of the process at Nova Scotia Power because we are a province that uses less electricity when it comes to the summer and, yes, renewable is part of that, but this isn't a new thing.

Mr. Speaker, I only have a few seconds left but I want to reiterate once again just how important the issue of power rates is. Power rates will define a massive segment of our economy, the success and failure of our businesses, and the ability of Nova Scotians to be able to afford to stay in Nova Scotia, raise their families in Nova Scotia, and ultimately retire here. This is a significant issue and, yes, this is an emergency issue.

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

MR. ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, it gives me great privilege and pleasure to stand today in the House to talk about this very important issue, about the energy costs in the Province of Nova Scotia and the effects they are having on the individuals who live here. In rural Nova Scotia many people are wondering, as we've heard other speakers say, how are we going to pay for our light bills? How are we going to pay for the electricity that we need? My colleague, the member for Dartmouth East, he was speaking about the impact that power rates have on industry.

It has that same impact on the small businesses, the corner stores and the small businesses that are one and two persons operations, the mom-and-pop operations. Every day they're faced with challenges, challenges about how to keep the doors open in their small business. When we see power raises coming their way, they have no other way to deal with that but to take it out of their bottom line.

We have an opportunity here today as Nova Scotians and as the people in this House of Assembly to talk about, what do we do? We've identified there's an issue, there's no question about that. Standard & Poor's said today that they are really worried about where Emera's going and with the money they're spending. The Minister of Energy stood here before and read a speech about what was going on in his department. He talked about the expensive coal that we import into Nova Scotia.

I think all of us know here that in years gone by when the world had an energy crunch and there was a problem with oil all over the world, the government of Nova Scotia

decided to turn to resources that they had, which happened to be coal. They used that coal to generate electricity and provide jobs to Nova Scotians rather than sending that money over across the sea. As the minister keeps talking about the rise in the cost of coal, he neglected to mention that maybe part of our solution is right here in Nova Scotia.

In the Speech from the Throne, the government identified the Donkin mine as something that is a highlight for them. It is something that they want to see proceed and they were taking credit for some of that. Well, I've long been an advocate that we should be using Donkin coal in our coal-fired generation plants while it is needed. (Applause)

We know that down the road, even if all the Minister of Energy has said to us comes to be, that in 25 years' time, the numbers from his department tell us that 35 per cent of our needs for electricity in Nova Scotia are going to be coal-fired generation still. That's if all of the plan goes well. I want you to know that we are firm believers in green energy and renewable energy. As a matter of fact, it was our government that started that program. The reason we did that is we understood that it has to change.

But we did it in such a way that our goals were slower, so that the mom-and-pop operations and the businesses of this province would have a chance to adjust how they did their operations, so that, indeed, they wouldn't be hit with a big power bill that may put them out of business - similar to the stories we're hearing today about Stora or what we heard in Bowater Mersey.

In our province, forestry is one of the mainstays of our economy. It built this province. It, along with mineral, with fisheries and our forestry - those were the backbones of how this province became so great and we do not and we should not forget about that. When the power costs are such a big cost to these organizations, we know that we're going to lose part of what has been our heritage. That should not be acceptable to any member of this House of Assembly. (Applause)

When our colleague, the Minister of Health and Wellness, was talking, she said she never heard about any projects that might be different, there was no real offer of things that we could do differently. I beg to differ. In Cape Breton Island right now at Cape Breton University, we have the Centre for Sustainability in Energy and the Environment. It is the leading edge of developing new technologies, looking at clean coal technology and finding ways to increase the green energy we are using in the Province of Nova Scotia. That's happening right there in our little island of Cape Breton. Besides that, there are people with many different ideas. Ross McCurdy, who happens to be the president of this centre, has been looking at different ideas and promoting different ideas about geothermal heating and looking at wastewater in the mines, those types of issues.

We also have another person on Cape Breton Island who is looking at some initiatives that are pretty amazing. The guy's name is Luciano Lisi and he operates a company called Cape Breton . . .

MR. MACLELLAN: Explorations.

MR. MACLEOD: Cape Breton Explorations. The member for Glace Bay helped me out with that.

Luciano came here because he married somebody from Glace Bay, and he moved back here, but currently he is working at building seniors' homes with wind power and with solar power. He's looking at doing wind farms so that they would sell the power to Nova Scotia Power. But do you know one of the problems? Do you know what makes it so hard for him to develop the power using wind energy on Cape Breton?

There are studies - and I'm sure, Mr. Speaker, you're aware of it, and I'm sure the Minister of Energy is aware of it - that the wind that is available in Cape Breton is amongst the best wind around. It is wind that happens on a regular basis; it's more consistent than in other parts of our province. One of the challenges for anyone to develop wind energy on the Island of Cape Breton is to get that energy across the Canso Causeway. There is a bottleneck there, and at this bottleneck it's hard to generate extra power and put it across, because Nova Scotia Power says we don't have the capacity.

Now we're looking at this project in Muskrat Falls, and that's part of what brought us to this today. We're talking about buying energy from an outside source. Instead of going in that direction without finding out what it's really going to cost, without understanding what the actual cost is to the Province of Nova Scotia and what the benefits to the Province of Nova Scotia are, we should be looking at it closely - as they are doing in Newfoundland and Labrador.

We have seen ourselves rush in to help Bowater Mersey, which was the right thing to do, but at no time did this government ever ask for guarantees on the jobs that were there, on the jobs that needed to stay there, and what way we are going to be sure that this operation is sustainable. Shortly after they got the money they went into a three-week shutdown, and then shortly after that another three-week shutdown.

So that is the reason it is so important for us as members of this House to be sure that we take every avenue that is available to us to see what type of deal Muskrat Falls is, what the real benefit to the people of Nova Scotia is - not the benefit to Nova Scotia Power, not the benefit to Emera, but the people of Nova Scotia, the people that we all represent; regardless of what Party we're from, they always should be our main priority. We need to do what is right for the people of the Province of Nova Scotia and make sure that we do something that is able to help affect the cost of power as we know it here in Nova Scotia. We do not want to see our young people going away to find jobs.

Mr. Speaker, there is a better route. There is a way for green energy to live with coal in the meantime, until things come to an end, but for the minister to say that we don't have any resources here to make this happen, I think he's wrong. When he talks about the price

of coal - let's buy Nova Scotia coal. Let's put Nova Scotians to work. Let's pay Nova Scotia taxes and make it a better place to live. Thank you.

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

MR. LEONARD PREYRA: Mr. Speaker, it's a great pleasure to stand up today and to have an opportunity to say a few words about energy and the government's plan for dealing with the current crisis that we face in energy. If there is one thing we share with the Opposition, it's a concern about the rising cost of energy, about the skyrocketing cost of energy.

Every one of us who is a member of this House knows about families who can't make ends meet. We know families that have to make tradeoffs between the cost of energy and food and meeting the other necessities of life. This is no real revelation to us, Mr. Speaker. We also know from dealing with Bowater and NewPage that the cost of energy works a hardship on our small businesses and our large businesses.

Electricity and energy are the lifeblood of our economy. Energy is what makes our families survive. It is what makes our communities grow. So it is important for us that when we deal with this issue, that we deal with it in a responsible way, that we deal with it in a way that meets the needs of today's families but also meets the needs of future generations.

In the past several months the cost of gasoline and diesel have increased by almost 12 per cent; furnace oil has increased by 20 per cent; electricity has increased by 5 per cent, 33 per cent in the last seven years; natural gas has increased by 14 per cent and coal has risen by 75 per cent over that period. All of our sources of energy that we have traditionally used have increased.

I know it's tempting for the Opposition to blame the government or to blame some other company for the rising cost of energy. The fact is that all credible observers in this province, and outside this province, have contributed to things that are happening outside the province. (Interruptions) Mr. Speaker, the honourable members say that it's a fiction that the government has not been involved, but let me just cite some of the reasons and he can (Interruptions). Mr. Speaker, we have issues here - talking about the shutdowns in four refineries in Pennsylvania, for example, have driven up the price, five in Europe. We have the tensions between the West and Iran. The EU has placed an embargo on Iranian crude. (Interruptions)

Mr. Speaker, the honourable member for Cape Breton West talks about wind energy, I think that in this House the most wind is being generated in the back bench of the Tory Party today. And some insurance companies (Interruption) unfortunately we can't harness them. Some insurance companies have stopped insuring tankers and we have

reductions in exports because of exports from Syria and Yemen and southern Sudan and all those war-torn areas have dried up.

We know, Mr. Speaker, that we can't control what is happening in the rest of the world. We can't control what is happening in the outside world. As much as the Opposition here would like to stick its head in the sand and say that all we have to do is do nothing, be happy and energy prices will come down, that we should go back to the old world of coal-fired plants. We can't control the world price of oil, we can't control the world price of coal and we can't stick our heads in the sand. We did that for years, sticking our heads in the sand, that's why we find ourselves in this current situation, it is what brought us here.

What we needed to do was come up with a strategy for dealing with the crisis that didn't involve sticking our heads in the sand. We understand the burden that Nova Scotian families have to face, we understand the burden that Nova Scotia businesses have to face and we are doing things about it. We have a plan for doing things with it, Mr. Speaker, and we are working on those plans because we want to support Nova Scotia families; we want to support Nova Scotia businesses and that is why we introduced the HST rebate on energy bills, that's why we got the rebate. That's why we have the Heating Assistance Rebate Program, that's why we have Efficiency Nova Scotia, to reduce our demand for energy and to create incentives for people to use energy. That's why we have assistance programs for people on low incomes, people with disabilities.

We have a plan, Mr. Speaker, that deals with the real needs of Nova Scotian families, that deals with the real challenges of Nova Scotia families. We have decided not to stick our heads in the sand, Mr. Speaker. (Interruptions)

The Opposition, Mr. Speaker, is so out of touch with reality. They believe that the world price of energy will somehow respond to their great rhetoric on the other side. The challenge of fossil fuels is a worldwide challenge and it's not just about the price of fossil fuels. In fact I see the members opposite are talking about this government when in fact their own government, their own Leader in Ottawa is saying precisely the same thing about fossil fuels. He should talk to the Prime Minister, tell the Prime Minister that he's wrong about coal.

The challenge, Mr. Speaker, is to wean ourselves off those coal-fired plants, it's not to bury our heads in the sand and say that we're going to go to the good old days of coal-fired plants. That seems to be the Tories' strategy these days, to say no, to say that we need to go back as if to say that we lived in a great beautiful world when they were in government. We know that we need to wean ourselves off fossil fuels, we know that they are harmful, we know that we need to use more reliable sources of energy, we need to use the most sources that we have a little more control over.

We know that those guys across the hall don't believe in any of that. There's a great deal of hypocrisy, Mr. Speaker, in what they say. We know that those fossil fuels that they

are defending, that they promoted, have endangered the health of Nova Scotian families. We know that those things that they promoted endangered the health of Nova Scotian communities and we need to wean ourselves off that energy and we have to wean ourselves off that attitude because the health of our communities, the health of our families and the health of our children depend on what we do today.

Not only are we taking steps, Mr. Speaker, to help Nova Scotian families but we are introducing other incentives for the longer term and tidal energy is one of those. Tidal energy represents a way of the future for us. They are talking about that as a waste of money but we know that 10, 15 years down the road people will thank us for taking that leadership.

HON. STERLING BELLIVEAU: You'll hear the tide has turned.

MR. PREYRA: Yes, the tide will turn, as the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture says.

Mr. Speaker, they've devoted a great deal of energy to attacking the Lower Churchill project. It will create good jobs, good energy, and lower and more stable prices for us. There's going to be a review of the Muskrat Falls project, there has been in Newfoundland and Labrador and there in Manitoba Hydro International an arm's-length agency has said yes and . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please.

MR. PREYRA: And the province's consumer advocate has said that it's a good deal. My point is, Mr. Speaker, that we do have a great plan. We have a plan that makes life more affordable for Nova Scotia families and we also have a price to wean ourselves off these harmful energy sources. I'm saying to the members opposite that the future generations will thank us. We have initiatives in tidal power, we have initiatives in solar power, we have initiatives in wind power, in fact, today we see Spark Energy saying that all of their turbines are up and running and we're delighted to see that reliance on wind energy. We have feed-in tariffs, we have natural gas, we'll have a diverse strategy and that strategy's aimed at Nova Scotia families and it's aimed at making life better for Nova Scotia families and for weaning ourselves from the harmful effects of that government and the energy sources that they relied on. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clare.

HON. WAYNE GAUDET: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and say a few words about the skyrocketing rates in Nova Scotia. As MLAs, and I'm sure all my colleagues, I'm not the only one that hears from many families, and many individuals at home in our own ridings, from people who are struggling day by day in order to make ends meet.

Mr. Speaker, to you and to all members of the House, I can tell you practically every week - and I'm sure my colleagues do as well - we hear from individuals in our own riding telling us some sad stories. I want to share with you this evening some of those few sad stories. Often when you hear these stories it leaves you wondering how some of these folks are actually doing it, struggling. This is not something that has only started recently - this has been ongoing for years, power rates going up.

We hear from people who are on fixed incomes; many are seniors, many folks are trying to make ends meet, trying to live off a disability pension, living off workers' compensation benefits; many are struggling on income assistance. Let's not forget those low- or mid-income earners in our province who are also struggling. Every time power bills go up, these families, these individuals don't have that extra income to use to pay the increase of their power bills. They're left having to cut essentials to make ends meet.

We all hear the same stories. These aren't just unique to the people from Clare - they're from all over Nova Scotia. These people, these families, individuals, they have to cut their food budget, they have to cut their heat budget, they have to cut their medication budget. They have to turn the heat off, they have to turn it down. Now, mind you, we can certainly pray to God that we've had a mild winter, but still, people do get cold.

I hear these stories about individuals telling me they had to cut their pills in half, make them stretch, or they have to decide to take pills only every second or odd day. Why? They know they have a choice, they have to pay the power bill or else the power gets cut off. What choices do these people have? We all know if you don't pay your light bill, Nova Scotia Power will allow you a little while anyway to keep the lights on, but eventually you're going to get that last notice and your power is going to get cut off.

Over the years I have received some calls from people in Clare that were told by Nova Scotia Power, pay up or else. Well, it seems, especially in recent years, that the number of those calls are increasing. I'm sure I'm not the only one. My colleagues here in the House, I'm sure they can tell you the number of calls they're receiving are increasing as well.

When you look over the last 10 years, electricity rates have increased seven times. I'll table this in a minute. We all know, effective January 1, 2012, rates have gone up approximately 10 per cent. I'll table this at the end. Last year, in 2011, power rates went up 5.6 per cent; 2009, 9.4 per cent; 2007, 4.7 per cent; 2006, 8.6 per cent; 2005, 6.2 per cent; 2002, 3.1 per cent. When you look at the last 10 years, electricity rates in Nova Scotia have gone up seven times - last 10 years power bills have gone up seven times. So, again, when you look at these power rate increases in the last 10 years, we need to remember that there are many families and many individuals who can't afford these rate increases or who just can't afford any more power rate increases. Power rate increases are going to force people out of their homes or push them to live with somebody else. There's no more to give, no more to give.

We all know that there will be more power rate increases in the future, that's a given. We just have to look at the last 10 years what has been happening in our province. If anybody believes that the last power increase that we encountered on January 1st of this year is the last one for a long, long while - hey, we all know differently but there are people in all our communities who are struggling day by day. They have to cut their food budget. They have to cut on their heat. They have to cut on their medication. Again, you know, what choices do they have? There aren't too many choices.

We all know that the cost of producing electricity in our province keeps going up. There are many people in Nova Scotia who have to make these terrible, difficult cuts. I talked about people cutting back on their food budget. We're forcing these people to food banks. Food banks in Nova Scotia are seeing more demands from their communities. Food banks can't keep up with more demands and more demands on themselves. Thank God, you know, those food banks are in our communities.

I talked about families having to cut back on their heat budget. We all know, looking back at this past winter, it was mild but still there's a limit on how far people can cut back on their heat. There is simply no more money, no more revenue for Nova Scotia Power to take from these people, there's no more. So when there's no more, people in our province are being pushed to the brink by these sky-high power rates. They aren't able to withstand any more power increases or pay more power increases.

This is nothing new, Mr. Speaker. I was able to find a few articles in The ChronicleHerald that date back to 2005 and I'll just go quickly. This was dated August 1, 2005, called "Nova Scotians can't afford an increase in cost of electricity":

"It's not just that Nova Scotians don't like the rate increase. They can't afford one. Power rate affects everyone. For most families, any increase means a sacrifice somewhere else in the budget."

I'll table that, Mr. Speaker. Nova Scotians don't like power rate increases, Nova Scotians can't afford them, Nova Scotians are left to make tough choices and we all know that power rates affect everyone in our province.

I was also able to find one more article from 2005. You know, when the NDP were in Opposition the then Leader and now Premier said that, "The NDP has been and continues to be a vocal opponent to any power rate increases and will appear as an intervener at the upcoming rate hearings." That was on August 22, 2005. Also:

"This burden on family budget is pushing many to the breaking point. Seniors and others on fixed and modest income have little room for such increases and as a result are having to cut essentials to make ends meet."

Mr. Speaker, I fully agree with our Premier back then. I guess with those few comments I will take my seat. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The time allotted for the emergency debate has expired. I would like to thank all the honourable members of the Assembly tonight for an excellent debate. The notice for adjournment was made earlier.

We will now rise to meet tomorrow between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m.

[The House rose at 8:00 p.m.]

NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3)**RESOLUTION NO. 109**

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

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

Whereas Nova Scotia's NDP government is so out of touch with reality that they consider taking \$743 in higher HST from every Nova Scotia "making life more affordable"; and

Whereas the NDP doublespeak continues when they say they are investing in our kids while making real cuts to classrooms; and

Whereas last week's Throne Speech told Nova Scotians "you can see and feel the optimism for the future" in Yarmouth, a place that has endured hardship thanks to the NDP decision to cut the ferry;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly urge this government to take off the orange-coloured glasses and admit that NDP policies are making life harder for Nova Scotians.

RESOLUTION NO. 110

By: Hon. Christopher d'Entremont (Argyle)

Monsieur le Président, à une date ultérieure, je demanderai l'adoption de la résolution suivante:

Attendu que le 24 janvier, 2012, le conseil Leménager 8988 des Chevaliers de Colomb de Sainte-Anne-du-Ruisseau a présenté un chèque de 5 000\$ à la paroisse Sainte-Anne; et

Attendu que les deux clochers de l'église nécessitent des réparations d'une valeur d'environ 64 000\$; et

Attendu que des Chevaliers de Colomb a organisé une loterie afin de ramasser des fonds envers cette cause;

Par conséquent, qu'il soit résolu que tous les membres de cette Assemblée remercient des Chevaliers de Colomb de leurs efforts et les remercient d'organiser cette

loterie qui va aider à maintenir l'intégrité structurale de l'église Sainte-Anne, la plus vieille paroisse dans cette région.