



DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Gordon Gosse

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HALIFAX, THURSDAY, APRIL 12, 2012

Sixty-first General Assembly

Fourth Session

2:00 P.M.

SPEAKER

Hon. Gordon Gosse

DEPUTY SPEAKERS

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

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. Before we begin the daily routine, the subject matter for late debate has been chosen, which I will now read:

Therefore be it resolved that because schools boards are being forced to reduce services for special needs students as a result of the NDP Government's detrimental cuts to education, government reverse cuts and reinstate funding to public education to pre-2010 levels.

It was submitted by the honourable member for Cape Breton South.

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

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

MR. ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to table a petition which is signed by over 700 people, with the operative clause being:

“We, users of the Loch Lomond Road and Hay Cove Road, are very dissatisfied with their condition, and the amount of maintence [sic] they receive. We expect plans to be made to upgrade them before they are completely impassable.”

Mr. Speaker, I have attached my name.

MR. SPEAKER: The petition is tabled.

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES**TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS****STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS****GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION**

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Seniors.

RESOLUTION NO. 166

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 Nova Scotia Centre on Aging at Mount Saint Vincent University provides a blend of academic strength with community involvement in aging-related initiatives; and

Whereas the Centre on Aging has been providing excellence in aging research through projects from family and friend caregivers, home care human resources, age-friendly communities, dementia care, nursing home care, technology and aging, and seniors housing to abuse of older adults; and

Whereas 2012 marks the 20th Anniversary of the Nova Scotia Centre on Aging, with the anniversary theme of “Our Future is Aging”, chosen because Nova Scotia’s population is aging and it reaffirms the work and mission of the centre to generate knowledge that informs policy and practice on aging-related issues;

Therefore be it resolved that members of the House congratulate the Nova Scotia Centre on Aging for their important work, continued success, and their 20-year anniversary celebration.

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. 167

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

Whereas maintaining good oral health includes keeping your teeth free from cavities and keeping your gums free from disease; and

Whereas the month of April is Oral Health Month and it is an opportunity to increase awareness on how oral health contributes to overall health; and

Whereas keeping teeth and gums healthy contributes to the prevention of serious long-term health issues such as oral cancer, which claims the lives of more than 1,000 Canadians each year;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House recognize April as Oral Health Month, and encourage all Nova Scotians to make the health of their teeth and gums a priority.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of African Nova Scotian Affairs.

RESOLUTION NO. 168

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

Whereas 1912 was an interesting year in the history of Halifax, Nova Scotia, and the world as we recall the maiden voyage of RMS Titanic; and

Whereas on April 12th of that same year, Thomas Simmonds was born in the community of North Preston where he went on to marry Eunice Whynder, raise their children, and live out his bountiful life; and

Whereas on Thursday, April 12, 2012, Thomas Simmonds celebrated his 100th birthday at home with his family and friends;

Therefore be it resolved that the House of Assembly extend heartfelt congratulations and best wishes to Thomas Simmonds on the occasion of his 100th birthday.

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 Finance.

RESOLUTION NO. 169

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

Whereas the electoral process is the cornerstone of democracy, an opportunity for every eligible person to contribute to choosing their Leaders; and

Whereas being chosen for leadership in this way brings great opportunity for the Leader and with it great responsibility to be effective, accountable, and fair; and

Whereas on February 25th, 2012, Sydney Peters was elected by the members of Glooscap First Nation as chief;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating Mr. Peters on his election as chief and in welcoming him to the circle of people in this province who have been chosen by their communities to serve at the highest level of public life.

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. 170

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

Whereas Accreditation Canada is an independent organization that provides national and international health care organizations with an external peer review process to assess and improve the services they provide to their patients based on standards of excellence; and

Whereas Colchester East Hants Health Authority received full accreditation status last summer; and

Whereas after the health authority completed additional work related to various standards and required organizational processes, their accreditation level was upgraded to the highest achievement level - that is accreditation with exemplary standing;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly join me in congratulating the Colchester East Hants Health Authority on this prestigious ranking, and commend their dedication to providing quality services and patient care to the residents of Colchester County and East Hants in our lovely province.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Finance.

RESOLUTION NO. 171

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

Whereas the Boston Marathon is a 115-year-old prestigious road race that has encouraged thousands of people from around the world to take up running, improving their fitness levels and leading to healthier, happier lives; and

Whereas preparing to qualify for and run a marathon requires months of commitment; and

Whereas Tom Soehl, a dedicated public servant working in the Office of Aboriginal Affairs, has qualified for the Boston Marathon and will compete on April 16th;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating Tom Soehl on qualifying for the 2012 Boston Marathon and wish him our best in his race on Monday.

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. 17 - Entitled an Act Respecting Certain Financial Measures. (Hon. Graham Steele)

Bill No. 18 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 6 of the Revised Statutes of 1989. The Agriculture and Marketing Act. (Mr. Leo Glavine)

Bill No. 19 - Entitled an Act to Require the Establishment of a Mandatory Early Development Instrument Assessment Program in Nova Scotia. (Hon. Karen Casey)

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

The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

MR. ANDREW YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, may I do an introduction?

MR. SPEAKER: Most certainly.

MR. YOUNGER: In our west gallery today I'd like to introduce one of the Massage Addict co-owners, Chris Harker, and his daughter, Maclaine - I think that's the correct pronunciation. Maybe we could all offer them a warm welcome. (Applause)

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

NOTICES OF MOTION

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

RESOLUTION NO. 172

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

Whereas Massage Addict is an innovative, membership-based business franchise initiated in Dartmouth in 2008; and

Whereas the owners of Massage Addict, Lori MacKenzie and Chris Harker, have grown their business from that initial location in Dartmouth to four metro locations and two in Ontario; and

Whereas after a successful appearance on the popular CBC television show *Dragon's Den*, Ms. MacKenzie and Mr. Harker have secured a significant investment in their business that will allow them to grow their business nationwide;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Ms. MacKenzie and Mr. Harker on their initiative and wish them the best of luck in their ever-expanding business.

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party.

RESOLUTION NO. 173

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

Whereas today Brigadier-General John James Grant took the oath of office to become Nova Scotia's 32nd Lieutenant Governor; and

Whereas Lieutenant Governor Grant's distinguished military service and his extensive community involvement will serve him well in this new position; and

Whereas Lieutenant Governor Grant will inspire his fellow Nova Scotians by dedicating his tenure as the Queen's representative to those who serve their fellow citizens;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House congratulate Lieutenant Governor Grant on his installation as the Queen's representative in Nova Scotia and wish him well as he begins this important new role.

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 on an introduction.

MR. MAT WHYNOTT: Thank you Mr. Speaker. I'd ask the members of the House to pay attention to the east gallery where we have a gentleman by the name of Bill Swan, who is the former president of the Hammonds Plains-Upper Sackville NDP, lives in the riding of Timberlea-Prospect now. He's a long-time community activist and a long-time supporter and worker for our Party. I'd ask the House to give him a warm welcome please. (Applause)

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

RESOLUTION NO. 174

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

Whereas J.A. Snow Funeral Home of Lacewood Drive in Clayton Park was established as Snow and Company Undertaker on Argyle Street in 1883, making it the oldest funeral home in Halifax; and

Whereas 100 years ago, in the aftermath of the loss of the HMS Titanic at sea, the White Star Line contracted Snow's Funeral Home to prepare any bodies that were recovered from the ocean for burial at sea or on land; and

Whereas Snow and Company rose to the challenge of this historic task and assisted in the burial at sea of a 128 victims, prepared 59 victims to be sent home to loved ones and arranged for a further 150 victims of the disaster to be laid to rest in Halifax graveyards;

Therefore be it resolved that members of this House commend J.A. Snow Funeral Home for this stalwart and dignified service to victims of the HMS Titanic and for their continued service to the residents of Halifax.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Cape Breton West

RESOLUTION NO. 175

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

Whereas J. Robert Kennedy was born in Glace Bay, the son of Hugh and Bernice Kennedy of Donkin; and

Whereas from a young age, Rob wrote stories that continue to this day to receive literary attention and accolades; and

Whereas Rob's recent works entitled *The Protocol*, *Depraved Difference*, *Tick Tock*, and *Brass Monkey* continue to excite readers to the mystery and adventure genre;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate and recognize new author J. Robert Kennedy for his success in the literary world and wish him well as he continues on his career.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations.

RESOLUTION NO. 176

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

Whereas recreation facilities are a focal point for many communities; and

Whereas the demand by sports-minded residents required an expansion of the East Hants Sportsplex; and

Whereas on April 14, 2012, the East Hants Sportsplex will host a grand opening of its new facilities;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulate the directors, management and staff of the East Hants Sportsplex on the successful completion of its new facilities and wishes them a great day for their grand opening ceremonies.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Kings West.

RESOLUTION NO. 177

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

Whereas Kyle Jordan of Berwick, a 14-year-old student at Berwick and District School, recently won the Canspell Regional Spelling Bee; and

Whereas Kyle earned a \$5,000 scholarship and a trip to Toronto to represent Nova Scotia at the Canspell National Finals that took place at the end of March; and

Whereas Kyle's love of books and reading continues to prepare him for championships such as this;

Therefore be it resolved that the House of Assembly recognize and congratulate Kyle Jordan on his win at the Canspell Regionals, and wish him much success in future competitions.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Inverness.

RESOLUTION NO. 178

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

Whereas Al MacInnis, Con Smythe Trophy-winning MVP of the 1988 Stanley Cup Champion Calgary Flames, became the first inductee of the Forever A Flame program during Al MacInnis Night at the Scotiabank Saddledome in February; and

Whereas 23 years after winning the Stanley Cup with the Flames and almost 10 years after retiring from the game, the Calgary Flames paid homage to hall of fame defenceman Al MacInnis in front of a sellout crowd; and

Whereas the people of Port Hood watched proudly as a special banner with his No. 2 and a picture of him in a Flames jersey was raised to the rafters of the arena;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Port Hood's Al MacInnis on becoming the first inductee of the Forever A Flame program.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic on an introduction.

MS. MICHELE RAYMOND: Mr. Speaker, I'm very glad to welcome to the gallery today Irene Smith, who is the executive director of the Avalon Sexual Assault Centre. I am especially pleased that they have come here today to speak, or at least to be present, and to watch the proceedings in the gallery because they are not always the most public face of some of the most important justice issues that arise here.

As many people probably know, we have one of the lowest rates of prosecution for sexual assaults and the Avalon Sexual Assault Centre is here to help those who have not had that. Thank you very much. (Applause)

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

The honourable member for Guysborough-Sheet Harbour.

RESOLUTION NO. 179

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

Whereas on April 15, 2012, Margaret Delorey of Hazel Hill, in the constituency of Guysborough-Sheet Harbour, will celebrate her 100th birthday; and

Whereas Margaret Delorey, born in 1912 in Fox Island, has raised six boys and now has 18 grandchildren and 31 great-grandchildren, and very much enjoys knitting and spending time with her family; and

Whereas Margaret is a well-respected member of her community and will celebrate her 100th birthday with many family and friends at the Guysborough Royal Canadian Legion;

Therefore be it resolved that members of this House of Assembly congratulate Margaret Delorey on the special occasion of her 100th birthday, and extend to her our very best wishes for many more such celebrations.

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 Preston.

RESOLUTION NO. 180

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

Whereas Ronald David is a leader in his community of North Preston, continually promoting education and serving his community in leadership positions such as crime prevention and community development within the church, the school, and the community centre; and

Whereas Ronald has provided services to the Lake Echo Fire Department for 15 years, served as a trustee member of the Halifax School Board for 18 years, and served as president of both the North Preston Ratepayers Association and the North Preston Recreation Centre; and

Whereas Ronald has received the Golden Apple Award from the Halifax School Board, and the Dr. W.P. Oliver Award for outstanding service to the community;

Therefore be it resolved that members of this House recognize the many contributions Ronald David has made to his community and to our province.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Cape Breton North.

RESOLUTION NO. 181

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

Whereas two Sydney Mines firefighters who were killed in the line of duty are among those whose names have been inducted into a national memorial started by the Canadian Fallen Firefighters Foundation; and

Whereas Archibald Hall was a volunteer fireman who became a paraplegic and eventually died of his injuries after a fire truck rolled over; and

Whereas Lewis Jessome died of a heart attack while fighting a fire in North Sydney;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in saluting these two volunteer firemen who lost their lives providing service to their community, and thank Sydney Mines Volunteer Fire Chief Paul MacCormick for submitting their names to the Canadian Fallen Firefighters Foundation so that their sacrifice will not be forgotten.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Bedford-Birch Cove.

RESOLUTION NO. 182

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

Whereas Gary Walker, the principal of Halifax West High School, has been named one of Canada's Outstanding Principals for 2012; and

Whereas Mr. Walker is one of 40 Canadian principals to be honoured by The Learning Partnership for exceptional leadership at a gala reception in February 2012 in Toronto; and

Whereas Mr. Walker is a member of the National Academy of Canada's Outstanding Principals, who continue their professional development through an on-line forum and act as mentors to new colleagues;

Therefore be it resolved that members of this House of Assembly congratulate Gary Walker on his record of leadership, which has led to this national recognition, and wish him well in all his future endeavours.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Argyle.

RESOLUTION NO. 183

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

Whereas Trout Point Lodge, located in Kemptville along the Tusket River, offers luxurious culinary vacations in an eco-friendly setting; and

Whereas Charles L. Leary and Vaughn J. Perret are the proprietors, instructors, and tour leaders at the lodge, who prepare food they source locally and from their own on-site garden; and

Whereas Trout Point Lodge has received many prestigious awards from major travel and tourist guides and most recently was accepted as the first Canadian member of the Diamond Collection by the travel site bedandbreakfast.com and received acknowledgement from Fodor's travel guide to Atlantic Canada;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Charles and Vaughn for receiving this recognition and thank them for their commitment to environmental sensitivity.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Yarmouth.

RESOLUTION NO. 184

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

Whereas Yarmouth resident Keith Miller has volunteered his time as an auxiliary constable for the RCMP for almost 30 years; and

Whereas Keith Miller's commitment to his community was honoured during African Heritage Month as one of the province's Unsung Heroes: Men Who Make a Difference; and

Whereas it was stated of Keith Miller in his nomination that he exhibits traits that many police officers admire greatly - whether it be defusing a tense situation with his calm and gentle nature or the compassion he displays for others, Keith has earned the respect of so many people;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Keith Miller on being recognized as an Unsung Hero and thank him for his dedication to the people of his community.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Victoria-The Lakes.

RESOLUTION NO. 185

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

Whereas Highland Links Golf Course in Ingonish was recognized as one of the top 100 golf courses in the world in 2010 and 2011; and

Whereas in 2009 the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada recognized Stanley Thompson, architect designer of the Highland Links, by choosing the course as the site for placement of the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada plaque to recognize his achievements; and

Whereas the Highland Links, opened in 1941, is one of Canada's historical landmarks that respects the natural landscape and was listed as best scenery in the world by Networked Golfer in 2008;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate the community of Ingonish and Highland Links manager Graham Hudson for the prestigious rating as well as the historical significance that has been preserved over the years.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Preston.

RESOLUTION NO. 186

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

Whereas Melanie Power Coombs was born and brought up in the community of Lake Echo; and

Whereas Melanie received her doctorate from Dalhousie University in immunology and microbiology and then attended Harvard University where she did further studying on the subject, and while in attendance there she was asked to do research work and some teaching; and

Whereas Melanie still found time to volunteer at the IWK Hospital as well as Awana Leader for Sparks, science judge for Grade 5 students, and worked in the flower and gift shops at the Victoria General Hospital;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House recognize and acknowledge the many accomplishments and good work of Melanie Power Coombs.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Cape Breton North.

RESOLUTION NO. 187

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

Whereas on any given day there are as many as 1,000 people at Memorial Composite High School in Sydney Mines; and

Whereas as part of its public accessible defibrillator program, St. John Ambulance's Nova Scotia/Prince Edward Island Council has donated an automatic

external defibrillator, trainer and wall cabinet to the school, a device that could save many lives; and

Whereas Memorial Composite High School was chosen for the program because it is so involved with the LifeSmart Program, which is a first-aid training program designed for high school students and led by teacher Charles Colson;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly salute staff member Charles Colson for his dedication to the LifeSmart Program and all that he has done for the school.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

RESOLUTION NO. 188

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

Whereas Sweet Smiles is a pastry café and catering service located in Dartmouth; and

Whereas café owner Cheryl Pace started up her business in the Alderney Landing Farmers' Market and has expanded to include a street-front café offering light fare and delicious baked goods; and

Whereas Sweet Smiles Cafe, at 639 Portland Hills Drive, celebrated its one-year anniversary on February 1, 2012;

Therefore be it resolved that members of the House of Assembly congratulate Ms. Cheryl Pace on her tenacity, her initiative, and wish her and Sweet Smiles Cafe 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 Inverness.

RESOLUTION NO. 189

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

Whereas John O'Connor of Inverness has served with the Inverness Volunteer Fire Department for 40 years; and

Whereas Mr. O'Connor was honoured with the presentation of an Exemplary Service Medal and a watch to recognize his four decades as a volunteer firefighter and his work to strengthen the department; and

Whereas members of the department presented John's wife, Bernice, with flowers as a thank you for her support during those 40 years;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly acknowledge John O'Connor for 40 years of service with the Inverness Volunteer Fire Department and thank him for selflessly protecting his friends and neighbours.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Yarmouth.

RESOLUTION NO. 190

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

Whereas Kraft Hockeyville held its search for the community that best embodies passion for hockey and hometown, asking individuals, groups and teams from coast to coast to demonstrate their passion for the game and hockey spirit by nominating their community to be the next Kraft Hockeyville; and

Whereas with the hard work and dedication of the organizing committee members Wayne Hamilton, Patti Verran, Sonya Breton and Gil Dares, the Yarmouth is Hockeyville 2012 campaign emerged, inspiring our community to come together and vote for Yarmouth to be one of the top five finalists in the country; and

Whereas with close to 1.7 million votes, Yarmouth, representing the Atlantic region, finished fourth in the country winning \$25,000 in arena upgrades for Mariners Centre from Kraft;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly recognize the Yarmouth is Hockeyville 2012 organizing committee for its tireless commitment and enthusiasm which inspired so many members of our community and beyond to support Yarmouth in this contest, ensuring that no matter the outcome, Yarmouth really is Hockeyville.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Cape Breton West.

RESOLUTION NO. 191

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

Whereas Mitchell Ramsay-Mader was elected in the student union election held recently at the Cape Breton University; and

Whereas Mitchell is the son of Jeannie Ramsay and Greg Mader and he resides in Albert Bridge; and

Whereas Mitchell was elected as the Student Representative as Off-Campus Representative for the upcoming term;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Mitchell Ramsay-Mader on his recent election and wish him every success for his upcoming year at Cape Breton University.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Bedford-Birch Cove.

RESOLUTION NO. 192

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

Whereas Glenora Distillery in Cape Breton has been named Distillery of the Year by the Canadian Whisky Awards Group, an award which is determined by an independent panel of whisky writers, bloggers and journalists; and

Whereas the company's 10-year-old Glen Breton Rare won gold at the 2011 International Review of Spirits, in Chicago, in October; and

Whereas Glenora's single malt whisky is now rated among the top 50 spirits worldwide;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly congratulate Glenora Distillery and owner Lauchie MacLean of Bedford on their recent awards, and wish them many more years of production of first-class spirits.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Victoria-The Lakes.

RESOLUTION NO. 193

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

Whereas in 1972, a group of concerned seniors formed the Cape Breton Council of Senior Citizens and Pensioners as a way to address issues and concerns of all seniors in industrial Cape Breton; and

Whereas the council is composed of representatives from seniors and pensioners clubs throughout the Cape Breton Regional Municipality whose mission is to protect and promote the rights of seniors and advocate to enhance the quality of life for seniors; and

Whereas for over 40 years the council has brought forward seniors' concerns at local, provincial and federal levels;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly recognize the Cape Breton Council of Senior Citizens and Pensioners, its executive and members, for 40 years of dedication and assistance to the seniors of the Cape Breton Regional Municipality.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Kings West.

RESOLUTION NO. 194

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

Whereas Marjorie Murphy of Berwick, Nova Scotia, has been an active volunteer for most of her 80-plus years; and

Whereas Marjorie has volunteered for various groups such as the Canadian Cancer Society, the Red Cross and the local food bank, just to name a new; and

Whereas Marjorie's latest act of kindness is knitting mittens for the local food bank to hand out to needy families at Christmas;

Therefore be it resolved that the House of Assembly recognize and congratulate Berwick's choice of Marjorie Murphy as Berwick's Volunteer of the Year.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Argyle.

RESOLUTION NO. 195

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: M. le Président, à une date ultérieure, je demanderai l'adoption de la résolution suivante:

Attendu que le jeudi 15 décembre 2011, le Musée des Acadiens des Pubnicos a présenté une dramatisation du livre *Le Tapis de Grand-Pré* pour la première fois par des marionnettes; et

Attendu que la Société historique acadienne de Pubnico-Ouest, avec une équipe de 20 personnes, a présenté cette dramatisation basée sur le livre écrit par Réjean Aucoin et Jean-Claude Tremblay; et

Attendu que ce spectacle nous amène dans l'histoire acadienne, notamment la déportation, et nous fait visiter tous les coins de la Nouvelle-Écosse;

Par conséquent, qu'il soit résolu que tous les membres de cette Assemblée félicitent le Musée des Acadiens des Pubnicos sur le succès de ce spectacle parsemé un peu de la magie de Noël et de l'histoire acadienne.

M. le Président, je demande l'adoption de cette résolution sans préavis et sans débat.

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

Whereas on Thursday, December 15, 2011, the dramatization of *The Magic Rug of Grand Pré* was presented for the first time with handheld puppets at the Musée des Acadiens des Pubnicos; and

Whereas the Acadian Historical Society of West Pubnico, with a cast of 20 people, presented the play based on the book written by Réjean Aucoin and Jean-Claude Tremblay; and

Whereas the presentation took people through Acadian history and the deportation, at the same time visiting all corners of Nova Scotia;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate the Musée des Acadiens des Pubnicos on the success of this dramatization, which blended a touch of Christmas magic and Acadian history.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS

MR. SPEAKER: The time is now 2:47 p.m. We will end at 3:47 p.m.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

PREM.: EDUC. MIN. - ABILITY

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, after overseeing an attack on education funding, the Education Minister was unable to answer basic questions about departmental spending. The minister cut Reading Recovery to save money but couldn't tell us the cost of Succeeding in Reading.

In a little over an hour, the Education Minister could not answer more than 20 questions about Education Department spending. So my question to the Premier is, why is the Premier allowing a minister to stay in control of such a critical and important department when the minister is clearly unable to explain departmental spending?

HON. DARRELL DEXTER (The Premier): Mr. Speaker, I'm afraid he's referring to questioning that took place in estimates, I believe. I know that in this House whenever the Minister of Education is asked questions, she gives full and complete answers. I can only assume that it was the quality of the questions.

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, I'm sure that parents across this province will find some comfort in the Premier's cavalier approach to the cuts in public education.

The Official Opposition are not the only ones warning of the impact of government's repeated cuts. CUPE, the NSGEU, and the SEIU tell us there are fewer resources for students with behavioural and developmental issues. The NSTU - members of the Education Minister's profession - tell us that teachers have lost their jobs because of government's cuts.

Mr. Speaker, CUPE, the NSGEU, and the NSTU are saying that the NDP Government's decisions are costing jobs, increasing class sizes, and reducing supports to students. My question the Premier is, how can they all be wrong?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, again, I'm not sure what it is that he is referring to, but all I can tell him - which is the truth - is that the per capita funding per student has gone up dramatically. I have tabled in this House just how much it has gone up. The teacher-student ratio has gone down. There are 30,000 fewer students than 10 years ago, and yet there are 300 more teachers. I think everybody understands what that means.

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, last year there were 553 positions cut because of this government's attack on public education - 82 teaching positions, 136 specialists, 75 teaching assistants, and 132 support positions. That was last year.

Chignecto-Central Regional School Board warned of job cuts, Halifax Regional School Board warned yesterday there would be job cuts coming next week, and school boards across this province have been warning since last November that the decision by this government to cut education further would mean there would be job losses of a direct impact on students. My question to the Premier is, why is the Premier protecting and supporting a minister that is clearly so out of touch with reality in today's classrooms?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, last year the school boards hired teachers. They didn't lay any off, they hired teachers. I suppose we could have taken the approach that the former Liberal Government took - it just rolled all their wages back - but we decided not to do that.

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

EDUC. - CUTS: BUDGET OFFICER - INPUT

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, after instructing the school boards to make devastating cuts of \$65 million to their budget in the last two years, the Minister of Education has decided she doesn't like what she sees. The government has decided to send a budget officer from the Department of Education to dictate where the cuts should be made. School boards are making gut-wrenching decisions to try to please the minister. If she didn't expect the results to be as devastating as they are, then we have a very naive minister.

My question to the minister is, in the past couple of days we've heard the Premier call the school board names, insist they were playing games, and yesterday the minister threatened them. When the budget officer goes in, will he respect any of the school board's wishes, or will they just be doing the minister's bidding?

HON. RAMONA JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, I made sure that Chignecto-Central Regional School Board was receiving the support that they need to look over their budget to provide options. I recognize that letting go a complete service for library services in a complete board was unacceptable to this government.

MR. ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, the Chignecto-Central Regional School Board has already been cut to the core. From their budget, 85 per cent falls under wages and benefits - that leaves only 15 per cent of the remaining budget to work with. They have already trimmed the fat, and positions have been cut. Which positions does the minister think are less important than the 41 librarians?

MS. JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the member opposite that we are dealing with declining enrolment and that we are providing the appropriate amount of funding based on the children in our schools. Our curve, child funding, has gone up.

MR. ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, we heard from the Chignecto-Central Regional School Board that because of declining enrolment they would have to lose 18 teaching positions. People who work for Chignecto-Central Regional are very nervous waiting for the minister's axe to fall: 58.1 members of the NSTU have their heads on the chopping block, 54.6 members of the NSGEU are nervously awaiting their pink slips, and 20.5 members of CUPE are shaking in their boots.

Despite the outcry from this school board, the minister says the cuts are not to affect the classroom. Now that the onus is on the minister, how does she plan to do this?

MS. JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, we are making sure that the resources that we're providing to our school boards match the needs of our students. Per capita funding has gone up; enrolment has gone down. There are 361 more teachers teaching today than there were 10 years ago - and 10 years ago we had 30,000 more students. We are making sure that our ratio stays low - it is low and for the last three years it was 12.9, 12.9, 12.8.

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

PREM. - CHIGNECTO-CENT. REG. SCH. BD.: ADVICE - TIMING

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Dexter Government announced its intentions to block the Chignecto-Central board's decision to eliminate librarians. The government's decision to step in and offer guidance came after weeks of gut-wrenching decision-making at the board level. After taking more than \$60 million out of public education, the government has downloaded a lot of tough decisions to the boards. For months the only word from this government to the boards was that they would be getting less money and more responsibility.

My question to the Premier is, why did the Premier wait until yesterday to offer advice and support instead of offering it months ago?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, somebody has to stand up for the librarians and for the children and we're happy to do it.

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, the Premier may find this to be some game. There are hard-working Nova Scotians who are accepting the responsibility that they were elected to do and that is to deliver programs to students across this province. To have a Premier download to them a budget and when they respond to it, him not liking it and interfere, the simple question he should be standing up and telling us is why didn't he offer advice sooner instead of waiting to the eleventh hour?

Last night the Chignecto-Central Regional School Board said they welcomed the advice from the government. They wished the offer had come sooner. But they also said, offering advice with no additional money will mean cuts are still going to happen. My question to the Premier is, since you've made it clear you won't provide additional funding, what programs will your government tell this board to cut?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, what we're doing is trying to give them the assistance they need in order to be able to get through their budget process so they can make decisions that ensure the money we give them actually gets to the children, the people it's supposed to benefit. That is the purpose of the advice that we are giving them.

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, I don't know of a single elected school board member who runs for office who does not want to put the money that comes to them in front of children. I'm not exactly sure where the Premier comes from on that. Why is he insinuating that hard-working Nova Scotians, who run for school board office, are doing it for some other motive? The motive is simple, the motive is for students.

When you remove \$60 million from public education, job cuts are unavoidable, yet the Minister of Education said, as more boards make budgetary decisions to cope with funding shortfalls, more jobs will not be cut. How is that possible? We're asking boards to do more with less. Yesterday the Halifax board announced that job cuts were likely coming. My question to the Premier is, how will the Premier avoid the mistake he made with the Chignecto board and what advice is he offering to the Halifax Regional School Board to make sure they're not faced with this crisis next week?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, in this province we're going through changes in our education system. We have lost a considerable amount of students out of that system, some 30,000. Actually the number is more now if you look at what has happened over the last 10 or 11 years. What that means is that the money that we have has to be spent in a way that is responsible and continuing to spend and just write a blank cheque is not a responsible thing to do. We have increased the per-student funding.

For example, look at the Chignecto-Central school board, which has been the subject of the discussion, their enrolment dropped by 8 per cent yet their per-student funding went up by 12 per cent. This is responsible decision making.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester North.

EDUC. - KIDS NOT CUTS PETITION: MIN. - SIGNATORY CONFIRM

HON. KAREN CASEY: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Education has slashed funding to education and has turned a blind eye to the negative impact her cuts are having on our classrooms. Parents, students, community members and teachers are concerned about the impact this minister's cuts are having on public schools all across the province. The Nova Scotia Teachers Union represents over 10,000 teachers - members of the minister's own profession, I might add. The NSTU has a petition called, Kids Not Cuts, calling on the NDP Government to reinstate funding to public education. My question to the minister is, did she sign the petition?

HON. RAMONA JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, no.

MS. CASEY: Mr. Speaker, to date the petition now sits with more than 16,000 signatures. These signatures represent people who are worried about public education in the province. They represent people who are calling on the government to reverse the \$65 million cuts, and as an educator, an MLA, and a concerned community member, I was proud to sign that petition, as were all members of the Liberal caucus. We were also proud to sign the petition and promote it through our communities.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the minister is, how many of her NDP colleagues signed the Nova Scotia Teachers Union "Kids Not Cuts" petition?

MS. JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, we have got to look at the reality of the situation that we're dealing with: we have fewer students in our schools. We cannot be maintaining teachers where there are no children.

MS. CASEY: Mr. Speaker, on April 5th I read a resolution in this House calling on all members of the House to sign that petition, "Kids Not Cuts." The NDP caucus did not support that resolution, and we could hear many Noes coming from that side of the House.

Mr. Speaker, if the government supports students first, why did they not support the resolution and sign the petition "Kids Not Cuts"?

MS. JENNEX: Everyone on this side - this government supports our students in our schools, and we have a plan. We have a plan called Kids and Learning First. (Applause)

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

PREM. - N.B. PREM./N.S. PREM.: PROMISES - VALUE

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier. The Government of New Brunswick inherited a real deficit of \$722 million from the previous Liberal Government when they were elected. Still, in their campaign they had promised not to raise the HST there, and now, two years later, we know that they kept their promise.

Our Premier made a similar promise to the people of Nova Scotia despite the fact that he inherited a surplus, and I will table for the benefit of the House the message from the minister for the year ended 2009, which states that there was a surplus of \$19,700,000.

Still, unlike the Premier of New Brunswick, the Premier of Nova Scotia broke his promise. So my question to the Premier is, why is a promise from the Premier of New Brunswick worth more than a promise from the Premier of Nova Scotia?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, what the provincial government did prior to 2009 is they took program spending and they built it on false revenues. They built in escalators that meant that in every year after they left government there was going to be an accumulated deficit that would then be added to the debt. So they put in place a structural deficit that was going to cost the people of Nova Scotia \$1.4 billion. We had to pay that debt off in order to ensure that the people of Nova Scotia were not impoverished.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, the only deficit that that Premier has is a trust deficit. Whether it's in Education, whether it's in Health, or whether it's in Finance, that's the only true deficit over there - a deficit of trust. In New Brunswick, rather than break their promise and hose taxpayers, they actually cut expenses at the top, at the centre of government - rather than their approach, which is to cut at the front lines of our classrooms and our hospitals.

The most recent head count report of the Premier's own government - his own report on head count - shows that at the department level (Interruptions) The head count report of the NDP's own government shows that the number of employees at the centre of government grew by a plus 42 last year, a number that is remarkably close to the 41 librarians that are being cut this week, as we know, at the Chignecto-Central Regional School Board. So my question to the Premier is why is it okay to cut at the front lines of our schools and hospitals and then add 42 new people at the centre of government? - according to his own report which I will table for the benefit of the House.

THE PREMIER: Well, Mr. Speaker, that question went in a couple of different directions, so I will try to address them. First of all the Governments of New Brunswick have chosen over the last four years to add some \$3.3 billion to their deficit - to their debt, rather. That's a choice, one that we have rejected. With respect to the number of employees - and I think he was specifically referring to Education - I'll table for your information the

estimate-to-estimate comparison that shows that the number of employees in the Department of Education has gone from 295 to 194 over the last three years.

MR. BAILLIE: The comparison to the Province of New Brunswick is this - their Premier kept his promise and our Premier did not, that is a fact. Their Premier is staying true to his word, that he is cutting 624 positions from the centre of government as reported in the Halifax ChronicleHerald today - and I will table that for the benefit of the House of Assembly - unlike our Premier's own head count report, which shows Agriculture at plus 10, Economic and Rural Development and Tourism at plus 21, Finance at plus 12, and Labour and Advanced Education at plus 23.

My question to the Premier is, why do we have a "do as I say", not a "do as I do" Premier - when will he take his own advice and start keeping his promises at the centre of government instead of imposing them on others?

THE PREMIER: I suppose that we have to assume as a result of that that they would cut the Public Service to a much greater degree than we have. But the simple fact of the matter is that we have reduced the number of FTEs in provincial government by more than 400.

I would point out to the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party that as a result of the decisions made in New Brunswick, the net debt-to-GDP ratio in New Brunswick has increased while the one in Nova Scotia has gone down. In fact, New Brunswick will actually - I'll table this - exceed ours sometime this year.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester North.

**EDUC. - NSTU TAKE YOUR MLA TO SCHOOL DAY:
MIN - SUPPORT CONFIRM**

HON. KAREN CASEY: Mr. Speaker, on March 2nd the Nova Scotia Teachers Union organized a Take Your MLA to School Day. This was an important opportunity for MLAs to see the realities of our public education system. Members were invited to see first-hand the complexities of our classroom, and if members could not participate on that particular day the NSTU was very accommodating in organizing alternate dates. So my question to the minister is did she support the NSTU initiative?

HON. RAMONA JENNEX: I had the honour of being a classroom teacher for 30 years. (Applause) My colleagues, and I know colleagues opposite, participated in the Take Your MLA to School Day, and from all the reports that I've heard, every single person had an absolutely, well-received and informative time. So I thank all of the teachers that participated in take your MLA to work.

Unfortunately I did not participate, but after 30 years in the classroom I think I have a pretty good idea what children's learning looks like.

MS. CASEY: I also spent a fair number of years in the classroom, and I still felt I needed to go back to see what was going on today. (Applause)

Mr. Speaker, the needs of today's classroom are complex. Teachers are faced with a growing diversity of needs and fewer and fewer resources. Education assistants and supports for special needs students are being cut, and this is having a negative impact on all students and all teachers. The Nova Scotia Teachers Union Take Your MLA to School Day provided an opportunity for us, in this House, to see what teachers are dealing with on a daily basis. So my question to the minister is, although she says she did not participate, why did she not participate?

MS. JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, you know I have the opportunity of being in many schools in the Province of Nova Scotia. I feel that I am in an absolutely wonderful profession now, to be able to get into any school that I would like to see certain programs. I have watched Virtual School. I have watched skilled trades. I am in lots of schools all across the province and, unfortunately, I did not participate on the MLA Back to School Day because I was engaged in another meeting. Thank you.

MR. CASEY: Mr. Speaker, I did say in my earlier question that the NSTU was very accommodating and if an MLA had a commitment on that day, they could make an alternate arrangement, so I'm not sure that saying "I had another meeting" is a good enough excuse, but we'll let the NSTU and the members of the teaching profession judge that.

The Nova Scotia Teachers Union has organized two initiatives: Take Your MLA to School and Kids Not Cuts petition. We've heard today that, not only did the minister not participate, she has not openly said that she supports either one of those. So my question to the minister is, what message does this minister have for the NSTU and all of the teachers in this province, about her lack of participation, her lack of support in these two important initiatives?

MS. JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, I know that the NSTU has a few initiatives going but you know this government has a very big initiative going on, that is called Kids and Learning First. Part of that, we are working with the Nova Scotia Teachers Union to look at the life of a classroom teacher and how we can work together to make sure that they are providing the most effective service.

I hear from teachers saying that there is too much paperwork. We're working on that together. My initiative is, Kids and Learning First.

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

PREM.: FIRST CONTRACT ARBITRATION - CONSULTATIONS

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier. In The ChronicleHerald opinion piece today, Leanne Hachey, of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, explained that the business community needs a government that, I quote, “. . . is truly open to meaningful consultation in all areas of public policy; that its actions are in sync with its words. We need to know that outcomes aren't foregone conclusions.” I'll table that quote for the benefit of the House.

We know that's not what happened with the most recent round on first contract arbitration because the government, as we find out now, had precooked their preferred legislation long before the consultation ever began. My question to the Premier, in light of this evidence, will he now admit that the entire consultation was nothing but a sham?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, what happened, which is normal practice in government, is that materials come forward, draft legislation comes forward. The decision is then to send that out for consultation. You undergo a consultation, stakeholder sessions, in order to make sure you have all the input. Then all that material comes back, you decide on a final draft of legislation and then it goes forward for introduction. That's what happens in every case, as far as I know. Now it may be that the former government did things differently. Perhaps it was their decision to shoot first and ask questions later.

MR. BAILLIE: Well Mr. Speaker, that's very interesting because in this House on November 1, 2011 the Premier said, and I quote from Hansard:

“. . . we talked about the Labour Management Review Committee. We said it was a good idea, we said we didn't want to see what happened in the past, where legislation was introduced without any consultation, without any vehicle for study.”

Yet, now we know that the government had cooked up their bill long before they actually asked anyone's opinion and they cast aside the opinion of the CFIB, they cast aside the opinion of important employers like Michelin. They put them through a sham consultation. So my question to the Premier is, will he now apologize for putting all those important employers throughout Nova Scotia through a false sham consultation?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, what happened was exactly what I described in Hansard. I didn't know that I had said that in the past, but obviously I did, and that's exactly what happened. We had some draft legislation. We put it out through the LMRC to have consultations. They did. They came back; they reported back. They did not have specific recommendations, but they did provide us with the materials that they had received. All of the interest groups in Nova Scotia certainly had a full opportunity to examine the issue and to provide assistance and advice to the government.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, Ms. Hachey of the CFIB told reporters recently that, “. . . all the time and resources and money we spent . . .” and our member employers spent “. . . was all for not (sic)” It was clear the government knew what it wanted to do in advance, long before stakeholders were brought into the process. I hear the Premier’s answer to the previous question is no, he won’t apologize for causing them - these very employers who took the Premier at his word, spent time and money and came to the Legislature to express their opinion - if not today, when will he apologize to the employers of Nova Scotia for putting them through the wringer on his first contract arbitration sham process?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, of course we greatly respect all of the members of our business community. We deal with them on a daily basis. We work with them on many great projects to the benefit of the Province of Nova Scotia. We put in place a Labour Management Review Committee that was there for the purpose of consulting with them. That consultation took place. It took place in good faith, and it provided us with advice. We were then able to come back with what, in our judgment, was the right piece of legislation. That was a good bill. It’s a good law, it makes for a more stable environment, and it means that there will be an increase in productivity. Those things are all good for our economy.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

EDUC.: CUTS - EFFECTS

MR. ANDREW YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Education. The government refuses to admit that their \$60 million in cuts will negatively impact the classrooms. Well, Alexis Allen, the NSTU president, said, “Students WILL be affected by these cuts; there is no avoiding it. Our schools are being cut to the core resulting in larger classes, fewer supports, less time for individual attention and fewer courses to meet individual needs.” I’ll table that.

Would the Minister of Education please tell me, are the NSTU and Alexis Allen wrong?

HON. RAMONA JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, it is my job in this province to stand up for students, and that is what I’m doing.

MR. YOUNGER: No, Mr. Speaker, the minister is throwing the students under the bus. That’s what she’s doing. The Education Minister continues to insist that no jobs were lost because of the NDP’s attack on public education. Despite her insistence, Liz MacDonald, president of CUPE Local 5050, says, “Having just gone through a difficult round of cuts at the end of last school year (where we lost dozens and dozens of important, frontline workers . . .), parents need to become more informed and involved if we are to prevent even further cuts.” I’ll table that.

Mr. Speaker, is Liz MacDonald of CUPE wrong?

MS. JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to remind the member that our ratio is the lowest it has been for the last three years: 12.9. We are investing appropriately for our students. Our per-student funding has gone up, and it is at the highest it has ever been in this province.

MR. YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, if the ratios were as low as the minister suggested, she would not have had to raise the minimum class cap size this year, so we all know that she is misleading the House when she says that. This government is robbing our students of essential services. The Education Minister refuses to acknowledge this fact and just offers the talking points from the Premier's Office, which - when you look at the numbers that they provide - don't even reflect what the minister herself is saying. NSGEU disagrees with the government, too. President Joan Jessome says, "The province is basing its cuts to school boards . . ."

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable member for Dartmouth East has the floor.

MR. YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, President Joan Jessome says: "The province is basing its cuts to school boards on declining enrolment. But fewer students do not mean fewer needs. Educational assistants, administrative assistants and librarians need to be there when the students need them."

Furthermore, we all know that the 1-point something students per school, that her own department said is declined by, doesn't reduce the heating cost, the busing cost or any of those other fixed costs - so, Mr. Speaker, is Joan Jessome wrong?

MS. JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, when we provided the budget line for each of the school boards, we took into consideration fixed costs. We have not - there is declining enrolment in the province and we made sure the resources match the declining enrolment, also taking into consideration the fixed costs that school boards have.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle.

PREM. - CAP. HEALTH/NSGEU: NEGOTIATIONS - BIAS

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, as we all know, contract talks between the Capital District Health Authority and the NSGEU have broken down and we're less than two weeks away from a potential strike by 3,600 health care support workers. It's quite clear from the history that the NDP have a very close tie with big labour groups like the NSGEU. In 2010 the NDP were fined by Elections Nova Scotia because they failed to return \$45,000 from eight unions and one affiliate, and in 2006 the NSGEU

president used the union mailing list to endorse the NDP candidate in Halifax Clayton Park.

My question to the Premier is, how can patients trust the NDP Government not to favour its labour union friends who helped them get elected over patients' health care priorities?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, that preamble that was filled with so many accusations and falsehoods, I couldn't keep track of them all. The simple fact of the matter is there is a collective bargaining process, it is a difficult one. The parties have tried to reach an agreement, they're now into a countdown. The gravity of this situation is very high and I think what we need to understand is that over the coming 10 days there will be the necessity for these parties to get back to the table and try to find a resolution that provides the appropriate service to their patients and, of course, protects public health care in this district.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The word "falsehood" is unparliamentary. I would ask the honourable member if he would please retract that word in his statement.

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I understand that you can say it, you just can't do it. Is that the idea? Oh, no, it's the other way around - you can do it, you just can't say it. (Interruptions)

Mr. Speaker, I retract it.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, I think he challenged the Speaker there, I thought that was pretty impressive - thinks he's smarter than everybody else, because that continues to happen in many, many places. We're learning to expect that of the Premier of Nova Scotia.

The Premier didn't stand up for the people who relied on Metro Transit bus service for their life essentials - the public questions why they should believe that he would stand up against his union friends in health care. Are all the potential options to protect the patients, including back to work legislation, truly on the table for this NDP Premier in the event of a strike by health care workers in the Capital District Health Authority?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I think we well know the opinions of the Progressive Conservative Party on this matter. We know that they have always chosen the options that most infringe upon collective bargaining rights. We know that they are opposed to good faith bargaining, that they want to have only their way when it comes to the administration of health care. They don't want to listen to front-line health care workers, and we've experienced this. We experienced it through Bill No. 68 - and you'll remember Bill No. 68. That was when they wanted to impose a contract, take away the right for people to even meet to discuss a contract, and I remember the health care workers (Interruptions)

They said to us, Mr. Speaker, that Bill No. 68 was the worst thing that ever happened to them since the Liberals rolled their wages back.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, I like listening to the piece of fiction coming from the Premier here. The employer is well represented and the employees are well represented, but I can tell you that patients have no representation with this NDP Premier, because of his ties with union bosses of this province. Nova Scotia has the right to know what their elected officials will do to ensure that they have access to health care services that they deserve as a right.

Is the Premier going to tell his union boss friends to stand in the way of his responsibility to protect patient care or will he do the right thing? Will he actually do the right thing this time - because doing the right thing seems to be very hard for this Premier - to get the two groups back to the table? Will they go back to the table?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, you can be assured that we stand ready to assist the parties in any way that we can to facilitate an agreement. We're paying very close attention to this, because we want to ensure that patients in this district get the services that they need. We understand that this a difficult process, and of course, it's much easier for a majority government just to bring in legislation and to slam the door on any possibility of a good-faith agreement, but we have chosen not to do that.

Mr. Speaker, we are allowing the process to take its course, and we expect that reasonable people can come to a reasonable agreement.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

EDUC.: DIABETIC CHILDREN - SUPPORTS

MR. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, every parent sending their children to school in the Fall experiences stress. The stress for parents of young diabetic children increases exponentially, as they must also ensure that there are adequate supports in place to protect their children's health and well-being. While the Minister of Education has developed a policy for type 1 diabetics in the classroom to ensure these children are able to enjoy a quality education despite their chronic illness, the policy requires additional supports to be effective.

Given that this NDP Government has cut \$60 million out of public education, how will the minister ensure we won't have a situation similar to last September's, where parents are forced to remove young diabetic children from the classroom due to lack of support?

HON. RAMONA JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, every child who comes to school is supported appropriately, and in some cases we need to have a little bit of extra help with the

team associated with each child. Every child's situation with diabetes is a little bit different.

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, educational assistants and many boards support children with diabetes. Job losses for EAs do not make the needs of young children with diabetes go away. In fact, it makes the management of the disease that much more challenging. If educational assistants are stretched too thin and teachers in the classroom are left with inadequate supports, they may miss triggers in diabetics that suddenly present themselves, especially in very young children who do not fully understand the disease.

How will the minister ensure her type 1 diabetes policy can be followed when boards are reducing the number of EAs as a result of NDP budget cuts?

MS. JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, the health and safety of every child is paramount to every teacher in this province. When a child comes to school with any form of specific need that needs to have support, then the parent and the teacher and the school work together to have a plan. So each case is different and each child is supported.

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, all week we have heard the minister justify massive cuts to education under the guise of declining enrolment, so here's a little fact for the minister. The incidence of juvenile type 1 diabetes is rising across the country at a rate of 5 per cent a year; the greatest problem is this rate being in children 5 to 9 years. The minister can't continue to live in the fairytale world she wants. The challenges associated with ensuring young children with type 1 diabetes in the classroom have the necessary supports are, unfortunately, not declining, in fact, they are increasing. Given budget cuts to education, will the minister reassure parents of young diabetics that ongoing adequate support will be available for their children this September - yes or no?

MS. JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, I can answer that with confidence, we will have supports for children who need support. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West on a new question.

HEALTH & WELLNESS: CAP. HEALTH STRIKE - BARGAINING RESUME

MR. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, yesterday Nova Scotians heard of the potential impacts of a strike at Capital Health, with 9,000 people currently on the wait list for surgery and with the potential for cancellation of 104 surgeries a day, waits will only get worse. This district not only provides health care services to the residents of the district, it is a pivotal site for the delivery of health care to residents throughout the province.

My question to the Minister of Health and Wellness, when will this minister urge both parties to get back to the bargaining table so an agreement can be reached prior to midnight, April 25th?

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for that very important question. I and the Premier have both been, certainly, encouraging that very thing to occur.

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, patients are being moved now; cancellations, if they aren't already occurring, will be very soon. This is a government that boasts, at every chance, that they are improving emergency room care, that they have improved wait times, yet patients and potential patients continue to wait, wondering whether this government plans to act or sit on the sideline.

My question to the minister, how long will patients have to be inconvenienced before this minister decides to take action to avert a probable strike?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I think most members here would be aware that yesterday Capital District held a press conference and they have been communicating with the public to allow the public to have a better understanding of what the current situation is and how the process will unfold in this very important period.

Mr. Speaker, as the Premier said yesterday and again today, the best place to have a resolution is at the bargaining table and we would encourage the parties to return to the bargaining table to find a solution. Thank you.

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, residents of Capital District will experience longer wait times. Nova Scotians will experience longer wait times. A potential strike at Capital Health would bring everything to a grinding halt quickly, causing disruptions throughout the entire health care system. Can the minister please indicate whether it is her government's plan to send this issue to binding arbitration, just like she did for the nurses at Capital Health?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Capital District Health Authority had an opportunity to outline the various processes that they will undergo during this period. Once again, we encourage the people to settle their differences at the bargaining table.

I want to assure people that the health and safety of residents of this province and, indeed, other provinces - because the QEII in particular does provide services to residents of other provinces - are of the utmost concern for myself and the Premier and this government. My deputy has been in contact with other provinces and we will continue to work very hard to support the parties in reaching a settlement. Thank you.

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

COM. SERV. - EAST PRESTON DAY CARE: MIN./JUSTICE MIN. ANSWERS

MR. ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Minister of Community Services. Yesterday, the Ministers of Community Services and Justice were asked very specific questions by my colleagues, and I'm going to table those. Those questions were about what they and their departments knew about the daycare in East Preston.

Mr. Speaker, as members of this House and as parents and as grandparents, our first priority should be the safety and well-being of our children. Many times today we heard the Minister of Education saying the safety of children was a priority. This Minister of Community Services did nothing, nothing, for over seven months to notify the parents or the current board about the situation. This minister gave no information to this House, she has stuck to her talking points and she has covered up the truth about what's going on. Will the minister commit to table specific, detailed answers to the questions that were put to her by noon tomorrow?

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, I have been absolutely clear, I have given the facts. Number one, children are of great concern, any issues surrounding children and their parents, we do that every day in Community Services. That is what we have dedicated ourselves to. I've also been very clear on the fact that I tabled three articles that clearly stated that the daycare knew about the allegations for well over 10 years, thank you.

MR. MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table from the Registry of Joint Stock Companies, the list of the Board of Directors of the East Preston Day Care, which have changed at least six times in the last 10 years. So it is the current board that this minister failed to communicate with. This minister will not tell the House what she did, this minister will not tell us when she learned about the full seriousness of this problem. What has she meant by the words "we did an internal investigation"? This minister hasn't told us why we needed an internal investigation. This minister didn't say whether there was any consideration of the impact on the province's expense of lawsuits if they warned anybody about what was taking place in East Preston.

Mr. Speaker, for the sake of the children, this minister should have erred on the side of caution and told the current board what was going on. Parents of these kids deserve answers. What is the minister covering up, what makes her duck every question, what is it that she's covering up?

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite and his Party do not understand the role of Community Services and the role of the RCMP. (Interruption) The role of the RCMP is to investigate (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable Minister of Community Services has the floor.

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: The role of the RCMP (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. I'm not going to repeat myself continuously when I call order. When I say order, I'd like to see order in the Chamber so we can have a relatively calm parliamentary debate.

The honourable Minister of Community Services has the floor.

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: The role of the RCMP, Mr. Speaker, is to investigate historical allegations. These allegations are over 40 years old. The role of Community Services is to investigate any current allegations and as I have said in this House, over and over, we followed the same protocol as that Party would to investigate any current allegations.

MR. MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, nobody is questioning what the role of the RCMP is but I do know that we would have called the Board of Directors of East Preston Day Care and made sure that we erred on the side of caution for the safety of the children that are there. (Applause)

Mr. Speaker, my final supplementary is to the Minister of Justice. Would the Minister of Justice, who didn't give any answers as well yesterday, he wouldn't tell (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. Order. Pardon me? Pardon me? Do not flout the Chair. When I say order, I mean order in this Chamber. So please respect the rules of the Canadian parliamentary system; when the Speaker says order, that means order. Now we'll continue with the question that was for the Minister of Justice?

MR. MACLEOD: Yes.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Justice has the floor.

MR. MACLEOD: I didn't ask my question.

MR. SPEAKER: You didn't ask it yet? Go ahead.

The honourable member for Cape Breton West has the floor.

MR. MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate your calmness in the Chair today. My question is to the Minister of Justice.

The Minister of Justice, when he was asked the questions yesterday by my colleague, the member for Inverness, he wouldn't give answers about what he knew, when he knew it, or what he did about what he learned. My question to the Minister of Justice is, will he commit to answering the questions we have tabled here in the House today, by noon tomorrow?

HON. ROSS LANDRY: Mr. Speaker, I want to assure the House that this Minister of Justice, that this government, is committed and focused on the safety of all Nova Scotians, whether they are children or adults. Unequivocally, there is no question in my mind of that commitment and I spent a lifetime fulfilling that. I also want to reiterate in regard to the question being asked, in relation to the answers that I have heard in the House, I have the utmost respect and confidence and I clearly understand the Minister of Community Services in what she has conveyed. I concur 100 per cent with her actions and with her answers, and I'm appalled that you can't comprehend that.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston.

SNSMR - MUN. MOU: BREACH - EXPLAIN

HON. KEITH COLWELL: Mr. Speaker, it has been a year since this NDP Government broke a promise to municipalities and tore up the MOU service agreement. The MOU included an agreement where the province would gradually assume more responsibility in education funding. My question is to the Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations. Knowing that there would be \$65 million in NDP education cuts, why did the minister further jeopardize education by breaking the MOU last year?

HON. JOHN MACDONELL: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question from the member opposite. That member, if his memory is good enough, would recognize that he was part of the Liberal Government and as a Cabinet Minister actually put the service exchange in place, actually imposed those education costs on municipal units. That is the system we inherited. It was a cost-neutral system; in other words, municipalities (Interruptions)

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

AN HON. MEMBER: Did you hear that? Come on!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. I hear it on all sides of the House, all day today. It's on all sides of the House today; it's not just on one side of the House, okay? What is very difficult in here - the time allotted for the Oral Question Period has expired. I will ask the honourable member to sit down, please. Three minutes? I said 3:47 p.m.

I want the members to actually sit down. It's becoming very heated in the Chamber today, so I'd ask the members to take a deep breath so that we can continue to debate in the

Chamber in a very good, parliamentary way. I'd ask all the members in here to do that today for the remainder of Question Period today and think about it over the weekend, if you want to have good parliamentary debate in the Chamber, without chirping back and forth on all sides of the House.

The honourable Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations has the floor.

MR. MACDONELL: Mr. Speaker, the situation that municipalities find themselves in on the costs that have incurred from 15 years ago, under a previous Liberal Government, was a mechanism that was determined to be cost-neutral for them. They probably don't agree with having any costs imposed on them, but these are not costs that were imposed by this government. They do carry a share, and the member opposite will remember his comments last year saying this would cause an increase in taxes. As a matter of fact, tax rates have gone down in the HRM and basically across the province. We're quite pleased with the result.

MR. COLWELL: Mr. Speaker, I was here in 1993 when the province was broke and a service exchange was put in place. This minister and this government broke an MOU that was negotiated with the municipalities. I believe they have to ensure the municipalities would have to shoulder more increased cost, and that is what we're hearing from the municipalities. The NDP Government has cut \$65 million from schools at the same time that they have downloaded an increase in educational costs on the municipalities. Has the minister considered revisiting his decision on mandatory contributions of municipalities regarding education?

MR. MACDONELL: Mr. Speaker, we're not reconsidering that.

MR. COLWELL: Mr. Speaker, it is clear in the case of the province downloading responsibility onto the municipalities that, indeed, there will be higher taxes in times to come as a result of the cancellation of this MOU.

The minister turned his back on the MOU last year and now the NDP is imposing \$65 million in cuts - a double hit to education from the NDP, and it's a further strain . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order. Order, please. It's one of those days. The time allotted for the Oral Question Period has expired.

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order regarding an exchange between myself and the Premier during Question Period today. The forecast increase in net debt for the Province of Nova Scotia for the year just ended is \$462.9 million.

MR. SPEAKER: That's not a point of order.

MR. BAILLIE: The Premier stated in his . . .

MR. SPEAKER: It's not a point of order. It's a difference between two members. It's not a point of order.

MR. BAILLIE: I'm referring to the . . .

MR. SPEAKER: It's not a point of order. It's a difference between two members in the Chamber.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. During Question Period, the member for Lunenburg West was clearly heard by members on this side of the House as using what is deemed very unparliamentary language toward members of our caucus. I would ask that you have the member - rather than repeat the words, I would hope the member would take the opportunity to retract the comments he was making that were clearly heard from our side, our caucus, and the Progressive Conservative caucus as well.

MR. SPEAKER: There's so much noise in here today that it's hard to hear, but I will check with Hansard and ask them to have a look into it. I will check with Hansard first. (Interruptions) No, I'm not. I will check with Hansard first.

The honourable member for Argyle.

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, on the point of order. I don't want to belabour this one too much longer, but we heard it very clearly as well from the member for Lunenburg West, so you do have a whole bunch of people that did hear something blurted out over there that probably shouldn't have come.

MR. SPEAKER: Yes, I will take that under advisement. I will have a look and report back to the House at my earliest convenience, but I will check with Hansard and the recording and Legislative Television to see if there's anything recorded. Thank you.

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, would you please call the order of business, Government Motions.

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, I move that you do now leave the Chair and that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole House on Supply unto Her Majesty.

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

MS. DIANA WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to have the opportunity today to be speaking as we go into Supply this afternoon. As you know, this provides an opportunity for members of the House to speak about issues that are pressing in their riding or that are of great interest to their constituents or that are of a larger interest to all of the province.

The issue I want to address today is the issue of a wilderness area in the province, known as Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lakes. That is a wilderness area that was created in 2009. The process began in 2007 under the Progressive Conservative Government and did follow a rather concerted campaign in the Clayton Park area to draw the provincial government's attention to the need to preserve the Crown lands that rest directly behind Bayers Lake Business Park.

As I imagine all members know, Bayers Lake Business Park is not a very attractive wilderness area. It has been basically paved over, trees have been taken out, and it's not very people-friendly or walking-friendly. But for the residents of Clayton Park who live very close to that area, there is something that helps and that is that there is a beautiful wilderness area directly adjacent to it. At the time of my election in 2003, we began to look at that area because people in my riding were asking when the fast pace of development was going to slow down in the Clayton Park West area. In fact, they wondered when it would jump the highway and the work would begin on the other side of Highway No. 102.

Looking into it, I discovered that the land back there was largely owned by the Crown, that there were over 4,000 acres of Crown land, and I saw a particular opportunity to create a wilderness area, really on the doorstep of our most densely populated provincial riding. In fact, it isn't just the people of Clayton Park who will benefit from this wilderness area, but also the people who live in Hammonds Plains and in Timberlea because they also back onto this beautiful area. I was looking over some of the information about it that was contained on the Department of Environment's Web site and they describe it as a near urban outdoor education and recreational area and, again, it received really resounding support from the community when it came time to look at preserving that area.

In trying to bring it to the attention of the government at the time, I brought in a Private Member's Bill in 2004. That was supported by the Ecology Action Centre, the Halifax North West Trails Association, the Halifax Field Naturalists, Canoe Kayak Nova Scotia, and many members of our community, including Chris Miller who is now the director at CPAWS, the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society. So we had very strong

support from environmentalists and from neighbourhood associations and we pushed to have that area preserved.

Mr. Speaker, the reason it has some bearing today is that there's actually some new, I would say opportunities, and perhaps a possible chance that we might miss an opportunity in this area if there is not action taken by HRM and by the Department of Environment. So I thought I would take the opportunity today to not only remember the well-fought campaign on the community level to have this area designated as a special wilderness area and, in fact, through the province's action, create the largest urban wilderness park in Canada, which is something to be very proud of in our city.

What is happening more recently, Mr. Speaker, is that the land in Bayers Lake, the land that is still owned by the city, is to be sold for an expansion of that, I guess that business park, it never really was an industrial park as was originally intended. So it's intended to be expanded, in fact, almost double in size. The city put up for sale something like 180 acres which would just about double the size of Bayers Lake and they sought developers who would be interested in purchasing that land and moving forward with more development similar to what is there now - more stores and more retail principally.

Mr. Speaker, the city entered into a purchase and sale agreement with one developer and the concern that we have, and I believe the province should share, was that the city, HRM, the municipality, put the entire amount of land that they owned, that borders on the wilderness area of Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lakes, they put all of that land on the chopping block for sale and they didn't consider the impact that having that type of development, right up to the boundary of a wilderness park, they didn't consider the negative impact that would have. All of the ecologists and environmentalists who have looked at that say that there would be tremendous runoff and a real threat to the pristine nature of the many lakes and wetlands and wilderness that are part of the 3,300 acres that the province, you know, very generously chose to set aside for future generations as a wilderness preserve.

For that reason, I think the Department of Environment had every reason to be interested and to be concerned that HRM was going to sell all of their lands in that area, rather than setting any of it aside to both buffer and protect Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lakes and also to add to the land that the province had put forth and really chose to set aside for future generations.

I think that in speaking of that, it is important to note that HRM had actually led the way, and in many ways helped to urge and support the province in making the designation of Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lakes, which was, in fact, the first wilderness area - no, one of three that the Tories brought forth during their time.

They were very slow in expanding the wilderness areas that were set up first under the Liberal Government in the 1990s. Thirty-one large properties in the province were set

aside during that time, under a Liberal Government, then, for the first four or five years of the Progressive Conservative Government in early 2000, nothing at all happened and there were no lands added to that area. I can think of only three that were done under the Progressive Conservative's time, but they did set the 12 per cent goal of protecting lands. When they announced Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lakes, they said this was part of the 12 per cent allotment that would go towards that.

The role of HRM, though, was that in their regional planning exercise, which was an extensive exercise, they designated a number of areas or determined that a number of areas around the HRM should be set aside as regional parks. In the consultation at that time, all of the groups that I've mentioned before, the local groups and the Ecology Action Centre and others, had pushed for a regional park in the area of Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lakes. Again, I say that is exactly on the edge of Bayers Lake Business Park and within walking distance of literally thousands of residents of HRM.

I know the member for Hammonds Plains-Upper Sackville will appreciate that too - the Blue Mountain portion is right in the Hammonds Plains area; in fact, Maskwa Aquatic Club, I believe, is also in the Hammonds Plains area. I think Maskwa has 50 acres that may someday be part of the wilderness, but they are actually custodians of that land and it is adjacent as well. That portion that Maskwa owns or manages - leases, I guess - has been set aside, not included in the 3,300 acres that were given as a preserve.

The area is precious, it's going to, I think, show that government had tremendous foresight in setting aside that land because of the intense development around it. There have been a couple of threats to that area as we've gone forward. One of them is that HRM has not set proper boundaries for their regional park, which they set out in principle and said, we'd like to have a regional park there. In their maps in the regional plan they gave an outline of where they would have a regional park, but they have taken no steps to acquire the private lands that were in that regional park area - and they are some of the best lands. They border on lakes like Quarry Lake and Susies Lake. They are in private ownership now and the city had said early on that they would intend, over time, to acquire those lands and add them to their regional park. They also have the lands that they owned on the Bayers Lake side, which would add significantly to the lands that were set aside.

As I said earlier, last summer they set out all of the lands that HRM owned, for sale, and they entered into a purchase and sale agreement for the entire package of land that was left in their business park. By so doing, they missed the opportunity to create a big buffer and not only a big buffer for the environmental impacts on the park, but also a big buffer that could add to the wilderness area. The area that is about to be sold and brought under, I guess, further development, more paving and more retail, actually includes some trails, particularly for mountain bikers, Madam Speaker. The mountain-bike community has worked hard to put trails in that area and I know it is city-owned land, I realize it was never intended to be, for a long term, parkland, but they would certainly like to see the boundaries of that park extended to protect some of the parkland that they have enjoyed

over the last number of years - and so would the environmentalists, who feel that the type of development we see in Bayers Lake would be detrimental to the ecological health of the lakes and wilderness area that the province has set aside.

It's really of intense interest to the province - I hope they're paying attention - and I have over the last number of months had a couple of e-mails back and forth with the Department of Environment asking that they get involved and that they encourage HRM to come forward and follow through with their regional park plan, which would, in fact, have designated some of that surrounding land that they are now in the process of selling; they would have put it aside and added it to the land that the province is given.

I'm very concerned that this purchase and sale is going to go right up to the edge of the lands that the province has designated and will have a detrimental effect. The only positive thing right now from the sale of this land is that it will open up a trailhead so that the public can actually get in there, have a parking spot, and a designated entry.

One of the problems we have right now is that since 2009, when the park was actually announced, everybody was very excited but there are no designated points of entry that you can get into the park. One area that people like to go in is by parking along Highway No. 102, on the shoulder, and walking into the lakes, but that is obviously very dangerous, Madam Speaker, to stop on that busy highway near Bayers Lake and to have to pull out again, is very dangerous. It's actually a prohibited area, you're not supposed to park there.

The second way you can get in is by parking at Kent, the building supply store, in their parking lot and walking in behind their building. They have been pretty good about people coming in, but they're somewhat concerned; it is going over private lands to access the park.

What certainly is needed is a proper trailhead and a good place for parking so that people have an access point and we can actually start to have many more people begin to enjoy the park, far above the numbers that are currently able to get in and out of there because frankly, Madam Speaker, if you don't have a guide or somebody to take you in the first time, you won't find your way and I think it's imperative that we have that opening.

Now the city has said that they will provide a trailhead when the lands are sold, that that will be a designation, that whoever buys the land will set aside a certain number of acres and that will become - probably not very many acres - the trailhead.

What I'm asking is that the Department of Environment also get involved to encourage HRM to put more land that they currently own towards this park, towards their regional park as they committed in the regional plan, and towards helping to protect the area that we've put out.

Again, when the province went forward and actually announced the Blue Mountain Birch-Cove Lakes Wilderness Area it was interesting that the HRM took pleasure in saying that they had led the way. There was a quote, actually, from the Mayor, from Peter Kelly, saying, "I'm very pleased with the province's collaborative approach and support for HRM's regional plan," 'said Mayor Peter Kelly.' "This will help us move forward with HRM's plans for a regional park in the area." That was said at the very first announcement of a wilderness area, and that was in October 2007.

The difficulty is that HRM has not moved on this file at all and, in fact, there have been development pressures coming in through the regional planning committee. A group of landowners in that area, rather than sitting back waiting to have their land acquired at what would be the proper market value, have actually joined together and tried to jack up the value of their land, which is really unfair to the people of Halifax because we have a commitment from HRM that a regional park will be there.

My concern today is that all of the good work in creating this beautiful wilderness area for the use of people in years to come may be compromised both by development pressures along Highway No.102 where there are private landowners, that HRM has not sought to acquire their lands, and has not even worked hard to continue to keep their price down by not allowing it to be developed.

So Madam Speaker, I think that this is an area of great concern to all of us even though it's a good news story for the city, thank you.

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

HON. DAVID WILSON: Thank you Madam Speaker. It's always a privilege to stand in the House, especially to talk about your community or the area you represent. As the member opposite just spoke, I'd like to just briefly describe some of the organizations and some of the work that's being done in my community around protecting lands, ensuring that we have green space within our community.

Sackville, of course, was created many years ago, but a real burst in population was in the early 1970s when the province began to build houses and development out in the Sackville area. During that construction time a lot of destruction had happened to the lakes in the area, especially First Lake, which at the time was very clean. There was a campground on one end of the lake, there were beaches. After the development, with a lot of the runoffs, the protection wasn't in place during those construction years of the subdivisions around First Lake. Unfortunately, that lake was severely polluted at the time and over the years, with many organizations and individuals, the hard work they've put in to clean up First Lake and protect Second Lake, I must say now we have a much better ecosystem around both lakes.

Some of those groups have worked extremely hard in that area, of course the Sackville Rivers Association. We all know, and hopefully all members know, the important work that they've done over the years to rejuvenate the Sackville River and not only do they just concentrate on that, they work within all the ecosystems in our community and outside. Walter Regan, the president of the association, has worked tirelessly for many, many years to try to improve the environmental impact, or the environment around our watershed in Sackville and the communities around that.

Another group that has worked extremely hard is the Second Lake park association. It was created in 1998 with an emphasis on protecting the lands around Second Lake from development. It was to their pleasure back in, I believe it was 1999, 694 acres that were surrounding Second Lake were moved from what was then the Department of Housing; the Department of Housing moved that land under that department over to the Department of Natural Resources and that was to hopefully protect it in the future. Over the last 15 to 20 years, that's what the community has worked towards. Over the last almost nine years that I've been elected, I've moved and worked to ensure that that has happened around Second Lake.

A number of years ago we were able to add about 75 acres to that portion, to over 700 acres of protected land, right in the heart of the community of Sackville, which is really a lot of homes that are surrounding First and Second Lakes. So it's important that we continue to work with groups like the Second Lake park association, Sackville Rivers Association, and another group, Friends of First Lake, Madam Speaker, who have worked extremely hard to protect the land around First Lake. So those groups all work together to ensure that we have the green spaces and that we protect the watershed system that we have in our community, and our government will continue to work with them, in the future, to move in the direction to protecting that land.

I look forward to the future and some of the commitments that we're going to be able to bring forward to ensuring that that land is actually protected in the future, Madam Speaker. I know it's important to a lot of the community members and residents of my community to ensure that we protect our land. That's why we have a commitment as a government to protect 12 per cent of the land in Nova Scotia. We're working extremely hard, throughout all kinds of communities in Nova Scotia, trying to ensure that we reach that target. I believe we're at about 9 per cent now.

So we're well on our way to reaching that goal and I think Nova Scotians appreciate the effort of not only the government, but organizations within the communities across the province who are working to achieve that goal. The associations I've mentioned, like Sackville Rivers Association, Friends of First Lake, the Second Lake park association, they're just three of, I'm sure, hundreds and hundreds of organizations that are doing that work in communities across the province, ensuring that we have green space amongst the development that we see has happened in the province to date.

So, Madam Speaker, with those few words I look forward to continue to support organizations throughout the province, but especially in my community, that are working extremely hard to ensure we minimize any damage we do to the environment. (Applause)

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

MR. ZACH CHURCHILL: Madam Speaker, it's always a pleasure to stand in my place and discuss issues that I know are on the thoughts of many Nova Scotians, inside this Chamber and out. We've had a lot of talk recently in this Chamber around education, and I know members on this side of the House have had to sit and listen to members of the government talk about how much they value our education system, how much they're investing in it, and how much support our youth are getting. However, when you speak with teachers or educational professionals, parents, and students, we're not getting that message from them, Madam Speaker. What has happened is we've had a government that, while they say they are investing in education and value education, unlike previous governments, is a government that is actually taking millions and millions of dollars out of the system. It's having a direct and meaningful and tangible impact on the classroom experience of our students and on the learning outcomes that I think we're going to be seeing in the province.

One of the big issues I have with how this debate has unfolded is that the government continuously stands up and presents the argument that, well, we need to cut money because enrolments have gone down in the province. The government has cited the fact that there were more students in the system 10 years ago than there are now. I've seen the Minister of Finance present a graph that shows enrolment going down and investment in education going up.

The problem I have with that is it's a misleading graph, because what that graph doesn't take into consideration is that just because enrolment has gone down in the Province of Nova Scotia doesn't mean that the cost of educating our young people has. You look at 10 years ago, and children who were considered to be bad kids in our classrooms, who were sent home - we are starting to realize now that these youth, these kids, actually have learning disabilities. They have challenges. They need support in our education system.

What has happened over the course of the last 10 years is that funding has gone up to address that very real need in our classrooms. But instead of recognizing that, this government continuously chooses to show everyone that graph and talk about how increased funding to education is a bad thing. I'm sorry, but the fact that enrolment has gone down does not mean that the cost of educating our young people has.

It doesn't mean that, because now we know that children who we thought were problem children, perhaps, in a classroom, who we sent to detention, who we sent home, back to their parents - sometimes back to very dangerous situations at home - we know that

these children can actually succeed and be better students and then become more successful adults if they have very specific supports in place to help them.

What the cuts of our education system are already doing in a very real and tangible way is impacting the supports we have in place for those kids who need support the most. Those children who need support the most in our education system are being affected the most by these cuts. I think that's a very, very sad thing for these children, obviously, but it's also a very dangerous thing for the future of our province. We've seen that increasing investment in supports for these youth is taking individuals who might otherwise end up being on community services support later on in life, not contributing to the local economy - we've seen that these supports can actually help them become successful in school, gain confidence about themselves, believe in themselves a bit more, and become successful adolescents and adults who are contributing to our economy and our society.

I'm incredulous that this government has taken that whole component out of this conversation, to be honest. For a government that says they care about students more than anybody else and that they've invested more than anybody else, while they cut millions of dollars out of our system, to not recognize the impact that those cuts are having on the most vulnerable and at-risk youth in the classroom is shameful, to say the least.

If we're going to sit in this Chamber and stand in this Chamber and have a real and meaningful dialogue around education and where we want our province to be in the future, we can't disregard this issue. We can't say that because enrolment is going down, we need to cut funding. That's not the case, right? It's not the case, and instead of actually engaging in a meaningful and real dialogue about these things, this government has chosen to push an incredible amount of spin out on the public and say, well, because enrolment has gone down and past governments messed up and increased funding to education, we now need to fix that problem.

I will stand in this Chamber and say that I am proud of past governments that increased funding to education, because I think every government that comes into this province and eventually leads this province, I think, will be judged primarily on how they treat our education system. Our education system is the absolute foundation of who we are as a people, it's the foundation of our economy, it's the foundation of the kind of society we want to have. In matters of health, an educated society is a healthier one. I think that, as time will tell, this government's record on education is going to be plain to see.

For a government to stand up in this House and say we've done a better job than everybody else, completely disregards the facts around this issue, completely disregards what parents are saying, what students are saying, what teachers are saying. I think we really need to change how we discuss this issue here in the House and in the public. I really do encourage this government to actually have the courage to stand up and have an honest dialogue about what's happening in our classrooms.

I've spoken with parents in my constituency, whose children are on the autism spectrum, whose children - even three to five years ago - were doing very poorly. They weren't succeeding. They weren't able to function in an operational way in the classroom. These children in past years have actually seen an incredible amount of success because we've identified a lot of the issues around, especially, children on the autism spectrum and provided focused and targeted resources to helping them. The success rates of these children has been growing because of increased investment in education.

As I said, they're feeling more confident in themselves, they're becoming better students and we know that that will lead to them becoming more successful adults. What I've heard recently from parents, who have seen these successes in previous years, is that already, in the last couple of years, because of the cuts to our education system, the cuts to the resources that those children need in our classrooms, their children have actually regressed, they've regressed, they've gone back to where they were before.

These are the real and dangerous implications of the cuts that this government is putting on our education system. To have a Premier and a Minister of Education stand up and say this is somehow the school board's fault, I think it defies logic. It defies logic. Anyone who is paying attention to this debate, anyone who's being affected by cuts to the classroom knows that school boards are doing what they can with the money that they have. When you cut \$65 million out of the education system, it's not the school board's fault if learning outcomes in various regions start changing.

The responsibility lies completely and solely with our Premier, the Minister of Education and this NDP Government. If this is going to be a government that does care about the future of this province, that believes in bringing us forward to new heights of success, you don't do that by gutting our education system, period. The only way that we'll move forward as a province, the only way our economy will become more competitive, the only way our people will become more successful, is if we invest first and foremost in our young people and our education system and then the teachers and educators and professionals that are making that education system work. To date, that's not what has happened.

We've seen this actually carry over into the post-secondary education system as well. This is a government who, while in Opposition, championed the cause of post-secondary students, but what has happened now, there has actually been an attack on our post-secondary education system as well. We have taken \$75 million-plus out of our post-secondary education system.

What that means, how that's going to affect our system is, one, it's going to make education more unaffordable because the cost of educating people is going to go up. That's going to be borne on parents and on students, on family members and it also means that the quality of our education system's going to be put in jeopardy, at a time when we need our post-secondary system in particular to be producing greater results for the province. We

have a real opportunity here in the Province of Nova Scotia to be a centre of excellence for Canada, to really set the bar when it comes to our universities and colleges, and to be a place that actually recruits young, bright minds from all over the country and beyond - all over the world - to come and educate themselves here.

What message are we sending to our students, to our parents, and to students and parents outside of the province and country, when they are looking at a government that is actually stripping funding to that system? It's not a very good message.

I realize the government has put some energy into improving our affordability measures. As a former student leader who actually pushed for a lot of those programs and funding, I will stand here and be honest; I know those programs will have an impact to a certain level on the amount of debt that students are forced to pay back upon graduation. Where we're missing the boat here is that the upfront costs of post-secondary education matter as well.

The quality of our education system matters as well, and when you strip the core funding, it's going to impact both of those things. Ancillary fees will go up because universities are going to be forced to look at other ways to fund their institutions so they can try to provide the quality of education that they want to. That means costs are going up for students and it means that students who otherwise might not be able to, will be forced to take out some debt.

There's a problem with the way we've actually looked at our universities here in the Province of Nova Scotia. Instead of recognizing the fact that we have so many - we have 11 post-secondary universities here - instead of recognizing the value that they are to the province, instead of recognizing the potential that they present for the province to be a centre of innovation, creativity for the whole country, we are still asking ourselves, should we have so many universities? Should we get rid of some? Should we amalgamate some?

If this were any other place in the world, I'm sure that any government that was overseeing our post-secondary education system would say, that's such a great thing to have, so many universities in so many different regions of the province. It's a good thing. What potential can be reached with all those?

Instead, we have a government now that is still questioning whether we should have them. We have a government that is putting the future of one of our most renowned institutions, NSCAD, into question. This is an institution that is hundreds of years old, I believe. It is world-known for being a centre of excellence in fine arts. That institution is still unsure of whether they're going to be able to continue in the independent way they have been operating.

What message is that sending to those folks in our economy who are from the creative sector? What message is that sending to our artists? What message is that sending

to young students and parents who want to pursue an education in the fine arts? I personally see a value in it. What message is that sending when we're putting the only fine arts institution in our province on the chopping block? Are we telling our young people that fine arts don't matter? Are we telling parents, don't send your kids to a fine arts school because it's not as important as the others while, at the same time, saying the creative economy is important? I'm sorry, you can't have it both ways. If this government believes in supporting the creative economy in this province, that starts with an independent and robust NSCAD. We've seen . . .

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please. The time allotted for this member has elapsed.

The honourable member for Richmond.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to be able to rise today and speak on the motion going into Supply. I wanted to touch a bit on the issue of education, which certainly is something that is first and foremost on the minds of many Nova Scotians and certainly on the minds of the Liberal caucus office, as the Official Opposition.

Madam Speaker, I did have the opportunity to attend the event put on by the Nova Scotia Teachers Union, Take Your MLA to School Day. I had the opportunity to participate - a full day, I should add - at the East Richmond Elementary Centre in St. Peters, in Mrs. Gay Middleton's Primary class. It's a Grade Primary but there were a few Grade 1 students in the class as well. I have to say I hear many members in the House, former teachers, and some who are not teachers but who have a chance to go speak to classes - it's one thing to go speak to a class for an hour or for a bit more, it's another thing to start the day at 8:00 a.m. and go until 3:00 p.m. in a classroom. I can tell you for me it was certainly an eye-opener.

In that class there was a teacher's aide and I had the opportunity to see first-hand the interaction amongst the various students, and they indicated to me some of the special needs that existed within that one classroom. To me it was certainly an eye-opener that in a small, in one classroom - I shouldn't say small, there were certainly enough students there - that there was identified needs for so many of those students. I remember saying at the end of the day to the teacher, what would you do if you didn't have that teacher's aide?

One of the students - and it was only once it was pointed out to me - was a high-level functioning autistic. Off and on during the day he felt the need to be held in someone's arms - it was part of his autism and it was a comfort thing for him. Can you imagine if the teacher's assistant hadn't been there and it had been left up to the teacher to be able to provide this while taking care of all the other students at the same time? It's just not realistic - and that was just one of the students, in that classroom, who has special needs.

When parents tell us that they're concerned about the loss of these teacher's aides they have every right to be concerned, and we should take those concerns very seriously. I have to say I heard a few people comment on the Minister of Education's statement that every parent has a say in the supports provided to their students and to their children. Well, we could only wish we lived in a society where that was the case, that parents would get whatever supports they ask for their children. That's just not reality and the Minister of Education should know that that's not reality.

Parents of students with special needs have to go through a yearly battle to ensure that their child has the supports necessary. Whenever those parents hear of cuts coming, naturally they fear the worst - and have every right to do so.

During the day there was an opportunity - we started off in gym class watching one gym teacher try to interact and keep all of the children entertained through different activities, it was something to see in itself; then to watch the various activities that went on throughout the day, working on the cognitive skills of the children; and whenever there was time for reading stories, to watch the participation of the children themselves and that they could recite some of the stories as the teacher was reading them because they had become accustomed to them - and even the reactions to the stories themselves and the words that were being said, it was truly impressive.

I know it's not every teacher that can provide this service, but Gaye Middleton is a very accomplished guitar player and singer. What better thing in Primary, with some Grade 1 students, than to see the children being able to take a 10-minute break and have a sing-along? I have to tell you, Madam Speaker, it was very impressive and to see the added
...

AN HON. MEMBER: Did she sing for you?

MR. SAMSON: She was a great singer, very much, and the kids were great singers as well. Fortunately they did not ask me to participate and I was more than happy to sit back and watch them. It was an eye-opener for me. I can say, like members of the government side have said how many times they have been in classrooms. I have as well, but I never spent the entire day in a Primary classroom; I had never done that before. It was an eye-opener for me and it gave me a much better appreciation as a parent, as an elected official, to understand the needs that exist within our education system.

Earlier we've heard repeated times the Premier and the Minister of Education quote how many students are no longer in our classrooms. Well, Madam Speaker, I've been here for 14 years. I got here at the same time as the Premier and I have to say, until he became the Premier of this province, never once did the Premier, the member for Cole Harbour, ever stand in this House and say we have declining students, we need to cut education, not once, and declining enrolment did not start with the NDP Government in 2009. When the member for Timberlea-Prospect was the Education Critic, never once - and Hansard will

prove that - did he say we have fewer students and, therefore, we need to cut money in education? It was never said and it was never said by any member of the government when they sat in Opposition.

So it's very hypocritical now, to even hear them using those types of comments, when while they were in Opposition it never crossed their lips - they never said it once - and to hear them suggest that because we have fewer students, therefore the costs should be lower, completely fails to realize what my colleague tried to point out to the government, that the costs of fuel have gone up, wages have gone up. The costs of operating these schools have gone up but, more importantly, this government - and I'm sure they know, especially those who are educators, that as my colleague said, I remember when I was in elementary school, those kids who acted up, it was said, oh, they're bad kids, we have to send them to another school. Well, they weren't bad kids. They had learning disabilities. They had ADHD. Some had mild forms of autism. They had terms that we never even knew existed back then, and now we do. Now that we do recognize that, it comes with the need to be able to address it and the need to be able to support it and that comes at a cost.

At the end of the day, Madam Speaker, I'm sure all of us, as elected members, want to see no child left behind and not once have I heard the Premier or the Minister of Education say our government is committed to making sure no child is left behind. Instead, they talk about per-student funding, something that when the Government House Leader was in Opposition, he claimed would be the ruination of Cape Breton Island because it was discriminatory and would affect our ability as an island to grow our economy. Yet, today, it no longer seems to be an issue.

Madam Speaker, in a perfect world every student would have the same needs, would have the same talents, would have the same abilities. It's just not reality. It's not reality in this House; it's not reality outside of this House. But as a society, I think we can be proud in our province of the fact that we have worked so hard in recognizing the needs of students, recognizing their abilities, and training teachers, teachers' aides, the parents, even the staff of these schools, to be able to support these students, and to be able to identify them so none are left behind.

Our caucus will continue to stand up for students, to stand up for the children in Mrs. Gaye Middleton's Primary class, the students at East Richmond Elementary School, and the students throughout schools in this entire province because if the government is not going to defend the children of this province and the schools of this province, I can assure you that the Official Opposition is going to do that for Nova Scotians. Thank you. (Applause)

MADAM SPEAKER: The time allotted for debate on the Supply motion is almost over but at this point, before we move to the next order of business, I would ask the member for Richmond to stand and retract the remark "hypocritical". It is unparliamentary.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: By all means, Madam Speaker, I would certainly withdraw that remark.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you very much.

The motion is carried.

[4:34 p.m. The House resolved itself into CWH on Supply with Deputy Speaker Mr. Alfie MacLeod in the Chair.]

[5:59 p.m. CWH on Supply rose and the House reconvened with Deputy Speaker Mr. Alfie MacLeod in the Chair.]

MR. SPEAKER: The Chairman of the Committee of the Whole House on Supply reports:

THE CLERK: That the committee has met, has made progress, and begs leave to sit again.

MR. SPEAKER: Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

We have now reached the moment of interruption.

The Adjournment motion was submitted by the honourable member for Cape Breton South:

“Therefore be it resolved that because school boards are being forced to reduce services for special needs students as a result of the NDP Government’s detrimental cuts to education, government reverse cuts and reinstate funding to public education to pre-2010 levels.”

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION UNDER RULE 5(5)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester North.

EDUC. - CUTS: NDP GOV'T. - REVERSE

HON. KAREN CASEY: Mr. Speaker, I will begin by speaking to the resolution which is of no news to members of this House. It’s something that we’ve been debating for

the last two years and it's something that we will continue to debate as long as this government continues to ignore the needs of students in our schools.

Mr. Speaker, not only do they ignore it but they slash the funding that would allow school boards to respond to those needs. You know, the NSTU sponsored the Take Your MLA to School Day. I know that MLAs are invited to meet with their school boards and some of them take advantage of that opportunity; some of them even have enough interest to get into the classrooms.

The intent of the Take Your MLA to School Day was to ensure that every MLA had an opportunity - we wished they had all taken advantage of that opportunity - to get into the classroom and look at the complexities of the classroom. They are significant, they are diverse and we have many, many children coming into our public school system who bring with them some special needs. We have a policy of inclusion, a policy that says that all students, regardless of ability or disability, have a right to be included in the public school system; it's a great policy.

We need to make sure, Mr. Speaker, that we provide programs and supports to accommodate those students. So when we look at those diverse needs and those complexities within the classroom - you know, I was in a classroom for a long time and I know the complexity of the classroom has changed, but I also know that you could have a class of 25 students and you had no challenges because the students there did not bring with them any special needs. You could have a class of 17 students and it was a huge responsibility and a huge challenge because they brought special needs with them, and the teacher's responsibility is to try to meet those needs.

We look at numbers and we talk about numbers but we fail to recognize the importance of the population in those classrooms, the importance of the special needs that those students bring. They don't bring them because they want to, they bring them because that's who they are and parents send, to our public schools, the best they have and it's our responsibility to give them the best we have.

When we're looking at the complexity in a classroom and we're looking at the special needs that are there, we are failing the students who have been sent to us and whose parents have entrusted them to us, to do the best we can, to help them achieve some success. We know, Mr. Speaker, that that level of success ranges, it's a broad range of success, and we know that for some students that success is limited. We know for others the potential is great. But we also, through research, know that when teachers understand the complexity, the disability, the challenge, whatever that student has, if they understand it, then they can apply appropriate strategies to meet those needs.

We heard from the member for Richmond about his day as an MLA in a classroom and the story of the autistic child. We have a lot of autistic children in our midst; in fact, the most recent statistics show that one out of 88 children has some form of autism. That is

huge, that is huge. Those children don't choose to have autism, but we need to choose programs and supports so they can be successful. (Applause)

Mr. Speaker, we've talked a lot about cuts to funding. We've talked a lot about the importance of adequately funding a board so they can deliver the supports they need. We saw last year with the funding cuts that EAs - or TAs, whatever you want to call them - supports for students with special needs, were reduced significantly. For every EA, TA, whatever, that was reduced, we left a child without the support they needed to make their day a happy, successful, productive day. Any government that can stand up and say "we put kids first" is completely out of touch with the reality of the classroom today.

Boards are challenged with how they do the best with the limited resources that they are now given. I hear the minister saying, parents are part of the planning team. Yes, parents may be invited in to help the teacher and the principal and the school psychologist and whoever is part of that team understand the complexities and the challenges that their son or daughter may be bringing to the classroom, but there is no guarantee, if the board doesn't have the money, that those children will get the supports they need. That is a disservice to those kids, and this government should be ashamed of what they've done to that.

It goes beyond the students with the special needs or the special challenges. The department gives some targeted money for special education and it's never enough. The Chignecto-Central board is one of the boards that is being criticized for what they are doing to support kids in the classroom. One of the things they have done consistently in the last two years is take money from some other global budget to make sure they have the money in their special education budget to try to meet the needs of the kids who are there. So for this government to say they are funding special education, they've increased it by whatever - they may have increased it, but they have not matched the need that is in the school. Until this government recognizes the need and puts up the funding to support the program to meet the need, then they will continue to fail those kids in our schools.

Mr. Speaker, every classroom has challenges, whether they are cognitive abilities, whether they are behavioural challenges, whatever they are. A teacher does his or her very best to provide the supports that now are not there, but in a class of 25 or 26 or whatever - in a class of 25 there might be 23 other kids who are paying a price because the teacher has had to take her time and her attention, and rightly so, to try to meet the needs of those two challenging kids in her class.

If anybody has had - well, obviously not everybody did take advantage of the opportunity - but every MLA should visit a class where there are students with special needs and see the amount of time that they have that is taken away from the full class. Many kids are left there to try to learn on their own, learn in spite of, do whatever. This government needs to think not about just the students with special needs but about every other kid in that class, because they are paying a price for this government's callous cutting

of education dollars. Mr. Speaker, until that stops, we will continue to be providing a disservice to the kids in our public education system. Thank you very much.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Queens.

MS. VICKI CONRAD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the member for the opportunity to speak to this. I have to say that I'm not ashamed of our government's program for education, and certainly am very committed in supporting our government's Kids and Learning First. It's unfortunate that the members opposite have not taken the time to fully engage themselves and to understand the program around Kids and Learning First, which is a plan that ensures every student here in the Province of Nova Scotia - every student, including those with special needs and all students, whatever their individual circumstance, we all recognize deserve the best possible education to help students reach their potential. That is what parents want and that is what all Nova Scotians expect from government and our education partners.

I would like to take a few moments to outline for the members opposite, and all members of the House, some of the initiatives the province is undertaking to ensure we reach our goal of helping students with special needs succeed. As part of our Autism Spectrum Disorder Action Plan, we have invested \$4 million to make early, intensive, behavioural intervention fully available to pre-school children diagnosed with autism. This early intervention eases students' transition from home to school. As part of this collaborative plan, we have also invested \$213,000 in additional funding to support early intervention services for children with special needs.

Nova Scotia is collaborating with the other three Atlantic Provinces in the Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority's Autism in Education initiative, to promote evidence-based practice in serving students with autism. We are implementing a student information system to more effectively track programming and services for all children and youth, particularly children with special needs.

Mr. Speaker, our government's approach has been a more horizontal and holistic one where departments collaborate, bringing about more effective ways to address the needs of every student. SchoolsPlus is an excellent example of this ongoing collaboration. The Department of Education recently announced that it will be adding four new schools plus hub sites for the 2012-13 school year. This is in addition to the many SchoolsPlus sites that are currently serving communities in all eight school boards. Along with a wide range of after-school activities, SchoolsPlus brings vital services to students and families, many of which come from valuable community partners. SchoolsPlus has had much success and I am pleased that more students, including those students with special needs, are benefiting from the program.

In addition to these collaborative initiatives, we are implementing "Well-Beings". The Nova Scotia School Mental Health Framework is an excellent example of a

collaborative effort between the Departments of Education and Health and Wellness to support students and their families. Actions from “Well-Beings” include incorporating mental health curriculum into healthy education and healthy living programs as well as providing mental health training to teachers and support staff.

Mr. Speaker, our government is putting Kids and Learning First by helping students with special needs succeed. Our government is making significant investments in public education - \$1.1 billion even as enrolments continue to 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 – its highest level ever. It will increase again by \$85 in 2012-13.

Mr. Speaker, as a parent I know, and as a government we know, that services and supports for students with special needs are vital to Nova Scotians and for that reason under this government they will continue to be protected. Our 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 this province, ready to build a life here in Nova Scotia.

We know families want the elected school boards and this government to make decisions that put children and learning first. I will remind all members and all Nova Scotians that Kids and Learning First ensures every child has the supports they need available to them. This will be accomplished by supporting four goals: 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.

Our education plan builds on our successes and targets new investment, more than \$6 million, over the next few years. Kids and Learning First is about doing things differently. It's about better aligning resources and programs within the province's reality, while improving learning and students' outcomes. The budget targets that the department presented earlier to school boards were determined after careful consideration and discussion with the school boards and an understanding of the realities of a declining student enrolment. They are being asked to find 1.3 per cent in savings for next year. I will point out that this is less than the 1.7 per cent reduction in students the province is projecting next year.

I have full confidence that Kids and Learning First will ensure that every student succeeds, including those with special needs. We shouldn't be ashamed of our government's initiative in putting Kids and Learning First. Thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak to our government's programs and, with that, I will take my seat.

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

MR. KEITH BAIN: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to stand in my place this evening to speak on this resolution. NDP cuts to education are in the news and in the thoughts of Nova Scotia parents, teachers and students. Parents are worried about their children's education, kids are worried about slashed programs at their schools and teachers are worried about their jobs and their students. They have good reason for that.

The impacts from this budget are going to have a serious and negative impact on students. Over the last two years, school boards have seen cuts in the neighbourhood of \$65 million. That means deep cuts, that means classrooms are bound to be affected. Our children's education should be at the top of the priority list of this government, but that simply isn't so under this NDP Government. Education is the gateway to a good job and a bright future.

In the Chronicle-Herald, the director of Autism Nova Scotia said, and I will table that when I'm finished, "EDUCATION PLANS FORGETS STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS." The minister's reply was, our plan is on the way. The audacity of that minister to make cuts, without a plan to deal with the children with special needs, is remarkable. Has this plan been presented yet? No. Has there been a solid date provided for when it will be available? No. Cuts have been multiple, supports are failing and there are more devastating cuts to come.

The short-sightedness of the minister has even prompted the call for her resignation. The minister had refused to participate in an opportunity to go to see what the classrooms of today are like and the Take an MLA To School Day, and the minister reinforced her decision earlier today.

We've been hearing the same answer from the Minister of Education since the budget cuts were announced, and we've also been hearing it from the Premier - 30,000 fewer students and 361 more teachers over the last 10 years, and so on and so on. The class sizes are increasing, Mr. Speaker, they are increasing enough to raise the maximum level for class sizes.

Whole services are on the chopping block, to be cut from entire boards. Mr. Speaker, something doesn't make sense here. We see the government handing these cuts to the board to deal with, keeping their hands clean, and when the board makes next to impossible decisions that don't make the department happy, they decide to send in a budget bureaucrat. Mr. Speaker, the question has to be asked: Where was the help to those boards when the devastating cuts were dropped on them in the first place?

We remove funding to public schools and, while we have done that, the expenditures from the Department of Education have actually increased - there is over \$600 million going to capital purchases, and pork barrel announcements of new schools show the true strength of the NDP as ribbon-cutters, yet the cuts to the front line have

continued. And not only have the cuts continued, the force of inflation has further exhausted the resources available for the education of Nova Scotian children.

Mr. Speaker, this government has completely lost touch with reality, has truly lost the trust of Nova Scotians, and our education system will be years behind if this current NDP Government continues down the path they are going.

The department is bankrupting our public education system, Mr. Speaker. Today we saw educational professionals weigh in and I'm going to give some quotes here and again, I will table that as well. The first quote : "Education is not a priority for this minister, it's as simple as that." - NSTU President Alexis Allen - "Ramona Jennex is publicly interfering with a democratically elected school board."

MR. SPEAKER: Honourable member, as you know, you're not supposed to name a member of the House who is sitting. If you would, honourable member, just put the minister's position in that place.

MR. BAIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was just reading the quote. The minister “. . . is publicly interfering with the democratically elected school board. How did she think the board was going to deal with a massive funding cut without losing positions?"

Again, I'm still continuing on quotes here, Mr. Speaker. "Her department has cut \$65 million from the education budget over the past two years at a time when Nova Scotia is already the second lowest in funding per pupil in Canada. These cuts will mean the loss of as many as 700 teaching positions. The Minister is supposed to be advocating for education, not destroying it." The minister “. . . also continues to make statements about Nova Scotia education system that are not supported by facts. The province's students do as well or better than most other provinces on international tests."

Today, Mr. Speaker, and yesterday as well, the Premier says the union's resignation call is really not worthy of comment. That's shameful. These are the people who know and understand the system best.

In short, Mr. Speaker, Nova Scotians no longer believe that this NDP Government is committed to education in our province. The NDP cuts will hurt all students from Cape Breton to Yarmouth - and that's just wrong. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, and I want to thank all members of the House for their participation in the debate.

The honourable Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. CLARRIE MACKINNON: Mr. Speaker, I move that you do now leave the Chair and that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole House on Supply unto Her Majesty.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is carried.

We will take a short break to allow the minister's staff to get back in the Chamber. We are now on break until the Committee of the Whole House on Supply returns.

[6:25 p.m. The House resolved itself into a CWH on Supply with Deputy Speaker Mr. Alfie MacLeod in the Chair.]

[9:15 p.m. CWH on Supply rose and the House reconvened. Mr. Speaker, Hon. Gordon Goss, resumed the Chair.]

MR. SPEAKER: The Chairman of the Committee of the Whole House on Supply reports:

THE CLERK: That the Committee of the Whole House on Supply has met, has made some progress, and begs leave to sit again.

MR. SPEAKER: Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

The honourable Government House Leader.

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

PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 5.

Bill No. 5 - Municipal Government Act.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations.

HON. JOHN MACDONELL: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to move second reading of Bill No. 5, amendments to the Municipal Government Act.

Mr. Speaker, changes to this Act will allow municipalities in Nova Scotia to begin a new project. Municipalities can choose to help residents to install and finance energy-efficient equipment such as solar panels by letting them pay for it on their municipal tax bills. We first introduced this option in the Halifax Regional Municipality and at this time the province said it would make the necessary changes to legislation for the rest of the municipalities if they asked.

The Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities has asked us for this enabling amendment and we're pleased to help. Here's how it would work - municipalities will do the research, order the solar panels, and have them installed for everyone who opts into the program. Homeowners will decide how long they want to take to pay and the municipality will add the amount to the homeowner's municipal taxes over a number of years.

Normally, if you or I signed up to install energy-efficient equipment, like solar panels, it could take anywhere from seven to 15 years for the savings to pay off. Many families can't afford to make that investment all at once; this way, homeowners can pay for their system over several years while benefiting from saving energy immediately. Mr. Speaker, as I've said, amendments to the Municipal Government Act are necessary to allow this kind of financing to take place through municipal tax bills. The issue is that without this change, municipalities can't spend money on somebody's property they don't own, and they wouldn't be able to tax them to pay for it without the amendments.

We're pleased to support municipalities who choose to offer this innovative program to their residents, and homeowners across the province are looking for ways to help them reduce their impact on the environment. They know the cost of energy isn't going down, and this is one way to help Nova Scotians keep their bills in check. The province, the UNSM, and municipalities are listening. This is a good example of how governments working together can make life a little better and a little greener for families.

I'd like to take this opportunity to congratulate the UNSM for supporting this amendment so that communities throughout the province can support greener living initiatives. Mr. Speaker, I hope to see solar panels popping up across the province in the years to come. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Richmond.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to rise and make a few comments on Bill No. 5 on behalf of the Official Opposition.

Clearly, in one sense, we're pleased to see this was a request from the UNSM to give them this enabling legislation to be able to offer these types of services to their ratepayers. A few concerns do arise with this, and maybe the minister will be able to address it in his closing comments.

One of the first questions is why is this not being offered to Efficiency Nova Scotia so that it applies to residents throughout the entire province? It's questionable as to which municipal units will take this offer up and will be prepared to take the necessary administrative steps to put in place such a program. The question is will someone in Richmond County benefit from this, yet someone in Colchester County not have that opportunity, or Cumberland, or Yarmouth, or Shelburne, because a municipal unit has chosen not to offer the program? It begs the question, should the government not be showing leadership by ensuring that Nova Scotians, regardless of where they live, are able to take advantage of this?

Mr. Speaker, a few years ago, if I'm not mistaken, there was a rebate that was offered to homeowners if they wished to install solar panels. I don't believe that rebate still exists. I believe it was eliminated and hasn't been brought back. But even when that rebate was made available, it only applied to solar panels for hot water.

The issue that was raised with me is, why would it not apply to solar panels for electricity? One of the companies that raised that with me is a home-grown company from my own riding, Appleseed Energy, which has been working very diligently to lobby the government, the Minister of Energy, Efficiency Nova Scotia, to try to get them to put in a rebate program which, it is my understanding, several U.S. states already have quite a generous rebate program in place.

Appleseed Energy has been able to work on a number of projects where they are not only installing solar panels for hot water, they are installing solar panels for electricity. In fact, Appleseed Energy was recognized through its partnership with the Janvrin's Island Community Centre. In my riding during the recent Strait Area Chamber of Commerce awards, they were presented with an efficiency award for the fact that they were able to place solar panels on the Janvrin's Island Community Centre that offers not only hot water but offers electricity, which is going to have a significant reduction in their costs of electricity and is going to save a lot of money for this community hall which, as you would know, Mr. Speaker, so many community halls throughout our province are suffering and having a hard time making ends meet with the increased costs of electricity and increased costs of everything else that comes with running those types of facilities.

They have been lobbying the government. They have been quite vocal. They have met with a number of officials in the government to ask that this type of a rebate program be available in the Province of Nova Scotia, so regardless of where you live, you would be able to access this.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that many Nova Scotians are taking the steps on their own to find energy-efficient ways of running their homes and of obviously cutting down their costs. One would expect that the government would want to be a partner in that success. So why do we have this bill here today that is enabling the municipalities, if we knew that all municipalities, that the government said okay, we're going to put together a template so

that every municipal unit, rather than on their own trying to come up with a program, we're going to help create one that we'll share with them so that regardless of whether you are a municipality as small as the District of St. Mary's or you are as large as HRM, or you are as large as the Cape Breton Regional Municipality, you can offer the same program.

I believe that leaving it on their own, Mr. Speaker, is going to make it that much more challenging for municipal units. I don't think there's a lack of will or lack of desire but, like everyone else, municipal units have to prioritize where they're going to invest in initiatives for their staff and for their entire municipality.

I think it would be quite unfortunate if, with the passage of this bill - because it's a majority government, obviously this bill will pass - it would be unfortunate if a year from now or two years from now, the minister gave us an update where there would only be certain municipalities that had taken up this offer and not all of them. That's one of the concerns I have in that I don't think where you live in Nova Scotia should determine whether you get the benefit from this program or not. I think that is one of the flaws here. It is not a criticism of the municipalities. Again, they have their own cost pressures as well and I would be remiss, when we're talking about the Municipal Government Act, if I didn't mention that this is also the same minister who reneged on a commitment that had been made to municipalities about service exchange, which would have relieved the municipalities of a significant cost pressure.

So in one sense the minister is saying, here we are giving you the ability to offer this program, but we're also the same government that increased your cost pressures because of the fact that a commitment you had negotiated in good faith with a previous administration has been reneged upon by this minister and this current government. I know that my colleague, the member for Preston, has certainly been very vocal in speaking up on behalf of municipal units that have been very disappointed with this minister and with this government for that extra cost that they will now have to bear - something that they had negotiated in good faith, but once again, as we've seen on so many other occasions that we've pointed out, the government has obviously reneged.

As I was mentioning, the question - and maybe the minister can clarify, when we're talking about these solar panels - will it just be for hot water, or will it be for electricity as well, or will it apply to all solar panels? I think that's an important distinction, because I know a number of homeowners have indicated to me, especially through the representative of Appleseed Energy, that many people are interested in solar panels for electricity. They have their own hot water system, so they don't need solar panels for that, but they are interested in using it for electricity to cut down their costs. Then one has to ask, why are people looking to cut down their costs?

Well, Mr. Speaker, I think I would be remiss as well if I didn't mention that power rates have increased significantly under this current administration since their election in 2009. While they campaigned on making life more affordable for families, exactly the

opposite has taken place not only through rate increases for Nova Scotia Power but as well, Nova Scotia homeowners are now faced with the NDP electricity tax, which they are paying into. Which begs the question: if they are paying into this electricity tax for energy-efficient programs, why would solar panels not be part of that program? Homeowners who may take up the government's offer through their municipalities to purchase these solar panels and have them financed should be asking themselves, if they're paying into this electricity tax which was imposed by the NDP, why would they not be able to benefit from that through Efficiency Nova Scotia with funding assistance for the solar panels?

So I have yet to hear from the Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations or the minister responsible for Efficiency Nova Scotia as to why solar panels are not already part of what they are offering. As I mentioned before, this is something that had been offered at one point in time here in our province. I know many Nova Scotians took advantage of it then even though it was, as I mentioned, only available on the issue of solar panels for hot water and not available to those who were looking to have the solar panels for electricity as well.

One would have to ask whether the Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations has looked at what is being offered in other jurisdictions, whether they are here in Canada or whether they are in the United States, when it comes to efficiency programs, especially on the issue of solar panels. Has the minister looked at what is being done in other provinces, what is being done in a number of states? I know that the representatives for Appleseed Energy have provided that information to the government, and one has to question whether it had any impact and why we are not following the lead of what apparently is offered in other jurisdictions.

I can tell you, earlier it was interesting because when my colleague, the member for Preston, did question the minister about the service exchange agreement and how the government reneged on that, the minister responded by saying that municipal units have reduced their taxes so there has been no impact on the municipalities.

Well, I believe credit for that should go to the municipalities themselves who have had to make tough decisions, who have had to look within their own administrations to try to find savings. I know that municipal councillors and municipal units are determined to try to keep their taxes as low as they can for their own ratepayers. So I think credit for that certainly goes to municipalities, and we'll have to wait and see over time as that service exchange, the monies that they were expecting they would no longer have to pay once that is going to kick in - we'll have to wait to see whether there are going to be tax increases as a result. So I think it might be a bit premature for the minister to suggest that reneging on that service agreement has not had a direct impact on the municipal units, and we'll certainly see from that.

When we talk about the Municipal Government Act, I wanted to commend my own municipality. Certainly in Richmond County, which is facing very challenging times with the closure of the NewPage mill, which was a significant portion of our tax base, we are all waiting in anticipation to see what the results of those negotiations are going to be. It will certainly have an impact on the bottom line of our own municipality and the tax rate that's going to be chosen for our own ratepayers. It's been reported in the news today that the Stern Group has made an offer to the union which, my understanding is, is going to be voted on, on Sunday. The message was fairly direct - here's our offer, if you don't take it, we're done.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier is quoted as saying that he offers no advice to the workers as to what they should do, but we've certainly seen from the Bowater experience that this could have a significant impact on the workforce and on their future benefits. That will be the same for us in the Strait area because, you would know yourself, Mr. Speaker, that that mill employed 600 direct employees at the site itself. The current offer that's in front of the union is for 229 employees. That's less than half.

Mr. Speaker, that's just not the loss of a potential tax base with the mill itself. We could potentially be losing the tax base of over 300 employees. That, obviously, could have a devastating impact on the Municipality of Richmond, Municipality of Inverness, Municipality of Antigonish, and Municipality of Guysborough as well. (Interruption) And Victoria as well. I'd be remiss if I didn't say Victoria and I'd say even CBRM because I know many of the workers, a number of them either worked at the steel plant or they worked at the mines, found employment with the NewPage facility, so the impact on those municipal units, in itself, could be quite devastating.

As you are aware, Mr. Speaker, the company has confirmed that they are not prepared to take over the liabilities of the pension plan that was left by NewPage, which media reports today are indicating it is \$100 million underfunded. As I've said a number of times in this House, the impact on the municipality, the impact on our economy just from the pension plan is going to be devastating. In my riding I would say that maybe 30 per cent - being generous - of my residents who are retired have a private pension plan. So 70 per cent of the retirees are basically on Old Age, Canada Pension and the supplement, which is just basic level of income, as the Speaker would be well aware.

Other than teachers and a few civil servants that we would have in Richmond County, NewPage and the previous Stora Forest Industries are those who had private pension plans that were able to make investments and improvements to their homes and were helping generate our economy and growing our economy and making sure the municipality could keep its tax base at a very competitive rate. I'm proud to say, for a small municipality, Richmond has some of the most competitive tax rates of anywhere in the province and that's because of discipline that has been there by the municipal councillors ensuring that there was strategic investments but always making sure, as well, that they

were preparing themselves for the day where they may not be able to rely upon NewPage or some of the other heavy industries that we have in Richmond County.

When we talk about the Municipal Government Act, I think it's important not just to talk about this program but certainly talk about what is being faced by the municipalities throughout the entire province. Again, I had mentioned after the budget that we were hoping there was going to be a specific strategy to deal with the issues facing the economy of the Strait area.

With NewPage one of the other concerns, Mr. Speaker, that I would hope the minister would be aware of, and his government, is that we're all wondering what the future is for the generating station in Point Tupper, the Nova Scotia Power generating station. We have seen previously that the federal Conservative Government had indicated that this type of generating station had to be closed by a certain date.

It would appear that the federal government has relaxed some of those requirements, but for how long? That is one of the significant employers that we have in the Strait area. They don't necessarily pay a specific amount just to Richmond County. Because of the agreement that exists with Nova Scotia Power, taxes are paid in lieu to a number of municipal units rather than where their specific infrastructure is located. I'm sure you'd be well aware of that, Mr. Speaker, knowing the Lingan Generating Station, where it's located and how much taxes are being paid directly to the Cape Breton Regional Municipality for housing that specific infrastructure.

I'm sure that the Cape Breton Regional Municipality would probably be in a much better financial standing if Nova Scotia Power was paying them directly for the infrastructure they have in that municipality. Instead it is shared throughout the province, which makes it a challenge for those municipal units.

Mr. Speaker, as well for my own municipality, we're certainly hopeful that the future of the tank farm operated by NuStar, in Point Tupper, is going to continue - and we're always hopeful that there might even be an expansion that would take place.

Mr. Speaker, you would be aware that that's the site of the old Gulf Oil refinery that was located in Point Tupper. I was mentioning to someone the other day that it would be interesting to see what the economy of the Strait area would be if that Gulf Oil refinery was still operating today, if the heavy water plant was still operating today. It was ironic - someone had pointed out to me that there's actually apparently a world demand for heavy water right now, but unfortunately for the Strait area the timing just wasn't on our side, because that plant was dismantled and very few of its assets remain.

But at the old Gulf Oil refinery, you would recall that the tanks are still there, and what NuStar has been doing is they've been bringing in ships, mostly from Europe, very large ships with oil that come into the Strait of Canso, off-loads, it is put into the tanks and

then smaller ships are brought in which take the oil and load it on and then they bring it down to the Eastern Seaboard. That has been quite successful for a number of years.

It is my understanding that the Eastern Seaboard is starting to accommodate larger vessels, which questions whether those ships will be able to go directly to the U.S. rather than having to come into the Strait of Canso to off-load onto smaller ships. Certainly a significant part of our economy and for our municipality is the taxes that are paid by NuStar.

Mr. Speaker, I know you drive on Highway No. 4 on occasion, and you would have noticed that on the site, on the lands owned by NuStar at the old Gulf refinery, we have a number of wind turbines, which are great to see. It's quite an ironic contrast to the Nova Scotia Power generating station which is almost directly across the road from these turbines, but it's great to see that we are moving towards much greener energy in Richmond County with these turbines. And, again, with the taxes that are payable there, we're certainly hopeful that that is going to assist our municipality, as well, in its revenues and its ability to keep our tax rates as low as possible.

Richmond is not unlike so many other municipalities in the Province of Nova Scotia. As I mentioned before, the vast majority of our retirees are on fixed income and they are on supplement, so when the municipality is trying to determine its tax rate, the councillors sitting around the table know that even a small increase could make the difference for many of our seniors as to whether they can remain in their own homes or whether they have to sell their home because they just can't pay the taxes anymore.

Again, I can't commend our municipality enough with the leadership of our new CAO and with the councillors who are there who are very cognizant of what they can do to keep those taxes as low as possible because we want our seniors to remain in our communities, we want them to stay in their own homes, and we want them to be not only part of the community but, at the end of the day, we want them to pay taxes. We want them to be generating revenue for the municipality, to allow us to be able to continue to offer the services that we want to see in our municipal units.

So the question will become - and I'll have the opportunity to speak to the municipality as to what their views are on this specific proposal that is being brought forward through Bill No. 5 from the Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations - as to whether they see an opportunity to be able to offer this program, and to be able to use some of their capital funds or reserve funds to provide this funding up front, with the idea that ratepayers who participate will be able to pay back, on a yearly basis, up to a certain point in time, for those who are interested in that.

Mr. Speaker, I'm also curious whether the minister himself or Efficiency Nova Scotia could advise as to what sort of public campaign the government has been undertaking to encourage people to use solar panels. I know the minister says he's hopeful

that they're going to be popping up all over the place - I think we all are - but the question is, has government been undertaking initiatives to try to make Nova Scotians aware of the benefits of solar panels, giving them a sense of what the costs are and what the savings would be down at the end of the road?

Mr. Speaker, I'd be remiss again if I didn't mention - we know this government is very fond of advertising and using taxpayers' funds to do advertising, so we certainly wonder as to what is being done on that front to encourage people to use solar panels. I'm not sure every homeowner truly appreciates what their savings could be, what the timeframe would be for repayment, when they could expect to see those benefits. Again, as I mentioned earlier, the question becomes this: are the solar panels simply for hot water or will they also be eligible for solar panels for electricity?

As you would be aware, it's interesting that a number of new homeowners who are constructing - whether cottages or even permanent homes - are choosing not to get connected to Nova Scotia Power. Either because they are in a remote location or the cost of connecting is too high and they're trying to find ways not to have to have Nova Scotia Power connect electricity to their homes or to their cottages. They are starting to see more of these small wind turbines that are being located near properties, people are starting to invest in solar panels and trying to find whatever means that they possibly can to provide electricity to their properties without having to have that cost.

Mr. Speaker, I'm sure you'd be well aware that if you build in an area that doesn't have power poles coming right to your property, the cost to do so is extremely high. In fact, I've seen a number of people who have come to my office and it's really surprising, you're into thousands and thousands of dollars. In some cases, depending on where they have to cross, what the terrain is, to be able to get to the specific property, it's one that's extremely cost-prohibitive for them. What's interesting is, I even saw in one case where someone bought a property in a subdivision, started building and once they applied to get connected with Nova Scotia Power, they were told it was going to cost thousands and thousands of dollars to get electricity to their property. These are people who bought a lot in a subdivision and I think they naturally assumed there's going to be access to electricity.

From my own experience, I would give the advice that if you are going to buy a piece of property and you're going to make that investment, make sure before you do so, that you have access to the basic necessities. Make sure you have access to electricity, make sure you have access to a phone line, which I'm finding out is not automatic in many areas as well. Make sure you have service to high-speed Internet, if that is something you are looking for. Cell service is another issue that I'll speak more about as the session goes on.

These are things many of us take for granted, but are not offered in many areas of our province. That's some of the issues that I know my municipality is facing today and it's

been raised recently. I'll certainly be bringing those concerns to the House as well about the challenges that are being faced with that.

One of the things as well that I'd hoped the Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations may have been able to indicate to us is, what is the program in place now in the Halifax Regional Municipality? If it is, what are the results? I think that will be very useful for us, as we're debating this legislation, to know exactly has it worked? Are there issues with it? What has the impact been? I think it would be very useful for us, as legislators, even if the program is not in place, if Halifax Regional Municipality could even tell us what level of interest that they have seen from this initiative. I think that's something that would be very useful for us as we move forward in the debate on this legislation.

As I indicated earlier, there are a vast number of issues which are being faced by municipal units throughout the province and I had hoped that this bill might have touched on some of those issues and quite possibly the minister may be bringing more legislation to assist municipalities. It is becoming a greater challenge for them to try to make sure that their bottom line is protected and at the end of the day that they are able to pass those savings onto their consumers.

M. le Président, je voulais juste prendre quelques minutes pour faire quelques commentaires sur le projet de loi numéro 5 qui nous est présenté ce soir, qui offre un programme aux municipalités pour leur permettre d'offrir un programme pour assister les citoyens dans leur circonscription à pouvoir trouver des façons de mettre en place, et je ne sais pas si c'est le propre terme, mais les panneaux solaires, pour leur permettre de profiter du soleil que nous avons ici en Nouvelle-Écosse pour réduire leurs frais d'électricité. Comme on sait, M. le Président, les frais d'électricité, ici dans la province de la Nouvelle-Écosse, ont augmenté presque tous les ans. Certainement, depuis que le gouvernement NPD a été élu en 2009, nous avons vu des augmentations chaque année, qu'il est de plus en plus difficile, pour les gens de la Nouvelle-Écosse qui ont leurs propres logis, de pouvoir trouver les deux bouts et faire sûr qu'ils peuvent avoir les moyens de continuer de rester dans leur maison.

Est-ce que ce projet de loi va faire sur une grosse différence pour les gens de la Nouvelle-Écosse, spécialement ceux qui sont sur un income qui est fixe? Les gens qui sont à leur retraite, qui cherchent des moyens de réduire leurs frais d'électricité? Il faut entendre pouvoir, comme j'ai indiqué plus tôt, M. le Président, plusieurs des municipalités sont dans des situations très difficiles.

J'avais eu l'occasion de parler au préfet de la municipalité du district de Guysborough, qui m'a indiqué que trois entreprises étaient responsables pour 90 p. 100 des taxes commerciales payées à cette municipalité : trois entreprises, seulement trois, 90 p. 100. Si seulement une de ces entreprises là n'avait pas de succès, ça aurait un impact incroyable sur cette municipalité.

Chez nous, au comté de Richmond, c'est la même chose. Nous attendons pour voir qu'est-ce qui va être le résultat des négociations entre le Stern group avec le syndicat, avec Nova Scotia Power, avec la municipalité, pour voir si cette usine peut ouvrir de nouveau et que ça peut continuer dans le futur, pas juste pour notre municipalité, pour la municipalité d'Inverness, la municipalité de Guysborough, la municipalité d'Antigonish, la municipalité de Victoria, pour faire sûr que les gens, non seulement puissent continuer à être employés à cette usine, mais que l'usine elle-même puisse continuer à payer les taxes qu'elle paye maintenant à la municipalité de Richmond.

Nous avons entendu dans les nouvelles aujourd'hui, comme je l'ai indiqué, que l'offre qui a été faite au syndicat par le Stern group, c'est une offre qui verra 229 employés du syndicat à l'usine. Comme vous le savez, à un moment donné, il y avait 600 employés à cette usine. Des employés du syndicat, des employés qui avaient fait une moyenne d'argent qui était élevée assez, mais maintenant va tomber de 600 à 229. Ça va avoir un impact en même temps sur les municipalités, le fait que ces employés ici, qui ne vont pas être offert d'emplois à cette usine, vont avoir un choix : soit qu'ils peuvent trouver un autre emploi dans nos régions, ou bien, comme plusieurs l'ont déjà fait, ils vont s'en aller à Fort McMurray en Alberta.

M. le Président, ça ne profite pas à nos municipalités, ça ne profite pas à nos communautés, puis c'est une question sérieuse qu'il faut répondre. Parce qu'à la fin de la journée, quand on regarde l'impact sur les municipalités, je sais que déjà beaucoup des employés, les anciens employés de New Page, sont partis à Fort McMurray. Ils sont partis en Alberta et la question devient, est-ce qu'ils sont prêts à retourner pour travailler ici? Parce que j'ai parlé avec un de mes amis de chez nous, qui a été travaillé là, à Fort McMurray. Il est là dans une position qui paie 75 \$ l'heure.

In English, \$75 per hour.

Pour demander à quelqu'un de laisser un emploi qui paie 75 \$ l'heure, à retourner pour travailler, allons dire à 26 \$, allons dire 30 \$, 35 \$, ça va être quelque chose qui va être très difficile. Parce que si ces gens continuent à aller travailler à Fort McMurray, en Alberta, à un moment donné, ils vont emmener leurs familles. S'ils amènent leurs familles, ils vont vendre leur logis. S'ils vendent leur logis, ils ne payent plus de taxes. Il faut se demander la question : est-ce qu'il y a assez de personnes qui vont venir au comté de Richmond, qui vont venir à la région de Strait, pour acheter ces maisons, continuer à payer des taxes, continuer à avoir de l'argent qui va venir à nos municipalités, pour offrir les programmes comme ceux qui sont offerts par la loi numéro 5 que nous avons devant nous aujourd'hui. Ce sont des questions auxquelles il faut faire face ici, spécialement à l'Assemblée, il faut avoir un débat. Parce que c'est l'impact, à la fin de la journée, qu'il y aura sur les municipalités, qui posent la question, si l'impact est sévère assez, est-ce que les municipalités seront dans une position pour offrir les programmes, comme il est prévu dans le projet de loi numéro 5 qui est devant nous aujourd'hui.

J'ai demandé au ministre, et, peut-être qu'il pourra nous répondre à la fin du débat, il y a déjà eu un projet de loi qui a été passé ici, dans cette Assemblée, pour permettre à ce programme d'être offert par la région municipale d'Halifax. Comme j'ai posé la question, est-ce que ce programme est déjà en place? Si oui, combien de participants y a-t-il eu à ce programme? Si non, combien d'intérêt ils ont eu dans ce programme? Parce qu'à la fin de la journée, si nous allons passer des projets de loi ici à l'Assemblée, on s'attend à qu'ils vont avoir du succès. On ne peut pas l'assurer, mais on s'attendrait qu'on aurait regardé la situation et l'examiné suffisamment pour déterminer s'il y a un aspect de succès qui va venir avec ce projet de loi.

Ce sont des questions que nous attendons. L'autre question, comme j'ai soulevé, j'ai une entreprise chez nous qui a demandé que le gouvernement, soit à travers d'Efficiency Nova Scotia, ou soit à travers du ministère de l'Énergie, offre des rabais aux gens qui veulent acheter de ces panneaux solaires. Malheureusement, il y avait un programme qui existait ici à la province, mais ça été coupé. Alors, je ne m'en rappelle pas, je ne veux pas dire ça tellement, si ça été coupé par le gouvernement NPD ou si ça avait déjà été coupé par le gouvernement précédent conservateur. Peu importe. Le fait est que c'était un programme qui était là pour assister les gens qui voulaient investir dans des panneaux solaires, qui n'existe plus. Maintenant, si les gens veulent faire cet investissement, on leur dit vous avez deux choix : vous pouvez le payer vous-même, de votre poche, ou nous allons permettre aux municipalités d'offrir un programme de financement pour acheter ces panneaux solaires.

L'autre point que j'ai soulevé, j'ai une entreprise dans ma circonscription, Appleseed Energy qui, pendant les dernières quelques années, a dit au gouvernement, le rabais qui était offert avant était seulement pour des panneaux solaires pour le chauffage de l'eau. Ils demandaient la question, pourquoi ne pas offrir des rabais pour les panneaux solaires pour l'électricité. De ce que je peux comprendre, des représentations qu'ils ont fait à moi-même, je sais qu'ils on fait ces mêmes représentations à différents fonctionnaires dans le ministère de l'Énergie et dans d'autres ministères où c'est moi-même qui a demandé que les réunions prennent place et ces réunions ont pris place et ils ont indiqués que dans autres provinces au Canada, et dans plusieurs des états aux États-Unis, il y a déjà des programmes en place pour offrir des rabais pour des panneaux solaires pour l'électricité.

Comme j'ai indiqué, récemment, cette même entreprise, Appleseed Energy, a travaillé avec le centre communautaire aux îles Madame, qu'on les appelle. En anglais on dit Janvrin's Island, mais en français ça toujours été appelé les îles Madame. Ils ont été à leur centre communautaire, et sur le toit du centre communautaire, ils ont placé des panneaux solaires pour l'électricité. L'idée est que ça va assister ce centre communautaire à réduire les frais d'électricité. Comme vous le savez bien, M. le Président, nous avons des centres communautaires à travers la province qui ont beaucoup de difficulté à maintenir, à cause des dépenses. Que ça soit de l'électricité, que ça soit de l'huile de chauffage, à cause d'un manque de participation, c'est un problème auquel font face les centres communautaires à travers cette province.

Selon moi, le succès que nous avons vu au centre communautaire aux îles Madame, est quelque chose que ce gouvernement doit être en train d'encourager à travers la province, et encourager ces petites entreprises, comme Appleseed Energy, de pouvoir aller et travailler, soit avec des centres communautaires, des écoles peut-être, des logis privés ou d'autres entreprises, même des édifices du gouvernement, de pouvoir mettre ces panneaux solaires en place. Ça c'est une question, en même temps, quand on parle du projet de loi numéro 5, que le ministre pourrait peut-être nous indiquer, c'est, est-ce que le gouvernement a un programme en place pour les édifices qui sont sous le contrôle du gouvernement, qui vont commencer à mettre des panneaux solaires sur ces édifices?

Parce que, à la fin de la journée, si le ministre nous dit aujourd'hui, comme il nous a dit dans ses commentaires du début, qu'il espère de voir ces panneaux solaires à travers la province, qu'il veut les voir se mettre en place partout. Quel meilleur message pour les gens de la Nouvelle-Écosse. Les encourager à faire les investissements dans ces panneaux solaires, si le gouvernement même est en train de dire, pour nos édifices, nous allons mettre des panneaux solaires, peut-être même pour nos écoles. Que nous allons commencer à travailler avec les conseils scolaires pour faire des investissements dans ces panneaux solaires à nos écoles, pour réduire les frais d'électricité et aussi, d'envoyer le message à nos jeunes, qu'ils peuvent ramener chez eux, chez leurs parents et les encourager eux-mêmes à faire ces investissements, une fois qu'ils peuvent voir le succès de ces panneaux solaires sur les frais d'électricité de l'école.

Parce qu'à la fin de la journée, comme vous le savez bien, le succès que nous avons eu ici dans notre province, au niveau de l'environnement, au niveau du recyclage qui existe, je m'en rappelle, quand j'étais ministre de l'Environnement, la Province de la Nouvelle-Écosse était à un point 50 p. 100 de divertissement à cause du recyclage et à cause des autres programmes. J'espère qu'on est peut-être même encore plus haut maintenant, mais beaucoup du succès de ce programme-là, est venu de nos jeunes, à travers des écoles. Les jeunes ont été à la maison et s'ils voyaient leurs parents mettre une bouteille à la poubelle, ils disaient non, non, non, les bouteilles ne vont à la poubelle, les bouteilles vont pour le recyclage. Je pense que si nous allons avoir du succès avec ces panneaux solaires, il faut faire certain de faire un programme d'éducation avec nos jeunes pour les encourager, pour voir le succès qu'ils vont ramener ce message-là à leurs parents. Quelle meilleure place à les encourager qu'à l'école. Parce que s'ils peuvent voir à l'école, voir ces panneaux, voir comment ils fonctionnent, apprendre comment est-ce que ça travaille, voir le succès pour réduire les frais d'électricité à nos écoles, quel meilleur exemple?

Alors, j'espère M. le Président, avec ces commentaires, que peut-être le ministre de Services Nouvelle-Écosse et Relations avec les municipalités, va regarder pour voir, est-ce qu'il y a plus que le gouvernement peut faire sur ce sujet, autre que simplement dire nous allons permettre aux municipalités d'offrir ce programme. Comme je l'ai dit plus tôt, ça serait bon de voir s'il va y avoir un programme d'avertissement qui vont faire des annonces publiques du gouvernement sur la question des panneaux solaires pour encourager les gens à investir, à voir le succès, jusqu'à date, j'en n'ai pas vu.

Comme j'ai indiqué plus tôt, on sait que ce gouvernement NPD n'hésite pas à utiliser l'argent qu'il ramasse des gens de la Nouvelle-Écosse pour payer pour des annonces publiques, des annonces que je vous soumettrai, pour la plupart, quelques-unes sont des annonces qui sont très proches d'être des annonces politiques, non pas juste des annonces publiques. Alors, pourquoi on n'a pas, quand on annonce ce projet de loi, aussi un programme qu'on pourrait présenter à l'Assemblée pour dire, voici comment nous allons offrir, pas juste l'opportunité pour les municipalités de mettre ce programme ici en place, mais aussi pour encourager les gens de la Nouvelle-Écosse à vouloir faire cet investissement.

Une des autres questions, M. le Président, comme je l'ai soulevé plus tôt, c'est est-ce qu'il va y avoir un programme standard à travers toutes les municipalités? Est-ce que le système de financement qui va être offert aux gens de la Nouvelle-Écosse sera la même chose à Yarmouth, la même chose à Cumberland, la même à Richmond, la même chose à Guysborough, Inverness, ou est-ce que ça va être laissé à chaque municipalité à déterminer. Ici à Inverness, vous avez sept ans, ici à Guysborough, vous avez cinq ans, ici à Yarmouth, nous avons neuf ans. Ça c'est une question qu'il faut demander aussi et c'est pour ça que j'ai soulevé au ministre, s'il pouvait nous dire qu'ils ont en place un programme standard, qui sera utilisé à travers toute la Nouvelle-Écosse, je pense que c'est quelque chose qui nous donnerait même plus de confiance pour appuyer l'esprit de la loi numéro 5.

Mr. Speaker, I do note that the time is getting short for today's sitting, so with that I will have a few more comments on this, but I would be happy to move adjournment on Bill No. 5.

MR. SPEAKER: Très bien. Merci beaucoup.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, that ends the government's business for today. I move that the House do now rise to meet from the hour of 9:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. when after the daily routine and debate on supply, we will be debating Bills No. 5, 9, 11, 13 and 17. I move that the House do now rise.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is to adjourn.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

We will now adjourn to meet tomorrow from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

[The House rose at 10:00 p.m.]

NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3)**RESOLUTION NO. 196**

By: Hon. Jamie Baillie (Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party)

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

Whereas while it may not be the oldest hostel in Canada, the Wentworth Hostel is the nation's most continuous hostel destination and after 50 years, there was good reason for a celebration and ceremony; and

Whereas hostelling continues to be popular with upwards of 5,000 people visiting the house each year; and

Whereas part of Hostels International, the Wentworth Hostel operates year round with a peak in the winter season thanks to the nearby Ski Wentworth;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate the Wentworth Hostel on 50 years in business and wish them continued success for many years to come.

RESOLUTION NO. 197

By: Hon. Darrell Dexter (The Premier)

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

Whereas the electoral process is the cornerstone of democracy - an opportunity for every eligible person to contribute to choosing their leaders; and

Whereas being chosen for leadership in this way brings great opportunity for the leader and with it great responsibility to be effective, accountable and fair; and

Whereas on December 9, 2011 Janette Peterson was elected by the members of Annapolis Valley First Nation as chief;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating Ms. Peterson on her election as chief and in welcoming her to the circle of people in this province who have been chosen by their communities to serve at the highest levels of public life.

RESOLUTION NO. 198

By: Hon. Darrell Dexter (The Premier)

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

Whereas the electoral process is the cornerstone of democracy - an opportunity for every eligible person to contribute to choosing their leaders; and

Whereas being chosen for leadership in this way brings great opportunity for the leader and with it great responsibility to be effective, accountable and fair; and

Whereas on November 24, 2011, Andrea Paul was elected by the members of Pictou Landing First Nation as chief;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating Ms. Paul on her election as chief and in welcoming her to the circle of people in this province who have been chosen by their communities to serve at the highest levels of public life.

RESOLUTION NO. 199

By: Hon. Darrell Dexter (The Premier)

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

Whereas the electoral process is the cornerstone of democracy - an opportunity for every eligible person to contribute to choosing their leaders; and

Whereas being chosen for leadership in this way brings great opportunity for the leader and with it great responsibility to be effective, accountable and fair; and

Whereas on December 1, 2011, Frank Meuse was elected by the members of Bear River First Nation as chief;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating Mr. Meuse on his election as chief and in welcoming him to the circle of people in this province who have been chosen by their communities to serve at the highest levels of public life.

RESOLUTION NO. 200

By: Hon. Darrell Dexter (The Premier)

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

Whereas the electoral process is the cornerstone of democracy - an opportunity for every eligible person to contribute to choosing their leaders; and

Whereas being chosen for leadership in this way brings great opportunity for the leader and with it great responsibility to be effective, accountable and fair; and

Whereas on February 23, 2012 Robert Gloade was elected by the members of Millbrook First Nation as chief;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating Mr. Gloade on his election as chief and in welcoming him to the circle of people in this province who have been chosen by their communities to serve at the highest levels of public life.