



DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Gordon Gosse

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HALIFAX, THURSDAY, APRIL 19, 2012

Sixty-first General Assembly

Fourth Session

12:00 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 submitted and I will read it:

Therefore be it resolved that the NDP Government's education funding cuts are being felt in classrooms across the province, and we call on the government to invest in our students and restore funding to public education.

This was submitted by the honourable member for Digby-Annapolis.

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS**PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES****TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS****STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS**

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

HON. WILLIAM ESTABROOKS: Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise in the House today to officially release the third edition of our 5-Year Highway Improvement Plan. This plan represents our government's commitment to fix rural roads and to keep our community strong. It also represents an investment of more than \$1 billion since 2010. This represents thousands of jobs and millions of dollars to our economy.

Mr. Speaker, before I continue, before the member for Cape Breton Centre interrupts me again, I would like to take a moment for an introduction. I know that many members present are aware of who Mr. Bruce Fitzner is. He's the chief highway engineer, and he has also brought some staff with him - one in particular - and I'm going to ask them all to stand in a moment.

With you on all of your desks this morning, you have a copy of the five-year road plan. The person who is not going to get the credit is this minister, because it's the job of the staff; it's not the job of the chief highway engineer, because the staff did all the good work to make him look good. So with those comments I would ask Carol McKee to please stand and receive the recognition of the House. (Applause)

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

MR. ESTABROOKS: Staff from our department worked with their many colleagues throughout the province to identify the roads and bridges projects for the next five years. I would like to thank them for the time and energy they've invested in this important project for our province, and I look forward to continuing to work with them as the minister.

Mr. Speaker, 2010 was the first year we introduced our new approach to paving and improving Nova Scotia's highways and bridges. As today marks the third year of our planning, I believe we're in a good position to give you a report card update. The teacher in me says report cards are important. It's important particularly to look. I would like to report that 97 per cent of the projects planned for 2011-12 have either been completed or started.

I'm also pleased to report that we were able to complete 11 repaving projects earlier than originally planned.

Mr. Speaker, we have paved more than 1,900 kilometres of road in the last three years and resurfaced 400 kilometres of road in addition. This year we plan to pave another 500 kilometres of road and resurface an additional 200 kilometres. When you consider both operational and capital funding, we are investing close to \$363 million in Nova Scotia roads this construction season - \$363 million.

As explained in our plan, building and maintaining roads and infrastructure creates thousands of jobs. It allows local businesses to transport goods to market. It connects Nova Scotians to vital services. It provides employment and education and is critical to the safe travel of many visitors to our province. I encourage all members of this House to read our plan and not just look at the roads and bridges in their particular constituencies. It's like giving out your lesson plan early to your students. I want to know, are you listening to me or are you reading ahead?

In this plan you will find an overview of all our works completed since we started in 2010; an explanation as to how we fund our projects; the steps we're taking to make our dollars go further by paving smarter; information on the types of provincial roads and highways and how they're prioritized for maintenance; and finally, a schedule for the projects for the next five years. I'm particularly proud of this new approach that we're taking - well, it's not really new anymore, this is the third time - so we can spend our dollars further to improve roads in more communities. What we're doing is increasing our focus on improving roads before they become too damaged. This means we're not only addressing our worst roads but making a larger and smarter investment in improving our paved roads before they become too damaged and more costly to repair.

This minister and this government and successive governments will always have a five-year plan - a five-year road plan publicly announced and the report card to follow the next year are part of the expectations of Nova Scotians. This means each time we finish a year of projects, a new year of projects gets added to the plan. This advanced planning allows us to get more work done while being open and accountable.

We've also started to do some roadwork in-house. This is helping to keep the tendered prices more competitive. Our mobile asphalt plant is starting this summer during the paving season, and I know there are some members of this House very interested in the schedule and where it is going to begin.

Another important part of our plan, which I encourage the honourable members to read, is a section called "How are projects prioritized?" I appreciate the commitment of all members of this House having to respond to the needs of their communities. I want to say to all sides of the House, to the members of the Opposition in particular, it is a pleasure to deal with you because you have the opportunity, as we sit down and look at what you

consider the prioritized roads. Members on this side of the House, I extend the same invite to them, although they have my ear more often, I want members opposite to know that I know when you are doing your job because when you and your local highway engineers are on the same page, the reflection of priorities are laid there and they are open.

I believe that many of you would agree that roads and bridge maintenance is often a popular topic when speaking to constituents. To that end, it was critical to the overall success of our work to have a small, well-established criteria staff we can use to prioritize annual projects. This way we can ensure that decisions are made consistently from one end of the province to the other.

Mr. Speaker, this is a good day for our department; it's a good day for our province; and, more importantly, it's a good day for Nova Scotians. We are looking forward to another good year of making strategic investments in our roads, highways, and bridges, thanks to the hard work of our staff, and Bruce Fitzner in particular, here in Halifax and across the province, from people on the ground who know the situations in your local communities to the MLAs who weekly bring me up-to-date with their priorities, to our road-building partners, we will continue to do the best we can for Nova Scotians.

Here's to a busy and productive paving season - we aim to "pay less and pave more." Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clare.

HON. WAYNE GAUDET: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to rise today and respond to the minister's statement on the newest edition of the government's highway improvement plan. I also would like to thank the minister and his staff for providing me with an advance copy of the statement.

Mr. Speaker, the Liberal caucus has long been a supporter of the government's five-year plan for highways, so we're pleased to see an update today. Travelling on highways and roads can sometimes be hazardous due to weather and other factors. It is government's responsibility to ensure that these roads are in the best condition they can be for Nova Scotians, as well as for motorists coming into our province.

Mr. Speaker, while it is good to have a highway plan in place, the Liberal caucus continues to hear of roads that are in poor condition, bridges and rails that are in need of repair, and sections of highways that are unfinished and delayed. We must work harder to improve these conditions.

One concern has been with respect to rural infrastructure maintenance, RIM, and the sharp decline in RIM funding. This program funding has been crucial to repairing rural roads, Mr. Speaker, and it has been cut substantially by this government and replaced with

an in-house, expensive, public paving project. Our caucus has always disagreed with this approach. This approach did not work 20 years ago, and it certainly will not work now.

Businesses in the construction and trucking industries know that this approach does not work. The government of 20 years ago knew this approach did not work, and that is why it was abandoned back then.

So we have yet to see the results of this government's paving plan. Last year's attempts we know were failures - out of the 366 kilometres of work planned by the NDP Government last year, we know that only 36 kilometres were double-chip sealed and no work was performed on the single-chip seal.

We have also heard concerns from businesses and contractors that government won't tender out the projects they choose - government simply cherry-picks which projects, in which areas, they want the chip seal.

Local businesses have the capacity and the economic feasibility to perform this work cheaper and more effectively than government, Mr. Speaker, it is that simple. Construction businesses are pleased with the five-year plan, and even supported the minister when it was announced, but they don't need government to be in competition with them.

I look forward to seeing how the minister plans to proceed with the five-year plan in the future, and with those comments I will take my seat. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, I think all members appreciate hearing about roadwork - am I correct about that? (Applause) That's kind of a lukewarm support, minister, but I know they are. I know it is particularly important for members representing rural areas of the province.

We have a duty, on this side of the Legislature, to hold the government to the commitments made in this capital plan and we will. We are pleased to see this government continues its significant investment in roads made by the previous Progressive Conservative Government. Good roads are one of the most important and tangible benefits people see in return for their tax dollar. When we look at the price of gas at the pump, we know Nova Scotians are paying a lot of taxes to upkeep the roads and they deserve the most efficient investment of those dollars.

I think, particularly, about people who are on fixed income and those who are earning low incomes, despite their valuable contribution to our economy, and the impact high gas prices have on those people - all the more reason why their tax dollars deserve to

be invested in the most efficient way possible. That is why we continue to question the government's entry into the paving business.

One must be careful to criticize because I'm sure no one would refuse to see a paving plant of any kind visit their constituency and visit their region. The point I would like to make is that we would want to see that the tax dollars provided to government are optimized. By that, I mean so that we all get the most kilometres of good quality pavement that lasts, for the best price. We believe the private sector, which has evolved with competitive forces, can deliver the best value for Nova Scotians.

But government has a role too. Government must ensure the conditions exist to ensure the competition exists so that bidders sharpen their pencils to give Nova Scotians the best price. When this is not happening, we believe it can be fixed with better planning, like we see here with this five-year plan, but also with tendering practices that make it easier for more companies to bid.

How can that be handled? It can be supported by earlier scheduling of paving projects early in the season so a company has time to prepare within their schedules to do the work and they can bid on more projects, and by bundling of smaller projects. While the government believes in entering the market to be a competitor, we believe they have added risk to possible increases in paving price, which will mean less paving.

Why? Because, essentially, they have shrunk the market. Less paving available to the private sector will mean rationalization in the industry. I think we will see over time, with less supply coming to the market, some road builders will disappear, leaving fewer. Of course, when you have fewer competitors, prices go up.

We will continue to question the decision made by the government to enter the paving business. We would like to see them include in future capital plans, local roads. We will continue to hold the government accountable to ensure that all of our gas taxes are invested in our roads.

Upon closing, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the workers at the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal. I know in my area they work hard. I have an excellent relationship with them and I appreciate it, because ultimately that relationship brings good results for the people I represent. I also want to thank the minister for his open door policy and for his approach and interest in our collective efforts. I'm sure nobody would disagree with me that we must all work together to make sure we have good roads for our constituents.

To conclude, may we have a safe and successful paving season. Thank you.

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

HON. WILLIAM ESTABROOKS: My first and only mistake of the day was that I neglected to stick to the text. I would also like to take this opportunity, besides Bruce and Carol, I would ask Judy Matheson and Laura Cunningham from the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal to stand and receive recognition. (Applause)

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

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I believe that all of my colleagues here in the Chamber would agree that making life better and life more affordable for Nova Scotian families is a top priority. We all want our children to grow up to be happy and healthy and to live long lives, and we know that today's lifestyle threatens that future.

Childhood obesity, inactivity, and unhealthy eating have reached epidemic levels. Nova Scotia already has some of the highest rates of chronic disease in the country, and now we're seeing some of these adult diseases in children. In Nova Scotia, one in three children and youth are currently overweight or obese, and many more children are not getting the nutrition and the activity they need to grow up healthy.

Why is this happening? What is contributing to the poor health of our children? Well, it's a complex problem. During the last 30 years, we have redesigned our lives and our communities for convenience. Our health behaviours and our health are shaped by our employment, our income, our education, and our social support networks. Many of these factors lie outside the health care system, and sometimes they are beyond individual choice or parental responsibility. That's why for the first time we are working on a plan that will make illness prevention a government-wide priority.

Budget 2012 commits \$2 million to plan to help children to eat well, move more, and grow up healthy. The Department of Health and Wellness has been working with our partners to develop the plan, building on the good work underway across the province. We have taken many steps: a review of literature, best practices, and current activities at all levels of government and around the world; task teams working on healthy eating and physical activity; a scientific advisory panel; a discussion framework outlining trends, challenges, and possible solutions; and conversations with decision-makers across government in all sectors.

An important step in developing the plan was to ask the public and our partners what we can do. Today I am pleased to release the report, *What We Heard: Survey And Consultation Findings for a Childhood Obesity Prevention Strategy*. The report is available online. It confirms that we are on the same page and that we all feel that we need to do more to reshape the places where we live, work, and play to reshape the future and to be healthier.

We consulted more than 1,100 people and groups about challenges and possible next steps, and I'd like thank everyone who participated in the consultation. Some of those people are in the east gallery today: Menna MacIsaac and Elaine Shelton of the Heart and Stroke Association; Louis Brill of the Nova Scotia Lung Association; and Susan Tilley-Russell and Nick Langley from the Arthritis Society, to name a few. I welcome them, as I know all members of the House do. (Applause)

We heard ideas and thoughts from a wide variety of people, Mr. Speaker. Although we won't be able to do everything, there were common themes: increasing access and the affordability and availability of food and opportunities for physical activity; increasing education and information about healthy living; enabling change through policy, legislation and leadership; and ensuring children start their lives well by supporting new parents and families.

We are working with partners across government to incorporate the input and evidence into a plan. We are looking at high-priority actions that we can afford to do this year. Yet, we also need to look at what we can do over the long term to reshape the places where we live, work and play.

Mr. Speaker, we are getting the province back to financial balance, creating jobs and building a strong economy and we are posed for a new level of prosperity. We need to be at our best to prepare for the opportunities ahead. I think we all would agree it starts with our children.

The government is working to prevent chronic disease and health conditions by looking across our programs and services to make sure that illness prevention is a higher priority. Whether that means assessing what we are doing in initiatives such as the Department of Education's Community Use of Schools fund, or helping families make ends meet so that they can make healthier choices, or building safe, walkable, bike-friendly communities so that activity is part of our daily routine, so we can have a real impact on our climate change goals so that we create more vibrant communities that are attractive to new residents and tourists.

We heard that investing in local food can help children learn where food comes from, and supply communities with healthy farm-fresh food and support our rural communities and the agricultural sector.

We heard that we need to look at more policies such as our Nova Scotia School Food Nutrition policy and the regulations and standards that help child care centres serve healthy food, developed in partnership with government and many stakeholders.

Reshaping our future to be healthier will take all of us, Mr. Speaker, taking many steps together. We will continue the journey when we launch a plan for a healthier Nova

Scotia later this Spring. Thank you for the opportunity to speak about this important initiative. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

MR. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for her comments and would like to thank her for a copy of her statement in advance.

Mr. Speaker, childhood obesity has been an issue left unchecked for far too long. The rates of chronic disease will continue to rise, and as the minister stated, we are now seeing adult diseases in children. It's important that we take whatever steps necessary to curb the rising rates of childhood obesity.

The minister's statement was quite interesting in that she stated that literature reviews, the formation of task teams, and the development of a discussion framework has been in the works. Mr. Speaker, these actions are administrative in nature and while important, we need to at some point take action. Every month delayed is a month lost in this battle. None of these steps speak to concrete action.

If the minister wants to consider some concrete action, she only has to look as far as Private Member's Bill No. 18, which I tabled on April 12th calling for a healthy snack program for children in schools, a program that introduces our children to the benefits of locally grown, healthy foods.

Mr. Speaker, we all know that when children are faced with initiatives in school, they take what they learn back to their homes. Interestingly enough, one of the *What We Heard* comments spoke to the need to invest in local food in order to teach children where food comes from, which has the double benefit of supporting our rural communities. A healthy snack program does just that and perhaps this government can pass this bill and get on with the job that needs to be done.

Increasingly, physical activity in school is another concrete action this government can take. I hope to see it in the strategy, whenever we see the strategy. This is an area in our past bills in which the Liberal Party has been very clear and which a Liberal Government would immediately have: daily physical activity in Primary to Grade 9. Today this ministerial statement speaks to very little detail and no plans of action. We hope to see them sooner than later.

On behalf of the Liberal caucus, I would like to thank the many individuals involved in putting together this strategy and those who took the time out of their busy schedules to let their voices be heard. It's now time for government to act.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle.

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for her comments today and, of course, for the advanced copy that we received a few hours ago.

Mr. Speaker, we've been hearing about the new obesity strategy for some time from this government and I was really hoping, and I was very optimistic yesterday when I heard that it was coming today, that we would see some concrete steps on where this government is going. What I do see is a lot of good work. I see a lot of good possibilities. Some of them, I think, could have been gotten from talking to the honourable colleagues around the Cabinet Table. I'm sure the Minister of Agriculture has talked about local foods on many occasions. I'm sure that the Minister of Education has talked about physical activity in schools, and I'm sure that the Minister of Justice has talked about cycling and healthy living and active living - many of these things that should be incorporated into a strategy as it comes forward.

What I find, though, is that regardless of the information that is provided here today, there are really no concrete steps yet. I hope that, in the very near future, we will see that strategy because I do agree with my colleague from the Liberal Party that every month we don't have a strategy is a month lost. Many of us know the issues of obesity. We see it happening in our communities. We see more and more children suffering from the results of childhood obesity and as they move on into adulthood.

You know, Statistics Canada will say 58.6 per cent of Canadian men and 43.5 per cent of women are at increased health risks because of excess weight. This all, of course, costs us money as they go through the health system. Obesity - and some statistics from the Heart & Stroke Foundation, where 60.5 per cent of Nova Scotia women, 58 per cent of Nova Scotia men, aged 18 and over, are overweight or obese; obesity increases the risk of high blood pressure, diabetes, high blood cholesterol, heart disease, and stroke.

Mr. Speaker, again, our caucus will be supportive of a strategy that truly gets to the root of teaching our children, and not just teaching our children but teaching our whole society, how to live healthier lives because I think this is a goal that we, as legislators, should truly aspire towards. Again, I'm very disappointed with the lack of detail that is in this ministerial statement, but I'm hopeful that in the very near future the minister will have something concrete to share with us.

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Premier.

HON. DARRELL DEXTER (The Premier): Mr. Speaker, if I could be permitted to make an introduction before I read my resolution.

MR. SPEAKER: Certainly.

THE PREMIER: Joining us in the gallery today, we have the family of the late Air Marshal Harold (Gus) Edwards and most notably his daughter, Sue Edwards of Clementsport. We also have with us Colonel (Retired) Ernest Cable, an historian at the Shearwater Aviation Museum, and Colonel Ian Lightbody, who is the wing commander at 12 Wing Shearwater. Our guests are with us here today to commemorate the upcoming induction of Air Marshal Edwards into the Canadian Aviation Hall of Fame. I would ask all the members to extend a warm welcome to them today. (Applause)

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

The honourable Premier.

RESOLUTION NO. 275

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

Whereas the late Air Marshal Harold (Gus) Edwards, a First World War veteran and a prisoner of war who fought for England, joined the Canadian Air Force in 1920 to take on the responsibility of recruiting personnel, eventually strengthening the Air Force to the point that it received Royal Assent and was officially established as the Royal Canadian Air Force; and

Whereas in 1934, Air Marshal Edwards was selected to command RCAF Station Dartmouth, now known as 12 Wing Shearwater, where he formed one of the Air Force's first post-Depression squadrons, which under his leadership provided air support to the RCMP by flying the first anti-smuggling patrols off the coast of Nova Scotia; and

Whereas at a gala dinner in Montreal on June 14th, Air Marshal Edwards will be posthumously inducted into Canada's Aviation Hall of Fame for his outstanding contribution to the building of our national air force, nurturing it from its modest and uncertain beginnings to its status as the fourth-largest Allied air force at the end of the Second World War;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly recognize Air Marshal Harold (Gus) Edwards' lengthy and distinguished military career and congratulate his daughter, Sue Edwards, and all of his surviving family on this upcoming induction, a prestigious but worthy honour for a man of his accomplishments.

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. (Standing Ovation)

The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

RESOLUTION NO. 276

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

Whereas April is Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) Awareness Month and during this time we focus on the importance of diagnosis, treatment, and quality of life for those living with IBS; and

Whereas Canada has one of the highest rates of IBS in the world, with five million sufferers, and IBS is one of the most common causes of work and school absenteeism; and

Whereas the Canadian Digestive Health Foundation supports IBS research and provides expert advice and compassionate support to the millions of Canadians suffering from digestive disorders;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House recognize April as Irritable Bowel Syndrome Awareness Month and acknowledge the work done by the Canadian Digestive Health Foundation in helping Canadians take control of their digestive health.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

RESOLUTION NO. 277

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

Whereas for more than 30 years the federal owner/operator and fleet separation policies have been the cornerstone of Nova Scotia's fishery; and

Whereas by protecting the independence of our inshore fleets, these policies have helped create and maintain good jobs in coastal communities across this province; and

Whereas the absence of these two policies in the current DFO Future of Canada's Commercial Fisheries discussion paper has caused widespread concern from groups that represent fishers across Atlantic Canada and elsewhere;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly join our NDP Government in pledging their support for the owner/operator and fleet separation policies and in asking Minister Ashfield to clarify his federal government's position on these policies while also providing additional time to consult more thoroughly with fishers and other affected individuals who rely on the fisheries for their livelihood.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Labour and Advanced Education.

RESOLUTION NO. 278

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

Whereas National Volunteer Week is being celebrated this week from April 15th to April 21st; and

Whereas in commemoration of the week, Nova Scotia Provincial Library and the Department of Labour and Advanced Education worked together to purchase new books to add to the province's Voluntary Sector Resource Collection; and

Whereas 12 titles, including *Working Across Generations: Defining the Future of Non-Profit Leadership* and *Social Media for Social Good* will be sent to regional libraries to add to their resources;

Therefore be it resolved that this House join me in congratulating this team for implementing this project during National Volunteer Week and continuing to help encourage literacy and lifelong learning in this 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 Premier.

RESOLUTION NO. 279

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

Whereas the members of Local 972 of the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union were faced with a difficult decision to make on the future of Port Hawkesbury's NewPage mill; and

Whereas NewPage employees, through their bargaining committee, negotiated in the best interest of their members and their community and in the end made the difficult decisions needed to accept the offer extended by Pacific West Commercial Corporation, their favourable vote clearly sending the message that employees are committed to the NewPage mill and its survival; and

Whereas everyone involved in this process, union leadership and membership alike, were focused on a common outcome, one that is a major step in seeing the NewPage mill reopen and operating well into the future;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House recognize the hard work undertaken by the bargaining committee and the difficult decision made by Local 972 and join me in commending union members for their hard work in ensuring the best possible outcome, not just for the employees but for the NewPage mill, the Strait region, and Nova Scotia.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 32 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 418 of the Revised Statutes of 1989. The Securities Act. (Hon. Graham Steele)

Bill No. 33 - Entitled an Act to Support Diabetic Persons in Nova Scotia. (Mr. Leo Glavine)

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

NOTICES OF MOTION

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

RESOLUTION NO. 280

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

Whereas on March 25, 2010, the NDP Speech from the Throne promised Nova Scotians a Mental Health and Addictions Strategy; and

Whereas two years and 25 days later, Nova Scotians have yet to see any concrete plan when it comes to addressing mental health and addictions in this province; and

Whereas the only concrete actions we have seen to date from the NDP Government is to cut funding used to provide mental health and addiction programs, so they could pay for faster assessments;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the Legislature urge the Minister of Health and Wellness to finally present her long-promised Mental Health and Addictions Strategy and reassure Nova Scotians it will be a well-coordinated and fully-funded, robust strategy needed to address the many needs across this province.

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

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

Is it agreed?

I hear several Noes.

The notice is tabled.

The honourable Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party.

RESOLUTION NO. 281

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

Whereas Canada's 68th National Volunteer Week is being celebrated this week from April 15th to 21st; and

Whereas whether it is in community health care, sports and recreation, heritage and arts or volunteer firefighting, Nova Scotia volunteers graciously donate their time and energy in a larger way than any other group of Canadians, contributing 207 hours annually; and

Whereas nearly 54 per cent of all Nova Scotians volunteer in one way or another;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House applaud the significant commitment of all Nova Scotia volunteers who are so generous with their time in communities all over the 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 Clare.

RESOLUTION NO. 282

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

Whereas Harold Robicheau of Meteghan recently retired after 47 years, two months and six hours with the family business, “Chez Louis à Johnny”; and

Whereas Harold started working at a very young age of 17 years old with his father, on Wednesday, October 14th, 1964; and

Whereas throughout his working career, Harold has seen many changes with technology in today's households;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly congratulate Harold Robicheau on his retirement and wish him many years of good health and happiness for the future.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Inverness.

RESOLUTION NO. 283

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

Whereas a significant fire in Broad Cove Marsh required the response of the Inverness, Lake Ainslie, Margaree and Mabou Volunteer Fire Departments on Monday; and

Whereas volunteers spent upwards of 28 hours fighting the fire, with some having to leave to go to work after hours of effort, but not before saving all of the dozen homes in jeopardy, with one home lost as the fire was reported; and

Whereas it was the Whycocomagh Office of the Department of Natural Resources that coordinated the successful effort;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly acknowledge the generosity and commitment of our volunteer firefighters for the value they bring to the communities of 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 Dartmouth East.

RESOLUTION NO. 284

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

Whereas Atlantic Cirque is Atlantic Canada's first and only School of Circus Arts and Artist Agency; and

Whereas Anais Guimond is the founder and President of Atlantic Cirque and the 2010 Canadian Youth Business Foundation Female Entrepreneur of the Year; and

Whereas 2012 marks the 10th Anniversary of Atlantic Cirque being in business and was marked with a special performance series at the Sir James Dunn Theatre this February;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly congratulate Ms. Guimond and Atlantic Cirque on their 10th Anniversary and wish them many more years of success under the big top.

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. 285

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

Whereas in 1977, the Protection and Preservation of Black Culture in Nova Scotia, better known as the Black Cultural Society, was incorporated as a charitable organization; and

Whereas the Black Cultural Society, through the Black Cultural Centre, carefully keeps the history, artifacts, and traditions of Nova Scotia's Black communities, and preserves them for future generations; and

Whereas on Saturday, April 21st, a 35th Anniversary dinner will be held to mark the achievements of the Black Cultural Society;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly thank members of the Black Cultural Society, past and present, for their dedicated preservation of Nova Scotia's unique Black history and for working so hard to meet the needs and aspirations of our province's Black communities.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Bedford-Birch Cove.

RESOLUTION NO. 286

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

Whereas Fall River resident Rick Howe has spent four decades covering the news in Atlantic Canada, beginning first by doing hockey play-by-play in Campbellton and Newcastle, New Brunswick, then as a reporter at CFBC in 1976 as the station's only reporter, and then moving on to CJCH/C100 in Halifax where he spent over 30 years as a reporter, on-air newscaster, sportscaster, award-winning talk show host, and news director; and

Whereas Rick then moved on to News 95.7 as the host of the eponymous "Rick Howe Show," where he's known for his ability to get to the heart of the matter, and for his fair and even-handed treatment of guests, even as he holds people - particularly politicians - to account; and

Whereas Rick was honoured on April 14, 2012, with the Radio and Television News Directors Association's Lifetime Achievement Award for his remarkable and lengthy career in broadcasting;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly congratulate Rick Howe on his RTNDA Lifetime Achievement Award, and wish him many more years of giving us a hard time.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Hants West.

RESOLUTION NO. 287

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

Whereas the Long Pond Heritage Hockey Classic took place on Long Pond, in Windsor, February 11th, with six teams and 72 players taking part; and

Whereas Rob Frost, a member of Windsor's Hockey Heritage Society, was a driving force behind this exceptionally successful event, along with Windsor Home Hardware and Furnishings owner Jeff Redden, and Mark Cullen, Home Hardware's Celebrity Gardner, and Hockey Heritage President Dave Hunter; and

Whereas the Hockey Classic netted several thousand dollars to assist the Windsor Hockey Heritage Society with their operational funds, and also featured former NHL greats Terry O'Reilly from the Boston Bruins, and Syl Apps, Jr. of the Pittsburgh Penguins, as well as Dave Andrews, the current president of the American Hockey League;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly acknowledge the dedication and hard work of Rob Frost, Jeff Redden, President Dave Hunter and the Windsor Hockey Heritage Society, for a memorable day in the celebration of the grand game of hockey, first known as hurley when it began in Windsor in the early 1800s.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

RESOLUTION NO. 288

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

Whereas on Friday, April 13th, no black cats crossed paths at the Annapolis Royal Historic Gardens, in fact it was The Gardens' lucky day when this world-class gem was recognized as one of the 5 North American Gardens Worth Travelling For; and

Whereas this announcement was a confirmation of what both locals and international travellers have known for years, that The Gardens in Annapolis Royal is well worth travelling for; and

Whereas this latest award, presented at the annual Canadian and International Garden Tourism Awards in Vancouver, British Columbia, is presented to organizations and individuals who have distinguished themselves in the development and promotion of the garden experience as a tourism attraction, and is a true testament to the unwavering dedication of the staff and volunteers who have created a memorable garden experience;

Therefore be it resolved that members of the House of Assembly join me in congratulating the hard-working staff and volunteers at the Annapolis Royal Historic Gardens on this international honour.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Victoria-The Lakes.

RESOLUTION NO. 289

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

Whereas for the last four years, the Baddeck Lions Club has held a bonspiel at the Baddeck curling rink to raise funds for the Kidston Island Beach program; and

Whereas this year 18 teams entered the bonspiel, with 80 curlers participating and many businesses contributing products and services for auction; and

Whereas the event raised over \$12,000 for this year's Kidston Island Beach program;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly applaud and provide thanks to the Baddeck Lions Club, the curling teams, and the sponsors for their contribution to this year's Kidston Island Beach 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 Colchester North.

RESOLUTION NO. 290

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

Whereas the Colchester Historical Society has celebrated Heritage Night for 30 years to recognize people who preserve and promote local heritage; and

Whereas Lisa Davies from Onslow, Colchester North, won the genealogy category for the work she has accomplished in researching the Marsh, Cox, and Fulton roots of her family; and

Whereas Davies began her research eight years ago and her interest has steadily grown so that it has become a daily part of her life;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly congratulate Lisa Davies for receiving a heritage award from the Colchester Historical Society and wish her continue success as she focuses her research on the Trenholm family.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Cape Breton North.

RESOLUTION NO. 291

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

Whereas Maddie Purchase and Kendra Forrest, students at Seton Elementary School in North Sydney, took their idea for an anti-bullying conference to their principal Garland Standing; and

Whereas the anti-bullying conference, held in January, was designed to deal with continuing issues of bullying, to inspire children to appreciate people's differences, and to work on ways to deal with bullying; and

Whereas a host of guest speakers and presenters addressed the problem and suggested possible solutions as they examined the issue of bullying;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating Maddie, Kendra, and the students and staff of Seton Elementary School for taking steps to stop the growing problem of bullying.

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. 292

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

Whereas Heather Hamilton spent most of her adult life in Ontario and moved back to Nova Scotia and settled in Lake Echo seven years ago; and

Whereas since returning to Nova Scotia she has been an active member of the St. David's United Church, volunteering on many of their fundraising events as well as working at the Lake Echo Lions Club and the Lake Echo Seniors group; and

Whereas for the last four years Heather has been an active volunteer, volunteering her time with the Lake Echo Food Bank;

Therefore be it resolved that members of this House recognize the many contributions that Heather Hamilton has made to her community since settling back in Nova Scotia.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Inverness.

RESOLUTION NO. 293

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

Whereas Bonny MacIsaac of Inverness recently became the new president of the Inverness Progressive Conservative Association; and

Whereas Ms. MacIsaac is a lifelong supporter of the Progressive Conservative Party and has been heavily involved, volunteering her time as a member of the association since the age of 16 and serving as the association's secretary for nine years; and

Whereas Bonny is looking forward to her new position as president and is dedicated to the success of the Progressive Conservative Party;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly acknowledge Bonny MacIsaac for her contribution to democracy and good government in Nova Scotia.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Kings West.

RESOLUTION NO. 294

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

Whereas the Berwick Scouting organization will celebrate its 50th Anniversary this year; and

Whereas there are 63 youth now registered in all five sections of scouting, including Beavers, Cubs, Scouts, Venturers, and Rovers; and

Whereas on May 19th of this year the Berwick Scouting group will host a grand opening and camp set-up for the general public to come and share the scouting experience first-hand;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly recognize and congratulate the 2nd Berwick Scouting group on 50 years of scouting in the Berwick area.

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. 295

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

Whereas David Gray, son of Horace and Frances Gray from Howie Centre, recently won the Cape Breton Post's Screaming Eagles Be GM for a Day contest; and

Whereas David entered this contest which commemorated the Eagles' 15th Anniversary season; and

Whereas fans were asked to cast their minds back over the past 15 seasons, put themselves in the position of the team general manager and select two all-star teams including forwards, defence, goalies, enforcers, and coaches;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate David Gray on winning the contest, and recommend his GM services to the Toronto Maple Leafs.

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 Clayton Park.

RESOLUTION NO. 296

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

Whereas on April 11, 2012, Halifax West High School celebrated their 9th annual fundraiser, Head for a Cure, raising more than \$12,000 for the Terry Fox Foundation; and

Whereas students, staff, and guests gathered for a spirited assembly to support those who were having their hair cut or their heads shaved for this important cause; and

Whereas the top fundraiser was teacher Sandra Starratt, who raised more than \$2,000, and the top student was Darren James with a total of more than \$1,500 raised;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of the House congratulate the Halifax West Student Council for continuing the Head for a Cure tradition, which has raised approximately \$75,000, and commend Sandra Starratt and Darren James for their outstanding efforts in raising funds to help find a cure for cancer.

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. 297

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

Whereas the Cabot High Trailblazers basketball team are the Boys 2012 10th Annual Brendan MacLennan tournament champions; and

Whereas Cabot defended their title for the second consecutive year, and is one of only three teams to have won the tournament and have picked up all three titles in the past three events; and

Whereas the player of the game was Andrew Briand who scored 15 rebounds, six points and three assists, while Mason MacDonald earned tournament MVP by scoring 28 points and 14 rebounds in the championship game and averaged 13.3 points, 8.5 rebounds, and a 68 shot percentage for the tournament;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate coach Graham Whitty, assistant coach Evan Mickey, and players Nathan MacKinnon, Lucas Hardy, Cole Hussey, Brett Barron, Austin Belair Glanville, Ben Fricker, Cody Buchanan, Mason MacDonald, Zach Hardy, Andrew Briand, Jordon MacLennan, and Timothy Hatcher, on their 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 Clare.

RESOLUTION NO. 298

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

Whereas Roadside Grill, located in Belliveau Cove, is celebrating 20 years in business this year; and

Whereas David Dugas and his staff, with their warm welcome, have provided the people of Clare and area with outstanding service throughout the years; and

Whereas over the years Roadside Grill has made a significant contribution to the economy of Clare;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating David Dugas and staff for the exemplary service they've provided and wish them continued success in 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 Cape Breton North.

RESOLUTION NO. 299

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

Whereas a postcard describing desperate conditions was sent from Kathryn MacDonald to her grandmother, Theresa, from Global Vision, a school in Tanzania, East Africa, where Kathryn is volunteering and teaching English and science; and

Whereas Theresa MacDonald read the postcard to her church group in North Sydney, and before long other church groups and local elementary schools began fundraising to help Global Vision; and

Whereas Kathryn also raised funds and a total of \$3,500 was raised to greatly help improve conditions at Global Vision;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly thank all those who raised funds for Global Vision and congratulate Kathryn MacDonald on understanding that one little postcard can make a big difference.

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. 300

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

Whereas the University Atlantic Championship Debate Tournament was held at St. Francis Xavier University on March 2nd and March 3rd with the team of Ethan Macaulay and Miguel Chua making it to the semifinals; and

Whereas the teams of Jacqueline Byers, Emma Robillard-Cole, Sean McGarry and Meaghan Carlson made it to the finals, with Sean and Meaghan emerging as Atlantic champions; and

Whereas Jacqueline and Sean were the top team after elimination rounds at the National Debating Tournament at York University, with a record of six wins and zero losses, and went all the way to the national semifinals;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Sodales, the Dalhousie Debate Society, on its impressive showing at both the Atlantic and national debating championships.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Colchester North.

RESOLUTION NO. 301

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

Whereas volunteer fire brigades across Nova Scotia provide an essential service to the residents of their communities; and

Whereas these fire brigades provide emergency response to fires and medical emergencies, and to requests from neighbouring brigades through mutual aid; and

Whereas the fire brigade from Debert, Colchester North, is celebrating its 40th Anniversary this year;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate the Debert Fire Brigade for their 40th Anniversary and thank the members for the public service they provide to protect others, often putting their own lives at risk.

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. 302

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

Whereas Joan Haddow was born and brought up in Halifax and moved to Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, in 1965 where she brought up her three sons; and

Whereas Joan has spent a lifetime of volunteering with many organizations such as youth soccer, youth hockey and various other associations; and

Whereas Joan has knit or crocheted more than 20 afghans and children's sweater sets for Alice House, Adsum House, and Turning Point, as well as donating numerous hats and afghans to her church for their tea and sales, and knit many sweater sets for the Salvation Army for their Christmas program, as well as the IWK where she knit hats for newborns;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House recognize and acknowledge the many contributions Joan Haddow has provided to her community and to all of Nova Scotia.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Yarmouth.

RESOLUTION NO. 303

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 native Tim Vallillee has been living with cystic fibrosis for 44 years and has been a source of inspiration and strength for others living with CF and their loved ones; and

Whereas Tim Vallillee has organized a Great Strides Walk for cystic fibrosis for May 27th in Kingston; and

Whereas almost 30 years ago Tim's mother, Dorothy Vallillee, along with others in the Yarmouth area, created the South West Nova Chapter of Cystic Fibrosis Canada, and Dorothy has also organized a Great Strides Walk for cystic fibrosis for May 27th in Yarmouth;

Therefore be it resolved that members of this House of Assembly recognize and thank Tim Vallillee and his mother, Dorothy Vallillee, for their inspiring dedication to raising funds for research and awareness of cystic fibrosis, and wish Tim continued health and happiness.

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 1:16 p.m. We will finish at 2:16 p.m.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

PREM.: DENNY RELEASE - INVESTIGATE

MR. STEPHEN MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, yesterday the government announced plans to have the Deputy Ministers of Health and Justice, as well as the CEO of Capital Health, head an inquiry into the release of Andre Noel Denny. It is worrying that the departments at the centre of this matter are the ones investigating it. If someone acted inappropriately, these departments would have to point the finger at themselves.

My question to the Premier is, will the Premier commit to an independent investigation of this matter?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, this is a review of the process and procedures that took place to determine whether or not they are adequate. Who better to do that than the departments themselves?

MR. MCNEIL: Well, Mr. Speaker, yesterday the departments didn't even know the location of a third person who did not return on time. The ministers didn't even seem to know that there was a third person missing.

The ministers responsible had no desire to explore the possibility of temporary changes to protocols while the investigation was underway. The Health Minister also said that media advisories of these matters were not issued. In the past they had been. The government is creating a new organization to investigate the police. They don't think that police should investigate themselves, but they think that a government department should.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the Premier is, if he doesn't believe that police departments should investigate themselves, why does he believe that the Departments of Justice and of Health should investigate themselves?

THE PREMIER: Well, first of all, the information that he just gave was wrong. The Minister of Health never said that there were media advisories with respect to previous non-compliance with return after passes. This is a procedural matter on which there is a

federally-constituted board with respect to the discharge of a patient. It spans two departments and an outside agency. That procedural inquiry is best handled by those parties.

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, this is a serious matter, and to have the Departments of Health and of Justice investigate themselves is not appropriate. Nova Scotians want to make sure that, whatever breakdown in protocol happened, we would get to the bottom of it. As the Premier so rightly pointed out, the federal government is also involved in this. We need an independent investigation to ensure that we get to the bottom of what broke down during this release.

I want to read from a disposition order for Mr. Denny: The board concluded that Mr. Denny is a significant threat to the safety of the public, but will grant a conditional discharge as the least restrictive disposition that is appropriate in the circumstances.

This disposition order was sent to the director of Mental Health Services at Capital Health, but Capital Health will be helping to lead this investigation. This is why I believe it's important that we have an independent person looking at what broke down in this situation.

My question to the Premier is, will he appoint an independent investigation to ensure that Nova Scotians can have faith in the findings of this report?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, at this time we will continue with the inquiry that we have announced, the purpose of which is to see if there is any reason for us to go any further. This is a circumstance that clearly is tragic, clearly is a difficult circumstance both for the family of Mr. Taavel but also, of course, for the family of the individual who now finds himself in custody. What we are all seeking to understand and to get answers to are the questions of whether or not the procedures that were in place were adequate, whether or not they were followed, and if not, are there improvements that can be made or is this a case where everything that happened, happened in accordance with the best practices, but still had a tragic result.

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

**PREM. - EAST COAST FORENSIC HOSP.:
UNSUPERVISED LEAVES - NUMBER**

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: My question is for the Premier. Mr. Speaker, yesterday the government did not have information available about how many clients of the East Coast Forensic Hospital were out on unsupervised leave this past week, the week of the tragic murder. It seemed like an obvious question to ask of the government, but yesterday was a very sad day. Now that the government has had another 24 hours, I will ask the

Premier, can he now tell the House how many people, who are clients of the East Coast Forensic unit, were out on unsupervised leave this past week?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, first of all they are patients and they are right across the province. No, I don't know how many are out on day passes today, I don't.

MR. BAILLIE: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think that Nova Scotians would like to know the answer to that question because it is, in fact, a matter of public safety and I certainly accept that the proper terminology is patients. I will ask this question then - of those patients of the East Coast Forensic unit who were out on unsupervised leave, how many were out beyond the allowable leave time?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, my understanding is yesterday there were three from the East Coast Forensic unit. As I said they are patients, this is not an unusual occurrence. There is a protocol for advising the police when people do not return as they are expected to. I'm sure, like many other Nova Scotians, I heard the interview with the director of the facility, yesterday, who said that this is not unusual. In most cases all of them return. Some of them return within 15 or 20 minutes because they've missed a bus or there is some other reason for their delay, but that their record of coming back and participating in the appropriate discharge plan is actually very high.

MR. BAILLIE: I appreciate we are now getting somewhere, the answer is three, I appreciate that. I will ask the Premier, of those three who were out on unsupervised leave beyond their allotted time, are all three accounted for now?

THE PREMIER: Yes, Mr. Speaker, they are and they were all accounted for within, I think, 24 hours.

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

PREM. - MENTAL HEALTH: PROGS.: CUTS - CONFIRM

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL: Yesterday during Question Period the Premier showed the priority he places on mental health. In reference to program cuts for children and youth mental health services the Premier stated, "The changes that you talk about were designed to do just exactly that. It was designed to take existing resources and to apply them more effectively to ensure that more people got better access to care."

Mr. Speaker, I'll table that. Nowhere in the statement did the Premier indicate that mental health programs would have a significant investment to the job that needs to be done. My question to the Premier is, will this government continue to nickel and dime the investment in mental health strategy or will they simply cut valuable mental health programs in order to pay for it?

THE PREMIER: We have protected all of the mental health budgets but we have also been leaders in the establishment of programs in mental health such as the Mental Health Courts. We have created the Psychiatric Intensive Care Unit, which is six beds, and there are numerous other examples of where this government has taken a leadership role with respect to mental health.

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, and they removed mental health workers at the IWK and transferred that to the Valley. Well, that's what we're talking about - because there's no additional funding, what they are doing is moving programs around.

In an affidavit from Janice Paul, the mother of Andre Denny, she commented on the lack of cultural sensitivity in the mental health system, she complained about the lack of options in medication, and she complained about the lack of supports once her son would return home. Sadly, these statements have been echoed by families, right across this province, attempting to access a variety of mental health services.

My question to the Premier is, why have the cries of Nova Scotia families seeking mental health services over the last three years fallen on deaf ears?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, for 20 years nothing happened on mental health services at all. Since this government has come to power we have shone a light on mental health services, we have made progress in terms of ensuring that this is a priority for government. The fact of the matter is, we have looked at programming and looked at the best way to ensure that the resources that we have actually provide services to the people who need it most. I cannot believe that the Leader of the Official Opposition would not agree with that.

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, there's absolutely no question in this province that mental health services have not received attention for a very, very long time. But this government and this Premier have been in power for three years, they have increased the budget to mental health services by .09 per cent, less than \$3 million, but they've added an additional \$50 million to the Industrial Expansion slush fund – and, for God's sake, they've spent a \$.05 million to buy lunch bags to give the kids.

My question is, why are lunch bags and a political slush fund more important than funding mental health services?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, no such thing. In fact, we are providing services to people who need it most. I would note that when the Critic for the Liberal Party was the Minister of Education she had exactly the same kind of program - I think they used tote bags then to put the materials in. It was the same thing, because we're trying to get materials into the hands of young people so that they can compete and have a leg up on literacy - that is important. We are focused on ensuring that the money that we have, the

limited resources we have - because we pay \$1 billion a year in interest on debt run up by those Parties - is actually used. The money we have is used to provide good services.

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

PREM. - SPECIAL NEEDS FUNDING: PAC VOTE - EXPLAIN

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, parents of children with special needs are particularly concerned. The Minister of Education stood in this House and said repeatedly she supports students with special needs despite slashing funding for student supports. On Wednesday at the Public Accounts Committee meeting, at an agenda-setting meeting, government members blocked a discussion on special needs funding.

Actions speak louder than words. I hope the Premier will answer this question to the House so that parents of children with special needs will have an answer. My question to the Premier is, why did government members at the Public Accounts Committee meeting block a discussion on special needs funding?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, special needs funding has of course been protected, and the important thing for parents of special needs children to know is that they have a champion for their children in the Minister of Education.

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, what they're feeling is that they have a government that is blocking an open debate in a committee that would allow them to zero in on funding for children with special needs. They recognize it is this government that has cut \$65 million from public education; they also recognize it is this government and that Minister of Education that has increased administrative costs in the Department of Education; they also know it is this government that is forcing boards to cut teachers and educational assistants; and they also know it is this government that does not support children with special needs.

My question to the Premier is, when can parents expect this government to stand up for students with special needs, instead of reciting speaking notes and trying to block a discussion in Public Accounts Committee?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, there was just a full opportunity for members of this House in the estimates of the Minister of Education to examine fully any aspect of that budget with respect to special education. It's why we have the mechanisms that we have here in the House.

The uncomfortable and inconvenient truth is that the members opposite know that it is this government that protects special needs funding for kids. It is this government that has them first and foremost in our minds when we develop programming, Mr. Speaker.

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, it is that government that is blocking senior staff in the Department of Education from coming here to Public Accounts to, quite frankly, answer questions that the Minister of Education was unable to answer here during the estimates period that the Premier is talking about.

School boards are being forced to cut teachers and they are being forced to cut educational assistants. We should be allowed to debate this issue on the floor of the House of Assembly, and we should be allowed, as Opposition members, to call anyone before Public Accounts Committee to get to the bottom of decisions that this government is unwilling to answer.

Mr. Speaker, this is the same government that spent \$90,000 on TV ads. This is the same government that spent \$0.5 million on lunch bags and is unwilling to debate special needs education on the floor of this House. When will the Premier tell parents when he plans to make students with special needs a priority, not promotions?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, just in case anyone watching at home believes anything that is said by the Leader of the Opposition, they should know that the senior officials at the Department of Education were here in the House of Assembly during the Education estimates. They could have asked any question they wanted with respect to education. He's critical today of the government's advertising program, but I would like to table a press release from the Leader of the Official Opposition in which he was critical of the lack of promotion of programs. It says, "McNeil argues that the NDP is failing to promote the program because they are trying to find savings through decreased participation."

Mr. Speaker, do they like us to promote programs or don't they?

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

PREM.: CAPITAL HEALTH STRIKE - DURATION

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. The clock is now ticking down officially on a very serious strike at Capital Health involving 3,600 important health care workers. Capital Health is already closing beds. They are scaling back services like blood collection and surgeries are being cancelled in anticipation of a strike.

The Premier left metro Halifax without transit services for over 44 days. My question to the Premier is, how many days will the Premier allow a strike at Capital Health to go on before he steps in to ensure proper patient care?

THE PREMIER: There is, as the member opposite knows, a collective bargaining process underway now. It is at a very sensitive point and we are hopeful that soon the

parties will get back together and resume some bargaining. We hope there will be a resolution to this in a reasonable manner. I'm sure that the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party would wish that as well.

MR. BAILLIE: Well, Mr. Speaker, we could all hope, but the job of a Premier is actually to plan and be ready to ensure that patient services are open. I'd ask the Premier to consider the case of Lisa Moorehouse, a 39-year-old mother who was diagnosed, unfortunately and very sadly, with stage 3C uterine cancer. She has had her surgery and is on the list for fast-track radiation and chemotherapy at Capital Health two weeks from now. Now that procedure is at risk, so on top of dealing with this awful disease, she now has to worry about whether she is going to get the treatments she needs.

My question to the Premier is, can the Premier assure Lisa Moorehouse and the hundreds of others like her that she will get the treatment that she needs and deserves?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, obviously I can't speak to individual cases. That would be an inappropriate thing for me to do. What I can say is that there is an emergency services agreement in place that is designed to provide access to those services throughout a strike, very much like the one that was described by the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, I guess the answer is no, the Premier can't provide Lisa Moorehouse and the hundreds of others like her with that assurance. But certainly they deserve to know that their services and their treatments will be there for them when they need them and they will not be used as pawns in a negotiation between the government and its union. So my question to the Premier is, will he at least stand up and tell people who are on those lists for surgery, like Lisa Moorehouse, that he is ready to do everything necessary to keep those services going?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, perhaps the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party didn't hear my response but what I said is that there is a comprehensive emergency services agreement in place between the union and Capital Health designed to provide those kinds of emergency services like the one that he has talked about. Obviously, it would be inappropriate to speak to individual cases, especially when he has provided nothing in the way of a background document about it.

I want Nova Scotians to understand that we are working very hard to try to come to a reasonable, negotiated agreement. The parties are at the table. They both know that they have our support - I'm sorry, we want them to get back to the table. They both know that we are pledged to give whatever support we can to help them to get there and to resolve this in a reasonable fashion.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester North.

EDUC. - LUNCH BAGS: TENDER - TERMINOLOGY

HON. KAREN CASEY: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Minister of Education. Yesterday in a response to a question, the minister took exception to the use of the word 'lunch bag' when speaking about her initiative for 4-year-olds. So my question to the minister is this, what are the bags called in the most recent tender?

HON. RAMONA JENNEX: The Play-Talk-Learn resources that are being distributed to all of our pre-school students as they come into Primary registration are housed in an insulated lunch bag. The resource is called Play-Talk-Learn.

MS. CASEY: Mr. Speaker, the language that's being used - lunch bags - comes directly from the tender document, which refers to them as a request for a standing offer for children's lunch bags. So the minister has no one to blame but herself for the term "lunch bag" but the decision is much more important than the name.

When resources are limited, when services to students are being cut, when teaching positions and other support positions are being reduced, when the anti-bullying strategies are being delayed, Nova Scotians are disappointed that this minister has not identified students in public schools as her priority.

So my question to the minister is, how can the minister justify to those students and parents that her priority to purchase lunch bags over funding programs and services is the right decision?

MS. JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, we have a program so that we can make sure that our pre-school students have the resources that they need before they come to school. The Play-Talk-Learn resources include books. It has music. I could go on as to what's in it, but the organization of the resources that are in the bag came from the determination of our reading specialists to replace the Welcome to School bag that the member for Colchester North signed off on in 2006-07 which went into the school board of CCRSB, Tri-County, and CSAP. The next year in 2007-08, it did include Halifax.

So four school boards from the year 2006 to the year 2009 received Welcome to School bags at the tune of \$32 a resource. This government has expanded upon making sure that these are resources that actually meet the needs of our students. They cost \$35 a resource. They have the resources that are appropriate to learning. This is for every student in the Province of Nova Scotia when they come to school. (Applause)

MS. CASEY: Mr. Speaker, perhaps if the minister wanted to check, those years when those resources were purchased, there was no cut to funding to the classrooms. (Applause)

Once again the minister is hiding behind school boards saying they asked for the bags. When school boards were contacted, not one board said that they had asked for the lunch bag. Rather, the boards are looking at the purchasing power of \$0.5 million. That could be eight teachers, could be 16 education assistants, could be 20 librarian technicians or it could be 20,000 lunch bags. Nova Scotians are shaking their head over this minister's decision.

My question to the minister is, knowing she made the wrong decision and knowing the tender closing date is not until April 27th, will the minister now make the right decision - withdraw the request for lunch bags and put the money where it belongs, in the classroom?

MS. JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, one of the most important things we can do is to make sure our students are going to be successful in school. This has been identified by the reading specialists in every single one of our boards across this province.

The member opposite is wrong in saying that the school boards were not consulted or did not want these. This is a component of Succeeding in Reading. We're making sure we're reaching our students. These are the resources that have been identified by our reading specialists for making sure our students are going to be successful. In a perfect world, all children would have the materials available to them but our society has changed and especially people who live in poverty do not have all the resources available to them. We are making sure that every pre-school child in the Province of Nova Scotia, and their families, have the benefit of the appropriate resources.

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

COM. SERV. - TALBOT HOUSE REVIEW: MIN. - READING CONFIRM

MR. KEITH BAIN: Mr. Speaker, yesterday during Question Period, the Minister of Community Services said, “. . . there were no specific individual accusations . . .” contained in the Talbot House organizational review. She also said, “. . . it was not an individual review whatsoever, without any accusations in there.” I'll table that.

My question through you to the minister is, could the minister please tell the House whether or not she's read the report in question?

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker: Yes, definitely I've read it.

MR. BAIN: Mr. Speaker, I'll table the report for the minister just so that I can be sure the minister and I are talking about the same report.

A disclaimer on the beginning page says, “This report is for the use of the Board and is submitted to Talbot House in confidence.” It goes on to say, “The report contains

confidential and identifiable personal information.” It provides a strong warning that, “. . . the Board of Talbot House consult with legal counsel before disclosing the report beyond the intended audience, or making any use of the report or its contents other than for the purpose . . .” of assisting the board to improve organization and operations of the facility.

I guess the minister must have skipped over that disclaimer when she sat down to read the report. My question through you to the minister is, why did the minister allow the report to be published, for all to see, on the Internet this week, when at the time the report was written her department was so determined its contents be kept confidential?

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, what we did is, we kept very good communications with the board of directors. We had public requests for that review through the media and because of the fact that we are a transparent government, we made the decision to put it on the Web site, and the board knew that.

MR. BAIN: Mr. Speaker, if the minister had read the report, she would have noticed there are direct references to Father Paul Abbass’ character and behaviour. By my count there are nine such references, and the way these references are presented should be noted.

My final question to the minister is, in light of the callous way the minister’s department has treated Father Abbass’ reputation, will the minister do the right thing and apologize to Father Abbass?

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, let me be clear. Any reference in that review is with respect to the organizational workings of that board of directors and not what they’re trying to imply. It was to look to see if they were meeting the standards of their service agreement.

Let me also say that when I came in as minister in 2009, I was absolutely shocked that most of the service providers in this government through Community Services did not have any contracts or service agreements. This one was developed in 2008. So for years and years and years, that group over there wrote cheques with no accountability back to the taxpayers of this province.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clare.

EDUC.: FUNDING CUTS - CLASSROOM EFFECTS

HON. WAYNE GAUDET: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Education. Last year on April 21, nearly a year ago today, the Minister of Education stood in this House and said the following about her funding cuts: “. . . I trust that the impact will not be felt by the students in the classroom.”

I'll table a copy of Hansard for the minister to check, Mr. Speaker. My question to the minister is, can the minister stand in this House today and say the same thing about this year and her latest round of funding cuts?

HON. RAMONA JENNEX: I would like to remind everyone that we have increased the student funding. Per-child funding has increased in this province. As the school boards go through their budgets, they have been instructed to make sure that the classroom is protected.

MR. GAUDET: Mr. Speaker, the minister forgot to inform the House that public education in Nova Scotia is the second lowest in all of our country. That's what she should say. (Applause)

Mr. Speaker, boards are starting to approve their budgets for the upcoming school year, and they are forced to make some tough decisions because of this government. The Tri-County Regional School Board would not say the impact of this minister's cut will not be felt in the classroom. In fact, the board superintendent said, ". . . any reductions will have impacts on services and supports to schools." I'll table a copy of that article.

This year's cuts, coupled with inflation and cost of living, amounted to a \$2.5 million reduction in budget in this year alone. Boards are already cut to the core after last year's cut. So again to the minister, will the minister tell members of this House today where she thinks \$2.5 million in savings can be cut where it will not impact students in the classroom?

MS. JENNEX: Boards were given a mandate around their budgets. We are asking all boards to make sure that resources and the classroom are protected. They are to look at administration and consultants, in those areas, to make sure that the classroom is protected. We are making sure that the resources match the need of our students. We have declining enrolment. We have increased the per-student spending and our ratio is the lowest it's ever been in the province.

MR. GAUDET: Mr. Speaker, the Tri-County Regional School Board is looking at cutting 11 teaching positions. I repeat for the minister to hear - they're looking at cutting 11 teaching positions as part of their budget-cutting process this year. Losing these teaching positions means larger class sizes, fewer class offerings, and fewer supports for our students, of course. The students that need the most support are the most vulnerable to this minister's callous cuts. Parents in the Tri-County area are looking to this minister to be an education leader, and instead she's gutting the supports and services students rely on. Again, will the minister stand up for students in the Tri-County Regional School Board and admit her cuts are affecting the classroom and restore funding to education?

MS. JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, we definitely are making sure that students in the Tri-County are protected. Their decreased enrolment is 3.2 per cent and we made sure that

their budget was capped in at 2. I just want to remind everybody that we are standing up for every child in this province and we have a plan, Kids and Learning First and we are making sure that the resources match the needs of our changing society. Thank you.

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

COM. SERV. - DEPT.: REVIEW - COMMITMENT

MR. ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, my question through you will be to the Minister of Community Services. In the last few weeks we have had serious questions about the department's handling of the situation and risk at the East Preston Day Care and the safety of the children there. This week serious questions about the department's handling of Talbot House have emerged. My question to the Minister of Community Services is, will the minister commit to having a full, independent, operational review of her department?

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, we followed absolutely every process that we have the authority to process, so the answer is no.

MR. MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I'm shocked and appalled at that answer. The minister stonewalled on the East Preston Day Care Centre, she talked about everything but the safety of the children. She's stonewalling on Talbot House and showing blatant disregard for the reputation of Father Paul Abbass. My question to the minister is, why is an operational review on Talbot House okay, but not for the minister's department?

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, I was very clear in the safety of the children because we have the jurisdiction in these types of situations to investigate current allegations, which we did. There was no evidence so the RCMP has the right to investigate historical allegations; they just can't seem to get it. It's also very interesting that the only one who is bringing up the name in this House is that Party over there that's causing the trouble.

MR. MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I can say as a parent and grandparent that there's not a single Nova Scotian who would accept that answer from that minister with regard to children's safety. If this minister is not up to the job maybe it's time that the Premier put someone in there that can do the job. My question for the minister is - I'll ask it again - in light of two serious abuses of power by that department, why not put the department through the same kind of operational review that the minister imposed on Talbot House and all of those reputable people who are on the board of directors at that centre?

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, the fact is the organizational review was not something that was just focused on Talbot House. We have done a number of organizational reviews and within the organizational reviews there will be things that will

come out because of the fact that we want to improve services between that organization and ourselves.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

LBR. & ADV. EDUC. - NSCC TUITION HIKE: SUPPORT EXPLAIN

MR. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, this government is overseeing tuition increases, student fee increases and massive cuts to post-secondary education funding. Under the NDP's watch \$75 million was slashed from post-secondary education in the province. On April 12, 2004, the Transportation and Infrastructure Minister, in his role as the Opposition's Education Critic said, "Here it is again, they're trying to balance their books on the backs of students."

Mr. Speaker, my question to the Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal Minister is, if the minister thought slashing the funding to universities was awful in 2004, why does he support removing \$75 million from the system today?

MR. SPEAKER: That's not within the minister's portfolio, so I would ask the honourable Minister of Labour and Advanced Education to answer that question, please.

HON. MARILYN MORE: Mr. Speaker, as I have said on the floor of this Chamber before, we are attempting to provide for the sustainability of our post-secondary system in this province, particularly the universities. We have 11 excellent institutions, but certainly they need to be innovative. They need to make sure that they are meeting the needs of Nova Scotians as well as the fiscal capacity of Nova Scotians. That period of transition and transformation is currently underway. Thank you.

MR. CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, the fact is that education is getting more expensive under this government. NSCC was forced to increase tuition and lay off staff. Dal was forced to increase tuition and student fees. I want to quote the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal again. On April 12th, he said, "I challenge the Minister of Education to reassure the public that this government is not considering hiking tuition fees at NSCC in the upcoming budget."

My question for the minister is, if it wasn't okay for the Progressive Conservatives to hike tuition at NSCC, why is it okay for the NDP?

MS. MORE: Mr. Speaker, it became very obvious when we became government in 2009 that the status quo was not sustainable in this province. We have carefully examined every sector. We are making strategic investments to improve our economy and also to invest in our human resources, including our students. I am very proud of our track record, in terms of our incredible improvements to student assistance and increasing opportunities for training and learning within this province. Thank you.

MR. CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, I hope the minister gets used to improving the affordability measures, because we're going to need them if tuition keeps going up in the Province of Nova Scotia. The only thing that has become obvious is this government's disrespect for the education system in the Province of Nova Scotia.

I'm going to quote the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal again, from December 8, 2004: "How can Newfoundland, economically very much like this province, put a freeze on and subsequently in the last four years actually reduce fees by 22.7 per cent?" Mr. Speaker, the minister added, ". . . that takes some political guts and this is the government that hasn't demonstrated much of it today."

My question to the minister is, why does this government attack university spending instead of showing some political guts and investing in the future of this province?

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The word "guts" is unparliamentary. I would ask the honourable member to retract that word, please.

MR. CHURCHILL: I retract that quote and will replace it with "intestinal fortitude," Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

MS. MORE: Mr. Speaker, this government is actually investing \$48 million new dollars into post-secondary education in terms (Interruption) I'm giving the answer. I know the facts. (Applause)

Mr. Speaker, this government has added \$48 million new dollars to the base of university education, and that's not even taking into account the Excellence and Innovation Fund of \$25 million. We are being strategic in investing in students and investing in the capacity of universities to be able to do innovative initiatives, in order to share services, reduce expenses, and focus as much money as possible on the education of our students. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston.

SNSMR: HRM TAX RATES - MIN. CONFIRM

HON. KEITH COLWELL: Mr. Speaker, last Thursday in response to a question, the Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations stated that there would be no tax increases as a result of the NDP's reversal on the MOU. In fact, he went so far as to say, ". . . tax rates have gone down in the HRM and basically across the province. We're quite pleased with the result." I'll table that comment from Hansard.

My question to the minister is, will the minister verify his comments from last week that municipal residents will experience no tax increases?

HON. JOHN MACDONELL: Mr. Speaker, the municipalities, depending on what project or extra service they may want to add on from one year to the other - but in terms of the assessment across the province, actually the cap is at 3.9 per cent. Assessment across the province is an average of 6 per cent, so actually above the cap - and the member may have noticed in today's paper, no tax increase in Kings County and actually HRM as well.

MR. COLWELL: Mr. Speaker, we know that Queens has increased its commercial, residential and resource property tax rates by 3 per cent. We're hearing from other municipalities across the province that are struggling with the decision as a result of this minister tearing up the MOU. I have a document here from The Nova Scotia ChronicleHerald, dated April 18th, in which it states that the Municipality of Queens has raised taxes as a result of the MOU being destroyed.

My question for the minister is, in addition to Queens, does the minister know what other municipalities are faced with the prospect of having to raise taxes to make up for the shortfall created by the NDP?

MR. MACDONELL: Mr. Speaker, like I said, depending on what projects certain municipalities may take on - certainly in Queens, and at their request, they wanted to have a cut in the taxes for Bowater, so if they increased their rate for their citizens to make up for that, that's their business, not ours.

Mr. Speaker, the assessments across the province are up. Municipalities have not increased their rates. If assessments are up and the rates stay the same, the tax bills would have increased. That's their business, that's not as a result of the MOU.

MR. COLWELL: Well, evidently the minister did not read the article in the paper where the mayor of Queens clearly stated - clearly stated - that as a result of the MOU being torn up, taxes did increase by 3 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, Queens had to raise its tax rate to make up for the shortfall that was created by the minister tearing up the MOU. We are also hearing from Colchester, Stewiacke, and others that are facing similar shortfalls on their books as a result of the MOU. This is putting service delivery at risk, and at the same time it's becoming likely that more and more Nova Scotians will be paying higher property taxes as a result of the removal of this MOU.

My question to the minister is, will the minister revisit his decision to tear up the MOU and reconsider his refusal to share service agreements?

MR. MACDONELL: Mr. Speaker, look, I'm really pleased that the member opposite was a municipal councillor because maybe at some point he'll pick up on the message I'm trying to give him. The member doesn't seem to understand that the costs under the MOU are the same costs that those municipal units had been paying for some 15 years now; they're not additional costs. As a matter of fact, they are costs imposed by the previous Liberal Government that he was a member of.

Now, Mr. Speaker, an increase in assessment would allow the municipal units to have an increase in income. They've decided to take advantage of the increase in assessment for greater dollars from their constituents - that's something that municipal councillors will have to defend with their own electorate in the months to come.

The member should also understand that the MOU that was signed, they signed the entire MOU including the clause that allowed the province to move out of the MOU.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants West.

ENERGY: KWH COSTS - TABLE

MR. CHUCK PORTER: Mr. Speaker, recently the Minister of Energy couldn't answer how much a kilowatt hour of electricity from Muskrat Falls will cost our ratepayers, or what the cost is of a kilowatt hour of wind. This is information the minister needs to know. I don't believe the minister increased their renewable targets and hasn't at least done some rough estimates of the cost of each renewable source.

Will the minister table, by the end of the day, the estimates done by his department on the cost of a kilowatt hour of electricity for ratepayers from various renewable sources that were used to make the decision to increase these targets?

HON. CHARLIE PARKER: Mr. Speaker, thank you to the honourable member for his question. Certainly we're all interested in the least expensive cost of electricity in our province. We know it's important for our homeowners and small businesses and industry as well.

We're looking at a portfolio approach in our province, looking at renewables, the importance of natural gas, hydroelectricity from Newfoundland and Labrador, and all of those together gives us stability, that we won't be dependent on coal. We've been dependent on coal for the last number of years, in fact at one time it was 75 per cent of our cost increase. It really, really influences, so that's why we're getting away from coal and going to renewable and more energy conservation.

MR. PORTER: Mr. Speaker, we all want more renewable energy, but it has to be done at a pace families and business can afford. It's the minister's job to know how much

each of these resources cost and to protect families and businesses from skyrocketing energy costs.

My question to the Minister of Energy is, will the minister admit he did not do a socioeconomic study of how much families and businesses can afford when he raised the targets?

MR. PARKER: Mr. Speaker, certainly the source of renewable electricity from Newfoundland and Labrador is an important part of our energy mix. The Newfoundland and Labrador Government is looking at the cost and the environmental assessment and the job benefits of that project, and when the time comes our URB here will determine, looking at the capital costs, the benefits to Nova Scotians and the rate of return - and as well as the renewable energy for the next 35 years, the URB will use all the expertise from Newfoundland and Labrador, as well as their own expertise, to come up with the right decision for Nova Scotians.

MR. PORTER: Mr. Speaker, the minister has nothing, obviously, no proof of anything. When he was asked recently about the research that was done to make the target decision the minister said he consulted Nova Scotians - opinion research is hardly enough for a decision of this magnitude, especially where no costs were secured. The minister is failing in his responsibility to protect our families and our businesses in this province.

Will the minister table the supporting information that was used to make the decision to increase the renewable targets? - or maybe the Premier wants to challenge it?

MR. PARKER: Mr. Speaker, the CEO of Emera has stated that the cost of renewable electricity from Newfoundland and Labrador on the Muskrat Falls project will be comparable in price to other renewables. That's a good, positive statement that it will be comparable to other renewables, and it's going to give us the best possible energy prices for the next 35 years at very stable prices.

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

PREM. - OAS CHANGES: PM CONSULTATION - DETAILS

MS. DIANA WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, with the federal budget, the Harper Conservatives announced changes to Old Age Security which will see the age of eligibility rise from 65 to 67. This change will have a direct impact on seniors in our province. To quote from a recent report from the Canadian Centre on Policy Alternatives: "Raising the age of eligibility for OAS/GIS to age 67 would have a negative impact on the incomes of all seniors in the age- 65-to-67 age bracket, but by far the greatest impact would be on those who have little or no retirement savings and limited benefits from the Canada Pension Plan."

My question to the Premier is what discussions has the Premier had with the Prime Minister regarding these changes and the negative impact that it will have on Nova Scotia's seniors?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, we're, of course, acutely aware of any change in the rules with respect to OAS and the manner in which they might impact on Nova Scotia. As the member opposite knows these changes, although they've been announced, are actually some years out in their implementation and in their effect. But let me assure you that this government does everything it can to protect our seniors from cost increases. It's one of the reasons why we undertook things like taking the HST off of home energy and a host of other things that are really designed just to make life a little bit easier for our seniors.

MS. WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, we're acutely aware of some of the increases that this government has put on electricity bills, gasoline, cost of food, extra taxes through HST so I'm glad that the government is thinking of affordability for once, they're not doing it.

Mr. Speaker, even if these changes are some years out Nova Scotians are making plans, themselves, for retirement and they are concerned about the impact that this is going to have. Nova Scotians need to know that their concerns are being heard in Ottawa. These changes will definitely have a negative impact on all seniors and will particularly target those with the lowest incomes and those that do physically demanding jobs.

My question to the Premier is, what steps is the Premier taking to ensure that the concerns of Nova Scotian seniors have been heard and understood in Ottawa now?

THE PREMIER: Well, Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite might know, the Council of the Federation will actually be meeting here in Nova Scotia in July. These issues and the approach to them are always part of the agenda. We made the point going in to the last budget that we were concerned about these types of initiatives, their impact on our citizens and therefore the impact, ultimately, on the budgets of the province. But I am pleased to say that in Ottawa the fight with respect to the Old Age Security and with respect to these issues is being ably taken forward by Thomas Mulcair, by Megan Leslie, by Peter Stoffer and by Robert Chisholm.

MS. WHALEN: I would hope that the government and the Premier of this province aren't sitting on their hands allowing others to speak for Nova Scotia's problems. It's their job, it's the Premier's job to go and represent seniors in this province.

To quote again from the report which I'm happy to table in case the government has not read it, "Delaying the age of eligibility for OAS . . . will result in significantly reduced incomes for those who are unable to replace OAS . . . income from earnings in low wage jobs." Mr. Speaker, we all know that we have a lot of people working in low wage jobs in this province. There's a great concern throughout the province over these changes. Nova

Scotians are angry at the Harper Conservatives for imposing these and they are disappointed in the Premier not standing up for them.

My question to the Premier is, why is the Premier not standing up to the Harper Conservatives, telling them these changes are unacceptable and that they will hurt Nova Scotians?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, to the contrary the federal government knows full well what our concerns are, but there are a number of things that we want to do. First of all we want to make sure that we move people out of low wage jobs into better paying jobs so they are not reliant on it. That's why we have projects on the horizon, like the Lower Churchill, like the ships contract, like the investment in the offshore. It's why we're investing in skills trade training for young people so that by the time they get to retirement age they're going to have good jobs with pensions, with incomes. Unfortunately 15 years ago when this work should have been done by a Liberal Government it wasn't.

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

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, Michelin will add 500 jobs in South Carolina, invest \$750 million to expand its operation there because the state is seen as pro business. Mr. LeBlanc of Michelin said that Nova Scotia's new labour law doesn't help him build a case for Nova Scotia in the future

Mr. Speaker, in the last three years the Annapolis Valley is down 4,400 jobs, the southern region is down 3,400 jobs. During the NDP mandate the areas are collectively out about 7,800 jobs. Five hundred, good paying, full-time Michelin jobs could do a lot to help the struggling Valley and southern regions but the NDP had to pay back the big labour bosses.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism is, why won't the minister admit that the NDP's labour-friendly laws have failed the people of the Valley and the southern region and hurt their chances of attracting Michelin's 500 jobs and \$750 million in new investment?

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. The time allotted for Oral Question Period has expired. I'm sorry I got carried away, it was that good today.

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: Before we go, the honourable member for Kings North on an introduction.

MR. JIM MORTON: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to call the attention of the House to the east gallery. I noticed that my former boss, Dr. John Campbell, is in the gallery and I am pleased to welcome him here. Dr. Campbell is the director of Mental Health and Addictions Services for Annapolis Valley Health and does an awful lot to make the Annapolis Valley community a better place. Thank you for visiting. I'm sure all of us will give him a warm welcome, as we usually would. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East on an introduction.

MR. ANDREW YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, in the west gallery I'd like to draw the members' attention to Mr. Allan Billard, who is here with the Shubenacadie Canal Commission today. (Applause)

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

The honourable member for Preston.

HON. KEITH COLWELL: Mr. Speaker, it's with pleasure that I stand today to talk on the motion to go into Supply. I've spoken in this Chamber many times about the financial crisis that the Better Deal for Today's Families that this NDP Government is imposing on Nova Scotians. The further it goes - and I've been called by the members across there, "the member of Gloom and Doom", probably gloom and doom for their Party's next election when people realize exactly why they don't have the money they used to have to spend on things because their income tax has increased and bracket creep that the government said they wouldn't do. They said they wouldn't put the GST up. They put the GST up, costing Nova Scotians \$1 million a day - \$1 million a day.

We've seen the results of high gas prices, the price of gasoline going from about \$1.05 - it was up to \$1.45, we got a big reduction - we're down to \$1.42 now. When you see those things happen and then the price of heating oil goes through the roof, as time goes on, all these extra costs that are facing Nova Scotians, that today's deal for better families or families better deal for families, whatever the slogan was during the campaign for the NDP

Government that is in place now, looks pretty pale when I have someone come into my office and say - and I saw this advertisement on TV and I never thought it would happen - come into my office and say, well if I can do this, maybe I can heat my home next winter. Think about that, just think about that. Those are individuals on a fixed pension, a pension that doesn't rise as the cost of living goes up. It's impossible, with the huge cost of living that has gone up in this province.

We've seen the Yarmouth ferry cancelled by this government. It has devastated Yarmouth and I can tell you that even in my own constituency, we have very few tourist operators, and you ask any one tourist operator any place in this province, has the cancellation of that ferry made any difference, and the answer is, yes, instantly, yes. We've had fewer nights booked, that means fewer people working at our establishment, fewer people working in Nova Scotia. The statistics are out on how many people are working in Nova Scotia and it's not good, it's not good. We see a lack of economic development here. There's no insight, there's no drive to really make Nova Scotia more competitive.

We talked about the pro-union bill that was passed, and people like Michelin Tire say it doesn't look like a good environment to invest here anymore. Michelin Tire is a very large company and actually, I used to do business in France, and one of the business people I dealt with there, I recall when everybody in France was going to unionize and Michelin told the Government of France if you unionize, we move, we move, and guess what the Government of France did? They didn't impose unionism on Michelin. So when Michelin says that it's not a good place to invest, I wouldn't fool around with Michelin, I can tell you, because they will not tolerate unionization in their facilities because they pay their people very well, they have excellent benefits, and indeed there is no need for a union at Michelin.

When you look at all the devastating things that have happened in this province since 2009 when this government came in, it's unbelievable. It's just unbelievable. Serious cuts in education. The Education Minister says we've got more funding per student than we've ever had. Well, how come we have the second lowest funding per student in the whole country? So it's just a play on words, it's just another way for somebody to say, you know, we've got more funding per student, but if you take millions and millions of dollars out of the system, how can you possibly have more money per student? Well, the student population is going down a little bit, that would account for a little bit of it but not more money per student.

So I think they must have recalculated this somewhere, some type of an inventive accounting system that shows that this is in place. It sounds good and somebody who doesn't realize the millions have been gone, so how can there be more funding per student? It's just a play on numbers, that's all it is; you just recalculate. Even the class sizes - I went the other day to school with the teachers, that was promoted by the Nova Scotia Teachers Union. It was a wonderful day. I got an opportunity to talk to teachers and, do you know what? Most of the teachers in the school I went to told me their class sizes are going up next

year – up – up substantially, but yet the minister stands here and tells us the class sizes are going down.

So who do we believe? I tend to believe the school teacher who's on the front line and is the one who has to put up with a change in her classroom. They weren't complaining. They were not complaining about more students. They say it's going to be more difficult. It's harder on them to give quality education and that's the secret – quality education.

We see so many changes happening. There's a very poor environment here now for business. Most people who work in government say, and the general population may not think that's serious but it is serious. It is serious. If business doesn't stay in Nova Scotia, employ Nova Scotians and ensure that Nova Scotians have good jobs on a steady basis through private industry, our economy is going to fail. I've said here before, and it's a message people have got to understand, anything we do as elected members here, we add nothing to the economy. The people in the civil service at any level add nothing to the economy – important jobs, I will say that, very important jobs, but they add nothing to the economy. If you get some mom and dad operation that are working in their backyard or in their homes, or a little business they have, employing one or two people, they add to the economy, they pay real taxes. The taxes they pay aren't recirculated government dollars that don't generate any economic growth.

If you take a small business that exports outside the province, well, years ago when I was in manufacturing and exporting out of the province, the Department of External Affairs told me for every dollar I exported out of Nova Scotia, or for every import I could replace, it was equivalent to \$7 economic benefit to Canada and, indeed, when we're in this province, was directly to this province.

So when you look at these things and you see the backward motion this government has made, we're going to be hit on all sides, we're hit on all sides. Taxes have increased. The cost of everything has gone up. There's no environment anymore for business, no encouragement for business to move forward and make things happen and indeed help the economy grow. There's no plan for economic development. There are all kinds of statements and all kinds of other things that appear on the surface to do something, but in reality, our jobs are decreasing in this province. At the same time, the cost of government is going up, the cost to municipalities' government is going up and everybody is paying more taxes.

The Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations just said, well they've got enough money because the assessments went up 6 per cent. I understand all that, I read all that, but letters that I have in my possession indicate differently. There is indication that, indeed, property taxes are going to go up because of this MOU, so that's another blow to industry and individuals.

The members across there sort of laugh and they say, well all this isn't true and all that. They say it's not true, not true. They haven't been talking to their constituents because when they talk to their constituents they're going to find out, people are struggling. They're having a very hard time paying their taxes. Some people have stopped insuring their homes because they simply can't afford to do it anymore.

We've had several people, over many years that I've been an MLA, who haven't been able to pay their insurance and lost their homes in fires; they're absolutely devastated. I'm getting more and more people coming in and saying, I can't pay my insurance, I can't pay it; I hope my house doesn't burn down. How would you like to live like that every day in fear that your house might burn down or somebody break into it and terrorize the place and absolutely destroy it? That is a direct result of all the extra costs this government has imposed on people.

When they put the fees up for everything in the province, and some twice in one year, the Minister of Finance got up last year and told us, it's what it costs to provide the service. Well, when I asked the same question of the minister in the Red Room, if he could give me a breakdown of exactly what everything costs, all these different fees and services - guess what? They couldn't provide it. When I questioned him further and further, no one in the department - now I know the department have very professional staff and should have that information - the truth came out that the Minister of Finance told me to increase these fees because they needed some more tax revenue. Wasn't that pretty interesting? That's all a matter of public record now.

So tax increase after tax increase and now the government says they're going to take the GST off, 1 per cent one year and another 1 per cent, well that's about as good as the promise they made to not put the GST up. So I have absolutely no faith, and I know Nova Scotians have no faith in them, that they will actually do that. By that time the economy is going to be hurt so badly, even if they did decide to take it off, it's going to take years and years for Nova Scotia to recuperate.

As we go forward and we see exactly how devastating this government has been to the province, you know, in 20 years time we'll look back at it and say, the NDP Government was here. They did some pretty devastating things to the families in Nova Scotia, to the industries in Nova Scotia, we're going to look back and say, we were always being criticized, on this side of the House, for things that we did in the past and there were some tough decisions made in the past, there were. I can remember in 1993 after the election, the province was basically bankrupt, it was bankrupt. It was bankrupt, it was that simple and we barely managed to crawl out from underneath that. Those were very, very difficult times.

At the same time, we didn't institute laws that would make unionization almost automatic in the province and cost people a fortune in small business and ultimately shut some small businesses down. I'll use Michelin as an example, again, and some of the large

manufacturers who came into our Red Room in the Law Amendments Committee and stated these facts very clearly. If Nova Scotians don't believe these businesses, they'll believe them when they leave the province and these good jobs, these well-paid, high-paid jobs are gone and that revenue from the income tax and the corporate taxes that these companies have been paying, are gone, and try to make those up again, you're not going to make them up, you won't make them up.

We watched in Dartmouth, Moirs candy pack up and leave the province. There were very well-paid jobs there. There were no minimum-wage jobs at Moirs candy factory, but they left because the taxes were too high in the province. The municipal taxes were too high. It was cheaper to move to Mexico.

We hear now that Michelin is going to move. I've talked to Michelin already. Michelin is going to move some more jobs into the southern U.S. - good financial sense for them. Unfortunately, that could have a long-term negative effect on what we do here in Nova Scotia with Michelin. Anyone who thinks that a company like Michelin or any other large company is going to stay in Nova Scotia because it's a nice place to live has got to come down to reality. It is a beautiful place to live - one of the most wonderful places in the world. But they won't stay here if they can't make money here, and if they can't get people to work for them at a competitive rate - I don't mean a low wage, but a competitive rate - and become very productive so they can compete on the world market.

No matter what we do today, we compete in a world market. It's so easy and so cheap to ship things now. That's why China is doing so well. They have a very low, well-educated, well-trained workforce that works for a small fraction of what Nova Scotians or Americans work for. It's really going to have a long-term, devastating effect on our economy here in North America.

As you look through all this stuff and you see what's happening, it takes a long time for all these things to play out and a long time to see the actual problems people have in their homes and personal times. How much time do I have left? Seconds? It's a situation that, if it persists much longer, we're going to have real problems in Nova Scotia. It's got to be corrected. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Clayton Park.

MS. DIANA WHALEN: Madam Speaker, I really appreciate the opportunity of speaking on Supply today before we begin the estimate process. I wanted to speak on a couple of issues around modernizing our Legislature, one of them being on-line petitions.

The reason it's come back into my awareness is that just today somebody sent me a link from Ottawa showing an NDP Member of Parliament from British Columbia - I'm not sure of his riding - rising in Parliament and speaking for a period of time on the need to

modernize the Parliament of Canada, our own Parliament, and to accept on-line petitions. That was the gist of his talk. The challenge then goes out to Parliament to do so.

Here in our Legislature we have touched on it a couple of times at least. I know various Speakers of the House have perhaps considered it. Even in this session of the Legislature, we've had a petition rejected - I think it was from the member for Truro-Bible Hill, bringing in a petition that was largely on-line or perhaps completely on-line. There was one rejected, anyway, and I think the Clerk remembers that too. We see that time and time again. On-line petitions are very commonplace. They are a way for people to be involved and engaged in democracy.

Everything on-line is really the way young people communicate. We say repeatedly that we're concerned about voter apathy and about young people tuning out and not seeing the relevance of what we do in the Legislature and the kind of bills we pass. We know that every day there's the opportunity here to make changes that will either positively or adversely affect Nova Scotians. We know that it has relevance when you can raise a tax or lower a tax or change the way people are getting tax credits or change school zone speeds. Whatever it may be, it is relevant to the lives of Nova Scotians.

There's a complete disconnect in reaching young people. Even when we held the Democracy 250 celebrations that went on for a year and made a concerted effort to talk to young people, there was no increase in the voter turnout in the next election in 2009. We're failing to connect with young people who live their lives largely on-line, who rely on computers and the Internet and Facebook and so many other platforms to communicate with each other, and they expect to be able to communicate with government as well.

We know we've all signed on-line petitions. We've all seen them being brought into our constituencies, or people saying, would you support this and would you go on-line? Not only is that the case, but the Government of Nova Scotia themselves have launched on-line petitions. I can't say for sure that the NDP Government has done that, but I know that when the fight was on with Ottawa over the Crown share and Nova Scotia getting a fair deal with our offshore, there was an on-line petition that was sponsored by the government under the Progressive Conservatives to get Nova Scotians to go on-line and show our federal masters, I guess, what we feel is a fair deal for Nova Scotians. And thousands of Nova Scotians went on-line and signed that petition.

It was spoken about by the government of the day, the Progressive Conservative Government, yet there's a bit of disconnect, I guess is the right word - because I'm not allowed to use some other words - but there's a disconnect between using it as a tool to make your case to Ottawa and then refusing to recognize it here in the House.

Now it would be fair to say that I've had discussions with our Chief Clerk and talked about the need for that and identified what some of the problems are. We know

there's a problem - I guess it's more than a perceived problem, it's probably a real problem - about identifying the names, verifying that the names actually represent different people.

I know as well that there are other jurisdictions that have begun to recognize on-line petitions and have set up the platform within their own government Web sites that would allow people to do it with the right safeguards in place, or the way to check whether or not these are independent individuals who are signing the petition and making their voice heard. So we know that there are ways to mitigate the problems that are identified.

We are actually very lucky here because our Clerk has actually spent a long time, I think, studying this issue out of personal interest as much as any directive from the Legislature. We have, really, an expert in our House that we could rely on to find a way forward, somebody who has actually spoken on this at gatherings and conferences and knows at least what the state of affairs is in other jurisdictions and here, and the obstacles and the means to overcome them.

Madam Speaker, I have twice read resolutions in this House calling on the government to look into this - not saying that you have to, but look into it and let's start moving forward with a way to show Nova Scotians that we are progressive, that we recognize that so much of communications today relies on computers and is done electronically and digitally, and that we are moving with the times and understanding that this is an important part of communicating with our constituents - and for them it's a way to communicate with us. So to constantly bury our heads in the sand and turn our backs on the idea of an on-line petition here seems very regressive and backward.

I would really hope, and I imagine all members would feel the same way, that we need to take those steps to modernize. This is just a small step, really, in the scheme of things. Our government has taken great strides, Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations is doing a lot of work on-line - you can renew your car registration now without going in person and lining up. We've seen those ads, and those are good ads, Madam Speaker, telling people to go on-line and do some of the work there rather than going in person to different centres. The government is adopting on-line services, recognizing that that's convenient and that's the way people do business today, but our Legislature is living in the distant past where this is concerned.

I've mentioned that I've twice read resolutions - once was when the Progressive Conservative Government was still in power and it was voted down. I read it again, after the 2009 election, and it again was voted down. I'm not sure if the objections were as much from government - they were definitely voiced by the member who represented Cape Breton North at that time, the former Speaker, Cecil Clarke, who is no longer a member of the House. He had, for some reason, a real opposition to this idea. I'm hoping that the current government will look at it.

I've been told that it's not an appropriate issue to bring as a Private Member's Bill, Madam Speaker. I thought, let's put it before the House as a Private Member's Bill. It can be on the docket; it can be a way for me, as an Opposition member, to say to government that this is something I think is important to get going on. In fact, since I first began to mention this, which would have been in about 2006, we've had a number of jurisdictions I've mentioned that are now taking on-line petitions. One of them is the actual parliament that we base all of our traditions on and that is the British Parliament - the British Parliament now accepts on-line petitions.

I think that's important, because we so often refer to the fact that all of our precedents and a lot of our practices are based on the British parliamentary system. When you think of it, there is that ancient Parliament in London accepting on-line petitions and here we are in Nova Scotia, a place that has had some real recognition for being the birthplace of responsible government 250 years ago, when we had the first elected representative government in the British Empire. We have an awful lot to be proud of, but here we are resting on some ancient laurels and refusing to be positive and looking forward and connecting with the reality of today and Nova Scotians are asking us to do that. When our constituents bring us a big petition and it happens to have been on-line, we at the same time have to tell them, no, you can't bring it in its not valid, they don't believe it. That is extremely discouraging to people to hear that it's not valid after they've written it and gone through the effort of collecting the signatures.

Madam Speaker, I saw one recently which is sponsored by an employee of HRM and it's asking for the solvency relief that HRM pensioners would like to have, and pension plan members would like to have from this province. It has over 1,100 signatures but unfortunately it's on-line. Now that hasn't been presented to any of us, or I don't think to any members of the Legislature to bring in, but that person will be told, we can talk about your petition, but we can't bring it in formally as a petition in our Legislature, and I think that is a shame.

At the same time, Madam Speaker, the preamble that was sent to me with that petition asking me to sign it, it actually said in the preamble that they had verified the signatures, that they verified that people who had signed it and voted on that, put their wishes forward in the petition, had been verified as plan members of HRM's pension plan.

I think that we're becoming known to be a little bit backwards, in a sense, because we're simply refusing to move with the times. I would really like to, again, bring that petition forward. It wouldn't be as a petition, it would be a resolution or even a Private Member's Bill because I'm a little impatient. I keep being told that it can't be a Private Member's Bill; I say impatient, I've been asking for six years, that's not a short period of time. It's a lot of time for government to consider it and for the mechanisms, and the bureaucrats that work for us to consider how it can be done.

There's another petition just now, 16,000 Nova Scotians have signed the NSTU petition, the petition against education cuts, Kids Not Cuts is their petition, and again, 16,000 Nova Scotians and nobody paying attention to that because it's an on-line petition.

Well, we will talk about those petitions here. We'll talk about them as people having an opportunity to express their views in large numbers that they believe it is meaningful to go on-line and vote that way. In fact, people are voting in elections now on-line. I mean if you can go for your municipal election here in HRM - we do that - you can vote for your councillor and the mayor on-line, but we can't accept an on-line petition - I just can't accept that.

When I say I'm becoming impatient, as I say six years have passed, I think that although I've been told repeatedly that this is not the subject for a Private Member's Bill, and the reason I've been told is that it should go instead to the Committee on Assembly Matters, that we have a committee of the Legislature that is responsible for such things but, Madam Speaker, that committee has not met in about six years; I doubt if it has met since I've first raised this issue. I've written to more than one Speaker because we've had a different government, we've had a number of different Speakers as well, even within this current government. I've written and I've asked, would you please call a meeting of the Assembly Matters Committee so that we can address this issue.

I believe that other members have had other issues they've wanted to raise with the Assembly Matters Committee as well - there were a number of them. I think, in fact, Madam Speaker, you had an issue around the Human Resources Committee and information provided to the committee and, as well, you wrote to the Speaker and asked that that go to the Assembly Matters Committee. There is more than enough to put on the agenda.

But my issue today is on-line petitions and I believe that if we could meet to discuss on-line petitions with the Assembly Matters Committee, which is the mechanism that we as members are given to make changes to the House, that we could have a meeting of the minds, no matter which side of the House we represent, government or Opposition. I know that this is something that would matter to members of the House.

We want to be able to engage with voters of all ages. We have to move with the times and we have to be able to, especially, engage young people who are not voting. I don't even like to say young voters because so many of them are not voters; the apathy is so great among young people and I think we need to show them that we are listening and understanding about a new way of communication and making your wishes known and trying to influence the course of your province, your city and your country.

Again I mentioned and I will come back on another day and give you the name of the NDP Member of Parliament who, yes, is sitting in Parliament in the Official Opposition asking the government of the day there to please move forward and accept on-line

petitions. There is no greater reason to say that we should do it than to know that the British Parliament themselves have tackled this problem and have found a way to make it happen so they can tell the citizens of Britain that, yes, you can give us on-line petitions and we will look at them and not only that, you can put a mechanism in there that would allow that if you had a certain number of signatures, there would be an answer given from the government. That's something that's being proposed by the NDP in Ottawa today.

So I would really ask that all members of the House speak to their respective House Leaders, maybe to their respective Leaders of the Parties, and say that there should be pressure on this Parliament, this Legislature, to look at meeting the Assembly Matters Committee so that we can move forward. It is of importance to all of us. I think this is an issue that is non-partisan. It really is about asking the government here to be able to better deal with our communications with the public through on-line petitions.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

MR. LEO GLAVINE: Madam Speaker, I'm pleased today to rise in my place to speak about the IWK adolescent mental health issue and in many regards speak about mental health issues generally for youth and adolescents around our province. When we speak about programs, changes in programs, developments at the IWK, in every respect we're talking about a provincial issue and, of course, more so on the medical side, it's an Atlantic Canada issue, less so in terms of mental health programs, and that in good measure is because other jurisdictions in the Maritimes do have their own programs for treatment.

One of the major developments taking place at the IWK is the change in the ACT program. The ACT program is moving from 24/7 to 24/5 type of program and service to our youth and adolescents. We know that delivery of programs, we know that models change, and as I've stated here in the House before, one of the major points that keeps coming back is that while this will increase the rate of assessment, it doesn't guarantee in any way that the rate of treatment will take place. One of the major challenges that the province has is the number of resources in our province to deal with a full array of mental health issues, from youth requirements to, in fact, a growing area of mental health, and that is geriatric mental health services.

The issue around the ACT program I think was really put into perspective by the Council of Canadian Child and Youth Care Associations. They wrote, in late March, about how they viewed the layoff of the 22 youth care workers. Even if a model of care is changing for adolescent mental health, there should remain a place for these workers in our schools and in our communities. Even the clinicians say there is indeed a need. In fact, there was a study carried out in 2005. One of the major findings of that particular research that was done was that there should be a mix of workers, professionals, from the point of view of psychologists, psychiatrists, mental health nurses and rehabilitation people in other specialities as well, and that youth mental health workers were an important part of that

mix. So in this open letter, the Council of Canadian Child and Youth Care Associations said, and I want to read into the record and provide the House with a copy:

I am writing to make you aware of the Council of Canadian Child and Youth Care Associations' (Council) stance regarding the IWK Health Centre's decision to layoff 22 full-time youth care worker positions. The Council is a National body comprised of representatives from the Provincial and Territorial Child and Youth Care Associations. The Council has been supporting the Provincial Associations for the past 28 years (formally since 1987). The goals of the Council are to promote the development of child and youth care as a profession in Canada and ensure the delivery of quality care. The Council supports the Nova Scotia Child and Youth Care Workers Association, its members and the profession.

The child and youth work approach is strength-based, deeply rooted in relational practice and a necessary complement to the medical model. Child and youth care workers provide a level of accountability and respectability to a range of services, *including in-patient mental health services*, often focused on the delivery of pathological and pharmacological interventions.

Child and youth care workers are highly educated and trained to be dynamic, qualified members of treatment teams in a variety of settings *including mental health centres and services*. Our role and skill set is distinct from *other professions* such as social work and nursing. The clinical contribution, of child and youth care workers, often takes place at any point during the day and occurs within the clients' daily living often resulting in 'on the spot' crisis prevention and intervention. The "laying off" of 22 full-time child and youth care worker positions and believing that it will not impact patient care is preposterous. I find this decision deeply distressing. There will be many children, youth and families who will be negatively impacted by these changes.

I want to ensure that the IWK Health Centre, the Nova Scotia Government, the Nova Scotia Child and Youth Care Workers Association Members and the many children, youth and families impacted by these changes understand the stance the Council is taking. It is my hope that the IWK Health Centre finds a way to reevaluate the impact these changes will have. If you have any further questions I can be reached through the Nova Scotia Child and Youth Care Workers Association.

In the name of Child and Youth Care
Sincerely,

David Connolly

President

Council of Canadian Child and Youth Care Associations

I will have that tabled, Mr. Speaker. So one of the aspects that has become very clear is the capability, the qualifications, and the role that the youth care worker plays in a dynamic treatment model for our youth. In fact, it's very interesting that the new CAPA model, which is still being developed at the IWK, has been developed by a mental health youth worker from B.C. It is that model that the IWK is actually using to a very strong extent. However, I think you will find that in B.C. and in other jurisdictions, while they want a greater level of community-based supports and interventions, they are not throwing out their in-patient programs, especially programs that have served this province as successfully as the ACT and Compass programs.

It was not our Party - and people across the province who are saying, don't look at better ways of organizing and administering youth mental health. It is, in fact, the opposite. Everybody knew we needed some change, but change in this regard looks like getting rid of 22 youth mental health workers because it's part of the cuts that the IWK has to orchestrate over the next number of months.

Many of these youth mental health workers who are out of a job would have been welcomed with open arms into our community settings, especially in our schools. We're all too familiar in our schools with children having behavioural outbursts that disrupt the class. As a former teacher and school administrator, some were a disturbance that impacted on the whole school and disrupted the school to the point of having to clear a playground, clear a gymnasium, clear a classroom.

These workers could deal with those kinds of crises. This is what they have been trained to do. This is what they do so well. Under the ACT program, they go into schools, they go into homes, and now their work will be reduced because of the nature of the ACT program.

I think one of the areas that really needs to be sorted out very quickly is the criteria for getting into the ACT program. If you have challenges around picking up your child at 3:00 p.m. on Friday, then your child may be restricted from getting in the ACT program. You have to be able to take your child home. We know that part of the problem is dysfunction that is going on in the home, and so you have a child who has a serious mental health problem, perhaps of a psychosis nature, severe behavioural issue, then perhaps going home, especially in the early weeks and months of treatment, because very often the child in the ACT program is there for about four months. Some have been there longer and some have been there extremely long because they were a danger to themselves and to their families.

In fact, I would have to say that some of the most nightmarish letters and comments to me since becoming an MLA, and also in my earlier career, is to hear from a parent that

they are fearful of living in the home with their child. I can't think of anything more disturbing, having raised three children, than to think that you have fear of going to bed at night for what your child may do. I actually get a chill when I say those words. We have families that will have to take children who are in the ACT program back home on a Friday afternoon when there's very good reason that they may not be.

In the CBC interview that the CEO of the IWK, Anne McGuire, did, she said that staff would be brought in to deal with such situations. We're only about 20 days into this change, and on two weekends, children have gone to 4 South as a place for the weekend, and not in the program in which they are intended to be. We're going to have to see how that works out in the coming days.

I think one of the most disturbing aspects that I have heard around the change of the IWK mental health program was that staff were told to have a few less patients in the ACT and Compass programs, so in fact removing 22 workers from the programs could find justification, find a rationalization and that is a fact that hasn't played out well with staff at a whole lot of different levels in the IWK treatment program.

I think as days go along and this program is not being provided at its historic levels, we will be hearing from Nova Scotians to an even greater extent than currently. With that I thank you, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please.

The motion is carried.

[3:00 p.m. The House resolved itself into a CWH on Supply with Deputy Speaker Ms. Becky Kent in the Chair.]

[5:59 p.m. CWH on Supply rose and the House reconvened. Mr. Speaker, Hon. Gordon Gosse, 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.

We have now reached the moment of interruption. The subject for late debate had been chosen earlier, submitted by the honourable member for Digby-Annapolis.

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

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester North.

EDUC.: FUNDING - RESTORE

HON. KAREN CASEY: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in my place tonight and speak to the resolution:

“Therefore be it resolved that the NDP Government’s education funding cuts are being felt in classrooms across the province, and we call on the government to invest in our students and restore funding to public education.”

Mr. Speaker, the issue of education and funding to education, and the importance of education has been debated in this House, and I don’t think anybody would disagree that our future is very much linked to the education of our people. We often talk about Nova Scotia being the education capital, which is in reference not just to public education but to our post-secondary.

We have stated, repeatedly, that economists are telling us that in difficult times, in times of restraint, one of the last places that governments should look for savings would be in education. I think that message is understood but our fear is, and what has been demonstrated by the current government, is just the opposite. We do have a good public school education system but it can always be better. One of the priorities for any government, when they’re looking at education, is to try to identify the student needs and to respond to those needs.

Those needs range from the earliest needs of our youngest students, who are learning to read, to our graduates who are needing the skills that will allow them to go on to post-secondary or to employment so that they can become active and productive citizens. It is their ability to earn and give back to the economy of the province that will help us move forward. The importance of education cannot be underestimated.

The frustrating part for Nova Scotians is to see cuts made to funding to public education based on a business model, not on an education and student-needs model. As long as the government continues to believe that they can adjust their funding based on enrolment, we will never be able to adequately meet the needs of those students in our schools. That’s a sad situation. It’s one that we in our Liberal caucus have been fighting against. We’re trying to get the government to acknowledge their mistake and if they don’t want to listen to us, I think it’s important that they listen to teachers, parents, the education partners, and our school community, who are telling them the same thing.

When you have a petition that's signed by over 16,000 people who are asking the government to stop cutting the funding to education, it's not just the members in Opposition, it's the community, it's the parents, it's the students, it's the teachers who are saying to this government - stop it, enough is enough. It is having a negative impact on our ability to deliver quality programs and on the ability of our students in our classroom to get the skills they need.

We have looked at, over two years, about a \$65 million hit to our public schools. It's easy for the government to say, we're only decreasing the funding by 1.7 per cent or 2.1 per cent or whatever the number is, but in reality, the cost to the school boards are much greater than that. We know that funding does not include anything for inflationary costs. It does not address the rising cost in wages and benefits, and ironically enough, the contracts for our teachers and our other members of our employ - whether they're NSGEU or CUPE - those contracts are negotiated by the government. So the final outcome, whether it's a 2 per cent increase, 1 per cent, whatever it is, that's negotiated.

But then the boards are asked to pay that, but they're not given the money to pay that extra burden that they will have. It's kind of putting school boards in a very difficult position. I'll negotiate what you have to pay, but I'm not going to give you any money to pay it. That system simply is not working. When school boards are faced with that, it brings their 1.7 per cent or 2.1 per cent budget cut, up in some cases to 3 per cent or 4 per cent or even close to a 5 per cent reduction. I think it's quite misleading when people see an announcement that says, South Shore board or Chignecto-Central board or Strait board cut by 1.7 per cent. Some people think, oh, well, gee, that's not too bad - but they don't go on to read the fine print, which says, plus they must incur all of the inflationary costs which drive it up.

So the boards are struggling with that. They've been asked - and I think boards have complied with the request - to reduce the number of administrators in central office, to reduce the number of consultants. They've been asked to take out math and literacy mentors, those kinds of positions which the government believed were adding extra costs. Boards have complied with that and they've taken those positions, but it still has not been enough money for them to protect programs for kids.

I will use one example: the funding for special education. We hear the minister saying we have increased the amount of money for special education, but again, what she fails to go on to say is that boards will accept the increased funding for special education but it still doesn't match what they spend on special education. So every year there's a gap between what the government gives them for special education and what they pay themselves. They have to take that from somewhere, and that gap gets bigger and bigger.

So when you look at the funding that a school board has at their disposal, about 85 per cent of it goes out for wages and benefits without any decisions having to be made by the board. That's off their list right away. It leaves them about 15 per cent, and when you

have to look at accommodating all of the special needs that students have and their costly programs to meet special needs - for example, when you have a one-on-one, which is the support some children need in order to learn, that's a costly program, but the cost of not doing it is something that we will pay for in this province long into the future. Those students who don't learn to read can't be successful in school and are highly unlikely to be successful in the workforce. They will be restricted from going on to post-secondary education, and so their ability to give back to the economy of the province through taxes that they would pay based on their earnings is severely limited or it's gone.

That's the connection that this government fails to see. Investing in our students now will pay long-term benefits for this province forever and ever. We don't have a lot of revenue coming into our province. We need to have people who can earn a good wage and contribute back to the economy.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that failing the kids in our province by not adequately funding their education will be a price that this province has to pay in the future, and it saddens me to think that we have a government that doesn't recognize that.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hammonds Plains-Upper Sackville.

MR. MAT WHYNOTT: Mr. Speaker, I thank everybody for sticking around tonight for the late show. I appreciate the opportunity to talk about this important subject that we all know is near and dear to each and every one of our hearts when it comes to the education of our young people.

There are a lot of things that I would concur with the honourable member opposite in regard to all of the different positive things that we should be doing in our province when it comes to education. My wife is a teacher herself. Putting kids in learning is quite important to her and to all of her colleagues with whom she teaches. One of the things that I know the minister and this government certainly agree with is the hard work that our teachers and our administration do in this province. They are there to give guidance to our young people, to ensure that they have a bright future, hopefully here in this province, but one of the things that is also important is the role of parents - they play an important role as well. We have a system here in this province that is, quite frankly, world class and we want to ensure that by putting this plan in place, this Kids and Learning First plan, that we put the fundamentals that kids need in this province, in everything that we do, in every piece of curriculum, in every classroom across the province.

The reality is that we can't just keep spending and spending and spending and spending. People would say we need to cut spending on one hand but we can't increase revenues on the other hand. One of the things that I know the Opposition would say is look you're cutting here, you're cutting these services. I would say that we're increasing the per-student funding in this province. It's the highest it's ever been.

We need to ensure that we have efficiencies within every department, in every government service that we have. That's what I believe Nova Scotians elected us to do; it doesn't matter what Party you come from. People want to know that as a steward of their money - of the money that is given to the government through their taxes - that the province looks after their money, ensures that it is spent wisely and efficiently as well.

Previous governments have spent more and more on fewer and fewer students. We've seen this x-y graph that has been out into many different publications. The fact is that we have 30,000 fewer students than we did 10 years ago, but spending has gone up continuously. We need to ensure that we have this proper mechanism, this proper amount of money that's going into the classroom.

Actually, this morning I had a great conversation with one of the local principals at one of the schools of the area that I represent. We had quite a long conversation, probably about a half an hour. We've been trying to touch base for about a week now. Of course, we were playing phone tag with us being in here these long days, just playing a little bit of phone tag. He did bring up some concerns about some of these things that are out in the media, some of the opposition to some of the government's plans.

I just said, look, the reality is - exactly what I had just said. He said, you know I see it - he's been in the system for 20 years - and he said, we have to ensure the proper mechanism is in place. He said to me, what about special needs funding? I said well, in fact, if you look at the formula overall, school boards across the province saw an increase in special education funding to ensure that is there. He said that we just want to make sure that kids aren't falling through the cracks and I said, I agree. And I said to him, so you've pretty much put in your numbers for next year, so how many classrooms will you have in your school versus this year? How many specialty teachers will you have versus this year? How many EPAs will have versus this year? He said, based on the numbers of population and based on the formula that the board has asked them to submit, he will see zero reduction of FTEs.

I said, okay so does that mean your class sizes will go up? Let's not forget between myself, the member for Bedford-Birch Cove and probably the member for Halifax Clayton Park, we have probably one of the largest growing populations in the province. He said that right now, currently, the population is probably going to increase by about 15 kids, for the overall school. But he says the teachers will stay the same and the largest class that he will probably have is 25 and that's at Grade 5, I think he said.

So I asked him, are you actually going to see any decrease in service for the students who go to that school. He said at this point in time every indication from the board level is no. So I said to him, I appreciate you sharing some of that information with me, I appreciate that, and I said, well, I might be doing a debate tonight, and I mentioned to him that I would do that and mention that story.

We, as a government, want to ensure that we have this level of funding that ensures that every kid has a level of service, and not only to get a base level, but to ensure that every kid can succeed. So we want to ensure that we prepare our young people for the jobs for the future, which we know are going to be coming from the Ships Start Here program in Nova Scotia over the next 30 years, as well as the other priorities that young people and their parents want.

We want to make sure that their schools have the resources available to them that need to be provided, because the most important room in our schools is the classroom. We have increased the per-student funding. Our ratios continue to be low. These are the types of things that I think, when I talk to constituents - and quite frankly, there's been a few of them. There hasn't been a load of phone calls into my constituency office. Now I'm sure that maybe after I say that, there might be a few coming out.

This is the type of thing that I want to remind Nova Scotians, that MLAs are there to hear their concerns. I know whenever someone calls my office - and I usually have this kind of rule that I call people back within a 12 or 15-hour period, and they say, holy cow, you actually called me back and I didn't expect that. That's something I think we should do. If people see something that concerns them, they should contact their MLA, especially if they live in my constituency. I would encourage them to call me to have a conversation, because that's what we're here for.

It's not about opposing here - I have one view and they have another view. It's about having a conversation about how - oftentimes those people who do call our MLA offices really do care about their community that they live in, and they want to ensure the best, whether it's through education, whether it's through their health care system, whatever it may be. They really do care about their community. So if they do, I encourage them to contact me to have a conversation with me. Oftentimes, hopefully we'll be able to solve it.

In closing, I want to assure all Nova Scotians who may be watching here today that I'm certainly proud of our government and how we've put books in the hands of families, giving them age-appropriate literacy supports. We all know that not every family can spend what they would like to spend on books and other educational tools.

We are working to make sure that our children have the necessary tools and supports needed to ensure that every kid in Nova Scotia can succeed and build a life in their community that they grew up in. I appreciate the opportunity to have the debate here today. Thank you very much.

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

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise this evening to speak to this resolution: "Therefore be it resolved that the NDP Government's education funding

cuts are being felt in classrooms across the province and we call on the government to invest in our students, and restore funding to public education.”

Mr. Speaker, if I could, I'd love to ask the member for Hammonds Plains-Upper Sackville if he could give me his office number, because I can send a pile of different phone calls there that we are getting from the educators, from the students, and from the parents. Most of all, we're getting them from the school boards, from the people who are having to do the cuts, who are having to make the tough decisions.

I spoke with a number of different school boards over the last little while, and they are miffed at the fact that they are asked to cut 2 per cent and 3 per cent from their budget a second year, after having to do the same thing last year. They found the efficiency last year without too much cut to the classrooms and to the actual people who are necessary in the school system to educate our children, but this year those efficiencies are harder to come by.

I'm hearing about teacher cuts; I'm hearing about TA cuts; I'm hearing about support staff cuts - and if the member for Hammonds Plains-Upper Sackville wants to give us his number, I'm sure the people of the Cape Breton-Victoria Regional School Board, the Chignecto-Central Regional School Board, and the South Shore Regional School Board that I'm listening to would gladly call his office and see if they can give him the same explanation.

As they say, our school system is declining in enrolment. Because of that, cuts are being made, but the cuts are being made deeper than the enrolment part. He also spoke about not cutting spending but not even raising revenues, but this government has cut spending to the education system but it's also raised revenues. We've had to say to this House already that, by putting 2 per cent on the HST in two years, each and every individual in the Province of Nova Scotia has paid over \$700 in increased HST, which is over \$4,000 per household. In saying that, if that's not increasing revenues, I don't know what is.

Where is that money going? We know it's not going to the educational system because the cuts are happening there; we know it's not going to the health care system, the cuts are happening there.

I'd just like to read a quote from the great Benjamin Franklin that states: “If a man empties his purse into his head, no man can take it away from him. An investment in knowledge always pays the best interest.”

We know that if we're going to build a good workforce in this province and have good people to take over from what we're doing here, we have to have a good foundation. Mr. Speaker, the foundation for our children in this province is their education. We know when we build a house, if we don't start with a good foundation, the house will crumble. If

our children aren't getting this education to prepare them for the real world, the working world, then they will fail as well.

I'm hearing numbers in this House like the fact that the government has increased the funding per student to over \$10,000 per student and I'm also hearing there are 30,000 less students in the system. So my question to that one, Mr. Speaker, is if there are 30,000 less students and the funding were to remain the same, of course it has to go up. It would seem like it's up, but I have no indication there's any new real money being put into this system.

We know the budgets have actually gone down. We've discussed them in the last little while in the House here. Also, if we're decreasing the number of students and we're talking about increasing the number of teachers, then our class sizes should be going down. I know in the schools that my children have gone to, they've had class sizes, some of them well over 30. If you increase that, then that's not going down.

We hear the number of students in the elementary schools is going to increase from a maximum of 27 to 29. If the ratio they're talking about is increasing the number of teachers and decreasing the number of students, then there should be no need to raise that number from 27 to 29. When that number is raised to 29, Nova Scotia will have one of the highest caps, on the education system, in the country.

Mr. Speaker, these NDP cuts are devastating. Kids are protesting, teachers and parents are also worried about the future of our education system and our children. Nova Scotians are appalled by the actions of this government with respect to health care and education. We know that something needs to change. If we remove the public school funding from the estimates in the Department of Education, we actually see an increase of about 3.69 per cent for the Education Department. How can that Education Department funding be going up when funding to the school system is going down?

Our classrooms are being heavily affected. Our special needs children - we talk about special needs, schools like Landmark East and Bridgeway Academy they have grants provided to them, a grant for a child who needs to go to that school to get his education so he can fit back into the regular education system. We were told in this House by the Education Minister - a special education teacher herself, plus who has a child of her own that they couldn't teach in the classroom, who went to Landmark East and had great success with it - we were told that they can't do that education in the regular school system but they don't want to increase the funding to schools like that.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the education system is, arguably, the most important part of our society. Let's be clear, our children are our most valuable resource. We talk in this House about forestry, mining and wind - all valuable resources. We spend a great deal of money to develop these powers, these resources. So why don't we spend more money on

developing our most valuable resources, and we know that's our children? We shouldn't be cutting that money from the education system.

These children are the future of our province and without them growing up with a proper, useful and meaningful education, our future will be lost. We need an education system that prepares our children for what lies ahead in their future. We need to let them strive to be what they want to be and let their ambitions take them as high as they can.

Mr. Speaker, I feel that a decrease in our education funding will prevent some of our children from doing this. As Benjamin Franklin said, knowledge is an investment that pays dividends down the road. Benefits from such an education decrease the lines in health care, decrease crime, lead to better employment and better interpersonal skills. We need to allow our students to achieve whatever goals they would like; be that a skilled tradesperson so that we can take advantage of our new shipbuilding contract; be it in preparation for a university degree, because we know because of the shipbuilding contract we're going to need engineers, supervisors, and so on and so forth, to take full advantage of this.

As we have seen, these cuts to the Education budget have been putting a strain on our school boards and putting them in the very awkward situations of having to make very difficult decisions. In 2011 we saw cuts of 2.4 per cent to four of our school boards and now in 2012 we saw another 2.1 per cent to three of those four. They are forced to make cuts that will - and I repeat, will - affect our children. Cuts to teachers and teachers' assistants, support staff, will affect their education in one form or another.

Mr. Speaker, we don't think it's fair to work on balancing the budget on the backs of our children and our education system. A child with an education such as a doctor or a nurse may have all the options in the world and they can stay here or they can leave. If they're going to raise a family here, they want to do that with a good education system.

MR. SPEAKER: I would like to thank all the honourable members who took part in the late debate tonight for an excellent debate.

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 motion is carried.

[6:33 p.m. The House resolved itself into a CWH on Supply with Deputy Speaker Ms. Becky Kent in the Chair.]

[7:48 p.m. CWH on Supply rose and the House reconvened with Deputy Speaker Ms. Becky Kent in the Chair.]

MADAM 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 considerable progress, and begs leave to sit again.

MADAM SPEAKER: Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

The honourable Acting Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. MAT WHYNOTT: Madam Speaker, that concludes the government's business for today. We will sit tomorrow, April 20th, from the hours of 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. After the daily routine we will go into estimates and, if time permits, we will call Public Bills for Second Reading, Bill Nos. 5, 9, 11, 13, 17, 20, 22, 24, 30, and 32.

MADAM SPEAKER: Would the member mind repeating the hours for me?

MR. WHYNOTT: Tomorrow, April 20th, 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

MADAM SPEAKER: The motion is that the House do now rise, to meet tomorrow from the hours of 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

[The House rose at 7:49 p.m.]

NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3)**RESOLUTION NO. 304**

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 Oxford Regional Education Centre Senior Golden Bear Dylan Ellis reached a prestigious milestone in February; and

Whereas Dylan Ellis scored his 1000th point during a tournament in Sackville, N.S., in which he scored 30 points total; and

Whereas Dylan started playing on the Senior Golden Bears in Grade 10 and is now in his last year of high school basketball;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Dylan Ellis on reaching this outstanding milestone and wish him all the best in future endeavours.

RESOLUTION NO. 305

By: Mr. Andrew Younger (Dartmouth East)

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

Whereas this is the fourth year for the Fishin' Nova Scotia photo contest sponsored by the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture; and

Whereas more than 150 photos were entered in this year's contest in five categories, including Species, Young Anglers, Scenic, General, and Family; and

Whereas Ross Jones, a resident of Dartmouth East, won in the category of Best Scenic Photograph and his photo is featured in the 2012 Nova Scotia Angler's Handbook;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of the House of Assembly recognize the photographic talent of all Nova Scotians who participated in the competition, and in particular, Mr. Ross Jones, for celebrating the natural beauty of Nova Scotia.

RESOLUTION NO. 306

By: Mr. Chuck Porter (Hants West)

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

Whereas 4-H is a nationwide program dedicated to the development of young people to help them become responsible members of society while having fun at regular events with other 4-H'ers; and

Whereas years of involvement in 4-H are starting to pay off for Morgan McNeil from Hantsport, as she was awarded a \$2,500 2011 TD 4-H Agricultural Scholarship in November 2011 at a ceremony in Toronto; and

Whereas Morgan conquered her fear of public speaking and learned how to articulate her opinions and ensure her voice is heard through her experiences with 4-H;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Morgan on receiving the TD 4-H Agricultural Scholarship and wish her continued success with 4-H activities.