



## DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Gordon Gosse

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**HALIFAX, WEDNESDAY, APRIL 25, 2012**

**Sixty-first General Assembly**

**Fourth Session**

**2:00 P.M.**

**SPEAKER**

Hon. Gordon Gosse

**DEPUTY SPEAKERS**

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

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. We'll begin the daily routine.

**PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS**

**PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES**

**TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS**

**STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS**

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Premier.

HON. DARRELL DEXTER: (The Premier): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise in my place today and update all the members of the House on the efforts to get the pulp and paper mill in Port Hawkesbury open and operating again for the workers, their families, and supporting businesses in the Strait area.

The negotiations between Pacific West Commercial Corporation and the union representing hundreds of former mill workers are complete. The workers faced a difficult decision but ultimately voted in favour of a new agreement. In an overwhelming majority, workers voted to get back to work, to sustain their community and to help build a globally-competitive and sustainable forestry industry in the Strait region.

By voting in favour of the new agreement, workers put the future of their community and their fellow employees ahead of their own self-interest. I commend them for their selflessness and commitment to ensure a lasting industry for Nova Scotians and for their families.

The alternative was unthinkable for most people. Had workers voted against the agreement, the mill would close permanently with the asset being disassembled and shipped out of the province, taking with it hundreds of good rural jobs and millions of dollars. Mr. Speaker, this government was not about to sit idly by and let that happen. The workers and their families deserve nothing less than the government's best efforts to reopen the mill. The province continues to work with the community, the workers, the company and Nova Scotia Power to find a solution, and I think that we are close.

Since the union and the company reached an agreement, the province has had positive discussions with Pacific West about what a start-up plan might look like. Mr. Speaker, these are significant developments but there are still a number of items to be worked out, one of which is power rates. I have spoken with the CEO of Nova Scotia Power and I am confident that the utility and Pacific West are working together to build a plan in the best interests of Nova Scotians. Once that plan is finalized, it will go before the Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board for approval.

Mr. Speaker, this government knows that time is of the essence. The workers and their families have been patient and are ready to return to work, and this government remains on their side. With that in mind, I have asked Pacific West and Nova Scotia Power to file the necessary paperwork with the board, to ensure that once an agreement is found, a timely hearing will take place, moving us closer to getting the people of the Strait back to work.

We recognize that there are elements of this application yet to be finalized and, as such, the application will not be complete when it is filed later this week. These final elements will be brought to the board in the coming days and weeks.

Mr. Speaker, all members of this House will recognize that it is necessary to have the application filed in order that a timely hearing can be held and all stakeholders and parties involved in the proceeding can have their say before the board makes its ultimate decision. I know people are anxious to hear final details of the arrangements the province has been discussing with the company on the access to fibre to supply the mill and on the restart of the operation. Nova Scotians deserve to know this information but not before the agreements are finalized. I want to assure all members that the province will release these details as soon as the arrangements are in place.

Mr. Speaker, we must all remember that this is not a process the province controls. It is a court-mandated process and, as such, we must respect the role of the court. To this end, the court-appointed monitor has advised the province that pending a court-approved plan of arrangement, it would be inappropriate to release any final details regarding our involvement in or support of this project. The current timetable for a court hearing to deal with the approval of the plan of arrangement would likely occur in the middle of July.

Mr. Speaker, all parties here are working hard to get a deal, from the employees, the municipal councillors and stakeholders, the province, and Pacific West to Nova Scotia Power. I want to acknowledge everyone's hard work and note that as close as we may be, we are not across the finish line just yet. I want to commend Nova Scotia Power for demonstrating corporate responsibility by working to secure good jobs and a strong Nova Scotia economy without adding to the cost of power for its customers.

Since the mill closed, this government's primary concern has been for the workers, for the families, and for the businesses in the Strait region. The province has done everything that it can, within reason, to get this mill open and operating for a long time to come. Since last September, the province has invested more than \$27 million to keep people working in the local forestry industry and to ensure that the mill remains resale-ready for a new buyer. This is also an investment in building a sustainable forestry industry that will be globally competitive, providing good jobs for Nova Scotians and helping grow the province's economy.

Mr. Speaker, an operating mill in Port Hawkesbury will keep 330 direct jobs, 600 indirect jobs, and about 500 spinoff jobs right here in Nova Scotia. Not only that, a viable and sustainable forestry industry will bring in millions of dollars to help grow the economy and to fund important public programs and services like health care and education. This is something that Nova Scotians and their families right across the province can understand.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Richmond.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: I want to thank my colleague, the Leader of the Official Opposition, for allowing me the opportunity to respond to this statement. As you would know, Mr. Speaker, the former NewPage mill is located in Point Tupper, Richmond County. It makes up a significant portion of our municipal tax base and is one of the most important assets in our county.

These have been troubling times in Richmond County and in the entire Strait area since NewPage closed down their operations in September 2011. Current and former employees, their families, and the entire community in the Strait area have been in hot-idle mode. They have been waiting to see exactly what is going to happen to get that mill back up and running.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, unlike other mills in the province, the strongest asset that we have at the former NewPage facility is the super-calendared paper mill, which was almost a \$1 billion investment made by former StoraEnso, and which remains one of the most efficient, highest-producing super-calendared mills in the world. There is a future for this product and there is a future for this mill, and we're looking forward to being able to have it in operation for many years to come.

I do recognize that the government has worked to try to keep the mill in a resale condition and the employees working in the woodlands. What has been frustrating through that is that, although they have created a mills committee, the mills committee has never included representatives from the Legislature in the Strait area. Neither myself, the member for Inverness, the member for Guysborough-Sheet Harbour, or the member for Antigonish have ever been invited to attend those meetings or to hear the discussions taking place. What's unfortunate is that when the workers and their families and business leaders were looking for answers, they were calling us and we were unable to provide them with any because we weren't allowed to be part of that process.

I want to commend the union for the tough decision it had to make in accepting the agreement which was put forward by Pacific West Commercial Corporation. They have clearly indicated their willingness to make significant sacrifices in order to maintain these jobs and maintain this facility into the future.

Many questions remain regarding the sale of the NewPage mill. One of the main questions Nova Scotians, the people in the Strait area, are asking is, what is taking so long to reach a deal with Nova Scotia Power? I understand the Premier says he has spoken to the CEO, but I would suggest to the Premier that when you have a monopoly, you have a responsibility, and it's not to negotiate with just anyone. This is a situation where time is of the essence, and I would encourage the Premier to use his office to demand that the company work as quickly as possible to reach a deal so that this can move forward and we can see this mill operating once again.



Unfortunately the Premier's statement has failed to address the impact of high power rates, not only on this business but on all businesses in Nova Scotia and how much longer before we find ourselves in similar situations with businesses having to close down.

One of the questions being asked as well is, is there a means of speeding up the URB process? Many believe the application at the end will be very similar to the application brought forward by NewPage and Bowater months ago. Therefore, if it is similar, why is it going to take an entire hearing again to have this heard and is there a way of making this go faster?

One of the other questions I asked the Minister of Natural Resources just recently is, where are we at with negotiating a new Crown fibre agreement and why is that not ready to go? Clearly that is something that has to be put in place before this can go any further.

I've heard the Premier say that he's unable to disclose what the province is going to do because of the court process. That makes it extremely challenging for us as legislators when Nova Scotians are asking what debate took place on what the province's role was in this matter. I would suggest to you that any details that are going to be disclosed will be after this House has risen and there will not be a full debate on the floor of this House. It would appear that there is another financial package that will be offered by the province to Pacific West Corporation before the opening of that mill and Nova Scotians certainly deserve to know the details of that.

One of the questions we have is, will there be conditions attached to any further government funding? We've seen no such conditions were put in with the Bowater deal and we're seeing the impact of that today with continued shutdowns which are taking place and absolutely no requirement to maintain a specific level of workforce.

One of the disappointments in the Premier's statement today is that he has made absolutely no mention of an economic strategy or a plan for the over 300 skilled trades people who will not be offered a job should Pacific West conclude an agreement and reopen that mill. This is going to have a tremendous impact on the economy of the Strait area. For many of the employees, their employment insurance will be running out in the month of May. Therefore, if this deal is not concluded soon, many will be left with absolutely no income. Many have gone out West, which begs the question of how many will return.

The other issue which the Premier has completely failed to address is the four pension plans that were operated under NewPage which we now know were \$130 million underfunded. There are 1,000 former and active employees that are impacted by this. We are now being told that it'll be approximately a 30 per cent reduction of their pensions which has many retirees now questioning whether they will have to return to work. As I've said in this House many times, the pensions from NewPage and previously Stora and Stora Enso were some of the only private pensions that we have in the Strait area. This type of

reduction is going to have a devastating impact on our economy and I was hoping today the Premier would have had some indication of what his government plans on doing in the winding up process of these pension plans to try to ensure that they're protected as much as possible and that the province is working to try to make sure the best financial deal is available in the winding up process. Unfortunately that was not even mentioned in the Premier's statement.

I want to commend the Municipality of Richmond which I know is also being asked to make concessions on the tax side. There was previously a bill brought in this Chamber for a tax deal that was achieved with Stora and the municipality and my understanding is that may be looked at again.

At the end of the day, we are all looking forward to this. I believe the Premier has the ability to demand that negotiations move faster so that this mill can be up and running. I've made the offer before and I'll make it again to work with the government, to work with all the partners so that we can see a positive solution and have that mill back up and running as soon as possible. Merci.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Premier for an advance copy of his statement today and for the work his government has been doing to try to help the situation in the Strait area. I remember when it first happened, when I first got word, I said to myself, this is our worst nightmare, seeing the mill go into hot idle and possibly loss of employment at that time.

Also I'd like to thank the member for Richmond for his comments. I know this matter is one that we've tried to keep politics out of because I think we see from all sides of the House the importance of trying to fix the situation and recognize there are some factors that are outside the hands of control of government.

There are some items I'd like to touch on. The workers who have been mentioned by all sides, we would like to thank them today for the sacrifice they have made and only they know how big a sacrifice that was for them to make. I know my office has made a public offer to those who need to get connected for retraining. We're going to do everything we can to connect them to the community college at the Strait campus and I know there are cases where they may be able to put on additional classes if enough people come forward. We're going to try to help make that happen.

This is not just a significant component of the local economy but we can see by the list of creditors affected by the hot idling of the mill that this operation had tentacles out right across the province. It affected businesses right across the province.

I also want to state that a lot of people look at these industries as always having their hand out to government but I think it needs to be put on the record, Mr. Speaker, the tremendous amount of wealth that that paper mill has brought to our province since the 1960's in terms of jobs and taxes paid here in the province to pay for the services we enjoy.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to speak about power rates. I know this is something that's relevant to the workers who have just made recent sacrifices because, as we all know, the number one cost for the paper mill is power rates. If power rates continue to rise, it continues to put pressure on wages. I know how valuable those wages are in our local economy. We see it in the spinoff economy throughout all the small businesses that are supported by people who work at the paper mill.

I guess as we enter into a world where we pay a premium for renewable energy and we have projects like the Churchill Falls project, that we don't have a cost-benefit analysis on it yet. That concerns me because those are the kinds of things that are really going to drive power rates and we should know what we're going to pay before we lock ourselves into those kinds of contracts. When we look at the paper mill - if we're going to try to solve this, if we want this operation to run for more than five or 10 years, we need to address its number one cost, that being power rates.

I guess there are a couple of ways we can do that. We can try to help the paper mill reduce its energy usage and I hope that the government is working with the new owners to look at ways of reducing energy usage. They use upwards of 13 per cent of the electricity produced in the province right now.

I also want to point out to legislation that we had introduced, Mr. Speaker, with an interest to help reduce the burden of power rates, not just for the paper mill but also for all Nova Scotians. We introduced bills to eliminate the bonuses for Nova Scotia Power with the Elimination of Bonuses in Power Rates Bill, which required that bonuses for executives of electric public utilities not be included as a cost in determining power rates we pay. We also talked about transparency in power rates, we introduced a bill that would provide that the portion of any rate increase granted for Nova Scotia Power that is attributable to government energy policy cannot take effect until debated and approved in our Legislature.

We introduced a bill called the Ratepayer Fairness Bill that set out what the Utility and Review Board must take into account when determining an allowable rate of return for investors in Emera Nova Scotia Power, recognizing that with the power company, no risks are taken. If the input costs of energy go up, those costs are passed on to consumers, so anybody investing in that operation is not taking the kind of risks that one would typically take in investing in common stock.

Fourthly, we introduced a bill, the Power Rate Reduction Review Bill, which would establish a committee to independently file information with this Legislature to look at the underlying factors causing power rate increases.

Mr. Speaker, I've spent a considerable amount of my time in my remarks talking about power rates because I think that is the key to the future of the mill, but I also want to talk a little bit about pensions. I'm going to be introducing a bill, very soon, to fix a problem that I've seen in the Strait. I've heard a great amount of frustration from pensioners at NewPage who are facing 30 per cent to 40 per cent pension reductions about what happened to their pension. Only a few years ago, in fact in 2010 - this was after the stock market crash and recovery - the plan was underfunded by only about 6 per cent. Today we see a significantly underfunded situation with the plan.

Mr. Speaker, I will present more on that in the near term, but the point being is I would like for people who are members of these defined benefit plans to be assured of the security that they are supposed to have with those plans - and by that it means giving them more information every year so that they understand how their plan is functioning in terms of investment performance, and when there are decisions made around solvency and early retirements, how that affects the health of the plan, because I believe those components have had significant effect on the NewPage plan.

Mr. Speaker, I know I tried to introduce legislation, as well, in the last sitting that would protect the pensioners. In estimates yesterday we were discussing how the province had issued a 50-year term bond, and that bond was wonderful because it was at such a low rate of interest, and the thought that went through my head is that these historic low rates of interest, it was issued to an insurance company and I thought, I wonder if that's the same insurance company that's going to be funding the annuity for the pensioners, because they're going to be punished with the same low interest rates that are, of course, valued right now with people who hold debt, like our province - and anybody who holds debt. I would like the government to look at that.

Mr. Speaker, I know I'm running out of time but I need to mention something about wood as well. We see the price of wood where it is right now, how it has collapsed - that only proves how important the mill has been to the forestry sector of this province. I would ask that the government look at power rates and consider the impact of forcing pensioners into annuities at the historic low interest rates that we see now.

I would close, Mr. Speaker, by saying that we will be supportive of anything that is reasonable that the government does to help the situation at Pacific West Corporation. Thank you.

## **INTRODUCTION OF BILLS**

**Bill No. 47 - Entitled an Act to Modernize the Government of Nova Scotia.  
(Hon. Jamie Baillie)**

**Bill No. 48 - Entitled an Act to Require Balanced Budgets, Limit Government Spending and Reduce the Harmonized Sales Tax to Thirteen Per Cent. (Hon. Jamie Baillie)**

**Bill No. 49 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 217 of the Revised Statutes of 1989. The Income Tax Act. (Mr. Harold Theriault)**

**Bill No. 50 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2010. The Finance Act, Respecting Intergenerational Reporting. (Hon. Jamie Baillie)**

**Bill No. 51 - Entitled an Act to Reduce the Regulatory Burden in Nova Scotia. (Hon. Christopher d'Entremont)**

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

#### **GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION**

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Community Services.

#### **RESOLUTION NO. 359**

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

Whereas the month of May is Family Caregiver Month in Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Caregivers Nova Scotia is hosting a Support Group Leader Gathering on April 30, 2012, for friends and families who are giving care; and

Whereas caregivers provide valuable support to family and friends all across the province year-round;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House commend Nova Scotia's caregivers and give thanks to the family and friends who improve the quality of life for their loved ones.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

### **RESOLUTION NO. 360**

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

Whereas Annapolis Valley Health received full accreditation from Accreditation Canada with seven Accreditation Canada Leading Practices; and

Whereas this is the first year Annapolis Valley Health has received seven Accreditation Canada Leading Practices for leading practices, which include Seniors Rapid Assessment Services, Addiction Services Primary Care Pilot Project, the Middleton Adult Day Program, and Dial for Dinner Room Service Model; and

Whereas accreditation surveyors confirmed that Annapolis Valley Health is a leading health care organization;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House congratulate the management, staff, and accreditation team members of Annapolis Valley Health for their commitment to ongoing quality improvement and their efforts in the provision of safe, quality health care services.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Education.

**RESOLUTION NO. 361**

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

Whereas students and teachers from Shatford Elementary School are celebrating the grand opening of their new Active Kids Trail on April 27, 2012; and

Whereas the trail was designed to improve opportunities for Shatford Elementary students to safely and actively walk and bike to school; and

Whereas the trail is an exciting place for hands-on learning and extracurricular activities, such as snowshoeing and the run club;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly thank the school travel committee for working hard to provide an excellent trail for students, school staff, parents, and the communities served by Shatford Elementary School.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage.

**RESOLUTION NO. 362**

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

Whereas since the Fall of 2011, the Cape Breton Regional Library in partnership with Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey, Membertou Elementary School, and the Eskasoni Elementary and Middle School has been piloting a project called Library in the Classroom; and

Whereas each month a box of books is delivered to 10 elementary classrooms in the area, with the book topics and reading levels selected based on suggestions from the teacher; and

Whereas due to the success of this pilot project, organizers are exploring the possibility of expanding the program to junior and senior high classrooms in the area and the project will be presented at the upcoming Atlantic Native Teachers Education Conference being held at Cape Breton University in May;

Therefore be it resolved that the House of Assembly join me in congratulating the Cape Breton Regional Library and partners on their quest to encourage literacy in the classroom, therefore encouraging lifelong learning for the province's young people.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

### **RESOLUTION NO. 363**

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

Whereas National Medical Laboratory Week will be celebrated April 22<sup>nd</sup> to April 28<sup>th</sup> and medical laboratory technology is the third largest health care profession in Canada; and

Whereas medical laboratory technologists conduct laboratory tests which physicians and clinicians depend on to accurately diagnose and treat illness and to monitor patients' health; and

Whereas medical laboratory staff consists of medical laboratory technologists, medical laboratory assistants and medical laboratory clerical staff, who work as a team to provide information about your health in a timely manner;



Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House recognize the effort and professionalism of medical laboratory technologists, assistants, and support staff who strive to help maintain the health and well-being of Nova Scotians and all Canadians.

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.

#### **NOTICES OF MOTION**

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

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, do you mind if I do an introduction?

MR. SPEAKER: Most certainly.

MR. MCNEIL: I'd like to draw the attention of the House to the west gallery where we have with us today Pearlene Wright, Charlene Baker and Exie Scioccetti. They are three of the administrative assistants in our caucus office. We would ask them to stand and receive the warm welcome of the House of Assembly. (Applause)

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

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, I heard someone over there say they've got a tough job - I can't imagine.

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

#### **RESOLUTION NO. 364**

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

Whereas today, April 25<sup>th</sup>, marks the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Administrative Professionals Day; and

Whereas this year's theme, "Admins, the pulse of the office," exemplifies the true appreciation and value we, as elected officials, place in our administrative professionals; and

Whereas administrative professionals are the true engine of our offices, keeping us organized, on time and under budget;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly extend our appreciation to all administrative professionals in our caucus and constituency offices.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Argyle.

### **RESOLUTION NO. 365**

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

Whereas a strike of health care workers in the Capital District Health will cause uncertainty and fear among many Nova Scotians; and

Whereas the Ontario Government has moved to give Ontarians peace of mind by saying they will act unilaterally if a negotiated settlement cannot be reached with the province's doctors; and

Whereas it is the government's responsibility to make sure health services are there for Nova Scotians when they need them;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly condemn the NDP Government for failing to act to ensure Nova Scotians have much-needed health services.

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 Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal.

### **RESOLUTION NO. 366**

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

Whereas 19 Sir John A. Macdonald High School students, teachers Tabitha Bainbridge and Julie Wiseman, and parent Beth Rogers travelled to China for 12 days in March; and

Whereas these students began preparing for this trip last May; and

Whereas this group's tour included meeting new Chinese friends, visiting Beijing and helping to build a school in rural community beyond the Great Wall;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia Legislature congratulate these Sir John A. Macdonald students on their initiative and thank teachers Tabitha Bainbridge and Julie Wiseman, and parent Beth Rogers for their support of this valuable educational experience in China.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Community Services.

**RESOLUTION NO. 367**

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

Whereas on Monday, March 4, 2012, in Chester, Nova Scotia, the Greenspiel took place; and

Whereas Team Baker and Team Fay, both from Chester, went undefeated to win the Nova Scotia Under 15 Men's and Women's Curling Championship; and

Whereas Team Baker includes skip Ben Baker, mate Jacob Rowsell, second Simon Buell and lead Aaron Raymond; Team Fay includes skip Mary Fay, mate Jennifer Smith, second Karlee Burgess and lead Janique LeBlanc;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulate Team Baker and Team Fay on their win in the Nova Scotia Under 15 Men's and Women's Curling Championship and wish them all the best in the future.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party.

**RESOLUTION NO. 368**

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

Whereas yesterday marked the 97<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide; and

Whereas Armenian people around the world mark the day by remembering the more than one million people who were victims of mass murder; and

Whereas the Armenian people were subjected to forced deportation, expropriation, abduction, torture and starvation;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House remember those who were needlessly killed 97 years ago so that it never happens again.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

### **RESOLUTION NO. 369**

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

Whereas Phoenix House, a 10-bed home providing stable, long-term housing for female and male youth, opened its doors in 1987; and

Whereas today, a quarter of a century later, Phoenix provides a wide variety of housing options, services and programs for hundreds of homeless and at-risk youth aged 12 to 24; and

Whereas Phoenix is celebrating its 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary throughout 2012, including Dreamscape 2012, a gala dinner and dance to be held at the Cunard Centre on Friday, May 4<sup>th</sup>;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly congratulate Phoenix on its 25 years of service to homeless and at-risk youth, and to the entire community, and wish Phoenix continued success in the years to come.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism

HON. PERCY PARIS: Mr. Speaker, if I may, I ask your indulgence to make an introduction before I read my resolution.

MR. SPEAKER: Most certainly.

MR. PARIS: Thank you. I'm pleased to bring the attention of the House to the east gallery, the gallery opposite. Today we are joined by one individual who is no stranger to Nova Scotia or to the House, the president of LED Roadway Lighting, Mr. Chuck Cartmill. Also, he is joined today by the executive vice-president, Darren Zwicker.

Also joining LED Roadway Lighting we have guests from the United Kingdom. I'd like to introduce Simon Butt, Highways and Street Lighting; and Richard Goodwin, technical director. I would like the House to give them a warm welcome, please.

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

The honourable Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism.

### **RESOLUTION NO. 370**

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

Whereas volunteers are the backbone of every community and the people of Waverley-Fall River-Beaver Bank are giving back with over 60 volunteer-based organizations; and

Whereas Stephanie Dubé, a resident of Fall River, has been honoured with the Provincial Volunteer Award on April 2<sup>nd</sup> for her work in her community; and

Whereas Stephanie embodies the true spirit of volunteerism as she shares her time with the Fall River and Area Christmas Express, LWF Community Hall Board, Ash Lee Jefferson School Student Advisory Council and Parent Teacher Organization, Muscular

Dystrophy Telethon, Playground Fundraising Committee, and Big Brothers Big Sisters - that's only just to name a few;

Therefore be it resolved that the House of Assembly extend congratulations to Stephanie Dubé for being named volunteer of the year for her outstanding commitment to her community.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Education.

### **RESOLUTION NO. 371**

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

Whereas the Annapolis Valley Trails Coalition has worked with several Valley groups to create the Annapolis Valley Trail System in the Annapolis Valley of Nova Scotia; and

Whereas the Annapolis Valley Trail System recently opened 19 sections including over 200 kilometres of good quality trails that provide hours of healthy outdoor recreation space for all citizens of Clare, Digby, Annapolis and Kings Counties, which allows a wide variety of outdoor activities during all seasons for a multitude of users; and

Whereas the Annapolis Valley Trail System includes trails operated by the Towns of Wolfville, Kentville, Berwick, and the Cornwallis River Pathways Society, Kings County Trail Society, Annapolis County Trails Society, South Shore Annapolis Valley Recreational Trail Association, Village of Weymouth, Bear River to Sissiboo Trails Association, and the Association Sentier de Clare-Rails to Trails Association;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly recognize the efforts put forth by these groups and municipalities to create a safe and healthy outdoor experience for the citizens of Digby, Annapolis and Kings Counties, and wish them success with the

continuation of the development and promotion of trails in the Annapolis Valley for the use of all Nova Scotians and visitors.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations.

### **RESOLUTION NO. 372**

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

Whereas hockey commands great interest and participation at all levels; and

Whereas the East Hants Penguins Junior B hockey team has entertained fans for many decades; and

Whereas on April 8, 2012, the East Hants Penguins won the Nova Scotia Junior B Hockey Championship and qualified to vie for the Don Johnson Cup in Newfoundland and Labrador;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulate the East Hants Penguins and their organization on their championship and wish them success on winning the Don Johnson Cup.

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. 373**

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

Whereas Shelburne historian and author Lewis M. Jackson was recognized for his outstanding contributions to the preservation of the historical record with the presentation of an honorary lifetime membership in the Shelburne Historical Society on January 7, 2012; and

Whereas Lewis M. Jackson, whose meticulous historical research spans four decades, has already authored several books as well as numerous articles that have brought Shelburne County's rich, seafaring history to life on the written page and promises more to come; and

Whereas Lewis M. Jackson's research is also credited with helping Canada stake its claim to the northeastern section of Georges Bank in the International Court of Justice at The Hague, the Netherlands, in 1984;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulate Shelburne historian Lewis M. Jackson for receiving an honorary lifetime membership in the Shelburne Historical Society and applaud his historical research, which is helping preserve the rich, seafaring history for generations to come.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Natural Resources.

**RESOLUTION NO. 374**

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

Whereas Joyce Tucker of Pictou received the Pictou Patron Award, which is given out by the Town of Pictou and the Pictou Business and Marketing Society; and

Whereas the Pictou Patron Award is given to a Pictou resident who has made the town a better place to live and to visit; and

Whereas Joyce Tucker was given the award for the contributions she has made helping people and promoting the town and the businesses over many years;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia Legislative Assembly congratulate Joyce Tucker for her Pictou Patron Award and thank her for all the work she has done over the years in the Town of Pictou.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island.

**RESOLUTION NO. 375**

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

Whereas the Spring Garden Area Business Association and the Downtown Halifax Business Commission initiated the Navigator Street Outreach Program to help street-involved individuals manage their complex physical and mental health needs; and

Whereas in 2010-11, the Navigator Program reached out to more than 300 street-involved individuals and at-risk youth providing help and resources in such areas as housing, mental health, employment support and addictions; and

Whereas on March 28<sup>th</sup>, the Spring Garden Area Business Association and the Downtown Halifax Business Commission were recognized for their work in winning the 2012 Minister's Award for Leadership in Crime Prevention;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly recognize the Spring Garden Area Business Association and the Downtown Halifax Business Commission for their commitment to helping and empowering street-involved members of our community and congratulate them on winning the 2012 Minister's Award for Leadership in Crime Prevention.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Truro-Bible Hill.

### **RESOLUTION NO. 376**

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

Whereas Vince Sharpe, formerly a native of Truro who now resides in Inuvik, received a Medal of Bravery in November 2011; and

Whereas Mr. Sharpe received this special recognition because of his heroic action of entering a burning trailer and saving the lives of two men; and

Whereas in the past, Mr. Sharpe has also rescued a baby from a burning building as well as a woman from drowning;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia Legislature congratulate Vince Sharpe on receiving the Medal of Bravery for his selfless acts of helping others in their time of need.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Queens.

### **RESOLUTION NO. 377**

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

Whereas Alice Leverman has provided admirable leadership and vision to South Shore Health as its chief executive officer; and

Whereas in addition to strengthening the ability of South Shore Health to deliver services to its clients, Alice Leverman also promoted the integration of services focusing on patient-centred health services, from acute care to community health programs; and

Whereas effective July 1, 2012, Alice Leverman will be retiring from her position as chief executive officer of South Shore Health;

Therefore be it resolved that, along with wishing Alice Leverman all the best in her future endeavours, the House of Assembly congratulate Alice Leverman on her retirement from South Shore Health and recognize her many contributions and dedication to the health and well-being of the families and individuals of the South Shore.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Pictou East.

**RESOLUTION NO. 378**

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

Whereas every May 9<sup>th</sup> since 1992 the Westray Families Group, incorporated as the No More Westrays memorial society, have honoured the memories of the 26 men who died in the Westray Mine disaster with a memorial service; and

Whereas labour representatives from across Atlantic Canada annually participate and acknowledge the tragedy of Westray and its devastating impact on families and the community; and

Whereas the Westray Families Group, along with labour organizations, emergency services providers, government, and the community will mark the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of this tragedy on May 9, 2012;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly bestow special tribute to the Westray Families Group, labour, and the community for ensuring the message of Westray is never forgotten.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Antigonish.

**RESOLUTION NO. 379**

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

Whereas the Minister of Justice recently presented the Minister's Awards for Leadership in Crime Prevention, which recognize individuals and businesses who work to make their communities safer; and

Whereas the Minister's Awards recipients are chosen based on their community work, leadership, and education efforts; and

Whereas Constable Jennifer Arnold of the RCMP detachment in Antigonish was one of 14 award recipients of the 2012 Minister's Awards for Leadership in Crime Prevention;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly congratulate Constable Arnold on receiving one of the 2012 Minister's Awards for Leadership in Crime Prevention and thank her for her continued work in the community.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

## **ORDERS OF THE DAY**

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

MR. SPEAKER: The time is now 3:00 p.m. and we will finish at 4:30 p.m.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

### **PREM.: RESOLUTE/BOWATER - MILL FUTURE**

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, earlier today we heard that Bowater is planning two temporary shutdowns in the near future, one between May 6<sup>th</sup> and May 21<sup>st</sup>, and another between June 17<sup>th</sup> and July 2<sup>nd</sup>. We understand these shutdowns are due to a lack of orders by the mill.

Mr. Speaker, we've already seen that this mill has been shut down for seven weeks of 20 weeks since the Premier made his announcement on December 2<sup>nd</sup>, so my question

for the Premier is, what ongoing talks is the Premier having with Resolute and Bowater about the future of this mill?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, there is in place, of course, an arrangement for the continued operation of the mill. The fact of the matter is that downtime has been rotating through the Resolute family of mills trying to deal with a lack of orders. Most of that has to do with what's going on in Europe, and with the Euro. The reality is that you have mills there that, because of the difficulties they are having, are now bidding in the same marketplace.

What the Leader of the Opposition should know is that there is a good plan for that mill going forward - it includes a series of improvements that were negotiated as part of the overall package. Those have not, as yet, been put into effect.

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, the series of things that the Premier talks about going in place in that mill have nothing to do with diversification. In the original deal that we talked about in this House, late November early December, the total package was around \$90 million: \$50 million - of which \$23 million was for land, another \$25 million was for the upgrades to that mill that the Premier is talking about - and there was an additional \$40 million that was set aside that was available for Resolute to draw on or to use, or the province to purchase land.

My question for the Premier is, what mechanism is in place to trigger the use of that \$40 million by Resolute?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, we reserved the right, if we decided, to be able to purchase more property of high value, but in fact no decision like that has been made. That would be a decision that we would make.

What I can say is that there is a good future for that mill once those efficiencies are put in place. What it will do is make it a lower-cost, higher-productivity mill. But as was pointed out by the Leader of the Official Opposition, the agreement was signed not that long ago. There are engineering requirements and there is pre-work that needs to be done in order to be able to make those changes happen. In fact, even in large mechanisms like we're talking about, even ordering that would take time, in order to ensure that you had access to the machinery that you wanted.

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, with the announcement of the pending shutdowns coming up, that will be one-third of the time this mill will be closed from December until July. In the Premier's previous answer he acknowledged that it is, in fact, the province that will trigger whether or not they purchase more land and hand more money over to Resolute for that mill.

My final question to the Premier is, if the Premier deems that it's necessary to trigger for that \$40 million, will he at least ensure that that money is being spent in the Province of Nova Scotia for Nova Scotian workers and not those in Quebec?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, the purchase of land in Nova Scotia means the value of that expenditure stays in Nova Scotia for generations, to be enjoyed by all Nova Scotians. I would say it's clear that for the Leader of the Official Opposition the glass is one-third empty, instead of being two-thirds full.

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

**PREM. - ONTARIO LBR. DISPUTE: RESOLUTION - N.S. FOLLOW**

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier. Ontario's doctors have been in contract talks with their government since February, but those talks broke off yesterday. In Ontario, that government is not allowing a labour dispute in the health care sector to disrupt the health care services that Ontarians need. The Ontario Health Minister said, "We will try to find a negotiated settlement . . . But if we can't reach an agreement, yes, we will have to act unilaterally." I will table that for the benefit of the Premier and the government.

My question to the Premier is, why won't the Premier of this province provide Nova Scotians with the same assurance that their health care, here, will not be interrupted the same way that the Government of Ontario is doing for its citizens?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I would note that in the statement that was just read by the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party, he noted that the government observed a process that was ongoing and apparently he didn't comment on it until after the contract talks had actually broken down, so that seems like a reasonable thing.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, what would have been more reasonable was to have a plan in place before surgeries were cancelled, before outpatient clinics were closed, before diagnostic imaging tests were halted, before real beds were closed because the fact of the matter is that as of today, at Capital Health 430 surgeries have been cancelled; 1,947 outpatient clinic hours have been lost; 530 diagnostic imaging tests have been cancelled; and 172 beds are now closed.

Each day that goes by that the Premier stands by and crosses his fingers and hopes for the best, another 130 to 150 surgeries are going to be cancelled. These are the real stories of real Nova Scotians that are going on right now in this province and those people are looking to their Premier to take action like the Premier of Ontario is doing for his own citizens. My question to the Premier is, if not now then when will the Premier do the right thing and assure Nova Scotians that their government will act to keep their surgeries going, to keep those clinics open, to open up those hospital beds? If not now, when?



THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, there is a process of collective bargaining underway. What I can say is that the commitment that we have is to make every effort to reach a negotiated settlement, as was said, I believe, in the statement that he read from Ontario. There is no question that that is a difficult process, it is a difficult position, I think, not only for the government but for the workers. They, after all, went into those professions because they care about the patients that they look after. We recognize that they are very likely conflicted about this situation, we understand it and we have taken on the responsibility of balancing all of those interests. Yes, that can be difficult.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, of course a negotiated settlement is always preferable, everybody agrees with that, but the Premier in his answer expressed concern for how hard it is on the Capital District management, how hard it is on the government, how hard it is on the workers themselves. All that is true, but what he left out was the very patients who we're asking about, who he was elected to represent, who have real surgeries that are being cancelled, who have real outpatient needs, who have real diagnostic testing needs. They are the ones that we're asking the Premier to stand up for today. Of course a negotiated settlement is preferable, of course we all hope that that happens, but when you're the Premier of Nova Scotia hoping for the best is not enough.

My final question to the Premier is, as we are now hours away from a deadline, what is his plan to assure Nova Scotians that his government will be there to make sure their surgeries happen and that their health care needs are met?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, throughout this process the government has ensured at every step that it has been there to provide the services that were required to try to get the parties to reach an appropriate collective agreement. We appointed a very, very well-respected mediator to help the parties get to the table and get back at negotiations. It is a process, and I don't diminish for one second how difficult it is and I don't diminish for one second how difficult it is on the patients. What I can say is that Capital Health has made every effort to ensure that any inconvenience has been minimized, that where they could move things around so that they could be dealt with in preference, they have done that.

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

**PREM. - BLOOD TEST: LAB TECHS./PHYSICIANS - CONFLICT**

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, Nova Scotians trust their doctors, they trust them to diagnose, they trust them to treat ailments and they trust them to support them in their time of need. What happens when doctors order blood tests only to have blood work not analyzed because the same, identical test was ordered to the same patient within the last four months. According to a recent article in The ChronicleHerald, this happened in the Capital Health 18,083 times in 2011. So my question through you to the Premier, could

the Premier explain to Nova Scotians how the lab is able to override the health care decisions made by our family doctors?

THE PREMIER: What I can say is that the professionalism of the technicians and of the health care professionals who are in our system is designed to make sure that the patients throughout Nova Scotia get absolutely the best quality of service. The decisions that are made reflect those protocols and standards of practice.

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, the decisions that are being made are a direct reflection of the decisions that this government has made around health care. District health authorities are having to respond. I understand, we all understand, the need for the health care system to be efficient, however, if there is a question of ordering too many tests, then the system should speak directly to those physicians who they believe are over-using the system and not jeopardize the health of Nova Scotians.

Mr. Speaker, John MacMullin from Sydney had his oncologist order blood work and despite some administrative errors and the fact that blood work requested from Nova Scotia Cancer Centre should always be processed, his blood work wasn't. So Mr. MacMullin was sent for blood work again, for the second time, so twice the cost to the system, and sadly, Mr. Speaker, his cancer has returned.

So my question to the Premier, how can the Premier claim that his NDP Government's cut to health care hasn't impacted patient care when clearly it has?

THE PREMIER: Well, Mr. Speaker, very simply, there have been no cuts to laboratory services. As I said, these people who are doing this are professionals. They perform their jobs according to protocols and standards that are entirely appropriate. Of course, I can't speak to any particular case but what I can say is that those standards that they would see in our hospitals would reflect the same standards that you would find, I would suggest, anywhere in the country.

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, no one in this House has questioned the professionalism and the ability of people working in our labs, nor has anyone in this House questioned the professionalism of doctors across this province. What we have, though, is a health care professional, a doctor, ordering to have tests done being overridden by another health care provider because there has been a directive sent from the district health authority to make that happen, without any discussion with the doctor to find out why those tests were being ordered.

Mr. Speaker, any doctor that I know doesn't just order a test for the sake of ordering, they do it because they care about their patients and they are looking for as much information as possible to give the proper diagnosis and to provide the proper care for Nova Scotians.

We can find \$0.5 million to buy school lunch bags; we can find \$500 million for corporate welfare; we can find over \$0.5 million to tell Nova Scotians that they can get better care sooner, yet they are denying bloodwork tests if they have already been tested within the last four months to save less than \$400,000 and put the care of Nova Scotia in jeopardy. So my final question to the Premier, how can the Premier tell John MacMullin, and the countless others who had their test not processed, that they are getting better care sooner?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, the one thing we don't do is to try and set clinical standards by political people. In fact, the clinical standards are set by health care professionals and, as I've said, I certainly have complete faith in them carrying out their jobs appropriately.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

### **HEALTH & WELLNESS: WAIT TIMES FUNDING - DETAILS**

MR. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, when it comes to health care Nova Scotians are concerned about two things, wait times and accountability. For the past eight years Nova Scotia has been the beneficiary of two pots of money dedicated to wait times, \$151 million in a Wait Times Reduction Fund, and another \$24.2 million for a Patient Wait Time Guarantee Trust, sum total of \$175.2 million.

While this may not seem like a lot of money vis-à-vis the health care budget, it is dedicated funding which is to be used to address wait times. My question to the Premier is, where can Nova Scotians go on-line to find an all-encompassing report and strategy on how and where these dollars were and will be spent?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member opposite for his question. I would ask that you direct the question to the Minister of Health and Wellness.

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question. There is an agreement that all provinces made with the federal government with respect to wait time guarantees in five areas. This province has worked very hard - has struggled, in fact - to meet wait time guarantees in some areas.

The area where we do have recognition right across the country for being the leader is in our reporting of wait time guarantees. We have the most comprehensive Web site reporting waits on those guarantees of any province in the country.

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, Nova Scotians are waiting. They deserve to know which surgeries or treatments are the priority of this government. Beyond the catch phrase Better Care Sooner, Nova Scotians waiting for health care deserve to know who will be actually getting better sooner and when.

The Province of Manitoba, back in 2006, produced both a report on the health care services and where the money was to be spent. Ironically, the report was called Working for Better Health Care Sooner. There is irony here. While Manitoba was working for better health care sooner, Nova Scotians are still waiting.

Could the Premier please indicate when his government will produce a similar report for Nova Scotians?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I'm glad to see that the member opposite recognizes that good work is being done with respect to wait times. I would ask that you direct the question to the Minister of Health and Wellness.

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, as I indicated, Nova Scotia has been recognized by both the federal government and all of the other provinces for having the most comprehensive wait time reporting system of any of the provinces in the country.

Notwithstanding what the member has had to say about Manitoba, we provide very comprehensive information on the waits, particularly in those five areas where we have agreements with the federal government under the Health Accord. Just to remind members, those areas are in diagnostic services; in cancer treatment, such as radiation services; in cardio; in cataract surgery; and in orthopaedics.

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, despite investments, out of the five national priorities for wait times just mentioned by the minister, we are meeting one of them: coronary artery bypass grafts. Hip replacement wait time is a year and a half in Halifax - which, by the way, due to the NDP's delay on appointing a mediator, will get worse, not better - and vascular surgery is 224 days in the Valley and 78 days in Cape Breton.

Given that they are three years into their mandate, can the Premier tell us when we can expect some sort of plan which will address surgical wait times?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, as the Minister of Health has already pointed out, we have underway a comprehensive plan with respect to those wait times. They are working well and have been recognized by the federal government and other provinces.

What's interesting is that other provinces are paying very close attention to what's going on in Nova Scotia. As you may know, the Minister of Health and Wellness has been chairing the national committee of Ministers of Health. Wherever I have gone across the country I have heard from other Premiers their appreciation for the work of our Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

**EDUC. - ELEM. EDUC.: IMPORTANCE - MIN. CONFIRM**

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Minister of Education. The review of the Chignecto-Central Regional School Board 2012-13 budget report today said that in general, the decisions made by the board seem reasonable and understandable in a context of a declining enrolment. In particular, the report notes that the board decided that elementary education is the most important component and wanted to protect those important early years of education from the sharp NDP knife.

The board reasoned that lack of learning or assistance in those years is magnified in the higher grades, a concept that most educators and all Nova Scotians would agree with. So my question is, does the minister agree with the board that elementary education is the most critical component to protect in our education system?

HON. RAMONA JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, each and every board had their mandate. Chignecto-Central's mandate is laudable, and I appreciate the work they've done around the issue of elementary education. I know that they are going to continue to do the fine work that they are doing. Thank you.

MR. ORRELL: The minister's budget officer made some specific recommended cuts to replace those proposed by the school board. They include cuts to early reading supports, such as 3.5 literacy mentors and eight early reading intervention positions. They also include outright firing of eight more elementary teachers, which would cause elementary class sizes to grow.

My question is, does the minister agree that the recommendations from her budget officer are consistent with the CCRSB's goal in protecting elementary education?

MS. JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, I want this to be made very clear: the retirements at the Chignecto-Central Regional School Board are definitely in line with the issue of declining enrolment, and there will not be anybody fired. There will be people retiring from the system. This is an opportunity to address the declining enrolment situation in that board. Thank you.

MR. ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, this question is to the Premier. The report concludes that the province should work with school boards on priorities before doling out arbitrary budget cuts. This is the exact opposite approach to the one that the minister has pursued this year. Nova Scotians expect their elected school boards and their elected Premier to work together to protect and enhance the classroom experience, but that's not what the Premier has done.

He is only too happy to use our schools as backdrops when cutting ribbons and holding press conferences, but he leaves the dirty work to the school boards when cuts have to be made.

My question is, will the Premier admit now that his approach to school board budgeting has made a mess of the budgeting process and apologize to all involved and admit they were not playing games when these cuts were made?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, we were very pleased to have the work of Mr. Stewart and his report back. I noted that what he said in that was that the school board had the science of budgeting right, but the art of budgeting could use further reflection and consideration.

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

**HEALTH & WELLNESS: CAPITAL HEALTH DIST.  
- MAMMOGRAPHY WAIT LIST**

MS. DIANA WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, at the present time the wait time for diagnostic mammography in the Capital District is more than three months. In fact, it's 97 days. While everyone in this House agrees that Nova Scotia has one of the best provincial breast screening programs in the country, it's clear that we have a problem where diagnostic mammography comes in.

For women in metro this is a particular concern, as they have the longest wait list in the province for a test that will tell them whether or not they have cancer. My question to the minister is, has she expressed concern about this wait time in Capital Health District for diagnostic mammography to officials in her department or to the district?

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the honourable member for the question. I'm puzzled, frankly, by the premise of the question that wait times in the Capital District for mammography are a problem. I have met on more than one occasion with Dr. Judy Caines, who is the head of the breast cancer program for the province. This has never been raised with me as an issue or a concern and, in fact, Dr. Tom Marrie, who is the dean of the Medical School, not so long ago told me that I needed to get staff in my department to update the information on the department's Web site because it wasn't reflecting the fact that, in fact, not only were we meeting the benchmarks for breast cancer screening, we were exceeding the benchmarks for breast cancer screening and, again, this is an area where we are a provincial leader in the area.

MS. WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, we just heard in a previous question about what a terrific wait times Web site we have. In this answer we hear that it needs to be updated because it's not accurate. So it's not telling Nova Scotians accurately, this is what we're hearing from the Health and Wellness Minister and that's a direct contradiction from the Premier's answer and, frankly, I'm puzzled just as much as the minister is.

The Web site, the one that has been so largely complimented today by the Premier, says that it's 97 days in the Capital District for a woman to get a diagnostic mammography

and because the government has been so slow to appoint arbitrators or move on the threatened strike, as of yesterday there were 530 diagnostic appointments postponed in Capital District and some of those are bound to be mammograms as well. So we know that the wait list is getting longer as we speak.

Can the minister please explain how she plans to address what amounts to a three-month wait according to the government's Web site?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, well, I think my former response addressed the inaccuracy of the information that the member used in her first question.

Mr. Speaker, the department is working hard to address wait times and to meet our wait time guarantees. As I indicated, there are five areas that the national wait time guarantee program was focused on. Breast cancer mammography wasn't one of those areas that the provinces and the federal government had agreed to but, nevertheless, it's a very important area and we do have a phenomenally successful and comprehensive screening program for breast cancer here in Nova Scotia - largely thanks to the dedication of the staff who lead that program.

I would like to indicate, Mr. Speaker, that while we still have more work to do in the five areas of wait time reduction, we are making progress. For example, radiation therapy has increased from 62 per cent within the benchmark in 2009, we are now at 83 per cent. So I take great pride in knowing that we are moving in the right direction in terms of improving waits for important health care treatments.

MS. WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, whether or not the diagnostic mammography is one of the five areas that the wait times have been agreed to with the federal government is of no matter to women who are waiting for these tests to be done. These wait times are really critical. They are a time of a lot of stress and concern and they are something that should be on the minister's mind as well. If there's inaccurate information on the Web site, that I think is a travesty and the government should be embarrassed about it. So I would like to know, my question, my third question to the minister is whether or not she will look into the accuracy of the information and if indeed it is 97 days for a wait in metro, if she will do something about it?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, to be frank, I'm more concerned that women get the access to mammography in a timely fashion than the information although after I spoke with Dr. Marrie and he brought this to my attention, I did bring it to the attention of the people who manage the Web site in the department. Again, I think the important point is that we are meeting the national benchmarks. We are exceeding what is being (Interruption) Well the member for Bedford-Birch Cove doesn't think the information that I'm providing here is accurate, but I want to (Interruptions)

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

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, I provided the information. The information is that we are in fact exceeding the recommended guidelines for the timeframe in which mammography needs to be provided. I have met, on more than one occasion, with the head of the Breast Screening Program for Nova Scotia. She has brought other issues to my attention requiring addressing, which my department has worked on. This has not been an area that has been raised, I'm presuming because it's not an area where there is concern.

I want to assure the women of the Capital District who are looking for services that they are being seen in a timely fashion.

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

### **PREM.: BILL NO. 100 - INTENTIONS**

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Egg Studios is a video production company, a successful one here in Halifax that employs 20 Nova Scotians, but those jobs are now in jeopardy. Recently an international union, IATSE Local 849, applied to certify a small group of freelance technical workers who are occasionally used on a freelance basis by Egg Studios. The union was able to organize those freelance workers because of Bill No. 100 and the unique preamble that the Premier placed in Bill No. 100. Egg Studios themselves says this development risks their operations here in Nova Scotia.

My question to the Premier is, did the Premier intend to jeopardize small businesses and the jobs that they create and maintain, like those at Egg Studios, when he forced through Bill No. 100 last year?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, this is just misinformation. Bill No. 100 has nothing to do with organizing efforts on behalf of unions. This is just part of the ongoing mythology that the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party likes to try to build around that bill. That's not what it does; in fact, what it does do is ensures that businesses are able to continue to operate and that employees are able to continue to work.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, the Premier may want to read the certification decision of his own Labour Board, because the Labour Board itself identified Bill No. 100 and its preamble as the reason that the Labour Board was able to rely on in allowing a certification of previously freelance workers at Egg Studios. So the Premier might want to read that decision and reconsider his answer.

But, then again, this is the same Premier who told all Nova Scotians that non-unionized employers would not be affected by Bill No. 100 and yet here we are. Egg Studios is a non-unionized employer and they're being very directly affected by Bill No. 100. Egg Studios is very clear - this will affect their operations because their customers, not



being able to afford higher rates, will simply go elsewhere in the world outside Nova Scotia for that important piece of work.

Egg Studios doesn't have the financial resources to fight the Labour Board's ruling, the Premier's own Labour Board, so will the Premier instruct the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education to intervene on behalf of employers like Egg Studios and do a judicial review of the Labour Board's decision?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, the decision of employees to unionize is their decision; that's their democratic right. Why would anyone intervene in such a fundamental democratic right as the right to organize?

MR. BAILLIE: Well, Mr. Speaker, again I suggest the Premier should read the decision of his own Labour Board because in that decision the Nova Scotia Labour Board uniquely created a whole new classification of workers who are not dependent on one particular employer, as freelance workers are not, but only have to show they are dependent, somehow, on an entire industry. Only in Nova Scotia under the NDP has this principle now been established, so every single non-unionized employer in Nova Scotia now has to consider this new risk to their operations, which is why Egg Studios are in the position that they are in today.

If the Premier won't accept that this is a hardship to non-unionized employers, to important employers and important industries like Egg Studios, will he at least apologize to all of those who took him at his word that Bill No. 100 would not affect non-unionized employers when, in fact, Egg Studios proves it does.

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I'll refer that to the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education.

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

HON. MARILYN MORE: Certainly the right to unionize is a right that's guaranteed under the federal constitution. To date we've had nine applications to unionize; that is entirely consistent with the time period from previous years. Unlike the scaremongering of the Opposition Parties when that bill was under debate, there has been no big increase in applications to unionize.

Certainly as a provincial government, we agree that the preamble to that Act is something that is recognized in federal legislation as well and there's no reason it shouldn't be recognized in provincial legislation. Thank you.

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

**HEALTH & WELLNESS: BREAST CANCER TREATMENT - C.B. WAIT TIMES**

MS. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, anytime a person receives a diagnosis for any kind of cancer, their life goes on hold. It can be pretty devastating news and their natural instinct is to seek out a specialist to discuss treatment options. Having a plan helps cancer patients cope.

Mr. Speaker, the wait time to see a medical oncologist for breast cancer in Halifax is 54 days. That's longer than any cancer. In Cape Breton it's 40 days, again longer than any other cancer. I will table the documents from the government Web site, showing those times.

Mr. Speaker, that's not even for treatment, that's just for referral to a specialist. So my question to the Minister of Health and Wellness is, has she expressed any concern to her officials as to why this would be the case?

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, the referrals to specialists in very many areas entail waiting to get access to a specialist. The system is set up to ensure that people are seen within what are called "clinical guideline times", so quite often the clinical guidelines recommend that somebody be seen within a specific period of time. To the best of our system's abilities, the various specialties attempt to organize their intake procedures to meet those guidelines in terms of when they see people, when they are provided with diagnostic testing, when they will have a specialist to read the results of a diagnosis, et cetera.

I don't know what the clinical guidelines are for each area, not being a clinician, but certainly we work very hard to make sure we have specialists available and they organize their workload in a way that they are able to see people in the required time, Mr. Speaker.

MS. REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I'm worried about the cascading effect here in Capital District. We have a three-month wait for a diagnostic mammogram, that's 97 days. Then we have a seven-week or 54-day wait in Capital District, to see a medical oncologist. That comes to a total of 151 days, almost five months, and to this point that's just for a referral, that's not even treatment. My question to the minister is, can the minister please indicate to the women of Capital District how she plans to address these cascading wait times for breast cancer care?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: As I indicated earlier, there is a process that attempts to ensure that, particularly - I mean I think we all recognize that there is nothing more terrifying than a cancer diagnosis. When people have referrals and they have the diagnostic testing, mammograms and other forms of diagnostic testing like CAT scans and MRIs, the clinical staff review those tests and they make referrals, and people are seen on the basis of whether a clinician thinks - their assessment of the cancer, where it is, how aggressive it is, and how quickly they need to be seen.

People with the greatest need are moved to the front of the line, Mr. Speaker, this is how the health care system is organized. It's a triage kind of system and I'm not aware that there's any particular problem in terms of people who have breast cancer, particularly aggressive forms of breast cancer, not getting seen in a timely fashion. If the member has additional information, I'd be happy to look at it.

MS. REGAN: So the minister is saying that government has no responsibility for wait times and so, therefore, their whole slogan of Better Care Sooner has nothing to do with them at all.

Mr. Speaker, wait times are always a concern and when it comes to cancer, one day can seem like an eternity. Imagine five months without treatment, five months without a consult. Can the minister please indicate to the women of Capital District when she plans to address these wait times?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONLD: Mr. Speaker, as I indicated earlier, we have a very robust cancer program in Nova Scotia. Cancer Care Nova Scotia is phenomenal. It's led by incredible clinicians who I have met with and who work very closely in the department in terms of letting us know what their concerns are around meeting the clinical standards that they are completely committed to having in place and being able to follow through on.

The same is true for the Breast Cancer Screening Program. These clinicians are absolutely dedicated to providing the best care from the beginning of a diagnosis through to the treatment that's required when such a diagnosis is given. I place a great deal of trust and reliance on their professionalism and expertise, Mr. Speaker.

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

### **PREM.: QUALITY EDUC. - ENSURE**

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Premier. Today's school board report highlights the need to ensure that we have a quality public education system across all Nova Scotia, including our rural areas. The students there are concerned about getting a good education, wherever they live in Nova Scotia. So I ask this question on behalf of Mrs. Black's Grade 12 students at Springhill High School. My question to the Premier is, what will the Premier do to ensure that every Nova Scotian gets a quality education in this province no matter where they live?

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. I think that question is out of order. Asking a question about a specific class, on behalf of - you're to ask the question not on behalf of the teacher but on behalf of yourself, so I'd like you to rephrase the question. You can't ask a question on behalf of the teacher.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, I ask the Premier, what is he doing to ensure a quality education for every Nova Scotian student, no matter where they live?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, what we're doing is ensuring that they have the highest per-capita funding per student in history and one of the lowest student/teacher ratios in generations.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, that sounds good, but not all schools offer the same programs. Some have IB programs, some don't. Some have band, some don't. Some have extra activities that others don't, and sadly, these are exactly the kinds of programs that are the first to get cut when school boards are faced with awful decisions about funding cuts.

So my question to the Premier is, what will the Premier do to ensure all kids in Nova Scotia have an equal opportunity to get a full education, including important elements like these?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, boards do make decisions about programming, and the fact of the matter is that programming does differ from place to place. That's a normal part of the allocation of these resources. In some cases there simply isn't the demand for the course, so you don't offer it if there is no demand.

MR. BAILLIE: Well, Mr. Speaker, I can assure the Premier that there are students at Springhill High who definitely have a demand for those kinds of programs, but they're the first ones that get cut when school boards like Chignecto-Central have awful decisions to make about their funding. Not all schools are the same size, but luckily, the size of a school and the quality of education offered there are not always dependent on each other. I'll give an example. Advocate District School is an example of a small rural school that has consistently achieved good academic results. Nevertheless, small rural schools are deserving of support because of their unique circumstances.

My final question to the Premier is, why did the Premier allow the Hogg funding formula to be changed this year, eliminating the \$150,000 special allowance for our small rural schools?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, the list was expanded to recognize isolated schools as well, so the number of schools was actually increased.

One of the things I would point out, Mr. Speaker, is that I happen to be one of those people who throughout my life had the opportunity to go to a rural school. I know how beneficial the education that is offered there is to young people. When I was going, the number of students coming into those schools was increasing and increasing, and yet we still got what I consider to be quality personalized attention. I can only imagine that now, as the numbers are dropping, teachers are dedicating even more of their time to those students individually.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Glace Bay.

### **HEALTH & WELLNESS: C.B. ADDICTION PROGS. - RESOURCES**

MR. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, the most heart-wrenching calls I receive are from parents whose children are addicted to prescription drugs. Spending all their money and resorting to stealing for pills is often a reality in Glace Bay and in many communities in Cape Breton. Kids are heating their pills and then injecting them into their veins to maximize the strength, a tragic symptom of a long-time addiction that has gone untreated.

That's certainly a lot to deal with for an 18-year-old who hasn't even graduated from high school yet. There's a 29-day wait for the IWK Compass Program, no structured treatment programs at all in Cape Breton, and the wait time for community-based programming in Sydney is the longest in the province at 62 days. So my question to the Minister of Health and Wellness is, when will the minister add resources to Cape Breton to help youth and families overcome deadly drug addictions?

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: I thank the member. He raises a very important issue, one that I know is of concern not only to members of this House but to members of our community from one end of the province to the other.

This government not so long ago did a public campaign aimed at that very age group that the member referred to about the dangers, for example, of mixing prescription drugs with alcohol. We also have the Unwasted Web site, and that has been reaching a lot of young people with respect to a whole variety of issues around substance abuse - the abuse of alcohol, the abuse of prescription drugs, the abuse of other kinds of drugs.

With respect to treatment programs, I know that the director of addiction and treatment services in the Cape Breton area has many ideas and has put into practice some expanded services for young people in the Cape Breton District Health Authority.

Mr. Speaker, indeed there is a great need in the province, including in the Cape Breton DHA, and shortly we will be unveiling the mental health and addictions strategy, and my hope is that we will be able to expand a number of programs aimed at the youth of our province.

MR. MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I certainly am aware of the ad campaign and of the Web site, and I can tell you, honestly, I know with certainty that those initiatives, they're not reaching the kids in Glace Bay. I can tell you that it really is a difficult thing to hear that kids - I mean you have the OxyContin issues, now we have a new drug called OxyNEO, and the change essentially results in the fact that these pills can't be broken down to be snorted or injected, so that's where we are with these drugs. They are the kinds of decisions and changes that manufacturers have to make to avoid some of these things.

We also have Percocet, Dilaudid, and all the methamphetamines that children are getting into. They are going downtown and buying these things and they are cooking them up - I mean that's what is happening for kids who are 16 or 17 years old in my community, and in many communities in Cape Breton. These drug addictions are certainly difficult for the kids they affect, but they also have a devastating effect on their families, Mr. Speaker. And that's who I hear from almost every day - I've been speaking to a few in recent times and it's very difficult, as an MLA, to hear those things.

The parents feel helpless to get their kids out of this dire situation and they are losing hope. They have nowhere to turn to get help, and many parents even consider purchasing methadone off the street just as a way to get to bridge that gap between the treatment and waiting.

My question to the minister is, what advice would the Minister of Health have for parents watching their kids battle addictions, withdrawal, deal with withdrawal symptoms, depression, and thoughts of suicide while they wait six weeks for treatment for drug addictions?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I know what the member speaks of because I've worked with families that have had young people who have serious addictions. It's a very complex problem and it's one that is not solved easily. It requires multi-prongs, it requires strong prevention, and public education - the kinds of things I referred to. It also requires treatment; it requires treatment services in a timely fashion; and it requires early assessment and early intervention, which I have spoken of many times and is the direction and the focus in which this government is going with respect to treatment programs for young people.

It also includes enforcement; it includes working closely between police departments and the prescription drug monitoring program - these are all features of the work that we are doing to improve and address addictions for youth and for young adults.

MR. MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, with respect to the minister's reply, it certainly is a complex issue and it certainly is a multi-pronged approach that is required. One of those prongs and one of those pieces would be the methadone maintenance programs, for sure. While they are beneficial, and methadone does help children and all those who battle drug addictions to get through the next period, it is certainly not a cure. So I think that we can never think that methadone is the answer, but it is key for that rehabilitation process - no question.

The methadone maintenance programs in Sydney are facing ever-increasing demands, obviously, and have very long wait times for entry. In fact, in Cape Breton, fears of a reduction in service and possible closure of the methadone treatments have children, parents and drug-addiction advocates extremely concerned.

My question to the Minister of Health and Wellness is, could the Minister of Health and Wellness indicate if her department is in touch with Dr. Ali and those responsible for methadone services and if there are any plans for further support to the methadone programs in Cape Breton?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, the staff in the department work very closely with the district health authority staff who are responsible for the delivery of addictions services programs across the province. It's at the district level very often that the front-line physicians and others who are involved in programs like the methadone maintenance programs are involved. At the provincial level, we set the standards and oversee the implementation of the standards and provide policy support. The actual delivery occurs at the district level and staff in our department are very active in reviewing the need for methadone around the province and we will continue to do that.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

#### **HEALTH & WELLNESS: PHYSICIAN RECRUITMENT - MIN. INVOLVEMENT**

MR. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, there are certain communities in our province that are in need of GPs and specialists: Chester, Bridgewater, Caledonia, Lunenburg, Mahone Bay, and Yarmouth, just to name a few. Some of these communities are also attempting to recruit specialists. I don't think I need to tell you that health care is very difficult to deliver if you don't have a sufficient pool of GPs and specialists to do so.

My question to the Minister of Health and Wellness is, despite the fact that we have yet to see a physician resource plan, what role has the minister personally played in helping communities recruit the physician resources they need?

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, we are nearing the completion of a physician resource plan for the province. There are areas in the province that have been challenged in terms of physician recruitment. We have over 30, foreign-trained doctors working in rural and small urban centres around the province providing health care services. It's one of the programs that the Department of Health and Wellness funds to bring doctors in to underserved and hard to service areas.

In addition to that, we assist the district health authorities with their recruitment. We have programs that help pay for site visits when they have physicians, or people who are potentially physicians, coming to their community. We have expanded the residency program for rural practice into the Annapolis Valley, as a matter of fact. We have a variety of programs and incentives to get physicians into underserved areas.

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, we know that those efforts are not making very great strides because we have Chester, Bridgewater, Lunenburg, three vacancies in Tusket, Argyle, Pubnico, two in Barrington, three family physicians in Digby, Lockeport,

Yarmouth also looking for physicians, Annapolis Royal, Bridgetown, Kentville and area, Kingston, Greenwood, Middleton, Berwick, Wolfville two physicians, Pictou County and on we go.

Over one year ago, April 20<sup>th</sup> to be exact, the minister announced a successful bid for the development of a physician resource plan. The tender itself had a time frame completion date of six months. According to the minister's own press release, final recommendations were to be shared with government in November. We know that the Annapolis Valley District Board received a briefing on the plan in December. Given that it's now April, why hasn't the physician resource plan been shared with Nova Scotians?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I remind the honourable member that during the estimates I provided a detailed breakdown of the number of GPs who had come to Nova Scotia in the last year and started to practice here, the number who had left, the number of specialists who had come, and the number we have lost. We actually had a net gain in both GPs and specialists. Nova Scotia, by any account in all independent national reports, leads the country in the number of physicians that we have per capita, to the number of people who live in this province.

That does not mean we can rest on our laurels. We have the highest numbers of physicians per population, but the distribution of those physicians can be very problematic in that we have shortages - chronic shortages in some areas, and difficulty getting physicians into certain parts of the province. More important is the need to plan for the future needs of the population. The physician resource plan will do exactly that. The physician resource plan, as I indicated, is close to completion, and when it is completed it will be released.

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for that reminder. This report is supposed to highlight current GP and specialists' needs as well as future provincial needs for the next 10 years. It's supposed to align the supply needs for the province with Dalhousie's medical training and is supposed to assist in the development of a health care system that provides services equitably across the province. But there are 60,000 Nova Scotians who continue to access emergency rooms for primary care and wait and wait for a family physician. Will the minister please tell Nova Scotians when they can expect to see a physician resource plan and hopefully assist the communities in need?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, as I indicated, it is the case that the physician resource plan is close to completion. I want to remind members that we are transforming our health care system into a system that is much more collaborative and team based. While family doctors, GPs, will remain a cornerstone of the health care system, they increasingly are one member of a team, a team that includes nurse practitioners and advanced family practice nurses and so forth.



What we are doing is moving to more collaborative care clinics around the province and opening the Collaborative Emergency Centres across Nova Scotia, such as we've opened in Parrsboro and Springhill, with a few more to open quite shortly in Annapolis Royal, Pugwash, and Tatamagouche. These centres utilize doctors, nurse practitioners, paramedics, licensed practical nurses - a whole number of care providers. The result will be better care sooner, better chronic disease management, and better primary care for Nova Scotians.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Glace Bay.

### **ERDT: IRVING SHIPBUILDING CONTRACT - EMPLOYMENT NUMBERS**

MR. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, the NDP Government consistently used job numbers surrounding the shipbuilding contract that are in the tens of thousands of positions. In winning the bid, Irving was able to ensure a measure of growth for our province. The problem is that the NDP communications did not match the realities on the ground.

My question to the Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism is, exactly how many Nova Scotians does the minister project will find new employment with the Irving shipbuilding contract?

HON. PERCY PARIS: Mr. Speaker, as a result of the Irving bid, the Conference Board of Canada is projecting that at the peak of the contract there will be well over 11,000 jobs in the Province of Nova Scotia. We knew that when we were going into the process, Mr. Speaker. We envisioned that for the first two or three years the Irving shipyard will ramp up - there will be a constant of 4,000 jobs - in the vicinity of 4,000 jobs.

MR. MACLELLAN: We hear that the minister uses the number 4,000 to 11,000. The minister has often advised me not to get hung up on job targets but, Mr. Speaker, that sounds an awful lot like a range of jobs that would be created in the shipyard. I'm not sure which one it is, but anyway.

As we've stated in the past and will always continue to do so, Irving's success in winning the contract will benefit Nova Scotia and all Nova Scotians. Where the problem exists is that the NDP spin machine doesn't seem to reflect the reality of the jobs that are going to be created. We know that there is a global interest in this contract, Mr. Speaker. There is keen interest from Scotland, from America and we also know that jobs attached to this contract are being publicly publicized in the Philippines, and I'll table the article that does so.

An article in the Philippine Daily Inquirer carries the headline, "Jobs Await Filipino workers at Canadian shipyard", and that is tabled, Mr. Speaker. So my question to

the minister, was the minister not presenting a realistic picture to the people of Nova Scotia surrounding jobs connected to Irving?

MR. PARIS: Mr. Speaker, those numbers that I quote come from the Conference Board of Canada and I will reiterate - during the peak of fulfilling this contract, there will be over 11,000 jobs in the Province of Nova Scotia.

Mr. Speaker, you know there are some things that we have no control over. Irving is in the private sector and I'm not going to stand here in this House and criticize or comment on the procedures of Irving Oil. I don't have the detail and the information to do that and I will not criticize them here in this House.

MR. MACLELLAN: We're certainly not asking the minister to criticize Irving, we're just asking questions on behalf of the taxpayers who have invested \$300 million in this project, so I think it's a fair question.

Certainly, Mr. Speaker, shipbuilding is complex work and involved many integrations throughout the process. For the NDP to carelessly overstate job numbers is misleading at best. This contract, which was won fair and square by Irving, will have a positive impact on our economy which is certainly a great thing for Nova Scotia.

Nova Scotians deserve the facts and not spin and they are just looking for answers on how many jobs are going to be created for the Irving shipbuilding contract. So my question, will the minister tell Nova Scotians what portion of this contract he expects to leave the province of Nova Scotia?

MR. PARIS: Mr. Speaker, through you the member asked a question. I quoted numbers that come from the Conference Board of Canada; those aren't numbers that were manufactured by this government. I will say again so that the member can understand, at the peak years of this contract there will be over 11,000 jobs in the Province of Nova Scotia. This is the most important event that has happened in Nova Scotia's recent history, and certainly, in my lifetime. This is something that we all should be behind because I know Nova Scotians support this.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

#### **LBR. & ADV. EDUC. - SHIPBUILDING TRAINING: NSCC - FUNDING**

MR. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, the NSCC trains 90 per cent of all apprentices in the province. If this government was really committed to training Nova Scotian workers for Nova Scotian jobs it would invest in the NSCC. Instead we learn that the NSCC is facing a budget shortfall of \$5.37 million as a result of this government's damaging cuts to post-secondary education. A budget shortfall is not going to address the increased need for training in shipbuilding trades.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the minister is, will the minister tell members of this House how Nova Scotians are going to get training for Nova Scotia shipbuilding jobs if the NSCC is facing a budget shortfall of \$5.37 million?

HON. MARILYN MORE: Mr. Speaker, I just want to remind members of the Chamber that this government has invested over \$8 million - new dollars - in trades and training. Much of that is going to be delivered through the community college system and, in addition, there's \$250,000 dedicated each year to establish a centre for shipbuilding excellence at the Nova Scotia Community College. We understand what a tremendous investment we're going to be able to make to support the shipbuilding procurement contract. We have a plan and we're going to be ready.

MR. CHURCHILL: I know that the minister has announced a \$2.75 million investment specifically for shipbuilding-related training but still the NSCC is facing a \$5.37 million deficit, Mr. Speaker, as a result of the money cut from their core funding by this government. Will the minister tell members of this House, are the funds committed to shipbuilding-related training - are they new monies or are they just funds that this government is recycling from shortchanging NSCC in the first place?

MS. MORE: Mr. Speaker, I would say it's a combination of new additional funding and also reaffirmation of the core funding that we give to pre-apprenticeship programs through the community college as well. I just want to remind the honourable member that certainly, like all service providers who are publicly funded in this province, we've asked everyone to look at operational efficiencies, as we are doing within government as well. There's a way to become more efficient in terms of how we deliver programs without impacting necessarily on the programs themselves. So we are trying to improve both the access and the excellence of trades training and direct access to apprenticeships in this province as well as making sure that everyone reviews what they do, how they do it, and that the most money possible is going to programming.

MR. CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, this government has a knack for renaming money while slashing budgets. We saw it with the Minister of Education when she slashed money to the public education system and we now see it with this minister cutting the budget and underfunding the NSCC while putting a crowd-pleasing name on money that already exists in the system.

Mr. Speaker, putting a name on a portion of funding does not soften the blow of a \$5.37 million budget shortfall even if there's photo-op attached to it. The 25,000 students at NSCC programs across the province deserve the truth. Will the minister admit that her shipbuilding training announcement was not new funding, it was just window dressing for monies that were already supposed to go to NSCC in the first place?

MS. MORE: Mr. Speaker, the Province of Nova Scotia is actually giving more money to the Nova Scotia Community College system this year. We've asked them to

reallocate that as much as possible to programming and to look at operational efficiencies. So certainly they're looking at administration, for example. Two highly honoured principals of two campuses are retiring and so the community college has looked at that as an opportunity to have shared administration between two sets of community colleges in this province. So they're being innovative, they're protecting the programming and the students in the classroom and, at the same time, they are looking at operational efficiencies. So hats off to the community college.

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

### **COM. SERV.: TALBOT HOUSE REPT. - INTENT**

MR. KEITH BAIN: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Minister of Community Services. In response to questions about the fiasco her department created at Talbot House - and all the good it did in the community - the Minister of Community Services continues to stress that the report was to address organizational issues.

The minister said in this House, Mr. Speaker: "Any reference in that review is with respect to the organizational workings of that board of directors . . .", and I will table that, Mr. Speaker. However, the report wandered far into allegations, which have since been thoroughly discounted, that were personal and directed at the former executive director - not organizational issues, but sinister in nature.

My question to the minister, was the report designed to examine organizational issues, as the minister claims, or just to take on Talbot House on any issues, including personal smears? Which is it?

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, if you review the organizational review that we did, if you read it you would see within that that the information is about the organization. When you do an organizational review, you must talk to individuals to find out whether they are following policies. That's exactly what it is, and that's as far as it goes.

MR. BAIN: Mr. Speaker, during Budget Estimates on Monday, the minister described in what I say in great detail the way her department conducted their organizational review of Talbot House. She indicated that the way they did the review was to talk to the board of directors and staff and, if necessary, they would talk to the people receiving the services.

Mr. Speaker, my question through you to the minister: How many current residents did the minister's department speak with during the course of their review and, if they didn't, why did her department deem it unnecessary?

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: As I said before, Mr. Speaker, this entire issue is around an organizational review and it is focused on the performance and whether they met the standards that were in the service agreement. In fact, it's that group over there that wants to keep this going and harm the individuals involved.

Now the board of directors, the chairman has actually reached out and asked for us to work together, which I, in fact, have said yes, we would. So if they would stop their foolishness, people would be able to work together.

MR. BAIN: Mr. Speaker, I'm not even going to bother to respond to that accusation. You'd think if a department was doing an organizational review on a facility to see whether or not the programs are being delivered right - what better way to find out than to talk to the residents who are in Talbot House today?

Mr. Speaker, someone said that the department purposely did not meet with individual residents of Talbot House, and this is because many feel that the department only wants to hear bad things about the organization. The mishandling of this situation is shameful. The minister claims that the review was strictly an organizational review, yet the report shows evidence of an attack on Father Abbass.

The minister says she'll work with the board to help Talbot House get back on its feet after she pushed them down, but her department has announced that they are putting out a request for proposals. So my question to the minister is, will the minister apologize today to the board for the gross incompetence and disrespect she has shown them?

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: The only disrespect that has been shown to anybody is that group over there trying to create an issue over an organizational review.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

#### **ERDT - YAR. FERRY: STUDY PANEL - FOCUS**

MR. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, this week the Premier announced a panel that is going to review existing studies on the Yarmouth ferry. I have a real fear that this is another thing where the government is going to deflect responsibility on to another group. That's a sincere fear I have - I hope I'm mistaken.

Mr. Speaker, for the sake of this question, I'll give this process the benefit of the doubt. When it comes to the word "viability" that this group will be looking at, can the Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism tell us if they are only looking at the ferry service itself and its ability to make money for its owners, or are they going to look at the economic impact that a government investment will have for the area and a ferry?

HON. PERCY PARIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is a panel and one of the things that I want to make very, very clear - it is not another study. What it is doing is conducting a review. It's going to review all of the information, all of the data that has been put forward by a number of different individuals and organizations.

There have been a lot of pros and cons, Mr. Speaker, with respect to the Yarmouth ferry. This is certainly going to look at the business case; it's going to look at the viability of the ferry. This panel is going to be guided by a group of experts, ferry experts from Dalhousie University, and we hope they will provide everyone with the answers we all seek.

MR. CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, the challenge here is that we're on the cusp of another tourism season without that vital sea link to the largest tourism market in the world. There's still no timeline on what this panel is going to do or when they are going to complete their work by and there's no clarification on what the mandate of this group is when it comes to examining the viability. My hope would be that they look at the economic impact that service has on the tourism sector, on businesses across the province.

There's another challenge because yesterday the Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism said there is no money in the provincial budget to support a restored ferry service. Mr. Speaker, my question to the minister is, if the panel does say that an investment in a ferry is needed, where will the money come from?

MR. PARIS: Mr. Speaker, I know very well what I said yesterday and what I said is that we did not put any money in the budget for something that doesn't exist. I will say further, that if - and we don't know this panel is going to say - but one of the things that I've said repeatedly is that this requires a partnership, an involvement by more than just the Province of Nova Scotia.

Mr. Speaker, we would look for - and you know what? If we're going to invest in a ferry, we would think that the appropriate partners are going to be there alongside us, number one. Number two is that there's a solid, viable business case for the installation of a ferry.

MR. CHURCHILL: We still don't know what this word "viability" means or how it's going to be interpreted by the panel. That is a problem. The minister has said there is no money allocated for a restored ferry service. If you're putting a panel in place to look at this and one of the conclusions they are going to come up with is, it's either not worth it or it is. If they decide that it is, where will the money come from and how much is this government willing to put into it?

MR. PARIS: Mr. Speaker, you know a business case is a business case, as far as money is concerned - and I don't know why the member doesn't understand - what I've said repeatedly is that when we look at investments, we look to see who is at the table with us.

Mr. Speaker, we've said we tried with the Yarmouth ferry to have involvement from the federal government. The federal government said no. We asked the governments in the U.S., would you be involved with funding for the Yarmouth ferry? They said no.

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

### **ERDT: TEAM WEST/TEAM SOUTHWEST - ECONOMIC RESULTS**

MR. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, I really want to continue that last one, but I guess we have to move on. In 2009, once southwestern Nova Scotia lost the ferry and the government realized the economic damage that was going to happen, this minister invested over \$0.5 million into Team West and Team Southwest, whose purpose was to reinvigorate the economy of southwestern Nova Scotia. My question to the Premier is, what have they been doing?

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, I'll do him a favour and give him to the Minister of ERDT.

HON. PERCY PARIS: Mr. Speaker, this government has made huge investments in the southwestern region. I think in not any way a priority list, but certainly at the top of the list has to be the \$50 million we invested in Bowater to save thousands of jobs along the southwest region. I also would like to mention the investment that we made in things like the 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary for Yarmouth. We made an investment in the hockey challenge, the Junior A hockey challenge. We have made numerous investments in the southwest region and we have worked with organizations and individuals in the southwest region, which we will continue to do.

MR. CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, just to clarify my question which is, specifically with the over \$0.5 million - I think it was \$600,000 - that went to Team West or Team Southwest, what did those groups do for the economy of southwestern Nova Scotia? Have we seen a report on what the returns were to taxpayers, who put money into those things? What's going on? We haven't heard anything from those two groups in three years. I'm giving the minister an opportunity to provide this House with a very clear and direct report on the activities of Team West and Team Southwest and to explain to us, what happened to that \$600,000 that was put into them?

MR. PARIS: Mr. Speaker, Team West and Team Southwest, all of those organizations that were formed in the southwest region were formed in partnership with ACOA. For the last Team West, we are awaiting audited reports on just how the money was spent. We do know that there was some money that was left over from those various initiatives. We know that in some cases we received written requests if that money could be used for other things and we have denied them. We have tracked records and what we don't have records of, we will be receiving them.

MR. CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, it's a bit disconcerting to me that the minister doesn't know what these groups did for the economy of southwestern Nova Scotia. They were put in place to help, they received significant funds and nobody knows what has happened. Will the minister please table in this House any evidence he has, any data on the work that these groups have done on behalf of the citizens of southwestern Nova Scotia?

MR. PARIS: Mr. Speaker, as minister, I would be more than pleased to table all information, when it becomes available, to all members of this House. I will even go so far as to elaborate on that list because I will include the \$1 million that we invested in Rodd, I will include all of those other investments that we made in the southwest region to enable the southwest region to be all that it can be and then some. We are proud of our legacy with respect to the southwest region.

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

#### **OPPOSITION MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Opposition House Leader.

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

#### **PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING**

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Opposition House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 42.

#### **Bill No. 42 - Rural Nova Scotia Physicians Act.**

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

MR. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise in my place today and debate Bill No. 42, the Rural Nova Scotia Physicians Act.

Today I asked the question of the minister about the need for family physicians, especially in rural Nova Scotia. We know that the need is extensive and I just will start off by reiterating that kind of need that there is around rural Nova Scotia. Currently there are over 60,000 Nova Scotians who don't have a family doctor.

While we know that the model of health care delivery is in change, it's in a transitioning period and perhaps in many regards quite a transformation period. I know in speaking recently with Dr. Tom Marrie, head of the Dalhousie Medical School, I asked him



if he and his colleagues across the country are seeing any change around the need for every Canadian to have a family physician. That is still the goal and that is still the staple and the basis of good primary health care delivery. That remains an elusive goal in Nova Scotia when we have the number of people who are currently without a family physician.

When we take a look at communities like Chester, Bridgewater, Lunenburg, Tusket, Argyle, Pubnico, Barrington, Digby, Lockeport, Yarmouth, Annapolis Royal, Bridgetown, Kentville and area, Kingston, Greenwood, Middleton, Berwick, Wolfville, two physicians in Pictou County, a physician in Richmond County, Cape Breton and Arichat, Guysborough County - we do have a very identified need for more family physicians.

As the minister rightly points out, we in Nova Scotia are very fortunate to have the highest number of physicians per capita, but that's also very misleading and not that comforting for the many Nova Scotians without a family doctor. When it comes to those kinds of numbers, 231 doctors per 100,000 population, we need to realize some of the people who are registered to practise may actually not be actively practising. With a world-class medical school and an active research community, quickly the numbers change.

I know of several doctors in Nova Scotia who spend half a year here and half a year in another community. That skews the kinds of numbers around 231 per 100,000. Of course, as we all know in our province it is actually the distribution of the doctors as outlined, but a number of communities that are in need, that is our central problem. Again, hopefully, we're going to see that change.

This bill would assist greatly in addressing this maldistribution. We need to find ways to have young physicians, new physicians take a look at not just family medicine but also family medicine being practised in our rural communities. There are a number of initiatives that have actually borne fruit across the country and across North America. I'd like to see that; perhaps we need an array of initiatives, not just one. So I'm going to talk about three today. One, I think, would work in rural Nova Scotia as well as it worked in northern Ontario.

Northern Ontario and its mining communities were experiencing difficulty in attracting doctors and retaining doctors who went to those communities. They identified students from these northern communities who were finishing their basic science degree and applying for med school. They looked at it right at that early stage where they were applying for med school, and they were to provide economic incentives toward their med school education for coming back to their communities. Again, these were young northern Ontario students who knew the nature of the communities that they were coming back to, and they were prepared to make such a commitment.

I looked at one of those studies, which was done by a young doctor in Nova Scotia during his med school years, and he was looking at the concepts of recruitment and retention. This was a study based on the northern Ontario experience that he passed on to me some time ago.

Today in our bill we're talking about a clerkship program, and this is not new. This has been in practice in Minnesota, for example, for about 40 years. The program enables a med student to spend an extended period of time in their third year in a rural community. Most programs are 36 weeks in duration.

The Dalhousie Medical School has started down this path. This year they have three students in New Brunswick who are there under the clerkship program. Basically, they are not at the med school site at Dalhousie - they are in a community under mentorship, working with a family doctor, perhaps in a collaborative practice. These students are in their third year. They will be rotating around a number of facilities and this program enables the students to spend most of their academic year helping patients in one community. This concept of the clerkship is not unique to Minnesota. The med school in Alberta has used this in northern communities of Alberta, and the results are very, very encouraging.

First of all, I think we need to say what the benefits are to a med student who is involved in a clerkship. We know that during that third year, they are going to gain a real sense of the type of medicine that is practised by a family physician in a rural community. Very often they have a much greater range of practice and procedures and a variety of patients, from the day-old to the 100-plus-year-old patients who they would be seeing. It's a great diversity. They get to see patients over a longer period of time, and they get to build a relationship with a number of specialists and physicians in a community. Most of all, they get a really good sense of the nature of that community.

I know this is kind of the idea that a number of communities have tried to use, that kind of process in attracting and recruiting doctors to their communities, where they'll have a doctor come in for four or five days, spend time with the local medical community, visiting the hospital that they may have visiting privileges in, and seeing the kind of community, investigating the schools and so forth.

This, however, in a clerkship, is for an entire year, and I think the results speak for themselves. The University of Minnesota, in looking at its 40-year history of the program, says that 60 per cent to 70 per cent of the students that go through the program choose family medicine after graduation and about one-half of these ends up establishing a practice in a rural area. So, obviously, it has very good results.

The Canadian experience is probably not quite as strong and perhaps that could be the nature of the small, isolated northern communities of Alberta where this practice has been going for about 13 years and in the 13 years, the short-term statistics show a similar

trend with 30 per cent to 35 per cent of the graduates choosing family medicine and of those who do choose family medicine, 50 per cent go back to the community where they practiced in their clerkship. So this is a real winning formula that has been used in the United States, now in Canada, and Dalhousie is starting down the road; it's in its infancy of developing such a program.

As Dalhousie develops this program, I think it's absolutely critical, it's imperative for our province to be at the table with Dalhousie and work out - whether it's again, and most likely - a cost-shared arrangement to have the students be in a clerkship and be in these communities for that period of time. I think it's vitally important to see this program as a recruitment tool for communities looking to recruit a family physician.

We also know that the model used by the military across Canada has worked very well for them where they identify a student in med school who also has an interest in a Canadian Armed Forces career, whether it be a short or a long-term period. They've had no problem by providing tuition support, looking after those candidates financially, and then having them practice in a Canadian Armed Forces base for a period of three to five years, I think is the common practice that we would see.

So I think as we look at an array of possibilities, you know, in chatting just very recently about the clerkship program, it reminds me a little bit of a program growing up in rural Newfoundland and Labrador where the cottage hospital was the mainstay in the little outport communities and they would work on attracting young doctors to come to those communities, experience them for a period of time, especially in a role during the summer months, and in many ways it was kind of those first attempts at recruitment because it would be not for every young medical school to look at going to Lewisport, or Twillingate, or Burin, or any of the small communities around Newfoundland and Labrador.

I think as we continue to struggle in Nova Scotia, it's important that Nova Scotians do know that there are 60,000 of us who don't have a family doctor. I think whatever constructive solutions that we can offer through legislation, through discussion and dialogue with the Dalhousie Medical School, ways to get the new crop of doctors, over the next while, into our rural communities, it will indeed be a great asset.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Queens.

MS. VICKI CONRAD: Madam Speaker, I'm pleased to rise to speak to this piece of Opposition business today, the Rural Nova Scotia Physicians Bill. The bill certainly has a lot of interesting statements in it but it proposes a very simple answer to what is really a very complex problem.

At the core of this issue, we all agree, is access to primary care. We all know that Nova Scotians want and deserve medical attention where and when they need it, Madam

Speaker. I want to point out that our government has a number of initiatives in place to ensure that access to primary care is available to all Nova Scotians.

In terms of doctors, the Department of Health and Wellness has a number of incentive programs already in place to recruit and to retain rural physicians. The recruitment and retention of physicians in rural areas of our province continues to be very much a priority of this government, Madam Speaker.

To support physician recruitment, the province offers financial support for site visits for physicians considering working in a rural area. These doctors can also access financial support to help with the relocation costs, once they decide to work in the specific rural community. The province also provides debt assistance and return of service agreements to doctors who are willing and interested in practising in rural communities.

Madam Speaker, I want to take this time while I am chatting about this bill to talk about all of the positive things that are happening in Queens, my riding. There are many good partnerships that are working to help create healthier and attractive communities for new doctors who are looking to set up practice in rural communities.

I want to take this opportunity to speak to the Queens General Hospital and some of the exciting initiatives that are happening there. Queens General, for those members who aren't aware, is an acute care community hospital. It features 22 beds, combined medical and surgical units. It includes three concentrated nursing care beds, plus two telemetry units with full cardiac monitoring capability and a day surgery unit. Some of the services featured at the Queens General Hospital would be a 24-hour outpatient Emergency Department. We have a wonderful lab, we have diagnostic imaging. I spoke of the day surgery and ambulatory care services available. We have EKG and general services and respiratory therapy, family practice, we house mental health and addiction services, just to name a few.

What is happening that is new and exciting in Queens is, South Shore Health is preparing to issue its first tender call related to the new Queens General Health Care project. This new health care project, Madam Speaker, features a new primary care clinic and a Collaborative Care Centre. This is exciting for Queens and this has come about from the partnership of many in the community, including our physicians.

The Queens General Health project will not only feature the new primary care clinic, as I mentioned, but it will also feature the redevelopment of those 22 bed in-patient units at the hospital. This new clinic and Collaborative Care Centre will certainly enhance the health services for the community and also it will offer better experiences in patient care for clients and patients in the hospital. It will also improve the work environment for staff and physicians and that's very important to our doctors in the area. We want to make sure they do have not only enhanced services but also a really well-rounded work environment.

Our community is really supporting efforts to recruit and retain health professionals now and well into the future.

This new initiative, as I mentioned earlier, has been transpiring over many years and this build really is a result of many years of work from the South Shore Health board and many community partners. Also the region of Queens and the province has been very much involved with this new build.

I want to tell you, Madam Speaker, that the Queens General Health Project has a total budget of over \$16 million: \$11 million of that budget has come from our Queens Foundation and from private donors, the province has invested \$2.5 million, and the region of Queens has committed \$1 million to the project. A fundraising committee has been struck recently, consisting of volunteer members in our community, and they have been tasked with raising the remaining \$1.5 million for this new primary care clinic.

Madam Speaker, I want to tell you that the importance of these partnerships is really key in attracting and retaining new doctors to rural communities, and I want to talk about another very important and great initiative happening in Queens. We have the North Queens Medical Care Centre in Caledonia. The North Queens Medical Centre Association was formed in the mid-1980s to address a concern after a physician, the only physician in North Queens at the time, was retiring. So the North Queens Medical Centre Association was formed and they decided that they had a real challenge on their hands in terms of recruiting a doctor to that particular rural community. So what they set out to do was to form a partnership to come together and create a space that would be attractive for a doctor wishing to set up a new practice in the area.

The province at the time donated an old liquor store, Madam Speaker, and there was a double trailer that sat on that land next to this old liquor store - so the province donated not only the building, but they also donated the land. The community then came together and, with some assistance from the region of Queens and also Bowater Mersey at the time, they were able to create an attractive space - a small space but a very attractive space - and they were able to attract the first salaried physician in Nova Scotia in 1990. That was quite an accomplishment, then, for a rural community that was challenged with looking for a rural doctor.

Then in 1999 the North Queens Medical Centre Association decided to respond to an invitation to submit a letter of intent for the Strengthening Primary Care Initiative - and this was an initiative which was a joint initiative from both the federal and provincial governments at the time. The North Queens Medical Centre Association took up the challenge and not only did they attract the first nurse practitioner and staff to work in this new collaborative practice, but they also took on the challenge of creating a bigger space.

Out of that project and community work they decided to build a new facility, Madam Speaker, and this new facility in North Queens is second to none - and we actually

brag about it all across this country. The light has been shone on the community of North Queens and our wonderful medical centre, and that medical centre is a classic example of a community recognizing a need and working together to meet that need.

Today the North Queens Community Health Centre serves as a model, as I just mentioned. It offers effective delivery of primary health care in a rural community and, today, we have two full-time physicians and a full-time nurse practitioner. We get visits at the North Queens Community Health Centre from paediatricians, from Addiction Services, Mental Health Services - and there's diabetes education offered at that medical clinic as well. So we're very proud to talk about our successes in Queens when it comes to recruiting and retaining new doctors.

I want to mention some of our new doctors, I want to give them kudos for all of the great work that they do in Queens and continue to do in terms of serving the needs of residents, looking after our health care needs. I want to make mention and kudos to Dr. Andrew Blackadar, Dr. Sarah Cosh, Dr. Kim Crawford, and Dr. Al Doucet who works as well with South Shore Health. I want to reach out and say thank you to Dr. Gary Ernest, Dr. David Gunn, Dr. Jennifer MacDonald, Dr. Norah Mogan, Dr. Garry Morash, Dr. James Rafferty in Caledonia, Dr. Susan Thorne, Dr. Tim Woodford who happens to be my physician - a great doctor - and Renate Bennett who is our nurse practitioner in Caledonia.

These doctors come together at weekly meetings and they partner not only with the South Shore District Health Authority, but with other community partners such as the Queens Community Health Board. The Queens Community Health Board really is the ears and the eyes of the community in Queens. They service not only Queens County, but also parts of Lunenburg County as well. There are 15 volunteers on our Queens Community Health Board and they really are a true partner when they come to the table to address community health care needs, and they are a resource and a support for new doctors who are looking to set up practice in rural communities such as Queens.

Just in the last two years the Queens Community Health Board, which receives funding through the South Shore District Health Authority, they distributed \$15,000 in grants to organizations such as the Queens Fitness Centre. There is an incentive there for residents who are interested in bettering their health to have coupons, if you will, to enable them to join the Queens Fitness Centre and get some mentorship for good, healthy exercise regimes. That program was also partnered with some of our family doctors in Queens. They've contributed to the Well Woman Day Committee, the Kiwanis Club for the child resource fair, and also skate for health programs.

Another very important partner to help us retain doctors in rural communities such as Queens is the Queens General Hospital Auxiliary. Our auxiliary in Queens is a very important and key partner, a group of many dedicated volunteers who work to improve patient comfort and care. Some of those members work in the gift shop, they work with organizing our Queens Hospital Hustle and they raise many funds for the hospital.

Over the last several years they have donated in excess of \$150,000 to the hospital for a number of initiatives. Our acute comfort room, much equipment has been purchased for the operating room construction project. They have purchased for the hospital, and for our doctors who work tirelessly at the Queens General, a trauma stretcher, a space lab monitor, wheelchairs with IV poles, flexible scopes, stretcher chairs, blood pressure cuffs - these are the sorts of pieces of equipment that the auxiliary has worked hard to fundraise for, and all in support of our doctors in rural communities.

I want to conclude by saying that this government is very focused on retaining and attracting doctors to rural communities, and I want to say that I want to shine the light on what's happening in Queens. It's a good example of how partnerships do work. Not only have Queens doctors partnered with community volunteers and community organizations, but they have partnered very successfully with the province and this government. This government certainly knows all of the great work that has been happening in Queens.

Madam Speaker, it has been my pleasure speaking to this bill.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle.

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Merci beaucoup, Madame la Présidente. C'est un grand plaisir de parler ce soir sur ce projet de loi.

Thank you very much Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to stand this evening and speak to this bill that has been introduced by the Liberal caucus. Many of us represent wonderful rural areas and I thank the member for Queens for her discussion, her interest in her community and the great things that are happening.

I can tell you there are lots of great things happening around Nova Scotia because of the, I believe, tenacity and smartness of our rural areas. I think it's absolutely phenomenal to see the creativity that comes in our communities in trying to find ways to get doctors to come to their area. I can tell you, and I've seen it in rural Nova Scotia and other areas, that rural communities can be transformed. When a doctor comes to town and hangs up that shingle on Main Street, this is so important to attracting people to those communities, to visit, to shop, to do all those other things. It actually transforms an area and this doesn't happen very often anymore. This is a province that is largely a province with small towns. If rural communities are going to survive and thrive, they will depend on the access to a highly qualified, sustainable and responsive health care system.

Madam Speaker, the thing is - and even in my time as minister we used these stats an awful lot - that there is a higher average of doctors in Nova Scotia per population than any other province in Canada. The average in Canada is 201 doctors per 100,000 souls; in Nova Scotia that number is 231 per 100,000 souls. On the face you would look at that and say well that's pretty good, maybe we should just stop there; we're doing better than the national average.

The problem we have is that all those doctors, or the vast majority of those doctors, are based right here in HRM, and why is that? Well, this is where the teaching area is, this is where the research is. This is where a lot of what I would qualify as research doctors end up. This is very attractive to those individuals. They want to work on trials. They want to work on some good research and development of different drugs or different services or different procedures, and of course this is where they end up.

The gap that we have is the family doctor gap of trying to find those very basic services that are required in the area. A family doctor, I guess, is what you would call a do-all. They have to have a good base knowledge in medical care so that when individuals come to their practices they can be diagnosed, whether they can get a drug therapy, whether they need to go on to see a specialist or what have you. These are, I believe, the new specialists because they have to know so much. Gone is the day when everybody wanted to be a heart doctor, or wanted to be some kind of surgeon. Today if you have that broad base of knowledge, a family doctor is a phenomenal profession for you to do.

The shortages are rampant across this province - 9.4 family doctors are needed on the South Shore. In a recent ChronicleHerald article Dr. Tom Marrie, the dean of medicine at Dalhousie University, was saying southwestern Nova Scotia is worse than other parts of the province when it comes to access to family doctors. Well if that is happening and we have identified it, why do we not see anything happening?

What is being provided here, or proposed by the Liberal caucus, I think is one that warrants further study. Is it the only thing that we should be doing? Well, absolutely not, there are lots of other great things we should be doing to entice these individuals. Many times I've said as minister, and I know that the Leader of the Liberal Party at the time was looking at ways to entice local individuals to get them through the service, to bring them into the medical school, bring them through their time by designating seats in the medical school.

I can tell you that since my time as minister and working in that minority government where I did get an opportunity to chat on many occasions with the Leader of the Liberal Party, we did have a couple of opportunities there. We did put a number of seats in there. By the time you go through that process, you would only now start to see the result of that as these individuals start to graduate from the medical school.

Is it working? I don't know - maybe, maybe not. I guess time will tell whether that effort will come to fruition. Madam Speaker, what we do need to see is a continual eye on that process. Let's not forget that when Saint John UNB opened up their medical school in Saint John, a number of students left Dalhousie Medical School here to go off to be able to go to school closer to home. That opened up a number of seats here in Halifax at Dalhousie Medical School, which this government could have taken and said, okay, since there are now these seats that are available, let's take them in and designate them to expand that



family med, that rural family med for Nova Scotian students, or at the best, for students who are interested in practising here in Nova Scotia.

Madam Speaker, that didn't happen. They allowed those seats to be taken up by other countries in the world. Actually, as far as I know, there is a Middle Eastern country that took over some of those seats and now we're training doctors for many parts of the world.

I'm not saying that's wrong, because I think other parts of the world need doctors, too. We're sort of competing in this global market that makes it difficult. But heck, why wouldn't we have looked at some of those seats, to continue to nurture our local students, to nurture our local folks, to bring them through a process or a service that not only helps them but helps our communities grow and thrive when we need to have that kind of service?

Family doctors, in my mind - and this is because I've witnessed what happens to communities when we start to lose these kinds of professionals. Of course in the Yarmouth area, not just in the Town of Yarmouth itself but also in the Municipality of Argyle and around there, as doctors seem to be moving in and out all the time, it's the community capital that we end up losing as well. These individuals are not only specialists in their field of medicine. I would qualify them as specialists in our communities. They are the individuals who, even though they don't seem to have any time for anything, are the ones who belong to the service clubs. They're the ones who seem to be volunteering their time over and above what is required of them. In communities like ours that are continuing to see declining populations, these people are worth gold because they can come in with a fresh look. They can come in and provide that community capital that we need more than ever.

The member for Kings West was talking about the gaps that we're seeing in different parts of the province. I talked about the 9.4 family doctors we need in the South Shore. Well, it would be nice to have a plan for those. What are we going to do? What is going to happen is the South Shore is going to compete against Tri-County and Tri-County is going to compete against the Valley and the Valley is going to compete against Truro. In the end, somebody might end up being the winner, but that's not how the game should be played at all.

There should be a good strategy in saying, listen, here are the next availables. What happens here in Halifax in physician recruitment is that they try to sell the whole province. I don't dispute that that's kind of the right thing to do, to sell it as a whole. So they bring doctors in from other parts of the country, other parts of the world, and then where these people end up being placed depends on what kind of offer comes up from those rural areas where these people end up being placed.

Valley is looking for four family physicians right now so is Valley going to be fighting against South Shore? That will continue to happen while there is no real strategy for the placement of these individuals or the strategy of developing these specialists, these family doctor specialists, across our province. You know, Soldiers' Memorial is looking for an ER specialist; Cape Breton is continuing to look for two family doctors in Glace Bay; New Waterford - looking for ER physicians in Glace Bay, New Waterford, North Sydney and Sydney; specialists for the Cape Breton Regional Hospital.

Hantsport has been looking for a family physician for a really long time. As a matter of fact, thank goodness for the work of that nurse practitioner who has taken up a lot of slack for that community. That community has a history of having a family doctor there for a long time. Why don't we work to make sure Hantsport has one, like many other communities in Nova Scotia?

What's being provided here by the Liberal caucus has some merit. The problem I see with it is - and this is from personal experience in talking to a lot of people who have had to go away for their medical school training. Even though they're Nova Scotians, they're international students. What happens is, if those individuals are interested in coming back home - and I've seen this on a number of occasions now - they have to make application through Dalhousie Medical School because Dalhousie actually holds - I guess you would qualify it as the rights - to many of the clerkships, many of the practicum and all those things, so you sort of have to find your way through Dalhousie.

They are tending to be a bit of a block for that. Of course, they're working to make sure their students have placements across the system. So I think it would be an additional move. I don't know if it's a better move than what's being proposed here, but at least an additional move to work with the Medical School to make sure they welcome with open arms those individuals who have had to go outside to get their training. Whether they have gone to Saba University, whether they've gone to Hungary, I don't know where they end up but it seems to be all over the world that people have ended up going for their medical training, who still have their connection to here.

I think the connection to here is important. We want to bring them in and continue to train them in our style of medicine, in a North American style of medicine, in the Canadian style of medicine. I think that would be a tremendous opportunity for our rural areas in order to make sure they fill the gaps that they're seeing across Nova Scotia.

Many times I think the department works in concert with the Department of Education, with other organizations. It's an issue of which silo are you going to be working in but I think as long as you bring them together, we can find better ways, whether it is the student loan relief, but even better, beyond the student loan relief, it's trying to find dollars to put in the hands of these individuals so that they can continue. Sometimes it's not good enough to just have those dollars at the end of it. I mean in some cases it's hundreds of

thousands of dollars that these students have to incur to complete their training. Why don't we try to find some dollars up front?

I think that's where the coordination needs to come from. As I said, what's happening is, different areas are competing against each other and I think sometimes defeating each other when it comes to the availability of a family doctor. Again, I think the province would be better served to find a more strategic way, a more centralized way to get these doctors spread out across the province where we need them so they don't necessarily congregate in one area.

Whether it is even some kind of return for service or what it might be, I think it could be left up to the department, but there are good people in that department and maybe this kind of bill would supplement that. I think this needs to be researched further but I think we need to do some hard work here in the Legislature to make sure that the tools are available for Nova Scotian communities.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North on an introduction.

MR. JIM MORTON: Madam Speaker, I'd like to just draw the attention of the members of the House to the east gallery. My friend, Don Fraser, is alone up there this afternoon. Don is a resident of Kentville, he has run a law practice in the community for a long time. He has been a very active participant in the political process for probably all of his adult life. He has been a candidate for the NDP on more than one occasion, both provincially and federally. He is currently a very important person in my life as not only my friend, but as a president of my riding association. I welcome Don to the House and I know that everybody will give you a warm welcome. (Applause)

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you and I welcome our guests to the gallery today and hope you enjoy today's proceedings.

The honourable member for Yarmouth.

MR. ZACH CHURCHILL: Madam Speaker, thanks so much. This is a very important issue for my constituency, as I know it is for many areas across the province. Nova Scotia is fortunate to have the highest number of physicians per capita in this province, 231 doctors, I believe, per 100,000 people; however, the number is a bit misleading. Some of the people who are registered to practise may actually not be practising. With such a great world-class university and Medical School in Dalhousie, a lot of those folks are engaged in research and not necessarily out in the field practising family medicine.

Even more importantly, there seems to be a maldistribution of the doctors in the province. I know there are a lot of areas that are in desperate need of family physicians, mine being one of them. I think overall there is about 60,000 Nova Scotians that we know

do not have a family physician. That is a problem because we know having access to a family physician is a necessary component to a healthy life, to stay up on how your body is working and to be able to identify when things aren't working as they should be. I think the goal of all of us here should be to ensure that every Nova Scotian, any person here in the province, has access to a family physician, otherwise we're really not fulfilling that mandate to the citizens of this province.

I know I tabled a petition in this House which had, I believe, over 2,300 names solely from Yarmouth and that was just collecting names for a few weeks, only from Yarmouth County, folks who didn't have a family physician - it's a big number. I know I get a lot of calls at my office, people are always looking for family physicians.

The other problem that having a lack of family physicians causes is that there is undue stress put on our ERs. The Yarmouth ER, in particular, we have a few great physicians and a great staff there, but the demand that's placed on them is very extreme in a lot of cases. A lot of seniors are forced to go to our ER just to get prescriptions filled out and they end up waiting - because of the triage system - up to 14 hours, sometimes 19 hours I've heard. We have seniors sometimes who are ill, waiting in our ERs for that long, I think, is a terrible thing. I know for those folks it doesn't seem like they're getting better care sooner, that's for sure.

This idea hopefully will help us in addressing this issue of recruiting physicians to rural communities in Nova Scotia that are without enough physicians, that don't have enough physicians to supply the demand that's there. By allowing medical students the opportunity to go throughout our province and actually do work in rural hospitals, high-need hospitals, I think it provides some very real and good opportunities for those students. One, they will get to see how those rural hospitals work obviously and function, but I think even sometimes more importantly they'll be able to develop some key relationships at that institution and some key relationships in those communities that are in high need.

We know that relationships matter when people are deciding where they want to live, where they want to work and oftentimes it's the connections that people make which decide where they're going to go next. It's going to be the doctors who have been practising for awhile that influence these medical students on where they want to practise. If someone is practising in Yarmouth and gets to learn from the great doctors we have in Yarmouth, I think there's more of a likelihood that they will consider Yarmouth as a potential place to work, live, and bring up their family if they so choose. Whereas if they're going to have mentors here in the city, they're more likely to stay here and I think that's probably one of the reasons why we have so many doctors in the city and why we don't have a lot of doctors in rural communities.

I think it's worth noting that the incentive programs to recruit family physicians to high-need areas, to rural areas, haven't been reviewed, I think, in approximately 12 years -

I could be mistaken there. I think it is time that we look at how we're recruiting needed family physicians to our rural areas and come up with some new, innovative ideas to do this. I think this can be one. Minnesota has been doing this for awhile - I think for about four years actually, Madam Speaker. They've had some significant success in keeping doctors in areas that are in high demand for doctors.

And I think the University of Minnesota was the first school in North America to offer a program that we're proposing here, and 60 to 70 per cent of their students who went through the program chose family medicine after graduation and, furthermore, about half of those graduates ended up establishing a practice in a rural area. Those are pretty significant results when you consider the limited amount of resources that we need to go into this.

I hope this is a program that the government does consider, because I know it is needed. We have a lot of areas in the province that are in high need of family physicians and I'll list them - the folks who live in these areas know because they are experiencing this: Chester; Bridgewater; Lunenburg; there are vacancies in Tusket; Argyle; Pubnico; vacancies in Barrington; there's need of family physicians in Digby; there are vacancies in Lockeport; there are vacancies in Yarmouth; and, as I mentioned, I tabled a petition with over 2,300 names of people, collected in a couple of weeks, who don't have a family physician in Yarmouth. It's one of the issues that I probably hear the most about in my constituency office - the need for a family physician.

They are looking for family physicians in Annapolis Royal; Bridgetown; Kentville and area; Kingston; Greenwood; Middleton; Berwick; Wolfville - or Woofville, as I know the Minister of Education likes to refer to it - physicians are needed in Pictou County; in Richmond County; in Arichat; and Guysborough County as well. They are all in need of physicians. I know the good member for Guysborough-Sheet Harbour is well aware of the need for physicians in his area, as I am in mine.

So is this the end of the equation to help us ensure that we have a sufficient amount of doctors in rural areas? No, it's not, but I think it could be a good start and an important component.

Another issue, as the member for Argyle mentioned, is what happens with residency seats here. I know a lot of good Nova Scotians who have gone away to study medicine and they are unable to come back and start their residency here and then practise. This recently happened in Yarmouth where we thought we had a physician coming in, who actually married my cousin. So that's how big an issue it is in Yarmouth - I am now marrying off my family members, Madam Speaker, to recruit doctors to our area. I'm just kidding - I didn't really marry her off, she chose her husband.

We had an opportunity in Yarmouth to recruit this gentleman who is a bright, young fellow, who was committed to coming to Yarmouth and working and being a family

physician in Yarmouth. He wasn't able to get a residency seat here because of the red tape around coming back from overseas to practise here. That's another issue that we're going to have to address at some point, because we're allowing Nova Scotians who are trained, medical professionals who want to come back home, work as family physicians - and I know some who want to work in the high-need rural areas that we're talking about, they are unable to do that because of the red tape that surrounds this issue.

Here at least we can start the ball rolling by encouraging our young up-and-coming medical professionals to train in rural areas, build relationships in those high-need areas and, hopefully, be influenced by mentors in those areas who will help encourage them to actually stay and practise. If we can do that, I think it will be definitely a step in the right direction.

Another idea that this Party has floated, that we pushed - and it was an issue in the last provincial election - was to fund medical students, to provide funding for their very expensive tuition if they were willing to practise in rural, high-need areas that were in need of family physicians. To date that program the Liberal caucus has suggested hasn't been accepted by this government, unfortunately, but that's another idea that I think is worth looking at for sure.

We need to look at how we're going to recruit physicians to our high-need areas. Ontario does an incredible job with it. I think 10 years ago or more, Ontario had a huge issue with a lack of family physicians in rural areas. They completely overhauled how they incentivise practising in rural areas, and now rural communities in Ontario have some of the most competitive - physicians who want to practise in rural Ontario have some of the most competitive salaries and incentive programs.

As I said, here in Nova Scotia it has been 12 years since we've reviewed our incentive programs. Maybe this can be a first step to actually reviewing all the incentive programs we have in place to make sure that we are coming up with the most innovative, creative, and modern techniques to incentivise our medical graduates to practise family medicine in rural high-need areas.

At home I've spoken to medical professionals. They're really feeling the brunt of this government's cuts to health care. I've heard from nurses. Some nurses who are now on 12-hour shifts don't even have access to coffee anymore to complete their shifts. I mean, that's how specifically the health care cuts are affecting the daily lives of our nurses and medical professionals.

A concern that has been expressed to me from nurses, in particular, in my area at the regional hospital in Yarmouth is that their ability to provide the vital services that they're supposed to is being jeopardized because of cuts to their resources. At a time when the government is slashing the health care budgets, we need to do a much better job at thinking outside of the box and figuring how to address some of the shortcomings that we

have in our health care system. Make no mistake, 60,000 Nova Scotians without a family physician is definitely a shortcoming in our health care system right now.

I know that not a Party in this House wants to see folks go without family physicians and the medical care that they need. I know none of us want people to wait 19 hours in an emergency care facility before they're seen, but we have to be honest, some of the actions that the government has been taking in terms of budgetary cuts are counterproductive to achieving those goals.

Hopefully this idea will allow us to address at least one of those, and that's the deficit of doctors in rural high-need areas. A lot of us members here all hear about this on a daily basis. We get calls about a lack of family physicians. Unfortunately, I hear from families whose children don't have family physicians. It's a heartbreaking thing, but hopefully by looking at ideas like this, we can start to address that issue.

That's why I'm happy that on this Opposition Day our caucus has presented this important piece of legislation. I hope the government considers it. If you look at the results that have happened in other jurisdictions that have used this model, they have been pretty impressive. I think that we can reach those results or better here in the Province of Nova Scotia if we just think about things differently and do things differently. We can start with this piece of legislation.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable Opposition House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Madam Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 45.

**Bill No. 45 - Ratepayer Protection Act.**

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Richmond. (Interruption)

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: The pay is the same, too. (Laughter)

Madam Speaker, it's a pleasure to move second reading of Bill No. 45, which was introduced on behalf of our caucus and it is known as the Ratepayer Protection Act. I certainly hope that the government will see fit to allow this bill to move to second reading and to allow it to go to the Law Amendments Committee for consideration by Nova Scotians.

What does this bill do? Madam Speaker, it would require that Nova Scotia Power conduct biannual performance and value-for-money audits, which would be made public. It will require them to publish estimated and actual costs on a regular basis. It will require Nova Scotia Power to have public settlement meetings before any proposed general rate hike and will prevent millions in executive bonuses and regulatory costs from being passed on to ratepayers.

Madam Speaker, Nova Scotians are becoming very frustrated and confused by the operations of Nova Scotia Power. Earlier I responded to the Premier's statement regarding government's efforts to restart the NewPage mill. We'll recall, at the time, that once it was announced that NewPage would close, Nova Scotia Power turned around and said, every Nova Scotia ratepayer is going to have to pay more because NewPage is closed, so that created a panic in itself. We had the head of Nova Scotia Power telling us that. Lo and behold, just a few months later, the head of Nova Scotia Power was out trying to calm everyone's fears by saying that the closure of NewPage actually had absolutely no effect on the company. Nova Scotians are clearly looking for better direction.

Madam Speaker, over the last 10 years, electricity rates have increased seven times and now Nova Scotia Power has sought another large increase on the backs of consumers. We have seen power rate increases dig deeper into the pockets of everyday Nova Scotians. Nova Scotians have faced down continued rate increases from Nova Scotia Power and added electricity taxes, courtesy of NDP and Progressive Conservative Governments, all of this with no accountability.

There is simply no more revenue for Nova Scotia Power to take from the people of this province. Increases in power rates mean increases in just about everything from food to property taxes. They are an attack on the standard of living of all Nova Scotians, that is why the Liberal Caucus has introduced the Ratepayer Protection Bill. This is just one step of many a Liberal Government would take to ensure Nova Scotia Power is accountable to Nova Scotians. If passed, this bill will reduce power rates for Nova Scotians. It will give all residents of our province, homeowners and businesses, direct access to what their rates actually pay for.

Nova Scotians and the province's business community are being pushed to the brink by already sky high power rates and aren't able to withstand the further electricity increases being sought by Nova Scotia Power. As a province, we are becoming rapidly uncompetitive when compared to our neighbouring provinces. The NDP Government's only answer has been to trump the removal of the HST from electricity bills; however, this does not benefit small business and the continued rate increases certainly have removed any benefit experienced by Nova Scotians.

Madam Speaker, it did not benefit mills like NewPage and Bowater. In fact, the NDP - in cooperation with the Tories - did everything they could to hurt those businesses when it came to power rates. For the NDP to keep talking about the HST removal as a solution is an insult to everyone in this province that runs a business. While the HST removal had no benefit to those mills, the Tories - while in government - proposed a new electricity tax which mills like NewPage, along with every other electricity consumer in the province from businesses to low-income families, would be forced to pay.

The NDP, at the time, opposed that tax during the 2009 election but promptly implemented it in their first session after becoming government, with the support of the



Tory caucus. They literally called it a Christmas gift to Nova Scotians. Instead of the Progressive Conservatives and NDP deciding that Nova Scotia Power shareholders should pay for efficiency costs, they decided low-income Nova Scotians and struggling businesses should bear the brunt of those costs.

These increases stretched budgets, they put a strain on pocketbooks and make doing business in Nova Scotia unaffordable. The last dozen years brought a series of Progressive Conservative and at least one NDP Government that failed to stand up to Nova Scotia Power. Both the Progressive Conservatives and the NDP had the opportunity to rein in power rates that increased by 38 per cent over the last 10 years. To date, both have failed to do so. Both the Progressive Conservatives and the NDP had a chance to put an end to Nova Scotia Power executive bonuses - both failed to do so.

A Progressive Conservative Government sat back and watched this problem grow, while taking no action except proposing new taxes and implementing energy legislation without outlining the costs. The NDP, unfortunately for Nova Scotians, has only made it worse. Now the NDP wants you to believe they care about the pain Nova Scotians are in, and the Progressive Conservatives want you to believe that they care by proposing legislation based on principles Liberals have been talking about for two years such as ending ratepayer-funded executive bonuses, and suggesting costs of renewable energy legislation should be outlined at the time of bill introduction, when they didn't even do that themselves while in government.

Our work begins with Nova Scotians knowing whether they are getting value for money, or whether the parent company Emera is simply bleeding Nova Scotia Power dry. Madam Speaker, our belief is that profits from Nova Scotia Power should remain here in Nova Scotia. With Nova Scotians staring down the barrel of a seventh power rate hike in 10 years, Liberals have repeatedly asked the NDP Government to order a performance and value audit of Nova Scotia Power and their operations. This kind of audit will identify if there are cost savings to be made internally at Nova Scotia Power. These savings could then offset rate increases Nova Scotia Power wants to force on ratepayers throughout the province.

It's time we look inside the power monopoly in this province to see where there is fat to be cut, before asking Nova Scotians to pay up again. The NDP Government has no problem asking hospital workers and teachers to look internally for cuts, but they refuse to ask the same of Nova Scotia Power.

Madam Speaker, this bill forces the issue on Nova Scotia Power. I hear it in my office every day, Nova Scotians are used to frequent increases in their power bills. They feel powerless as people - and the Progressive Conservatives included - try to convince them that settlement agreements brokered behind closed doors, such as the one reached last month, are a win for them.

Madam Speaker, any deal reached in secret is not a win for Nova Scotians. Nova Scotia Power's continual pursuit of multi-year power rate hikes behind closed doors means Nova Scotians will pay more for electricity without ever seeing any real justification. Closed door meetings are not the way a public utility, operating in an effective monopoly, should operate.

The secrecy around these backroom negotiations can mean nothing positive for Nova Scotians already struggling with power bills - and it ends with this bill here. This legislation would require public settlement meetings to be held prior to appearing before the Utility and Review Board. If no settlement agreement can be reached between Nova Scotia Power and all of the stakeholders, then any costs associated with the Utility and Review Board hearing and general rate application are to be borne by Nova Scotia Power shareholders, not the ratepayers in this province.

Madam Speaker, these costs are not to be passed on to ratepayers in any way. This is a direct saving to ratepayers, whether or not a settlement is reached. Over the last three years regulatory costs at the Utility and Review Board have totalled over \$4 million. During that same time, Nova Scotia Power has spent nearly \$15 million appearing before the board. Ensuring that Nova Scotia Power, and not Nova Scotians, pay those bills will reduce the cost of electricity for every ratepayer in the province - and certainly encourage the company to reach settlement agreements.

Nova Scotia Power has ridden roughshod over ratepayers in Nova Scotia. The NDP Government and previous Progressive Conservative Governments have stood idly as power rates rose by 38 per cent over 10 years. Madam Speaker, enough is enough. The people of Nova Scotia deserve a government that acts, and it is clear that the NDP Government has no desire to act and rein in Nova Scotia Power.

A Liberal Government is prepared to take action on power issues - stabilizing rates, ensuring a diverse supply of clean energy, and making sure Nova Scotia Power's parent company, Emera, doesn't act like a pirate when it comes to ratepayers. The Ratepayer Protection Bill offers clear solutions to combat Nova Scotia Power's inability to rein in its spending and its desire to continually pass on costs to Nova Scotians. It complements other legislation that has already been introduced on behalf of our caucus and begins a road towards a new level of accountability on energy issues.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island.

MR. LEONARD PREYRA: Madam Speaker, it's a great pleasure for me to rise here and get the chance to say a few words about this ratepayers bill, a bill introduced by the Liberal Party in their new-found interest in ordinary Nova Scotians.

We all know that energy costs are rising. We know that vulnerable Nova Scotian families and communities are struggling under the burden of high energy costs. We know

that the costs of coal and other fossil fuels have risen dramatically over the last few years. Coal, for example, has increased by 75 per cent in the last five years. The cost of electricity has increased by 33 per cent over the last seven years; 80 per cent of our energy comes from these imported fossil fuels.

These are the facts. We know that energy costs are rising. They're rising here in Nova Scotia. They're rising all over the world. We know that the Government of Nova Scotia has very little control over world energy costs. Unlike the Liberal Party, we don't believe in sticking our heads in the sand when it comes to dealing with energy costs. We need real solutions and we need long-term solutions, not just posturing. It's very easy to pick an organization and beat it up and create these straw men and say, look at the wonderful job we're doing. It takes a lot of hard work to come up with real solutions, and they're clearly not willing to invest the energy in coming up with real solutions.

We understand that Nova Scotians feel vulnerable and threatened and that they're struggling under the burden of high energy costs. It's why we're trying to wean ourselves away from fossil fuels. It's why we removed the provincial portion of the HST on home energy. That was a real saving to Nova Scotians. It made a real difference for Nova Scotians. We provided an addition to the home heating assistance rebate. Through the Community Services Department, we provided support for Nova Scotians on low income.

Through Efficiency Nova Scotia we dealt with reducing the demand and helping Nova Scotians reduce their demand for energy through improving their homes and coming up with low-cost insulation programs. We came up with one of the most aggressive renewable energy targets in the world through our Renewable Electricity Strategy. Our renewable electricity plan mandates that by 2020, 40 per cent of all the electricity generated in Nova Scotia will come from local and renewable sources. Those are real solutions. Those are solutions that answer the real challenges faced by Nova Scotians. It helps them today and it helps them in the future.

I'd like to say a little bit more about these long-term plans. The last time I rose in this place I was talking about that African proverb, that a society grows when old men and old women plant trees in whose shade only their children and grandchildren will sit. That's what a government is supposed to do - plan for the long term. I'd like to say something about those long-term plans. (Interruptions)

Yes, Madam Speaker, the Progressive Conservatives believed in cutting down trees. They also believed in digging their heads in the sand, but those were not strategies. (Interruptions)

MADAM SPEAKER: Order. Order, please.

The honourable member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island has the floor.

MR. PREYRA: Madam Speaker, I know the truth hurts them, but sometimes they need to hear the truth in this House. For example, take wind energy. I wish we could harness the wind energy that comes from that opposite side every day. We, in this House, would be self-sufficient in energy if we could harness the wind that comes from the other side. (Applause) We're doing more than that.

We've invested in wind energy. If you've been to Pictou County, for example, you've seen the DSM, the manufacturing of wind turbines. In fact, 20 per cent of our energy today comes from wind energy and we would like to see more.

Churchill Falls, Madam Speaker, Muskrat Falls - this great partnership that we've forged with Newfoundland and Labrador, and later on New Brunswick and the Atlantic Provinces, it's going to save us a huge amount of energy down the road. (Interruption) They're asking about the cost - it's one of the great flaws of the Tory Governments in the past, that they haven't been able to look beyond their own noses. They haven't been able to look in front of their own immediate self-interest.

We're looking down the road and we know that down the road this will provide a renewable, green, safe, secure, stable, local source of energy to Nova Scotians. We might not benefit from that today, Madam Speaker, but I know our children and our grandchildren can be assured that they will have a safe, green, renewable, sustainable source of energy, and they should be happy for that.

Similarly, Madam Speaker, we know that the Fundy tides are the highest tides in the world and we are actually trying to harness that energy. We know from our recent pilot projects that there's more energy than we even dreamed of in that, and harnessing that energy will give our children and our grandchildren the sustainable, green, inexpensive energy we are looking for.

Solar energy, Madam Speaker, we're introducing initiatives for solar energy. The Liberal Party opposite is holding up a bill that will give the municipalities and give Nova Scotians the authority to invest in solar power, to create local jobs. They should ask themselves, if they're so concerned about Nova Scotians, why are they not letting Nova Scotians invest in solar energy and do something that the municipalities themselves are asking for? And we have introduced community (Interruptions)

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please. Order, please.

The honourable member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island has the floor.

MR. PREYRA: And we're expanding the use of natural gas as well, Madam Speaker. (Interruptions)

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please. Order, please. Thank you, as interesting as the side chatter is, it's very difficult to hear the member. He should not have to strain his voice to be heard.

The honourable member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island.

MR. PREYRA: I'm always happy to have their attention, Madam Speaker, and yes, we are expanding natural gas as well in Nova Scotia.

To get to the specifics of the bill, Madam Speaker, the Liberal Party would like to pretend that somehow what they are proposing is going to be a better system. Really what they're proposing instead is more bureaucracy, more layers of decision making, more costs that would be put on to the . . .

MR. ZACH CHURCHILL: Explain how. Explain that.

MR. PREYRA: The member for Yarmouth would like me to explain that. I would like to cite the Utility and Review Board decision of November 29, 2011. Responding precisely to the Liberal proposal, it says that NSPI had gone through a number of audits, very expensive audits, the cost of those audits have been passed on, and the Liberal Party would like to do more. This is one of the findings:

“The costs of such reviews ordered by the Board must ultimately be recovered from ratepayers. Accordingly, the Board is very conscious that it should only order such reviews or audits when absolutely necessary for the protection of ratepayers.”

The decision that they're talking about, executive compensation - the government Party resisted that, Madam Speaker. In the 2012 settlement agreement, they removed executive bonuses and reduced the allowable rate of return.

So, in short, Madam Speaker, we are introducing real solutions for Nova Scotians both to meet their immediate challenges, but in the long term as well, in the area of wind, tidal, solar, natural gas and a whole range . . . (Interruptions)

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please.

The honourable member for Hants West.

MR. CHUCK PORTER: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise this evening to speak for just a few minutes on Bill No. 45. As the House may know, I put a bill, with a very similar title, forward in the Fall session of the Legislature in 2011, and I think we talked about that here one day and, of course, the government shut that bill down, too.

One of the things that we did agree upon, at least on this side of the House, regardless of the Party, including the other side as far as I'm concerned - whoever wants to put a bill forward that involves fairness to ratepayers, Madam Speaker, that's a good thing. We're willing to talk about that no matter whose name is on that bill - at least I am and this Party here is - and I'm pretty sure most people on this side of the House are interested in talking about what is fair for Nova Scotians.

I can tell you there was a lot of hot air here a few minutes ago, Madam Speaker, that's for sure, and we talk a lot about this air and this energy. Now I have to tell you that the Premier of this province should consider the honourable member who just spoke for perhaps the Minister of Energy because when he stands up, at least he's got some excitement with the message he's trying to give and people hear him. They don't understand him, perhaps, in what he is saying, but they do hear.

Some of the things he talked about, we know. It's obvious that the government is not interested in taking on this challenge of fairness to ratepayers in this province, we know that. There's a rising cost that we're all aware of that is driven by a number of things, and we know that too, Madam Speaker. We need transparency around the cost of government policy impacting the power rates - we know that too, we haven't seen it.

Nova Scotia Power has free rein to do as they see fit when it comes to setting the rate - and what is better is they have the URB, which is an arm's length from government entity, that says it's okay to do it. They set the rate - what other company around the world has the URB, or any organization like that, saying this is what you are going to profit and oh, by the way, it's the ratepayer/the taxpayer, because they are one in the same. I've said that many times and I'll continue to say it - they are the same people, Madam Speaker. We have to be considerate of where we're going to end up.

Now back a few years ago in a previous government, the minister at that time, and Cabinet and all members of this House at that time, passed a bill in this House that was reflective of a policy going forward that made sense, that had a great deal of work and time put into it, that was a path that was affordable. That is certainly not a path that we are on today. It is interesting that the member will stand up and talk about how we should have affordable policies going forward but has no answers as to what those costs are.

He talks about the great "relationship" - I believe that was his word - he had with the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. As far as I know there's no deal signed yet. Maybe he, as the future Minister of Energy may have some knowledge of that, or is in consultation with the Minister of Energy, but obviously the minister and the Premier are not in consultation with anybody else in this House or with any Nova Scotian with regard to what affordability means.

We asked the questions in this House, we asked the questions in estimates, Madam Speaker. What is the cost of energy going to be from the project in Newfoundland and

Labrador? What is affordable? There are no answers; they don't know. So how can that possibly be fair to the ratepayer? How can that be fair to anyone when we don't know what those policies are? We put forward a number of bills and they'll be reintroduced as well, Madam Speaker, with regard to things around ratepayers, things around the cost of doing business in the Province of Nova Scotia by way of small business, large business, and certainly individual ratepayers here in this province when it comes to what the cost of their power bill will be.

No one even knows the price of a kilowatt hour and, if they do, they are not willing to share that. Perhaps they should dig a little deeper and be transparent, be forward with the people in this province, tell them what the long-term plan is going to be - they don't even have a short-term plan, let alone a long-term plan. Muskrat Falls is dubbed as some great plan, but far from it when we don't know what the costs will be. We haven't done the homework.

Now this bill goes back and it talks about Nova Scotia Power having to do a performance-based audit. Well we know what their performance is like, we also know what kind of money they're making and moving around within, and not investing back in this province. We put forward a bill in this House reflective of what is fair to ratepayers, Madam Speaker. What was that bill? That was a bill that was very much reflective of transparency. Did the government call it? No, the government didn't call that either, I don't think.

The government is not prepared, and it's unfortunate. We put forward a number of good bills in the Opposition, and in years past, bills were considered. There have been members in the Opposition who have put bills forward and got through, because they were worthwhile discussing. Regardless of what the final outcome was, they did make it across the hall, they did get to the Red Chamber, to Law Amendments.

Now, Madam Speaker, why that's not something as important as an energy bill that could possibly be voted on and moved over there - and let businesses come in, let individuals come in and talk about something like ratepayer protection. They need it.

We look at the NewPage saga that has been going on now for months. Here we have a potential deal looming; we've had a vote by the workers there. It's about the survival of that community in the Strait area and all Nova Scotians for that matter, because every job in this province counts, especially given the number of jobs we've lost, the number of people who are moving away because they see no hope. A lot of this is based on the fact they can't feed their families and can't pay their bills.

When you look at increasing rates with no future in sight of where they are going to be, what will the rates be? We don't know. What's going to keep them here? Again, we need to put something in place, and we've done that in the past, as well, with regard to equity and with regard to bonuses. As you know, Madam Speaker, we put forward a bill, I

put forward a bill in this House that had to deal with taking things like bonuses out of ratepayer requirements, or rate requirement as Nova Scotia Power likes to call it in their meetings, when they put forward their idea of what their upcoming rates will be for the coming years. Rate requirements - well, what is that? It doesn't go into much detail.

The minister can't even tell us, as I said earlier, what a kilowatt of power costs us in this province. Why is that? It shouldn't be that hard. You can't go forward with a long-term plan when you have no plan at all, no short-term plan, no plan. We all agree renewables are a good source, a good way to go. We need to do it at a pace, however, that is affordable to Nova Scotians. We do not have that. We've seen - both previous speakers have talked to the number of rate increases - over 30 per cent in seven years, that's unacceptable.

When we move forward, we talk about things like coal. We've been on coal for a lifetime here. Yes, we do need to wean off of those kinds of energy sources and I think a long-term plan somewhere down the road may do that, but may not totally; those are also valuable jobs in the coal industry and in other industries in this province. We just can't say tomorrow that we're going to get off. They're setting dates, putting forward plans and saying - oh we're going to shut that down and move it all to green energy. We don't even know what those sources are going to be. We don't know what costs are going to be. Is that affordable? We don't think so. Again, the minister is not willing to tell us. What are the targets? Are there targets? He says there are targets. How are we ever going to meet those targets?

We need to get back to a balanced energy plan that works for all Nova Scotia, whether that is more years in coal production, whether that's Newfoundland and Labrador, it may end up to be a great deal. But who knows, because we don't know what that means yet. We don't know what the costs are. We don't know if we can afford it. We have tidal out there that's on the cusp of being developed, which is not a bad thing, that's a good thing. It's right there in my backyard in the Minas Basin. That's a wonderful thing. We need to continue to focus on the technology to make that in my backyard, that's what I call that out there in the Minas Basin; that's what I call it, my backyard.

Why wouldn't I support a great company out there called Minas Basin that is investing in the production of future tidal power, which is a good thing? We need to make our way towards those greener sources of energy but at an affordable pace, one where all Nova Scotians know what the cost is going to be so that they can plan, so that they can feed their families. Those are important issues in Nova Scotia.

Ratepayer fairness has to come into play whether the government realizes it, and I think that they do, but they don't want to talk about it. They want to talk about a plan they developed to hurry it up, one that's not affordable.

Madam Speaker, with those few words, I know we don't have much time. These bills, regardless of who is putting them forward, which Party it is, need to be considered



seriously for further debate to get over to the Law Amendments Committee, to allow people to come in, individuals who feel the pain every day, to come in here; big businesses, small businesses that feel the pain every day, to come in here and offer their comments, tell government what's real in Nova Scotia today. With those few words, thank you very much.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable Opposition House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Thank you, Madam Speaker, that concludes the Official Opposition's business for today. I thank all the members for their interventions and would now turn it over to the Government House Leader for tomorrow's business.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Madam Speaker, after the daily routine and Question Period tomorrow we will be calling Bill Nos. 5, 9, 11, 13, 17, 20, 22, 24, 30, 32, 34, 37, 39, and 41. I move that the House do now rise to meet from the hours of 12:00 noon to 8:00 p.m. Supply will also meet tomorrow.

MADAM SPEAKER: The motion is that the House do now rise to meet again tomorrow at 12:00 noon.

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 5:59 p.m.]

**NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3)****RESOLUTION NO. 380**

By: Hon. Stephen McNeil (Leader of the Official Opposition)

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

Whereas on Sunday, April 15, 2012, Basketball Nova Scotia held the Midget Boys Division 1 2012 Provincial Championship in Halifax; and

Whereas under the guidance of the Community YMCA coaches Jeff Paris and Paul Dorrington and manager Rebekah Skeete, the team won the silver medal; and

Whereas team players Jelani Wright, Liam Thompson, Nathaniel Grant, Isaiah Skeete, Makhail Oliver, Jalen Dorrington, Denisho Goree, Tyler Martin, Emmanuel George, Malik States, Ommyo Paris, and William Fiander together contributed to this accomplishment;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this Legislature congratulate the coaches, the manager, and each dedicated athlete of the Community YMCA Midget Boys Division 1 basketball team on their achievements and wish them every success in future sporting endeavours.

**RESOLUTION NO. 381**

By: Hon. Wayne Gaudet (Clare)

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

Whereas the Clare Acadiens Bantam A team participated in the 35<sup>th</sup> Annual SEDMHA Honda International Minor Hockey Tournament from April 5<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup>, 2012; and

Whereas the Clare team played against Cole Harbour in the Accord Divisional Finals; and

Whereas the SEDMHA Honda International Hockey Tournament is one of the largest and most respected multi-level hockey tournaments in North America;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate the Clare Acadiens Bantam A hockey team and their coaches for winning a silver medal in

the Accord Divisional Final during the 35<sup>th</sup> Annual SEDMHA Honda International Minor Hockey Tournament.

**RESOLUTION NO. 382**

By: Hon. Wayne Gaudet (Clare)

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

Whereas the Clare Acadiens Peewee B team participated in the 35<sup>th</sup> Annual SEDMHA Honda International Minor Hockey Tournament from April 5<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup>, 2012; and

Whereas the Clare team played against Dartmouth in the Odyssey Divisional Finals; and

Whereas the SEDMHA Honda International Hockey Tournament is one of the largest and most respected multi-level hockey tournaments in North America;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate the Clare Acadiens Peewee B hockey team and their coaches for winning a silver medal in the Odyssey Divisional Final during the 35<sup>th</sup> Annual SEDMHA Honda International Minor Hockey Tournament.

**RESOLUTION NO. 383**

By: Hon. Wayne Gaudet (Clare)

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

Whereas the Yarmouth Mariners Bantam Female A hockey team participated in the 35<sup>th</sup> Annual SEDMHA Honda International Minor Hockey Tournament from April 5<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup>, 2012; and

Whereas the Clare team played against Eastern Shore in the Odyssey Divisional Finals; and

Whereas the SEDMHA Honda International Hockey Tournament is one of the largest and most respected multi-level hockey tournaments in North America;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate the Yarmouth Mariners Bantam Female A hockey team and their coaches for winning the

championship game of the Odyssey Division at the 35<sup>th</sup> Annual SEDMHA Honda International Minor Hockey Tournament.

**RESOLUTION NO. 384**

By: Hon. David Wilson (Communities, Culture and Heritage)

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

Whereas Melissa Keith of Lower Sackville is a freelance writer for *Atlantic Post Calls*; and

Whereas Melissa recently wrote an article titled “HPI: The Future of Live Racing?”, which appeared in the March 18, 2011 edition of *Atlantic Post Calls*; and

Whereas Melissa was recognized with the John Hervey Award for harness racing journalism at the United States Harness Writers Association’s Annual Dan Patch Awards Dinner held in Florida on February 12<sup>th</sup>;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Melissa Keith of Lower Sackville on the accolades received by her article “HPI: The Future of Live Racing?” from the United States Harness Writers Association and wish her future success.

**RESOLUTION NO. 385**

By: Ms. Pam Birdsall (Lunenburg)

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

Whereas the Provincial Volunteer Awards thank and honour people who donate their time to help others by supporting the causes in which they believe and serves to reinforce the human values that volunteering represents and increase awareness of the vital importance of volunteerism to our communities; and

Whereas Mike Brouse of Lunenburg has been an active and integral part of the Lunenburg Interchurch Food Bank for the last eight years, as well as donating his time to the Rotary Club of Lunenburg, the Lunenburg Folk Harbour Festival, and the Lunenburg Art Gallery; and

Whereas Mike Brouse of Lunenburg was honoured for his contributions at this year’s awards ceremony in Halifax on April 2<sup>nd</sup>;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly recognize the volunteer efforts and commitment to community displayed by Mike Brouse of Lunenburg.

**RESOLUTION NO. 386**

By: Mr. Jim Boudreau (Guysborough-Sheet Harbour)

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

Whereas the Canso Volunteer Fire Department Ladies Auxiliary was established in 1960 and Gertie Snow has been an active member since 1961; and

Whereas Gertie Snow has held most executive positions with the Ladies Auxiliary over the past 50 years; and

Whereas Gertie Snow, the most senior active member who presently holds the position of social convener for the auxiliary, started the first St. Patrick's Day Parade in Canso, is the MC for most events that take place at the fire hall, and has arranged fashion shows, children's Christmas parties, hootenannies, the memorable Regatta Parade Floats, and numerous social events and fundraisers to provide support to her fellow citizens;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly congratulate and thank Gertie Snow for volunteering her time to her community and for being such an integral part of all the meaningful work the Canso Volunteer Fire Department Ladies Auxiliary has undertaken in the community for the past 50 years.

**RESOLUTION NO. 387**

By: Mr. Jim Boudreau (Guysborough-Sheet Harbour)

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

Whereas the Canso Volunteer Fire Department Ladies Auxiliary was established in 1960 and Minnie Richardson was a charter member; and

Whereas Minnie Richardson has held most executive positions at one time or another over the past 50 years; and

Whereas Minnie Richardson, a lifetime member of the Canso Volunteer Fire Department Ladies Auxiliary, has participated in numerous events from the first St. Patrick's Day Parade in Canso to making Easter baskets for children of the community and

to hosting children's Christmas parties, social events, and numerous wedding and funeral receptions, as well as providing support during local emergencies;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly congratulate and thank Minnie Richardson for volunteering her time to her community and for being such an integral part of all the meaningful work the Canso Volunteer Fire Department Ladies Auxiliary has done in the community over the past 50 years.