



DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Gordon Gosse

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HALIFAX, WEDNESDAY, MAY 2, 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.

The subject matter for late debate has been selected, submitted by the honourable member for Truro-Bible Hill:

Therefore be it resolved that the irresponsible Liberal proposal to deregulate electricity markets would be a disastrous experiment at the expense of Nova Scotians.

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

HON. STERLING BELLIVEAU: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak about concerns regarding the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans on the future of the owner/operator and fleet separation policies. These policies have been the cornerstone of the Atlantic fisheries for over 30 years. They have helped protect the independence of our coastal communities, and in the process they have helped create and maintain good jobs. That is why the DFO discussion paper, *The Future of Canada's Commercial Fisheries*, and its failure to address these policies have caused such a negative reaction within the fishing industry across Atlantic Canada.

Last week I read a resolution asking all members of this House to join in my government's support of the owner/operator and fleet separation policies. I want to commend and thank the members of both Opposition Parties for voting in favour of this motion. Today I am asking the members for their continued support on this issue and to commit that we all work together in support of the many fishing organizations across Atlantic Canada.

Minister Ashfield in the Harper Conservative Government must clarify their position on the owner/operator and fleet separation policies and provide more time for fishers and fish harvesters to be properly consulted on this issue.

Today is the time to deliver a strong and unified message to the federal minister. I want every community, every politician, every fish harvester, and every independent fisherman across the province to hear my message: this government, this Premier, and this minister will stand up for our inshore, independent fishers and make sure any future DFO policy has their best interests at heart.

When I was first elected in 2006, young fishers did not have access to capital to purchase licences. Today I can say with pride that our loan board is the envy of other Atlantic Provinces and is helping to protect the independence of our fishers now and into the future.

In recent days my government has demonstrated our commitment to rural Nova Scotia that previous governments have lacked. By moving departmental headquarters to rural communities, we are creating good jobs where they are most needed and where they make the most sense. At a time when the federal Conservative Government is eliminating jobs in rural Nova Scotia, our government is working to grow rural economies. That includes protecting the independence of our inshore fleets.

Mr. Speaker, as a former fisherman myself, I understand the challenges the industry faces. I was around in the 1990s when the cod moratorium took effect, and I witnessed the

economic devastation it caused. Fortunately, independent fishers are resilient and they quickly adjusted their focus to shellfish species, mainly lobster, crabs and shrimp. Today these species are becoming the economic engines of our coastal communities. So when the fishing industry approaches me as minister and says there are potential federal changes coming that could negatively affect or impact our coastal communities, I, and all members of this House, have an obligation to express our concerns to the federal minister in order to protect our independent fishers.

Mr. Speaker, the future of Canada's commercial fisheries does not include owner/operator and fleet separation policies and our coastal communities face serious problems. Without these policies, one of Nova Scotia's enduring symbols - the fishing village - could disappear in front of our own eyes. The absence of these policies would not only harm fishers but also the many processors who depend on a steady supply of fish to operate their plants.

Mr. Speaker, the evidence is clear and the industry has spoken. Fishermen want and demand that any future federal policies protect the independent fishers in coastal communities. They have also requested time, that is time to do the right thing and have a fair consultation process over the future of a commercial fisheries discussion paper. So in a few moments my critics will pass judgment on my comments. As I look across the Chamber, I can't help but reflect on my grandfather and my father who fished in Cape Breton communities in their lifetime. Today, it is not uncommon for fishers from Cape Breton communities to join our families and fish in southwestern Nova Scotia.

My point, Mr. Speaker, is that the fisheries is a province-wide resource and on this issue we need a province-wide response. So with that in mind, I humbly request that we send a clear and united message to Ottawa, the federal Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and all elected politicians: We in Nova Scotia support our independent fishers and stand by them and the protection of our coastal communities. This is the legacy that I want my government to leave for Nova Scotians.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Richmond.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to rise as the Fisheries Critic for the Official Opposition caucus to respond to the statement made by the minister. There's no question that as soon as the federal discussion paper on the future of our fisheries came out, our caucus reacted immediately to the concerns that were being brought to our attention. Immediately we heard from fishermen and organizations that the owner/operator and fleet separation policies were not being included as part of that discussion.

In order to be proactive, we immediately made a request to the chair of the Resources Committee that an emergency meeting be held and that business be set aside so that officials with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans could be asked to appear in front

of that committee to answer the very questions that were being put to us by fishermen, processors and families throughout Nova Scotia. Mr. Speaker, I would be remiss if I did not express our disappointment that the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture, nor anyone from the government side, endorsed our call for the Department of Fisheries and Oceans to appear in front of that committee which, as we now know, they have declined to do so. I would submit to you that that is taking concrete action.

Last week the minister read a resolution in the House which we were more than happy to give our support to. The question that we have on behalf of fishermen, organizations, processors and communities throughout Nova Scotia, is what is the government going to do? Other than stand in this House and make noise, we really haven't seen any other plan. I would submit to the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture that if he wants to send a clear message to Ottawa, let's go to Ottawa and bring that message directly to them. (Applause)

In the past, Mr. Speaker, this House has sent all-Party delegations - on issues of important matters - directly to the federal government in Ottawa in order to meet with ministers, to meet with Members of Parliament from Nova Scotia to give the clear message to them of the concerns that we have about this. I would submit to you that that would be a much more effective approach than a minister standing in this House reading a statement today.

The minister has only touched on one issue that is really concerning the fisheries in Nova Scotia. The other major issue, which he has failed to even raise, is the proposed changes by the federal government to the Employment Insurance program, which could have an absolutely devastating impact on our coastal fisheries and on our rural economy. The owner/operator and fleet separation policies are a cornerstone of the fisheries of Nova Scotia, but the support of the Employment Insurance program is right behind it as critical to the future.

As I mentioned yesterday in debate in this House, we have a human resources issue that is starting to creep up throughout our rural communities, where fishermen are finding it harder to get crew members to work during the very limited fishing seasons that we have here in Nova Scotia. I would suggest to the minister that if you are going to send a clear message to Ottawa, don't limit it to the owner/operator policy. Make sure the federal government clearly understands concerns over Employment Insurance changes.

The other question that we are asking is this: the owner/operator and fleet separation policies is a federal matter, but what we're hearing from fishermen today is, why is the provincial minister not working today with those fishermen who are trying to get a better price for this lobster here in Nova Scotia, who have tied up their boats, who are doing what they can to try to achieve a better price? We're seeing fishermen come together, united, to try to earn a better price, which is not only going to benefit them but is going to benefit our economy. Yet to date the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture, on an issue

where I believe he actually could make a difference, has remained silent to date. I would encourage him to reflect on what his roles and responsibilities are here in Nova Scotia and how he can help our industry in this province.

There are so many of us who can stand in this House and talk about our experience and our families' experiences in fishing. When the minister talks about the cod moratorium, I was there. I fished my last year before the moratorium on Banquereau Bank on a 45-foot-long liner, and that was the end of the fishing because the government closed the fishery. It put an end to fishing for my family and so many families throughout Nova Scotia.

We've all been there. We know what it is, and we know that it's important to send that clear message. But I would again say to the minister that I am more than happy, and our caucus is more than happy, to go directly to Ottawa to bring that message. If the minister is truly serious, I would suggest that that would be a much more effective way of bringing the message of Nova Scotians directly to the federal representatives in our nation's capital. Merci.

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

MR. ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, first I would like to thank the minister for his advance copy of his statement today. In our caucus we made it ultimately clear that we believe in the fate of the small and independent players like those involved in the lobster, crab, and shrimp fisheries. The MFU believes that the policy is critical to the continued success of this industry, because it creates 20,000 jobs annually.

When you look at the value of the quota landed by owner/operator fleets in recent years, it is certainly nothing to turn your nose up at. For example, in 2010 in Atlantic Canada, owner/operator fleets landed \$396 million in lobster, \$280 million in snow crab - which is a huge fishery in Cape Breton - and \$163 million in shrimp. The landed value of these three species accounted for 63 per cent of the total value of Atlantic Canada's single largest employer.

The honourable minister mentioned, and I will too, that we can't ignore the economic value of an industry that provides hundreds of jobs in coastal communities, but that government, that Premier, and that minister are in the fog. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to welcome the minister to the party. He's finally come up to the plate and it's a little late, but at least he's here.

I want to tell you that on March 8th, myself, my colleague from Victoria-The Lakes, and my colleague from Cape Breton North sent a letter to the federal Minister of Fisheries and Oceans on this very issue, and I'll table a copy of that. Also, the LFA 34 formed a subcommittee which met last Friday with Minister Ashfield on this very subject, and they considered that they had a good meeting. It's about time that this minister got outside and

started to come aboard with some of the things that need to be done, and he has the audacity to talk about jobs that he is creating, that his government is creating jobs. They're taking jobs from disadvantaged regions, they're taking jobs from (Interruptions)

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

The honourable member for Cape Breton West.

MR. MACLEOD: Well, there's another example of a minister over there that doesn't know what he's talking about because he's saying that the federal government is taking jobs from Cape Breton. He's saying that they were taking jobs out of Louisbourg. If he would check the facts, he would know that there is nobody losing their jobs. There are people retiring but nobody is losing their job. But that minister and that government don't take the time to get the facts straight.

They are removing jobs from other parts of rural Nova Scotia and moving them to where? Other areas, depressed areas. They're saying they're helping rural Nova Scotia so they're moving jobs from one depressed area of rural Nova Scotia to another. How does that help rural Nova Scotia? How does that benefit anybody in Nova Scotia?

This government, that government has killed the economy of rural Nova Scotia. In the South Shore area alone, where the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture is a member - between June 2009 and March 2012, there have been 7,300 job losses. Rural Nova Scotia is paying the price for this NDP Government's reckless management of our economy. The staggering numbers of job losses go on and on.

This is a very serious situation and I agree with the member for Richmond. We should be in Ottawa talking to them, dealing with this situation, similar to what we did with the *MV Miner*, not sitting here trying to make small political points on some kind of a statement to chew up the time of Opposition Day. It'll take more than a statement by that minister to fix the economy of the Province of Nova Scotia.

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Premier.

RESOLUTION NO. 733

HON. DARRELL DEXTER (The Premier): Mr. Speaker, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas Nova Scotians were saddened yesterday to learn of the death of the former Lieutenant Governor, John James Kinley; and

Whereas Mr. Kinley was an engineer, businessman and serviceman who served his country in the Second World War as a merchant mariner and with the Royal Canadian Navy before being installed as the province's 29th Lieutenant Governor in 1994; and

Whereas John James Kinley will be remembered by all who knew him as a respected community member, an accomplished businessman and a loving family man;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly remember former Lieutenant Governor John James Kinley for his service to this province and to his country.

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

Mr. Speaker, if it would please you, I would like to ask for a moment of silence in honour of the former Lieutenant Governor.

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.

[A moment of silence was observed.]

The honourable Minister of Education.

RESOLUTION NO. 734

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

Whereas today, May 2nd, for the second year, Parrsboro Regional High School student Caine Meyers is partnering with the Town of Parrsboro for the "I Am Who I Am" T-Shirts Against Bullying Day; and

Whereas last year's inaugural event was a huge success, with more than 10,000 participants from all over the world sending e-mails with a photo of their T-shirts that say "I Am Who I Am"; and

Whereas Caine's hope is that this day will change many lives and create a positive route towards a bully-free future;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of the House of Assembly thank Caine Meyers, the students from Parrsboro Regional High School, the Chignecto-Central Regional School Board, and the Town of Parrsboro, for coming together to work towards bully-free schools and communities.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Colchester North on an introduction.

HON. KAREN CASEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise in my place today and draw members' attention to the gallery opposite. We have visiting with us a retired RCMP officer, Barry Mellish. Barry has been with the RCMP for 28 years, including a period as Deputy Chief of Operations with the United Nations in the former Yugoslavia.

Barry has been with the RCMP detachment in Truro-Bible Hill, and I would be pleased to say that he is not one of the people who signed my tickets, but thank you, Barry, for that. Barry continues his interest in safety, highway safety and workplace safety, with his employment in the public sector.

So welcome to the House, Barry. I'd ask all members to join with me in welcoming you. (Applause)

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

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 71 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 23 of the Revised Statutes of 1989. The Assessment Act. (Hon. John MacDonell)

Bill No. 72 - Entitled an Act to Provide for the Independent Review of Certain Capital Projects. (Hon. Jamie Baillie)

Bill No. 73 - Entitled An Act to Amend Chapter 18 of the Acts of 1998. The Municipal Government Act. (Hon. John MacDonell)

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

NOTICES OF MOTION

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

RESOLUTION NO. 735

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

Whereas on May 1, 2012, the residents of Lunenburg County, Nova Scotia, and Canada, lost a great citizen in the passing of our former Lieutenant Governor John James Kinley; and

Whereas Jim's deep sense of service and dedication to his province and to his country was shaped through his service in World War II as a merchant marine, while in the Royal Canadian Navy, and later through his executive position at the Lunenburg Foundry and Engineering Company: and

Whereas despite his appointment as Nova Scotia's 29th Lieutenant Governor which moved him to Halifax, Jim never lost his common touch nor his deep affection and his pride in his home community of Lunenburg;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly extend condolences to Jim's family, his wife Grace, his children Paula, Peter, Edward and Shona, and honour his memory by never losing faith in the power of strong rural communities.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Victoria-The Lakes.

MR. KEITH BAIN: Mr. Speaker, if I might be permitted to do an introduction?

MR. SPEAKER: Most certainly.

MR. BAIN: Mr. Speaker, as members are aware, the month of May is national Cystic Fibrosis Awareness Month across Canada and we're pleased to have in the gallery opposite today Pamela Barnes. Ms. Barnes is the development coordinator with Cystic Fibrosis Canada and she's here today to observe the proceedings of the House. I ask if she would rise and receive the warm welcome of the House. (Applause)

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

The honourable member for Victoria-The Lakes.

RESOLUTION NO. 736

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

Whereas the month of May is national Cystic Fibrosis Awareness Month across Canada; and

Whereas one in every 3,600 children born in Canada is diagnosed with cystic fibrosis and every week two children are diagnosed and one person dies from this devastating disease in Canada; and

Whereas here in Nova Scotia, on average 260 individuals suffer from the crippling disease of cystic fibrosis;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly recognize the resolve of patients suffering from cystic fibrosis here in Nova Scotia and applaud the dynamic work of individuals such as Pamela Barnes, in the Cystic Fibrosis Nova Scotia Office in Halifax, who work hard to ensure that the lives of CF patients in Nova Scotia are made more comfortable.

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 Cumberland North.

MR. BRIAN SKABAR: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to make an introduction.

MR. SPEAKER: Most certainly.

MR. SKABAR: I would like to draw everyone's attention to the east gallery where one of my lovely daughters is visiting today. So, Margaret, would you please stand, and her boyfriend, Mitchell Wilson. (Applause)

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

The honourable member for Cumberland North.

RESOLUTION NO. 737

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

Whereas the Schwartz School of Business at St. Francis Xavier University is initiating a program where seven of the finest business students are selected to experience international business practices; and

Whereas Mitchell Wilson, a third year business major student and a constituent of Cumberland North, has been one of the seven students selected for this inaugural program introducing them to international business between one of the world's largest trading nations, China and Canada; and

Whereas Mitchell departs May 3rd for Shanghai to partake in a six-week program in which he will experience first-hand business practices of Chinese businesses and study how they may best be incorporated into Canadian and Nova Scotian trade practices;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulate Mitchell Wilson on being selected to partake in this prestigious program and wish him success in his endeavours to bring forth new ideas for business practices in Nova Scotia.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island.

RESOLUTION NO. 738

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

Whereas David Sharpe is a member of the Halifax Trojan Aquatic Club, past winner of the Canadian Interuniversity Sport swim championships, and Swim Nova Scotia's 2011-12 Male Swimmer of the Year; and

Whereas David Sharpe competed in the Canadian Olympic Trials in Montreal on March 28, 2012, winning the Men's 200-metre butterfly with a career-best time and setting a Nova Scotia record; and

Whereas as a result of his first place finish, David Sharpe has been nominated by the Canadian Olympic Committee to compete in the 2012 Olympic Games in London;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulate David Sharpe on his nomination to the Canadian Olympic swim team and recognize his exceptional contributions to our province and the sport of swimming.

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. 739

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

Whereas David Westlake, a resident of Truro and full-time employee with the Municipality of Colchester, has been volunteering for most of his adult life; and

Whereas David Westlake has spent 20 years volunteering with the Truro Fire Service including helping to build a better fire training system for other volunteers, training coordinator with the Colchester Firefighters Association, deputy director of the Special Hazards Response Unit, as well as being a member of the School Advisory Committee for Harmony Heights Elementary and also serving on the regional committee at the Chignecto Regional West Science Fair; and

Whereas due to his tremendous contributions to his community, he has been honoured as Truro's Volunteer of the Year;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia Legislature congratulate David Westlake for being chosen as Truro's Volunteer of the Year Award and commend him for his dedication to volunteering in our community.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage.

RESOLUTION NO. 740

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

Whereas in 1942 Eastern Passage had a catastrophic fire and lost an historic landmark building in its commercial district of Quigley's Corner; and

Whereas in 1946 the building was rebuilt in a significantly smaller version which later became what was known as Lloyd's Supermarket, an Edwards family owned and operated business; and

Whereas in 2011 the Edwards family made the difficult decision to tear down the original building to rebuild a larger, more economically viable building that was made to emulate the architectural design of the original building, which offers four commercial retail spaces and eight picturesque apartments overlooking Fisherman's Cove;

Therefore be it resolved that this Nova Scotia House of Assembly commend the Edwards family of Eastern Passage for investing in economic development initiatives for their community while celebrating the proud heritage of Quigley's Corner and wish them great success in their future endeavours.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Queens.

RESOLUTION NO. 741

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

Whereas the Adopt-a-Library WOW Reading Challenge is a partnership between the RCMP, libraries and schools that aims to raise literacy levels and provide new books to libraries; and

Whereas the students of the Dr. John C. Wickwire Elementary School in Liverpool have been taking part in the WOW Reading Challenge since 2007, competing against other schools worldwide in the World Literacy Championship; and

Whereas the students of the Dr. John C. Wickwire Elementary School successfully completed their best year to date and have been awarded first place in their division, earning the World Literacy Trophy;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly recognize and congratulate the students of the Dr. John C. Wickwire Elementary School for their victory in the World Literacy Championship.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Pictou East.

RESOLUTION NO. 742

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

Whereas Areta Boone of Westville, Pictou County, a Grade 10 student at Northumberland Regional High School, is a proud member of 4-H; and

Whereas Areta Boone was selected as one of 10 4-H members across Nova Scotia between the ages of 15 and 17 to participate at the 4th Annual Kevin Grant Rural Youth Leadership Tour in March 2012; and

Whereas on this 4-H leadership tour, Areta Boone and her fellow 4-H members had the opportunity to spend three days meeting people and touring farms and businesses and historic sites in Lunenburg County;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly congratulate Areta Boone for showing youth leadership within the 4-H movement and wish her every 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 member for Antigonish.

RESOLUTION NO. 743

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

Whereas each year since 1935, provincial educators have co-operatively celebrated Education Week, honouring the work that teachers and education partners do on behalf of their students; and

Whereas on April 23rd, 23 educators and five partners were recognized for their work toward this year's Education Week theme, Educating Students for Life; and

Whereas Jenn Laudadio, an English and drama teacher at Dr. J.H. Gillis Regional High School, was recognized with an Education Week award for her efforts to promote equality in and outside the classroom;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly thank Ms. Laudadio for her work in the classroom and around the community, and applaud the work that all educators do in our province.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Kings North.

RESOLUTION NO. 744

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

Whereas the Nova Scotia curling team, composed of Stephen Parkin, Tammy Schnare, Bruce Lightle, Rebecca Foster, and John Robicheau, competed at the 2012 Special Olympics Canada Winter Games in St. Albert, Alberta; and

Whereas the Nova Scotia curling team won their opening game 12-3 over British Columbia at the 2012 Special Olympics; and

Whereas the Nova Scotia curling team advanced to the gold medal game against Prince Edward Island to earn an impressive silver medal after trailing 4-1 early in the game and fighting back to a 5-5 tie;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly congratulate the Nova Scotia curling team on winning a silver medal at the 2012 Special Olympics Canada Winter Games in St. Albert, Alberta.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Lunenburg.

RESOLUTION NO. 745

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

Whereas Nova Scotia is honoured to be the home of many national historic sites, such as the Alexander Graham Bell Museum in Baddeck, which interprets and maintains

the historic family home of the inventor of such important modern telecommunications technologies as the telephone; and

Whereas the Alexander Graham Bell Museum employs many local residents as tour guides, interpreters, carpenters, and engineers, whose jobs provide vital economic investment in the Town of Baddeck and the surrounding rural community; and

Whereas the federal government has recently announced that 1,600 employees at Parks Canada will be “affected” by their \$5.2 billion job reduction strategy, and these cuts represent over 50 per cent of the current employees at Parks Canada and will undoubtedly have a direct effect on employees at the Alexander Graham Bell Museum;

Therefore be it resolved that the House of Assembly encourage the member for Victoria-The Lakes to contact his colleagues within the federal Conservative Party to stress the importance of these cuts to the employees of the Alexander Graham Bell Museum and the impact that the loss of these jobs will have on the vital and historic rural community.

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

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

Is it agreed?

I hear several Noes.

The notice is tabled.

The honourable member for Colchester-Musquodoboit Valley.

RESOLUTION NO. 746

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

Whereas Diane Clarke has been the band teacher at Musquodoboit Rural High School since 1995, during which time the MRHS band program has developed to a level of consistent excellence, receiving gold standards at music festivals across the province; and

Whereas Diane has provided the musical leadership for MRHS’ outstanding musical productions of *The Music Man* (2003), *Annie* (2005), *The Sound of Music* (2007), *The Wizard of Oz* (2009), and *Little Shop of Horrors* (2011); and

Whereas a host of MRHS graduates are going on to receive music degrees, perform professionally, and teach music across North America;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia Legislature join the people of the communities served by Musquodoboit Rural High School in appreciative acknowledgement of Diane Clarke's singular contribution as an outstanding music teacher and mentor in Musquodoboit.

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. 747

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 Saint Mary's University African Students' Society and the Dalhousie African Students' Association are student-run organizations that promote awareness of African culture, art, and heritage; and

Whereas the centrepiece event of the Saint Mary's University African Students' Society and the Dalhousie African Students' Association is the annual Africa Night celebration; and

Whereas on March 24, 2012, more than 700 students and community members were treated to an evening of authentic African cuisine and performances showcasing African dance, fashion, art, and music;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly recognize the Saint Mary's University African Students' Society and the Dalhousie African Students' Association for their contributions to the vitality of our community, and extend congratulations on the success of their 2012 Africa Night.

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. 748

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

Whereas Emily McInnis, a Grade 7 student at Redcliffe Middle School, and Brandin Arsenault, a Grade 8 student at Bible Hill Junior High, have created a Web site, called Operation Unfriend Bullying, to help combat cyberbullying; and

Whereas the Web site, which gives people an anonymous outlet for asking questions and discussing bullying issues, has been so popular that it has received over 260,000 hits since it officially started on December 7, 2011; and

Whereas Emily McInnis and Brandin Arsenault recently received Leadership in Crime Prevention awards from our Justice Minister in the youth category for their Web site, Operation Unfriend Bullying;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia Legislature congratulate Emily McInnis and Brandin Arsenault for creating their Web site to take a stand against bullying and for receiving the Leadership in Crime Prevention awards for their efforts.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage.

RESOLUTION NO. 749

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

Whereas on November 30, 2011, Ocean View Manor Society unveiled its new name as Ocean View Continuing Care Centre, which better represents its commitment to being an innovative facility focused on comfort, care, and compassion of its residents and families; and

Whereas their new brand is a more accurate reflection of Ocean View Continuing Care Centre's extended capabilities, beyond just bricks and mortar, which is in keeping with the government's philosophy to help "Nova Scotians live well in a place they can call home"; and

Whereas Ocean View Continuing Care Centre has been part of the community of Eastern Passage since 1967 and is a not-for-profit society, accredited continuing care facility, providing service for 176 residents with over 260 staff and a dedicated board of directors;

Therefore be it resolved that this Nova Scotia House of Assembly wish the board of directors, staff, and administrators of Ocean View Continuing Care Centre many more years of success in delivering quality care and demonstrating leadership in their industry for the benefit of Nova Scotians.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Queens.

RESOLUTION NO. 750

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

Whereas White Point Beach Resort remains active in its tourism promotion throughout the rebuilding process in the aftermath of a November 2011 fire; and

Whereas White Point Beach Resort hosted the event Scotiable, a Nova Scotia night at the Ottawa Travel and Leisure Show in Ottawa, Ontario, on March 9, 2012; and

Whereas this event integrated the White Point experience into the Ottawa Travel and Leisure Show;

Therefore be it resolved that the House of Assembly recognize and congratulate White Point Beach Lodge for its original and inclusive promotion of Nova Scotia and the White Point experience.

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. 751

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

Whereas Antigonish native Eric Gillis represented Canada in the 10,000-metre race at the Beijing Olympics in 2008; and

Whereas in October 2011, Gillis, now a marathoner, qualified for the 2012 Olympics with a finish time of two hours, 11 minutes, and 28 seconds at the Toronto Marathon; and

Whereas on April 26th, Eric Gillis, who now lives and trains in Guelph, Ontario, was officially nominated to the 2012 Canadian Olympic team;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly congratulate Mr. Gillis on his achievement, and wish him and all of the Olympic team members the best of luck in this summer's Games.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Lunenburg.

RESOLUTION NO. 752

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

Whereas Nova Scotia is honoured to be the home of many National Historic Sites such as the Fortress Louisbourg, which was rebuilt to interpret and maintain the historic presence of this important French settlement and military installation; and

Whereas the Fortress Louisbourg National Historic Site employs hundreds of local residents as tour guides, interpreters, archaeologists, carpenters, and engineers, whose jobs provide vital economic investment in the Town of Louisbourg and also the surrounding rural community; and

Whereas the federal government has recently announced that 1,689 employees at Parks Canada will be "affected" by the \$5.2 billion job reduction strategy, and 120 positions specifically at Fortress Louisbourg will either be eliminated or face a reduction of hours;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly encourage the member for Cape Breton West to contact his colleagues within the federal Conservative Party to stress the importance of the job losses at Fortress Louisbourg and the impact that the loss of these jobs will have on this vital and historic rural community.

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

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

Is it agreed?

I hear several Noes.

The notice is tabled.

The honourable member for Colchester-Musquodoboit Valley.

RESOLUTION NO. 753

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

Whereas the Woodcock Conservation Society held its 8th annual fundraising dinner on February 25th at Whistler's in Stewiacke, packing the hall and raising \$2,750 for the society's work; and

Whereas the purpose of the Woodcock Conservation Society is to establish and develop woodcock habitat in order to increase numbers and improve upland wildlife habitat in general; and

Whereas since its founding in 2004, the Woodcock Conservation Society has conducted habitat enhancement projects within the constituency of Colchester-Musquodoboit Valley in West St. Andrews, Princeport, Chaswood and Lake Egmont in conjunction with the Nova Forest Alliance, Nova Scotia Habitat Conservation Fund and Wildlife Habitat Canada;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia House of Assembly acknowledges appreciatively the leadership of Bob Stewart, chairman and all of the directors of the Woodcock Conservation Society, and hereby expresses its high regard for the society's continuing habitat enhancement work.

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.

MR. SPEAKER: I will now seek unanimous consent of the House to revert back to the order of business, Tabling Reports, Regulations and Other Papers.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Richmond.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave on behalf of the Official Opposition to table a committee member change notice pursuant to Rule 60(5)(d) of the Rules and Forms of Procedures of the House of Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The honourable Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party on an introduction.

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to make an introduction. I would like to draw the attention of all members of this House to the gallery opposite where we have visiting us today the Maritime Mad Caps, who are affiliated with the Crown Jewels of Canada, formerly known as the Red Hatters. I won't introduce them all individually for fear of unduly singling out any one of them, but I would just like to draw the attention of all members of the House to the Crown Jewels of Canada and ask them to join me in welcoming them here to the proceedings today. (Applause)

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

The honourable member for Bedford-Birch Cove.

MS. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I would like to make an introduction here today. I would like to welcome the ladies and I would like to welcome in particular one of my constituents, Mrs. Baillie. Please stand. (Applause)

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY**ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS**

MR. SPEAKER: The time is now 2:59 p.m., we will finish at 4:29 p.m.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

PREM.: LWR. CHURCHILL - OVERSEER

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, today the Utility and Review Board has stated at the Public Accounts Committee that if the Lower Churchill project falls under the control of Emera, there's nothing they can do to oversee this particular project. The Premier told this House, in the past, that this project would fall under the authority of the URB. Either the Premier doesn't know the full scope of this project or he misled this House. My question to the Premier is, which is it?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, it is neither. I said that the project will go to the Utility and Review Board and it will.

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, the chairman of the Utility and Review Board said today that the lead company and the only one speaking to them is Emera not Nova Scotia Power. He was very clear to the committee of this House that no one from Nova Scotia Power has contacted the Utility and Review Board and that they would have no oversight over that project. Maybe the Premier could stand in this House and clarify if he knows something that the chairman of the Utility and Review Board doesn't?

THE PREMIER: Well, Mr. Speaker, I do and that is that the project will go to the Utility and Review Board for review as I direct.

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, the only way that that project can go to the Utility and Review Board - either it's being built by Nova Scotia Power or we change the legislation. Since this government has brought forward no legislation - we have had a weak legislative agenda, it would have been nice to have a substantive piece of legislation that could have debated, but we've had a weak legislative agenda. So my question to the Premier, is he going to change the legislation or what?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, because the Leader of the Official Opposition does not understand the options, I'm not going to bother to explain them. But there are, in fact, other ways that this project could come to the Utility and Review Board but further to that if it requires that there are regulatory change to ensure that the project comes to the Utility and Review Board we will see that that is done.

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

PREM. - MUSKRAT FALLS PROJ.: REVIEW - DETAILS

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, in committee today the chair of the Public Utility Board stated clearly that they may not review the Muskrat Falls project, depending on how it is financed. That is a clear contradiction to what the Premier told all Nova Scotians prior to today. Now we hear him say that they will and so my question to the Premier why did the Premier tell Nova Scotians that it was the job of the Utility and Review Board to review that project when in fact it isn't.

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I know that that question was written before Question Period. Certainly now that he's had the benefit of listening to the answers to the questions that were put to the Leader of the Official Opposition, he should know that I intend to direct that that project is in fact reviewed by the Utility and Review Board, as it was always planned and expected by Nova Scotians and that is what will happen.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, the Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador has already done her job protecting the ratepayers of Newfoundland by directing their Utility and Review Board to do a cost benefit analysis of that project. An analysis, by the way, that was pretty sketchy about whether it worked for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. Up till today, the Premier of Nova Scotia - the person who is responsible for standing up for Nova Scotian ratepayers - has failed to do the same. Only today, when he was contradicted by the chair of our Utility and Review Board does he say that he may.

So my question to the Premier is, when will he do for Nova Scotia what he's failed to do up till now and follow the lead of his compatriot in Newfoundland and Labrador.

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party hears only conveniently what he wants to hear. We have always said that this review will be undertaken by the Utility and Review Board. In fact, there have been numerous reviews that have already come forward as a result of Newfoundland and Labrador's engagement that have talked about the benefits of the Utility and Review Board. I have told the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party numerous times that the final contract between Nova Scotia Power, Emera and Nalcor have not been finalized and until the costs are known and until it is finalized it is not possible to do the kind of review that he asks for.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, it was almost a year ago that the Premier of Nova Scotia committed this province and all of the ratepayers in it to the Muskrat Falls project, a project that everyone has hoped for. But the fact of the matter is, he does not know how much the cost of power from Muskrat Falls will be. Now we know today it is not the job of the Utility and Review Board to tell Nova Scotians how much it will cost, or even to determine whether it's affordable for Nova Scotians. It's certainly not Emera's and it's certainly not Nova Scotia Power's - it is his job.

It's been almost a year. Will he commit in this House today to telling Nova Scotians how much power from that project will cost before another dollar is spent developing it.

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, perhaps I'll use smaller words when I'm speaking. I have already said to the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party that what will happen is there will be a review, and it will be done by the Utility and Review Board. You can't review a project for which the costs are not yet known. The final contract is not yet known.

I point out to the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party, in addition to the benefits that have been identified for the electricity ratepayers here in the province in terms of stability over 35 years, this morning in Public Accounts the chair of the Utility and Review Board - when he was asked what the cheapest power he had was in the system, he said it was hydro.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

PREM. - MUSKRAT FALLS: URB REVIEW - DETAILS

MR. ANDREW YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, my question is also for the Premier, and unfortunately, what the chair said was not that it is hydro. It is hydro from the stations that already exist in Nova Scotia, and he specifically excluded Muskrat Falls in his follow-up statement. (Applause)

With that being said, the Premier is right that this can be an important process, and it's not smaller words we need - it's accurate words in the same statement. On April 4th the Premier stood in this House and said - and I quote - in response to a question about this from another member:

“ . . . he knows full well there is a comprehensive review process, that the project, before it can be approved as capital expenditure for the utility, has to go to the Utility and Review Board. That is the appropriate process for a review.”

What we learned today from the chair of the board is that no such process exists, and that the only method under which that can currently happen, since it is an Emera project, is not if the government changes regulation but if it amends Section 35 of the Public Utilities Act to include this project or Emera. Those were the exact words of the chair of the board standing outside.

Mr. Speaker, this is very simple. Will the Premier amend the Public Utilities Act to ensure that the commitment he has made to Nova Scotians that this will go the Utility and Review Board actually happens?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, for all of his assertions, he is wrong. This is a project that will go to the Utility and Review Board, just as I said it would. There will be a review, and we're looking forward to it. We believe that once the review is complete - the folly of the Opposition in their criticism of this project is completely unfounded.

MR. YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, our criticism is not of this project. It is of the fact that government believes that Nova Scotians should not be kept informed about it and given honest answers.

It's quite simple. The fact is the Premier has said things which the chair of the board has said are simply untrue. The chair of the board has said there are elements of this project that, no matter what the Premier orders, they do not have the jurisdiction to review, no matter what. But he did say that there is an opportunity here to review this project if the government amends Section 35 of the Public Utilities Act to ensure this project is completed. As it stands now, it's an Emera project or it will be a project done by a new Emera company. Neither of those are covered by that section, and the chair was very clear about that.

Mr. Speaker, why will the Premier not agree to make this easy and amend that section of the Act so that the review is mandated by law?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I've done my best to explain to the member opposite why he is wrong. He doesn't seem to want to accept that, but he is wrong, and that was not what the chair of the Utility and Review Board said. He was speaking hypothetically.

The fact of the matter is that no application has been made yet. I want to assure the members of the House and the members of the public that I've said this matter will be reviewed by the Utility and Review Board, and it will.

MR. YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, if the Premier thinks that I'm going to believe him over the chair of the Utility and Review Board after the litany of broken promises from this government, he must be living in la-la land. The fact of the matter is, the chair of the board was very, very clear about this. He said it's only Emera that has talked to him. Emera stood down at the Marriott and said it will either be Emera or it will be a separate company.

Mr. Bennett has not talked about it at the Nova Scotia Power company. He said the only way it would ever get reviewed under the current situation is as a fuel cost. Because they have to look at long-term fuel costs, it would probably then get refused.

Mr. Speaker, we know there are other benefits associated. This is easily solved. All the Premier has to do is bring in an amendment to the Public Utilities Act to address this issue that the chair of the board has raised - raised in here and raised outside with the media. Why won't he do it?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, first of all, there is no application, as has been pointed out by the chairman of the board. It has not been - we don't fix imaginary problems, we fix real problems. This is not one of those.

I have said that it will be reviewed by the Utility and Review Board and it will be reviewed by the Utility and Review Board. As for the member for Dartmouth East being in la-la-land, I concur with that.

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

PREM.: NDP ELECTRICITY TAX - DETAILS

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, in 2009, prior to the election of 2009, the Premier told Nova Scotians that he would remove the HST off electricity bills to the tune of about \$28 million. Following the election campaign, the Premier then told Nova Scotians he was going to introduce an NDP electricity tax, which would add \$40 million to power bills across the Province of Nova Scotia. So, take a little with one hand and then give a little back. My question to the Premier is, why did the Premier fail to tell Nova Scotians that he was going to add \$40 million to electricity bills across this province?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, this morning at the Utility and Review Board, the chairman of the Utility and Review Board was asked about how you could go about having stable and cheaper rates for Nova Scotians. You know what he said? He said through demand-side management, which is exactly what that efficiency company does.

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, we would agree with the chairman of the Utility and Review Board, what we don't agree with is this government that has decided it's every ratepayer that should pay for it. We believe the shareholders of Nova Scotia Power should pay for it. Since the Premier is unwilling to recognize his own mistake and force shareholders of Nova Scotia Power to pay for the NDP electricity tax, will he at least guarantee Nova Scotians that he will freeze it and it will not continue to rise?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, the demand-side management charge was designed and was implemented as a result of the decision of the Utility and Review Board and it had nothing to do with the Government of Nova Scotia. In fact, the Government of Nova Scotia are the ones who removed the tax from electricity.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table for you and for the edification of the members opposite the testimony of Mr. Crandlemire from Efficiency Nova Scotia with respect to this matter. He said, "Energy efficiency improvements made in 2011 will save Nova Scotians about \$100 million in electricity costs, and efficiency improvements in 2012 will spur \$40 million worth of economic activity in the province - work for electricians, carpenters, insulators, plumbers and more, from Yarmouth to Amherst . . ."

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, I'm hearing people around the House saying, who does he work for? I think we all know the answer. The fact of the matter is no one is questioning the fact that demand-side management should exist. The question is, who should pay for it? The government on the other side believes every ratepayer in Nova Scotia should pay for it; we quite frankly believe that shareholders of Nova Scotia Power should pay for it.

Before the 2009 election the Premier said he didn't want the DSM charge and then he put it on every power bill, every month. Before the 2009 election he said he wouldn't raise the HST and then he did it mere months after being elected Premier. Before the 2009 election campaign, he voted against giving big oil a tax break. A few months ago he handed out \$10 million tax free money to big oil. My question to the Premier is, how can we trust the NDP Government will help the people in this province and its high power rates when you've broken your promise so many times to the people of this province?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, all of the litany of things that he has said are distortions of the facts. The fact of the matter is the oil refinery in Dartmouth got no money from the government whatsoever. The highest taxed refinery east of Manitoba was not charged more tax. We are the ones who took the HST off home energy. We are the ones who put in place the affordability tax credits. We are the ones who raised the allowances for those who are disabled and those who are the poorest in our society. We are the ones who took income tax off for seniors who pay the GIS. That was this government. That crowd over there voted against all those things. (Interruptions)

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

PREM.: JOB RELOCATIONS - CONFIRM

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, earlier this week the NDP told Nova Scotians they were moving jobs from Halifax to rural Nova Scotia, including Maintenance Enforcement jobs, but it turns out that's just not the case. The fact is those 25 jobs are coming from the communities of Amherst, New Glasgow and Kentville, not Halifax. In fact, the only place that jobs are not coming from is the Department of Justice's head office on Terminal Road in Halifax. Now, my question to the Premier is, why does his government claim to be moving jobs like these from Halifax to rural Nova Scotia when in fact they're doing no such thing?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I have no idea where the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party got his information but he's wrong. Jobs are coming out of their head office which is in Dartmouth and they are going to New Waterford.

MR. BAILLIE: Well, Mr. Speaker, the Premier might want to have a chat once in a while with his own Minister of Justice because the fact of the matter is the centres that are consolidating in New Waterford are in New Glasgow, are in Kentville, and are in Amherst,

they are not in Halifax. There is one in Dartmouth but the government when it added up its 93 jobs included all 25 maintenance enforcement jobs and that is simply not the case.

I focus on Kentville for a reason, because the Annapolis Valley has lost 5,500 full-time jobs in the last three years according to Statistics Canada, a 10 per cent decline in their workforce. The Premier and his government play a cruel game of telling them that they're moving jobs around when they're doing no such thing. How many of those jobs came from Kentville in the Annapolis Valley and not from Halifax as his government alleges?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, the consolidation takes place regardless of where those jobs go because this was being consolidated. So the question was, where was it going to be consolidated? Now, in the past, every consolidation that the Progressive Conservatives did came into Halifax. For us, we are going to consolidate those jobs and the jobs from Dartmouth and they are going to New Waterford – to be clear.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Justice told all Nova Scotians through the media just outside this Chamber, and I will quote directly: We made a promise that we're going to move jobs from the city into the rural areas to balance out the economy of Nova Scotia. In fact, he is doing no such thing. It is just a cruel joke. So I will ask the Premier, does he condone the behaviour of a minister who tells Nova Scotians that he's doing one thing when, in fact, he is doing the other?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, in addition to the jobs from the Maintenance Enforcement Program in Dartmouth, there are other areas that are being consolidated in Cape Breton and that is good for Cape Breton.

Mr. Speaker, in addition, the jobs from the head office in Agriculture are going to Truro; the Marine Division of the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture is going to Digby; the Aquaculture Division is going to Shelburne; and all of those are good jobs in rural Nova Scotia. Unlike the Progressive Conservative Government that is slashing jobs in rural Nova Scotia, as they did at the Fortress of Louisbourg in Cape Breton, as they have done at the Department of Indian Affairs in Amherst, as they go about destroying jobs in Nova Scotia, we are creating them.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

PREM. - ELECTRICITY: CONSERVATION COSTS - PMT. INFO.

MR. ANDREW YOUNGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Premier. When we asked about the NDP's new electricity tax, the best that they can come up with is to suggest the Liberals are against conservation. This is ridiculous and the funny thing is that they'll table quotes out of context. I'll table the complete transcript from the Public Accounts Committee of the other week where we make it abundantly clear that we

absolutely support conservation - what we do not support is taxing ratepayers to death and letting shareholders run away with record profits.

Mr. Speaker, this is about who pays, and that's all it's about - it's about who pays for this. So will the Premier tell us why he believes that Nova Scotia ratepayers should be the ones to pay for conservation, instead of Nova Scotia Power shareholders?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, the concern, I think, for everyone in this House is to ensure that there are lower and stable prices on behalf of ratepayers in Nova Scotia. It should be abundantly obvious, even to the member for Dartmouth East, that if you pay \$40 million and you get \$100 million of savings that is a good deal for ratepayers.

MR. YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, it's an even better deal when that \$40 million is paid by shareholders and not ratepayers. (Applause)

Let me quote from a document dated June 3, 2009: "I am making this representation on behalf of the New Democratic Party, . . . The NDP is of the view that the DSM . . . dated April 6, 2009, places the burden of DSM-related improvements too heavily on residential users and other rate classes. . . . It should, rather, be based on the notion that the utility will bear the costs for making DSM-related investments in order to stabilize its long-term position in the market, and access to power for consumers of all classes." This is signed on behalf of the Premier by Mr. Dan O'Connor, which I will now table.

Mr. Speaker, six days before the election the NDP said that shareholders should pay the DSM charges, and yet after the election they tabled an Act which had ratepayers pay it. So why was it wrong during the election to have ratepayers pay this fee but, then once they became government, charging shareholders was wrong and charging ratepayers was right?

THE PREMIER: No, Mr. Speaker, as he did mention, that was, in fact, a submission to the Utility and Review Board and, like all Parties, we had the opportunity to make a submission to the Utility and Review Board. After we do that, we live with the decision of the Utility and Review Board.

MR. YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, I knew that the Premier was going to answer that, and it's unfortunate that this morning the chairman of the Utility and Review Board said the Premier is absolutely wrong when he says that. In fact, he said this morning that this Act, which was introduced by the NDP, which I will table, left the board no choice but to charge ratepayers and left them with no option but to charge ratepayers. He said it was a result of the NDP Act.

Mr. Speaker, let's try this one more time - and maybe we can have a bit of accurate information since the NDP passed that Act and the chairman said they didn't make that decision - why does the NDP believe ratepayers should pay for conservation programs,

instead of shareholders of a company with record profits earned on the backs of hard-working Nova Scotians?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I know that the member for Dartmouth East was actually at the meeting this morning, but I think he needs to go back and review the transcript or something because that's not what they said. In fact, what the chairman of the Utility and Review Board actually said was that DSM charges, the demand-side management program, was in fact one of the best ways to control costs for consumers.

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

PREM. - CAPITAL HEALTH AGREEMENT: JOB CUTS - DETAILS

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Premier said that job cuts at Capital Health may be needed to pay for the settlement ratified with the local union last Friday. That prompted, today, the president of the Nova Scotia Government and General Employees Union, Ms. Joan Jessome to say "that wasn't part of the deal." I will table that quote from the media for the benefit of the House.

Mr. Speaker, the deal negotiated by Dave Collins, the lead negotiator for Capital Health, did not deal with job cuts, leaving many Nova Scotians to wonder what deal Ms. Jessome is now referring to. I will ask the Premier, what deal has the Premier made that Ms. Jessome is referring to when she says that wasn't part of the deal that Nova Scotians don't yet know about?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, if the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party has a question for Joan Jessome, I think he should ask Joan Jessome.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, she's not on my speed dial like we all know she is on his speed dial. It became apparent this week that the Premier agreed to this deal with the Capital Health union without even knowing the full cost to his government of implementing the deal. That is why many Nova Scotians are wondering what deal Ms. Jessome is referring to. She is not here, but the Premier is, so I will ask him.

What involvement did his office have in negotiating a backdoor deal with Local 42, other than the one that Mr. Collins was supposedly responsible for that Ms. Jessome now feels is a deal he broke?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I have to say the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party has a very active imagination. It doesn't serve him very well in these circumstances. The health care negotiations were well-managed. They proceeded in a purposeful and predictable manner, and they resulted in a settlement which was satisfactory to the parties.

What I said yesterday, I think, is just blindingly obvious. If you have a finite amount of money and salaries are your biggest wage costs, the increase in wages means that you don't have as much money for salaried employees. But what I also said yesterday - and as we all know, in scrums there are some things that get reported and some things that do not - I also mentioned that we would support the budgets of the DHAs. They framed them up on the basis of a certain set of expectations, and we appreciate the work they've done. We're going to support that.

I also said that there is an opportunity here for the employees in that local and in the district health authority to come forward now and to help us find further efficiencies, further ways of merging services, to be able to deliver services that will cut those costs, much as we have already done with the merged services that people have already seen and the savings that we have already achieved.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, just talking about active imaginations, I want to assure you, sir, that I continue to imagine a day when we'll get a straight answer from the other side of the House to simple questions like this.

Regardless of what deals were done, all Nova Scotians remain wondering who is going to pay for it all? Capital Health budgeted 1 per cent; we know the actual settlement is multiples of that number. Either Capital Health and their patients will pay through cuts to programs and jobs, or all Nova Scotians are going to pay when the Premier tops up the budget for Capital Health. So here is a simple question, and I imagine a straightforward answer: which is it? Who will pay for that deal?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, as the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party knows, there are cost pressures in every department every year as a result of increased costs that come in many, many forms, and to a large degree as a result of contracts that have been signed that have rolling increases in them. Those are beyond the control of a government when it is done by the government before you. You simply pick up where they left off and therefore have to deal with the mess that was left behind by the former government.

In our case, this government had to deal with a \$1.4 billion structural deficit left behind by the former Progressive Conservative Governments.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

PREM.: RENEWABLE TO RETAIL/DEREGULATION - COMPARE

MR. ANDREW YOUNGER: Thank you Mr. Speaker, and again my question is for the Premier. The Premier has had the night to reflect and think about Question Period yesterday, I hope, and his incorrect statement that enacting the 51st recommendation of the Electricity Marketplace Governance Committee to allow renewable energy suppliers to sell to consumers would be deregulation, which is what he tried to suggest yesterday.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask him again and give him a chance to correct his statements. Does the Premier still believe that renewable-to-retail - which would introduce competition to Nova Scotia Power and break their monopoly, and was recommended by that committee - is the same as deregulation?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, as I understand it, the Liberal Party has a comprehensive plan for deregulation of the electricity market that will, in fact, mean Nova Scotians will pay higher electricity tax costs. If I'm wrong then they should tell me that, but I can tell you this about that recommendation and when it was made. When that recommendation was made, the electricity profile of this province looked entirely different, and in fact the recommendation that was made at the time was to allow electricity consumers to pay a higher price, a premium, for green electricity. It would not bring prices down; in fact, for those people who chose to buy green power under that model, the price would actually be higher.

MR. YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, the Premier should try reading our bill because this caucus has never mentioned deregulation. In fact we have suggested better regulation and more regulation of the energy industry, not less - not like this crowd who basically wants to advocate the responsibility.

You know, I'm wondering also whether the Premier talks to members of his caucus because the Deputy Premier said, ". . . when is your government going to ensure that renewable energy suppliers can sell their project at a fair price in this province?" Then he said that the minister, ". . . hasn't come up within a mile of talking about Section 51 in EMGC . . ." The minister, ". . . has chosen to ignore this report and the impact it will have on the ability for some of these people to sell the energy."

Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Premier suggested that the Liberals want deregulation because we've introduced the bill that the Deputy Premier suggested should go forward. Is the Premier saying the Deputy Premier is wrong?

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Throw me under the bus. (Laughter)

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, as you know I would not do that. But what I will do is, I will table - I'm sure the member for Dartmouth East is aware of what was actually said in the report with respect to recommendation number 51 and this is what it says: "In a fully competitive retail market, any seller can offer green energy at a higher price, but would face the price competition from sellers . . . Consumers could then choose whether or not they wished to pay a green energy premium." Meaning, they would pay more for green energy.

That recommendation is no longer necessary and the bill is no longer necessary because we have increased the level of green energy in the province and it is now part of the portfolio that every Nova Scotian gets when it buys its electricity.

MR. YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, the Premier has introduced the higher prices but he hasn't introduced the competition that was meant to go with it and make it work, and then he has the audacity to suggest that that bill, which the NDP supported in Opposition, is deregulation, which couldn't be further from the truth. Let me also table the comments of the member for Halifax Chebucto, also supporting the bill in this House, I guess he was wrong too.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier thinks that we can't have renewable energy in a regulated market but New Brunswick has both and it's working just fine. And I'll table their Act that's working there. So what does he think is wrong with Nova Scotia's Government that we can't have a competent renewable-to-retail-system while still having a regulated market just like his caucus member has suggested and just like they have in New Brunswick?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Liberals were going to deregulate the market and now the member for Dartmouth East says they're going to put in place even more regulation. Well you know something, they don't need more regulation. What they need is a comprehensive renewable electricity policy which is what they got and not something that was obsolete because this government did a better job.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle.

**COM. SERV.: CHETICAMP ASSOC. FOR COMMUN. LIVING REPT.
- MIN. MISINFORMATION**

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, in a desperate attempt to divert attention away from her own mistakes, the Minister of Community Services misinformed the House about a report on the Cheticamp Association for Community Living. The disclaimer of the Cheticamp report reads, "The report resulting from the review is submitted and received by the Board in confidence and is embargoed until the Board and DCS have discussed the findings and recommendations."

The disclaimer on the Talbot House review said, "The report contains confidential and identifiable personal information. Disclosure of this review by the Department of Community Services is governed by the provisions of the Nova Scotia *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*."

Mr. Speaker, I'll table those two very different disclaimers. My question to the minister is, the minister used her response to my colleague's final supplementary question to delude this House - can she point out any reference to personal information in the Cheticamp report?

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, it doesn't matter how they continually fabricate and twist facts, it's a disclaimer, and the disclaimers are regular

disclaimers that are utilized when we do such reports. We had discussions with the board and so we did the right thing.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, in trying to make the minister understand, I'll give her an example of identifiable information. If I were to say, the Premier is a job-killing mismanager of Nova Scotia's economy, everyone would know that I'm referring to the member for Cole Harbour. Can the minister finally see how seven statements in the Talbot House report make veiled suggestions of inappropriate behaviour by the well-known executive director of Talbot House of which there was only one, was wrong?

AN HON. MEMBER: It's only one guy.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: It's only one guy and why the disclaimer?

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, if you look at the Cheticamp report that the member for Argyle also put on-line, it references the executive director in there. It looks at the same thing. It looks at policy. So anybody reading the one that he also put on-line could also identify that executive director in the community. So there is no difference in those reviews that were put on-line.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, in the report for Talbot House there are seven different instances of veiled suggestions of inappropriate behaviour. In the Cheticamp one, of course, there is nothing like that in there. Members from this Party have stood in this House tabling highlighted excerpts from the reports, tabling the minister's own words. We even tabled enacted legislation that the minister has violated and she still doesn't seem to understand, nor her colleagues on the front benches understand that she is wrong. She sticks to the messaging. She tries desperately to divert attention away from her mistakes. She blames an official but it isn't working.

Mr. Speaker, the minister cannot create a distraction when she has broken the law. It's time for her to admit it. Will the minister accept her ministerial responsibility and admit her handling of the Talbot House review was illegal?

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, the facts are the facts are the facts. When you read the review, it talks about policy. It talks about policy whether there's an omission policy, whether there are job descriptions. If you also read the Cheticamp review, it says the same thing, where there's a job description. It's unbelievable that they're twisting their story so many times that they're even getting mixed up in their own twisted facts.

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

SNSMR: GOOD NEIGHBOUR ENERGY FUND - DEPLETION

MS. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, this winter many Nova Scotians have had to turn to the Good Neighbour Energy Fund to be able to heat their homes and turn on their lights. The last day to apply for this assistance was April 30th, but the fund was depleted by April 17th and this was the second time this fund was depleted this year. This fund had never been depleted before. The fund received a top-up of \$400,000 two months ago and then ran out of money again with over a week left to the program. People who needed help with their power bills were being turned away. My question is, how is it acceptable to the Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations that so many Nova Scotians needed assistance paying their power bills that the fund was depleted twice this season?

HON. JOHN MACDONELL: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question, it's a good one. The Good Neighbour Energy Fund is not run by government. It is the generosity of the people through the government to give money to the Salvation Army that runs that fund. We made two instalments, if I can use that word, of \$400,000. The initial plan was to give them \$400,000 and they used that up fairly quickly; we had the capacity to offer more and we did do that. Do we like the fact that Nova Scotians find themselves in difficulty? We don't. I think the use of the fund applies more to oil than it does to electricity, but that could yet be verified. I want to say if it was possible to do more I think we would very much like to do more, but whatever we can do we try to do it.

MS. REGAN: Mr. Speaker, the increased need for the Good Neighbour Energy Fund speaks volumes about the need for this government to act to make power more affordable for Nova Scotians. Last year 1,808 families accessed this fund. This year 2,752 families had to use it, that's 944 more families that needed to use this assistance because they couldn't pay their power bills. Will the Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations stand up for Nova Scotians, call on his Cabinet colleagues to break the Nova Scotia Power monopoly, and reduce the need for so many people to seek help with their power bills?

MR. MACDONELL: Mr. Speaker, as much as I respect the member opposite when she raises issues, I think she does a good job, but I have not gotten myself to a place that just because she says it that it means it's true. The condition on which she speaks, I don't think anybody can say, I don't think she can say, is related to power rates in Nova Scotia. I think this fund is more exclusively used for people who are having trouble paying their oil bill, not their electricity bill.

MS. REGAN: Mr. Speaker, it's not enough to keep topping up the assistance fund. Since 2001, power rates have gone up 40 per cent. The previous government did nothing to ease the burden of power rates on Nova Scotians and this government isn't doing anything either. We're not talking about power taxes; we're talking about power rates. Power rates are unmanageable, and as a result the Good Neighbour Energy Fund was depleted twice this season. Will this government do what the former government refused to do and do

something, anything, to make power rates more affordable and break the monopoly of Nova Scotia Power?

MR. MACDONELL: Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure if the member opposite missed something in the budgeting process a couple of years back, but this government took the provincial portion of the HST off home heating to give a benefit to Nova Scotians, something that the members of that Party voted against.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Glace Bay.

ERDT: ELECTRICITY COSTS - BUS. EFFECTS

MR. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism gave no indication that he understands the concerns of business in this province. He deflected questions on our struggling economy, important questions which businesses are very concerned about.

Time after time businesses point to the cost of electricity as their main concern. Skyrocketing power rates are putting our economy and our future at risk. My question is, why has the Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism been ignoring the increasing cost of power, which impacts businesses in our province?

HON. PERCY PARIS: Mr. Speaker, my colleagues are saying I should send that question over to the Minister of Energy, but I'm going to stand here and say that we are very much in tune with what is going on in the Province of Nova Scotia when it comes to business.

We've made, under the jobsHere strategy, huge investment not only in human resources in the Province of Nova Scotia, but we've made huge investments in capital spending, not to mention the investments that we made in jobs. I can speak about the thousands of jobs that we invested in that could stay here in Nova Scotia, in rural Nova Scotia, when it comes to Bowater.

We make those investments all the time. What we've done, after 20 years of non-economic growth, we've managed to turn the ship around.

MR. MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, again the minister reverts back to his lines about how well they've done with the economy and they've turned things around after so many years of devastation by the Liberals and the Tories. Just hang on for a second, the government side can just wait because what they should understand is that there's really (Interruptions) The background noise won't help get rid of the fact and forget about the fact that we've got 0.3 per cent growth in our GDP. You can use all the lines you want, you can talk about jobsHere, the minister can stand up and say things are getting better, things are turning around. We're the second-worst performing province in this country with GDP,

which is the key measure of economic growth - 0.3 per cent. So you're in tune with businesses and you're in tune with the economy? I don't think so, at way less than 1 per cent growth in this country.

The minister's record is clearly one of a stalled economy; power rates continue to climb and businesses continue to struggle under your watch. In the last year the minister has done nothing more than come up with catchy slogans that he uses over and over, 0.3 per cent GDP, Mr. Speaker. My question to the minister is, why does this minister have absolutely no strategy for addressing rising electricity rates in this province, which affect businesses in Nova Scotia?

MR. PARIS: Mr. Speaker, I will toss the ball on that question over to the Minister of Energy.

HON. CHARLIE PARKER: Mr. Speaker, in spite of what the honourable member says, we do have a plan in this province for dealing with energy costs. I know we're all concerned, whether a homeowner or a small business or a large industrial. We're doing a whole variety of issues here, as government combats ever-increasing power rates with things like the Lower Churchill project, natural gas replacement for coal, our COMFIT program, a renewable electricity administrator for the IPPs, Efficiency Nova Scotia; there are a whole suite of programs for small businesses, large businesses, and homeowners - renewable policy. I could go on but there are just a whole suite of alternatives here that are fighting the cost of power in this province.

MR. MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, the reality is that we are a struggling economy. Our GDP experienced almost flat growth last year. Under this minister's watch, under this department, we spent \$120 million last year; we're about to spend \$199 million this year.

My question the Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism is, how does this minister explain 0.3 per cent GDP growth for the Province of Nova Scotia?

MR. PARIS: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise in my place again and boast about the record of this government when it comes to jobs, when it comes to employee training in the Province of Nova Scotia. When it comes to regional unemployment, these are the facts: in the first three months, compared to last year, Cape Breton - guess what? - it decreased by 2.7 per cent. That is a trend that exists right across every region of this province.

This government has made huge investments in employment, in jobs, and in growing the economy, and we will continue to do that. We are on the right track. We are going to stay the course and we are going to watch this economy grow and grow and grow.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

**EDUC. - DART. NORTH STUDENT ASSESSMENTS/LUNCH BAGS:
FUNDING - EXPLAIN**

MR. TREVOR ZINCK: Mr. Speaker, at a recent community meeting in Dartmouth North some alarming numbers were presented to the public centred on recent test scores and the overall educational experience by our young people. In recent Grade 3 assessments for reading comprehension in Halifax Regional Municipality schools we saw students meet expectations by 75 per cent. In comparison, students at Harbour View elementary scored only 60 per cent; at John MacNeil, 52 per cent; at Shannon Park, 41 per cent. And math was no different: HRM schools met expectations by 72 per cent, but at Harbour View it was 54 per cent and at John MacNeil only 42 per cent. Students in Dartmouth North need help.

My question to the Minister of Education is, is she truly convinced that spending \$500,000-plus on orange lunch bags is going to help these Grade 3 students and students going into Grade 3?

HON. RAMONA JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite asked a number of questions, but I thank him very much for the opportunity to explain that we're investing in our students by providing materials going home with families to our preschool students as they register for school that will enhance the opportunities for them to engage in language. It's reading materials, it's music, it's a number of things that have been very carefully researched by the reading specialists across Nova Scotia. It's an investment of \$35 for every preschool student going into our schools, an investment that I stand behind. I hope that people who want our students to do the best they can stand with me.

MR. ZINCK: Mr. Speaker, Grade 6 students in Dartmouth North are faring no better. HRM schools for reading test scores met expectations by 81 per cent, compared to 50 per cent for Harbour View and 56 per cent for John MacNeil. In math scores, HRM met expectations by 61 per cent but Harbour View elementary students fell to 22 per cent and John MacNeil to 27 per cent. Can the minister explain to the House how her NDP Government can cut \$65 million out of the Education budget and not have it negatively affecting these students?

MS. JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, we are investing in our students. Our Kids and Learning First plan has identified the fact that we need to have targeted investments in our students. We are going in at Grade 3, Grade 6, and Grade 9 to see where our students are so that we know where to put our supports.

MR. ZINCK: Mr. Speaker, to many it would seem as though the students in Dartmouth North are simply failing, but I believe that it's deep cuts to the Education budget made by this NDP Government that are failing them. Can the minister assure the House and the students of Dartmouth North that she will stop the cut-and-paste exercise and truly put Nova Scotia students and students in Dartmouth North first?

MS. JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, we're making sure that we're putting investments in all of our students, and our students in Dartmouth North are as important as every student in this province. We are targeting our investments. We are making sure that we're providing opportunities for our students. We have made sure that we have options and opportunities. We are increasing our skills trades. We are making sure that we're checking in at Grade 3, Grade 6, and Grade 9, not just to see where our students are, but where we can put more resources so that we can make sure that every student is successful within our system.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

PREM.: CDHA CUTS - BUS. PLAN

MR. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier. Yesterday the Premier indicated that the inevitable result of an arbitrated decision around wages for CDHA health care workers will be job cuts. He went on to say these cuts will impact patients and the service they receive, although in true Premier-like style he was not clear. Given that Capital Health's business plan has been prepared for a 1 per cent increase and the plan has not yet been approved by Cabinet, could the Premier please indicate whether his government has sent the business plan back to Capital Health for even more cuts?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I was perfectly clear when I spoke yesterday. I said that we would support the business plans that came forward from the district health authority. We have an ongoing dialogue with them. They know that we are concerned about the manner in which wage costs are going. We understand they have a job to deliver services. We have said that we would like to engage the employees themselves. Oftentimes those people on the front lines are the ones who know best how to help resolve some of these problems.

We have an issue in this province with respect to the finances of our province. The simple fact of the matter is that we were left with a terrible mess where the expenses that we have far outstrip the revenues that we have. We're committed to getting that under control. The district health authority knows that, and the unions representing the workers know it. I assume that the Opposition knows it, although some days you wouldn't be so sure.

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, this story gets potentially worse. You see, there is a clause in the new agreement - Article 32.23, to be exact, which I will table - which has a layoff exception. The clause states that any worker with eight years experience can't be laid off except where a layoff is beyond the control of the employer. Fire, explosions, and destruction or the breakdown of machinery are examples cited in the clause as beyond the control of the employer. Balancing the budget for this NDP Government is not.

If the Premier knew that layoffs were the end results of this agreement, why did he approve a clause that would potentially see the youngest workers bear the brunt of the impact?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, this is exactly the way that these clauses work in labour relations. The fact of the matter is that there are bumping rights. There are seniority clauses in almost every contract. That's not out of the ordinary. This is the same kind of thing that would have been negotiated by former governments of both stripes.

There are people out there who want to suspend reality and try to suggest that there are no consequences with respect to the decisions that are made. There are always consequences, and the reality is that we, as a government, take the view that we must face those and we must be clear and upfront both with our workers and with the people of Nova Scotia. Mr. Speaker, as I said before, I thought what I said yesterday was blindingly obvious, but perhaps I'm wrong.

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, Article 32.23 has the potential to negatively impact retention and recruitment of new and young workers at a time when we can ill afford to do so, and the Premier knows it. This government already laid off youth mental health workers at the IWK with six or seven years of experience, so it is certainly in keeping with this government's mandate, given that once again we are in a situation where the wage decision is out of government's control.

This Premier knows full well that the wage increase built into the business plan will not suffice, even if the arbitrator rules for the wage increase on the lowest end of the scale. Will the Premier clarify once and for all: will the government be approving a business plan that will have even more job cuts and loss of services than previously anticipated, or will this government cover the bill for Capital Health? Which is it, Mr. Premier?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I'll say again that we will support the business plans that have come forward from the district health authority, but the simple reality is that the district health authorities and the Department of Health and Wellness have a partnership where they seek to resolve issues both with respect to service delivery and with respect to the resources that are committed to that service delivery. I think this is what the people of Nova Scotia expect. They expect that we will respect their need for service, but they also expect that we will respect the fact that every cent that we spend in health care comes right out of their pockets.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston.

SNSMR - BALANCED BUDGET: MUN. TAX HIKES - EFFECTS

HON. KEITH COLWELL: Mr. Speaker, in response to the NDP and their decision to tear up the municipal MOU last year, towns and municipalities are being forced into the

position of raising taxes. We know that Queens Municipality has instituted a 3 per cent hike because of the NDP; Queens is not alone. The Municipality of Digby will incur \$136,525 more in expenditures this year because of the decision of the NDP to tear up the MOU. This added pressure on the municipalities already struggling to keep up with added costs such as raising power costs, wastewater treatment and supports to organizations. My question to the Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations is, why is the minister intent on balancing the province's books on the backs of the municipalities and on property tax owners?

HON. JOHN MACDONELL: Mr. Speaker, we're doing no such thing. Actually, I spoke with members from the UNSM today and I think some members of the House as well. The situation actually has been that many municipal units have not raised their rate for their taxpayers. There is no indication that any changes to the MOU have caused increased rates for taxpayers. As far as Queens goes, I think there's some new infrastructure they're building there and that's their choice to increase the rate to help cover those costs. We are considering all Nova Scotians and all taxpayers, there's only one taxpayer for all three levels of government and so this government actually has considered their concerns. They have about \$140 million surplus among the municipal units and I think they are not being penalized by this government.

MR. COLWELL: Mr. Speaker, a 3 per cent increase in Queens, an additional 3 cents on the residential tax rate in Digby, and in the County of Colchester they're facing shortfalls due entirely to the minister's decision to tear up the municipal MOU. This coming year the County of Colchester is facing a \$529,907 shortfall. This means an additional 2.59 cents on both the residential and commercial tax rates. Faced with increasing service requirements and increased power costs, municipalities are struggling with the NDP minister's breach of faith on the MOU and residents are paying more property taxes. My question to the minister is, will the minister admit his decision to tear up the MOU is resulting in higher taxes for residents?

MR. MACDONELL: Mr. Speaker, it's very difficult for me to admit something that's not true. The issue of the MOU, as the member opposite describes it, as my tearing it up, if he was to examine it he would actually see there is a clause in the MOU that allows the government to move away if they cannot afford it. That was not signed by this government, it was signed by a former member of the Progressive Conservative Government with the UNSM, they can't avoid what was actually written in the agreement.

MR. COLWELL: Mr. Speaker, 3 per cent in Queens, an additional 3 cents on the residential tax rate in Digby, an additional 2.59 cents in both residential and commercial tax rates in the County of Colchester, this is what the minister's decision means and it adds up. The Municipality of Argyle is faced with difficult decisions around service delivery. Nova Scotians across the province are faced with paying more for less thanks to this NDP Government. My question is, will the minister reconsider his decision to tear up the MOU?

MR. MACDONELL: Mr. Speaker, the state of the MOU is the state of the MOU going forward. Municipal units actually have gotten a break on their corrections cost, the province absorbed \$4 million in costs that the municipal units would have been responsible for, so they are getting a break with the change in the MOU.

I speak to the wardens and mayors quite often; as a matter of fact, I saw the warden for Colchester County just recently. He didn't raise any issue around the MOU causing them to raise taxes so I would say that the member opposite is right in one thing, that the things I say do add up, which is contrary to the things he says. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HEALTH & WELLNESS: NEWBORN SCREENING - CF INCLUDE

MR. KEITH BAIN: Mr. Speaker, early diagnosis of cystic fibrosis greatly impacts the quality of life of affected individuals. Screening newborns for cystic fibrosis would have an incredible impact on both the day-to-day lives of patients and the costs associated with their care. Studies reveal there's a significant difference between those who are screened at birth and those who are diagnosed in a clinical setting.

Mr. Speaker, my question through you to the Minister of Health and Wellness is, when will Nova Scotia follow the example set by other provinces and include cystic fibrosis among the disorders screened for in our newborns screening service?

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for a very important question. I believe that there are really only a few provinces that are currently doing this particular test. We are looking at what is happening elsewhere.

We have a very good screening program in Nova Scotia where we do, in fact, screen newborns for - I think the staff in the department told me more than 30-some different disorders. We will continue to gather the scientific information with respect to this particular procedure and what the cost and the impact might be. Thank you.

MR. BAIN: Mr. Speaker, cystic fibrosis patients are used to frequent hospital stays, on top of dealing with both intravenous antibiotics and a host of other drugs. Each year we spend over \$1 million on these drugs alone. A report from the Health and Wellness Department indicates that an average of \$7,443 is spent on each patient every year. In examining the total cost of care for an individual with CF, in-patient hospitalization is not factored in though it represents up to 47 per cent of the cost.

Mr. Speaker, my question through you to the minister is, can the minister explain why her government would rather cut front-line services in areas like health and education, instead of being proactive like some of our fellow provincial governments?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, there have been no cuts to front-line services in the Department of Health and Wellness in this province. If members of the Third Party want to sit down and examine the Health and Wellness Department's budget, the budget continues to grow and has grown by millions of dollars in each of the three years we've brought budgets forward. In fact, in this year the Health and Wellness Department's budget is growing by 2.5 per cent.

We continue to invest in health care. We invest strategically in the area of health care. We have priorities. We are investing in better care sooner for people, collaborative care practices and keeping emergency rooms open around the province, reducing wait times and soon in a mental health strategy. These are our government's priorities and we will continue to focus on them.

MR. BAIN: Mr. Speaker, I think it's important that the government consider newborn screening for CF as a priority as well, but they're not doing that. Cost-savings aside, the department should adopt testing solely based on the fact that cystic fibrosis patients are reported as having a better quality of life. An American study indicated that children diagnosed after undergoing newborn screening have benefited from better lung function and body mass index. In Ontario the screening program was implemented to avoid frequent infection and long-term damage to the lungs. So my final question to the minister is, can the minister explain to this House why an opportunity to save money and lives is not attractive to her government?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, as I indicated, with respect to screening and the cystic fibrosis issue, it's something that we will certainly examine and are examining, but the decisions that will be made with respect to investing in this will be based on the scientific information. The screening in Ontario, as I understand, is relatively new and we will take a look at what the impact is in Ontario and whether or not it, in fact, contributes to better outcomes for CF patients and has a positive financial impact on the system.

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

FIN. - OAS CHANGES: PROV. SPENDING - EFFECT

MS. DIANA WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, with upcoming changes to Old Age Security in the most recent Harper Conservative budget, Nova Scotians are concerned that they're going to be left behind. Old Age Security is especially important to low-income households and these changes will have a disproportionate impact on those with little or no savings, those unable to replace OAS with some other type of employment income, and those with very physically demanding jobs. This will also have a direct impact on the cost for services provided to these people by the provincial government.

My question for the Minister of Finance is, has the minister estimated the effect of these changes on the future spending requirements of the province?

HON. GRAHAM STEELE: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for a very good question. She asked the same question in estimates and, for the benefit of the House, I'll give the same answer.

This is an extremely important issue. The change of the qualifying age of Old Age Security from 65 to 67 has enormous implications throughout government. To name only a few, the ones the member mentioned, Community Services, Workers' Compensation, all public and private pension plans, because so much is geared towards the age 65.

With all members of the House, we need to work our way towards this, but it is quite a large, significant undertaking to figure out exactly what the implications are and we are working on that and will continue to work on that. When we have those results, which I don't expect to be for some time, we'll certainly share that with the House because it affects so very many people in this province.

MS. WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, as the minister has said, there are going to be programs like Workers' Compensation, Community Services, and many others, that are going to cost the Province of Nova Scotia more money if there's a two-year gap that will have to be funded for. So my question to the minister is, has he begun to calculate the impact of those changes so that we can take that message about how detrimental it is to Nova Scotia directly back to the federal government, so that they know of our objections? So has he begun to calculate?

MR. STEELE: Mr. Speaker, we have. It is a very significant policy undertaking and by way of comparison I would just remind the member that over the - in fact, over the entire time that I've been the Minister of Finance, the federal-provincial-territorial Finance Ministers have been working on a retirement income adequacy project which took an enormous amount of effort on the part of all governments. A great deal of staff time was devoted to it and, regrettably, mainly because of the federal government the issue is no longer really on the table. I think that's very regrettable.

But one thing that I did learn from that whole project was just how complex the issue of retirement income adequacy is, and this adds another dimension to an already very complicated area. We are working on it, and we will continue on it, but it certainly is not something that we would get the full picture on just between the time of the announcement in the federal budget and now.

MS. WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, one of the things that concerns me, particularly, about the coming change - and I recognize it's some years off, but I think we cannot be too quick in starting to signal our concern about it. One of the big concerns is the current government's - and really, I think, the province's - interest in trades and trade training. We

know that if we're going to have the jobs that are coming with the shipbuilding project, a lot of those are going to be heavy, hard construction jobs that take their toll on workers. It's harder for them to work up to 65, let alone an additional two years. The impact will be felt greatly in the trades area.

With all of this in mind, I'd like to ask the Minister of Finance if he has done anything yet as part of the federal-provincial-territorial group or, as the Minister of Finance for Nova Scotia, has he signalled in any way to the federal government that these changes are going to be very detrimental and that we are really strongly objecting to them?

MR. STEELE: Mr. Speaker, the next meeting of the federal-provincial-territorial Finance Ministers is in June, or at least we expect it in June. The date is essentially set by the federal government and they did cancel one meeting without consulting with the provinces. We do expect the next one will be in June and I do expect this topic will be on the agenda.

Like the whole retirement income adequacy project, it is not the sort of thing that gets dealt with or resolved at a single meeting. It's going to take a great deal of staff time in every jurisdiction to figure out all the implications and consequences. But I do thank the member for raising the issue today. It is a very important issue for many Nova Scotians.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clare.

PSC: DISABLED EMPLOYEES - PERCENTAGE

HON. WAYNE GAUDET: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of the Public Service Commission. We all know the value of leading by example and there would be no greater example than one which highlights a public service that is truly inclusive of all people and accurately reflects the population it serves. We all know Nova Scotia has the highest rate of disabilities in Canada, a rate which currently stands at 20 per cent. My first question to the minister is, what percentage of the public service is made up of persons who have identified themselves with a disability?

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, it's a very good question. I don't have the answer right at my fingertips, but I will endeavour to get that for the member as soon as I possibly can.

MR. GAUDET: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for his commitment. There is no question government programs are needed to support programs with disabilities. More importantly are the huge benefits that can be achieved when a person with a disability is able to demonstrate that if given the opportunity, they are willing, able, and very capable members of any workforce and that includes the Public Service.

While I can appreciate that this information may not be readily available, I wonder, could the minister advise the House of the number of applicants and interviews granted for individuals who identified themselves with a disability in fiscal year 2011-12?

MR. CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member again for the question. That's a very wide-ranging question. I think the member realizes that. Again, I would not have that right at my fingertips, but I will endeavour to get those answers. I would expect it would be somewhat difficult, the ones who actually get to the interview process, but we'll do our best to get as accurate a number as we can for you as quickly as we can.

MR. GAUDET: Mr. Speaker, again I thank the minister for looking into this and providing us with the information at his earliest convenience. The success of ensuring a truly diverse workforce is ensuring that applications and interviews result in hiring. My final question to the minister is, of the number of applicants and interviews granted for persons who have self-identified as having a disability, how many were hired in the last year?

MR. CORBETT: I get so few questions and yet I've got so few answers, and I apologize to the member for that. What I do agree with, and I think every member of this House agrees, is the ability of diversity and with people with disabilities that the government show leadership and be a leader in all of this. We will do that and I will give my word through you, Mr. Speaker, to that member that we will get this information to him as quickly as we can. I thank him again for his question because it is a very good question.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

EDUC.: TEACHER CUTS - CLASSROOM IMPACT

MR. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, the Tri-County Regional School Board is facing some difficult decisions. Because of the NDP Government's \$65 million cuts to public education, the school board is looking at cutting 11 teachers from our classrooms. The superintendent of the board has said that despite what this minister says, ". . . any reductions will have impacts on services and supports to schools." I'll table those comments.

Does the minister think that cutting 11 teaching positions won't impact the classroom?

HON. RAMONA JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, I trust that Tri-County made the decisions in the best interests of the students in the classroom. Thank you.

MR. CHURCHILL: The decisions of this government have placed a \$2.5 million shortfall in the budget for the Tri-County Regional School Board, Mr. Speaker. As a result, they are forced to cut teaching positions, something that this minister said would not

happen. This minister continues to fall back on the argument around declining enrolment. However, the real costs of educating our youth don't tie into enrolment numbers.

Will the minister admit to the parents of Tri-County that just because enrolment is going down, it doesn't mean the cost of our education is?

MS. JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, I'm a bit confused because as we requested, school boards were to look at retirement and attrition. It is my understanding that Tri-County was able to meet their budget obligation without laying off or cutting anybody. Thank you.

MR. CHURCHILL: Tri-County Regional School Board is facing a \$2.5 million deficit in funding as a result of this government's decisions. They are eliminating 11 teaching positions from the tri-counties and there is nobody in their right mind who will say that's not going to impact the classroom, Mr. Speaker - it's going to.

Mr. Speaker, the students in the Tri-County Regional School Board need the Minister of Education to be a leader of education and to advocate for them at the Cabinet Table. Instead, she puts hundreds of thousands of dollars into political advertising and over \$0.5 million into lunch bags and hacky sacks.

Will the minister stand in the House today and tell parents and students in the Tri-County Regional School Board that she will advocate for public education and call on her Cabinet colleagues to restore funding to our schools so that we don't lose any teaching positions, Mr. Speaker?

MS. JENNEX: We are making an investment in our students all across Nova Scotia and we are dealing with a challenge, and that is declining enrolment. We are increasing our spending per student.

I would like to say that I am making sure that school boards that are adversely affected by steep declining enrolment have been protected. We did put a cap of 2.1 per cent on Tri-County; their enrolment decline for the coming year is 3.2 per cent. Thank you.

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

ERDT - JOB LOSSES: NDP GOV'T. - POSITION

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, the NDP have driven rural Nova Scotia to its deathbed and now they want to kill it - unless, of course, it's the Deputy Premier's constituency.

We now know that the 36 Department of Justice jobs moved to New Waterford were not from Halifax at all. They were from parts of rural Nova Scotia and other economically-disadvantaged regions. The reality is that the NDP have not created one,

single new job in rural Nova Scotia, they have only shuffled a handful around. Simply put, the NDP's job creation plan for Nova Scotia can be compared to rearranging deck chairs on the Titanic.

My question, Mr. Speaker, through you to the Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism is, given that not a single new job has been created for rural Nova Scotians under this NDP Government and that jobs losses actually range in the thousands, will the minister finally be honest and straightforward with rural Nova Scotians and admit that they are simply not a priority for this NDP Government?

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. That is unparliamentary and out of order, "finally be honest" - yes, it is. Your impunity of the minister, I'd ask the honourable member to rephrase that question, please.

MR. ORRELL: Will the minister finally be straightforward with Nova Scotians and admit they are simply not a priority for this NDP Government?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

HON. PERCY PARIS: Mr. Speaker, certainly at every opportunity I get I enjoy getting on my feet and having the opportunity to talk about the progress that this province is making in jobs and growing the economy. This government has made investments in every region of the Province of Nova Scotia and we continue to make those investments. We want Nova Scotians to have the right skills for the good jobs that are being created in this province. Nova Scotia is well positioned not only for today, but well into the future.

MR. ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, people in Amherst, New Glasgow, and Kentville are all paying the price of the NDP's reckless economic mismanagement today. These communities have already suffered enough damage under the NDP's watch - closed businesses, lost jobs, and an inattentive Minister of Economic Development and Rural Development and Tourism. However, it appears the NDP are ready to pay lots of attention to the Deputy Premier's riding. My question is why is a job in New Waterford more valuable to the NDP Government than a job in New Glasgow, Kentville, or Amherst?

MR. PARIS: Mr. Speaker, when I hear a question like that I'm curious because we've made investments. I've mentioned already once in this House about the investment we made in Billdidit, which is in Cape Breton; Poirier's boat building, also in Cape Breton; Tri-Star business in Yarmouth. I could go on and on - over 200 investments that we've made in businesses here in the Province of Nova Scotia. We've taken 20 years of being ignored and we've turned it around.

MR. ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, how many actual jobs were created in Cape Breton since this government has taken power? The numbers speak for themselves. Rural Nova Scotia is down 8,000 jobs and the NDP, and in particular this Minister of Economic and

Rural Development and Tourism, have done nothing, absolutely nothing, for rural Nova Scotia.

We've seen businesses from one end of the province to the other close; we've seen vital links to nearby economies eliminated; we've seen more and more young people forced out of rural communities, they've called home, in search of work; and more people are leaving rural Nova Scotia to work out West than ever. My question is, will the Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism admit that his disastrous policies and gross neglect have driven rural Nova Scotia into a recession?

MR. PARIS: Mr. Speaker, (Interruptions)

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

MR. PARIS: We are putting jobs in Nova Scotia, not taking them out.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, I want to table a document regarding some questions the member for Clare asked me, and I said I would get back to him. These are in response to your first question, member, and I'll try to endeavour to get the rest for the two supplementaries.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS' BUSINESS

MR. SPEAKER: The Deputy Opposition House Leader.

MR. ANDREW YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, would you please call the order of business, Private Member's Public Bills for Second Reading.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING

MR. SPEAKER: The Deputy Opposition House Leader.

MR. ANDREW YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 45.

Bill No. 45 - Ratepayer Protection Act.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

MR. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise on this Opposition Day to speak to Bill No. 45, the Ratepayer Protection Act. I first wanted to outline what this actual bill does encompass. The bill will require Nova Scotia Power to conduct bi-annual performance and value for money audits which will be made public, to publish estimated and actual costs on a regular basis, require public settlement meetings before any proposed general rate hike, and it will prevent millions in executive bonuses and regulatory costs being passed on to ratepayers.

Mr. Speaker, this is a bill and a mechanism whereby we can actually work to get stabilized power rates in our province. We pay some of the highest rates in Canada and over the last 10 years electricity rates have increased seven times. It has become now almost an expectation that in Nova Scotia, over 400,000 households and businesses will actually get an annual power increase. Now Nova Scotia Power has sought another large increase on the backs of customers. We have, of course, a 20 per cent increase in just two of those seven years. We have seen power rates increase and dig deeper into the pockets of Nova Scotians.

We heard a question here in the House today, Madam Speaker, in regards to those impacts of power rates. We have seen the Good Neighbour Energy Fund have requests at the highest level that we have seen since this program, run by the Salvation Army, has been in existence. Fortunately, both Nova Scotia Power and government - and in fact government came through on a second occasion this year, but it still tells us that it is in fact in good measure with those power bills that come in monthly or bi-monthly, that Nova Scotians are having a greater challenge with. Nova Scotians have faced now continual rate increases from Nova Scotia Power and added electricity taxes courtesy of the NDP and Progressive Conservative Governments.

Again, today, we've had questions challenging demand side management. We all know that conservation, improving our homes to become more efficient, also industry and business to make investments - however again, it is Nova Scotians who are paying this, many Nova Scotians who in fact are not in a position to actually benefit from Efficiency Nova Scotia. They don't have the ability to be able to make the kind of significant investments that will improve the R-factor in their homes, therefore improve the conservation of energy and ultimately reduce their power bill.

So these have gone forward. As we know, Nova Scotians really haven't had an opportunity to have much say. They have simply shown up on the power bill. We're finding out in our constituency offices, more and more, that while demand-side management is a term that perhaps many don't quite understand, it really is, of course, Efficiency Nova Scotia, but they are asking what is that new amount on my power bill and why did it go up this year? We know, of course, it's at \$40 million - the take of Nova Scotia's tax dollars now - and it's going to go to \$80 million, so we know that that rate is going to continue to escalate over the number of years.

Really, there is simply no more revenue for Nova Scotia Power to take from people of this province. When we look at 80 per cent of Nova Scotians, their home value is a bit over \$100,000, many less - to deal with the kind of demands that they have, it is becoming more challenging. In fact, increasing power rates mean increases in just about everything from food to property taxes. When our mainline stores get their bills, guess what, we pay their bills. We pay their bills, let's make no mistake about it. As that rate goes up by 10 per cent more, or perhaps higher for commercial, then that's passed on to the food that we will buy. Whether it's the mainline stores or whether it's the corner store, we in fact are paying that price.

What is happening in Nova Scotia is really part of just a small number of jurisdictions that have that have very high power rates. It's an attack on the standard of living on Nova Scotians. This is why the Liberal caucus has introduced the Ratepayer Protection Bill. It is just one step of many a Liberal government would take to ensure that Nova Scotia Power is accountable to Nova Scotians. If passed this bill will reduce power rates for Nova Scotians and will give homeowners and businesses direct access to what their rates pay for.

In other words, by doing an audit we would exactly know - and with the biannual performance, and we would also require public settlement meetings before any proposed general rate hikes so that Nova Scotians are actually informed. Is there in investment in improving the transmission lines, are there more workers required? This bill would help Nova Scotians understand that. Nova Scotian in the province's business community are pushed to the brink with the high power rates and aren't able to withstand further increases.

One of the areas that we are hearing more and more is from the business community. Those that have invested and want to invest further, they now realize that our power rates are putting us in a non competitive place. Provinces, especially British Columbia and Quebec, that produce almost all of their power from hydroelectricity have that kind of an advantage. We are, as a province, transitioning to more renewable energy which is a positive.

I remember back to those day, in fact I think it was my first year teaching, when we had the oil embargo and we were using tremendous amounts of Bunker C to produce electricity in Nova Scotia. Our rates started to take off and at that time, which is getting close to 40 years ago, it was advised that we start a transition towards renewable energy. We are very late in the game in developing renewable energy, we have made some strides in recent years and I acknowledge that it will in time pay advantages for us.

In the meantime the NDP Government's only answers has been to trumpet removal of the HST from electricity bills. However this does not benefit small business and we realize that even for all Nova Scotians it's been more than offset by the NDP electricity tax. It did not benefit mills like NewPage and Bowater and one of the reasons why both those mills are in considerable trouble. For Bowater, the long-term outlook does not look very

good. NewPage and the deal that is emerging - and just today I did have some detailed explanation of the Nova Scotia Power and the Stern company agreement that is emerging, and it does hold promise for the Stern mill and future operations in Port Hawkesbury. But it was power rates that were the ultimate cause of bringing these two mills to the brink of closure. Long term, Bowater is literally on life support due to the power bills that they pay.

Every Nova Scotian is also helping to pay the power bill at Bowater. That's how severe their costs are around electricity. In fact, the NDP, in co-operation 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 who 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 other electricity consumers in the province, from businesses to low-income families, would be forced to pay.

The NDP 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 the NDP deciding that Nova Scotia Power shareholders should pay for efficiency costs, they decided low-income Nova Scotians and struggling businesses should pay those costs. These increases stretch budgets, put a strain on pocketbooks, and make doing business in Nova Scotia unaffordable.

The last dozen years brought a series of Progressive Conservative and NDP Governments that failed to stand up to Nova Scotia Power. The Progressive Conservatives and the NDP had the opportunity to rein in power rates that increased by 38 per cent over the last decade, and both failed to do so. Both the Progressive Conservatives and the NDP had a chance to put an end to the Nova Scotia bonuses, but also failed to do so.

I believe if there is one area that all Nova Scotians are coming to understand, it's that we pay those bonuses, and they are pretty significant bonuses that are handed out at Nova Scotia Power. Progressive Conservative Governments sat back and watched this problem grow while taking no action except for proposing new taxes, implementing energy legislation without outlining the costs.

The NDP want us to believe that they care about the pain Nova Scotians are in, and the Progressive Conservatives want you to believe they care by proposing legislation based on principles Liberals have been talking about for two years, such as ending ratepayer-funded bonuses and suggesting that costs of renewable energy legislation should be outlined at the time of bill introduction, when they didn't even do that themselves. Our work begins with Nova Scotians knowing whether they're getting value for money, or whether the parent company, Emera, is simply bleeding Nova Scotia Power dry.

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-value audit of Nova Scotia Power and their operations, the kind of audit that will identify if there are cost savings to be made internally in Nova Scotia Power. These savings could then offset rate increases Nova Scotia Power wants for ratepayers. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg.

MS. PAM BIRDSALL: Madam Speaker, I'm pleased to rise in my place today and speak to Bill No. 45, the Ratepayer Protection Act, a bill which was introduced by the Liberals.

It's a very interesting thing, where we're in a situation where the world is dealing with a fossil fuel addiction and our province is in a very difficult situation because when the former government was in the position to be able to start doing something 15 years ago, the former government did nothing. We are in the position we are in today because of a lack of initiative and a lack of foresight and a lack of planning. The biggest single reason that electricity rates have gone up as high as they have is because of the cost of oil and the cost of coal.

Over the past six years the price of coal has increased 75 per cent. Our renewables account for 1.5 per cent of the rate increases, so we understand that it's coal that is such a big problem over the last six years. We've put environmental targets in place, Madam Speaker, that will help us move away from fuel. One of the things that is really important, too, in our approach is to widen our stance, to be able to allow people to conserve energy and not use so much. It's always so interesting, we're trying to find the cheapest rates of electricity and fuel, instead of really personally claiming responsibility, on some level, for our personal use.

I recently attended a meeting last Friday night, after a long week here in the Legislature, in Mahone Bay at the Council of Canadians, where they were talking about smart grids. They were talking about appliances in homes, smart thermostats which will regulate and work with different appliances to help us use fuel in times when it is not being used at a higher rate.

Our government understands that the burden of rising electrical prices is very hard on the pocketbooks of Nova Scotians, which is why, when we took office, we removed the HST on energy and legislated some of the most aggressive renewable energy targets in the world. (Interruption) We won awards for that, yes we did.

Our targets for 2012, targeting 40 per cent of our electricity to be from renewables, this truly is something we can be proud of and our children can be proud of. The other side doesn't seem to be offering a lot of solutions. This particular bill is calling for audits and, as we know, in the Fall the URB said that if these sorts of audits were happening by NSPI, that they're very, very expensive and these audits will also go onto the backs of ratepayers, so

we don't need all sorts of expensive audits, we need to follow a plan and plans that will work for us, that's why our government is aggressively moving toward the Lower Churchill project and other renewable projects, like wind and tidal.

Madam Speaker, we know that the Fundy tides are the highest in the world and the technology that is being developed for Fundy Tidal is being looked at by many countries. We're creating some innovative changes and those things will really work. We have the highest tides in the world and they will bring us some wonderful energy.

Our government also knows that the dependence on imported oil is a really big thing, it's a big problem. We have a renewable energy electricity plan that we released in April 2010. It clearly states that there will be upfront costs associated with developing more renewable sources of energy and possibly 1 or 2 per cent on electricity bills will rise in the very short term but we feel that this is a really reasonable price to pay so that we can have more affordable electricity in the future.

Our plan is to make life more affordable for Nova Scotians in the long run and doing nothing would obviously raise the cost of electricity much more. Renewable electricity prices do not go away over time and these carbon-based fuels will. Moving toward local, renewable energy sources will help stabilize energy prices for the future and for our children and for their grandchildren.

I know that when my children are in the position to be able to have homes of their own, they'll be talking and using - by way of a normal circumstance - to create a home that would be energy efficient, to create a home that is well insulated, that has insulated windows and roofs, that has all sorts of innovative processes like geothermal, things that are being worked out now in such a good way that in the past were new and there were all sorts of problems with these as new kinds of ways of heating your home.

In my area we have some new Canadian citizens who have made, for the last number of years, an interesting wood-burning stove called a Kachelofen. A Kachelofen is a very interesting kind of stove that creates a wall of mass and it's so efficient on the inside of its chambers that the smoke that comes out of the top is very clean and it takes small amounts of dry wood to activate the Kachelofen. Once it warms up you have a lovely, warm seat that you can sit on and put your back against the warm mass ceramic tile.

These are the kinds of things that our children will be using when they're building homes of the future. They'll think differently than we did. They won't be building inefficient homes that rely on oil, that cost thousands of dollars every month to fuel, that's not the way it will happen. They will be using solar on their roofs. We're looking at different sorts of solar now at a municipal and provincial level and these things certainly will help with business in the province.

In Dartmouth we have businesses that work in solar and that will certainly help

with the spinoff. I'm sure there will be many industries that will be employed creating these sorts of things. Our plan will also support as much as \$1.5 billion in green investment and create an estimated 5,000 to 7,000 jobs in the future.

We're taking a balanced approach to transforming our electricity system, which will be in the best interest for Nova Scotians. Our plan is based on an intensive process of public and expert input that includes consultation with Nova Scotians on how to stabilize the rates through these increasing renewables.

We have also put in a number of other programs. We've got our Energy Rebate Program, which automatically rebates the equivalent of the provincial portion of the HST on our energy bills. This is something that is a very important program. We also have our Heating Assistance Rebate Program and that rebate is \$200 for eligible applicants who heat their homes with oil, electricity, wood, propane, pellets, natural gas or coal.

I was speaking earlier about efficiency and how efficient our homes will be, Efficiency Nova Scotia is a department that is really working very hard to help people analyze the efficiency of their homes, to see the kinds of upgrades that are required to help low-income homeowners who heat with electricity. These things show vision, they show a plan, they show a multiple way of approaching our issues with electricity that all of us face. I think these are all very important things that our government is doing.

We are moving away from fossil fuels and we're reducing the impact of these prices. Our connection with Newfoundland and Labrador through the Lower Churchill project is one that is a very exciting project for all the Atlantic Provinces. It shows teamwork, it shows a collegial and collaborative approach among the provinces. Newfoundland and Labrador and Nova Scotia are working now to see all the possibilities of this project. This is a very complex issue dealing with Native land claims, making sure that things are in the right place, and when this all comes about it will give us a 35-year window of energy that will stay at a stable rate. This is something that we can all look forward to.

Renewable fuels - so it also states this whole thing with Lower Churchill Falls will help develop new technologies. Every project brings its own issues and each project with challenges, new solutions are found. With the Lower Churchill project, we're looking at innovation that will be developed, that will also be looked at from other parts of the world, and take the whole idea of new ways of working with hydro power.

Madam Speaker, I would just like to say that again we're working toward a balanced approach. We are very pleased with the things that our government has been doing. The idea of Bill No. 45, of having audits that will cost far too much, is just something that we don't want to consider. Looking again at just the current costs of fuels, gasoline and diesel have both increased by 12 per cent which is almost 15 cents a litre since October 2010. Furnace oil for home heating has increased by 20 per cent and currently over

\$1 a litre. Electricity has increased 5.5 per cent and natural gas has increased by 14 per cent, though it remains half of the cost of furnace fuel on this per-energy basis.

Even the costs of wood are going up due to higher transportation costs but it's usually the lowest option for rural Nova Scotia. I know that all the people in my area start to get their wood very early, start chopping it and getting it piled up so the air will move through it and dry it, so they have a good stock of wood long before they need to use it.

Nova Scotia has put forward a lot of programs that will be very helpful to us in the future. We're dealing with the cost of energy that has been rising with this multi-pronged plan and I think that at this point, Madam Speaker, I will take my seat. I'm very pleased to have been able to stand here and talk today about this. (Applause)

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

MR. JIM MORTON: I would like to continue on Bill No. 45.

MADAM SPEAKER: No, I'm sorry. It would go to the Progressive Conservative Party at this stage.

The honourable member for Inverness.

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Madam Speaker, I think we would all agree on one thing in the Legislature here, if we're talking about protecting ratepayers. I think we would all agree that what we're trying to do is protect them from the ever-escalating costs of power and energy.

There are a number of things I would like to talk about today. We've brought legislation before the members of this House. One of the pieces of legislation would compel Nova Scotia Power to indicate what portion of any rate increase is caused by government policies on our power bills. We've heard the honourable member who just spoke, speak about our fossil fuel addiction.

It's interesting, Madam Speaker, I think about many years ago there was a windmill put up near Cheticamp but there weren't any others put up. I can only assume that at that time Nova Scotia Power didn't see the value of putting more of them up. So I suppose it's not that long ago. For some people it's a long time ago. I've heard a couple members saying they were quite young at this time - 15 years ago - but I guess my point is that I don't think all is what it seems to be when we look at energy, and I'll get to some of these points during my discussion.

We believe that it should be transparent. If government energy policy is affecting power rates, let's take away all the philosophical debate, let's take away the political

debate, let's cut to the chase and look at the numbers. We believe in that. We need to make sure that to protect ratepayers, people who are paying power bills, we need to make sure that the shareholder rates of return, that people who own stock in Emera, that it's fair to the people who are paying the power bills to that company. By that I mean, if they are getting a regulated rate of return, over 9 per cent, and they don't have as many risks in their business models as most other companies would, do they really deserve to be getting over 9 per cent?

The other thing we introduced a piece of legislation on was getting executive bonuses out of the rates and paid for after that rate of 9 per cent plus profit is taken. Those were initiatives to try to protect ratepayers, so we can appreciate when there are bills brought forward where the interest is to protect ratepayers from increasing power bills.

We look at Muskrat Falls, and there was debate about it today during Question Period. It's amazing that government would go and publicly proclaim what a wonderful thing it is to enter this deal without even knowing what the numbers behind it are. To my point earlier, when we think about the irresponsibility of that and the fact that it's something that once you're locked into it, you're locking the province in for many, many years. Perhaps the Premier said today - it sounded like he was going to ask the URB to take a look at the numbers behind that project. It's important for government to do its homework, Madam Speaker, but I would encourage them to do it before they start proclaiming deals.

There are a number of things I wanted to speak about. One of the things is that I read an Auditor General's Report in Ontario, and I think every member should pick up a copy of this report and have a read of it. It talks about the experience in Ontario the last number of years, some of the things they've tried to do to make their province greener. Madam Speaker, it has been quite disastrous for their province and for their economy. An Auditor General's Report that was released earlier this year goes into detail about some of the errors that were made in Ontario.

I'll give you an example. When we think about green energy, we think it's free. We picture windmills spinning around giving us free energy. What many people don't realize is there is a cost to those structures.

AN HON. MEMBER: More expensive.

MR. MACMASTER: They are more expensive - to construct them, to maintain them, and to replace them. In Ontario, over a five-year period, 23 per cent of the rate of increase in power bills was a result of the move toward renewable energy - moving toward it too quickly, more quickly than was economically feasible. When I say that, Madam Speaker, I think about all the people who have to pay their power bills. Imagine if your power bill for the past year is \$3,000, and imagine having to pay an extra \$750. That would be a 25 per cent increase. That is not making life more affordable for citizens, and I think

it's important that government accepts the responsibility to think about that.

The other thing that was discovered in Ontario is that people don't really know that these initiatives cost more. Why would they? We often hear the Premier extolling it; we heard the member opposite just speaking, saying that we have this addiction to fossil fuels, we've got to get off it. Well, if we came off it completely tomorrow, what would that do to power rates? I honestly don't believe that the members opposite understand. I really don't think they do. They think that green energy is free, when in fact a premium is paid for green energy.

AN HON. MEMBER: No, no. We know that.

ANOTHER HON. MEMBER: Yes, we do.

MR. MACMASTER: Now they say that they do know. I think if they realized how much more, and maybe the members would like to get up and talk about if maybe a 25 per cent increase over the next few years is something that their constituents would appreciate.

AN HON. MEMBER: Well, I wouldn't go that far. That's a bit of a stretch.

MR. MACMASTER: That's what happened in Ontario, Madam Speaker. Perhaps the members opposite would like to go back to their constituency and tell their constituents that they've got this great new energy policy, which Muskrat Falls is a part of. It's a wonderful thing, and oh, by the way, it's going to cost you an extra \$750 next year to pay your power bills. I think there would be a lot of moans and groans and rubbing of eyes and dissatisfaction. Much as the members hate to hear me say this right now, that's the reality of it and that has been the Ontario experience.

So people don't mind, Madam Speaker - I don't think people mind paying a small premium for green energy, but they cannot afford to be paying the premiums that are required based on the energy policy put forth by this government. I would compare it to a tank of gasoline - most people can't afford to buy a \$200 tank of gas but if you start increasing - if we look at some of these renewable energy sources, you start looking at how much more they cost compared to the energy, what it has been the last number of years, you're looking at two and three times the cost of energy. That's the premium.

Madam Speaker, the other thing I would like to speak about is - and just, I guess, to highlight the point even more, in Ontario, in their experience, and it's no different here, the question I guess that would have to be asked is, is it true that wind and solar, renewable power, will add significant costs to our power bills? In their case it was two to 10 times higher to conventional sources, such as nuclear power, which they have in Ontario, coal and natural gas.

Madam Speaker, the other thing that I think we need to be cognizant of is the

impact on the economy. I know at the paper mill, which this government is working on to try to save, in Point Tupper, and I know they've come forth recently - well, at least the two parties have come forth with an agreement that I understand some legislation will need to be passed here in this House to support it happening, when a company uses 13 to 15 per cent of the electricity in the province and there are great fluctuations in power rates, it affects the people working there.

People often tout the benefit of the jobs created in renewable energy. I am sure there are jobs created, but there have been studies that show - and it was reported in the Auditor General's Report in Ontario - that for every one of those jobs created, it kills two to four jobs elsewhere in the economy. So the experience in other jurisdictions suggests that those jobs that are created - well, just what I said there, I'm not going to repeat it again.

There was a study that also found that each job that was created under a renewable energy policy cost between \$90,000 and \$140,000 per year in public subsidies - or about 175 per cent to 250 per cent of the average wage paid to manufacturing workers. These are points, Madam Speaker, that we think the government should be considering and not to just be blindly moving off with policies that might sound good as far as the philosophy is concerned. But when you look at the facts and you look at the numbers, they are only hurting Nova Scotians.

Madam Speaker, I don't have a problem with us dabbling in renewable energy, because we know that investment in the industry will help develop those technologies further. However, I guess one of the things that concerns me about getting more into things like wind energy is that sometimes they are not even reducing our need for fossil fuels. The member opposite talked about how we have to get off this addiction for using fossil fuels and, sadly, oftentimes when fossil fuels are replaced by things like wind, there's a cost to make up for the inefficiency of the wind.

In Ontario it was recognized that the lack of correlation between electricity demand and intermittent renewable energy created operational challenges, including power surpluses and the need for backup power generated by other sources. What I mean by that is, when the wind isn't blowing, which is often at times when it's most needed, if it's not there, the backup supply of fossil fuel has to be increased. It's inefficient and it causes more burning of fossil fuels.

This is something that I think most people don't realize. In their efforts to replace fossil fuels, they may not even be achieving that, yet they're increasing power bills for consumers and that's a loss times two because it's not working.

I've got too many papers here. This is not one of my better speeches. I have too much information here and it's good information, but it's all over the place.

MADAM SPEAKER: You have one minute left. We've had to adjust the timing a

little bit.

MR. MACMASTER: To try to sum it up, I think we're ultimately debating politics and philosophy versus common sense and facts. If the members opposite feel as strongly as they do about the policies their government is bringing forward, let's turn that philosophy into facts, turn it into the numbers, show us the numbers and show yourselves the numbers. If you can prove it, then you'll feel better about what you're extolling here in this Legislature, you'll feel better about what you're telling Nova Scotians and if the members don't do it, then I would suggest to them that they don't have a very good basis in what they're putting forth.

With that, I will conclude my remarks.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

MR. ANDREW YOUNGER: I think that in three years that might be the first time I've heard someone channel the former Minister of Energy, Bill Dooks, and wonder what happens when the wind doesn't blow.

Here's the thing. There are some things that we agree on in the House and there are others we don't. We know, it was reiterated this morning, that fossil fuel prices are on a consistent rise. The federal Conservative Government has mandated the phasing out of coal plants. While that has been delayed somewhat under the agreement reached with them, the federal Conservative Party has mandated that, so that's coming to an end anyway. The Third Party can stand and say that a significant part of our future can rest on coal, but it can't.

There are not just environmental reasons. Even if you don't believe in climate change and you think the Earth is flat, the fact of the matter is, the federal Conservative Government, which is perhaps the single most right-wing Party in the country, has mandated the closure of coal plants. That's just a fact. The only other option is to move to non-coal sources and renewable, do provide - the chairman of the board said that this morning - renewables will provide long-term, stable prices on renewable energy.

The fact is we have to deal with the realities of federal regulation and where pricing is going. We know, for example, that the Pubnico wind farm is now producing energy at lower than the price of coal. That's probably the only one that is at the moment in Nova Scotia because of the way the capital costs have been addressed. We know that, for example, natural gas - which we can have a whole debate in here on whether that's renewable, but natural gas obviously is part of the energy mix that is permitted going in the future - is very low at the moment and probably with some of the shale plays around North America will stay very low. So we know that that's the reality that we're in. We know that the reality we're in is a future where whether it comes from renewables and, frankly, it only makes sense to use the cost-effective renewables and there has been a push for some

renewables that aren't necessarily as cost-effective as others. In the reality of the fact that you're either going to be dealing with higher fossil fuel prices or you're going to be dealing with energy rates that are stable, but higher from renewable energy, then you have to look at other options.

We've advocated for a number of those options. For example, importing hydropower from Hydro-Québec which is currently selling on the market, I understand, at around 3 cents to 4 cents a kilowatt hour, which is below coal, it's below natural gas, it's below wind, it's below basically every other source on the market. There's a limited amount of power that we can bring in from that, but even when the government talks about Muskrat Falls they're only talking about 8 per cent of the province's energy, so you still need to have it from other sources and it's a maximum of 8 per cent, I might add. When you look at mitigating that with lower prices and lower options by importing that makes sense.

This bill, the Ratepayer Protection Bill, starts to address some of the issues that impact rates no matter what the fuel source is. It was interesting to hear the member from the NDP caucus stand and talk about how they do not like the idea of having the audits, but neglected to talk about the issue of bonuses, something the minister wouldn't even answer the other day. The minister would not stand up in this House and say that he opposed ratepayers being responsible for bonuses. This morning I put that question directly to the chairman of the Utility and Review Board and he said, listen - and we all know this - it's part of the backroom deal that was created for the last rate hike, the bonuses were taken out for a year, but that was part of that negotiation.

Mr. Bennett, the CEO of Nova Scotia Power was very blunt and honest to say that that isn't something you should necessarily expect for future years. The chair of the Utility and Review Board was quite clear this morning that currently the Public Utilities Act, which outlines what can and cannot be considered or what may or may not be considered in a rate, does not exclude the inclusion of executive bonuses. That is one example of something that this government could do which would measurably reduce future rate increases. There's a reason why it was taken out in the last rate hike and it was taken out because it was a cost to ratepayers.

Those executive bonuses can be taken out of the rate base permanently, but the government is unwilling to do that. That is not a debate about who should pay for conservation, that is not a debate about renewables versus fossil fuels, that is just the fact of a simple choice, it's an amendment to the Public Utilities Act that would prevent that from happening.

Another element this bill would do is to require Nova Scotia Power to publicly publish its estimated and actual costs on a regular basis. We all have that feeling - or at least I think we all have that feeling - that Nova Scotia Power walks into a Utility and Review Board hearing and asks for the moon, the sun and the sky, knowing they're going to get a little bit less. It's like the car salesman asking you to pay \$35,000 for the vehicle when he

knows he'll sell it to you for \$27,000 and that's exactly the game that Nova Scotia Power is playing because they want to shock you with a high rate and make you feel relieved that they only took some of the money from your wallet, and that's not right.

So there are a number of steps in here, a number of proposals, that would prevent that, that would open that process to more transparency and more honesty and, frankly, the chairman of the Utility and Review Board sat in here this morning and when I asked him whether he felt that Nova Scotia Power had become significantly more transparent, he said he would agree they were transparent, but he wouldn't use the word "significantly" and they're still working on that. This is one of the steps to legislatively force them to do that.

Publishing the estimated and actual costs are important. At the moment you can get them but you have to sign up as an intervener and sign a confidentiality agreement. Well, that doesn't make any sense. Why should all of those costs be secret? Why shouldn't people know what they actually spent and how close to their estimates they were? We know that, for example, the Utility and Review Board has chastised Nova Scotia Power for its errors in coal forecasting and the member for Halifax Chebucto raised that issue this morning. We know that they have been chastised for their secrecy over issues and, in fact, there were issues that had to be pulled out. This would legislatively require Nova Scotia Power to publish both its estimates and its actual and it would help limit the amount of that shooting high and coming in a little bit lower at the end of the day, because the public would know and anybody that wanted to go in would know. Frankly, not everybody is going to but there are people who if they had access to that information, they would be able to make complete representations.

The board has also talked about new processes and settlement hearings and this would legislate something the board has recommended, and again talked about this morning. Settlement hearings are starting to happen, but the board chairman this morning said that they don't happen early enough and he wants them to happen earlier, but this would put an added incentive into it, to say that unless you can address these through a public settlement hearing, before the rate hike hearing and address the major issues, then the costs of the hearing are borne by shareholders and that means, again it's about putting the burden on shareholders instead of the burden on ratepayers, and I'm sorry but at a 9.2 per cent to a 9.5 per cent guaranteed rate of return, the shareholders can stand to take a little bit of risk. (Applause)

I can't think of any company in this country that gets that kind of return that doesn't have to be exposed to a little bit of risk. So there becomes a choice. They either have to - and this government has to do it legislatively through the Electricity Act and the Public Utilities Act, to either force them to take on risk or you drastically reduce that rate of return because you can't have both.

Over the past three years, since 2009, electricity rates have climbed by over 20 per cent to residential customers and we all have electric bills. Some of us have more than one.

So we've all seen those increases and I'm sure many people like me have gone around and, you know, done things to reduce our energy consumption and still have seen that bill increase. Many people have seen that and they see that in part because of the dramatic nature of the hike, in over 20 per cent in the past three years, over 40 per cent in the past 10 years in electricity prices.

There are options that measurably change the things that can be included in a rate and there are options that the government can take to make those happen and they can't happen without legislation. Many of these things are not things that the board has the ability to do without changes in legislation and that's part of what we all need to remember, is the board is effectively a creature of the Public Utilities Act and has to follow what's in that Act. They don't get to make up their own rules. They follow the rules set out by the provincial government, so at a time when these rates are climbing like this, this is the opportunity to ensure that this utility is properly regulated, that we have options to allow our energy sector to work, to be properly regulated, and also to ensure that things that ratepayers shouldn't be responsible for aren't on that rate base.

There are some limited steps that the Utility and Review Board have taken in this regard but they are very limited, because they are limited by what is actually in that legislation and that's a shame. So we have the chance in this session and through this bill, or - the only criticism I've heard from government on this bill is about the audits. So fine, I think the audits are important but take the audits out and pass the rest. I haven't heard a single criticism from the government on any of the other elements of this bill.

Frankly, the cost of the audits is a red herring since the bill makes them the responsibility of Nova Scotia Power and actually removes other costs and is cost-neutral. But if they don't like that, if they're concerned about that, they don't think that Nova Scotia Power, which takes money out of Nova Scotians' pockets every month, shouldn't be audited in this manner - in a public value for money audit - then fine, take that out and pass the rest of it. Frankly, I've not heard - in the couple of times this has been debated - I have never heard any criticism of the other elements in this bill, from government.

Are the minister and the government saying that they think ratepayers should pay for bonuses? Are they saying that costs shouldn't be publicly available? Are they saying that ratepayers should be forced to pay for settlement hearings that result from Nova Scotia Power shooting high and coming in low? That's the real question in this.

There's only one tiny element of this that I've heard a criticism of from government in the three times that this has been debated. We haven't heard the government's position on the other three elements and I think it's time that they give us that answer. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

MR. JIM MORTON: I'm pleased to have those couple of minutes to stand and speak to Bill No. 45. You know, it occurred to me as I was listening to the debate this afternoon that we're approaching an anniversary - 20 years ago this Fall, the Donnie Cameron government sold Nova Scotia Power Corporation.

AN. HON. MEMBER: A dark day.

MR. MORTON: That was a dark day and I think it will be a dark anniversary when we celebrate that later this year.

I think it might be interesting to speculate what might have been if . . .
(Interruptions)

AN HON. MEMBER: What government was that?

MR. MORTON: That was a government of the Progressive Conservative Party. It might be interesting, Madam Speaker, to speculate what might have been if that decision had not been taken those 20 years ago, if the government of the day, and maybe the Liberal Party of the day, had the foresight to think about how governments can actually make a difference in the lives of people. Instead, that government, as the Progressive Conservative Party so often does and as the Liberal Party seems to still do, take that peculiar position that good government is government that steps back from the interests of the people.

I think that decision 20 years ago was exactly the consequence of that kind of thinking but I do think it would be interesting to speculate what might have happened if that hadn't occurred 20 years ago and if, instead, the government of the day had begun to imagine, had begun to recognize the effects of global warming, had begun to recognize that we needed to import coal to fire our electricity, had begun to think about what could be different in the future and had started the work that we started a couple of years ago, 20 years ago. We would be in a very different place having a very different discussion and not simply talking about adding another layer of bureaucracy and another cost to the ratepayers of this province.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable Deputy Opposition House Leader.

MR. ANDREW YOUNGER: Madam Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 46.

Bill No. 46 - Electricity Act.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North (Interruption) The honourable member for Kings West.

MR. LEO GLAVINE: Thank you, Madam Speaker. That's a double faux pas because Kings North was called Kings West, now Kings West is being called Kings North,

so there we go. Anyway those things happen here in the House - and in referencing the member for Kings North, we sometimes don't know all of the history and in fact forget what our stand and the position of our Parties at different points in time. I think that's a very normal and natural thing, and 20 years ago the NDP also very much thought and advocated that cheap coal out of Cape Breton, that coal was king. Coal was king 20 years ago in the world view of the NDP at that time, so we all know that times change.

Today, however, times have really changed too much for Nova Scotians when it comes to power rates. I would say my constituency office has gone through a winter period that saw the most notices of disconnection - Nova Scotia Power is cognizant enough not to inflict the deepest of pain, and that is to disconnect and cut off the power in the winter, but nevertheless they'll send out disconnection notices. I think it really is just another indicator that we have simply gone too far in this province.

I just did receive information from the library, it's a known fact so probably if it needs to be tabled I can certainly table it, but Nova Scotians now pay the second highest rates in Canada - we are just below Yellowknife in terms of the rates that we pay. Every Nova Scotian household, every one of our businesses, and our biggest industries have that as top of mind. We know that without the very complex deal that Stern and Nova Scotia Power have forged over the last number of months, the future of the mill in Port Hawkesbury, the calendar mill, was very, very much in doubt as to starting up. Just like over the next few years, because of power rates, we will see the demise, unfortunately, of another of our mills in this province.

One of the things that is associated with this bill - Bill No. 46, the Electricity Act - this bill permits renewable energy providers to sell directly to customers. I think this is, again, part of the energy fix in this province whose time truly has come. The one major distinguishing factor that we need to realize and correct a concern of government is that this has nothing to do with deregulation - let's be very, very clear about what Bill No. 46 is actually proposing.

It is a bill that has been introduced by our caucus at least twice - maybe three times. This bill will help to create more competition in the energy sector by allowing producers of renewable energy to sell directly to Nova Scotia consumers. One of the areas that I would have liked to have seen is that if we're going to develop biomass, I think there is a place in conjunction with our forestry industry to have small-scale biomass plants in this province. I truly think they could be viable and fit into a sustainable forestry regime for this province.

I am quite worried about the concentration of 60 megawatts in one part of the province, because it will not be viable to truck wood across this province to keep that large-scale operation going. So the wood supply has to come from neighbouring counties, neighbouring areas of Port Hawkesbury. I would very much have liked to have seen small-scale biomass run by private entities and sell directly, whether it's a regional hospital, whether it's a Michelin plant, or even for a community enterprise. I think that would start

down the road of competition that would start to reel in Nova Scotia Power, and what seems to be very automatic. Whenever the rate request goes before the URB we can be sure that it's pretty well automatic, except for maybe 1 per cent or 2 per cent below the request.

Increased competition will mean Nova Scotia Power rates will become more competitive. I think this is a bill whose time has come. I think the production of power in our province, again, is one of those non-partisan ideas. I think we have to embrace what is best for Nova Scotians and what is best for our future in terms of generating power, making us competitive once again, not second place behind Yellowknife. We know that companies that have intensive use of power do want to see small-scale production with a feed directly into their operations. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg West.

MR. GARY RAMEY: Madam Speaker, it's my pleasure to have a few minutes this evening to speak about Bill No. 46. I think one of the things that has been missing from the debate as I've listened to it, for these many days in the House, is context. Life is contextual. I think it's important to put things in context.

The great poet John Donne said that no man is an island, and no province is an island and no country is an island. We live in a world that is interconnected. One of our own great Canadians, Marshall McLuhan, said the world's a global village, and he was right about that, too. I think when we talk about things like - and we're talking about electricity tonight - we have to look at what has happened in the world over the last 50 years or so. What has happened in the world over the last 50 years or so is Chinese folks have largely, in many sectors, stopped riding bicycles and started driving cars. They have become industrialized and they're now one of the leading economies in the world, driven by electricity.

The subcontinent India, the second-largest country in the world, now has a burgeoning middle class. At one time North America got to hog all the energy. We don't get to hog all the energy anymore, nor should we. As a result, anybody who understands capitalistic principles and supply and demand knows that when there's great demand and short supply the price goes up, and that's exactly what has happened in this particular case.

I just thought maybe it would be a good idea to set the stage that way as we punt the ball back and forth constantly in here talking about electricity and electrical rates. I'm not sure any Nova Scotian really cares much about that. What they care about is, can we solve a problem that we have, that being the cost of electricity here in Nova Scotia? I think they want us to do something about it.

I'm standing here, and there's a plaque behind me that talks about responsible government. Mr. Howe is on the wall over here holding his muniments, talking about many years in our history, talking about responsible government. Mr. Howe would expect us to

treat this issue responsibly. And to treat this issue responsibly, I think he would expect us to not use stream of consciousness or some other method where you make up the story as you go. I think what he would want us to do, I think what we need to do, actually what is totally necessary to do, is have something called a plan. That plan has to be sensible, it has to be affordable and it has to be implemented and it has to be implemented soon because we don't want to be fiddling while Rome burns here.

I think several other members have said, so I don't have to say it again very much, that one of the big problems we've had is the cost of coal. That is what we use largely in Nova Scotia to generate electricity. I don't think anybody disagrees on this but most people say it has gone up about 75 per cent or so. We know for a fact that's not something that we can continue to rely on if we want to have reasonable power rates here.

Some kind of a plan that demonstrates that we're going to try to change that would obviously be a good plan and so we have to reduce that burden for everybody in Nova Scotia, including, not just the citizenry, the folks who we see every day in our constituencies, but also for the companies that hire our constituents and who have them working. That's why on the first part for the individual citizens we took the HST off energy costs so that life would be a little bit more affordable for those folks.

We know just by listening to the news in the last couple of months and the stories around NewPage and around Bowater and our other large users of electricity in the province, that we have some serious work to do there as well. The Premier has said in the past, now is not the time - I think this is what he said anyway, I would stand corrected if he didn't - I think he said now is not the time for an increase in the allowable return on equity so seeing Nova Scotia Power agreeing that the ROE go down in the agreement earlier this year is good news.

You know what? That's the truth, that was good news. The customers have decided they want to be able to scrutinize any proposed rate increases on an annual basis rather than look at a multi-year rate. I have to say and I think my colleagues agree, I respect that decision and I think they do as well. That's why our government is aggressively looking for alternate sources of energy and that includes the Churchill Falls project, wind power and it includes tidal power.

That dependence that I talked about awhile ago on imported coal and the failure of previous governments and I don't want to get on a big story about it, but the failure of previous governments to implement a plan, which is what I indicated a few minutes ago to bring stability to electricity prices and have that reflected in our electricity bills, that was largely a failure of all governments to the present time. I know in Question Period today we heard a lot of talk about growing the economy - how come the economy's not growing and why didn't the economy grow faster? Well, news flash on this, there's a worldwide recession. Greece almost went broke and there are some other issues around the European Economic Community which have caused a few problems.

Then there was - I hesitate to bring this up - the collapse of the financial institutions in the United States which may have had a minor effect on the way things are rolling out here in Nova Scotia. Although we're good, we're really good, we can't fix everything almost immediately. We can just fix it over a couple of mandates, we'll have it straightened out and we'll be able to move on. That's what needs to happen.

Our plan is, actually as we go forward, making life more affordable for Nova Scotians. The reason is we're investing money now so we will save money in the future. That's called being smart. When we talk Efficiency Nova Scotia, we invest money, not only do we invest money in retrofitting homes and retrofitting homes for even low-income families, bringing down the amount of electricity we use, but while we're doing that, we employ people who do the retrofits, which actually grows the economy.

Madam Speaker, that's called a double whammy. It's a really good thing to do. It's what governments should be doing and it's part of making life better for all Nova Scotians. We're going to stick with that plan, we're going to implement that plan, and we're going to make Nova Scotia a better place to live, work and play every day.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cape Breton North.

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Madam Speaker, I'll have to thank the member for Lunenburg West for that animated and fiery speech but we're talking about making life better for Nova Scotians. I think if you asked each and every Nova Scotian about the increase in their HST and all the services that have been cut, it's not making life better for Nova Scotians but anyway, besides that, I'm pleased to rise today to talk about Bill No. 46, an amendment to the Electricity Act to enable opening renewable energy producers to sell electricity directly to the consumer.

Madam Speaker, we in the PC caucus are in favour of renewable energy and the benefits it has to the environment and individuals, but at what cost? We need renewables that will grow with the ability of the consumer to pay and grow with the economy, not phased in all at once and to the fact that people can't pay. We're hearing blanket statements about this, it will reduce costs for ratepayers but I haven't seen any real proof of that yet. Our power rates have gone up and up and up over the last three years and the renewable rates continue to be higher than any other rates. While we encourage the province to expand this renewable capacity, there has to be a market of people willing to pay the premium price for that.

Madam Speaker, we're hearing about them investing now. Well, if we're investing in renewables, what happens when the wind dies? When there's no wind, when the NDP Government isn't in power and there's no wind, what do we have? We have to have some kind of backup plan.

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please. The chatter in the room is making it difficult

for me to hear. (Interruptions) Order, please.

The honourable member for Cape Breton North has the floor.

MR. ORRELL: Madam Speaker, development costs for renewable energy are high. We don't know what the upkeep costs are going to be. I remember back a number of years ago when they came out with hybrid cars. The costs of those cars were - and they are talking electric cars - out of reach of the average Nova Scotian, but the average Nova Scotian has to have power. To have these renewables forced on us in a manner that we can't pay is just not right. If we go with all renewables and we have no wind, how do we store that power? We have to have a battery backup and that's expensive and to replace that battery is expensive. If we're opening up renewables directly from the producer to the consumer, how do they transmit that energy? That energy has to be transmitted on power lines. Those lines are owned now by Emera or Nova Scotia Power. They're going to charge for that. We've already heard we have the second highest cost in Canada.

Madam Speaker, I heard them talk about getting off coal but we know that we're going to rely on coal over the next 30 years. We know that coal is cheaper now than the renewables are. We have an area in Cape Breton, the Donkin area, that can produce coal at a rate that we could use in this province. We also have a Centre for Sustainability in Energy at Cape Breton University that's trying to study clean technologies - clean coal technologies - using the geothermal from the mines. So all that stuff can go a long way in how we produce our costs.

Now, we see from the COMFIT program that the rates are higher. Not only would purchasers have to build the capacity, they'll also have to transmit this electricity, like I said. They will have to either build their own transmission lines, which is extremely expensive, or use the already existing lines and rent them from what's there and that's cost to the consumer we don't know of.

It's the responsibility of the government to make sure the power rates in this province are affordable and not driving people and businesses away. We need to get the basics right such as competitive tax structure, reducing red tape and keeping power rates affordable. We currently have some of the highest taxes in the country and highest power rates in the country, which doesn't improve our competitive advantage.

Now we've seen from this government's mismanagement of the Muskrat Falls project they're not willing to do their homework and study the true costs of what it's going to cost the consumers of Nova Scotia to get this power. We're hearing something like 17 cents a kilowatt hour for Newfoundlanders and if we have to build a transmission line to come across the Atlantic and sell it through here, that's going to cost more to the people of Nova Scotia. Yes, it may stabilize power rates, but at what cost? The government is committing to ratepayers to foot the bill without telling each and every one of us what it will cost.

We've heard some reports from Newfoundland and Labrador that they're doing their homework on Muskrat Falls and Nova Scotians deserve a government that will do the same, do their homework, create policies that are in the best interests of Nova Scotians, that are affordable and reliable. Reliable and stable is good, but we have to know the cost.

The Utility and Review Board chairman came before the Public Accounts Committee today and said that in-province hydro remains the cheapest option next to the low cost of coal. However, we do not have the capacity in Nova Scotia to supply our energy costs with hydro, and without looking into other jurisdictions we're not going to be able to do that. We need to compare Muskrat Falls to other sources, Hydro-Québec, natural gas from Maine, or energy from New Brunswick, ways that we can produce energy to the consumers of Nova Scotia that we know the cost of.

Just because we can bring hydro ashore in Nova Scotia, does it mean there's a market for it elsewhere? There's a bottleneck in Maine and there's already too much electricity on their grid, so the ability to sell that to them will be restricted. These are all questions we have to ask this government, but they refuse to do this homework.

While diversifying our energy portfolio is important, we need a government that is open and transparent about the costs. If buying energy directly is good, then we should study that, but there are lots of unanswered questions and when those questions are answered, we'll be able to make informed decisions. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

MR. ANDREW YOUNGER: Madam Speaker, if you have no objections, I'll actually speak about the bill. I just sat through two members of the Third Party channelling Bill Dooks and saying the wind might not blow. I figured the first one was a mistake and then I heard it twice. Then I heard an NDP member suggest that the NDP would never have championed coal 20 years ago, which I think would surprise the member for Cape Breton Centre, who was one of the great champions of coal at that time.

This bill would allow renewable energy suppliers to sell directly to customers. I want to be very clear because it's quite apparent that the government members haven't actually read the bill in any of the times it has been introduced. I say that because we heard the Premier suggest that it was deregulation. In fact, not once in this bill does it suggest the URB would not set rates; not once in this bill does it remove any of the regulatory powers of the URB; in fact, if anything, it refines them and extends them to this new group of suppliers. My suggestion, of course, to the NDP researchers would be to actually read the bill before you suggest that it is about deregulation, because it is not remotely about it in the page that's there.

This is actually something that the member for Halifax Chebucto and the member for Cape Breton Centre have spoken in favour of. The Premier stood up and stated very

clearly that - he said, we've done this. We've done this with feed-in tariffs and so forth.

The problem with that is that the recommendation was two parts for a reason. I think it's important to understand these two parts. Yes, we always knew renewable energy, especially in the short term, was going to have a higher rate than the fossil fuels because we were going to reach that rate. That's fine.

The other part was that independent renewable energy suppliers who have spoken in favour of this, such as Seaforth Energy, Chebucto Wind Fields, and many of these others - who have all spoken in favour of this measure, I might add - pointed out that this would allow them access to capital and allow them to expand green jobs in this province, allow them to expand and reduce the price of renewable energy.

Two years ago when we introduced this, one of the government members stood up and tried to suggest that this would result in the collapse of the energy market in Nova Scotia. Of course, that hasn't happened in New Brunswick or in any other Canadian provinces or U.S. states where this is already the law. That's just a ridiculous assertion, to suggest that that would happen, because it wouldn't. In fact, one of the other members over there suggested we should be thinking ahead. Of course we should. That's exactly what this does - it allows that to happen.

Here are some of the examples. The other day - I think it might have been yesterday - the Premier, I believe, announced that they were exploring moving an airport near Waterville for the possible future expansion of Michelin. So great, but there's a company that has talked about the limitation, that what happens is it does not allow them to actually produce energy on their own property because their property isn't big enough.

What they and many other businesses would like the opportunity to do is to be able to purchase a property somewhere else or partner with a renewable energy supplier and generate power somewhere and supply the mill, for example. You're not allowed to do that at the moment, and it actually takes this legislation to do that, to allow those companies to say, do you know what? We're going to self-generate energy, or at least self-generate a certain amount of our energy.

Of course there are farmers who do this, and there are companies that do some of this. There are a few Atlantic Superstore sites that do this, but they do it because they have the ability on their own property to do this. That is the only way you are currently legally allowed to do that in Nova Scotia.

Madam Speaker, that's why this bill is important. This is a bill that promotes green jobs. It promotes opportunities in manufacturing and the green economy, and it is also something which allows competition in a regulated marketplace, just like the same legislation allows that in New Brunswick. This is why, I would assume, the member for Cape Breton Centre and the member for Halifax Chebucto have previously spoken in

favour of this.

Nothing has changed in that time that would suddenly make this deregulation, and it's a ridiculous assertion to say that, to try and suggest that, because nobody has ever said that. We've said it opens up the marketplace - which, interestingly enough, were the exact words that were used at the time by members who are now sitting in the government benches.

Madam Speaker, this is important. This is an opportunity for Nova Scotians. Thank you very much.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you. The honourable Deputy House Leader for the Official Opposition.

MR. ANDREW YOUNGER: Thank you, Madam Speaker. That concludes our business for the day, and I'm happy to turn it over to the Government House Leader.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Madam Speaker, I want to thank everybody for their debate tonight. It was very interesting, very lively.

Madam Speaker, we ask that the House do now rise to meet from the hours of noon to 10:00 p.m. tomorrow. After the orders of the day and Question Period, we will call Private and Local Bills, Bill No. 57; Public Bills For Second Reading, Bill Nos. 71 and 73; and if we are fortunate enough and get permission, if we report any bills back for Committee of the Whole House on Bills, maybe we can get unanimous consent and we'll move forward with those.

With that said, Madam Speaker, we ask that the House do now rise.

MADAM SPEAKER: The motion is that the House do now rise, to meet again tomorrow, May 3rd, between the hours of noon and 10:00 p.m.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The adjournment motion was submitted by the honourable member for Truro-Bible Hill:

“Therefore be it resolved that the irresponsible Liberal proposal to deregulate electricity markets would be a disastrous experiment at the expense of Nova Scotians.”

ADJOURNMENT

MOTIONS UNDER RULE 5(5)

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Truro-Bible Hill.

ELECTRICITY DEREGULATION: LIBERAL PROPOSAL - RESULTS

MS. LENORE ZANN: Madam Speaker, thank you to my colleagues. It gives me great pleasure to rise this evening to speak to the irresponsible proposal brought forward from the Liberal caucus.

Quite simply, the Liberal caucus suggestion would ensure large companies earn greater profits while Nova Scotia ratepayers would pay even more for electricity. I would suggest that the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition would like to deregulate the industry and leave Nova Scotia ratepayers at the mercy of an extremely volatile market. Apparently the Leader of the Official Opposition would like to follow in the steps of Alberta and Ontario and experiment with electricity deregulation on the backs of Nova Scotians and on the backs of our children.

But, I would like to table a report by the RBC Dominion Securities from 2001 and I would like to read an excerpt from this report which says,

“Alberta is further advanced in the process of deregulating its electrical industry than any other Canadian province . . . In unnerving similarity to California’s experience, this process has resulted in Alberta’s power prices increasing from amongst the lowest in the world to among the highest prices in North America.”

This is the same proposal being put forward by the Liberal caucus. The Leader of the Official Opposition would like to see Nova Scotia participate in a similar experiment which would see electricity prices soar to unthinkable levels. My government has a plan that makes sense. My government has a plan that will ensure stable energy prices for all Nova Scotians for many years to come. Let me say, my government understands the burden of rising electricity prices on the pocketbooks of Nova Scotians. We really do. I personally understand the burden of these rising prices on the pocketbooks of my constituents in Truro-Bible Hill.

That’s why, when we took office, we removed the HST on energy and we legislated some of the most aggressive renewable energy targets in the world. I have to say that I am very proud of that fact. We all know that the cost of coal keeps rising each year and Nova

Scotians end up paying more for electricity because of that. But the Liberal's proposal to deregulate electricity markets would definitely not address this.

Our plan is about making life better and more affordable for all Nova Scotians which includes protecting our environment and doing our part to stop global warming while providing a much healthier, greener and affordable future for our children and our children's children. You see, renewable electricity prices do not go up over time in the same way that coal does, has and will continue to. Coal prices have already risen 75 per cent in the last five years. That's hard to believe.

So why wouldn't this government be doing everything we can to try to convert to renewable energy sources as quickly as possible? Moving towards local renewable energy sources will help stabilize energy prices in the future and protect consumers from the volatility of world markets and energy supply shortages. Unlike the Liberal proposal, our plan is about ensuring fair and stable energy prices for all Nova Scotians today, tomorrow and for years to come.

Perhaps the members opposite in both Parties are not as familiar as I am with everyday life in the United States. I have lived and worked in three different cities in the U.S. over the years: Chicago, New York, and Los Angeles, California. In fact, I personally experienced the now-infamous rolling blackouts in California that were a direct result of the privatization and deregulation of electricity. I have personally heard tapes that were recorded by laughing workers working for the power company as they turned off the power for hundreds of thousands of people, and one of them laughingly said, "Yes, that's right, I guess Granny won't get to heat up her oatmeal this morning." Pretty terrible stuff, isn't it? I think we can all agree to that.

Perhaps, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite are also not familiar with some of the politics that have gone on in Ontario. Some of them are too young to remember some of that. However, I am old enough. I attended York University in Toronto in the 1970s and I lived in that city for many years. I was both a homeowner and taxpayer, so I paid great attention to what was happening in Queen's Park.

Perhaps the Leader of the Official Opposition has not had the opportunity to discuss electricity deregulation with his Liberal colleague, the Honourable Dalton McGuinty of Ontario. Therefore I wish to table an excerpt from an Ontario Provincial Government Question Period, and it's a quote from the Honourable Dalton McGuinty. I will first read it in this House. The quote is, "Now that Bay Street recognizes it, now that Main Street recognizes this, now that there is a broad consensus right across the country that this has been one of the most glaring examples of gross mismanagement and incompetence, why not admit it? Deregulation is dead; the market is dead; your experiment has been an abject failure."

Well, I can tell you that I - that we, that this government - will not sit on the

sidelines and allow this Liberal proposal to deregulate electricity and cripple our future. We will not entertain an ill-conceived plan which will empty our purses and threaten our environment. In my humble opinion, this is a grossly irresponsible proposal which has already proven to be a disastrous experiment in many other jurisdictions, as I've already mentioned.

Our approach, Mr. Speaker, is not only to stabilize electricity prices and reduce our environmental footprint. Our approach is also to create more good jobs and to plan stable energy prices and affordable energy prices for the good people of Nova Scotia well into the future. We have a plan, unlike the Leader of the Official Opposition and his Party, whose only plan seems to be criticize and deny every progressive move this government makes. We have a plan. It's working, and guess what? We are just getting started. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

MR. ANDREW YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, I'm glad the NDP's just getting started bankrupting companies with higher energy rates and driving people into the poorhouse where they can't afford food. The fact of the matter is the Liberal caucus has never once suggested deregulation, and in fact has always opposed deregulation - never once. Mr. Speaker, we've actually gone through the complete Hansard record of multiple terms when Liberal members who are long gone have been in the House. Never once have the Liberals suggested deregulation.

Where this came from is the Premier decided that the piece of legislation - which is supported by the member for Halifax Chebucto and Cape Breton Centre, which actually brings better regulation and more regulation - he decided to say that's deregulation. Never once, never once has any Liberal member of the Nova Scotia Legislature supported deregulation. The only party in Nova Scotia reducing regulations and abdicating their responsibility over power rates is the NDP. The fact of the matter is the NDP have allowed power rates in this province to increase by over 20 per cent. They may have taken the HST off electricity by taking \$28 million off, but they added a new tax that has dragged \$40 million out of the pocketbooks of Nova Scotians when they said during the election they would never do that. It's this Party, this NDP that is driving people to have to choose between electricity and food.

It is this Party, this Party is the only one demanding proper regulation of Nova Scotia Power and the electricity market. Never once, never once have we suggested deregulation of the electricity market, and the fact that the NDP would suggest it shows just how bad their research is, and explains why they break one promise after another. They don't know how to govern this province, and in 12 months time they will not even be sitting on that side of the House.

That is where we are in Nova Scotia with a Party - we have a Premier who didn't even understand, Mr. Speaker, that the Utility and Review Board didn't feel it had the

authority to govern Muskrat Falls; we have a Premier who didn't understand that it was his legislation that added a \$40 million tax on the ratepayers of Nova Scotia; and it is this Premier who tried to say that a bill which his own Party had supported and spoken in favour of is suddenly deregulation, even though in fact the bill, the one-page bill, doesn't remove a single thing from the oversight of Nova Scotia.

In fact, one of the parts of that is that it demands that there be oversight by the Utility and Review Board, and approval of rates. It doesn't remove one bit of regulation in this province and the word "deregulation" has not escaped the lips of the Leader of the Official Opposition - or mine. That word has never, ever escaped our lips in the term of us doing it, because we wouldn't do it - we would never do such a thing.

The fact of the matter is that it's that Party that has shown a complete incompetence when it comes to regulating and understanding electricity issues in this province. At one time there were members of that Party, and I can count them out, there was the member for Timberlea-Prospect who said that the URB was abdicating its responsibility and wasn't doing proper - there was the member for Halifax Chebucto who used to go to power rate hearings when he cared about Nova Scotians. There were so many of them who thought that Nova Scotia Power was treating Nova Scotians poorly and they spoke in favour of the legislation the Liberal caucus had proposed, but now, all of a sudden, because they know they're on the rope and they know that Nova Scotians blame them for higher rates, that is why we now have a problem, that is why they now try to slander the Official Opposition, slander the Official Opposition with untruths and things that are blatantly false.

I asked the Premier during Question Period to table a single example, a single example of this caucus advocating for deregulation and he was unable to do it. In fact, during his answer, he backtracked from saying that we were in favour of deregulation. It's a shame that the NDP decided they had to put this in, and then put it in and then the Premier backtracked before we even got to this debate because it kind of threw that out the window, didn't it, Mr. Speaker?

You know, we have a plan for Nova Scotians for rates to ensure that Nova Scotians are treated fairly. We won't spend the next 20 years studying issues while rates skyrocket and people are driven from their homes and businesses choose not to locate here because the power rates are downright unaffordable. We have a plan that will ensure that our hospitals are not crippled by increasing power rates, and that our schools are not crippled by increasing power rates, and that jobs don't go elsewhere because the NDP don't understand the impact of electricity rates in this province. (Applause)

Mr. Speaker, this plan is simple, and not one word of it involves deregulation - not one word. So if the best that the NDP can come up with is to try to make things up, there's not a Nova Scotian who is going to believe them. The fact of the matter is, we have advocated for the fact that ratepayers should not be paying the executive bonuses of Nova Scotia Power. The NDP refuses to support that - the NDP believe that Nova Scotia Power

ratepayers should pay bonuses, not shareholders. The NDP doesn't believe that Nova Scotia Power should be audited because they think they're doing everything just lovely. I would love to see the Premier campaign on that one.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier also sits there and says that he doesn't want green jobs in this province because he doesn't want to give those renewable energy suppliers the opportunity to compete in a regulated market against Nova Scotia Power for customers. He doesn't want companies like Michelin, companies like Stern, which used to be NewPage, companies like Bowater, Acadian Seaplants, he doesn't want them to be able to choose to generate renewable energy off, on other sites, and use it on their property. He doesn't want to allow that because it would remove his control.

The fact is that this is a Premier who is more than willing to stand up and when things are going well, he'll take credit, but when they are going bad, he'll defer it down to the Utility and Review Board - the one organization that he said was treating Nova Scotians poorly when he was in Opposition. This is a Premier who will not stand up for anything that he stood up for in Opposition. It's one broken promise after another, as Nova Scotians suffer under the oppressive regime that sits over there in those benches. That's why Nova Scotians are looking hard at this and wondering how the NDP can remotely suggest that the Liberal caucus, which has never once advocated for deregulation, would suddenly do that, because we wouldn't do that.

We stand by what we said. When we said that the DSM charge, which is now the electricity tax introduced by the NDP, should be paid by shareholders, we stood by that but the Premier said that six days before the election, he said it should be paid for by shareholders and lo and behold, in the first session after, he was the first one to take \$40 million out of the pockets of Nova Scotians. I might add that that's \$12 million more than he has taken from them than they saved from his HST cut. He didn't tell them that.

Then, even of the saving - he talks about the \$100 million savings that Nova Scotians are getting from those conservation programs and forgets to mention the millions of dollars his departments are taking from Efficiency Nova Scotia programs, instead of allowing them to go to low-income families and middle-income families and businesses who could use the help in reducing their energy costs.

Then the best thing he can say is, well, Liberals are against conservation, when repeatedly we've said we are absolutely in favour of it and we applaud the work of Efficiency Nova Scotia. What we don't applaud is the fact that ratepayers are forced to pay those costs when shareholders should bear the burden. Once upon a time the Premier believed that, too, and he doesn't anymore.

Mr. Speaker, there will be a new energy future in this province and the Liberal caucus is leading that, and the Liberal caucus is leading that under a fully-regulated market, under a market that supports green energy and stable prices and honesty with Nova

Scotians over energy, not making up untruths and telling fairy tales that other Parties believe in, things that they don't believe in. It has been one thing after another that they try to throw and none of it sticks, and this is the latest one.

Now I remind you, Mr. Speaker, never once have I, the Leader of this Party, or any member of this caucus advocated for the deregulation of the electricity market in Nova Scotia and if they have researchers in that caucus who believe that, it's time to fire them and get new ones.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, what a spirited debate we have here this evening. I have to tell you that this place feels like purgatory to me, you can't get any satisfaction in here. You can't change anybody's mind in here.

In all seriousness, we can talk all we want, debate back and forth and if anybody is watching this, I'm sure they're seeing this too. It's very difficult to change people's minds and we try to talk about numbers, as soon as we go to numbers, people go to philosophy. I've suggested, why don't we just put the numbers out on the table?

No question, as the member for Truro-Bible Hill said today, the price of coal has risen. I think she said 70 or 75 per cent in recent years. I would not dispute that, I would agree with that and I would also agree that it's probably going to go higher.

There are things that cause commodity prices to drop as well. Look at the price of natural gas, which has dropped from \$14 to \$2. That kind of a drop means that more people will be demanding natural gas. We're even hearing talk in the province now of trucking natural gas around the province. It's only preliminary talk but that's a sign of the market seeing, oh, there's an opportunity, something is cheaper, we can sell it, we can make a profit margin on that. The more natural gas that's purchased, the less coal that will be purchased, which will start to drop the price of coal.

My point is that right now the province is burning - 58 per cent of the input to make electricity comes from coal. It's not going to go away any time soon. If the renewable target is moved from 20 per cent to 40 per cent, if it's such a good idea, why don't we move it to 100 per cent tomorrow? Why don't we close all the coal plants down in the province? Why don't we stop burning coal completely now? I would suggest to the government if they feel that strongly about it, why don't they do that? Why don't they come out and say that?

The reality they're going to face is that it's not practical. Coal is so much cheaper than the alternatives. When we start looking at the numbers, yes, coal has risen 75 per cent, but it's still one-third of the price of the amount that Nova Scotia Power is required to pay for wind energy. So it's going to have to increase itself, increase much more to even come

close to the cost of wind.

We heard the Premier today in Question Period talking about when the URB was here today during Public Accounts, I had asked the question, what is the cheapest source for generating electricity? First he said coal and he said, no, wait, it's hydro. That's what the Premier mentioned today in Question Period but I knew the Premier was going to jump on that so I asked the follow-up question, can you clarify what you mean by hydro? I trust you don't mean Muskrat Falls? And he said no, I'm not referring to that, and he referenced the Wreck Cove power generating station in Cape Breton.

I guess my point here, since I don't think we're - from the vehement opposition by the Party that was accused of suggesting we have deregulation, instead of attacking them for something they claim they've not called for, that's why I'm kind of changing my remarks and customizing them a bit - because of the gentleman that I am.

The point I'm trying to make here is that it feels like I'm in purgatory today because I know I'm not going to convince the members opposite about the impracticality of just completely leaving coal. I know the member for Dartmouth East made some comments, as well, that we have to believe that climate change is reality and that the world is not flat. That kind of riled me up a little bit, but I think it's irresponsible when I hear the Premier say things in the province like we're shackled to fossil fuel prices and we should have got off it 15 years ago. Well, we know that 15 years ago coal was 75 per cent cheaper and it was an even better bargain back then. I'm not saying that we shouldn't move away from it but what I'm saying is just completely move away from it immediately is just not practical. People can't afford that. At the end of the day we would have to do a movement where we would all have to head for the hills and get back to the land.

You might think that's ridiculous but I can tell you that in Japan right now, where they've shut down nuclear power plants after the earthquakes over there, they don't use air conditioning now in Japan. The citizens have been asked not to use air conditioning and it gets pretty hot in Japan in the summer. They also don't have lights turned on in their offices during the daytime because there's such a shortage of energy supply and if you shut down all the coal plants today in Nova Scotia, those are decisions we would be facing. There was a comment in the Speech from the Throne that they were going to light a candle for those in the dark but we would be in the dark if we completely cut off coal right now. Some people may be prepared to head for the hills but I think most Nova Scotians are not. They appreciate getting up in the morning and flicking a light switch and being able to see what they're doing if they're up early for work.

If we look at Germany, Germany was one of the leaders in the world at looking at renewable energy. Drove all kind of subsidies to it and now have discovered that it hasn't been such a great idea. They had intentions to close coal plants; they have not closed one coal plant in Germany, not one. So I'm not saying that we shouldn't aim to do that someday, but we have to be careful.

When we had the URB here today, we heard talk that we should have never privatized Nova Scotia Power, maybe not, but the fact is it has been privatized so we are where we are. The question becomes, how can we best control that private entity to make sure that it is delivering fair power rates to Nova Scotians and how can we make sure that the decisions they are making are in our best interests?

When the government makes a sweeping decision to say, let's go with Muskrat Falls before looking at the cost or, let's switch our renewable goals to go from 20 per cent to 40 per cent without looking at the impact of that, I think that's irresponsible. If we want to get ourselves out of - or at least get me out of - purgatory, I'd like to see some numbers. I think we would lose all of the philosophy in the debate and I think we would all realize that renewable energy is a good thing, in time, as it improves and it becomes more efficient, but we must be responsible.

We can debate ourselves till we are blue in the face in here but at the end of the day most Nova Scotians, pretty much all Nova Scotians who I look at outside the window here, they are the ones who have no say in any of this, really don't know a lot about it because there is all kinds of misinformation out there. They are the ones who are paying their power bills and they are the ones who have to live with the decisions we make.

As I close, Mr. Speaker, I would ask that we be responsible in this Legislature, from all sides, and that if we want to look towards reducing fossil fuels and moving towards renewable energy, I would ask that we be responsible about it and that we table numbers in the Legislature and let the numbers help to carry the day because there are economic consequences as well. What good are we - and I think of the paper mill in my area - if power rates drive that operation out of business and the operation is moved to China where there are less strict environmental regulations and where people in China are making our paper for us and they are polluting the same air there that we're breathing here. (Interruption) Yes, somebody has to start somewhere, no question, but we are going to defeat ourselves because in that example, if we don't solve the problem because we just export it to China and we lose our economy, we have less power in the future to make good decisions because our economy is weaker and we have less of an economy to be able to afford the more expensive renewable energy. With that, I will conclude my remarks.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you and I want to thank all honourable members for their enthusiastic and charged debate tonight. The time for late debate has now expired.

We are adjourned.

[The House rose at 6:28 p.m.]

NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3)**RESOLUTION NO. 754**

By: Ms. Pam Birdsall (Lunenburg)

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

Whereas David Findlay is a talented musician, composer and producer who graduated from McGill University's Tonmeister program with a master's degree in sound recording; and

Whereas Mr. Findlay then worked for Air Studios in London, England, and Electric Lady Studios in New York City, as well as scoring multiple independent films and television shows, honing his craft as he lived across Canada; and

Whereas David Findlay finally decided to settle in Lunenburg, Nova Scotia to open his own recording studio, Otitis Media, based on his love of the area and the recognition of the musical talent and passion on the East Coast of Canada;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulate David Findlay on completing his new sound recording studio, Otitis Media, while contributing to the diversity of rural Nova Scotia.

RESOLUTION NO. 755

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 Royal Canadian Mint commissioned a special commemorative 50 cent silver plated coin and a \$10 silver coin in honour of the 100th Anniversary of the sinking of the Titanic, which was unveiled at the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic in Halifax on March 5; and

Whereas the Royal Canadian Mint chose to designs of Lunenburg based artist Yves Berube, who designed an angled image of the Titanic approaching an iceberg, with a map of eastern Canada and the exact latitude and longitude of the accident visible in the centre of the coin; and

Whereas Yves Berube, who has designed several specialty coins for the mint, spent much time researching his subject to find the perfect composition for the highly sought-

after coins, which are already out of stock;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulate Lunenburg artist Yves Berube on his artistic rendition for the Royal Canadian Mint to commemorate the 100th Anniversary of the sinking of the Titanic.

RESOLUTION NO. 756

By: Hon. Darrell Dexter (The Premier)

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

Whereas more than 100 students and staff members at Cole Harbour District High School sang, danced, performed, played instruments, directed and worked backstage to put on an extremely successful production of the popular musical *Grease*; and

Whereas the show played to a sold out audience at Alderney Landing in Dartmouth from March 29th to April 1st of this year; and

Whereas the show received great local reviews, and helped to teach the students about the value of hard work, dedication and team work;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House congratulate the students and staff at Cole Harbour District High School for putting on a great show, bringing positive attention to their school and promoting the creative talent of our young Nova Scotians.

RESOLUTION NO. 757

By: Mr. Leo Glavine (Kings West)

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

Whereas Alister Thomson is a 7th Degree Black Belt, who has been active in Aikido for more than 38 years; and

Whereas Alister has been instrumental in supporting the growth of Yoshinkan Aikido throughout Nova Scotia and across North America; and

Whereas as Alister Thomson's dynamic teaching style, expert instruction and vast experience make him one of the most sought after instructor in the North America;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the Nova Scotia Legislature commend Alister Thomson for his commitment to Aikido and instilling in his pupils the love and purpose of this marital art.

RESOLUTION NO. 758

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 hockey team participated in the 2012 Western Nova Minor Hockey League Weekend of Champions in West Hants on April 15, 2012; and

Whereas the Clare Acadiens Bantam A team defeated the Acadia team 4 to 3 in overtime; and

Whereas the Clare Acadiens Bantam A hockey team are the Western Nova Minor Hockey League 2011-2012 League Champions;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly congratulate team players Jordan Boyd, Alec Gaudet, Jamie Belliveau, Josh Cleveland, Waylon Robicheau, Brandon Sullivan, Isaac Comeau, Taylor Wheatley, Shane Robicheau, Joseph Comeau, Logan Melanson, Bradley MacDonald, Jared Barkhouse, Bailey Mullen, Patrick LeBlanc, and Marie Gaudet and their coaches on winning the gold medal game and wish them continued success in the future.

RESOLUTION NO. 759

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 Nova Scotia Junior C Hockey League announced its awards winners for the 2011-2012 season; and

Whereas the Clare Mutual Lions defeated the Avon River Rats in the West Division Semi Final, as well as the Barrington Ice Dogs in the West Division Final; and

Whereas the Clare Mutual Lions won the Justin Kenny Trophy as the West Division Playoff Champions of the Nova Scotia Jr. C Hockey League;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate the Clare Mutual Lions Jr. C hockey team and their coaches for winning the Justin Kenny Trophy.

RESOLUTION NO. 760

By: Hon. Wayne Gaudet (Clare)

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

Whereas Jordan Boyd of Church Point, Nova Scotia, is a member of the Clare Acadiens Bantam A hockey team; and

Whereas the Clare team played against Cole Harbour in the Accord Division Finals at the 35th Annual SEDMHA Honda International Minor Hockey Tournament; and

Whereas Jordan Boyd was awarded Most Valuable Player of the game;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Jordan Boyd on this prestigious award and wish him continued success in the future.

RESOLUTION NO. 761

By: Hon. Wayne Gaudet (Clare)

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

Whereas on January 24, 2012, a fundraising hockey game was held at Université Sainte-Anne to raise funds for the Lisa Thibodeau Work Fund, administered by CORD - Clare Organization Representing Persons with Disabilities; and

Whereas the charity hockey game was organized between former Clare Lions Junior C Hockey players and the RCMP Bisons hockey team; and

Whereas over 300 people attended this charity hockey game and raised \$2,560 for the Lisa Thibodeau Work Fund;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly congratulate and thank the organizers for their hard work in organizing the event and for reaching out to such a worthy cause.

RESOLUTION NO. 762

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 Chamber of Commerce Business Excellence Awards 2011 are presented annually to recognize, celebrate, and inspire business excellence throughout our municipality; and

Whereas the Small Business of the Year Award was presented to Robert Saulnier, owner/operator of La Râpure à Évelina; and

Whereas Robert Saulnier is proud to say that Évelina played a critical role in the development of the business, and not a process was approved unless it met with her strict quality control;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating current owner/operator Robert Saulnier for winning the Clare Chamber of Commerce Small Business of the Year Award and wish his business continued growth and success in the future.

RESOLUTION NO. 763

By: Hon. Wayne Gaudet (Clare)

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

Whereas on February 9, 2012, Innovacorp announced the winners of the 1-3 Technology Start-Up Competition, which is a competition to support Nova Scotians with potential new knowledge-based businesses; and

Whereas Vince Stuart, owner of Clare Machine Works Limited, from Meteghan Centre, was chosen as the first-place winner in zone 3, which includes Digby, Annapolis, Kings, and Hants counties; and

Whereas Vince Stuart won the regional competition with his delayed bait dispenser, called the Bait Savour;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating Vince Stuart in winning first-place recognition in the Innovacorp's 1-3 Technology Start-Up Competition and wish his business continued growth in the future.

RESOLUTION NO. 764

By: Hon. Wayne Gaudet (Clare)

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

Whereas on February 9, 2012, Innovacorp announced the winners of the 1-3 Technology Start-Up Competition, which is a competition to support Nova Scotians with potential new knowledge-based businesses; and

Whereas Eric Bourque, owner of Nova Ergonomic Tool Technologies Inc., from Comeauville, was chosen as the second-place winner in zone 3, which includes Digby, Annapolis, Kings, and Hants counties; and

Whereas Eric Bourque was a winner in the regional competition with his Nova-Gripper, a unique tool for the construction trade;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating Eric Bourque on winning this impressive award and wish his business continued growth in the future.

RESOLUTION NO. 765

By: Hon. Sterling Belliveau (Fisheries and Aquaculture)

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

Whereas Sandy Point resident Bill Acker has been chosen as the 2012 Representative Volunteer for the Municipality of Shelburne; and

Whereas Bill Acker has been an active volunteer in his community for many years, from coaching minor hockey and ball and serving in various capacities for local sporting organizations to some 30 years as an active volunteer on various municipal recreation committees; and

Whereas Bill Acker has also been volunteering his time and expertise to the Sandy Point Recreation Group for more than 15 years and is involved in every aspect of the group's endeavours;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulates Bill Acker for being chosen as the 2012 Representative Volunteer for the Municipality of Shelburne and

applaud his outstanding contribution to the community.

RESOLUTION NO. 766

By: Hon. Sterling Belliveau (Fisheries and Aquaculture)

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

Whereas Doctors Cove resident Shelly Perry has been selected as the 2012 Representative Volunteer for the Municipality of Barrington; and

Whereas Shelly Perry has been an active volunteer in her community for more than 10 years, serving as President of the Wayne Perry Memorial Playground Association, contributing valuable time and energy to the Evelyn Richardson Memorial Elementary School Parent Support Group, and donating countless hours in support of the Rosalin Nickerson Care Fund Society; and

Whereas Shelly Perry also volunteers her time to help her seven-year-old son Josh with his teddy bear project, Josh's Caring Bears, delivering more than 300 teddies to four different seniors homes in Shelburne and Yarmouth Counties;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulates Shelly Perry, the 2012 Representative Volunteer for the Municipality of Barrington, for her outstanding contributions to the community.

RESOLUTION NO. 767

By: Hon. Sterling Belliveau (Fisheries and Aquaculture)

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

Whereas Lockeport resident Kendrick (Ken) Beck has been chosen as the 2012 Representative Volunteer for the Town of Lockeport; and

Whereas Ken Beck has been a driving force behind the promotion of youth soccer in the Town of Lockeport for the past six years by coaching, hosting skills clinics, carrying out field maintenance, taking part in fundraising activities and introducing pre-school and elementary school soccer programs in the community; and

Whereas Ken Beck's volunteerism goes back to the days when he was a Grade 11 high school student and has continued throughout the years in support of various community projects and events;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulate Lockeport resident Kendrick (Ken) Beck, the 2012 Representative Volunteer for the Town of Lockeport, for his outstanding contribution to the community.

RESOLUTION NO. 768

By: Hon. Sterling Belliveau (Fisheries and Aquaculture)

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

Whereas veteran Cecil D. Atkinson has been selected as the 2012 Representative Volunteer for the Town of Clark's Harbour; and

Whereas Cecil D. Atkinson has been a dedicated volunteer and a supportive member of the Cape Sable Island Branch of the Royal Canadian Legion for more than 22 years, consistently maintaining an active role wherever his time and talents were needed; and

Whereas Cecil D. Atkinson is described as an inspiration and a credit to the Royal Canadian Legion and his community and whose knowledge and reliability are shining examples for those following in his footsteps;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulate veteran Cecil D. Atkinson, the 2012 Representative Volunteer for the Town of Clark's Harbour, for his outstanding contributions to the community.

RESOLUTION NO. 769

By: Hon. Christopher d'Entremont (Argyle)

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

Whereas the birth of a child is a momentous event and marks the beginning of a very satisfying journey down a long road where the rewards far outnumber the challenges; and

Whereas Bill Cosby once said, "...the hardest truth for a father to learn is that his children are continuously growing up and moving away from him(until, of course, they move back in.)"; and

Whereas on April 16, 2012 a very special occasion took place when Alicia Newell and Preston Cottreau welcomed their daughter into the world;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Alicia and Preston on this miraculous event in their lives and wish them many happy years as parents.

RESOLUTION NO. 770

By: Hon. Christopher d'Entremont (Argyle)

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

Whereas the birth of a child is a momentous event and marks the beginning of a very satisfying journey down a long road where the rewards far outnumber the challenges; and

Whereas Bill Cosby once said, "...the hardest truth for a father to learn is that his children are continuously growing up and moving away from him (until, of course, they move back in.)"; and

Whereas on January 13, 2012 a very special occasion took place when Cassandra and Martial d'Entremont welcomed their daughter into the world;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Cassandra and Martial on this miraculous event in their lives and wish them many happy years as parents.

RESOLUTION NO. 771

By: Hon. Christopher d'Entremont (Argyle)

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

Whereas the birth of a child is a momentous event and marks the beginning of a very satisfying journey down a long road where the rewards far outnumber the challenges; and

Whereas Bill Cosby once said, "...the hardest truth for a father to learn is that his children are continuously growing up and moving away from him (until, of course, they move back in.)"; and

Whereas on December 7, 2011 a very special occasion took place when Amber Baker and Josh Muise welcomed their daughter into the world;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Amber and Josh on this miraculous event in their lives and wish them many happy years as parents.

RESOLUTION NO. 772

By: Hon. Christopher d'Entremont (Argyle)

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

Whereas anniversaries are an occasion for family and friends to gather together to celebrate the life of two individuals united as one; and

Whereas an unknown author once quoted, "A marriage anniversary is the celebration of love, trust, partnership, tolerance and tenacity. The order varies for any given year."; and

Whereas on January 10, 2012 a very special occasion took place when Mariette and Everette Surette celebrated their 50th Wedding Anniversary;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Mariette and Everette on this remarkable milestone in their life together and in wishing them many more happy years.

RESOLUTION NO. 773

By: Hon. Christopher d'Entremont (Argyle)

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

Whereas anniversaries are an occasion for family and friends to gather together to celebrate the life of two individuals united as one; and

Whereas an unknown author once quoted, "A marriage anniversary is the celebration of love, trust, partnership, tolerance and tenacity. The order varies for any given year."; and

Whereas on January 8, 2012 a very special occasion took place when Paulette and Donald Doucette celebrated their 50th Wedding Anniversary;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Paulette and Donald on this remarkable milestone in their life together and in wishing them

many more happy years.

RESOLUTION NO. 774

By: Hon. Christopher d'Entremont (Argyle)

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

Whereas anniversaries are an occasion for family and friends to gather together to celebrate the life of two individuals united as one; and

Whereas an unknown author once quoted, "A marriage anniversary is the celebration of love, trust, partnership, tolerance and tenacity. The order varies for any given year."; and

Whereas on February 17, 2012 a very special occasion took place when Phyllis and Hubert Pothier celebrated their 50th Wedding Anniversary;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Phyllis and Hubert on this remarkable milestone in their life together and in wishing them many more happy years.

RESOLUTION NO. 775

By: Hon. Christopher d'Entremont (Argyle)

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

Whereas anniversaries are an occasion for family and friends to gather together to celebrate the life of two individuals united as one; and

Whereas an unknown author once quoted, "A marriage anniversary is the celebration of love, trust, partnership, tolerance and tenacity. The order varies for any given year."; and

Whereas on December 30, 2011 a very special occasion took place when Nina and Rudolph Muise celebrated their 50th Wedding Anniversary;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Nina and Rudolph on this remarkable milestone in their life together and in wishing them many more happy years.