



## DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Gordon Gosse

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**HALIFAX, WEDNESDAY, APRIL 11, 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, I will read the topic for tonight's late debate:

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 member for Colchester North.

HON. KAREN CASEY: Mr. Speaker, with your permission I will table a petition to which I have affixed my name. This petition refers to road conditions in the Debert area: mainly MacElmon Road, Plains Road, Soley Factory Road, Masstown Road, Hudson Street, Chisholm Road, Campbell Road, Station Road and Middle Road.

Mr. Speaker, we expect full paving on all those roads. Thank you very much.

MR. SPEAKER: The petition is tabled.

The honourable member for Truro-Bible Hill.

MS. LENORE ZANN: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to present a petition today on the subject of the Chignecto Central Adult High School. The operative clause is as follows:

“These signatures represents [sic] the positive effects that Adult high schools have had on us as students, also members of our Community. Closing down Adult high schools would change the lives of many negatively. Please take this Petition into CONSIDERATION before coming to a final decision.”

Mr. Speaker, I have affixed my signature.

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 Education.

HON. RAMONA JENNEX: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise in my place this afternoon to speak to the important topic of school board budget deliberations. Nova Scotians expect school boards to make decisions that put children and learning first. This means doing everything they can to protect important resources that benefit students.

Mr. Speaker, the Chignecto-Central Regional School Board is in the midst of its budget discussions and they are accountable to teachers, staff, parents, and students for the decisions they make. I have heard from parents and students about the options that the Chignecto-Central board is considering, and I share their deep concerns. These decisions are unacceptable. That is why I have sent a letter to the Chignecto-Central board today, telling them not to finalize their proposed budget cuts, pending an immediate provincial review of their spending options.

Mr. Speaker, we will be in further contact, shortly, with the board and staff. We want to ensure any reductions that happen are in the best interest of students' needs. We know boards have difficult decisions to make, we all do. Within the Education Department we have cut \$3 million from our own administration and operating costs and we have reduced 12 positions over two years. I also believe our current approach to school board funding is the right approach to meet the needs of students.

The fact is, Mr. Speaker, we continue to invest significantly in our students. Provincially, funding has increased by \$325 per student over the past two years, to its highest level ever. Per-student funding has increased to an all-time high in Chignecto-Central as well. At the same time, the reality is there are fewer students in our schools. The Chignecto-Central board student population has dropped by several hundred students every year and more than 4,000 students since the year 2002.

In 2012-13 we are investing \$177 million in the Chignecto-Central Regional School Board, including \$3.8 million for library funding under the new funding formula. The funding we are providing the board is in line with the 1.7 per cent decline in the board's student population. In other words, the funding is in place to keep the ratio of classroom teachers to students at the same level it was last year.

We cannot afford to continue the previous trend of increasing budgets for a decreasing student population. Not only is it financially unrealistic, it is also not producing the results in the classroom. It's just not working. We have to do things differently. As the Truro Daily News said in an editorial on March 22<sup>nd</sup>, "In the big scheme of things making do with less is simply a sign of the times if this province is serious about getting its financial house in order." I will table that editorial.

There is no question that our education system faces challenges, but by using our resources carefully and focusing on doing the important things well, we can help our students achieve success in the classroom and beyond. Our school boards are in the best position to know the unique needs of their communities, and all of us expect our boards to make the right decisions for students. If this doesn't happen, Mr. Speaker, this government is prepared to take action to make sure our school boards are putting kids and learning first.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester North.

HON. KAREN CASEY: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise in my place to respond to the ministerial statement. We did get a copy of it 10 minutes prior to the House sitting. However, we've had a chance to review it, and certainly expected that the minister would be taking this step based on comments and probably some threats, if you might call them that. So let's look at the statement.

AN HON. MEMBER: People call it bullying, Mr. Speaker.

MS. CASEY: This is anti-bullying day.

Mr. Speaker, it's a pretty sad situation when we have to have a minister and a department that hide behind school boards when things are going bad and take credit for school boards when they're doing great jobs. Unfortunately, boards have been put in a very difficult position - not just Chignecto-Central but all boards - over the last two years. They have been asked, as the minister quoted, to make do with less and yet provide equal or more services to students. That is an impossible task. They've been asked to do something that isn't possible. (Applause)

Within the funding that goes to school boards, the minister should know that there is targeted funding. Targeted funding is to protect programs that the Department of Education wishes to see provided to all students across the province, and the decision as to which funding is targeted is made by the minister and the department. If the minister and the department value a program, they target the money, and boards have no other choice but to spend that money on that program or that service.

After the fact, the minister comes in and says, oh, but libraries are something that we have to have, and so the board made a bad decision. Well, Mr. Speaker, the board made a decision as to which of the services that they wanted to provide would have to be cut, and they made their proposed cuts based on protecting students in the classroom. So when you have a board that's faced with less money, difficult decisions, programs that are not supported with targeted funding, you give the board the latitude to do what the minister asks the boards to do, and that's to take the envelope of money, designate what's targeted to those programs, and use the rest in the best way that they can to protect kids. That's exactly what this board did, and that's exactly what this minister is criticizing this board for.

So my suggestion to the minister is, if library services are a service that the minister and the department value, then do what the funding allocation and formula allow you to do - target that money. Don't come in after the fact and say, well, we really wanted you to do this but you didn't make the right decision so now we're telling you, you have to do it.

Let's make sure, Mr. Speaker, that when we look at the way we support boards and the way we fund schools and students, that we make sure that we have protected what we



believe - as a government and as a department - needs to be protected and you will sign the money based on that.

Mr. Speaker, the sad part of today is that what the minister is doing is responding and reacting to the anger that parents, students, teachers and the whole community in Chignecto-Central have towards this particular government; that's what they're reacting to. They know that the students were walking out, not because they're angry at the board but because they're angry at this government. They know that the anger that's coming through in emails is not towards the board, it's towards this government.

In closing I would like to say that I do acknowledge that the Chignecto-Central Regional School Board do the best they can with the limited resources they have, as other boards in this province, and this government has put a noose around their neck so they can't make good decisions.

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

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, I rise to respond not only as the Leader of the Progressive Conservative caucus but also as the MLA for Cumberland South, one of the constituencies in the Chignecto-Central Regional School Board and as a MLA and recipient of many emails and letters in the last few days as the issue around librarians and other cuts has come forward.

Mr. Speaker, this action today is not the result of any well thought-out plan by the NDP Government and it is certainly not the result of their own financial, good management practices. In fact, what we see today is a knee-jerk reaction to the events of the last few days, to the outrage that's been expressed by parents and by students in Chignecto-Central Regional School Board. We need no further evidence in the fact that this statement was cooked up just in the last few minutes and brought into this House in a rush here today as the government reacts to the very situation that they have caused. The great lesson for the Premier and for the Minister of Education today is that they are now reaping what they themselves have sown.

They are very quick to cut ribbons when they are spending money in Education. They are very quick to go to the site of a new school or an expansion and take credit for it and point to their own decisions about those schools or those expansions as they get out their ribbon and their scissors and the photographers so they can take credit for those things. But they are awfully quick to pass the buck when they are imposing cuts in our schools and in our classrooms. That is the great hypocrisy of the government as highlighted by the statement that was cooked up just a few minutes ago to react today to what is going on at CEC in Truro and at schools across the Chignecto-Central region.

Matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, Gary Clarke - the superintendent of the school board and a professional educator - said today that far from game-playing, he has found the last

few months of their budget exercise to be the most trying in his decades of experience at setting school board budgets. The Premier himself says that he wants school boards to be partners in education but before today, did his government sit down with the Chignecto-Central Regional School Board - or any school board - after having given them their cut targets and ask them what their priorities were, ask them what their cost pressures were, ask them what the options were that had been presented to school boards?

The answer is no. They did nothing to work with school boards in order to try and get a handle on the decisions that were being imposed on school boards like Chignecto-Central. Only today, in the face of mounting public outrage, has the government cooked up a ministerial response when they've had months to work with school boards. In fact the one thing that the government did do was hire another bureaucrat at the Department of Education and, ironically, give them the responsibility of the liaising with the school boards - a responsibility that for 100 years has resided with the minister and the deputy and the existing infrastructure in education. And that person is not even an educator themselves.

So here we have the government reaping what they sowed. Only now, with no plan other than to cut, only now, under pressure when they don't like the seeds of their own misfortune do they create a statement like this or send a sternly worded letter to the school board. So all Nova Scotians are going to be left to ask, who is playing games now? That is the question that's being answered here with this statement - who is playing games now?

MR. SPEAKER: Before I move on to Government Notices of Motion, I've reviewed the petition submitted by the honourable member for Truro-Bible Hill. Unfortunately, all the petitions must bear original signatures - photocopies of petitions and printouts of Internet petitions are not acceptable. It's been ruled on many times in this House of Assembly, so I rule this petition out of order.

### **GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION**

The honourable Minister of Labour and Advanced Education.

HON. MARILYN MORE: Mr. Speaker, might I be permitted an introduction before I do my resolution?

MR. SPEAKER: Most certainly.

MS. MORE: Thank you.

I am delighted to introduce, in the east gallery, members of the 2012 Conference Steering Committee for the Canadian Coalition of Women in Engineering, Science, Trades and Technology. We have with us the national president Nan Armour, Stephanie Hunter, Tina Kelly, Jennifer Reimersma, Charla Williams, and Tamara Franz-Odendaal. I want to

pass on congratulations and a sincere thank you to all these women, and you'll hear shortly the tremendous work they've done and what pride they're bringing to our province.

Thank you very much and I ask my colleagues to give them a warm welcome.  
(Applause)

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

The honourable Minister of Labour and Advanced Education.

### **RESOLUTION NO. 145**

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

Whereas for the first time, Nova Scotia will host the Canadian Coalition of Women in Engineering, Science, Trades and Technology Conference in Halifax from May 3<sup>rd</sup> to May 5<sup>th</sup>; and

Whereas this national conference will attract more than 300 participants from across Canada who are committed to increasing the participation of women in non-traditional careers; and

Whereas the theme for the conference is Inspiring a SeaChange ... Moving Forward Together, and will provide women and employers with an opportunity to work together to remove barriers and help women to fully participate in science, engineering, trades and technology careers;

Therefore be it resolved that this House encourage representatives from industry, educational institutions, community organizations, and unions, to participate in the Canadian Coalition of Women in Engineering, Science, Trades and Technology Conference in May 2012. For more information, visit [www.CCWESTT2012.ca](http://www.CCWESTT2012.ca).

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. 146**

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

Whereas the third week of April is National Volunteers Week; and

Whereas volunteers make an enormous contribution to building communities; and

Whereas young volunteers, ages 15 to 24, consistently show the highest rate of volunteering, improving our lives immeasurably;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House take the time to commend Nova Scotia's volunteers and recognize their ongoing spirit of giving.

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. 147**

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

Whereas 100 years ago the citizens of Yarmouth, Nova Scotia, celebrated the opening of the first Yarmouth Hospital, an eight bed facility; and

Whereas by 1916 a new, larger facility was built on the present site of the Yarmouth Regional Hospital, overlooking beautiful Yarmouth Harbour; and

Whereas over the past century Yarmouth Regional Hospital has continued to grow, with significant expansions in the 1960s, 1970s and in 2000 and has introduced many new, innovative services and programs to residents of southwestern Nova Scotia;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join with the staff of the Yarmouth Regional Hospital, the Hospital Foundation, Auxiliary and all of South West Health, in celebrating 100 years of dedication and working together to improve the health of the communities they serve.

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. 148**

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 Dairy Farmers of Nova Scotia Excellence Award is awarded annually to farms which display dairy production excellence; and

Whereas Nova Scotia's high-quality dairy industry is an integral part of our agricultural landscape; and

Whereas Allister and Mary McCarron of Carrondale Farm in St. Andrews have been awarded the Dairy Farmers of Nova Scotia Excellence Award for the 25th time;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Allister and Mary McCarron on their receipt of the 25th Dairy Farmers of Nova Scotia Excellence Award and the continued high standard of farming which has allowed them to receive this prestigious honour.

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. 149**

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

Whereas the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture held its annual Fishin' Nova Scotia photo contest as a way to generate interest in sport fishing, one of our province's most popular pastimes; and

Whereas more than 150 people entered their favourite sport fishing photos in the Fishin' Nova Scotia photo contest; and

Whereas five winning photos were selected and are featured in the Anglers' Handbook and Summary of Regulations for the 2012 fishing season;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly congratulate the winners of the Fishin' Nova Scotia photo contest and recognize the talents of the budding photographers who participated in this year's contest.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage.

**RESOLUTION NO. 150**

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

Whereas 2012 marks the 10th Anniversary of Nova Scotia's non-profit reading promotion program, Read to Me!; and

Whereas every day at hospital bedsides across the province families are visited by Read to Me! representatives and given a free yellow bag of books, a CD of music and rhymes, baby's first library card and a message that reading to a baby is important; and

Whereas the Read to Me! program, in partnership with the Nova Scotia Provincial Library, has impacted literacy and learning in the province with deliveries of more than 80,000 bags containing about 200,000 free books in the past decade;

Therefore be it resolved that this House join me in recognizing and celebrating the accomplishments of the Read to Me! program on its 10<sup>th</sup> year and acknowledging that reading with baby early can positively impact baby's cognitive and emotional development.

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. 151**

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 Faculty of Dentistry at Dalhousie University has been recognized as the recipient of the 2012 William J. Gies Award for Achievement from the American Dental Education Association's ADEAGies Foundation; and

Whereas Dalhousie Dentistry has become the first Canadian faculty of dentistry to be presented with this pre-eminent recognition of exceptional contributions to, and in support of, oral health care and dental education around the world; and

Whereas the faculty will be celebrating the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of its first graduating class during its centennial celebrations from May 23-26, 2012, here in Halifax;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly congratulate the alumni, faculty, staff, and students of the Faculty of Dentistry at Dalhousie University - one of the oldest university faculties of dentistry in Canada - upon the receipt of the prestigious William J. Gies Award and upon the occasion of its upcoming centennial.

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. 152**

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

Whereas 11 Select Nova Scotia Community Suppers were held in communities in all corners of our province in February 2012; and

Whereas Select Nova Scotia Community Suppers bring together neighbours, farmers, and producers to enjoy fresh, local foods during the winter months; and

Whereas Select Nova Scotia Community Suppers were started by the Department of Agriculture's Select Nova Scotia campaign to promote the sale and consumption of Nova Scotia-grown and produced food;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly thank the countless volunteers and community leaders who organized IncrEDIBLE Community Suppers across Nova Scotia last winter.



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. 153**

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

Whereas Rare, an American conservation organization, and National Geographic ran a global environmental contest for coastal fisheries called Solution Search: Turning the Tide for Coastal Fisheries; and

Whereas Off the Hook, a Bay of Fundy-based community fishery, supports sustainable and local fisheries by working to connect small-scale, groundfish bottom hook-and-line fishermen to subscribing customers in the Halifax area; and

Whereas Off the Hook was selected as runner-up out of more than 100 entries from 48 countries;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly congratulate Off the Hook for being chosen as one of the top sustainable fisheries projects in the global environmental contest.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage.

### **RESOLUTION NO. 154**

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

Whereas today, April 11<sup>th</sup>, is the opening of the renewed Tatamagouche branch of the Colchester-East Hants Public Library; and

Whereas from 1976 to 2012 the library occupied a tiny 682-square-foot building on Main Street, built in 1951, and this new facility, also on Main Street, is a 3,900-square-foot, environmentally-friendly structure; and

Whereas the renewed library was made possible through the support of the Municipality of the County of Colchester and Library Board, Industry Canada, the province's ecoNova Scotia Fund, local residents, and individual donations;

Therefore be it resolved that this House join me in congratulating the staff, volunteers and community on their hard work in realizing this new facility that will support lifelong learning and the betterment of the families in this region.

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

**Bill No. 14 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 475 of the Revised Statutes of 1989. The Trade Union Act. (Hon. Stephen McNeil)**

**Bill No. 15 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 5 of the Acts of 2010. The House of Assembly Management Commission Act. (Hon. Michel Samson)**

**Bill No. 16 - Entitled an Act to Review Ancillary Fees at Universities in Nova Scotia. (Mr. Zach Churchill)**

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

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, may I do an introduction which has nothing to do with my resolution, but can I do it prior?

MR. SPEAKER: Most certainly.

MR. MCNEIL: Thank you. I would like to draw the attention of the House to the west gallery where we have Warden Diana Brothers of Kings County who is here to take in the festivities, and her husband, Jim. I would ask the House to give her a warm welcome and thank her for the work that she does on behalf of all the residents of Kings County. (Applause)

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

#### **NOTICES OF MOTION**

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

#### **RESOLUTION NO. 155**

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

Whereas today, April 11<sup>th</sup>, marks the International Day of Pink, a day when communities nationally and internationally unite to celebrate diversity and to raise awareness to stop homophobic, transphobic, and all forms of bullying; and

Whereas the International Day of Pink originated here in Nova Scotia when two high school students, David Shepherd and Travis Price, wore pink shirts in the spirit of tolerance and respect for others; and

Whereas this day is significant as it should remind everyone that while anyone can bully or be a victim of bullying, it takes a concerted effort by legislators, families, schools and workplaces to stop it;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly join me in acknowledging April 11<sup>th</sup> as International Day of Pink and pledge our commitment to ensuring we do all we can to make Nova Scotia a more open, accepting, and safe community for future generations.

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. 156**

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 April 1, 1873, the SS Atlantic was lost in a storm off Lower Prospect, Nova Scotia; and

Whereas the rescue efforts of Reverend William Ancient, along with the local fishermen of Terence Bay and Lower Prospect, rescued 390 people out of the 950 who were on board that evening; and

Whereas in 1998 local citizens of Terence Bay and Lower Prospect organized the SS Atlantic Heritage Park Society, and in 2002 an Interpretation Centre was completed containing a small museum of artifacts from the SS Atlantic;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia Legislature acknowledge the continuing work of the many volunteers of the SS Atlantic centre and their efforts to remember the sinking of the SS Atlantic on April 1, 1873.

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.

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, may I take this opportunity to do an introduction?

I want to bring attention to the east gallery. I would like to introduce a gentleman, if he would stand up, Aaron Webber. Aaron is a dedicated NDP supporter of the province and for my constituency, and works diligently for me and brings forward many new innovative ideas and the youth component. I want to say hello to Aaron today and have everyone provide him with a warm welcome. (Applause)

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

The honourable Minister of Community Services.

### **RESOLUTION NO. 157**

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

Whereas on February 24, 2012, Leading Seaman David Denman of Boutilier's Point received the Medal of Bravery from Governor General David Johnston in a ceremony in Ottawa; and

Whereas Leading Seaman Denman is part of the Fleet Dive Unit from Shearwater, and he and 10 to 12 other personnel were called to the Stewiacke area in September 2009 to recover grenades from a 30-foot-by-40-foot pond; and

Whereas the divers were equipped with metal detectors and Denman's detector located a grenade with the pin pulled, and he was able to return it to shore and have it safely destroyed;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly congratulate Leading Seaman Denman on receiving the Medal of Bravery and wish him the very best as he continues with his career in the Navy.

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. 158**

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

Whereas Wolfville resident Kathi Sheriko received a Courage To Give Back Award from Family SOS at the Sixth Annual Courage To Give Back Awards, held on January 19, 2012, at the Cunard Centre in Halifax; and

Whereas Kathi's late husband, Tom, was diagnosed with cancer in 1988 and as her children grew, she and her family recognized how cancer had affected their childhood and family life; and

Whereas the Sheriko family created Camp Triumph in 2005 to help other children and families dealing with chronic illness or disability, and since then have helped approximately 900 children whose families have been affected;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulate Kathi Sheriko and her family for the courage to establish Camp Triumph to help children deal with chronic illness and disabilities.

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. 159**

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

Whereas the Paul Harris Fellowship award was established in 1957 to express appreciation for contributions to the humanitarian and educational programs of the Rotary Club; and

Whereas Ken Eisner, a successful developer in Truro and a strong supporter of many charitable organizations in the area, has donated a free space to the Rotary Club for the past 10 years for their major annual fundraising event; and

Whereas Ken Eisner was this year's recipient of the Truro Rotary Club's Paul Harris Fellowship award in recognition of his generous contributions to the club;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia Legislature congratulate Ken Eisner on receiving the Paul Harris Fellowship award and thank him for the many contributions he has made 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 Queens.

### **RESOLUTION NO. 160**

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

Whereas on January 21, 2012, Queens County track and field athlete Chelsea Whalen competed in the Auburn Indoor Invitational, held in Birmingham, Alabama; and

Whereas as a result of her participation in the Auburn Indoor Invitational, Chelsea Whalen became the first female shot putter in Nova Scotia history to break the 15-metre mark; and

Whereas this throw also ranks Chelsea Whalen first in the Atlantic Coast Conference, as well as first in Canada;

Therefore be it resolved that the House of Assembly recognize and congratulate Chelsea Whalen of Queens County for her exceptional athletic achievement.

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. 161**

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

Whereas on Monday, April 2<sup>nd</sup>, the Minister of the Voluntary Sector presented the 38<sup>th</sup> Annual Provincial Volunteer Awards to 69 volunteers from across Nova Scotia; and

Whereas volunteers are an integral part of our communities, giving their time and expertise to improve the lives of those around them; and

Whereas Ms. Jean McNeil of Antigonish was recognized with a Provincial Volunteer Award for her 15 years of work with the Canadian Red Cross, as well as with the Opportunity Shop, the CWL, and the sick and elderly;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly congratulate Ms. McNeil on being named one of Nova Scotia's outstanding volunteers and thank her for her service to our community and those in need.

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



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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Hammonds Plains-Upper Sackville.

### **RESOLUTION NO. 162**

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

Whereas this summer, on Saturday, August 18, 2012, the Springfield Lake Recreation Association, in conjunction with Weir Rockin', will host their sixth annual outdoor rock concert series at Weir Field in Upper Sackville; and

Whereas the group will be expanding their musical offering and welcoming three headline bands this year, including Toronto's own Platinum Blonde, Vancouver's Prism, and Sarnia, Ontario's Kim Mitchell to Upper Sackville; and

Whereas members of the planning committee and the communities of Lower, Middle, and Upper Sackville are excited about the annual outdoor rock concert and are expecting another record-breaking attendance of over 3,500 people at this year's event;

Therefore be it resolved that the House of Assembly extend best wishes and congratulations to the Springfield Lake Recreation Association for the sixth annual Weir Rockin' outdoor concert series held this summer, 2012, in Upper Sackville.

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. 163**

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 Truck Repair celebrated the grand opening of its new facility on Saturday, January 28, 2012; and

Whereas Kings Truck Repair provides decades of industry experience and some of the most up-to-date mechanical and diagnostic expertise in the Annapolis Valley; and

Whereas Kings Truck Repair has the ability to diagnose problems relating to any and all aspects of the three-quarter ton and larger trucks;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly congratulate Kings Truck Repair on their outstanding service and their new location, and wish its owners and staff continued success.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Lunenburg.

**RESOLUTION NO. 164**

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

Whereas the New Germany Saints Women's Basketball Team participated in the Division 3 Provincial Basketball Championship on March 1-3, 2012; and

Whereas the New Germany Saints entered the championship as the number-one seed, and won the championship after defeating the Cape Breton Highlands 51-40 in the championship game; and

Whereas this is the first provincial championship title for coach Marcus Noel and the first championship that the New Germany Saints won since 2001-02, and only their second championship in the team history;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulate the New Germany Saints Women's Basketball team on winning the Division 3 Provincial Championship.

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. 165**

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

Whereas on Monday, April 2<sup>nd</sup>, the Minister of the Voluntary Sector presented the 38th Annual Provincial Volunteer Awards to 69 volunteers from across Nova Scotia; and

Whereas volunteers are an integral part of our communities, giving their time and expertise to improve the lives of those around them; and

Whereas Shannon and Stephanie Venedam, sisters from Antigonish County, were recognized for their volunteer coaching at various levels of soccer in Antigonish, as well as their work in Pomquet and around St. Francis Xavier University;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly congratulate Shannon and Stephanie Venedam on their awards, thank them for their contributions to the community, and wish them 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.

## **ORDERS OF THE DAY**

### **ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS**

MR. SPEAKER: It is now approximately 2:54 p.m., we will finish at 4:24 p.m.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

### **PREM. - EDUC. CUTS: NDP GOV'T. - RESPONSIBILITY ASSUME**

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Premier stood in this House, in front of the television cameras, calling the Chignecto-Central Regional School Board's decision to lay off librarians "a political game." We saw there are many Nova Scotians who believed yesterday that the Premier was the one playing the political games. After the ministerial statement by the Minister of Education, she seemed to have joined into those political games that this government seems to be playing with our students and education.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the Premier is, why does the NDP Government continue to try to avoid taking responsibility for the pain and harm that their \$60 million cuts have caused to the public education system?

HON. DARRELL DEXTER (The Premier): Mr. Speaker, this government is investing more money than ever in the education system, the highest per capita rates per student in our history. We simply are pointing out to people in this province that we want to ensure that the boards make use of the money and get the provincial dollars invested right into the classroom for the kids.

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, the Premier continues to chastise the boards publicly: "I am distressed to see the board, who are supposed to be the partners of the provincial government in the delivery of appropriate educational services, making decisions that - in my opinion - are simply designed to try to embarrass the government." I would think the

most embarrassing thing for this government would be the \$60 million that they've cut from public education.

Mr. Speaker, when is the government going to stop publicly chastising the boards for making the decisions that are being forced upon them by the Minister of Education?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, the school boards have a difficult job. They have a job to do. They have a responsibility to people and we are simply asking that they accept the responsibility that they asked for.

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, they've accepted that responsibility and across this province school boards are responding to the needs of students each and every day. Let me remind the government, and let me remind the Premier, that it is his responsibility to deliver the fiscal envelope to the school boards across this province.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier has said many times in this House that it is up to the boards how they deliver that funding and what programs they offer. He has said that many times in this House. So my question to the Premier is, if they're not going to cut library technicians, Mr. Premier, what services do you propose they cut?

THE PREMIER: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'll say again that they should take a good hard look at their administrative costs. That's one place that they could begin. (Interruptions)

Mr. Speaker, the simple fact of the matter is we are responsible for providing the boards with the money to deliver the education for kids in this province, which we do. What we do not do is give them a blank cheque and I don't think people in Nova Scotia expect that. They expect the boards to use, very wisely, the money that we give them and make sure that that money gets to the kids.

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

#### **PREM.: GOV'T (N.S.)/SCH. BDS. - PARTNERSHIP**

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier. Yesterday the Premier told all of us that school boards are supposed to be partners in education with his government. Then, both inside this House and outside this House, he accused the Chignecto-Central Regional School Board of playing games in an attempt to embarrass his government.

Well, Mr. Speaker, partnership is supposed to work both ways. So my question to the Premier is, how is name-calling an example of partnership?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I'm not name-calling, I'm simply naming what is happening.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, here is what is happening. The Premier likes to talk about partnerships with school boards but his actions are exactly the opposite. When he wants a new school, political or otherwise, he's happy to cut the ribbon and take credit for it as his decision. When there are cuts to be made, cuts imposed by his government, he passes the buck off to someone else.

Today on CBC the Chignecto-Central Regional School Board's superintendent, Mr. Gary Clarke, said that far from playing political games, he found this year's budget process at his school board the hardest he has seen in his decades as an educator. So my question to the Premier is, rather than engaging in more name-calling, will he now apologize to Mr. Clarke for his treatment of Mr. Clarke and the Chignecto-Central Regional School Board yesterday, in this House and outside?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, last year we saw the same thing with the same board. They go through this process where they drive up fear in people. They say they're going to do - all these teachers that lose their jobs, that doesn't happen and, you know, I have to say I am not only not going to apologize, I'm going to reiterate that they've got to get on with doing their jobs.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, the students at Cobequid Educational Centre in Truro are rallying as we speak. Clearly they want library services and equality education and the funding that goes along with it. So my question to the Premier is, are those students playing a political game too?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, those students are speaking out on behalf of library services in that board, which they deserve to receive.

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

#### **PREM. - EDUC. CUTS: ADMIN./STUDENTS - ALLOCATION**

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, in the last budget session the Chignecto-Central Regional School Board cut 20 per cent from the administrative costs of its board. Many of the people left on that board are there to deliver programs that are demanded by provincial governments. All at the same time, though, in the minister's department, you have a new position created for an associate deputy minister; we have an increase in administrative costs, almost every budget line is going up in her department, but yet school boards are being asked to deliver more with less. Can the Premier tell Nova Scotians why his Minister of Education deserves more, but our students deserve less?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, he knows that's not true. He knows that's exactly the same person, in the same position, with a different title - no different employee whatsoever. The fact of the matter is, we are streamlining the budget of this province, we're taking out FTEs where we are capable of doing that without destroying the service.

We are doing it in a common-sense, reasonable way in order to make sure that the money that the taxpayers of Nova Scotia entrust us with are spent in the most effective and efficient way.

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, I would suggest the Premier read the budget that was delivered here last week because there's no question there are administrative costs going up in the Department of Education. We've created a new position, it may be the same person from the department filling it, but he's getting paid more money. There are more FTEs being budgeted in the Department of Education, all at the same time this Premier is bullying school boards across this province and telling them to do more with less. I want the Premier to stand up and tell Nova Scotians how they are going to deliver their education without the proper funding.

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I think the Leader of the Opposition ought to read the budget. The number of FTEs in the Department of Education went down, not up. The school boards in this province are receiving the highest level of funding per student in their history.

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, it may be the highest funding per student in our history, but a lot of that is being sucked right over to the Department of Education and not being delivered where it should be. The Premier talks about forcing school boards to deliver education to the students and at the desk, maybe he better start by telling the minister to stop pulling the money that should be going to school boards and hiding it in her department. Why doesn't the Premier finally show some leadership and stand up for students in this province and demand that we have a reduction in the Department of Education and deliver that money directly to the students in this province?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, that's an absolute fantasy on behalf of the Leader of the Opposition. There are less FTEs in the Department of Education, more money going into the pockets of the boards so that they can deliver services to students in this province.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester North.

#### **EDUC. - LIBRARY SERVICES: VALUE - MIN. STANCE**

HON. KAREN CASEY: Mr. Speaker, libraries are a valuable resource within our public schools. They are the hubs of independent learning and research and for developing literacy skills and for fostering a love of reading. With this government's gutting of the public education system, boards are being forced to close their school libraries. Last year it was the South Shore Regional School Board that lost 80 per cent of the library technicians and this year it's Chignecto. Teachers report that librarians often organize author visits and after-school activities. My question to the minister is, does the minister - and to what extent does she - value library services?

HON. RAMONA JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, not only do I value libraries, I'm sure that everyone in this House values libraries.

MS. CASEY: As a direct result of this government's callous cuts many librarians and library technicians in the Chignecto-Central Regional School Board may lose their jobs and they may lose the support of that valuable learning. Yesterday, during Question Period the Premier said that this is nothing but a political game being played by the school board. Mr. Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth. The school boards are not playing political games; the students are not interested in playing political games or being used in a political game, they are looking to this minister for support. So will the minister demonstrate that support that she has stated that she has for school libraries? Will she demonstrate that and provide targeted money to the school boards to save their libraries?

MS. JENNEX: I think that I demonstrated my commitment to the libraries in Chignecto-Central Regional School Board by my ministerial statement today telling the school board that we will be providing someone from the department to go down and help them with their budget deliberations. Thank you.

MS. CASEY: Well, Mr. Speaker, we did talk about targeted money. I thought the minister knew what targeted money was, and saying somebody's going to help them look at their books has nothing to do with saving libraries.

Mr. Speaker, school boards are in their second year of severe funding cuts at the hands of this government. The minister has stated that these will not have a negative impact on students. So my question to the minister is, will she be prepared to meet with those students who are marching right now, because they value education, and let her hear from them what kind of negative impact these cuts are having?

MS. JENNEX: I'd like to remind the member opposite that we are investing in our students, we are investing in our school boards. We have increased funding per student in this province. We have the lowest student ratio in a decade. So, Mr. Speaker, we value Kids and Learning First and we are making sure that we are investing in our students. Thank you.

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

**PREM. - EDUC. CUTS: ADMIN./SCHOOLS - EXPLAIN**

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier. The government likes to talk about its funding to education, but unfortunately they're putting it in all the wrong places. The Premier imposes restraint on the Chignecto-Central Regional School Board and other school boards, but it is a restraint that is not practised by the head office of his own Department of Education.



The fact of the matter is that the year-end forecast for full-time people at the department itself, for the year just ended, was 177. The budget for the year that we are now into is 194. Those are 17 vacant positions that they continue to fund while they cut 41 librarians out of one school board. So my question to the Premier is, why cut schools and add more at the top of the department?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, that's not what's happening. In fact, he would know that he is comparing apples and oranges. The numbers that he is using include positions that were vacant in the previous year - they were still funded FTEs. The overall numbers of FTEs in the province have gone down by seven and I tabled that information for your information last week.

MR. BAILLIE: Well, Mr. Speaker, who is playing games now? I am quoting Page 7.2 of the budget estimates for the Department of Education . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. No questions on Budget Estimates during Question Period please. General questions on the budget will be allowed.

The honourable Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party has the floor.

MR. BAILLIE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My point is, who is playing games now? Facts and figures are being thrown around but here is a number that every Nova Scotian can understand and I quote from the government's own head count report, head count, not FTEs, how many people, how many heads at the Department of Education for the most recent year? It was 193 last year, it's 196 this year. That's plus three in head counts, something every Nova Scotian can understand. It is up not down and I will table the head count report for the Premier's own perusal.

On top of that, Mr. Speaker, the office of the minister, the office of the deputy minister, the communications secretary of Education in total are going to cost Nova Scotians \$884,000 this year, an increase of \$219,000 over last year. My question to the Premier is, why cut schools and add more fat at the top?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, again, you want to talk about playing games, he's using a head count number, which of course - if you have two people sharing an FTE you get two people. He's using - trying to manipulate that data to tell people something that simply isn't true, which is that there are less FTEs in the Department of Education. In fact, the Department of Education is sharing in the burden of making sure we get back to balance.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, FTEs are up at the department, head count is up at the department - the only thing that is not on the up and up is the Premier's answer to these questions. That's why I ask, who is playing political games now?

No wonder parents are so frustrated in Truro today, no wonder the students are rallying, when those kinds of manipulations go on. My question to the Premier is, when will he end his own budgetary game-playing?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, for the edification of the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party, I'm going to table now the average per-student funding graph over the last 10, 12 years. What it shows is, of course, while the former Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party, and former Education Minister, now the Liberal member for Colchester North, was the Minister of Education, the amount of student funding stretched from \$8,217 to \$9,258. This year it will be \$10,457 per student.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester North.

**EDUC. - ANTI-BULLYING TASK FORCE:  
RECOMMENDATION - IMPLEMENTATION**

HON. KAREN CASEY: Mr. Speaker, the Education Minister struck an Anti-Bullying Task Force to study the problem plaguing the youth of Nova Scotia. The task force produced a report with 85 well-documented and well-researched recommendations. This government has a very poor record of effectively and efficiently implementing any strategies and they frequently suffer from delays.

Mr. Speaker, we can't afford any delays in implementing these recommendations, so my question to the minister is, when will the minister produce a timeline outlining the implementation of the report's recommendations?

HON. RAMONA JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, soon, very soon.

MS. CASEY: You know, Mr. Speaker, we might be amused by that, but it's a sad state when we have kids who are bullied and they are suffering both physically and emotionally and the best this minister can say is "soon, very soon."

Mr. Speaker, the anti-bullying report recommends hiring more guidance counsellors and providing more mental health resources. This government has cut \$65 million from education, \$60 million from health care, and they still have not produced their mental health strategy which was promised two years ago.

Mr. Speaker, this government is not fond of investing in education or in health. The problem of bullying, however, needs to be addressed now. So my question to the minister is, does the minister really believe that a \$350,000 social media marketing campaign is the answer to a very serious problem?

MS. JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, the issue of bullying is being worked on in every school in this province, in Nova Scotia, on a daily basis. The work has not stopped in the

department or in any school or in any community around anti-bullying just because we're still working on the recommendations.

This government has taken those recommendations, we're working with them, we're working with our partners, we are in discussions. We are moving forward with the recommendations. Shortly I will be bringing things to the House around cyber-bullying, but I want to make everyone very aware that this is a very, very serious problem and everyone needs to be part of the solution. Schools are working on this on a daily basis. We are going to be moving forward with the recommendations to see what we can do together, collectively as a community, to work towards removing bullying out of our society.

MS. CASEY: Mr. Speaker, it is a serious issue, it is something that needs to be addressed, it is something that is ongoing and it is a social issue, and the schools are one place, only one place, where we try to address this problem.

Mr. Speaker, the report recommended hiring an anti-bullying coordinator to oversee the implementation of the recommendations. Even though that recommendation was endorsed by Bullying Canada, the Education Minister blasted the recommendations, saying, "We need to make sure we're not adding more people into an existing system." This is the same minister who increased the amount of spending on the senior management within her own department by close to a quarter of a million dollars, yet she fails to see the urgency in addressing and implementing recommendations of the report.

My question to the minister is, if she's not prepared to accept the recommendation to hire an anti-bullying coordinator, who within the department has been asked to take the lead on that?

MS. JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, I was very clear in making sure that we are not adding another level of bureaucracy. I have never said that I was not endorsing an anti-bullying coordinator.

I would like to also be very clear that the Department of Education has reduced administration, and unfortunately, this is one of the symptoms of bullying in this province: when people are not honest and truthful with their comments and their facts, then people get misinformation. It's important that we stand as role models. Thank you.

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

### **EDUC.: FUNDING - PRIORITIES**

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, last week the NDP rolled out their votes and pork-barrelling-first plan. We know about one vote that didn't get bought. Some parents in Eastern Passage have questions. In an e-mail, one Eastern Passage mother was concerned that at the same time the NDP Government is making education cuts, they have \$15 million

laying around to create a high school. She said something is wrong when you are faced with laying off teachers but are putting millions of dollars into an unnecessary school.

My question to the minister is, will the Minister of Education admit that at a time when students in other parts of the province are being forced to go without library services because of their government's misplaced priorities, \$15 million would be better spent on the priorities of our school boards and not the political priorities of the NDP?

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. Order. I would remind the honourable member that he must say who the person is before you read the e-mail. You have to say who it is and then say the quote. (Interruptions) Without that, I find that it's hard to deal with that question. That is the procedure that we follow here in this House. (Interruption) Okay, but I'd like to see that information tabled before the end of QP. Thank you.

The honourable Minister of Education has the floor.

HON. RAMONA JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, we are investing in our students' education, and as part of the Kids and Learning First plan, we said we were increasing skilled trades. Because we're putting skilled trades in Cole Harbour, this makes it necessary for a high school in Eastern Passage.

MR. ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, another concern of Eastern Passage families was the fate of the elementary school students who currently attend the school that will be reconfigured into a high school. Where will the children whose school becomes a high school attend classes? Will they be split up? What will the addition of these students do to the class size of the new schools they have to attend?

My question to the minister is, will the Minister of Education reassure parents of elementary school children in Eastern Passage that she has considered the future of their children at least as much as they considered the political future of the member for Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage, when she decides to build another school for political reasons?

MS. JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for the question. The configuration of where the schools are going to be and the renovations, alterations, and configurations of schools are in the hands of the school board. Actually, they welcome being able to make sure that where children are going and the grade configurations are appropriate for the community.

MR. ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, one of the reasons the Premier actually gave with a straight face for building a new high school is to house some of the students when the renovations are done to the other school. When the renovations are being made to create a high school in Eastern Passage, where will the elementary school students who attend that school go? Will the votes and pork-barrelling-first plan produce another school in another NDP riding?

MS. JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, the Kids and Learning First plan is our blueprint for a student's success, and part of that is making sure that we provide opportunities for every student in this province. We are making sure that the skilled trades are going to be on the Dartmouth side, in Cole Harbour, and the configuration of the schools in Eastern Passage are going to be taken with the best interests of every child in that community.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Glace Bay.

### **EDUC. - JOB CUTS: STUDENTS - EFFECTS**

MR. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, Nova Scotians are feeling the NDP education cuts and they're feeling them directly in the classrooms. Last year, 553 positions were eliminated due to the decisions made by this Education Minister, although they of course try to pin it on the boards.

So my question, Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Education explain how cutting positions, how cutting jobs will do anything except make it harder for students to succeed, and send qualified educators out of the province to look for work?

HON. RAMONA JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, I would just like to remind the members opposite that no teacher lost their job last year. (Interruptions) I will repeat that - no teacher lost their job last year. (Interruptions) Unfortunately, we are dealing with declining enrolments. We have been losing hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of children out of our school system. We have a problem and we need to make sure that we are making our students be successful. We are investing strategically; we are making sure that our children come first.

MR. MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, 82 teacher positions were cut to meet the budget targets set by this minister; 136 program specialists were eliminated; 75 teaching assistants for students in the classrooms were cut; and, in addition, 132 support positions were eliminated.

Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Education explain how she intends to improve or, let's be honest here, how she intends to even maintain educational quality when she's cutting jobs and driving educators away from the Province of Nova Scotia?

MS. JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, we are increasing our student funding. It is at the highest level that it has ever been. We have the lowest student-to-teacher ratio in a generation.

MR. MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, the education cuts by the NDP Government are certainly affecting classrooms, but it's not just the disappearing jobs and classroom supports which are impairing educational success - schools are having to defer upgrades to

technology, abandon improvements to resources and supports, and are requiring classroom teachers, professional educators, to spend more time not teaching.

Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Education acknowledge that her education cuts will only further harm students and learning, and reverse this misguided and short-sighted decision to cut these corners?

MS. JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, as part of the Kids and Learning First plan, we are exploring, along with teachers, how we can reduce the paperwork because teachers are telling us that they're spending a lot of time. So we are acknowledging that - we want to make sure that our teachers are in the classroom working with our students and we're working on that, together.

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

**COM. SERV. - EAST PRESTON DAY CARE:  
ALLEGED ABUSE - NOTIFICATION**

MR. KEITH BAIN: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Minister of Community Services.

The Minister of Community Services has refused to take responsibility for her failure to contact the East Preston Day Care when she was notified about an alleged abuser working there. Mr. Speaker, a mother of a pre-schooler at the daycare told reporters on March 3<sup>rd</sup> that: "The Community Services Department, having heard even an allegation about the presence of a potential abuser, should have acted immediately."

Mr. Speaker, the same mother also said she was disgusted that no action was taken sooner. So my question to the minister is, what excuse does the minister have for this mother? Does she believe the parents of East Preston did not deserve to know?

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, as I said before, and I'll repeat again and again, we took immediate action. We were informed on November 15, 2010, we acted the same day and, to me, that's an immediate action and we also followed protocol, which is protocol that existed when that Party was in government, no difference.

MR. BAIN: Mr. Speaker, we're still waiting to see that protocol that exists. Krista Dicks, mother of a two-year-old little girl who goes to the East Preston Day Care, told CTV reporters that she feels terrified, disgusted and failed. Another parent told reporters that, "Community Services needs to step up. This is huge. This is unbelievable. These are children." My question is, why didn't the minister do her job? Will the minister tell these parents why she let a man with allegations of pedophilia against him continue to work with these little girls and boys eight months longer than she had to?

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, I'll be very clear. Yesterday I tabled three articles that indicated that the daycare was aware, for well over 10 years, of these allegations. We also followed protocol. Anything dealing with children is very concerning to us. We look after children every day, so we took every step that we should have taken and they were immediate steps. You know, it's a real shame that any political Party would try to gain political points on the emotions of children and parents. All I can say is, shame on them.

MR. BAIN: Mr. Speaker, our job is to ask tough questions. The minister's job is to answer them. If she's not up to that job there's a solution for that as well. Nova Scotians have a right to know that this minister did her job to protect vulnerable children. The more the minister tries to deflect, the more it becomes clear she's not up to the job. The Children and Family Services Act states that children are entitled to protection from abuse and neglect. In this case the minister failed to do her job. She did not provide any protection to those children.

When the board of directors at the daycare heard about the allegations from a reporter last June, they held an emergency meeting and fired the person. When the minister heard, she did absolutely nothing to alert the daycare. The only reason the situation went on so long is because of that minister. She let the media do her job. The media did the right thing. My question is - there are no more excuses, the minister needs to admit today that she is wrong, she failed to do the right thing - will the minister finally admit this to these parents?

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, once again I'll be very clear. The fact is when we were notified of the situation we took immediate action. We contacted the Halifax Regional Police and the RCMP Major Crime Unit. We did an internal investigation. We checked the Child Abuse Registry. We also know that the daycare did know about the allegations for over 10 years, I have tabled three articles that state that. We took every action. The Act that they are referring to clearly states that if there's a current issue of concern that we can go and follow the process with that. We took the protocol (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Order. Order, please. Order, please. Order, please. Thank you.

The honourable Minister of Community Services has the floor.

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, I can't be any more clear in the fact that we followed the protocol that is set out, there is a protocol. This was an historical allegation that is not covered in the Act. The fact is, again, we took immediate action. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Glace Bay.

**EDUC. - STUDENT/TEACHER RATIOS: POSITION LIST - PROVIDE**

MR. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Education keeps talking about student/teacher ratios in our province. However, her numbers are simply misleading. A more accurate description of what she is talking about would be the student-to-employee ratio, considering that the numbers include more than simply classroom teachers.

Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Education provide a list of all positions included in her ratio? Does it include principals, vice-principals, support staff? Exactly what is being counted?

HON. RAMONA JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, the ratio for teachers in our system to children is 12.9. If you take out administrators - I will take the administrators out of that number - the ratio is 14.7. The real test is how many children are in the class? We have the lowest class sizes in elementary, junior high, and in high school than we have had in a generation.

MR. MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, because of the NDP cuts to education, class sizes are increasing and teachers are being forced to spend less time teaching. The minister knows this, this is why she increased the minimum class size. Larger class sizes mean that there are more students for every teacher in the classroom, contrary to what this minister and this government keep saying. With more students, the classroom teacher has less time to deliver the quality of education we expect from our schools.

If the minister is accurate about the average class size, why did she increase the maximum class size from Primary to Grade 4 from 27 to 29 kids?

MS. JENNEX: I just would like to repeat that we have the lowest class sizes in elementary, junior high, and high school than we have had in a generation.

MR. MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, when the minister continues to use her student/administrator ratio it distorts the reality of the situation faced in classrooms across our province, many of which are over 30 kids. The education cuts are putting the quality of our students' education at risk.

Mr. Speaker, when will the minister stand up for Nova Scotia students and tell the Premier that she is not to continue to damage our education system with these deep-impacting NDP education cuts?

MS. JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, we are investing in our children more than we ever have. We have increased the per-student funding. We have a plan in Kids and Learning First, which is providing more opportunities for every student in this province. We support our students to be successful. Thank you very much.



MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Richmond.

**EDUC. - ORANGE LUNCH BAGS: SCH. BDS. - REQUEST CONFIRM**

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, the Liberal caucus remains very concerned about cuts to our education system. Yesterday I asked the Minister of Education about her spending \$124,000 of taxpayers' money to buy orange lunch bags for pre-Primary children. At a time when this minister has cut funding to school boards, which will impact librarians and teachers' aides, one has to question the wisdom of spending \$124,000 on orange lunch bags.

Yesterday the minister said school boards asked for these orange lunch bags. My question to the minister is, will she table in the House today the correspondence to confirm this?

MS. JENNEX: We have provided literacy supports to our youngest children in our system. Children who are coming into Primary receive a bag full of things that support literacy development and creativity - CDs, books, crayons, scissors are in there. You know it would be very nice to have been able to resource as much as we could from Nova Scotia - many things are from Nova Scotia but unfortunately we weren't able to find a company in Nova Scotia that produced crayons. Thank you.

MR. SAMSON: Well, you also might want to question whether there's any company in Nova Scotia that produces lunch bags or does printing because apparently that was done in Ontario, not here in Nova Scotia.

Mr. Speaker, the minister has confirmed that the NDP orange lunch bags have been sent to four school boards for \$124,000 of taxpayers' money. One such board is the Strait Regional School Board, which - ironically - recently voted to close three community schools due to budget cuts imposed by this NDP Government. While the NDP continues to run politically-motivated ads which tell Nova Scotians that schools are the heart of the community, the NDP has remained silent while three community schools were closed in the Strait area.

My question is, how can the minister justify spending \$124,000 on orange lunch bags while schools are being closed in the Strait area?

MS. JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, we have provided literacy support to our youngest children coming into school. This government has also changed the formula to make sure we are supporting our small and isolated schools. We have increased \$22 million going to our small and isolated schools in this province.

MR. SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, obviously her funding isn't working very well in the Strait area, where three communities - one in my riding, one in the riding of Antigonish,

and one in the riding of Guysborough-Sheet Harbour, the last two being government ridings - certainly have not seen the benefit of the minister's new funding formula to save small community schools. As part of the review process by the school board, parents, educators, and students wrote to the Minister of Education asking for her intervention in the process. The minister was asked for a meeting. She has not agreed to any meeting, and responses were only sent to parents after the decision had been made to close these schools.

In her statement earlier today, the minister said, "I have heard from parents and students about the options that the Chignecto-Central board is considering, and I share their deep concerns. These decisions are unacceptable. That is why I have sent a letter to the Chignecto-Central board today telling them not to finalize their proposed budget cuts, pending an immediate provincial review of their spending options."

My question to the Minister of Education is, on behalf of the parents, the students, and the teachers of those three schools, why did the Minister of Education not do the same thing before the Strait Regional School Board closed three schools?

MS. JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, under the legislative process the school review is very clearly mandated and it is not to be interfered with by the minister. The school review process is a very clearly articulated process where parents and community have the opportunity on two separate occasions to offer their input to the process and to the board.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester-North.

#### **EDUC. - READING RECOVERY PROG.: CUTS - COST-SAVINGS**

HON. KAREN CASEY: Mr. Speaker, on February 8, 2011, in correspondence from the minister to the South Shore Regional School Board, she stated that the cost of delivering the Reading Recovery program was \$7.1 million. At the time, eliminating Reading Recovery was touted by this government as being a cost-saving measure.

My question to the minister is, how many dollars did the minister plan to save by eliminating Reading Recovery?

HON. RAMONA JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, we brought in a program called Succeeding in Reading to make sure we were meeting our youngest children's needs. This government did not want to see children wait until Grade 1 and then, almost through a lottery system, one or two children getting Reading Recovery. We wanted them to get in to make sure our children are supported early in Primary and carried through as they need support when they need it, not wait for one or two spots in a Reading Recovery program that was expensive. We are spending money wisely to reach more students.

MS. CASEY: Mr. Speaker, the question was, how much did the minister plan to save? The second comment is, I'm not sure what board she worked with, but I've never heard of a lottery system to qualify for Reading Recovery.

Educators all across this province know the value of Reading Recovery. School boards recognize the value of Reading Recovery. It was part of an early literacy initiative. It was not a single program, as this minister believes - that it was the only program. It was not the only program. It was one of a whole array of programs to support early literacy in our schools. The South Shore Regional School Board asked the minister if they could continue the program at their own cost because they recognized the kids who were learning to read through that program. When boards wanted to continue that program, why did the minister deny them and those kids the opportunity?

MS. JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, we are making sure that we are providing the appropriate service at the appropriate developmental stage in children's literacy development. We are making sure that we have teachers and early literacy specialists that work in the classroom with our youngest students to support them as they are learning to read and write. Thank you.

MS. CASEY: Mr. Speaker, I'm glad to see the minister acknowledges the benefits of the Reading Recovery program in one sense because the teachers who are delivering the new framework that she talks about are the Reading Recovery-trained teachers in this province. These teachers are highly skilled at early literacy intervention and they're a great resource in our public education system. Hundreds of students in the Reading Recovery program have been successful and are confident young readers. For a nominal licensing fee of approximately \$3,000 per board, hundreds of our current students could still be benefiting from Reading Recovery.

My question to the minister is, how can the minister deny the students that we have as most vulnerable, in Grade 1, how can she deny them the opportunity to take advantage of a program that may work for them?

MS. JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, the honourable member made a comment "may work for them" and that is just the problem with Reading Recovery. Unfortunately, our data state that by the time the children made it to Grade 3, the significant gains they had made, they had lost; it was not sticking. We also know with Reading Recovery, not every student is recorded. If they are excused from the Reading Recovery program without succeeding, their name drops off the data. We make sure that our students in Primary and Grade 1 and now in Grade 2 are going to have the supports they need. Reading Recovery teachers are the ones who are doing early literacy because they have training in early literacy and they are trained experts, and they're now meeting the needs of more of our students in our system.

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

**EDUC. - EDUC. ASSISTANTS: CUTS - CLASSROOM EFFECTS**

MS. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, imagine a typical Nova Scotia classroom; the class includes a high-needs autistic child and two children with ADHD, not an uncommon experience here in this province. Suddenly the teacher who used to have a full-time educational assistant only has a part-time one, the result of NDP budget cuts. So, as if the demands on the teacher weren't challenging enough, that teacher is now left to provide a quality education for all students, with fewer resources at his or her disposal. I'm wondering, how would the Minister of Education cope with this situation if she experienced those cutbacks in her classroom?

HON. RAMONA JENNEX: The issue around teacher assistants or educational assistants is based on the need of a child. Through the process of an IPP, it is determined when a child needs a TA. We are making sure, school boards are making sure, schools are making sure, that children who need support are receiving the support that they need.

MS. REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I think the minister should try talking to parents because they don't say that. I don't think I need to tell you that no one wins in this classroom. The students with special needs have lost their valuable support system and they've lost their best opportunity to learn. The other children in the class will not receive the attention from the teacher that they need and deserve and the teachers' resources are stretched to the breaking point. Could the minister please tell us how a high-needs autistic student is experiencing a better educational experience when the valuable resources the student relies on have been chopped in half by her government?

MS. JENNEX: I don't know this particular case, but any student, any child that has autism, we make sure through their Individual Program Plan, which involves a team approach which is the teacher, the administration, resource teachers, maybe an outside agency, but the key person on every team is the parent. The parents and the team determine what supports the student needs in the school.

MS. REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I don't know what fantasyland the minister is living in, but it sure isn't the Nova Scotia educational system. Man, talk to any parent who has been through that process. It's this NDP Government that has spent \$90,000 on advertising telling the world they're putting Kids and Learning First - and nothing could be further from the truth.

Mr. Speaker, the needs in the classroom have not diminished and, despite what the minister has said, neither have the class sizes. The only thing that has changed is that this government has decimated the support systems for these students - they have failed them, and they have failed the teachers who want to teach those students.

Will the minister admit that by cutting educational assistants in the classroom she has compromised the ability of teachers to deliver a quality education to our most

vulnerable students and deprived those students of their rightful education and a meaningful future?

MS. JENNEX: This government has increased their allocation for special needs spending in our budget and students that need support do receive the support they need - it is a team approach with the parent and with the teachers and with the resource teachers. There is a process in place.

And I would like to just remind people opposite that it is very important that we follow along with our IPP process to make sure that the appropriate supports are in place for our students.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle.

**COM. SERV. - EAST PRESTON DAY CARE:  
ALLEGED PEDOPHILE - DEPT. AWARENESS**

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Community Services, after weeks of silence, finally admitted that she learned on November 15, 2010, that an alleged pedophile worked at the East Preston Day Care, yet she did nothing, nothing, to notify the current board or the parents, and it was left to Frank Magazine - Frank Magazine, Mr. Speaker - to let them know eight months later. Eight months later - that is a complete failure to do her job to protect little children, a sacred duty under the Children and Family Services Act.

She now owes people a full explanation, Mr. Speaker, not just excuses. Did the minister learn the full gravity of the evidence against this alleged pedophile from Justice on November 15<sup>th</sup> and, if not, when was her department fully apprised of all evidence and allegations against the alleged pedophile?

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: Once again, let's review some of the facts. That fact is that the daycare was aware of the allegations for over 10 years; the fact is that we took immediate action - the very same day we learned of the allegations; the fact is that we contacted the Halifax Regional Police and the RCMP; the fact is that we did an internal investigation; the fact is that we checked the Child Abuse Register; the fact is that we followed protocol. And if they can't understand - and it's a real shame that they think that this is something that they want to gain political points on, the emotions of such a serious issue. So shame on them.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, in her answer yesterday, and just now, the minister refers to an internal investigation being conducted. Now people just don't do internal investigations unless there is a need to look long and hard at what was done by government itself. So my question is, what precisely was looked at in this internal

investigation and did that investigation include interviewing or reviewing material from anyone from the Justice Department?

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, I've answered this question over and over again and if he can't take it in, tell him to sit down and read Hansard.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, this is an extremely serious matter and the minister just can't blow it off, and that's exactly what she is trying to do. Justice had to defend lawsuits about the alleged, serious sexual assaults at the Home for Colored Children; they told Community Services.

I am looking for a very short answer from this minister, Mr. Speaker. Were officials in her department briefed about the progress of lawsuits by victims of this alleged pedophile, by officials or lawyers from Justice – yes or no – and was it ever discussed or even considered – yes or no – what the impact of the minister notifying the daycare or taking stronger action might have had on the province's position in the lawsuit?

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, as I've indicated before, we took immediate action. We took the appropriate action. If he can't understand that, that is his problem.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

### **ENERGY - GOV'T. BLDGS.: ENERGY EFFICIENCY - FUNDING**

MR. ANDREW YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Energy. Today we learned from the CEO of Efficiency Nova Scotia that the Department of Community Services, and possibly other departments, have accessed funding from the corporation to pay for upgrades and energy efficiencies to properties owned and operated by the province.

So, Mr. Speaker, Efficiency Nova Scotia, and more importantly Nova Scotia Power ratepayers, are effectively subsidizing the Department of Community Services for energy upgrades that the province should be able to pay for from their own budget, as they require municipalities to do. So would the Minister of Energy please explain why funding to improve energy efficiency in government buildings is not coming from departmental budgets?

HON. CHARLIE PARKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the honourable member for the question. Certainly I think all Nova Scotians are interested in supporting programs that will save money on our energy costs whether it's a homeowner, small business, a large corporate interest, or a government building. This program that's underway is saving a considerable amount of money, I think somewhere in the range of \$100 million a year. Why wouldn't we want to save that money?

MR. YOUNGER: Well, Mr. Speaker, isn't it interesting that this government decided to tell municipalities that they should pay for the LED street light upgrades through the future cost savings but they want to raise the bills of Nova Scotia Power's ratepayers to pay for their energy efficiency upgrades? That's not fair.

You know, Mr. Speaker, this government added a new electricity tax to power bills of ratepayers after opposing the Tory plan to do just that during the election and then they raided the fund. Of course, improving energy efficiency in government-owned and operated facilities is important but the minister can't possibly believe that government departments should be taking opportunities from residents and businesses of this province when the government could fund the initiatives itself.

So, Mr. Speaker, does the minister believe government departments should stop raiding Efficiency Nova Scotia programs so that more non-profits, low-income families and indeed families and businesses from across this province can access more efficiency funding?

MR. PARKER: Mr. Speaker, certainly we do have a number of good programs for low-income Nova Scotians, programs to do with weather stripping, or insulation, or air sealing, insulating the hot water tank and so on. So those are all of benefit to low-income Nova Scotians. A lot of seniors, unfortunately, are low income as well and they would benefit from any of those programs. So there are programs out there for everybody with an existing home, a new home, a small business, large businesses and, yes, even government buildings. It's all saving money for Nova Scotians.

MR. YOUNGER: You know, Mr. Speaker, isn't it interesting that the government chooses to tell municipalities to fund energy savings one way, but doesn't follow their own advice to the municipalities?

Mr. Speaker, the NDP had a choice to abandon the Tory proposal to tax Nova Scotia Power customers and have shareholders pick up efficiency costs but the NDP changed their position from the election like they've changed so many other election positions and sided with big business. Now it turns out (Interruption)

Mr. Speaker, the Premier wants to suggest the URB made that decision. It did not. I stood at the press conference with the minister downstairs when the minister trumpeted that this would be a Christmas gift for Nova Scotians, to be taxed on their bills. I stood here while that bill was debated before this House, when that bill could have charged shareholders and the Premier knows it.

Mr. Speaker, now it turns out that government departments are bleeding money from programs run using the tax instead of financing their own energy upgrades. This

means less money available to people and businesses wanting help to improve their energy efficiencies.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister ask his Cabinet colleagues to stop departments from seeking their funding from Efficiency Nova Scotia for government owned and operated buildings and make that funding available to members of the public?

MR. PARKER: Mr. Speaker, you know Christmas comes all year round when the HST is taken off of power rates for everyone, for all Nova Scotians. The government rate is - we're paying into the system, we have the right to benefit on behalf of all Nova Scotians, the ratepayers, the taxpayers. In fact, the savings are somewhere in the range of 30 per cent, why wouldn't we want to save 30 per cent on our power bills?

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

### **LBR. & ADV. EDUC.: STUDENT ASSISTANCE - DETAILS**

MR. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, costs of higher education in the Province of Nova Scotia are going up along with the cost of living. Life is getting more expensive under the NDP Government and students at our post-secondary institutions are really feeling the brunt of it.

The Minister of Labour and Advanced Education recently announced that students can expect \$5.5 million in assistance but she was short on details. In fact, the minister's announcement that was supposed to be held last week was postponed and then cancelled. Students are left wondering what is happening with this money. Will the minister stand up in the House today and tell us what is going to happen with this money?

HON. MARILYN MORE: Mr. Speaker, I actually just briefed the second of the two post-secondary student organizations before the House opened today. It was a confidential briefing, giving them a heads-up on the details before an announcement is made. I would just urge the member opposite to remain patient and he'll get more details.

Certainly we've been listening to student organizations in this province and they have told us, time and time again, that they share our government's interest in reducing unmet need and improving our Student Assistance Program and we've been listening very carefully.

MR. CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, I'll be as patient as the students who are waiting for the announcement for that money.

There's a problem in Nova Scotia, Mr. Speaker, the average tuition fees in this province are much higher than the national average. There are actually only two provinces in the country whose tuition levels are higher and when it comes to graduate student



tuition, we actually have the highest in the country, bar none. As well, thanks to this government, \$75 million in cuts to our universities and our post-secondary education system, student fees are on the rise at campuses. Still, we get no details about student assistance.

Mr. Speaker, education is getting more and more expensive for students and their families. Will the minister tell students today when they can expect real relief when it comes to tuition and up-front grants for students?

MS. MORE: Mr. Speaker, our government has been very clear from day one that the group that we are comparing in the statistics, as the member well knows, are undergraduate Nova Scotia students in Nova Scotia universities. We are committed to keeping their tuition at or below the national average and we have certainly been able to keep that commitment. We are doing everything possible to make university education in this province, post-secondary education in a more general sense, affordable and accessible to Nova Scotians. We're committed to that and we'll stick to it. Thank you.

MR. CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, how is gutting \$75 million out of core funding to our universities supporting a more affordable education system? It's not. The fact is, tuition is going up in this province, especially when it comes to undergraduate and graduate tuition. We've seen that, Stats Canada has spoken about it.

I just want to read this here: High tuitions are a deterrent to many bright and talented young people who want to acquire a post-secondary education. Families are struggling to help their students pay for university. The NDP will continue to fight for lower tuition in Nova Scotia. Mr. Speaker, that came from the Premier when he was Leader of the Opposition. How quickly those promises failed when this government took office. (Interruptions) Mr. Speaker, it's not what this government's doing. Recently the Graduate Retention Rebate was cut by \$13.8 million. Will the minister commit to directing that \$13.8 million, plus the \$5.5 million recently announced, to much-needed upfront grants for students?

MS. MORE: Mr. Speaker, over the last two years our province has invested \$48 million new additional dollars to support students attending post-secondary institutions in this province. That is a record to be proud of - that's the highest contribution that any government has made and, certainly, we are very proud of these efforts.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

#### **HEALTH & WELLNESS - TALBOT HOUSE: CLIENTS - MIN. ROLE**

MR. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, on March 5<sup>th</sup>, the Talbot House closure was abruptly announced by the Minister of Community Services. At that time, arrangements were made by the Minister of Community Services to transfer 14 individuals in varying

stages of addiction treatment - treatment that falls under the mandate of the Minister of Health and Wellness. Given the Minister of Community Services displayed her sensitive and caring nature last week by saying virtually nothing about the availability of current programs and services to clients, I am wondering what role did the Minister of Health and Wellness play in ensuring that the ongoing treatment of clients who had been receiving treatment at Talbot House has been adequate?

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, Talbot House falls under the jurisdiction of the Department of Community Services, and I would refer that question to the Minister of Community Services.

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, as I stated before, Talbot House is run by a board of directors and we are the funder of Talbot House. The board of directors made a decision to close Talbot House and we took care of the residents who were on-site; there were approximately five to six, and we found another location for them. We took action to make sure that their needs were being taken care of.

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, the minister can point fingers at the board all she wants, but the fact is she's responsible for treatment not only of the current residents, but also for those who are seeking residential treatment with options that are quickly dwindling. The option to provide residential treatment for individuals with addictions in this province is decreasing at a rapid pace - Recovery House in Antigonish, a 28-day recovery program, had its funding discontinued by this government; Talbot House closed; Compass Program - another 28-day intensive, structured residential treatment program - closed under this government's mandate. My question to the Minister of Health and Wellness, how will wait times for individuals with addictions who need intensive, structured treatment go down when the options available for this type of treatment in this province are disappearing?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, addiction services are very, very important services to have in place for people who need to go through withdrawal, often through a residential-based program, and then we can provide a variety of options to people including ongoing treatment and follow-up, and frequently these programs can be done on an outpatient or day-program basis.

With respect to the Compass Program, the member started to ask me some questions about that yesterday. That program was not being fully utilized, 40 per cent of the time the beds in that program were empty. Although we were funding it, it wasn't a good use of resources. We have now redirected those resources into the detox program, the in-patient program and, in fact, the number of days that people will be able to be in that program will be expanded threefold. So, in fact, we're reinvesting in a model that will see better treatment with better outcomes for people, including our in-patient program.

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, the reality is that structured residential treatment is, for many, the best option. The government has dismantled addiction treatment options in this province without ever having released a mental health and addiction strategy. It's like the minister is hoping these individuals who do not respond well to community based programs will just go away. How will the minister ensure those requiring structured programming to deal with their addictions are able to get treatment in a timely manner?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, as I indicated, we are taking a variety of initiatives to improve access for a greater number of people in Nova Scotia, be they children, youth or adults. Faster assessments, expanded treatment, appropriate treatment, treatment and services that are based on evidence for what works, what will be effective, and at the end of the day more people will be seen without having to infuse resources. We are using resources in the system more effectively and we are investing strategically.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

**JUSTICE - EAST PRESTON DAY CARE:  
ALLEGED PEDOPHILE - MIN. AWARENESS**

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice. Yesterday we learned that on November 15<sup>th</sup> the Department of Community Services knew that an alleged pedophile was employed as a bus driver for the East Preston Day Care. The Department of Justice was the obvious source for this information. Will the minister tell us what exact date he became aware of the risk to preschoolers at the daycare?

HON. ROSS LANDRY: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for that question. I just want to add to my colleague's position on this. The important fact here is that when there are allegations or alleged actions made in our communities, a report is made to the appropriate police agency and in this case it was done. I have all the respect for the police officers in this province, but a common thread that seems to be coming from the Third Party is that they lack confidence in the qualities and skills of our highly professional police officers. That's a bit disturbing.

MR. MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, we would have confidence in this Minister of Justice if he could provide us a date. We have placed great emphasis on this matter here in Question Period because the allegations of past abuse by this individual are very disturbing. If they are true, we are concerned another young person could suffer the same experience. My next question is, what steps did the minister take to protect the children when he knew they were in the presence of the alleged pedophile?

MR. LANDRY: Mr. Speaker, I want to assure all Nova Scotians that I, as the Minister of Justice, take any actions that are aggressive or violent against a child, or abuse of any manner - I take that seriously. The Department of Justice acts promptly on all

allegations and issues. As my colleague had mentioned, on the date that her office became aware, they took appropriate action by notifying the police and then allowing the process. She did that immediately as reported in the House, and I stand by my colleague's comments.

MR. MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, parents want to know that their children are protected from alleged pedophiles. Who from the Department of Justice met with whom from the Department of Community Services, on the phone, in person or by e-mail and what information was conveyed to protect these children?

MR. LANDRY: Mr. Speaker, another part of this whole process is that our judicial process is well respected, highly professional and does an excellent job. Public Prosecution is an independent body to look at all issues such as this that come forward and look for the substance with regard to allegations. Remember, we must respect allegations while at the same time assuring the rights and safety of all children. I take that job seriously and I act on those matters promptly and I have all the confidence in the steps that were taken to this date.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Richmond.

#### **JUSTICE: VIOLENT CRIME - ADDRESS**

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, in the first three full months of this year there have been 10 reports of shootings by the Halifax Regional Police. The issue of violent crime has been brought to the Justice Minister's attention in this House by myself and others on numerous occasions. As of yet the minister has failed to take any proactive measures in developing a violent crime prevention strategy for both HRM and the Province of Nova Scotia.

My question to the minister is, why does the minister refuse to address violent crime in the Province of Nova Scotia?

HON. ROSS LANDRY: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for the question. It gives me an opportunity to outline that as Minister of Justice I take all matters that deal with violence seriously, and that over the last year - as I reported the last time this House sat - I have been meeting with colleagues throughout the justice system. In fact, I have recently met with the police - both the RCMP and the Halifax Regional Police - and I compliment them on the strategic steps that they are taking to do enforcement when violent incidents are occurring. I want to point out to Nova Scotians that they are doing a phenomenal job when a violent situation occurs. I'm going to stop my answer at this point, and I will add more when he gives his next question, to outline some other key points that need to be outlined.

MR. SAMSON: Well, Mr. Speaker, when you don't have much to say, I guess it's best to pace yourself to try to stretch it out a bit more.

Ironically, this is a government which is very fond of strategies, as we heard of five new ones in the Throne Speech times four. We have seen from this minister quite clearly that he is only interested in reacting to events. Gun crime is very serious issue, and it is one that only seems to be getting worse as the months and years continue. It is an issue here in the Halifax Regional Municipality, but it's also one that is affecting lives throughout the Province of Nova Scotia.

Nova Scotians need to know that the Minister of Justice is taking measures to ensure that gun crime is addressed once and for all. Yet after almost three full years in office we have nothing in terms of a proactive strategy to address violent crime in this province. So my question is, again, when will the minister stop reacting to issues and develop a strategy which would address violent crime in our province?

MR. LANDRY: I will take some time to speak a little longer since the honourable member has put an invitation out to me to go beyond just a brief answer and give a more in-depth answer, and I'm very happy to do that.

I want to outline some of the steps that we have taken in direct regard to domestic violence. Recently I spoke and gave an overall presentation on the strategic plan that I, as minister, and the Department of Justice are giving. We gave that at a forum. I guess I should have put an invitation out to the member, to my colleague there.

I also want to point out that in that presentation that I did, we talked about collaborating with some of the best practices, and there is one we identified in Chicago under the CeaseFire program. We're working with the municipal police department to bring in this program that addresses violence of this nature. The research and the academic support around that show that it works. We're looking into that. We're also expanding the Restorative Justice Initiative within the province. We are a world leader in this area. We're partnering with Dalhousie University.

I will save more to tell about all the good things that we're doing in the next part to his supplementary question, and I thank the member for his question.

MR. SAMSON: You know, Mr. Speaker, it's ironic because it took three full years to have the minister stand in this House and talk about the Chicago experience that they're now going to try to implement. Nova Scotians are asking, what took so long and why wasn't this addressed three years ago?

The reports from the Halifax Regional Police speak for themselves: January 1 - the very first day of this year - a shooting at the metro bus terminal in Dartmouth; January 11, several gunshots in the area of 200 block of Ross Street in Halifax; February 6, police

respond to report of shots being fired in the area of Demetreous Lane and Victoria Road; March 24, shots fired near Grafton and Carmichael; April 2, a man had been shot at Dakin Drive in Halifax.

This is a serious issue that for years now, the last three years, we've been calling upon this minister to put a strategy in place to allow our police officers in our communities to be able to battle gun crime and to make our streets safer. So again, my question to the minister is, why will you not announce a formal violent crime prevention strategy for the Province of Nova Scotia?

MR. LANDRY: I thank the member for that question. There's just so much in there that I could talk about and say about the great things that the Justice Department are doing, that the municipal police departments are doing, that the RCMP are doing. Taking three full years - it's a matter of looking at some very complex problems and working. The issue of violence in our society is not something that occurs overnight or that it had occurred overnight. It is not something that's exclusive to this community and this community alone.

I am very confident in the quality of professional services by our police departments to deliver services and one area that I spoke about is the Chicago CeaseFire program. Those types of programs take time, and I hope that he would trust and respect the judgment by our police leaders and our justice colleagues, that they're making some sound decisions there.

Also on Restorative Justice and expanding that program and working, for example, with Dalhousie University on a pilot project where we can start to look at reducing the impact on our police officers in the community to deal with crime so that they're freer to work on some of these other issues, but the main part of dealing with violence in society is dealing with the underlying causes and we're working on that. (Interruptions) I want to say, I can hear from my colleagues about giving a speech, my colleague across there asking me to give more detail, they can't have it both ways. It seems to be typical.

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

#### **LBR. & ADV. EDUC. - MICHELIN: MEETINGS - CONFIRM**

MR. KEITH BAIN: Mr. Speaker, last Fall the president of Michelin Canada, in an unprecedented move, came to the Law Amendments Committee condemning the NDP's first contract arbitration and calling it a threat.

So, Mr. Speaker, my question through you to the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education is, since ramming through first contract arbitration last Fall, has she or the Premier had any follow-up meetings with Michelin executives about their future investment in this province?

HON. MARILYN MORE: Mr. Speaker, in the timeline since first contract legislation was either voted on in here or was implemented, no, I have not personally had any meetings with representatives from Michelin.

MR. BAIN: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for that forthright answer. On January 26, 2012, Michelin announced it was suspending its Hungary expansion over government policy saying, "The attitude of the current government, the new taxes and the new laws make the economic environment unpredictable." I will table that when I finish my question.

Mr. Speaker, at the Law Amendments Committee last Fall, Michelin Canada president Dana LeBlanc said, "Simply put, it makes it very difficult when you have legislation such as Bill No. 102 . . . and the instability in the legislation, it makes my job and other peoples' [sic] jobs very difficult to sell Nova Scotia as a better place to invest in."

Mr. Speaker, my question through you to the minister is, since passing this risky labour legislation, has Michelin indicated to the minister that it will make future investment in Nova Scotia or do NDP laws make the economic environment too unpredictable?

MS. MORE: I can state quite emphatically that all businesses in this province - small, medium, and large - benefit from a stable labour relations atmosphere, and that's something that we are working towards.

MR. BAIN: Mr. Speaker, on Tuesday Michelin announced plans to hire 500 workers, build a new plant and expand an existing plant in South Carolina - not in Nova Scotia. Mr. LeBlanc said that our province's labour law ". . . doesn't help me build a case for Nova Scotia in the future . . . South Carolina has shown that it is pro-business."

Mr. Speaker, my question through you to the Premier is, will the Premier admit that since his first contract arbitration legislation, it's stifling business growth in our province and putting 3,500 good Michelin jobs at risk? Will he rip up his risky law before it's too late?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, the legislation that came into effect just a short time ago, and before that, was debated here in the Legislature, of course. It's a very good piece of legislation. Some 80 per cent or more of Canadians are already covered by similar kinds of legislation, and it provides the kind of stability that the minister mentioned.

The reality is, I have a lot of contact with officials at Michelin. I talk to them regularly. I just recently spoke to Pete Selleck, who is the new North American president. He wanted to talk to me about the plants here in Nova Scotia. He expressed his confidence in those plants. He indicated to us that they continue to have a world-class workforce, there

continue to be great opportunities in Nova Scotia, and that expansion in this province competes within the Michelin family for work.

In South Carolina the plant that they are building was actually built on a site - just to give you an example - that was purchased and made ready for Michelin some 13 years ago. So it takes a long time for them to get the approvals for capital expansion and that's part of their internal process.

Mr. Speaker, I've made it perfectly clear to Michelin that we look forward to working with them, we expect to work with them in the future, and we expect that they will continue to invest in what has been a very good set of plants for the Province of Nova Scotia and for the company of Michelin.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Richmond.

#### **JUSTICE - JAIL CONSTRUCTION: MIN. OPPOSITION - EXPLAIN**

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Justice was recently quoted in the Halifax ChronicleHerald as saying, "Anyone who thinks building more jails and putting more people in jail (is the solution) in my opinion, they're delusional."

Mr. Speaker, these comments are ironic, considering the fact that building more jails is precisely what the federal Harper Conservative Government is doing through Bill C-10, requiring the provinces to build more jails at taxpayers' expense. My question to the minister is, can he explain why this is the first time we are hearing of his opposition to building more jails?

HON. ROSS LANDRY: I want to thank the member, Mr. Speaker, for that question; it's an excellent question. This government made a decision to replace two aging facilities. At the time of going forward with building and with that decision, we also looked at the potential impact that Bill C-10 may have, so we took a strategic approach and looked at taxpayers' dollars and how to make a decision that may deal with current concerns with flow within our correction facilities, plus deal with potential future issues.

There is a distinct difference between ideologies from where I sit on building - if you build it, you will fill it. So my position, Mr. Speaker, is that we are building one that meets our current capacity and deals with what we anticipate are future impacts in this province. I think it's very important that we look at the taxpayer in all these issues because it's their money we are managing.

MR. SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, it's refreshing to finally hear the Minister of Justice. What is unfortunate is that when we called upon both him and the Premier to stand up to the federal government and tell them the Province of Nova Scotia will not have taxpayers' dollars going to build more jails to suit a federal policy of the Harper Government, they



both fell silent. Neither the Premier nor the Minister of Justice stood up; yet in other provinces the Premier spoke up, the Ministers of Justice spoke up. Ontario, for example, calculated that if this bill is implemented, it could cost the Province of Ontario an extra \$1 billion of taxpayers' funds to go build jails for Prime Minister Harper.

The question is, why was our Premier . . .

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

Before I finish up on the Question Period thing, I would like to make reference here to one of our former Speakers you would be well aware of, Murray Scott. I'm going to say that on October 16, 2003, Speaker Scott ruled with respect to a letter, the Speaker observed information that would reveal the author had been removed. He ruled that any document that is not tabled in its entirety is completely and therefore out of order. Speaker Scott ruled that thereafter, any member who is going to table or read a letter or quote from a letter should first announce that it is, in fact, signed by the author.

Speaker Scott went on to address the issue of tabling printed copies of electronic communications. He stated that electronic communications or e-mails make up a great percentage of correspondence between individuals in modern times, and members receive, on a regular basis, e-mails from constituents, bringing forward issues and concerns.

He requested that all members, when attempting to read from e-mails or to table printout copies from forms of this communication, first ensure that the name of the author is known on the copy of the e-mail, and that the member is prepared to disclose the identity of the author and to take full responsibility of the context before it is tabled in this House. Thank you.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition on an introduction.

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, I would like to draw the attention, for an introduction, to your gallery, the Speaker's Gallery, where we have with us, Wayne Adams. Wayne is the first member for the riding of Preston; the first African Nova Scotian to sit in this House. He is well-known across this province, and most recently the province honoured him with the Order of Nova Scotia for the tremendous work he has done in the community.

I would like him to rise and receive a warm welcome from the House. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: We welcome all of our guests in the gallery.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. During Question Period today the Leader of the Official Opposition, when questioning the Minister of

Education, used the word “bullying”. I think you have ruled on this or brought it forward one day before, and it was resolved with the retraction of that word.

Mr. Speaker, if the member doesn’t want to retract it now, if you would look at Hansard and make a decision.

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

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, if in any way I touched the thin skin of the members across the opposite way for their behaviour, I will remove that phrase of “bullying” and strike it from the record.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

### **OPPOSITION MEMBERS’ BUSINESS**

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Opposition House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, just for the notice of members, the order that was presented will start at 4:27 p.m. and will end at 5:27 p.m. on Bill No. 10. At that point, at 5:27 p.m., we will start debate on Resolution No. 9 and conclude at 5:59 p.m. We can certainly send an amended schedule to everyone.

With that, 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. 10

### **Bill No. 10 - Blueprint for the Future of Public Education in Nova Scotia Act.**

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester North.

HON. KAREN CASEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’m pleased to rise today and speak to Bill No. 10, an Act to Review the Public School Programs in Nova Scotia - this bill can also be referred to as a Blueprint for the Future of Public Education in Nova Scotia Act.

We know that we have some of most valuable resources in our schools every day, and we know that we, as a province and as Members of the Legislative Assembly, have a

responsibility to ensure that we do whatever we can to make sure that the program that is delivered to those students is the best possible program we can do.

We know that there are many good things within the public school programs and we also know that we can always get better. Any government of any day who would suggest that there's no room for improvement is completely out of touch. One of the ways that we can look at what we're doing, look at whether we are achieving the outcomes that we want and how we're achieving those, is all part of our responsibility as members of the Legislature.

Bill No. 10 speaks to some of those key parts of that legislation - it speaks to the goals and policies of public school education; it speaks to the curriculum from Primary through to Grade 12 and all of the courses within that curriculum; and it speaks to the methodologies, the strategies, the initiatives, the programs, the outcomes that we want for our students. These components, these specifics within the public school programs, are the backbone and the framework of our public school education system.

So, we have looked at this program and based on the circumstances that we find ourselves in, in the province today, we believe that this needs to be reviewed. With any review, there will be some things that will be recommended for change, there will be some things that will be recommended to maintain and there may be things that are not in the document now, that should be there if, in fact, it is our intent to make it the best document that it can be, to guide us through our public school system.

We have heard, over a number of years in fact, that the assessments, for example, the outcomes for students on standardized assessments - whether they be provincial, national or international, we've heard people talk about the results of those - how are our students in Nova Scotia doing? How do they compare to other provinces? How do they compare internationally? On some of those assessments, Nova Scotia does very well. We need to look at what is it that we're doing that is allowing our students to perform well on those assessments.

The flip side of that is that some of those results are not as good as we would like them to be. So we have to bore down into that and determine what it is that we're doing that needs to be changed. A review of the public school programs would provide an opportunity for that thorough review and outcome of that review to set the direction for education in this province, in the future.

We know that the skills that students need and the knowledge base that students need, when they leave our public schools and go into post-secondary, are fundamental to their success. We know that some of those skills will be used for our graduates as they go into apprenticeship programs, as they go into the skills trades programs. Some of those skills will be used when they go on to community college or post-secondary or when they

go out into the workforce. It's that whole set of skills that we want our students to have, so that they are better prepared for the future.

We know that the environment they're going out into has changed. We know that there's a huge emphasis on technology. We need to make sure that our students are well prepared, well equipped. One of the ways, in order for us to ensure that we have provided the best possible programming for our students, is to take it apart, piece by piece, and look at it. Look at the policies.

For example, look at the inclusion policy. Is the model that we're using for inclusion the best way to help all of the kids in our classrooms? The inclusion policy says that all students have a right to be in our classrooms. A review under Bill No. 10 would allow us to look at that. We also have to look at the outcomes that we expect students to have at the end of Grade 12. Are those skill sets that our students will have, is it preparing them for their next step? Are they going to have to go on and somewhere try to get those skills upgraded so they can pursue their dream or their desire or their ambition?

That's where the policies and the goals of our public education system need to be peeled away and looked at and determined - are we going in the right direction? Once we know where we want to go, then the challenge is to make sure that the programs that we have in place will get us to that point. First of all, decide what we want students to have, what they need and then look at the programs that will help them achieve those goals and those outcomes. That's where we look at the curriculum, because we have many programs that are designed to help meet the needs of all our students.

So are they working? Are students getting the results that we expected they would get? If they are, that's something that you maintain. If they are not, that's something you change. But until we take a good look at this, we don't know that.

We talk about math scores as an example. We know that the math scores in this province are not as good as anyone in this House would like them to be. We know that it's not the fault of the students; they are bright, young kids. We know that it's not the fault of the teachers; they are trained to be dedicated, and they are. We know that there's something that we need to do better in order for those students' scores to be improved - all part of the review. If you do a review appropriately, you will come out with a blueprint and that blueprint will have some of the existing and it will have some of the new.

The methodologies that teachers are using - maybe there's a different strategy, maybe there's a better way that we can help our kids achieve those skills and those outcomes that we want. We know not only that technology has changed the expectations and the working environment but that our world is so much smaller now. It used to be that our world was close by. The world is our pathway, and many of us can go wherever we want in that pathway. We want to make sure our students are ready. So, Madam Speaker, the intent of Bill No. 10 is to make sure that we take a look at what we need.

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

MR. JIM BOUDREAU: Madam Speaker, it's a pleasure for me to rise today to speak on this piece of Opposition business. The blueprint for the future of public education in Nova Scotia endeavours to do many things in a very small time frame. In just over a month, this bill basically wants a full review of public education in Nova Scotia.

At first glance, it would appear as if this is quite an undertaking, one that quite likely carries with it a large price tag - which, of course, did not accompany this bill. We have come to expect this lack of accountability from our Opposition colleagues. This is nothing new, to come up with ideas but to have no plan to pay for them.

As I said, when I first examined this bill, I was concerned about its scope. When I discussed each clause in more detail with my colleagues, I was quite pleased to learn more about what the Department of Education has done in the past few years and is working on today.

Regarding Clause 2(2)(a), the examination of goals and policies, I believe my learned colleague from Lunenburg will spend more time on this particular line when she discusses this bill. I would like to remind all members of this House and all Nova Scotians that, upon forming government in 2009, we reviewed the status of public education in our province and took a very close look at where we would find ourselves if the path that the previous government put us was followed.

Madam Speaker, this prompted our government to put on the brakes. We knew that the path the province was on, as a whole, was unsustainable; that spending more and getting less was not doing any of our students - or, ultimately, the taxpayers - an ounce of good. It was at this point that we reached out to an expert, an expert to review our system and use his knowledge of jurisdictions across Canada - which, incidentally, is what is laid out in Clause 2(2)(b) of this bill, the bill we are currently discussing.

This expert, Ben Levin, produced strategic advice based on his many years of experience in public education. This advice was then used to plan the course for public education in our province, the plan we call Kids and Learning First. I'm prepared to table this plan along with Mr. Levin's report if the House should so wish but I do believe we all have copies of that.

Madam Speaker, Kids and Learning First is not only based on a comprehensive review of the education system in our province, which is the essence of this bill before us today, it goes one step further. The Kids and Learning First plan sees where we are today and plans for how to make it better tomorrow.

There are hurdles that we must overcome, Madam Speaker. Our government and, in fact, everyone who has a stake in the education of our young people should always strive

for better. As I used to tell my own children - and certainly my students - you need to do your best, strive for better and better, and always work towards your goals. This is exactly what Kids and Learning First does. It sets deliverable and measureable goals that came out of the review by one of Canada's foremost experts in education.

Madam Speaker, Clause 2(2)(c) asks for a cross-jurisdictional analysis across Canada. I would like to point out to the Opposition, and indeed to all members of this House, that Nova Scotia's Minister of Education is, in fact, the chair of the Council of Ministers of Education in Canada. This honour presents the minister with the opportunity to discuss the very items laid out in this bill. In fact, assessment is identified as one of the key components of the work of the council.

Madam Speaker, the fact that the Opposition bill we are debating today includes work recently completed, or consultation already a part of the Department of Education's daily work, only points out to Nova Scotians that the Opposition simply does not do its homework. This was not acceptable in any classrooms nor should it be accepted in this House of Assembly.

Madam Speaker, I would encourage the Leader of the Official Opposition who introduced this bill, to consult with the member for Colchester North who, while with a different Party, was, in fact, an Education Minister not that long ago. Even though while that member was Education Minister, problems in the classroom got worse, and I'm happy to table an article from The ChronicleHerald that states just that. As the honourable member just stated a few minutes ago, math scores and math results are down in the province. This is true but the article identifies that those scores got worse under the Tories' watch. Perhaps the Leader of the Official Opposition could learn a thing or two about how hard the employees in the Department of Education work for the people of Nova Scotia.

Madam Speaker, in closing today I thank this House for the opportunity to discuss Bill No. 10 and let the good people of Nova Scotia know that because the ideas within it are in fact relevant, our government, in its usual proactive way, has already completed these tasks and as I can relate, my experience in the classroom is that teachers want to teach. They want the opportunity to have the autonomy within the classroom that is a necessary item for teaching. (Interruptions) I need the honourable members over here to be quiet I think. (Interruptions) I'm going to try to control my class, yes.

Education, as we have said here many times, is extremely important to all members in this House and is certainly important to this government, this minister, and myself as a former teacher. There are lots of former teachers here on these benches. We feel that education needs the support of all members and needs the support so that we can change our education system to make it better. Our education system, as has been stated many times, is not working. There need to be some changes and some revisions in the system so that teachers and students can maximize their learning opportunities.

Madam Speaker, we know that the system that exists has grown, and it has grown significantly, and therefore it needs to change. It needs to come in line with the numbers of students. It has to take in the realities that exist in this province. As a government we wish to do this and to make the education system better, to make it more responsive to the needs of students, to make it more responsive to the needs of society.

AN HON. MEMBER: Jim you're a teacher, you know better.

MR. BOUDREAU: I am a teacher and I do know better and I do know that there is a necessary need to change the system as it exists in this province. I've been in the classroom for 30-plus years and I do know that the system is in dire need of a fix and it has to be fixed because the taxpayers are asking for that, the students are asking for that, the parents are asking for that. They're asking for the system to be fixed and with that, Madam Speaker, I will take my place.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cape Breton North.

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and it's my pleasure to rise this afternoon and speak to this Bill No. 10 as produced by the Liberal Party here today. I have to disagree with the honourable member from the other side that our school system is not working. If they say it's not working, why is taking more money out of this system going to make it work better?

Madam Speaker, our teachers are cut to the limits, they are limited in the resources they have, they are limited in what they can do in the classroom because of the resources that are put in the school system. By taking more money out of that system, I can't see where that is going to make the system better if they say it's not working already.

I look around the building here today and I see a lot of educated individuals that went through that system. They went through that system at a time when education funding was probably, they say a lot less than what they're giving them today, but everybody seemed to survive.

Madam Speaker, this Act to review the public school program, we as members in this House agree that we have a responsibility to our students and we, as a PC caucus, want to see this responsibility so that these people succeed to their utmost ability. We talked a lot in the last little while about skilled trades, it's nice to hear that we are going to expand our trades program in Nova Scotia, but we have a school in my riding that has a skilled trades program and it has had a skilled trades program since 1979.

AN HON. MEMBER: They should be everywhere.

MR. ORRELL: And I agree they should be everywhere. This trade program has produced valuable and numerous electricians, they've produced plumbers, they've produced auto mechanics, and they've produced welders . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: Do you support that school in Cole Harbour?

MR. ORRELL: I would support that school in Cole Harbour but do we have to build another one in order to do that because it didn't take the students out of the Memorial school when they had a problem with their ventilation system. That ventilation system, Madam Speaker, still sits there. The duct work is there, we can't get the vacuum system. That system severely handicaps what those students can do in their shop program. They had a school in South Colchester that had the same vacuum system, on a smaller scale, installed.

Madam Speaker, in speaking with the teachers in this program and the head of the department of the program, these students have to go into the shop, they have to cut a few pieces of board, they have to shut the machines down, they have to clean up the dust, they have to clean up the floors and then they have to go back to what they're doing again. I'll take my hat off to those teachers, they've done a fabulous job in producing those students there. In their skills competitions, these students preformed very well and they performed as good as any students in the province. Imagine what they could do if they had this system up and running and they could do more time on the machines, instead of learning how to clean them properly.

Now, Madam Speaker, this school at Memorial is in a place called Cape Breton and Cape Breton seems like it doesn't get that end of it. The government seems like they don't want to put the money into that while these schools on the mainland are getting more and more. Fifteen million dollars could go a long way to improving the trades program at Memorial. That \$15 million could have the vacuum system, I don't care where you'd have to buy it, I'm sure you can buy a vacuum system somewhere in this country for \$15 million.

We all know the value of an education, we have one ourselves. We all need to take advantage of this in order to improve the future of Nova Scotia. This bill speaks to the goals and policies of our school systems. It will be interesting to see to what end we're going to speak to this policy. What is the main goal? Is it to make sure we save money and improve the education of our children? If that's the case, I welcome the review.

It will be interesting to see what the details have to say. They are going to study the methods of strategic programs and the outcomes. I hope when we do this review, if a bill gets called, it will change the outcomes, it will change how we deliver our programs and it will improve the program delivery in our school system. We hope that it will make us use the resources to the best we have.



If we look at our curriculum from P to 12 and all the courses in between, we hope that we can eliminate the courses that aren't being used to their ability and add two courses that we're going to need for the future of our province. We know we need skilled tradespeople, but we also need university graduates in engineering and other programs, business and so on, and we need young people to come and step up as entrepreneurs, so we want to make sure we encourage that.

I would hope this review is already being dealt with at the Department of Education in some form or another and I hope that we're comparing ourselves to other provinces. But do we want to be the ones that are other provinces? Our education system is unique and by doing this review, we hope that it stays unique. We have a good opportunity in our province here with the shipbuilding contract and if we don't educate our students to the degree that they need it, we're going to blow this contract.

We want to make sure that our people come home from away and return to Nova Scotia and raise their families here. Our business communities are finding it difficult to do that. We hope by educating our individuals that they'll be able to change these policies and make sure that people stay here. We don't want to see more bureaucracy in the education system. We would hope that money will be spent wisely. We would hope that money would stay here in the province, to continue to improve the education of our children.

It's interesting to see education being such a priority for this government, but all we've been hearing for the last week or so is the cuts, cuts, cuts. As I said previously, cutting the education system and cutting the legs out from our kids is not the future we want to take in this province. We want to see all of our students succeed and we do that by making the environment in the school system the best we possibly can. We hope that this review will not end up in cutting front-line people in the system. We hope that we'll be able to find efficiencies in the system to make our students succeed all the better and we hope the review will provide the students with the tools they need to compete for businesses and jobs in this province and make sure that our students succeed in every endeavour they partake. Madam Speaker, with those few words I will take my seat.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

**HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL:** Madam Speaker, I'm pleased to rise to speak to Bill No. 10. I first of all want to congratulate and thank the former speaker for his words around his concerns about this bill as we move it forward and the things that he would like to see come out of it in terms of measurables, making sure that any changes we make are improving the public education system in this province. That is our goal, as a caucus, and I welcome his comments.

I also want to acknowledge to him, I have also had the pleasure of being in Memorial Composite High School, where it has been a wonderful program. When it was introduced a number of decades ago they also added funding to make sure that that

program would be able to operate in the way that it was intended to. As you see now, we're talking about that and I think all of us believe the trades program should be offered in high schools across this province. I believe all of us would like the sons and daughters of our constituents to have an opportunity to experience hands-on work. My background is in that. I have a background in a trade and very proud of it. I worked very hard, I ran a business and with these two hands I was able to live in the community I wanted to live in and was able to raise two good kids, I think, in the community where I wanted them to grow.

But when the province is talking about adding trade programs across this province and reducing funding at the same time, it simply doesn't make sense no matter who you talk to. You can't ask schools and boards to do more with less. That's part of what Bill No. 10 is about. Bill No.10 is about looking at the outcomes that we want in our public education system, what are the goals we want for our children and our students? What are the skills they would require, not only through trade school but academic skills that they would require?

I listened to the member for Guysborough-Sheet Harbour when he spoke. He talked about articles in The ChronicleHerald about math scores, I think it was in 2005-06 about math scores. Members of this caucus and members, quite frankly in the NDP caucus who were in the House at that time, encouraged the member, encouraged the former Minister of Education to respond and I am proud to say she responded with the support of this House and she instituted math mentors. We saw a change in math scores in this province but I want to remind the member that it was his government that cut math mentors when we were beginning to see an improvement, it was his government.

While he suggested that I do my homework, I would suggest, before he plagiarizes any staff work on the floor of the House of Assembly, he should research it so he knows what he's talking about.

But I did take from his comments - which I thought was a legitimate question - I thought the fact that he said that the time frame was tight. That's a legitimate question to say. I want to remind him that his government hired Ben Levin, who landed in Nova Scotia for a night, then left and gave us a report. But, having said all of that, we would go ahead and be more than happy to accept an amendment from any member of the government in the Committee on Law Amendments about how we can extend the time frames that are associated with our bill and we would extend the time frame to allow the proper due diligence to happen.

What our bill is talking about is allowing parents, allowing teachers, allowing school board members, allowing members of this House, allowing members of the business community to have input in how we build an education system that responds to the needs of our province. I want to encourage members of this House to seriously look at this bill. I want to remind them it was their Premier, their Leader, who said in this House

that he was willing to look at Opposition legislation when it was called up for debate. He said he'd be more than happy to move it through to the Committee on Law Amendments to allow the public to have their review on it.

I think this is a legitimate bill, especially with the timing around public education and the changes that are coming in Chignecto and we're going to hear of other changes. We just recently heard today from the Halifax Regional School Board about the challenges they're facing. We're hearing from boards across the province and the challenges that are coming forward with them. We're hearing from a government that wants to add new programs without taking any out, which all comes to create a real financial strain on the system. Bill No. 10 would allow us to respond to that outside of this House and allow us and the public to have their input at the Committee on Law Amendments.

This caucus and I hope the members of the Progressive Conservative caucus as well as the members of the NDP caucus would want to hear from Nova Scotians, not only educators but parents and students. In the spirit of wanting to hear from Nova Scotians, I move second reading of Bill No. 10 in this House.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

MR. CLARRIE MACKINNON: Madam Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise this afternoon in relationship to Bill No. 10. The member for Guysborough-Sheet Harbour referred to his experience as a teacher in relationship to a response to Bill No. 10. I would like to talk for a moment or two about experiences that I had as a school board member back in the 1970s and in the 1980s and certainly, in those times, we were seeing the beginning of the declining enrolments and, of course, they have peaked since then.

Now we, in fact, have a vision, we have a plan. I have to say that there were no visions and there were no plans, no concrete, laid-out structures like Kids and Learning First. We, in fact, have a plan.

In a debate the other night involving the member for Digby-Annapolis, who I respect a great deal, he knows about charting a course because he's spent time, a lot of time on the water as a fish harvester, as did the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture. He knows about charting a course and charting a course is what we are doing, with education, in this province.

Kids and Learning First is about doing things differently, it's about doing things right, it's about better aligning the resources and programs within the province's existing budget, while improving learning and student outcomes. Madam Speaker, the province is making a significant investment in public education - \$1.1 billion, even as enrolments decline. Per-student-funding and class sizes are the best they've ever been and they will continue to stay that way. The average per-student-funding is \$10,372. It is the highest level ever and will increase again, by \$85, in 2012-13.

Madam Speaker, something that I am really excited about is that services and supports for students with special needs continue to be protected. That was something that I advocated as a school board member very early on, when we were looking at special needs. I don't even like to use the words "special needs."

MADAM SPEAKER: Order. The noise in the Chamber is getting too loud. I'd ask the members to respect the speakers at this time.

The honourable member for Pictou East has the floor.

MR. MACKINNON: I like to talk about student needs. Government's vision is for every student, in every classroom, to become well-educated, confident, responsible adults with the skills they need to create and work in good jobs across the province, ready to build a life in Nova Scotia.

We also know we have to deal with the realities of today and the pressures that come with 30,000 fewer students than a decade ago. Today there are more than 360 teachers in the system, 360 more teachers in the system than we had in 2001-02, when there are, as I've already stated, 30,000 fewer students. This is really important. You know, we are under attack repeatedly for a situation that we actually inherited from governments, past governments. That \$13 billion debt that we inherited, as I said the other night, three-quarters of it came from the Progressive Conservatives and one-quarter of it came from the Liberals. That is the inheritance that we got from those two Parties. Previous governments opted to increase spending by almost 42 per cent in the face of rapidly declining enrolments.

At this time I have to tell a little story. I got an interest in politics at a very, very early age and an interest in education at an early age. I remember, as the son of a coal miner, going out and having to collect beer bottles and pop bottles and bran bags before there were even cans, going around with this bag on my back with a cousin of mine and he said to me, Clarrie, what do you want to do when you grow up? And I said, I want to be a politician. And he said, Clarrie, you need a good education and I think you have to be really smart to be a politician. But standing here looking across the aisle of this House, I wish my cousin were standing in my shoes today looking across and thinking about the legacy that we inherited. I wonder about his young wisdom, in looking back.

Our government's priority is to focus limited resources on today's classrooms and not on empty desks, and we expect school boards to do that same. We expect school boards not to play games with the students in the classrooms in Nova Scotia. School boards are being asked to find 1.3 per cent in savings for next year and this is less than the 1.7 per cent reduction in students the province is projecting next year. Think about that for a moment, think about that for a moment, 1.3 per cent as opposed to 1.7 per cent.

Bill No. 10 - what did we do in the past? What did the Liberals do? What did the Liberals do in 1993? What did the Liberals do? Rolled back the wages.

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please.

The honourable member for Pictou East has the floor.

MR. MACKINNON: I heard the comment over there, we weren't even born then. Well, I'll tell you, many of us were and many of us have the memories of elephants in relationship to that. I remember running in those days, in 1993. I ran for the NDP in Halifax Bedford Basin in 1993, so I know about those days. I know about those rollbacks. I know about those cuts. I know about those mass layoffs. I remember it all and I remember who was in power at the time and it was that crowd, that crowd right over there, they were the ones, they were the ones. Then that other crowd came along and they did even worse; they did even worse, that other crowd.

I mean we had bad and then we had very bad, very bad. (Interruption) Exactly. Going back to Kids and Learning First; Kids and Learning First ensures that every child has the supports available to them, and this will be accomplished by supporting four goals. Four goals - you get it? Putting students first; supporting effective teaching in every classroom; preparing young people for good jobs and citizenship; and strengthening the links among schools, parents, and communities.

I was very, very pleased to hear that the Leader of the Opposition - and I knew that he had earned his living, and a good living, in skilled trades. This government has a vision in relationship to skilled trades programs as well. I remember being three times at the Halifax Shipyard - and to see the tears in the eyes of some of the workers there when the contract was announced. The skilled trades program that we're involved with, with our vision, with our plan, is being expanded to 18 high schools, from nine. This will allow students the opportunity to explore the trades in a hands-on way, to enable them to seize the opportunities that come with the \$25 billion shipbuilding contract.

Sometime I want to tell you a couple of other stories, but I've been given a signal, so my time is running out. Madam Speaker, Bill No. 10, we don't need Bill No. 10, we have a plan, we have a vision, the course has been charted, and the member for Digby-Annapolis knows all about that. We are on the course; we are following that course. When you're trying to get back to port you don't zigzag like these guys did, that crew over there, and the zigzagging out there. The member for Digby-Annapolis would never get back to port if he counted on any one of those across the floor of this House.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants West.

MR. CHUCK PORTER: Madam Speaker, I'd like to say that I'm pleased to be part of this debate today, but I want to say that I'm not, and I'll tell you why I'm not. The verbal diarrhea that is flowing here this afternoon - I hope there are no kids at home watching this . . .

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please. I'm going to ask that the member retract that, I would not consider that to be Parliamentary.

MR. PORTER: As per your wish, Madam Speaker, I am happy to retract that. There's probably a better choice of words, and thank you very much for picking that up.

MADAM SPEAKER: And by the level of excitement and engagement here this afternoon, I'm going to ask that the members speak a little louder than they would normally.

MR. PORTER: A little louder - well, I normally do.

MADAM SPEAKER: Not to stifle any of the support, but it is becoming a little bit difficult to hear.

The honourable member for Hants West.

MR. PORTER: Madam Speaker, I appreciate that, again. This debate has been taken rather lightly in my opinion today and you know, to me, I have three girls who are still in school, one has already gone through the system, and many of us here have had children, grandchildren and so on going through the system. What I find to be of interest is why do we need another piece of legislation to tell us that our children need a better education?

We have - I know, and I'll speak for my area, and I've travelled around a bit - some of the best educators that you'll find anywhere. We have had good curriculums; we have had good outcomes. I will tell you that recently, last week, I visited one of my elementary schools because the principal called. He said, can you come over? I want to talk to you about a serious matter. We talk about cuts to classroom sizes and we talked about this and we talked about that, but I'm going to tell you, last week when I went to the Brooklyn District Elementary School, in Brooklyn, I had a chance to tour around that school, and the principal there, Brenda Newcombe, was very good at showing me some of the different programs that they offer and what they've offered over the years.

One of things that people may not know about that school - and I'm sure that there are a lot like this - is the extra support that they are providing while going through and having to make tough decisions. The board has got to make decisions based on what this government has given them to work with, and they are making decisions where schools and classrooms are being cut, where schools are being closed.

Those are tough decisions to make, but at the end of the day, it's the children who matter the most here - the students who are going through those schools from Primary to Grade 12. There's lots of debate about who does the best, what Party did this and what Party did that, but none of that matters; not one bit of that matters to one of my kids - or any other kid, for that matter. They couldn't care less about what Party did what. They care about the education they're getting in that classroom. The parents care about the education that their children are receiving.

Now, when you go back to Brooklyn District Elementary School, you will see that they have a specialized room set up to deal with the children who are challenged to some degree and have learning disabilities. Part of the problem with this, however, is that they're losing a classroom. They are losing teachers. The question is, how are we supposed to continue to do this work? Brenda Newcombe wants to know, how are we supposed to find the funds and the teachers and the ability to keep this going?

They have EAs, like a lot of other schools. We never had EAs when I went to school, at least not that I recall, Madam Speaker. This is something that has come along in 20 years, maybe a little more than that. One of the educators might be able to enlighten us on the time frame, but I know in the last 20 years or so these special assistant teachers - teacher assistants, EAs, now they're called educational assistants - have been in place working.

We don't hear about the work being done in the classroom. All we hear about are the cuts. Go visit your schools. Those of you who took part in the Take Your MLA to School Day would know first-hand and very much up-to-date on what's going on in the last year since cuts have had to be made. When cuts have had to be made in these classrooms, who's affected by that? The little guys and gals coming in the door who need that extra resource. Well, now, we talked about resources, and part of the other reason that I received a call from Principal Newcombe was that she received, unbeknownst to her and unasked for, a variety of resources from the Department of Education.

With no input and non-option, these arrive. The Department of Education, the minister, says there's a plan that has been rolled out. They see that that's a benefit - fine and dandy - but they already have all of these things in the class. For questions, they get the little bag; they've got kits - I forget the actual name of the kits, but they come with a little drawer and wheels and the little table. There were five Dinky cars in it. There was one box of six crayons, I believe, that came in this, and the price was absolutely ridiculous. She wants to know, how can we not take that money? I don't need these resources. I have all kinds of books - books are always good; they accept them - but I have all of these resources. I also have, by the way, no room to put this cart or carts that I have received. She received a cart with no instruction. I believe it was for the gymnasium. It looked like something you might put a basketball or volleyball in, and the fire marshal says, oh, you can't store that there, it's in the hallway. Well, we have no other place to store it.

These are resources that are going out to schools, and you hate to use the word “waste” or “unwanted,” but that’s what it comes down to, because we’re choosing to put these items out and take away teachers. We’re cutting classrooms. We’re cutting resources. That’s what matters to the kids in these schools. That’s what matters to the parents and the grandparents and all of those people who’ve got children going through - the aunts and the uncles, the people who go and talk at parent-teacher. Those teachers are doing their utmost. They’re doing their level best with what they have to work with. I can tell you in talking to them and knowing a lot of teachers and visiting in my schools on a regular occasion and talking to the principals, that’s a tough job today. It’s a tough job.

To see some of the challenges that these teachers face, it’s not fun. I know I couldn’t do it. In the past I’ve done jobs that I believe a lot of people would say they could never do, that are tough jobs, but I’ll tell you, being a teacher today in this province and in any one of these schools is a tough act to follow. They need all the credit and all the support that they can get to continue doing what they are doing for our kids. It’s not easy when you see these kids who are challenged coming in the door, and the funny part was, you know, that principal knew every one of those students coming in the door by name; every teacher, every EA - she knew the issues associated with them.

They have taken on their own and built a room in that school, set it aside, a place that’s all matted, so when a child with autism has an episode, they have somewhere to put him to calm him down. Where is that in the curriculum? Where is that being supported? How will that continue? There’s nowhere else to get it. How will that stuff continue, Madam Speaker, with cuts to the classroom?

You can talk about all the programs and you can talk about putting a bill forward. That means absolutely nothing when it comes to the hands-on in the classroom. We shouldn’t have to be talking in this Legislature. We shouldn’t need legislation in this province to tell us that our kids need more. We don’t need it. We have the resources in those classrooms and we need to continue with what we have and we need additions in some schools.

Maybe there are some schools, we all hear about the population issue. Some schools have numbers that are lower. I’ve just lost a school, a school that I went to as a kid, an elementary school, Newport Station District School. On the other end of my school board, we’ve lost the Annapolis Elementary School - two schools in the Annapolis Valley Regional School Board have been closed. Thank God that the previous government put in place a plan that would allow the school board and the community and the school itself an opportunity and a longer process and not just do it overnight because the board’s recommendations were strong: close the school and close it as soon as you can.

That’s going to happen, unfortunately that happens, populations change, we have to make changes in some areas. It has been deemed that that will be the case. But what will happen to those resources? What will happen to those teachers? Will they lose jobs or will



they move on to other areas? Well those kids are all going to move on somewhere, they're going to go to Three Mile Plains District School or they're going to go to this wonderful Brooklyn school that I talked about as well, which, by the way, has lost a classroom.

We are supposed to be making decisions, Madam Speaker, about next year's allotment coming right here any time soon. They've just put budgets forward; April 21<sup>st</sup> is a magical date for projects and capital expenditures. The boards do have, no question, a very tough job trying to manage the dollars that they are given.

The unfortunate part is there is this downloading system. The province says, here's your budget, we'll work with you to some degree - I think that's probably a fair statement. The minister has said that she'll put somebody out in one of these other boards and work with them, help them work through their budget issues. There's only so much money in the pot, there's only so much you can do.

I'm not making excuses for government. That's the reality of life in this province, there's no question about that. We need to invest, though, in the resources and we need to put them in schools, like Brooklyn, that are doing the extras, like Windsor, like wherever - school A, B and C.

Do we need new schools? Everybody would like to have a new school. There is a discussion about a new school being kicked around in my area to replace the one that just closed and two more that are on the list for more work. What will happen there? It was just tossed out as an idea. There's been no consultation.

Where will the resources come for that? We've got wonderful schools across this province, wonderful staff, wonderful teachers. Where are the supports? We need more, obviously, in concentrated areas and in some areas, obviously Newport Station being one of those, that we are going to lose a school. That's tough on any community. We're going to lose a school and that is like closing a community, to some degree, especially a small community like Newport Station.

Now, Madam Speaker, when I went to that school, that may not seem like much to some but when I went to that school it was jammed, it was full but those were different days. My parents had seven children and we all went to that school and we were one of the smaller families in the community - there were families with many more.

We see that change. We do see the population change in some areas - again, not in all - but the question is, does that mean that you should have less resources available? Are those children deserving of a lesser education? The answer is no, they are certainly not. So decisions have to be made as to what will happen within that population, where will those kids go to school?

We hear about cuts here and we hear about cuts there. The reality is there are places that you cannot cut, that you have to support, health care being one of those. That's a tough act to follow. We know that there's waste there, we've talked about that. I've ranted about that before and I'm certain that there will be more debate about that into the future.

There's also what some would deem waste, perhaps, in the education system. There's discussion about boards - should boards be there? I don't know. Who is going to decide that? Should there be fewer numbers of boards? What we're hearing today is perhaps there's an opportunity to make school boards less.

We saw the Halifax Regional School Board go with one person, quite effectively for some time, strangely enough. Here we are, we are back to what we have now, it seems to be working. Is it the right number? Who knows. We need to figure out, government needs to figure out, working with the boards, to figure out where the money and education is best spent. I can tell you, Madam Speaker, where that money is best spent is in the classroom on those kids who are attending our schools.

With those few words, Madam Speaker, I'll take my seat.

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

HON. WILLIAM ESTABROOKS: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd like to compliment the previous speaker because of the very important part. As I sat here and listened to this debate on Bill No. 10, which is a bill of some significance, but of course people watching realizing the old teacher in me is going to say, are we going to support this bill? Well, there are reasons that we're going to talk it out.

The member opposite hit the right tone, Madam Speaker. Too often we stand in this House and attack each other and there are members of this side of the House - you don't have to point fingers, I've sat over there with you. There are members of this side of the House, members of that side of the House that have an exchange of ideas and a difference of opinion - show me your numbers and I'll show you my numbers. I hear from various young teachers, who I advised to be teachers, because they were students of mine. I've been in their classrooms and the proudest day that an old - emphasis, I should say, respected - teacher, gets is that when someone you taught becomes not only a teacher but becomes a school principal.

On the day that I went to school as the local MLA, I went to Sir John A. Macdonald High School, where I had the opportunity to be a teacher - thank you for that quick warning of one minute - where I had the opportunity to meet for the day and also, of course, had the occasion to talk to kids and to listen to Albert Reyner and his particular way of looking at teachers and what's going on. I agree with members opposite that said it's not easy to be a school teacher, but I'll tell you, if you like kids - I know the member for Kings West and I

will also agree on this and many other things we agree on aside from a few things of politics - I'll tell you if you like kids, teaching is the greatest job in the world and it is also one of the easiest.

I know there are other challenges, I know there are other issues: when you balance the NSGEU and the school boards and the role of parents and all the issues that are coming forward. I encourage members of this House to continue to participate in debates of this sort and have an idea difference and not a personality one.

## **OPPOSITION MEMBERS BUSINESS**

### **MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS**

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Deputy Opposition House Leader.

MR. ANDREW YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Resolution No. 9.

Res. No. 9, re Educ.: Cuts - NDP Gov't. Reverse - notice given Mar. 30/12 - (Hon. K. Casey)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

MR. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I thought first of all, I'd give those who are either watching in the gallery or at home today, an idea of what Resolution No. 9 was all about:

“Whereas the future growth and success of Nova Scotia depends on the education of our children; and

Whereas the NDP Government has shown no clear direction in managing the public education system, decimating when we need to be building and slashing when we need to be leading; and

Whereas Nova Scotians are expecting the government to be an education leader, expecting the government to identify education as a priority and provide the best possible education for our children;

Therefore be it resolved that the NDP Government reverse the detrimental cuts to our education system and put an end to balancing the books on the backs of our children.”

I want to first of all thank the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal for that reference to my previous career. He and I share many stories and views and perspectives on education and we did share for the best part of our work lives, the love of teaching young people. In fact, it was very difficult for me to actually think about

offering for public life because in my 25 years at West Kings, I missed eight days of school. I loved to go to school. I loved to teach young adults. Coaching, as well, was a big part of that.

We're not here to talk about that today. The reality is and those like the member for Guysborough-Sheet Harbour who was also a teacher and a number of others here in the Chamber, know the realities of the classroom have changed dramatically. We started our careers at a time when streaming was a part of education and many children fell by the wayside, even before Grade 9 or 10, when they had the option of going to vocational school and looking at their future in the trades.

Over the last couple of decades, we have embraced the concept of inclusion. From the very days of bringing inclusion into the public school system, which is one that I agree, with both the philosophical and the needs of what inclusion actually requires. We did have a very difficult time, in a province challenged financially, to support inclusion to the extent that it needed, the kind of support mechanisms to keep as many children in school for as long as humanly possible. That is why, today, I disagree with cutting education because there are still so many needs in the public school system.

There are still children who don't get the individualized programs that they could truly benefit from. That's why I think we will find, in a decade or so, that taking a look at saying we have 30,000 less students in the system - which by the way, if we add up the classrooms and classes that we offer in our high school, it comes down to about two or three students per class or classroom, because in our elementary schools we move students on a classroom basis. In many ways it's almost like back to balance. It is somewhat mythic when we use 30,000 less students as the reason for the kind of cuts that are presently coming.

We're at a time when, for example, we need a guidance counsellor in our elementary schools. I've had a number of calls - actually more through my critic role in Health - wondering what's available to elementary principals and schools to deal with mental health requirements that their student population has.

We talk about having a student population that is not very fit and we don't offer daily physical activity to many of our children and that should be a basic requirement, especially, as we know from Primary to Grade 9, this should be part of the daily life of a student in our school because they do have a lot of time when they get little or no activity whatsoever. If we're talking about creating a generation that will take personal responsibility for their health, we must teach them that with good practices through our public education system.

I do lament cuts and really we need to look at how government spends all of its dollars to weigh whether or not this is the best decision when we're moving into the realm of spending about \$400 million on a dying industry. Those are the evaluations that Nova

Scotians are making now, not 10 years down the road when we will see the impacts of cuts to education. These will be very detrimental.

When we say education has increased in its spending by 41 per cent over the past decade, out of that 41 per cent, 28 per cent is very easily seen and that's the inflationary factor and we all know that from running our households that inflation over the past decade has taken a big bite out of spending power if you didn't have commensurate increases in salary. The other 13 per cent, we have put programs in schools like O2, for example, and any time we bring those kinds of programs in and the resources to teach them, they certainly cost money. The program ESL here in Halifax, in particular, to have our immigrant children learn the language early, learn it well so that they can gain from their time in public education, again, is very often a costly endeavour.

I think Nova Scotians are starting to take a look at what is happening to our education system. We don't expect it to be like when we went to school. In fact, we expect it really to be more, and to be more accommodating of many, many students. Just taking one area alone, next year about 60 fully diagnosed autistic children will enter the school system in HRM. That will require, again, a tremendous investment to take those children through the public education system. But if we don't, we end up looking after them perhaps for a lifetime.

I visit a small options home in my riding where there's a man, 41 years of age, who has a vocabulary of 10 to 15 words because he has severe autism. Since being 21 years of age, he has been looked after by the province. So if we don't invest now we will pay a bigger price as we go down the road.

I think we're urging and asking government to make education and public education a much stronger priority than what we have seen over the past couple of years. Our teaching profession is becoming, in fact, very, very concerned about what they currently have to deal with in terms of some of the deficiencies that they see each day. I think we are on the verge of seeing a profession that will in fact take even a stronger stand than what they are currently. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg.

MS. PAM BIRDSALL: Mr. Speaker, it's so interesting waiting here to speak, I've changed my Mr. Speaker to Madam Speaker and then changed them all back to Mr. Speaker, just so I would get it right.

It's a privilege for me to stand here today and speak to Opposition business regarding education in Nova Scotia. The whole idea of education now, today talking about all this and listening to what everyone has had to say, we're looking at a very different playing field. When I was a teacher in the school system - I was an art teacher and the resources that I had in my classrooms were very different than they are now - back then I

taught at St. Pat's School on Brunswick Street and we had what was known then as the central ceramic lab. So as a fine artist, I was in charge of all the art teachers who would come down and they would book an afternoon, like a Saturday, a Friday, or a Tuesday, and come down for six weeks and I would teach them as the art teacher. Those sorts of things aren't available today and there are other ways that children are learning to be creative.

One of the things I wanted to talk about here is that the premise of this resolution, I think there are three main premises - it calls for a clear direction for public education; that we should agree that our children are the future of the province; and that Nova Scotians deserve a public education system that leads the way to excellence. I think those are things that we absolutely are doing now. (Interruption) No, it's not vague, it's very specific what we are doing.

I don't think there is a member in the Chamber who wouldn't agree with those ideas, and being a mother of grown children and at some point in the near future, hopefully, I'll have grandchildren and be able to enjoy the luxury of that, that I know a lot of my colleagues brag about - I can't wait for that - I know we all are here to support our children and yet we're looking at a very different kind of classroom.

When I went to Bayview School recently to introduce the Play-Talk-Learn kits, those were met with great enthusiasm by the Primary teacher in the Mahone Bay school. I had the opportunity to speak to the classroom teacher and the principal. The principal said, Pam, when I taught your children they had different skills than children do now because of the kind of home situation a lot of parents have to deal with. Most parents have two incomes that are required, and when my children were little we didn't have a computer to sit them down in front of, they had to play and interact in very different ways.

The whole idea of the Play-Talk-Learn program is to really encourage parents who may not feel really secure in reading to their children at home and interacting at home. A number of parents were there that day in the classroom. They were saying this is a wonderful thing for us to be able to have more interaction, knowing that what they are doing at home will be repeated in the classroom with the teachers. It helped them feel more engaged.

Mr. Speaker, the plan that we have, which we have all seen - I am prepared to say that all of us on our side of the House and the parents who I talked to and the teachers that I talked to are very enthusiastic. A clear direction involves examination of where schools have been and what people have done in the past.

When we formed the government in 2009, we looked at what we had in front of us and we realized that the school system was not 100 per cent. As we have said here today many times, the declining enrolment of 30,000 students - we have 30,000 less now than we did 10 years ago - we know those numbers are imprinted on all of our brains and yet how that looks and translates into reality is what we're talking about here.

Yes, of course we've got classrooms that - there are schools that are becoming smaller and smaller because of the people from rural areas coming to urban centres. Yet what I'm seeing is that more and more, things are changing. In Mahone Bay, in my little town, the population has gone up 4.3 per cent since the last census. Now that truly only relates to 15 new families moving to Mahone Bay and yet they are families with young people and they are coming here from other countries, a lot of them coming here from England, actually. They are coming for what Nova Scotia has to offer. They are coming because it's a safe place to live and their children can grow up in a place where they can interact with people.

When our government moved forward with our different programs, the whole idea, of course, is that government faces the reality of today and tomorrow and is focused on trying to help every student succeed. Mr. Speaker, I certainly don't need to remind you that our province is preparing to welcome the largest economic prosperity that will be happening soon, a lot of it because of the Irving shipyard contract, but many other things are happening. We've got potential exploration off our shores, as I've said; we've got many things in a film tax, we've got a very good film industry; many things are happening, all those things that will encourage and change things in our economics in the province.

Mr. Speaker, recently our Premier and the Minister of Education were accompanied by several honourable members to mention the investment in the state-of-the-art skilled trade centre. This centre will offer new manufacturing trade courses and some of that will be linked with shipbuilding and others just the trades. I remember when I was in high school there was an academic stream and a commercial stream. Out of the commercial stream, the community colleges arose and many will say they have come to a point very much like another university. Trade schools are things that we really are looking for.

The kind of response that I'm hearing around this announcement of this kind of trade school in Halifax and also in Dartmouth and in other areas in the province, will certainly be welcomed by many people. (Interruption) It is long overdue and this new centre will help meet the needs of hundreds of students across the Halifax Regional Municipality who are eager to take these skills. The additional investment will support and establish more skilled trade centres across the province so that all students across the province can prepare themselves for the future.

To make my point, Mr. Speaker, I believe that in order to lead the way we first must understand where we are and how we got here. To help us do this, our government asked someone to help do this and as we've spoken earlier, Dr. Ben Levin was one of Canada's foremost educators and Canada Research Chair in Education Leadership and Policy at the University of Toronto. Mr. Levin provided his advice and knowledge of jurisdictions across the country and internationally on the best way for Nova Scotians to plan for the future in education.

Our Kids and Learning First plan is the culmination of Dr. Levin's recommendations and additional research that will be needed to help students lead the way and I am looking forward to seeing the results of the Succeeding in Reading and how that will be helping students in Mahone Bay school learn the basics and fundamentals of reading in early years. I like the idea that the Succeeding in Reading will expand the number of children who are able to be involved in the process, and as we move forward it will develop even more so that more children can participate and have that special kind of training. I also look forward to seeing the expanded skills training program in Breton Education Centre in New Waterford and seeing how that provides learning opportunities for students in Cape Breton.

I'm looking forward to seeing how the community use of school grants program will help students in our communities enjoy healthy and active living. I understand that our children are our future, and I think we all certainly understand that. By working with teachers in the classroom - all they really want to do is teach. A third of my caucus have been teachers at one point, and we're teachers, parents, friends, aunts, and uncles to children and people who were involved in schools. I think that by working together - this kind of debate today is very interesting because we're all really on the same path; we're all working for our children. We're all trying to create the best situation for learning that we can, and what more can we do? The idea that children wouldn't be the foremost for all of us, the most important thing, is just unthinkable.

We do realize that there will be glitches in any programs that any Party puts forward, and yet we're working to smooth those things through by listening to teachers, listening to parents, listening to our students, and watching them flourish and enjoy the future. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. KEITH BAIN: Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise in my place this evening to talk about Resolution No. 9:

"Therefore be it resolved that the NDP Government reverse the detrimental cuts to our education system and put an end to balancing the books on the backs of our children."

You know, Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the debate on Bill No. 10 that took place. I know that the honourable member for Pictou West - Pictou East, I'm sorry - in his talk referenced an elephant. Well, my learned colleague, the member for Cape Breton West has a saying, and the saying goes, "How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time." But it seems that this government is trying to eat the whole elephant at once.

Over the past number of days we've heard it over and over again: this government refuses to take responsibility for the cuts that school boards are forced to make. The government needs to be accountable for what's happening in our public education system.



They leave school boards very few choices but to cut at the classroom level. Once the result of this government's poor decision-making is known to Nova Scotians, they conveniently step back and blame the school boards.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to attend the Take Your MLA to School Day at Baddeck Academy, a P to Grade 12 school in my constituency. It was truly amazing to see the changes that have happened in our education system and the way we educate our children, compared to the time that - for those who don't know, my 15 years on the Cape Breton-Victoria Regional School Board and its predecessor, the Northside-Victoria District School Board.

There are a lot of changes that have taken place. There's a lot more challenges that are facing the children who are going to school today. Many are taking problems from home to school with them and they're expected to be looked after, and some of those problems that those children are bringing looked after as well.

This government simply doesn't listen, Mr. Speaker. If they did, they would hear from the experts, the people on the ground, what we need to do in our school system. It was referenced numerous times today as well that the Chignecto-Central Regional School Board superintendent, Gary Clarke, describes the cuts that are taking place as "ugly, devastating," and "heartbreaking." And a board member, Ron Marks, says "We are going to affect all our children . . . parents will be shocked." Margo Tait, Superintendent of the Annapolis Valley Regional School Board, calls the cuts "difficult and at times . . . excruciating." Vic Fleury, President of the Nova Scotia School Boards Association, says that saying that these cuts won't have grave impacts on the classroom is naive.

Nova Scotians of all ages are crying out that these cuts have and will continue to negatively impact students. The government won't listen to the school boards, they won't listen to parents, and they won't listen to students. Nova Scotians understand there are fewer children in schools, but what they don't understand is why this government believes our current students are not deserving of a good education. Taking resources away from our students will lead to a lower quality education. It's a proven fact that a quality education leads to a more prosperous, fruitful life.

Last year, NDP education cuts resulted in the loss of 128 full-time teaching positions and 425 maintenance, consultant and support staff positions. This year we're going to see even more cuts - teachers, teaching assistants, library personnel, IT, property, transportation, and central and regional office staff.

Education is the key to success - those who are well-educated are more likely to go on to get better jobs, contribute more to society, and lead healthier lives. From an economic perspective, people who have a better education cost the government less - by going on to get a good job they are able to contribute more in taxes, and it has been shown also that people living above the poverty line demand less from our health care system.

The bottom line is this - the government is taking away great opportunities from our students. By doing this they are sending those in search of support down a dark path. And rather than making our children pay for their poor decision making, the government needs to find savings at the top. Making cuts at the front line, while inflating their own department is unethical - ask any Nova Scotian.

The most recent budget shows an increase of 553 full-time equivalent positions across government this year. This government supports watching 41 librarians walk out the door in order to put another 41 positions at the Department of Finance - it would be interesting to see how the students of Chignecto-Central handle that information. The fact is that the government would rather swell their own departments with more bureaucrats than give our kids a quality education and that, Mr. Speaker, is a hard pill to swallow.

Our children deserve better. More emphasis has to be put in the classroom, not slowly eroding it. So, in closing, I would hope that the government will see the wisdom of their ways and stop making these devastating cuts that are occurring throughout our education system.

Mr. Speaker, with those few words I will take my seat. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

MR. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, members of this Opposition have had to sit in this House and listen to members of the governing Party say that unlike any other government before them, they prioritize education. Yet it's this government, Mr. Speaker, who balked at the previous Minister of Education for increasing funding to education in the Province of Nova Scotia, the minister who now sits in this caucus. This government who says, we care more about education than anybody else, ever. However, the previous government, who invested a significant amount of dollars in education, that doesn't matter. When you look at the actual actions of this government, it tells a much different story than what they're saying because actions speak louder than words and talk is cheap.

The fact of the matter is, this government has stripped \$65 million out of our public education system, \$65 million out of it. Yet they'll stand in this House and say that they value education, they care about our youth and that they are investing in the future. I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker, that is not true. These cuts are having a very deep and real and tangible impact on the classrooms of this province and if the members opposite don't believe it, I suggest all the ones that didn't participate in Take Your MLA to School Day, take the NSTU up next time they want to do it. There is a reason why the members opposite didn't want to go to schools on Take Your MLA to School Day, because they know what's happened.

Mr. Speaker, the damage that is happening in our education system is being felt the most by those students with special needs in our classrooms, who need that support the

most. I've spoken to parents with children on the autism spectrum, they have noticed already a regression in the learning abilities of their kids, a regression already. That's a real impact that these cuts are having on the classroom, that's happening across the province. It's shameful and it's unbelievable that this government will still stand up and say, no we care about education, we care about our youth, when they're putting the future of our youth in jeopardy.

To finish I'll quote the late Honourable Jack Layton, what this government is doing with education is a "hashtag fail" and I will add that it's a hashtag unequivocal fail to our students, to our teachers, to their parents and to the future of this province and it's shameful and I hope they change the course soon.

MR. SPEAKER: Order. The time allotted for debate has ended. I will now recognize the House Leader for the Official Opposition.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for that and I certainly want to thank all members of the House for their participation in the debate today. I will now turn it over to the Government House Leader to give us the business for tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable the Government House Leader.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, I move the House do now rise to meet tomorrow from the hours of 2:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. and after the daily routine, we will do Committee of the Whole House on Supply and time permitting, Bills for Second Reading, Bill No. 5, Bill No. 9, Bill No. 11 and Bill No. 13. I move the House now rise, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is that the House now rise to meet again tomorrow at the hour of 2:00 p.m.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The Adjournment motion was submitted by the honourable member for Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage:

"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."

**ADJOURNMENT****MOTION UNDER RULE 5(5)**

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

**EDUC.: KIDS & LEARNING FIRST - GOV'T. COMMITMENT**

MS. BECKY KENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and it's certainly my pleasure to stand before the House today to speak about the tremendous investment that this government is making in the community of Eastern Passage and for the constituency of Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage, in so many ways, in the high school for Eastern Passage and a skills trades development of a skills trades centre in the Cole Harbour District High School.

Mr. Speaker, it's no surprise that, unfortunately, the Opposition members are in this House on a number of occasions since that announcement expressing unequivocally and very openly that they are against a high school for Eastern Passage. It's no surprise; for so many years past governments have neglected that community but those days are over, Mr. Speaker, we have a government that is putting Kids and Learning First and communities' needs for their families and their students front and foremost.

Two significant announcements, Mr. Speaker, equally exciting and I'm proud to be part of them, for different reasons. I'm going to start with the constituency of Cole Harbour and the opportunities that Nova Scotians will now have in looking for our future in the skilled trades. They have never been greater. The \$25 billion shipbuilding contract awarded to Irving Shipbuilding Inc. is truly an economic game-changer for Nova Scotia and it's expected to generate millions in economic spin-offs and 11,000 jobs. Our government wants our youth to stay in Nova Scotia, to train to get those jobs.

Our NDP Government is making strategic investments and purposeful and responsible investments in skilled trades. The announcement at Cole Harbour District High to renovate, to create a state-of-the-art skilled trades centre, is welcome news for so many people around HRM, students.

I was there, Mr. Speaker, along with the Premier, along with the Minister of Education, and I heard the cheers. I saw the faces of the youth who knew that a new chapter was opening for Cole Harbour District High and that's exciting. Students and staff and administration were thrilled to hear about the upgrades that were forthcoming with this investment. It turns a page in history and offers an opportunity for people to look to go to Cole Harbour District High, look for the good news and the great things that are happening at it. It helps meet the needs of the students, it increases the supply of skilled labour in Nova Scotia.

This will allow students to start thinking about this industry earlier, Mr. Speaker, and it creates direct links from the classroom to the jobs. As well at that announcement was an additional \$5 million to establish a fund to increase the number of schools offering skilled trades around Nova Scotia from nine to 18. That's an investment that Nova Scotia should be proud of, should be celebrating - not condemning from the Opposition members. That side of the House, I guess, would like to see those skills continue to go out West. This government does not believe in that, we believe our young people are poised and ready to have this training. The future starts now for the students preparing for good jobs in Nova Scotia.

The Eastern Passage High School announcement was one of the proudest days of, well, I would say it's probably the proudest day of my career as an elected official. I've had the pleasure of knocking on thousands of doors through three elections as an elected representative - successful campaigns, I might add. Overwhelmingly and unequivocally the message was clear, a priority of a high school for Eastern Passage was at the heart of the advocacy in that community. Our NDP Government recognizes, as do the residents of the Eastern Passage area and, quite frankly, of members around this room - I've heard it today - that schools are the hearts of the communities and Eastern Passage deserves to have their children educated fully, in their community.

I'm not surprised as well that Opposition members would ask questions about the configuration of schools. What puzzles me about it, earlier today a member asked a question about what would it look like, how would the schools look if there were renovations to happen? I would ask back, where was their concern when Eastern Passage was, for the gamut of decades, going through a number of scenarios, probably more than most communities. We have had P to 6 schools, we have had Primary-only schools, we have had P to 4 schools, times two. Currently right now we have two elementary schools, P to 4, we also have a Grades 4 to 6 school right now. We have Grades 7 to 9, we have had split shifts, we've run the gamut.

Finally, there's a government that recognizes that this community deserves the stability of having what is traditionally known as a full education in their own community. Those governments of the past, they just didn't care. Well, this NDP Government does care about the constituency of Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage.

What is so nice about this investment and this decision, what I take so much pride in, is that, on so many occasions, the Premier and I have discussed, as it would be no surprise to anyone, the need for a high school in Eastern Passage and how do we get there, but beyond a doubt, there was a support for it. We've been in this House as Opposition for roughly nine years before I became the MLA, and this Party, the NDP Party, supported a high school for Eastern Passage. We became government. We continue to have those conversations, but with the scenario around how to create a high school, people would pitch and offer opportunities to say why it would be a bad idea.

When the Premier and I and others who were involved would talk about how this can be good for everyone, how communities don't have to suffer, a member opposite actually tried to suggest today that a school in his riding would benefit from that \$15 million to renovate and correct a scenario in his school - which I'm all for. If there is a problem in the school, I understand that it should be addressed, but not at the consequence of a constituency. You don't have to take from one to give to the other and take opportunities away from a community that has been fully and completely neglected by governments of the past. I would argue that every day, and it's so disappointing - and frankly, from that member, I know he's offering the Party rhetoric associated to those questions. I can't believe for a minute that he fully believes that Eastern Passage doesn't deserve a school, but that's what they're saying. They just don't care.

This NDP Government does care about Cole Harbour and Eastern Passage. When we were down at Seaside Elementary School and making that announcement, we were surrounded by community members who were so excited. It brought them to tears. There were senior citizens there who have grandchildren, who were so excited, because they knew for 30 years - 30 years is a long time to be fighting for this, to be advocating in every election, and candidates from all Parties were at the doors, rest assured, supporting a high school for Eastern Passage.

Of course, now that an NDP Government is the one government that listened, supported, and delivered on that commitment with this investment, it's their job to oppose it, but our government is only one part of having that announcement. There are so many people who never gave up in Eastern Passage. There are members of our community like Maureen Ebsary, who has been part - I remember, her son is a little older than mine. I've been 30 years in the community and I've heard about the need and talked about it for my own sons, but Maureen - Jeep Deveaux would be another one who continued. I referenced him at the announcement as a founding father of high school advocacy for Eastern Passage. (Interruption) Yes, he has a son, Kevin Deveaux, who stood in this House before me as well, and spoke of the need for Eastern Passage to have a high school.

Mr. Speaker, I know that my time is running out. Chris Peters in the community, Todd King, Michelle Kempton, they're all members of our community who believe strongly. I know that members opposite will bring in references to people who don't necessarily think it's a good idea, but I would ask that those people in the community continue to dialogue with me. As discussions are had around the configuration and how this is going to come to be, that's what I want to hear. I need to hear from them.

At this moment, though, I would like to take the time to publicly thank the honourable Premier and the Minister of Education for putting kids and learning first, for caring about our community, and bringing a future to Cole Harbour and Eastern Passage. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

MR. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to stand in my place today to take part in late debate. When I take a look at the newspapers and the media, the e-mails and the tweeting and so on about the state of public education in our province, probably the bigger topic of public education is what we should be spending our time on here today. We do know that it is a great challenge to deliver strong and equitable education right across our province. I come here to Province House and believe and promote that every child in Nova Scotia should have a great opportunity when they enter the public education system.

Having strong resources and having a dedicated plan, not one that gets references to Ben Levin gave us the light to go forward here, with public education change in the province or the latest document from the NDP, Kids and Learning First, which is, again, many of those things are already in place with our best schools and best staff in the province. Yes, we always need some degree of change and improvement because public education must be a dynamic service to the province.

I guess I see this issue perhaps more from the school board and the consulting and the work that members have done in the community and, in fact, put great effort into putting a priority list together. I know the kind of consultations that the Annapolis Valley school board had with staff, right down to even the design of a school. The school where I taught and was administrator of, staff had that opportunity.

That's well along in the process. School boards did have Cole Harbour in sight for some renewal and it was No. 8 on their priority list. They were hoping that it would move up, perhaps a little quicker and I guess with the Premier in that riding, it did take on a rather fast pace to the top of the priority list. I certainly agree with the concept of having additional trades courses, we have no idea what they will be yet. Will it be offerings of O2 at each of the senior high grade levels? Maybe that's what the new shape of the skills trade courses are going to be.

It's a nice catch phrase. It's one that, certainly there is a need for, a greater concept of vocational training within the public school system. When we have children that are coming through without many of the basic skills around literacy and numeracy, good citizenship, those are the areas. Because I've been involved with the IWK and the changes in the mental health program lay off of staff and so on, I did a quick little survey. I picked seven schools across Nova Scotia, I just did it at random and I called seven senior high schools. Having contacts made it rather easy. There wasn't a single one of the schools that didn't have children on the wait list for mental health assessments.

That's the reality that we have in this province, that we have to look at what are the things we need to be doing for young people that will enable them, that will make them stronger as adults to function in our province.

I think some days here in the House, really, we are looking at and debating what are not the priorities of Nova Scotia? This school, we all welcome new schools in our

communities. There are a number of questions here, especially since those that were in looking at the future of schools in the Halifax Regional School Board did not at this time see the need for a new school in Eastern Passage. Desirable? Absolutely. But right now was it the time to make this investment?

I think those who were looking at this issue have raised some very important questions that perhaps we can get some answers to, questions like, how much extra operating dollars will HRSB be given to operate this school? How many students will want to attend Eastern Passage school considering we will only be able to deliver the minimum programming? That's one of the realities today with a high school of 400. In fact, the Department of Education has been talking mostly about the concept of a 750-student school to deliver the strongest and widest range of courses that should be offered, courses like the IB program, the International Baccalaureate program. Any kind of specialized courses, again, need students and teachers to be able to offer a full range.

How many students from Eastern Passage will want to stay at Cole Harbour due to the skilled trade programming? Obviously Cole Harbour will have a more generous offering of courses. Just looking at the physical plant that Cole Harbour has and with the enhancement of the skilled trade courses, again, we can see a significant number of students who could be siphoned off to go to Cole Harbour.

Why was the school board left out of the decision? I think that's an important part of the process. If this government no longer has faith and belief in school boards, then announce it publicly, say it publicly; don't do it in insidious ways. Don't hit school boards in those kinds of indirect ways, deal with them directly on.

Why wouldn't the government fund other schools of greater need first? Sunnyside is one of those schools, for example. Do all of the parents really want this school? I think this is a great time for that public survey. Some provinces now, and jurisdictions, are engaging in a wide review of people's perspectives on issues and especially the investment in infrastructure. It's extremely costly and is the right decision being made?

I think it's important for those questions to be answered along the way here. Again, at some point in time, Eastern Passage having this school with all of the criteria that are required for a modern high school and if all of those add up to a school, by all means. Do they at the present time? Many questions unanswered. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. KEITH BAIN: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to stand this evening and speak to tonight's late debate topic. We saw it today, what this government's commitment to putting Kids and Learning First is. Today, with the Chignecto-Central school board, the government began to reap what it sowed.



When it comes to cutting ribbons the NDP have their trusty scissors in hand, but when it comes to making cuts they hide behind school boards. It's funny then that today the government chose for late debate two opportunities for them to cut ribbons. No one would argue about educating young people in skilled trades but, once again, this government has circumvented the system. The minister went to great lengths to make sure the ribbon cuttings would take place. She did an end run around the Halifax Regional School Board. She announced a capital project based on political needs rather than the requirements of the school board.

Mr. Speaker, the Eastern Passage school wasn't even on the Halifax Regional School Board's priority list. It was forced on them. It must have been on the NDP re-election priority list. The minister made the decision without any pesky opinions from the Halifax Regional School Board, but when it comes to making pork-barrel political school announcements, she doesn't even give them the courtesy of hearing what their priorities are.

The Minister of Education has told this House she was looking forward to April 20<sup>th</sup>, the day she will receive the priorities of all the school boards. She said that's when decisions will be made - how ironic. Unfortunately, she made the decision to build the Eastern Passage school without hearing from the board and, you know, Mr. Speaker, it's not only the school board that was surprised by the announcement. Our office has received e-mails from parents who don't like the votes- and pork-barrelling-first plan.

There are too many letters that we received over the short time since the NDP started their pre-election spending. One e-mail from a local resident told the Premier that, "It's not giving EP a high school it's allowing you to take Cole Harbour High for your own purpose without consulting with the residents."

MR. SPEAKER: I would ask the member if he would table that.

MR. BAIN: Yes, I will table those, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: And does it have the name of the individual on it?

MR. BAIN: Yes, it does.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

MR. BAIN: And also, Mr. Speaker, another said, "I do not believe that the majority of residents would like to see a high school built here. Please rethink this costly mistake and keep bussing [sic] our kids to a school outside of this community. To broaden their horizons and make them better people."

Mr. Speaker, these quotes are from people who were not consulted. No one was consulted and apparently consultation in this time gets in the way of the NDP pork-barrel political moves. You know, it's ironic as well that in the media today the Premier talked about the school boards being partners with government. Well, I'll bet you that the Halifax Regional School Board and the Chignecto-Central Regional School Board don't feel like equal partners today.

I guess, Mr. Speaker, you're only a partner with this government if you agree with them. So it's safe to say today that if this government showed the same commitment to kids and learning that they do to cynical pork-barrel politics, our education system would be a lot better.

MR. SPEAKER: That ends the late debate for this evening. I want to thank all members who have participated in the debate. I now say that the House is adjourned until tomorrow at 2:00 p.m.

The House is adjourned.

[The House rose at 6:23 p.m.]