



DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Gordon Gosse

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HALIFAX, TUESDAY, MAY 15, 2012

Sixty-first General Assembly

Fourth Session

12:00 NOON

SPEAKER

Hon. Gordon Gosse

DEPUTY SPEAKERS

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

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please. Before we begin the daily routine, I will read the late debate, as submitted by the honourable member for Inverness:

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly urge the NDP Government to take concrete action to prevent cancelled surgeries, tests and procedures caused by strike or the threat of labour disruption in the health care field.

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Madam Speaker, on a point of order. Last night, during the frivolous debate that we had, while the honourable member for Cape Breton North was speaking, members on this side of the House heard (Interruption) Cape Breton West, sorry, did I do it again? - Cape Breton West heard some unparliamentary language, we believe, coming from the member for Lunenburg West. I'm just wondering whether that could be retracted or at least be reviewed.

MADAM SPEAKER: I will take that under advisement and report back on a later day. Thank you.

We will now commence with the daily routine.

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Natural Resources.

HON. CHARLIE PARKER: Madam Speaker, on behalf of the Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources, I beg leave to table a *Ministerial Land Transactions Regulations Annual Report 2011-2012*.

MADAM SPEAKER: The report is tabled.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

RESOLUTION NO. 1227

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

Whereas Section 7(1) of the Elections Act provides that “Subject to the approval of the House of Assembly by majority vote, the Governor in Council shall appoint a person to be the Chief Electoral Officer.”; and

Whereas an open competition was held and the selection committee has made a unanimous recommendation on the successful candidate to be appointed as Chief Electoral Officer;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly, pursuant to Section 7(1) of the Elections Act, approve the appointment by the Governor in Council of Richard Temporale as Chief Electoral Officer.

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

MADAM SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

NOTICES OF MOTION

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Natural Resources.

RESOLUTION NO. 1228

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

Whereas the Alma Fire Department of Alma, Pictou County, is celebrating 50 years of great service and protection to the many surrounding communities in 2012; and

Whereas the Alma Fire Department has grown from a small building and a used truck in 1962 to today having a five-bay station built in 2007, three pump/tanker combinations, a new utility/command van bought in 2009, and numerous pieces of protective gear and communications equipment; and

Whereas the Alma Fire Department Ladies Auxiliary has been very supportive in their fundraising efforts and has raised more than \$100,000 over the years for the fire department;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly thank the Alma Fire Department and Ladies Auxiliary for their important service in protecting our communities, congratulate them on 50 great years, and wish them continued success.

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

MADAM SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Kings West.

RESOLUTION NO. 1229

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

Whereas the NDP have sat by idly, doing nothing, while power rates have soared in Nova Scotia, causing businesses to be less competitive and life to be less affordable for families; and

Whereas in the same week that Nova Scotia Power indicated their intention to squeeze another 6 per cent power hike out of Nova Scotians, it was discovered that their executives were getting double-digit raises and throwing lavish parties, and yet the NDP still refuse to stand up for Nova Scotians; and

Whereas as of this morning, over 21,000 Nova Scotians have signed on to a petition calling on the NDP Government to direct the URB to deny Nova Scotia Power any general rate increases for the next three years;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly condemn the member for Kings South for not standing up for Nova Scotians and call on the NDP Government to finally take action against continued power rate increases.

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

MADAM SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

I hear several Noes.

The notice is tabled.

The honourable member for Argyle.

RESOLUTION NO. 1230

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

Whereas the Nova Scotia wine industry is flourishing and growing at a significant rate; and

Whereas the British Columbia Legislature recently gave unanimous support to a federal Private Member's Bill calling for an amendment to the Importation of Intoxicating Liquors Act; and

Whereas this legislation would give individuals a personal exemption to either directly import, send or transport wine only for personal consumption across provincial borders in Canada;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly support the Nova Scotia wine industry by signalling support of Mr. Albas' bill.

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

MADAM SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

I hear several Noes.

The notice is tabled.

The honourable member for Cape Breton South.

RESOLUTION NO. 1231

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

Whereas the NDP have sat by idly, doing nothing, while power rates have soared in Nova Scotia, causing businesses to be less competitive and life to be less affordable for families; and

Whereas in the same week that Nova Scotia Power indicated their intention to squeeze another 6 per cent power hike out of all Nova Scotians, it was discovered that their executives were getting double-digit raises and throwing lavish parties, and yet the NDP still refuse to stand up for Nova Scotians; and

Whereas as of this morning, over 21,000 Nova Scotians have signed on to a petition calling on the NDP Government to direct the URB to deny Nova Scotia Power any general rate increases for the next three years;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly condemn the member for Pictou West for not standing up for Nova Scotians and call on the NDP Government to finally take action against continued power rate increases.

MADAM SPEAKER: The notice is tabled.

The honourable member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island - I missed his turn so I'm going back there.

RESOLUTION NO. 1232

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

Whereas the Nova Scotia-Gambia Association is a non-profit organization that builds healthy communities in The Gambia through the delivery of youth-focused programs in areas such as gender equity, malaria prevention, sexual and reproductive health - including confidential HIV testing - and environmental sustainability; and

Whereas the signature event of the Nova Scotia-Gambia Association is the annual African Dinner and Auction, which raises much-needed funds to help support youth-driven health and education projects in The Gambia; and

Whereas on May 12, 2012, more than 200 community members gathered for the 27th annual African Dinner and Auction where they were treated to an evening of West African cuisine, drum and dance performances, and sharing of stories by inspiring volunteers and Gambians;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly recognize the Nova Scotia-Gambia Association as a vital force in youth-driven, community-based projects, and extend congratulations on 27 years of advancing health and education in The Gambia.

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

MADAM 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.

I'm going to get back into the sync of rotation - the honourable member for Cape Breton North.

RESOLUTION NO. 1233

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

Whereas the province's nine district health authorities and the IWK Health Centre will negotiate 50 collective agreements this year; and

Whereas Nova Scotians don't want to repeat last month's experience of important surgeries, procedures and test cancellations because of a labour negotiation that might result in a strike or a lockout; and

Whereas to adjourn this session without doing anything to remedy the waste, patient suffering and extended wait times that result from preparing for health strikes is irresponsible;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly direct the government to present a plan in this session to guarantee there will be no labour-related health care disruptions at the Cape Breton District Health Authority.

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

MADAM SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

I hear several Noes.

The notice is tabled.

The honourable member for Cumberland North.

RESOLUTION NO. 1234

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

Whereas mine rescue teams are a vital part of mine operations in Nova Scotia and are called upon to battle mine fires, contain underground floods, and rescue those trapped beneath layers of rock following an explosion; and

Whereas mine rescue teams throughout Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Newfoundland and Labrador came together to compete and learn from each other during the 2012 Nova Scotia/New Brunswick Mine Rescue Competition in Springhill over the weekend; and

Whereas the Canadian Salt Company Limited Mine Rescue Team of Pugwash, Nova Scotia, consisting of Coordinator Alan MacKenzie, Trainer Bruce Beattie, No. 1 Captain Robert McKellar, No. 2 Scott Bollong, No. 3 Dane Henderson, No. 4 Glenn Jamieson, No. 5 David MacLean, No. 6 Rene Power, and No. 7 John Fortier, have proven their skills are second to none;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly join me in congratulating the Canadian Salt Company Limited Mine Rescue Team of Pugwash, Nova Scotia, for the success of the 2012 Nova Scotia/New Brunswick Mine Rescue Competition.

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

MADAM SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Preston.

RESOLUTION NO. 1235

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

Whereas Chief Frank Beazley will retire in September after 42 years of distinguished service with the City of Halifax and later the Halifax Regional Municipality; and

Whereas Chief Beazley joined the Halifax Police Department in 1970, where he worked his way through the ranks, and was officially appointed chief of the Halifax Regional Police in June 2003, where he brought more diversity to the police services and served our city well; and

Whereas Chief Beazley is the recipient of the Police Exemplary Service Medal and the Queen's Golden Jubilee Medal, and is a member of the Order of Merit of the Police Forces;

Therefore be it resolved that this House recognize the many accomplishments of Chief Frank Beazley, wish him well in his long-deserved retirement, and thank him for the tremendous contribution he has made to our province.

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

MADAM SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Hants West.

RESOLUTION NO. 1236

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

Whereas the province's nine district health authorities and the IWK Health Centre will negotiate 50 collective agreements this year; and

Whereas Nova Scotians don't want to repeat last month's experience of important surgery, procedure, and test cancellations because a labour negotiation might result in a strike or lockout; and

Whereas to adjourn this session without doing anything to remedy the waste, patient suffering, and extended wait times that result from preparing for health strikes is irresponsible;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly direct the government to present a plan in this session to guarantee there will be no labour-related health care disruptions at the Annapolis Valley District Health Authority.

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

MADAM SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

I hear several Noes.

The notice is tabled.

The honourable member for Hammonds Plains-Upper Sackville.

RESOLUTION NO. 1237

MR. MAT WHYNOTT: Madam Speaker, on behalf of the member for Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas Reverend John Ferguson was ordained in 1991 and immediately began serving as the rector at St. Peter's Anglican Church in Eastern Passage, where he has been for 20 years; and

Whereas Reverend John has been faithfully serving his parishioners in a way that they describe as caring, friendly, and approachable, and is a modern thinker who works tirelessly to increase the congregation while staying true to his Anglican roots; and

Whereas on April 14, 2012, to celebrate the 20th Anniversary of Reverend John Ferguson's ordination to the priesthood, a fun-filled event called Roastin' the Rector was enjoyed by his parish and guests in a typical Reverend John style;

Therefore be it resolved that this Nova Scotia House of Assembly congratulate Reverend John Ferguson on the 20th Anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood and thank him for the unwavering devotion and service to the people of the parish and to the community of Eastern Passage area.

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

MADAM SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Bedford-Birch Cove.

RESOLUTION NO. 1238

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

Whereas the NDP have sat idly by doing nothing while power rates have soared in Nova Scotia, causing businesses to be less competitive and life to be less affordable for families; and

Whereas in the same week that Nova Scotia Power indicated their intention to squeeze another 6 per cent power hike out of Nova Scotians, it was discovered their executives were getting double-digit raises and throwing lavish parties, and yet the NDP still refused to stand up for Nova Scotians; and

Whereas as of this morning, over 21,000 Nova Scotians have signed a petition calling on the NDP Government to direct the URB to deny Nova Scotia Power any general rate increases for the next three years;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly condemn the member for Waverley-Fall River-Beaver Bank for not standing up for Nova Scotians and call on the NDP Government to finally take action against continued power rate increases.

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

MADAM SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

I hear several Noes.

The notice is tabled.

The honourable member for Inverness.

RESOLUTION NO. 1239

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

Whereas 719 Stora Royal Canadian Air Cadet Squadron celebrated their 50th Anniversary on May 12, 2012; and

Whereas the anniversary provided an opportunity to reflect upon how valuable the air cadet experience has been for so many; and

Whereas this squadron has drawn members from the Strait area, providing valuable training to generations of youth from all economic backgrounds, free of charge;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly acknowledge Chief Officer Robert Digou, parents, volunteers, and Branch 43 Royal Canadian Legion Port Hawkesbury for supporting the air cadet experience.

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

MADAM 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. 1240

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

Whereas Centre Consolidated School, located in Centre, Lunenburg County, first opened its doors to students in the area in 1958, and officially closed its doors in March of 2012 after educating three generations of Lunenburg County students; and

Whereas the Lunenburg Academy, affectionately known as the Castle on the Hill due to its majestic architecture, opened in 1895, served students from the Town of Lunenburg for more than a century and officially closed its doors in March 2012; and

Whereas the new Bluenose Academy, built on the site of the old Lunenburg High School, with a gold LEED efficiency rating and green roof on its gymnasium, covered with local plants and mosses, opened on March 21, 2012, to serve students from Centre Consolidated School and the Lunenburg Academy;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly recognize the long history of both Centre Consolidated School and the Lunenburg Academy, while welcoming all new students in the area to their new school, the Bluenose Academy.

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

MADAM SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Colchester North..

RESOLUTION NO. 1241

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

Whereas the Halifax Regional School Board, the province's largest board, has announced the elimination of 152 fewer classroom teachers for the upcoming school year; and

Whereas the Halifax Regional School Board has said that the impact of these cuts will be felt by students and teachers, and that the impact will be "unavoidable"; and

Whereas teachers, parents, and students across the province are concerned about how this government's \$65 million cuts to education will affect the quality of education in our schools;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House ask the NDP Government to identify education as a priority, acknowledge the negative impacts of a \$65 million cut in funding to public education, protect public education in Nova Scotia, and begin to make funding decisions based on the needs of our students.

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

MADAM SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

I hear several Noes.

The notice is tabled.

The honourable member for Argyle.

RESOLUTION NO. 1242

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

Whereas the province's nine district health authorities and the IWK Health Centre will negotiate 50 collective agreements this year; and

Whereas Nova Scotians don't want to repeat last month's experience of important surgeries, procedures and tests cancellations because a labour negotiation might result in a strike or lockout; and

Whereas to adjourn this session without doing anything to remedy the waste, patient suffering, and extended wait times that result from preparing for health strikes is irresponsible;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly direct the government to present a plan in this session to guarantee that there will be no labour-related health care disruptions at the South West Health District Authority.

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

MADAM SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

I hear several Noes.

The notice is tabled.

The honourable member for Digby-Annapolis.

RESOLUTION NO. 1243

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

Whereas today marks the 28th annual Export Achievements Awards, celebrating the province's top exporters; and

Whereas these awards give opportunity to commend the accomplishments and contributions Nova Scotian exporters provide to the economy; and

Whereas Sissiboo Investments of Weymouth is one of these 11 companies being recognized for their success, innovation, and prosperity;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of the House congratulate Sissiboo Investment on their achievements, and wish them all the best in their future exports.

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

MADAM SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Cape Breton West.

RESOLUTION NO. 1244

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

Whereas the member for Pictou East proclaimed yesterday that he knows, ". . . more about the Fortress of Louisbourg and its value to that community than anyone else in this House"; and

Whereas the member for Pictou East, who wants to be a minister but never will be, should use his vast knowledge of Louisbourg to show the Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism where it is on a map and urge him to develop a Cape Breton tourism strategy; and

Whereas the NDP, including the member for Pictou East, have done little for the people of Louisbourg except send rural Nova Scotia into a recession;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly urge the Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism to provide funds to build a monument in Louisbourg in the image of the member for Pictou East, so that the local pigeons will have a place to sit.

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

MADAM SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

I hear several Noes.

The notice is tabled.

The honourable member for Glace Bay.

RESOLUTION NO. 1245

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

Whereas the Cape Breton Sports Hall of Fame has been honouring teams and individuals who have contributed much to our island's rich sport heritage since the hall's inception in 1997; and

Whereas the May 2012 induction ceremony will include Glace Bay's powerhouse, the 1961 Caledonia Aces, winners of the Maritime B Senior Softball Championship; and

Whereas the historic '61 Aces were the first Cape Breton fastball team to win a Maritime title, which took place 26 years after the Maritime Softball Association's inception in 1935;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House join me in congratulating the Caledonia Aces team members: Titus Miller, Mick McIntyre, Francis Bonnar, Roddie "Yogi" Boutilier, Buddy Bonner, Tommy Andrews, Gerry Cronie, Henry "Rooster" Wilson, Richie Walton, Vince Ryan, Sonny Simmons, Mike MacIntosh, Naish Batten, Wilf "Hook" Edmund, Pats MacNeil, Gordie Murray, Junior Gardiner, the bat boy, Nick Bonnar, and we hope they enjoy their special night, the induction ceremony, on Saturday, May 26th, 2012.

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

MADAM 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 House Leader for the Official Opposition.

RESOLUTION NO. 1246

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

Whereas the NDP have sat by idly doing nothing while power rates have soared in Nova Scotia, causing businesses to be less competitive and life to be less affordable for families; and

Whereas in the same week that Nova Scotia Power indicated their intention to squeeze another 6 per cent power hike out of Nova Scotians, it was discovered that their executives were getting double-digit raises and throwing lavish parties and yet the NDP still refused to stand up for Nova Scotians; and

Whereas as of this morning, over 21,000 Nova Scotians have signed onto a petition calling on the NDP Government to direct the Utility and Review Board to deny Nova Scotia Power any general rate increases for the next three years;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly condemn the member for Queens for not standing up for Nova Scotians and call on the NDP Government to finally take action against continued power rate increases.

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

MADAM SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

I hear several Noes.

The notice is tabled.

The honourable member for Halifax Clayton Park.

RESOLUTION NO. 1247

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

Whereas the NDP have sat idly doing nothing while power rates have soared in Nova Scotia, causing businesses to be less competitive and life to be less affordable for families; and

Whereas in the same week that Nova Scotia Power indicated their intention to squeeze another 6 per cent power rate hike out of Nova Scotians, it was discovered that their executives were getting double-digit raises, throwing lavish parties and yet the NDP still refused to stand up for Nova Scotians; and

Whereas as of this morning, over 21,000 Nova Scotians have signed onto a petition calling on the NDP Government to direct the URB to deny Nova Scotia Power any general rate increases for the next three years;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly condemn the member for Truro-Bible Hill for not standing up for Nova Scotians and call on the NDP Government to finally take action against continued power rate increases.

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

MADAM SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

I hear several Noes.

The notice is tabled.

The honourable member for Clare.

RESOLUTION NO. 1248

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

Whereas the NDP have sat by idly, doing nothing, while the power rates have soared in Nova Scotia, causing businesses to be less competitive and life to be less affordable for today's families; and

Whereas the same week that Nova Scotia Power indicated their intention to squeeze another 6 per cent power hike out of Nova Scotians, it was discovered that their executives were getting double-digit raises and throwing lavish parties, and yet the NDP still refuse to stand up for Nova Scotians; and

Whereas, as of this morning, over 21,000 Nova Scotians have signed on to a petition calling on the NDP Government to direct the URB to deny Nova Scotia Power any general rate increase for the next three years;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly condemn the member for Sackville-Cobequid for not standing up for Nova Scotians and call on the NDP Government to finally take action against continued power rate increases.

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

MADAM SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

I hear several Noes.

The notice is tabled.

The honourable member for Bedford-Birch Cove.

RESOLUTION NO. 1249

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

Whereas the United Church Women was formed in 1962 when two earlier groups, the Ladies' Aid and the Ladies Missionary Societies, joined together to create a group that would support the work of the United Church of Canada; and

Whereas the United Church Women here in Nova Scotia support worship, music, Sunday school, theological training and seminars, international relief efforts, summer camps, the Tatamagouche Centre, the Brunswick Street Mission, scholarships, potluck suppers, wedding banquets, the Canadian Bible Society, and other projects; and

Whereas today the UCW will celebrate 50 years of devotion to duty with celebrations that will include 97 charter members in the Truro Presbytery who are now more than 90 years old;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly congratulate the United Church Women for all the good work they do and wish them well in their next 50 years.

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

MADAM SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

RESOLUTION NO. 1250

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

Whereas the Nova Scotia Business Hall of Fame was established by Junior Achievement in 1993 to recognize business leaders in our province and to inspire young Nova Scotians with whom Junior Achievement works to pursue careers in business; and

Whereas on Thursday, May 24, 2012, Chief Terrance Paul of Membertou First Nation will be inducted into the Junior Achievement Nova Scotia Business Hall of Fame; and

Whereas Chief Terrance Paul's passion and vision saw Membertou's operating budget grow from \$4 million to \$65 million, and the number of employees grow from 37 to more than 500 over a 10-year period;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the Legislature congratulate Chief Terrance Paul for this most prestigious induction, extend our appreciation for his commitment to the economic resurgence of Membertou First Nation, and wish him all the very best in his future endeavours.

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

MADAM SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Colchester North.

RESOLUTION NO. 1251

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

Whereas the NDP has sat idly by, doing nothing, while power rates have soared in Nova Scotia, causing businesses to be less competitive and life to be less affordable for families; and

Whereas in the same week that Nova Scotia Power indicated their intention to squeeze another 6 per cent power hike out of Nova Scotians, it was discovered that their executives were getting double-digit raises and throwing lavish parties, and yet the NDP Government still refuses to stand up for Nova Scotians; and

Whereas, as of this morning, over 21,000 Nova Scotians have signed a petition calling on the NDP to direct the URB to deny Nova Scotia Power any general rate increases in the next three years;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly ask the member for Pictou East to stand up for Nova Scotians and call on the NDP Government to finally take action against the continued power rate increases.

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

MADAM SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

I hear several Noes.

The notice is tabled.

The honourable member for Preston.

RESOLUTION NO. 1252

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

Whereas the NDP have sat idly by, doing nothing, while power rates have soared in Nova Scotia, causing businesses to be less competitive and life less affordable for families; and

Whereas in the same week that Nova Scotia Power indicated they are going to squeeze another 6 per cent power hike out of Nova Scotians, it was discovered that their executives were getting double-digit raises and throwing lavish parties, and yet the NDP still refuse to stand up for Nova Scotians; and

Whereas, as of this morning, over 21,000 Nova Scotians have signed a petition calling on the NDP Government to direct the URB to deny Nova Scotia Power any general rate increases for the next three years;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly condemn the member for Pictou Centre for not standing up for Nova Scotians and call on the NDP Government to finally take action against these continued power rate increases.

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

MADAM SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

I hear several Noes.

The notice is tabled.

The honourable member for Bedford-Birch Cove.

RESOLUTION NO. 1253

MS. KELLY REGAN: Madam Speaker, on behalf of the member for Dartmouth East, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas the NDP have sat idly by, doing nothing, while power rates have soared in Nova Scotia, causes businesses to be less competitive and life to be less affordable for Nova Scotia families; and

Whereas in the same week that Nova Scotia Power indicated their intention to squeeze another 6 per cent power hike out of Nova Scotians, it was discovered that their executives were getting double-digit raises and throwing lavish parties, and yet the NDP still refuse to stand up for Nova Scotians; and

Whereas, as of this morning, over 21,000 Nova Scotians have signed on to a petition calling on the NDP Government to direct the URB to deny Nova Scotia Power any general rate increases for the next three years;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly ask the member for Timberlea-Prospect to stand up for Nova Scotians and call on the NDP Government to finally take action against continued power rate increases.

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

MADAM SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

I hear several Noes.

The notice is tabled.

The honourable member for Yarmouth.

RESOLUTION NO. 1254

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

Whereas Yarmouth native Denise Robson has had great provincial, national and international success as a marathon runner; and

Whereas between 2005 and 2010, Denise Robson was the Nova Scotia Timex road-racing champion for six consecutive years, is the record holder for several races, and was the top female Canadian finisher in Boston in 2010; and

Whereas on May 5, 2012, Denise Robson was inducted into the Yarmouth Town and County Sports Heritage Association's Hall of Fame;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly congratulate Denise Robson on being inducted into the Yarmouth Town and County Sports Heritage Association's Hall of Fame, and recognize her for her many impressive achievements as a marathon runner.

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

MADAM SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Yarmouth.

RESOLUTION NO. 1255

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

Whereas the year 1992 saw the Yarmouth McDonald's Jr. B baseball team being named the Baseball Team of the Year for Nova Scotia, and the team won both the provincial and Atlantic championships; and

Whereas coach Paul Gould was named Coach of the Year for 1992 for his unwavering guidance of the team, which consisted of Scott Surette, Pat Muise, Kelsey Crowell, Ken Frotten, Dwayne Fitzgerald, Darren Olsen, Brent Patten, Darrell Frotten, Byron Spinney, Frank Grant, Jason Nelson, Jim Gould, Martin Muise, Russell Grant, Paul Gould, Jr., and assistant coach Don Nelson; and

Whereas on May 5, 2012, the Yarmouth McDonald's Jr. B baseball team was inducted into the Yarmouth Town and County Sports Heritage Association's Hall of Fame;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly congratulate the Yarmouth McDonald's Jr. B baseball team on being inducted into the Yarmouth Town and County Sports Heritage Association's Hall of Fame, and recognize them for their impressive achievements and contributions to sports in Yarmouth.

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

MADAM SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS

MADAM SPEAKER: The time is now 12:41 p.m. and we will proceed to 1:41 p.m.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

PREM. - NSP: EQUITY RETURN - REDUCTION DEMAND

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL: Madam Speaker, it's time the NDP Government and this Premier started working for Nova Scotians. The current power structure in Nova Scotia benefits Nova Scotia Power and its executives, not the people of this province. My question to the Premier is, will the Premier stand up to Nova Scotia Power and demand a reduction in the return on equity?

THE PREMIER: Madam Speaker, when this government came to power one of the first things it did was to take the HST off of home electricity. There is not one cent of provincial tax on electricity in this province because of what this caucus has done with respect to the cost of power in the province. Unfortunately, we inherited the system put in place by past Progressive Conservative and Liberal Governments.

MR. MCNEIL: Madam Speaker, there is a tax on power bills in this province called the NDP electricity tax and it was imposed by this government shortly after coming into power. More than \$100 million a year is being taken out of Nova Scotians by Nova Scotia Power and delivered to Emera to invest elsewhere. Last year was a record-breaking year with profits of \$123.5 million. A 9.2 per cent return on equity is simply too much for a company that faces no risk. My question to the Premier is, will the Premier break Nova Scotia Power's monopoly and make the power company compete in a highly-regulated market to ensure the rate of return is fair to all Nova Scotians?

THE PREMIER: That's what they say, but that's not what they mean. What they mean is they want to get on the road to deregulation, they want to drive up power costs. The Energy Critic for the Liberal Party tabled in this House legislation that would lead to the deregulation of the utility. I would like to read for the Leader of the Official Opposition the New Brunswick Energy Blueprint in October 2011 that responded to their own legislation and it says, "In particular, the competitive market has not developed in New Brunswick as anticipated - and given what has occurred in British Columbia, Ontario and elsewhere where competitive electricity markets have also failed to thrive - there is little likelihood

that it will happen.” Madam Speaker, I will table that for the Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. MCNEIL: Madam Speaker, here’s one guarantee, if the Premier continues to just sit idly by without any solutions, the power rates are going to continue to rise in this province. The people of this province don’t need to worry, when we say something on this side of the House, we mean it. When that Premier says something, he means something completely different. For example, he opposed the efficiency tax before the election, but once Nova Scotians voted he changed his mind pretty quickly and added a tax to every power bill in the Province of Nova Scotia.

The Premier doesn’t mind asking classroom teachers to do more with less, he doesn’t mind asking nurses and health care workers to do more with less, why is he afraid to stand up and tell Nova Scotia Power executives to do more with less?

THE PREMIER: Madam Speaker, as the Leader of the Official Opposition knows we said last year that we would not allow executive bonuses to go into the power rates, they were going to be paid by the shareholders, and that’s what has happened, that’s what is happening again in this rate filing. Perhaps the next time the Leader of the Official Opposition stands up he can tell Nova Scotians whether or not if they - God forbid - were ever the government, whether they would, in fact, put back in place the HST on home electricity.

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

PREM. - HEALTH CARE STRIKE: SERVICES - PROTECT

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Madam Speaker, just last month the threat of a work stoppage at Capital Health led to the cancellation of over 500 surgeries and 2,000 important health procedures for residents not just of the Capital area but for all Nova Scotia. Now, less than a month later, we know that there is an upcoming collective bargaining session between Nova Scotia's 6,500 nurses and all of the health districts of the province.

Today the president of the Nova Scotia Nurses’ Union, when asked if that could lead to a strike, said yes, that’s exactly what it would mean. I table that for the benefit of the Premier and the House. Madam Speaker, it is not acceptable to the patients of Nova Scotia that they be the ones to have their important surgeries set aside, their important health care procedures set aside, because of an impasse in collective bargaining.

My question to the Premier is, what plan does the Premier have to ensure that these important health services are protected and that our health system is not yet again held up in turmoil because of the threat of a work stoppage?

THE PREMIER: Madam Speaker, the nurses in our province are among a group of excellent health care workers we have throughout the province. They provide great front-line care. They are literally the face of our health care system.

We intend to bargain with them fairly. We hope to reach a reasonable resolve with them on this round of bargaining. That is a commitment we make on behalf of the people of Nova Scotia.

MR. BAILLIE: Madam Speaker, of course the nurses are a very important part of our health care system. That is exactly the point. They are crucial to the delivery of health care services to all Nova Scotians. Nurses are people who chose to go into the health care system because they care about the ongoing delivery of important services and surgeries and procedures to all Nova Scotians.

That's why the province needs to know that those services will be protected and maintained as collective bargaining sessions go on, even in the event of an impasse. The Premier refuses to stand up for those Nova Scotians, just like he refused to stand up for them the last time, when he stood by and watched 500 surgeries cancelled and 2,000 other important health care procedures cancelled because of the threat of a disruption to health care services.

My question to the Premier is, right now, will he commit to bringing a plan into this House before it adjourns for the summer, to show Nova Scotians that he will make sure their health care services go on uninterrupted?

THE PREMIER: Madam Speaker, we plan on fulfilling our responsibility with respect to collective bargaining in the province to treat nurses fairly. What we're not going to do is what is suggested by the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party, where he would bring in legislation to affect collective bargaining rights - the same kind of legislation that led to four illegal strikes in Alberta. That same kind of legislation is what he would like to see in here.

MR. BAILLIE: Madam Speaker, the fact that the Premier wants to debate our plan is exactly the point. He has no plan of his own. As we learned in this Question Period, he refuses to bring in a plan before the House rises for the summer. He's okay with leaving all Nova Scotians exposed to the risk that they will lose their surgeries, they will lose their important health care procedures, because he won't bring a plan into this House before it breaks for the summer.

You know what, Madam Speaker? There is a bill on the order paper that deals with this right now, that preserves collective bargaining, that respects taxpayers and also keeps those services going. Will the Premier commit to calling that bill for debate before the House rises? Yes or no?

THE PREMIER: Madam Speaker, the legislation that the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party is talking about is the exact legislation that led to illegal strikes in Alberta. One of the longest strikes in health care in this country took place in Alberta by nurses who already have legislation that outlaws strikes.

We have seen this time and again. Perhaps the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party did not learn from Bill No. 68 when nurses simply resigned. Can you imagine what kind of chaos they would create in the health care system?

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

PREM. - NSP: RATE INCREASES - STANCE

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL: Madam Speaker, another year of NDP governance and another rate increase is on the way. In fact, there are at least three more rate increases. The hearings for a proposed rate increase will begin on September 13, 2012. My question for the Premier is, does the Premier oppose the intended rate increases for 2013, 2014 and 2015 by Nova Scotia Power?

THE PREMIER: Madam Speaker, what I oppose is the system that was left to us by the Liberals and Progressive Conservatives in the former administrations. That is why we are changing the system. That's why we brought forward an electricity plan that shifts us off of coal, that ensures that we will move to renewables that are the most stable form of a rate base in the country. We're fixing a mess they left behind and they won't even say if they would reimpose the HST on electricity. When will they tell us?

MR. MCNEIL: Madam Speaker, I was honoured and privileged to be able to represent my Party and my constituents at the last rate increase and asking questions of Nova Scotia Power executives about the direction of their company and why they were continuing to ask Nova Scotians to pay more money while their executive compensation package was going up. My question to the Premier is, will he show leadership and clear his schedule and show up at the rate hearing in September and oppose any rate increase by Nova Scotia Power?

THE PREMIER: Madam Speaker, the government will be represented there. What I think we need to understand is that as a government, we're the ones who took the HST off of home electricity. Yet the Leader of the Opposition now has had the opportunity, he has been on his feet since I last spoke but he refuses to say that he would not keep that in place. That's because they wouldn't retract the HST because they would have done the same thing, they would have put the HST in place. They put it in place in the first instance and now we see that when they voted against it in this House, when they campaigned against it, of course they're in favour of higher taxes on electricity.

MR. MCNEIL: Madam Speaker, when I tell Nova Scotians something, they can believe it, unlike the Premier. This is the Premier who went around Nova Scotia and told Nova Scotians that he was going to take the HST off of electricity. But he forgot to tell them he was going to impose an NDP electricity tax on every power bill across this province.

Under the Premier's watch, our electricity rates have increased by over 20 per cent and no stoppage in sight, they're continuing to climb. Under the Premier's watch we've seen executive salaries at Nova Scotia Power go through the roof, as high as our rates are climbing with not a whisper out of the Premier. My question for the Premier is, will he show leadership, show up at the rate hearing, defend Nova Scotians and demand no rate increase to the power bills?

THE PREMIER: Instead of just defending ratepayers in Nova Scotia when it's convenient, I do it every single day. That is why we took the HST off of home electricity. That is why we have brought in an electricity plan that actually means that rates will become stable over the long term. That's why we signed the memorandum of understanding on Lower Churchill with Newfoundland and Labrador and we have a Leader of the Opposition who won't even say whether or not he would put the HST back on home electricity. Really, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

PREM. - NSP ENERGY-EFFICIENCY TAX: RATEPAYERS - EFFECT

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL: Madam Speaker, the energy efficiency tax the NDP Government added to power bills across the Province of Nova Scotia has taken \$40 million out of the pockets of Nova Scotians. My question to the Premier is, why does the Premier believe that Nova Scotian ratepayers should pay that and not Nova Scotia Power shareholders?

THE PREMIER: Madam Speaker, I will table right now the testimony before the Public Accounts Committee of Mr. Crandlemire, from Efficiency Nova Scotia who points out that \$100 million in benefits have been returned to Nova Scotians through energy efficiency efforts. That is because we are committed to ensuring that conservation has a place in Nova Scotia. We know, and the Leader of the Opposition should know, that conservation efforts actually lead to benefits for ratepayers, not costs.

MR. MCNEIL: Madam Speaker, just imagine if shareholders were paying for that, there would be a \$140 million benefit. I want to remind the Premier that not only is it a benefit to ratepayers, it's a real benefit to the shareholders of Nova Scotia Power when they do not have to invest in more power production. It is the power company that should be paying the NDP electricity tax.

Madam Speaker, in the 2009 election the Premier and the NDP opposed this tax, and I want to table a letter that they had sent to the URB saying just that, but that was before Nova Scotians voted. Following the vote, all of a sudden the Premier fell in love with the NDP electricity tax and he added it to every power bill across this province. So why does the Premier think that Nova Scotia ratepayers should pay the NDP electricity tax and not the shareholders?

THE PREMIER: As you know, Madam Speaker, the conservation efforts mean that ratepayers get a tangible benefit, in fact two and a half times the cost that they pay to Efficiency Nova Scotia. This was a program that came forward through the Utility and Review Board. It turns out that it has been very, very beneficial to ratepayers. So what I guess I would like to know from the Leader of the Opposition is, in addition to putting the HST back onto electricity, would he also do away with Efficiency Nova Scotia?

MR. MCNEIL: Madam Speaker, we're trying to find those Nova Scotians who have saved this \$100 million the Premier's talking about because every Nova Scotian who's talking to this caucus and is talking to every other Nova Scotian, is talking about the power rates increasing, not decreasing.

Madam Speaker, that has happened under his leadership, that has happened under the leadership of Premier Dexter and the NDP Government in Nova Scotia. He has had three years to respond to the people of Nova Scotia and the only thing he has done around electricity is added the NDP electricity tax, another \$40 million taken out of the pockets of Nova Scotians, and he has allowed the Nova Scotia Power executives to do as they wish, to take more and more money out of the pockets of Nova Scotians.

Madam Speaker, no one is opposed to energy efficiency. (Interruptions)

MADAM SPEAKER: Question.

MR. MCNEIL: No one is opposed to energy efficiency. The question is who pays? They believe ratepayers should pay, we believe Nova Scotia Power shareholders should pay. Will the Premier show up at the Utility and Review Board and demand that the shareholders pay for his NDP electricity tax?

THE PREMIER: Madam Speaker, one of the first things we did when we came into this House is we fought for lower prices for consumers by taking the HST off of electricity - something that the members of that Party campaigned against, something they spoke against here, and if they had their way, they would tax electricity and send it even higher.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle.

PREM.: EMERA PARTY - APOLOGY REQUEST

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Madam Speaker, yesterday we learned that only after Nova Scotia Power asked to raise rates by 6 per cent over the next two years, their parent company, Emera, threw a party at Salty's Restaurant on the Halifax waterfront. The party had a guest list of only 28 people yet featured three different entertainment acts. It seems no expense was spared. What a slap in the face to Nova Scotia ratepayers. At a time when Nova Scotians can't even afford to get a meal at Salty's because of the NDP's economic management, Emera executives are partying it up - only a day after asking ratepayers to cough up even more.

My question, Madam Speaker, through you is to the Premier. When will the Premier stand up for ratepayers and tell Emera enough is enough and ask their executives to issue an apology to Nova Scotians for an offensive gesture?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I will say this, I think if what the honourable member sets out is true, I think it was extraordinarily ill-advised and, quite frankly, shows poor judgment. The reality is though we have been left with Emera, with a structure with Nova Scotia Power, something that was created as a result of both of the Parties who sit across from us. They privatized it. Surely they must have known when they were privatizing it, that this day would come.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: Madam Speaker, let's talk about some of these things that the Premier is bringing up. In fact, we don't know anything about what the Premier agrees to do for Nova Scotia Power, Emera. Apparently they didn't even take notes at the Premier's Office. The Premier has failed to produce a single shred of documentation regarding his dealings with Emera and NSPC - no correspondence, no minutes from meetings, nothing.

Initially we thought it was odd that the Premier of Nova Scotia would have no records of dealings with Nova Scotia Power or for its parent company. But we do know the truth at this point, Madam Speaker. A FOIPOP obtained by our office shows the Premier and members of his staff flew between Halifax and St. John's on November 17th and November 18th to announce the \$6.2 billion Churchill mega project.

Just how did they get there, Madam Speaker? They took the Emera corporate jet. While the Premier was busy joining the mile high club at Nova Scotia Power, ratepayers were the ones getting taken for a ride.

My question, Madam Speaker, when will the Premier stop cozying up to Emera executives, getting pulled in to their agenda, and putting the ratepayers first for a change?

THE PREMIER: Madam Speaker, just so we're absolutely clear and so that - I know that the member for Argyle doesn't really care about facts but the fact of the matter is

that we paid the commercial rate for the flight. It was, in fact, the most convenient way to get there on that particular day because we were making an announcement that is going to change the energy landscape of our region. This was the signing of the memorandum of understanding between Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador for the Lower Churchill project.

Madam Speaker, if you're asking me, I think that was a great day for Nova Scotia.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: Madam Speaker, noteworthy, the Premier did ensure taxpayers were reimbursed. They reimbursed Emera to the tune of \$2,045.82. After all, don't forget, times are tough at Emera that you have to pay them back so quickly.

The fact that the Premier won't discuss a single thing (Interruption) Times are tough at Emera. The fact that the Premier won't disclose a single thing about what his minister calls his intimate knowledge of Emera but then enjoys a mile-high adventure on their corporate jet, seriously raises ethical questions that need to be answered. The Premier can't hide from this one any longer.

Why won't the Premier tell us what was discussed on the corporate jet ride? Why does his office have no record or anything discussed with Emera or Nova Scotia Power at any time? What is he hiding?

THE PREMIER: Well you've got to hand it to them, Madam Speaker. So if I wouldn't have paid for it, I would have received some kind of a benefit; if I do pay for it, I'm guilty of somehow repaying it too quickly.

I can tell you this, this was a great day for Nova Scotia. The Lower Churchill memorandum of understanding was signed on that day. That was the way to get there and get back, in order to be able to do business on behalf of the province. I realize that the former Cabinet Minister, the member for Argyle, has no idea about the necessity to do business on behalf of Nova Scotians and that's why they had the worst economic record in decades.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Richmond.

PREM. - EMERA PARTY: COSTS - DISCLOSURE DEMAND

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Madam Speaker, we just learned that on top of the highest power rates in Canada, double-digit executive pay increases, and private jets, Emera just threw a lavish party for 28 of its executives. The party included comedians, a private concert, food and drinks, all of which were paid for by the company - the same company that makes its profits from Nova Scotia Power ratepayers.

Madam Speaker, the company is refusing to reveal the true costs of the party. So, in light of the requests for another 6 per cent rate increase from Nova Scotia Power, will the Premier demand that Emera and Nova Scotia Power disclose the true costs of their lavish party?

THE PREMIER: Well as the member would know, Emera is a private concern. He would know that because, of course, it was his government when he was a Cabinet Minister that put in place the structure that created Emera.

MR. SAMSON: Madam Speaker, the members for Lunenburg West and Pictou East might not think this is a serious question but they might want to check with their constituents as to whether they believe having their money going to pay for lavish parties is a serious question or not.

Madam Speaker, this is clearly a culture of waste in Emera and Nova Scotia Power. On May 10th of this year, the Liberal Leader asked the Premier to demand a value-for-money audit of Nova Scotia Power that would eliminate and expose such wasteful behaviour. The audit - different from other audits performed recently - would be paid for by shareholders and not ratepayers, and the Premier refused.

The NDP believe that audits are too expensive even though the power monopoly would be prevented from passing costs on to ratepayers. My question to the Premier is, why is the Premier protecting Nova Scotia Power shareholders for paying for an audit and defending the monopoly's wasteful behaviour.

THE PREMIER: Madam Speaker, of course, as you would know the procedure before the Utility and Review Board is one that is overseen by, in fact, the Utility and Review Board. I will table, just so the member opposite recalls, because I am sure that he recalls that his Energy Critic actually went very specifically to the Utility and Review Board at the time, and they detailed the same explanation they had put forward today, and in the past. The Utility and Review Board said there are numerous audits that take place at Nova Scotia Power, that they have looked at it in detail, that the cost of these audits do in fact get passed on to the ratepayers and that it was an unwise thing to do.

MR. SAMSON: Madam Speaker, maybe the Premier can explain to Nova Scotians the recent excessive increases to executives, the lavish parties, and whether those audits would have prevented those from taking place and how that may have protected Nova Scotia ratepayers.

Madam Speaker, the government's backbenchers also lined up to beg that shareholders not have to pay for an audit in the defence of Nova Scotia Power. The member for Lunenburg said that, "The idea . . . of having audits that will cost far too much is just something that we don't want to consider." The member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island

said that Nova Scotia Power Incorporated “. . . had gone through a number of audits, very expensive audits . . .”

Madam Speaker, it's clear that the audits to which Nova Scotia Power has been subjected to date are clearly not putting an end to these excessive increases and lavish parties. My question to the Premier is, why is this government more concerned about protecting Nova Scotia Power shareholders and defending the power corporation's wasteful behaviour than defending Nova Scotia ratepayers?

THE PREMIER: Madam Speaker, it is this caucus that is speaking up on behalf of ratepayers. We're the one that took the HST off of home electricity. It is us that are making sure that the kinds of things that are being suggested like additional audits, and I won't say just an audit because it's additional audits. Audits have been done over and over and over again to look at the operations of Nova Scotia Power.

The board, and I already tabled this, says very specifically:

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

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle.

PREM. - MUSKRAT FALLS: EMERA - WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Madam Speaker, our office did a freedom of information request, and I'll table that here today, and asked for all correspondence between the Premier's Office and Emera, and the Premier's Office and Nova Scotia Power for almost three years. Surprisingly, only three e-mails were found. The Minister of Energy said the Premier was intimately involved with the Muskrat Falls project, and his mile-high jaunt proves that.

My question to the Premier is, why is there no written record of communications between his office and Emera about the Muskrat Falls project or affordable power rates for the entire three years?

THE PREMIER: Madam Speaker, it's because I work with the Department of Energy; I get my advice through my officials. I look for the materials that they produce, I look at their analysis. I realize that that's a concept that is absolutely foreign to the member opposite because obviously they didn't do it when they were in government.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: Madam Speaker, if all that was going on then the FOIPOP would have generated more than three e-mails. There is a growing cloud of secrecy around

the Premier's intimate involvement with Emera and Nova Scotia Power, travelling on their corporate jets, signing on to projects without asking the cost, and giving himself the ability to set the scope of the project review.

My question to the Premier is, why is there not one single piece of correspondence from the Premier to Emera or Nova Scotia Power fighting for more affordable power rates for Nova Scotia ratepayers?

THE PREMIER: Madam Speaker, apparently there is such a cloud of secrecy that I stood on a stage in front of a thousand people in Newfoundland and Labrador to announce the signing of the MOU with then-Premier Williams; apparently it is such a cloud of secrecy that I brought the now-Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador, Premier Dunderdale, to the Red Room here to have her talk about the importance of the Lower Churchill project. This is about a government that actually has some vision for the long-term energy health of our region and of this province, and the protection of our ratepayers.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: The only vision from this government is putting the blinders on when it comes to energy rates in this province, and that is an absolute shame. The intimate relationship seems to be one of Emera pulling the wool over the eyes of the naive NDP. Muskrat Falls may be the best renewable energy project for Nova Scotia, but it has been a year and a half since the Premier took Emera's jet to sign the term sheet, and there continues to be more questions than answers.

My question to the Premier is, to clear the cloud of secrecy around the project, will the Premier publicly demand to know the cost of the Muskrat Falls project to be borne by Nova Scotia ratepayers before any more time is wasted where we could be looking at other green energy options?

THE PREMIER: Madam Speaker, when this project was announced, the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party endorsed it - he did so, I believe, in front of the National Press Club. He talked about it as a great electricity project and a great economic development project.

The reality is the agreement between Nalcor in Newfoundland and Labrador and Nova Scotia Power, Emera, is the subject of an agreement. That agreement has not yet been signed and until it is, of course, the costs cannot be ascertained. But once that agreement is signed, it will go to the Utility and Review Board so that there is complete transparency.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Richmond.

PREM. - NSP RATE INCREASES: URB - DENIAL DIRECT

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Madam Speaker, as of this morning there were over 21,000 Nova Scotians who have signed a petition which would call on the NDP Government to direct the Utility and Review Board to deny Nova Scotia Power any general rate increases for the next three years. As I stand here now, 22,321 Nova Scotians have signed a petition calling on the Premier to show leadership on power rates.

My question is, will the Premier listen to the 22,321 Nova Scotians who have already signed the petition and direct that the Utility and Review Board deny any further rate increases for Nova Scotia Power for the next three years?

THE PREMIER: Madam Speaker, I don't know exactly what the number was, I thought he said 22,300 Nova Scotians have signed it. Those are 22,300 people who had the HST removed from their power bills.

MR. SAMSON: Madam Speaker, the issue here is simple: people across the province are finding it increasingly difficult to keep up with the increase in power rates. In the past decade power rates have gone up 40 per cent. That's seven times that Nova Scotia Power has turned to Nova Scotians for more money, all the while reporting record profits. In less than a week, over 22,000 Nova Scotians have declared that they've had enough.

This government is the only entity that has the power to take action and stand up to Nova Scotia Power. My question to the Premier is, why won't this NDP Government take action on behalf of Nova Scotians, stand up to Nova Scotia Power and say no to further rate increases?

THE PREMIER: Madam Speaker, those 22,300 people had the HST taken off by this government, and we will make sure that that crowd over there never gets the chance to put it back on.

MR. SAMSON: Madam Speaker, we're talking numbers, and we can say that all Nova Scotia ratepayers are paying more because of the NDP electricity tax that this government brought in. We heard the Premier say last week that in light of the high bonuses paid to Nova Scotia Power executives that, in fact, he commended Nova Scotia Power for reducing its executives. After what we heard today, it's quite clear that they've reduced in their communications department, when they have the Premier as their chief apologist here in Nova Scotia.

The NDP is the same Party that, when they were sitting on this side of the House, would have been standing up for Nova Scotians and demanding that government take action to bring power rates in line with what Nova Scotians could afford. Now we're being told, wait for the future where you're still going to have high power rates but they'll be more stable.

Nova Scotians are looking for leadership and they're looking for it now. Instead, this government decides to stand up for Nova Scotia Power, for 23 per cent executive salary increases - millionaires - while Nova Scotians can't pay their power bills - private jets and now lavish parties at the same time they're asking for more from Nova Scotians.

Again, my question is, why will the Premier not stand up for Nova Scotians and tell the URB that there will be no further rate increases from Nova Scotia Power for the next three years?

THE PREMIER: Madam Speaker, it would be amusing if it weren't so sad. We've watched them stand up and ask question after question about electricity rates, but they still will not answer the question of whether or not they would put the HST back on home electricity. They campaigned against us taking it off. They voted against it. What people in this province need to know is that the Liberals are committed to higher electricity rates and this government inherited the system that they left behind.

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

**LBR. & ADV. EDUC. - HEALTH CARE INTERRUPTIONS:
PLAN - TIMEFRAME**

MR. KEITH BAIN: Madam Speaker, we know that this year 50 collective agreements will be bargained at the IWK and the district health authorities. We already saw last month what disruption the threat of a strike can have on patient care. We know it doesn't have to be that way. There is a way to end the unethical practice of locking out the patients when the bargaining gets tough. With 50 agreements up this year, this urgent matter should be addressed before this House adjourns.

Madam Speaker, my question through you to the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education is, why is the NDP rushing out of the House before presenting a plan that would eliminate health care interruptions that could see 100 more surgeries cancelled and cause unnecessary fear and anxiety for patients?

HON. MARILYN MORE: Madam Speaker, I'm proud to say that when this government calls a session into order, we introduce good legislation and we take our time and make sure that it gets through this House in an orderly way and that it serves the citizens of this province.

I'm really pleased that over 90 per cent of collective agreement arrangements end in a settlement. That is a track record that we're very proud of. We do everything we can to ensure that the number is even higher, but the right to collective bargaining is one guaranteed by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and we respect that. Thank you.

MR. BAIN: Madam Speaker, NDP partisan Linda Power has been appointed to the board responsible for determining the raises going to NSGEU Local No. 42 members, and NDP partisan Ray Larkin will represent the union. The deck is stacked with NDP members who will be more interested in keeping a tight relationship with big labour than protecting the rights of patients. They've stacked both sides of the table with card-carrying members and are clearly more interested in pursuing their labour agenda than protecting the rights of patients.

My question through you to the minister is, why will the minister not commit to getting ahead of this very evident problem and putting forward solutions to be debated in this House before the end of this session?

MS. MORE: Madam Speaker, I just want to remind everyone in this House that the Department of Labour and Advanced Education manages the process used, and I don't think it's any surprise to anyone that when you have an arbitration panel each side has the right to choose an arbitrator and then they decide on someone who is neutral and they agree serves as chairman. The collective bargaining process works well across this country and we respect that process.

MR. BAIN: Madam Speaker, the effect of health care labour disruptions are not just theory, they have devastating effects on real Nova Scotians. Imagine the anguish that Lisa Moorhouse felt when she learned her cancer procedures were put in jeopardy because of the threat of strike of the NSGEU Local 42. So my question through you to the minister is, will the minister make sure that no other Nova Scotians have to suffer like Lisa Moorhouse did?

With Bill No. 102, she showed us how fond she is of changing labour legislation, will she commit to putting forward legislation, before the end of this session, to immediately deal with the looming labour disruptions in our health care system?

MS. MORE: Madam Speaker, there's nothing more I can say except that we appreciate and honour the due process involved with the collective bargaining process. We respect the rights of workers to be involved in that process, and certainly I have to say that having reasonable people wanting to come to a settlement sitting around the table is the place to settle this and not to be yelling at one another across the floor of this House.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Clayton Park.

**PREM. - NSP RATE INCREASES:
PETITIONS - PREMIER'S OFFICE RESPONSE**

MS. DIANA WHALEN: Madam Speaker, power rates have gone up seven times in the last 11 years. People are now paying 40 per cent more for power than they did 10 years

ago, and they're being forced now to choose between buying groceries and paying that power bill.

In fact power rates have gone up close to 20 per cent under the NDP Government. Every member of the Liberal caucus has signed a petition calling on the government to direct the URB to deny rate increases to Nova Scotia Power. The creator of the petition contacted the Premier on May 14th to ask the Premier to listen to the now more than 22,000 Nova Scotians who signed the petition and to stop Nova Scotia Power from increasing rates yet again. My question, Madam Speaker, is for the Premier, how has the Premier's Office responded to this call for action?

THE PREMIER: One of the things that we did, even before the petition - we didn't have to wait for a petition to understand the problems that were left behind by the Progressive Conservatives and Liberals when they privatized the system. We didn't have to wait for that; we knew there was a problem - and that's why we brought out the electricity plan; that's why we're getting off of fossil fuels; that's why we're not waiting for the coal regulations that are going to come down from the federal Conservatives and would drive sky-high the cost of electricity in this province. We didn't wait for the Opposition Parties. We took the HST off of home electricity - this is a government that cares about the people of Nova Scotia.

MS. WHALEN: Madam Speaker, this NDP Government is the very government that added a tax to the power bills of every Nova Scotian, and that was a tax that they had promised not to do - to make it even worse, it was a tax they had promised not to add. That's worse.

Madam Speaker, if 22,000 Nova Scotians came to the Legislature, the Premier would be forced to listen. And if those same 22,000 people called the Premier's Office, which they would, he will be forced to listen. However, because it's an electronic petition the concerns seem to be dismissed by the Premier of this NDP Government. (Interruptions)

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please.

The honourable member for Halifax Clayton Park has the floor.

MS. WHALEN: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. As I was saying, more than 22,000 people have signed the petition. If they came here in person or if they phoned the office of the Premier, he would be forced to listen, and because the petition is electronic, I believe it's just as meaningful, just as important. In the past, while in Opposition, the NDP championed causes and brought petitions to this House. Now that they are in government, the NDP is turning a blind eye. My question to the Premier, will the Premier listen to these thousands of Nova Scotians and finally stand up to Nova Scotia Power and direct the URB to deny the continued rate increases?

THE PREMIER: Madam Speaker, we brought a petition to the House for the purposes of taking the HST off of home electricity. We did that. I'd like to know why the member for Halifax Clayton Park insists on voting against lower energy prices and wants to put the tax back on electricity.

MS. WHALEN: Madam Speaker, energy prices have done nothing but rise and rise, 20 per cent now under the years of this NDP Government. The people of Nova Scotia know, and that's why they're up in arms, that's why they're signing this petition and that's why they are asking the government to pay attention now, not what they did in the past, what are they doing now to help with those prices?

Madam Speaker, this problem is not going to go away. The government would like to hunker down and finish up with the Legislature and hope that this problem will go away. Well it won't because the people are now on fire, they're interested, they're following this and they are not going away.

Madam Speaker, will the Premier commit to all Nova Scotians that he will finally wake up and protect ratepayers from another increase?

THE PREMIER: Madam Speaker, we have the system that we have in place today because of decisions that were made by the members opposite when they were in government. They decided to chain us to fossil fuel prices and I can tell you this, if they had their way, the price of electricity in this province would be 8 per cent higher today.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cape Breton South.

PREM. - NSP: RATE INCREASES/PAY INCREASES CORRELATION

HON. MANNING MACDONALD; Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Throughout Question Period today we've heard the Premier play the blame game, blaming members on this side of the House for all the ills, but I might remind the Premier that he's in charge now. It's his responsibility to look out for the ratepayers of Nova Scotia, the people of Nova Scotia, not Nova Scotia Power executives and shareholders.

Madam Speaker, last week Nova Scotia Power announced their intention to hike power rates by another 6 per cent over the next two years. The very next day we learned that executives at NSP saw double-digit pay increases, including the CEO, who got a 23 per cent - yes, a 23 per cent - pay increase.

My question to the Premier, will the Premier tell Nova Scotians why they should hand over more of their hard-earned income to Nova Scotia Power, while their CEO gets a 23 per cent increase?

THE PREMIER: Madam Speaker, I'll say one thing for the member for Cape Breton South, he's right about this, I am in charge now and we are making sure that we are cleaning up the mess that you guys left behind.

MR. MANNING MACDONALD: I'm not going to pay too much attention to the bragging of the Premier, that he is now in charge because, Madam Speaker, after the next election there are a number of issues that are going to take down that government over there and one of those issues is power rates in Nova Scotia, unless they do something about it, I'll tell you that. The NDP are good at saying one thing before an election and another after.

I can remember when they were on this side of the House, railing away at Nova Scotia Power, railing away at power increases, talking about skyrocketing costs, saying how can we trust you now, like the Minister of Health and Wellness used to love saying when she was on this side of the House. So Nova Scotians still remember when you guys were over here and what you said then and what you're saying now. Madam Speaker, Nova Scotians have told us that the pay packages . . .

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please. I just want to remind all members that their comments should be reflected through the Speaker and that the use of "you" is not permitted.

The honourable member for Cape Breton South.

MR. MANNING MACDONALD: Madam Speaker, Nova Scotians are telling us that the pay packages of Nova Scotia Power are out of control, a 23 per cent pay increase for the CEO and yet Nova Scotia Power shows up at the URB to ask Nova Scotians to hand over more money and pay higher rates.

There is a structural problem, Madam Speaker, inside of Nova Scotia Power. If they can afford to spend money on million dollar salaries and executive parties, and yet still tell Nova Scotians that their power rates are going to go up.

My question to the Premier is, when will the Premier order a performance value audit on Nova Scotia Power?

THE PREMIER: Madam Speaker, I agree with this much that the member for Cape Breton South said: that when we were on that side we were a better Opposition than they were, the same way that we're a better government than they were. I will read for the member for Cape Breton South from the document that I have already tabled. It says, "The costs of such reviews ordered by the Board must ultimately be recovered from ratepayers. Accordingly, the Board is very conscious that it should only order such reviews or audits when absolutely necessary for the protection of ratepayers." This is after they went through the long list of audits and reviews that have already been done very recently.

MR. MANNING MACDONALD: Madam Speaker, what I can tell you is that Nova Scotians are not impressed by the continuous bragging of the Premier over there, that he's in government over there and because he's in government everything's going to be done the way he and his crowd over there want it. Well, Nova Scotians will have a very different opinion of that during the next election. I can guarantee you that.

My final supplementary is, I think the Premier would be hard-pressed to find many people who enjoyed a 23 per cent increase in their pay last year, including some public servants that he's now dealing with. In fact, most Nova Scotians are finding it harder to make ends meet, many thanks to the combination of NDP tax hikes and an NDP Premier who refuses to stand up for Nova Scotians - yet he stands up for Nova Scotia Power. Will the Premier explain to Nova Scotians why it is okay for Nova Scotians to choose between buying groceries and paying their power bill while these power executives are enjoying double-digit pay increases on their million-dollar earnings?

Mr. Premier, I'm asking you . . .

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please.

MR. MANNING MACDONALD: Madam Speaker, my question to the Premier is, I'm asking the Premier to order the salary increases of Nova Scotia . . .

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please, honourable member for Cape Breton South. I just want your light - your opportunity to speak. I will have to recognize you. I called order and you didn't stop talking.

The honourable member for Cape Breton South has the floor.

MR. MANNING MACDONALD: Madam Speaker, I'm asking the Premier to order the salary increases to Nova Scotia Power executives rolled back, and also that any further increases from the ratepayers of Nova Scotia to Nova Scotia Power be cancelled until Nova Scotia Power conducts an audit or this government conducts an audit of Nova Scotia Power executives and finances.

THE PREMIER: Madam Speaker, as I just pointed out, audits are done regularly, including reviews of all the rate filings that go before the Utility and Review Board. Unfortunately, the members opposite - the members of that caucus - voted against taking the HST off home electricity. If they had their way, power rates would be 8 per cent higher than they are today.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cape Breton North.

PREM. - POWER COSTS: INCREASES - HOUSE CONTINUE

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Madam Speaker, last night on a CTV news panel, the Minister of Energy would not commit to stopping any more rate increases. In Opposition the Premier said, “. . . no more power rate increases until Nova Scotia Power Inc. and the government help families save at least 15% on their electricity bills.” I’ll table that. However, that hasn’t happened - typical of this Premier to say one thing in Opposition but do the complete opposite while in power.

My question to the Premier is, will he commit to keeping the House open and finding a solution to rising power costs, including the formula on determining the shareholders’ return on equity, or will he apologize to the over 22,000 people who signed a petition and expected more from this Premier?

THE PREMIER: Madam Speaker, the 22,000 people who signed that petition are 22,000 people who got the HST removed from their electricity bills - which they voted against. The simple fact of the matter is that both Parties opposite left behind a privatized utility dependent on the international fossil fuel market, which has driven up the cost of power in our province. This government is making the switch over to renewables, is signing agreements that will mean there will be stable, long-term rates that will benefit all of the citizens of our province.

MR. ORRELL: Madam Speaker, at a time when people in Nova Scotia are looking for bold leadership to help bring this province out of recession, the NDP Government is grasping at straws to distract from the real issues facing families, like skyrocketing power rates and protecting patients’ health care. In Opposition, the now Deputy Premier when talking about the URB’s role in power rate increases said the URB “. . . must consider the consumer’s ability to pay.” My question to the Premier is, why will the NDP not commit to keeping the House open and putting forward solutions that will cause the URB to consider consumers’ ability to pay for the power rate increases?

THE PREMIER: Madam Speaker, as you know, the system that we have before the Utility and Review Board is one where you have a private company created by the Progressive Conservatives back in the early 1990s that are tied to the international fossil fuel market, in particular, the coal market. The price of coal in the last seven years has gone up 75 per cent. That is what is driving the cost of power up. This government brought forward an electricity plan that sets out how we get off of that roller coaster that meant that power rates continue to climb. The conversion from coal over to renewables is the only way to resolve the problem over the long term.

MR. ORRELL: Madam Speaker, in 2009, just days before the election, the Premier said, “This is the wrong time to impose a rate surcharge . . . The bottom line here is affordability.”

Clearly the Premier's bottom line changed as soon as he was elected. We've brought forward suggestions and are prepared to stay in the House to come up with a tangible solution; clearly, the Premier is not. My question to the Premier is, why won't he commit to making good on his promises when in Opposition and bring forward legislation to deal with the skyrocketing costs of electricity instead of jet-setting on mile-high adventures following the wishes of Emera?

THE PREMIER: Madam Speaker, we are the government that brought in a new electricity plan, one that has been widely praised outside of the industry by independent power producers. It is this government that took the HST off of home electricity. It is this government that made sure there was an independent efficiency conservation corporation in the province that has saved ratepayers \$100 million. This is the government that takes the protection of its ratepayers seriously.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

**PREM. - CAP. DHA PLANT MAINTENANCE & UTILITIES:
ELECTRICITY COSTS - PERCENTAGE**

MR. LEO GLAVINE: Madam Speaker, for many Nova Scotians power bills are increasing and consequently they now make up a larger percentage of total monthly household expenses. It stands to reason that the same can be said for our hospitals. According to the most recent audited financial statements for Capital District Health Authority, our province's largest, the line item Plant Maintenance and Utilities had the largest dollar increase of all expenses from 2010-11, over a \$5 million increase. This was a larger dollar increase than salaries and a larger dollar increase than drugs. My question to the Premier is, any idea what percentage of the Plant Maintenance and Utilities line item is made up of electricity costs?

THE PREMIER: Madam Speaker, the reason we have a Utility and Review Board is to carry out the examination of the rate filing. On the question of policy for energy in this province, it is up to the government to set out an electricity plan, which we have done - one that will mean \$1.5 billion worth of investment in Nova Scotia in renewable energy. It is this government that has signed a memorandum of understanding with Newfoundland and Labrador for the Lower Churchill project that will help bring rate stability, energy security to the people of this province, and indeed more broadly to the people of the region.

MR. GLAVINE: Madam Speaker, this is one time the Premier should have counted on his Health and Wellness Minister.

Electricity costs make up 16 per cent of the Plant Maintenance and Utilities line item, the largest single expense found in this category. In fact, the Plant Maintenance and Utilities line item now consumes 7 per cent of the overall district budget in the annual report, before that 6 per cent and in the report before that, 4 per cent.

This fiscal year the minister has asked Capital District to cut from their budgets. On top of that, there are wage increases, drug costs and electricity costs to absorb beyond what the district had built into their plan. If all of this wasn't bad enough, electricity costs are increasing, not decreasing. Given that electricity costs are unavoidable in health care, Capital District had to find \$14 million in mitigations to balance the budget and now have to deal with anticipated wage increases. How will patient care not suffer?

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

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Madam Speaker, on a point of order. During questioning, when the member for Victoria-The Lakes was asking questions, the Deputy Premier did say a few words there - not that I'm going to repeat them, but if he would mind maybe retracting them and we'll move on. (Interruptions)

Well, do you want me to say them? He said the member for Victoria-The Lakes had an empty head and I think that was inappropriate in this House. I thought that maybe it should require an apology.

MADAM SPEAKER: I'll take that under advisement - I did not hear the comments - and will report later.

The honourable member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island.

MR. LEONARD PREYRA: Madam Speaker, with your indulgence, I would like to introduce a group of distinguished constituents in the east gallery. Today I have Ms. Susan Lidstone's Grade 4/5 class from Inglis Street Elementary. They are accompanied by parents Brock Caldwell, Sandra Alfoldy and David Ross.

Madam Speaker, it's a real thrill to have Inglis Street in my constituency. It's a very environmentally-conscious school and I know students here have won awards from the Resource Recovery Fund Board. Last weekend I saw them planting a community garden outside. It's a real delight to have them here. I'd like to have them receive the warm welcome of the House. (Applause)

MADAM SPEAKER: We welcome all of our guests in the gallery today and hope you enjoy today's proceedings.

The honourable Minister of Education.

HON. RAMONA JENNEX: Madam Speaker, I'm pleased to table answers to questions that were asked of me during estimates. A number of the questions asked were more directly related to Advanced Education; however, my staff are pleased to provide these answers and I table them at this time. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you.

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Madam Speaker, I move that you do now leave the Chair and the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole House on Bills.

MADAM SPEAKER: The motion is carried.

[1:44 p.m. The House resolved itself into a CWH on Bills with Deputy Speaker Ms. Becky Kent in the Chair.]

[2:08 p.m. CWH on Bills rose and the House reconvened with Ms. Becky Kent in the Chair.]

MADAM SPEAKER: The Chairman of the Committee of the Whole House on Bills reports:

THE CLERK: That the committee has met and considered the following bills:

Bill No. 81 - Gaming Control Act.

Bill No. 82 - Nova Scotia Association of Health Organizations Incorporation Act.

Bill No. 84 - Dalhousie University-Nova Scotia Agricultural College Merger Act.

Bill No. 87 - Good Forestry Management on Crown Land Act.

Bill No. 88 - Maritime Link Act.

Bill No. 90 - Nova Scotia Provincial Exhibition Commission Act.

and the chairman has been instructed to recommend these bills to the favourable consideration of the House, without amendments.

Further, Madam Speaker, that the committee has met and considered the following bill:

Bill No. 86 - NewPage Port Hawkesbury Pension Plans Act.

which was reported with certain amendments by the Committee on Law Amendments to the Committee of the Whole House, without further amendments, and the chairman has been instructed to recommend this bill to the favourable consideration of the House.

MADAM SPEAKER: Ordered that these bills be read a third time on a future day.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Madam Speaker, that concludes the government's business for today unless we want to do Third Reading and I don't believe there is consent of the House there. I move that the House do now rise to meet again tomorrow at the hour of 2:00 p.m. The House will sit until 6:00 p.m. or until the conclusion of business. I'd ask the House Leader of the Official Opposition to give business.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable Opposition House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Tomorrow, following Question Period, the Official Opposition Business will be Resolution No. 997 and Resolution No. 1093.

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

We will now move to late debate under Rule 5(5). The late debate topic as presented by the honourable member for Inverness reads:

“Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly urge the NDP government to take concrete action to prevent cancelled surgeries, tests and procedures caused by strike or the threat of labour disruption in the health care field.”

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION UNDER RULE 5(5)

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

NDP GOV'T. - HEALTH CARE STRIKE: CANCELLATIONS - PREVENT

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to rise to speak on the motion tonight. The motion is one that is designed to ensure that before this House rises, there is a plan in place to prevent disruptions in the continuous level of health care at our hospitals and other long-term care facilities which Nova Scotians rely on and deserve to know will be there for them whether the House is in session or not, regardless of what the state of the collective negotiation is, and that there are ways of accomplishing those objectives that it would be inappropriate for the House to rise and not deal with, as there are a high number of agreements coming up for negotiation.

It was only last month that Nova Scotians saw what can happen with even the threat of a work stoppage. I might add that that work stoppage could either be a strike or a lockout. We need a solution that is fair to both the unions involved and to the managers of our health care system, because both sides could initiate an interruption in health care services.

We saw what could happen in the run-up to a potential work stoppage just last month when negotiations between Local 42 and Capital Health reached an impasse over - apparently was headed for an impasse, and just because that impasse became a real possibility, the managers of Capital Health had to scale back their services to roughly one-quarter of normal levels.

We all know how tightly the health care system runs now. There is no slack. There are wait lists already for important procedures. There are people who wait a long time for their surgeries. To scale back the Capital Health District by that magnitude resulted in the outright cancellation of over 500 surgeries and the postponement of 2,000 important medical procedures.

That has a direct impact for 500 Nova Scotia families plus 2,000 Nova Scotia families. They were the ones who were locked out when negotiations appeared to be headed for an impasse. It is with them in mind that the resolution that is before us has been brought by the Progressive Conservative caucus, because there has got to be a better way to respect collective bargaining rights, to protect taxpayers, and to ensure an uninterrupted level of health care services delivered in our hospitals.

In fact, Madam Speaker, there is a better way. Nine provinces out of 10 - Nova Scotia being the only exception - have some form of legislation in place to keep the hospitals open, to keep surgeries running, when there is a labour dispute. Only in Nova Scotia is there no form now, and the time has long come. We had examples in living colour just last month that make the urgent necessity of this resolution apparent.

Over the next year, there are 50 more health-related collective agreements up for negotiation. There is one big one that starts later this month, which is with the over-6,000

nurses in our health care system who have their contract coming to negotiation. By all intents, looking at all sides, that is one that appears likely to be a very difficult negotiation. It may well end up at an impasse. It may well end up at the point where the threat of work stoppage is there again in our health system - in this case the most looming one, but 50 more times over the next year.

Let me just say how important and vital nurses are to the delivery of health care services. I've heard other members mention that. I know we all agree on the importance of nurses to our system. We all recognize that nurses are people who chose to go into health care because they want to deliver a continuous stream of services to Nova Scotians who need it. It is exactly because nurses deliver such an important and vital service, as do other health care professionals, that we need a solution that keeps that flow of services going when negotiations reach an impasse.

Madam Speaker, in other provinces resolutions have been found that are fair, and I might add that they have been found to be constitutional. This is not essential services legislation, because in fact at Capital Health and other places there are essential services plans in place. The problem is that the scaling back of our health care system to one-quarter of its capacity under the essential services plan that has been negotiated now still creates too much hardship for too many people.

The fact of the matter is that Nova Scotians need to know that the health care system, as tight as it is now, as overloaded as it is now, as stressed as it is now, will not be scaled back by even the threat of a work stoppage. This is true in other provinces. It's important, therefore, that in addition to the essential services plans that are in place, that there be an alternative dispute resolution plan that both parties to a negotiation can rely on and know that the outcome of collective bargaining is not going to be a lockout or a strike that is too much of a hardship on Nova Scotia patients, but, rather, there is some alternative dispute resolution that is fair to all sides that is in place, so that never again do we have a situation where a hospital or a health authority, like Capital Health, has to scale back on services and cancel surgeries.

I will point out that there is exactly such a bill before the House now. I won't debate the bill in the course of debating this resolution, but I will point out that it is the product of a lot of research, looking at other jurisdictions and how they have been constitutionally tested.

My point today is that there are solutions out there that have survived constitutional challenges, that have been found constitutional by the Supreme Court of Canada, that recognize the freedom of association that all Canadians enjoy, that all unions rely on, that no one disputes is a fundamental freedom of all Canadians, that includes the ability to collectively bargain, that includes the ability to meet with an employer and work out a contract that is fair to both sides through the bargaining process, that includes all of the normal steps in collective bargaining, including conciliation and mediation and binding

mediation and arbitration when a negotiation has to go to all of those steps - all within the great protection of freedoms provided by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Madam Speaker, there are other Canadians, there are other Nova Scotians who may not be a direct party to a negotiation between a hospital or a health authority and a health care union - they are the taxpayers who ultimately pay the bills for the settlements, they are the patients who ultimately have their right to unfettered access to our public health care system set aside when negotiations reach an impasse. I say that because they deserve to know that there is a system in place that respects the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, including freedom of association, freedom of unionization, respect for collective bargaining, and also respects the rights of all Canadians and all Nova Scotians to know their hospital, their doctor, their nurse, their paramedic and so on will be there when they need them, at all times, and respects the taxpayers' ability to fund agreements when they come.

At the end of the day, when collective agreement negotiations reach an impasse, when conciliation hasn't worked, when mediation hasn't worked, the alternative is arbitration. In this province and in others, experience has been - and even members of the government side have pointed out that experience has been that arbitrated settlements up until now have not directed an arbitrator to take into account the state of our economy or the ability of Nova Scotia taxpayers to pay ever-higher bills. So there are solutions to even that problem, Madam Speaker.

Other provinces, even in the most wealthy provinces in Canada, like Alberta and Ontario, have in place taxpayer protections that direct that an arbitrator must take into account the state of the economy of the province and the state of the level of taxation, the ability of the taxpayer to bear more. If it's important to Alberta to have that kind of protection in place, if it's important to Ontario to have that kind of protection in place, then clearly it's very important to Nova Scotia to have that same protection in place, alongside a fairly arbitrated settlement that takes into account the wages and benefits of similar workers, both union and non-unionized, in other jurisdictions.

That's why I say, Madam Speaker, as I conclude my remarks, that it is imperative, given the impending risks to our health care system that are known today, that before this House rises the government bring forward a plan to show patients that the health care system will not be interrupted and will be there for them - either a government plan that it is their duty to do or call the PC plan, which accomplishes the same objective, thank you very much.

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

MR. LEONARD PREYRA: Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to be able to rise here and say a few words in response to this resolution from the member for Inverness, and in response to the remarks from the Leader of the Third Party.

Madam Speaker, there is nothing more important in my constituency, no service more important in my constituency than the provision of health care. The Capital District Health Authority, the IWK, and the numerous agencies and service groups that have developed around the health services, form a vital part of my constituency and the services that are provided not just to Nova Scotians but right across the Atlantic Region.

I'm very proud of the doctors, the nurses, the paramedics, the health care professions, the social workers and all of those agencies who provide such great service and on whose services we so vitally depend. Madam Speaker, I am proud to say that people who come to use these services, who desperately need these services, almost invariably come away praising the health care professionals who serve them; the nurses, the doctors are first class. We talk here as if, essentially, this is about collective bargaining but for many of our health care professionals, for most of our health care professionals, the service in the health care profession is a calling. It is something they do, not for the money but because they want to serve and they know that they provide a vitally important service.

I'm delighted, Madam Speaker, to include so many of them as my constituents and that the service they provide is located so critically in my constituency. I'm delighted that the round of collective bargaining that recently concluded without a strike was, in fact, concluded without a strike. I know that the members opposite don't like the threat of a strike; nobody likes an argument, nobody likes the threat of disruption, particularly when it comes to health care.

But, Madam Speaker, we really haven't come up with a better system and if they had a better system we would be happy to introduce it. The systems that the honourable members from the Third Party have proposed in the past have all failed. It's almost as if they are going to wave a magic wand and say poof, this issue has been dealt with, this strike has been dealt with, and this service is now provided. We can't really wave magic wands and here they want to wave the magic wand of banning a strike.

In 2001, Madam Speaker, the Progressive Conservatives took away the right to strike and legislated a collective agreement and it led to mass resignations of health care workers who threatened to leave the province and they did. That led to a nursing shortage and a shortage of health care professionals. The answer always seems to be that we're going to take away the right to strike, we're going to take away rights. It's fascinating that the Third Party is so committed to the market, is so committed to deregulation, is so committed to free and fair association, but when it comes to the actual exercise of those rights, decides you can't have them. So in effect, at the rhetorical level they care but, really, at a practical level they don't believe in collective bargaining; they don't believe in freedom of association, they don't believe in those fundamental rights.

This bill goes further. When I first saw this bill that the honourable member is proposing we adopt and discuss in this sitting, I thought they were talking about essential services. I thought they were saying that like police officers, firefighters, corrections

officers whose services really are critical, that health care workers are an essential service and many of them do provide a vitally essential service. In the collective agreements they do have procedures for defining essential services and I thought the member of the Third Party was arguing that we should define essential services a little better, and maybe that is something worth considering.

What this bill proposes to do, Madam Speaker, is go far beyond that and what this resolution proposes to do is go far beyond that. I know I don't have a lot of time but I do want to note that in this bill that is being proposed, just about everyone who remotely provides a health care service, any unit of a hospital, any nursing home, any service that relies on health care professionals, including home care, home support, long-term care. Any service that's provided to people who provide the home care service - all of those are going to be banned from striking and we're going to send that to arbitration. It's really an extraordinary broad definition of what I initially thought would be an essential service and it takes away that right.

However desirable it may be to take away those rights, however desirable the Third Party may feel, it really just doesn't work. Taking away the right to strike from a vast majority of the health care professionals - almost all of them if I read that definition of the bill - just does not work. I know the honourable members have been citing media reports on that but I want to cite an editorial in *The ChronicleHerald* on September 14, 2007 when the paramedics were going on strike.

The editorial said it's a fight that the Progressive Conservative Government lost, that ". . . the MacDonald Government didn't lose this fight just because it got outthusted. Ultimately, it failed to make a compelling case that alternatives to collective bargaining are, in fact, superior." This is what the editorial said, "But the evidence shows that in jurisdictions where binding arbitration is mandatory, or where health-care workers are subject to essential services legislation, frustrations eventually mount and illegal strikes become more frequent and nasty. Patient safety is in far greater jeopardy then." If this bill is about protecting patients' safety, it just does not do that. Quite the contrary.

It says, "Is the status quo perfect? Hardly. Is there a better way? Probably not. Winston Churchill's famous paradox about democracy could just as well apply to collective bargaining in the health sector. Indeed, this is the worst system except for all the others." I'll table that.

It really is just a question of whether or not we can accomplish what the honourable members are suggesting through this arbitrariness of binding arbitration. In the end, we just don't get what they propose. I'll table another article, this is from the *The ChronicleHerald* on May 16, 2007, talking about the paramedics' strike.

"Legal or illegal, paramedics in Nova Scotia will strike next spring . . ." regardless of the legislation. "At the end of the day, if we're not getting a fair shake at the table, we'll

be walking anyway, no matter what legislation is put in place. . .” This is what the union said at the time. “It’s sad that we’ve come to a point where lawyers and arbitrators are going to make decisions on behalf of our health-care workers.”

The strikes in Quebec and Alberta in particular are the longest and those jurisdictions have precisely what the honourable members want to introduce here and we say no thank you to that.

If the honourable members are really concerned about health care and wait times and surgery, they would support the initiatives that have come forward from the government in the last two or three years. The Better Care Sooner plan focuses on prevention and along those lines we have introduced legislation on tobacco control and alcohol control, reducing the risk of head injuries, tanning beds, early detection of various types of infections and diseases.

Health promotion initiatives to promote healthy children, a mental health strategy, fair drug prices, caregiver benefits, emergency room supports, collaborative emergency centres - four of them - nursing home beds, physician resources. That’s what real change is about. It’s about introducing real programs and real benefits and real incentives that will create better care sooner, that will reduce wait times for Nova Scotians, that would make us healthier and safer.

Banning strikes, forcing agreements on people, they do not deal with the underlying problems in the health care system, as much as we would like to. This plan, our Better Care Sooner does it far better than any legislation that we’ve seen from the Opposition today. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Clayton Park.

MS. DIANA WHALEN: Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time, the 10 minutes, with my colleague, the member for Kings West.

MADAM SPEAKER: I’m sorry?

MR. LEO GLAVINE: At the end, at the end.

MS. WHALEN: May I do that?

MADAM SPEAKER: I’m just going to ask the Clerk for a calling on that - I’m not familiar.

MS. WHALEN: If not, I’m going to speak. (Interruption)

MADAM SPEAKER: Just to be clear, in debate, if you sit down during your time, the next rotation would go to the other Parties. So if that's your choice, so be it.

MS. WHALEN: Well, thank you very much. (Interruption) That's right. No, in fact, Madam Speaker, that is the rule - I was thinking it was more relaxed in late debate, but if that's the rule then I'll speak for 10 minutes, that will be fine.

This resolution in front of us was proposed by the Progressive Conservative Party, and it's talking about the need - it's actually a little bit vague, but the need to, I guess, avert strikes, and we all agree with that, and to prevent disruptions in the health care field. With that, there are a number of points that I think are worth looking at.

A number of years ago we were considering the very same issue. It was a different time and maybe different strikes, but as Madam Speaker knows I've been a member for nine years and we've certainly had the opportunity in that time to look at strikes and pending disruptions in health care and in other sectors. We've had the opportunity to speak to academics who studied this across the country.

One of the things that is interesting, Madam Speaker, is to note that jurisdictions that have a complete ban on strikes and legislation in place that bans strikes in health care have actually seen a lot more strike days than we have here in Nova Scotia. I think you have to look at evidence to see whether or not making a bill like that is actually going to create the outcome you want (Interruption) What happened to my microphone?

AN HON. MEMBER: I don't know if it's been on at all.

MS. WHALEN: I don't know . . .

MADAM SPEAKER: No, I think it has been on until that moment.

MS. WHALEN: Okay, well, thank you. I just thought I perhaps was not recognized for a moment, but that's good.

As I say, putting in legislation that there's an outright complete ban on strikes doesn't prevent strikes from occurring, and the jurisdiction I would like to reference today is Alberta. Alberta has had this kind of legislation for, I think it's 29 years if I'm not mistaken, and in that time they have lost many more days than we have to strikes. So I would like to just give an idea - it is 29 years that they've had this legislation in place and that, as I say, gives ample time to look at the impact to see if it's effective.

In Alberta, what they've actually seen in that period of time was, for example, in 1988 nurses went on strike in Alberta with no emergency plans in place. They just walked out and they walked out for a total of 266,000 person days; that wasn't just an hour or two.

I know in our time we saw a strike, one at the IWK in the nine years that I've been elected, but it lasted less than half a day.

This was a strike in Alberta of nurses that went on, collectively, 266,000 work days lost, nursing days lost. That's very significant, Madam Speaker, and what we need to know is that if you ban strikes outright you're not going to have an emergency plan in place because there is no mechanism that allows the union and the management to sit down and write out a plan about what will happen in the event that negotiations break down, in the event that the workers feel compelled to strike. In our health care system here, I know it's disruptive but at the same time the members sit down in good faith, the union representatives and the management, and they map out the areas that must be covered and the number of staff who are required in key areas.

They ensure that emergency surgeries are still continuing, that the emergency room is looked after, that cancer treatments would continue, certain key areas that we know would have tremendously negative impacts on the health of Nova Scotians if they were abandoned for any period of time. The nurses and others as well in our health care system have recognized that and they will sit down and go through that laborious detailed negotiation to come up with exactly the plan that will be in place if that emergency occurs and the workers are on strike, so that we can have some measure of comfort to know that there's a plan in place.

Now, contrast that with a jurisdiction like Alberta that has said just outright, very black and white, they said there can be no strikes but, in fact, we know there can be and there is no backup plan, no plan in place that's going to ensure the health and safety of people in Alberta during that time. It doesn't help to be so dogmatic. Alberta is - what do we hear recently? - 40 years of a Progressive Conservative government. They're right-wing, they're dogmatic, they're rigid, and they've chosen for 29 years to ban strikes in the health care system. That hasn't helped anybody.

Madam Speaker, I like to base my opinions on research, and I think this is pretty compelling research, just comparing what we have in Nova Scotia with what exists in Alberta and to see that over that period of time we have had very few strikes in Nova Scotia. If I take the same 29 years that we've compared with Alberta's legislation, in that time they had - let me see now, in Nova Scotia, where we still have the right to strike, we had 12 strikes that occurred in that setting. Ironically, nine of those strikes in the last 29 years occurred when the Tories were in power, so I think that kind of points to the Progressive Conservatives maybe not having the best ability to negotiate or perhaps not being as able to finesse a solution as some other governments were.

I think it actually predates all of us here in the Legislature today, but Bill No. 68 was a tremendously disruptive time for nurses in this province and they certainly came out in droves at that time - I believe it was in the early 2000s - to bitterly complain about their treatment at the hands of the Progressive Conservatives at that time. I believe the House

here was in for 24 hours a day for a little while, that we were sitting around the clock, with nurses in the gallery throughout those discussions. There are thousands of nurses in this province, and they definitely felt very strongly in the face of the treatment they were getting in Bill No. 68.

It's a bit of a digression there, but as I mentioned, if you compare the strikes that we've had in Nova Scotia - I say there have been 12 in health care, but that would include many very short strikes like the IWK one, which is an example in more recent times, where people were out picketing for one shift, really, and it was resolved. Still, in the face of that strike, as much as we were worried about all of the children and what was happening at the IWK, there were emergency plans in place for all of the people who were critically ill, who needed cancer treatment, who might be injured and arrive at the emergency room. They would not have found any further disruption than would be normal at those sites.

We know that one interesting thing about our health care system is that it does kick in and it really delivers when there is a serious crisis. When a family is in crisis, when they get a diagnosis that's very serious, I'm hearing time and time again how pleased they are with the response from the health care system. Where we seem to fail is when we have chronic disease or the need for surgeries that are not considered life-threatening. They might be terribly debilitating; they could be the need for surgeries like knee and hip replacements, that type of thing. They tend to be delayed and people are hampered, their lives are hurt, they are in pain, but our system really does well when there's a crisis.

I think that our current legislation around strikes is fair and it allows for a backup plan that protects Nova Scotians. We need to keep that in mind as we look forward to the next round of negotiations, which I understand are looming very soon, with 6,000 nurses who are represented by the nurses' union rather than NSGEU.

Madam Speaker, I had an e-mail recently from one of the health care workers whose contract is soon to be renegotiated. I can tell you that one of the things they're very concerned about is the fact that they've been asked to hold to 1 per cent. Now they've seen other unions get a higher amount and certainly that raises expectations, but they're mostly annoyed about the choices, the priorities that this government is making. They are making them every day here. We hear about these large amounts of money being funnelled through the Industrial Expansion Fund.

In particular, the nurse's e-mail that I received spoke about the \$300 million that is being given to Irving Shipbuilding Inc. - have we had 10 minutes yet, Madam Speaker? Very nearly. Well, those kinds of decisions are a real thorn in the side and certainly increase the animosity that might come in future negotiations. I think the government needs to be aware of that as well as they go forward.

My feeling overall is that Nova Scotia has been well served by having a system which allows for a backup plan and unions that I know are well-meaning and care about the patients. Thank you very much.

MADAM SPEAKER: The time allotted for late debate has elapsed. Thank you to all members for participating this afternoon. The House now stands adjourned to meet again tomorrow at 2:00 p.m. Thank you.

[The House rose at 2:40 p.m.]

NOTICE OF QUESTIONS FOR WRITTEN ANSWERS

Given on May 15, 2012

(Pursuant to Rule 30)

QUESTION NO. 1

By: Mr. Alfie MacLeod (Cape Breton West)

To: Hon. John MacDonell (Minister of Natural Resources)

(1) Will the minister explain for me the proposed changes being planned for the 2012 Moose Hunt in the Pollett's Cove - Aspy Fault Wilderness Area. Information given to me indicates an association of six guides in the zone 5 area has been formed and is in the process of obtaining the tags for the non-motorized hunt from the Department of Natural Resources to sell to the highest bidder. I am cognizant of the annual draw but can the minister confirm for me that guides are available to purchase tags once drawn for?

QUESTION NO. 2

By: Mr. Alfie MacLeod (Cape Breton West)

To: Hon. John MacDonell (Minister of Natural Resources)

(1) Will the minister provide for me, in as much detail as possible, how many times over the past 10 years applicants' names have been drawn multiple times in the annual Cape Breton Moose Hunt Draw while others who have put their name into the draw have never been called once? Does the minister, and the department, view this as simply the luck of the draw or is the department looking into ways to provide individuals who have never participated in the Cape Breton Moose Hunt an opportunity to do so in Cape Breton?

QUESTION NO. 3

By: Mr. Chuck Porter (Hants West)

To: Hon. Ramona Jennex (Minister of Education)

(1) With the decision by the Annapolis Valley Regional School Board to close the Newport Station and District Elementary School in the next two to three years, space and room at the Three Mile Plains Elementary School has just become a larger scale issue. Can the minister confirm the status of the gymnasium expansion at Three Mile Plains Elementary School originally scheduled for next year as outlined in April 2009?

QUESTION NO. 4

By: Mr. Chuck Porter (Hants West)

To: Hon. Maureen MacDonald (Minister of Health and Wellness)

(1) The minister is currently discussing the adoption of standards for Nova Scotia's New Mental Health Strategy. A concern recently came across my desk over the lengthy wait times for children and families wanting access to mental health. The concern expressed support for the ACT program which, to many, was of considerable value and made a difference for hundreds of children. Can the minister provide detailed background on what the present wait times are for children and families waiting to access mental health care and any plans she has toward alleviating the backlog as well as alternative measures, which might have been implemented to assist with the reduction in funding for the ACT Program?

QUESTION NO. 5

By: Mr. Chuck Porter (Hants West)

To: Hon. Maureen MacDonald (Minister of Health and Wellness)

(1) A constituent of Hants West is presently suffering from macular edema. I explained to you in a letter dated April 3, 2012, that Mrs. Bower has been denied coverage through Pharmacare for her Lucentis treatments because at the present time, coverage is only available for Lucentis when treating macular degeneration and not macular edema. As you are keenly aware, Health Canada approved Lucentis as a treatment for vision loss resulting from diabetic macular edema. With many Nova Scotians facing macular edema, the Atlantic Formulary Board, which makes decisions on which drugs should be covered, has the minister been updated recently as to when macular edema might potentially be covered, resulting in less vision loss for older diabetic patients across Nova Scotia?

QUESTION NO. 6

By: Hon. Christopher d'Entremont (Argyle)

To: Hon. Marilyn More (Minister of Labour and Advanced Education)

(1) Considerable debate has taken place this winter concerning proposed payments by former members of the Fisheries Safety Association to the Workers Compensation Board. Alexander Forbes and Ivan MacDonald insist their membership with the Fisheries Safety Association does not force them to pay a levy in the form of membership fees to the Workers Compensation Board based on the association's current set of bylaws. Will the

minister confirm such fees do not have to be paid by the Fisheries Safety Association of Nova Scotia?

QUESTION NO. 7

By: Hon. Christopher d'Entremont (Argyle)

To: Hon. Marilyn More (Minister of Labour and Advanced Education)

(1) Is the current government willing to consider allowing private insurance companies to sell coverage presently only sold by the Workers Compensation Board and therefore becoming an alternative, and not necessarily being forced to pay WCB coverage?

QUESTION NO. 8

By: Hon. Christopher d'Entremont (Argyle)

To: Hon. John MacDonell (Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations)

(1) Under Societies Act legislation, in the absence of a proper resignation letter, why is the Registry of Joint Stocks unable to revoke the registration of the Fisheries Safety Association of Nova Scotia for non-compliance with their by-laws?

NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3)**RESOLUTION NO. 1256**

By: Hon. Darrell Dexter (The Premier)

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

Whereas the community of Cole Harbour has long been a hockey town, a place where hockey is seen as more than a sport and where NHL greats like Cam Russell, Joe DiPenta and Sidney Crosby got their start; and

Whereas the Cole Harbour Bantam A hockey team, the next generation of hockey greats, just wrapped up an impressive season with a Top 4 finish in the Central Hockey Division, 17 tournament gold medals including the Champions Banner at the Truro KFC Tournament and a first-place finish in the Accord Division at the annual SEDMHA International Minor Hockey Tournament; and

Whereas the team practised two to three times a week, plus games, helping to foster commitment, skill development, leadership and social skills in these young men;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this Legislature congratulate the players and coaches of the Cole Harbour Bantam A hockey team on a fantastic season and recognize their healthy, active lifestyle choices and dedication to the sport they love.

RESOLUTION NO. 1257

By: Hon. Darrell Dexter (The Premier)

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

Whereas the community of Cole Harbour has long been a hockey town, a place where hockey is seen as more than a sport and where NHL greats like Cam Russell, Joe DiPenta and Sidney Crosby got their start; and

Whereas the Cole Harbour Pee Wee AA hockey team, the next generation of hockey greats and community leaders, just wrapped up a fun season that saw the team compete in tournaments in Prince Edward Island where they won gold at the Sherwood Parkdale Early Bird Tournament and Quebec where they played in the tournament of a lifetime against teams from the United States, France and Finland; and

Whereas these 17 young men have been active both on and off the ice, participating in many team fundraising activities as well as events to raise money for the Children's Wish Foundation;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly recognize the hard work, dedication and sportsmanship of the Cole Harbour Pee Wee AA team and its coaches, and congratulate them on a season filled with exciting games, important lessons and great memories.

RESOLUTION NO. 1258

By: Ms. Lenore Zann (Truro-Bible Hill)

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

Whereas Emily Tucker, a 19-year-old Truro native attending Mount Saint Vincent University, has been volunteering and showing leadership qualities since she was very young by volunteering at the Colchester Food Bank when 13 years of age and continued throughout her high school years, having a very successful paper route by age 12 and creating a yearbook for her class at the age of nine; and

Whereas Emily Tucker has continued to display her desire to help others and be successful through her active participation while pursuing a business degree at Mount Saint Vincent University; and

Whereas Emily Tucker was recently the recipient of two awards at Mount Saint Vincent, one for Frosh Leader of the Year, recognizing her desire to make a difference for first year students, and the other for Emerging Leader, recognizing her leadership qualities;

Therefore be it resolved that this Nova Scotia Legislature congratulates Emily Tucker for receiving the Frosh Leader of the Year and the Emerging Leader awards, and wishes her every success as she continues to pursue her education at Mount Saint Vincent University.

RESOLUTION NO. 1259

By: Ms. Lenore Zann (Truro-Bible Hill)

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

Whereas soprano Jane Archibald, a former Truro native and graduate of the Cobequid Educational Centre, was involved in community music from a young age going

on to fulltime studies and a successful career that has taken her to Toronto, San Francisco and the Vienna State Opera; and

Whereas Jane landed the title role in *Lucia di Lammermoor* as well as Konstanze in Zurich; Sophie, *Der Rosenkavalier*, at La Scala in Milan as well as Berlin; Zerbinetta, *Ariadne auf Naxos* at Baden-Baden Festspielhaus, the Royal House Convent Garden as well as in Munich; and Olympia and Cleopatra at the Opera National de Paris; and

Whereas Jane Archibald has won several awards for her talent including the 2006 award from the Sylva Gelber Foundation for the most talented musician under 30 and more recently a Juno Award for Classical Album of the Year for her work entitled *Haydn Arias*;

Therefore be it resolved that this Nova Scotia Legislature applaud Jane Archibald on her successful career in music and congratulate her for winning a Juno Award for Classical Album of the Year.

RESOLUTION NO. 1260

By: Lenore Zann (Truro-Bible Hill)

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

Whereas John Tucker and Jeff Russell are students in the Futureworx Environmental Service Program graduating in June 2012; and

Whereas Tucker and Russell became interested in researching an idea that would address the level of bacteria on hospital privacy curtains, thereby developing a prototype of a piece of equipment that will attach to these curtains and reduce the spread of infectious diseases; and

Whereas the two students recently submitted their prototype idea at a local mini Dragon's Den committee, which included Bruce Croxon of the famed CBC Dragon's Den TV series, and placed first, thus winning the opportunity to develop their business plan winning approximately \$4,000 in prizes;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia Legislature congratulate John Tucker and Jeff Russell on their research and for winning first place in the mini Dragon's Den competition and wish them the best of success in their business venture.

RESOLUTION NO. 1261

By: Lenore Zann (Truro-Bible Hill)

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

Whereas Lorne MacDougall started practicing law in 1943 when he joined the Burchell law firm, eventually becoming a senior law partner in the firm; and

Whereas Mr. MacDougall has been a strong community member in Truro, having chaired the Nova Scotia Dairy Commission for 20 years and having been board chairman of the construction project for the Colchester Regional Hospital during the 1960s and an active member of the Rotary Club since 1945, and is involved with community organizations such as the Community Concert Association, Children's Aid, CNIB, and the Canadian Arthritic and Rheumatism Society; and

Whereas at the age of 94 Mr. MacDougall still reports to his office for several hours each day and has been selected at this year's recipient of the Truro and District Chamber of Commerce Lifetime Achievement Award;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia Legislature congratulate Mr. Lorne MacDougall on receiving this Lifetime Achievement Award and thank him for his dedication and service to his community.

RESOLUTION NO. 1262

By: Lenore Zann (Truro-Bible Hill)

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

Whereas the Bible Hill Garden Club has been in existence since 1947 and is preparing to celebrate their 65th Anniversary; and

Whereas the Bible Hill Garden Club has approximately 60 active participants and promotes the beautification of properties within the community; and

Whereas the Bible Hill Garden Club has taken on many projects over the years, including developing the Holy Well Park on Main Street and maintaining it, planting trees at the Bible Hill Cemetery, and planting trees and shrubs at various locations throughout the community;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia Legislature congratulate the Bible Hill Garden Club on this milestone event and wish them all the best as they celebrate 65 years of service to the community.

RESOLUTION NO. 1263

By: Hon. Keith Colwell (Preston)

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

Whereas Lillian Godding was born in DeBaie's Cove, Nova Scotia, over 72 years ago; and

Whereas Lillian and her husband, Bert, raised two boys and still continued to be active in Four Harbour's Legion Branch #120 Ship Harbour by supporting the veterans and their families; and

Whereas Lillian served on the Audit Committee and was very active in the Ladies Auxiliary at St. Matthew's Anglican Church, Ship Harbour, where she also developed a keen interest and was an ardent, strong supporter in politics and worked on several election campaigns for the Liberal Party in Nova Scotia;

Therefore be it resolved that this House recognize the accomplishments of Lillian Godding, wish her well in her future endeavours, and thank her for all she has contributed to her community and province.

RESOLUTION NO. 1264

By: Leo Glavine (Kings West)

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

Whereas Ruth Foster started working as a hairstylist in 1972 at the Cornwallis Inn Beauty Salon in Kentville; and

Whereas Ruth moved to Berwick in March 1977 and opened her business, Ruth's Beauty Salon, on Commercial Street, near her present-day location in the Berwick Plaza, under the name of Valley Hairstylists, a business she purchased in 1993; and

Whereas Ruth keeps meticulous records on all her customers from the youngest to the oldest, from the number of years she has served them to the faithful patrons who have passed;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Ruth Foster on celebrating 35 years as a highly-regarded cosmetologist and businesswoman and wish her and her staff every success in the future.

RESOLUTION NO. 1265

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

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

Whereas since 2005 the Canadian Mental Health Association in collaboration with the Mental Health Foundation of Nova Scotia have invited individuals, groups and organizations to nominate outstanding community members to receive an Inspiring Lives Award; and

Whereas despite all of the challenges nominees have faced in their lives, they have inspired countless others with their determination, spirit and willingness to share their stories; and

Whereas Inspiring Lives Award nominee Jeannine Arseneault leads and motivates group members through her work within the Friends Gathering and Craft-Psycho-Social Rehabilitation Group by helping participants understand and live with their illnesses;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House congratulate Inspiring Lives Award nominee Jeannine Arseneault and extend our appreciation to her for her efforts in inspiring others, and in the process giving those facing mental health issues hope for the future.

RESOLUTION NO. 1266

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

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

Whereas since 2005 the Canadian Mental Health Association in collaboration with the Mental Health Foundation of Nova Scotia have invited individuals, groups and organizations to nominate outstanding community members to receive an Inspiring Lives Award; and

Whereas despite all of the challenges nominees have faced in their lives, they have inspired countless others with their determination, spirit and willingness to share their stories; and

Whereas Inspiring Lives Award nominee Brian Malay used his mental illness to write a book entitled *Whispers* to reduce the stigma of mental illness and to highlight perseverance in the face of illness and disability;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House congratulate the Schizophrenia Society for posthumously nominating Brian Malay, and extend our appreciation to Mr. Malay's family for his efforts in inspiring others, and in the process giving those facing mental health issues hope for their future.

RESOLUTION NO. 1267

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

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

Whereas since 2005 the Canadian Mental Health Association in collaboration with the Mental Health Foundation of Nova Scotia have invited individuals, groups and organizations to nominate outstanding community members to receive an Inspiring Lives Award; and

Whereas despite all of the challenges nominees have faced in their lives, they have inspired countless others with their determination, spirit and willingness to share their stories; and

Whereas Inspiring Lives Award nominee Lorene Atkinson serves as a Peer Support Specialist and helps many people in the numerous support groups she attends and inspires all participants on their journey to wellness;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House congratulate Inspiring Lives Award nominee Lorene Atkinson and extend our appreciation to her for her efforts in inspiring others, and in the process giving those facing mental health issues hope for their future.

RESOLUTION NO. 1268

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

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

Whereas since 2005 the Canadian Mental Health Association in collaboration with the Mental Health Foundation of Nova Scotia have invited individuals, groups and

organizations to nominate outstanding community members to receive an Inspiring Lives Award; and

Whereas despite all of the challenges nominees have faced in their lives, they have inspired countless others with their determination, spirit and willingness to share their stories; and

Whereas Inspiring Lives Award nominees Angela and Danielle Hamilton have used their recovery lessons gained through the IWK ACT Program to help not only themselves, but many others in their home community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House congratulate Inspiring Lives Award nominees Angela and Danielle Hamilton and extend our appreciation to them for their efforts in inspiring others, and in the process giving those facing mental health issues hope for their future.

RESOLUTION NO. 1269

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

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

Whereas since 2005 the Canadian Mental Health Association in collaboration with the Mental Health Foundation of Nova Scotia have invited individuals, groups and organizations to nominate outstanding community members to receive an Inspiring Lives Award; and

Whereas despite all of the challenges nominees have faced in their lives, they have inspired countless others with their determination, spirit and willingness to share their stories; and

Whereas Inspiring Lives Award nominee Adam Pelley has used his illness to regain a stronger sense of self by participating in professional sports and becoming a writer to share his life experience with others;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House congratulate Inspiring Lives Award nominee Adam Pelley and extend our appreciation to him for his efforts in inspiring others, and in the process giving those facing mental health issues hope for their future.

RESOLUTION NO. 1270

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

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

Whereas since 2005 the Canadian Mental Health Association in collaboration with the Mental Health Foundation of Nova Scotia have invited individuals, groups and organizations to nominate outstanding community members to receive an Inspiring Lives Award; and

Whereas despite all of the challenges nominees have faced in their lives, they have inspired countless others with their determination, spirit and willingness to share their stories; and

Whereas Inspiring Lives Award nominee Joel Maxwell uses his voice to create change, and his leadership at Laing House to make a positive difference in the lives of young people living with a mental illness;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House congratulate Inspiring Lives Award nominee Joel Maxwell and extend our appreciation to him for his efforts in inspiring others, and in the process giving those facing mental health issues hope for their future.

RESOLUTION NO. 1271

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

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

Whereas since 2005 the Canadian Mental Health Association in collaboration with the Mental Health Foundation of Nova Scotia have invited individuals, groups and organizations to nominate outstanding community members to receive an Inspiring Lives Award; and

Whereas despite all of the challenges nominees have faced in their lives, they have inspired countless others with their determination, spirit and willingness to share their stories; and

Whereas Inspiring Lives Award winner Michael Smith exhibits his strength through perseverance and has shared his story with thousands of Nova Scotians, including

students and organizations, to increase understanding and reduce the stigma surrounding mental illness;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House congratulate Inspiring Lives Award winner Michael Smith and extend our appreciation to him for his efforts in inspiring others, and in the process giving those facing mental health issues hope for their future.

RESOLUTION NO. 1272

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

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

Whereas since 2005 the Canadian Mental Health Association in collaboration with the Mental Health Foundation of Nova Scotia have invited individuals, groups and organizations to nominate outstanding community members to receive an Inspiring Lives Award; and

Whereas despite all of the challenges nominees have faced in their lives, they have inspired countless others with their determination, spirit and willingness to share their stories; and

Whereas Inspiring Lives Award winner Michelle Gardiner has turned her personal challenges of living with a mental illness into an advocacy role as part-time executive director of the Autism Society of Cape Breton and, as a result, has helped many others overcome their fears and misunderstanding of mental illness;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House congratulate Inspiring Lives Award winner Michelle Gardiner and extend our appreciation to her for her efforts in inspiring others, and in the process giving those facing mental health issues hope for their future.

RESOLUTION NO. 1273

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

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

Whereas since 2005 the Canadian Mental Health Association in collaboration with the Mental Health Foundation of Nova Scotia have invited individuals, groups and organizations to nominate outstanding community members to receive an Inspiring Lives Award; and

Whereas despite all of the challenges nominees have faced in their lives, they have inspired countless others with their determination, spirit and willingness to share their stories; and

Whereas Inspiring Lives Award winner Lyne Brun broke the barrier of her illness and, in doing so, promotes the importance of awareness and management of good mental health in her workplace and in the community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House congratulate Inspiring Lives Award winner Lyne Brun and extend our appreciation to her for her efforts in inspiring others, and in the process giving those facing mental health issues hope for their future.

RESOLUTION NO. 1274

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

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

Whereas since 2005 the Canadian Mental Health Association in collaboration with the Mental Health Foundation of Nova Scotia have invited individuals, groups and organizations to nominate outstanding community members to receive an Inspiring Lives Award; and

Whereas despite all of the challenges nominees have faced in their lives, they have inspired countless others with their determination, spirit and willingness to share their stories; and

Whereas Inspiring Lives Award winner Heather Frenette, through her volunteer efforts with CMHA Kings County, has been tireless in her commitment to eliminate the stigma surrounding mental illness;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House congratulate Inspiring Lives Award winner Heather Frenette and extend our appreciation to her for her efforts in inspiring others, and in the process giving those facing mental health issues hope for the future.