



DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Gordon Gosse

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Fourth Session

WEDNESDAY, MAY 16, 2012

TABLE OF CONTENTS	PAGE
NOTICES OF MOTION:	
Res. 1275, Gov't. (N.S.) - On-Line Petitions: Rules - Modernize, Hon. J. Baillie	2302
Res. 1276, Grand Day for Cobequid: Cobequid Commun. Health Ctr. Fdn. - Fundraising Congrats., Hon. P. Paris.....	2302
Vote - Affirmative.....	2303
Res. 1277, Michelin Plant (Waterville) - Anniv. (30 th), Hon. R. Jennex	2303
Vote - Affirmative.....	2304
Res. 1278, Holy Ghost Ukrainian Catholic Church - Anniv. (100 th), Hon. G. Gosse (by Hon. D. Wilson).....	2304
Vote - Affirmative.....	2304
Res. 1279, MacConnell, Susan - CBC Live Right Now Award, Hon. C. Parker.....	2305
Vote - Affirmative.....	2305
Res. 1280, Open Halifax: Participants/Contributors/Organizer - Congrats., Mr. L. Preyra	2305
Vote - Affirmative.....	2306

Res. 1281, Gabriel, Stan - Senior Horseman Award, Ms. L. Zann.....	2306
Vote - Affirmative.....	2307
Res. 1282, Craig, Brooklin - Astral Dr. Elem. Sch. Diversity Wk.: Development - Commend, Ms. B. Kent (by Mr. M. Whynott)	2307
Vote - Affirmative.....	2308
Res. 1283, Oickle, Capt. Brian - Liverpool Ryl. Cdn. Air Cadet Squadron (545): CO - Installation, Ms. V. Conrad.....	2308
Vote - Affirmative.....	2308
Res. 1284, de Waard, Frank/Wright, George - Lismore Seafood Plant: Opening - Congrats., Mr. C. MacKinnon	2309
Vote - Affirmative.....	2309
Res. 1285, Lipsett, Bruce: Commun. Serv. - Thank, Mr. G. Ramey	2309
Vote - Affirmative.....	2310
Res. 1286, Kings Reg. Rehab. Ctr. - Anniv. (50 th), Mr. J. Morton	2310
Vote - Affirmative.....	2311
Res. 1287, Hall, Carl/Guppie's Fam. Rest. - Commun. Commitment, Ms. P. Birdsall.....	2311
Vote - Affirmative.....	2312
Res. 1288, St. Andrew's Anglican Church (Mulgrave) - Anniv. (110 th), Mr. J. Boudreau	2312
Vote - Affirmative.....	2312
Res. 1289, Valley Royals Softball Team (Pleasant Valley): Victorious Season (2011) - Congrats., Mr. G. Burrill	2313
Vote - Affirmative.....	2313
Res. 1290, Rooftight Const. - N.S. Home Builders' Assoc. Award (2011), Hon. P. Paris	2313
Vote - Affirmative.....	2314
Res. 1291, Local Coun. of Women: Wright House Location - Anniv. (100 th), Mr. L. Preyra.....	2314
Vote - Affirmative.....	2315
Res. 1292, MacDonald, Dr. Bernie: NSAC Retirement - Congrats., Ms. L. Zann	2315
Vote - Affirmative.....	2316
Res. 1293, Ryl. Cdn. Air Cadets 545 - Anniv. (60 th), Ms. V. Conrad.....	2316
Vote - Affirmative.....	2316
Res. 1294, Butler, Don - Prov. Vol. Award, Mr. C. MacKinnon.....	2317
Vote - Affirmative.....	2317
Res. 1295, Parrish-Zwicker, Lavinia - NSSBA Sch. Bd. Member of Yr., Mr. J. Morton	2317
Vote - Affirmative.....	2318

ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS:

No. 280, Prem. - NSP: Rate Increases - Hearings Attend, Hon. S. McNeil	2318
No. 281, Prem. - NSP Rate Increases: Prem./Gov't. - Awareness Time Frame, Hon. J. Baillie	2319
No. 282, Prem. - NSP: Equity Return - Reduction Demand, Hon. S. McNeil	2321
No. 283, Health & Wellness: Mental Health Strategy - Gaps Explain, Hon. S. McNeil	2322
No. 284, Prem. - Health Care Strike: Services - Protection Plan, Hon. J. Baillie	2324
No. 285, Health & Wellness - IWK ACT Prog.: Cutback - Appropriateness Confirm, Mr. L. Glavine	2325
No. 286, Prem.: Emera Officials - Discussions Reveal, Hon. C. d'Entremont	2328
No. 287, Health & Wellness - ACT Prog.: Dismantling - Min. Response, Mr. L. Glavine	2330
No. 288, Energy - NSP Rate Increases: Fam. Budgets - Effects, Mr. C. Porter	2331
No. 289, Com. Serv. - Talbot House: Standards - Compliance Details, Ms. K. Regan	2333
No. 290, Prem. - NSP: Rate Increases - Prem., Ms. D. Whalen	2334
No. 291, Energy - NSP: Rate Hearings - Min. Appear, Mr. A. Younger	2335
No. 292, ERDT - Power Rates: Businesses - Concerns, Mr. G. MacLellan	2336
No. 293, Educ. - Bus Stop: Bullying - Protection, Mr. E. Orrell	2338
No. 294, Educ. - Schools: Electricity Costs - Funding Adjust, Hon. K. Casey	2340
No. 295, Energy - HARP: Access - Statistics, Hon. K. Colwell	2341
No. 296, Aboriginal Affs.: Bedford Waterfront - Petroglyphs, Ms. K. Regan	2343
No. 297, Justice - Taavel Death: Review - Release Confirm, Mr. A. MacMaster	2344
No. 298, TIR: Wentworth-Collingwood Rd. (Cumb. Co.) - Repair, Hon. W. Gaudet	2345
No. 299, Prem.: Emera Plane Trip - Advisability, Mr. A. MacLeod	2346

OPPOSITION MEMBERS' BUSINESS:

MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS:

Res. 997, Prem. - NSP: Rate Increases - Oppose	
Mr. A. Younger	2348
Mr. M. Whynott	2352
Mr. C. Porter	2355
Mr. L. Glavine.....	2360
Res. 1093, Prem./NDP Gov't. - Rate Hearings:	
Attendance On-Line Petition Support	
Ms. D. Whalen	2364
Hon. D. Wilson	2368
Mr. A. MacMaster.....	2373
Ms. K. Regan	2377

ADJOURNMENT, House rose to meet again on Thur., May 17th at 10:00 a.m.2380

NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3):

Res. 1296, Inverness Mun. Housing Corp./Inverary Manor: Bd. of Directors/ Mgt. & Staff - Efforts Acknowledge, Mr. A. MacMaster	2381
Res. 1297, ICE All Stars Senior Team: Cheerleading Comp. - Congrats., Mr. C. Porter	2381
Res. 1298, ICE All Stars Youth 1 Team: Cheerleading Comp. - Congrats., Mr. C. Porter	2382
Res. 1299, ICE All Stars Youth 2 Team: Cheerleading Comp. - Congrats., Mr. C. Porter	2382
Res. 1300, ICE All Stars Jr. Team: Cheerleading Comp. - Congrats., Mr. C. Porter	2383
Res. 1301, Cunningham, Jean Marie/DeViller, Jeremie: Son - Birth Congrats., Hon. C. d'Entremont.....	2383
Res. 1302, Pothier, Kim & Todd: Daughter - Birth Congrats., Hon. C. d'Entremont.....	2384
Res. 1303, Mahone Bay Area Lions Club: Lions Recycle for Sight - Commend, Ms. P. Birdsall.....	2384
Res. 1304, Chia-Kangata, Simone: Great Cloth Diaper Change - Promotion/Participation, Ms. P. Birdsall.....	2385
Res. 1305, Brewster, Pam: Vol. Activities - Recognize, Ms. P. Birdsall	2385
Res. 1306, Lifetime Home Expo: Vol./Organizers - Commend, Ms. P. Birdsall.....	2386
Res. 1307, S. Shore Genealogical Soc.: Genealogical Sleuths Proj. - Commend, Ms. P. Birdsall	2387
Res. 1308, King, Sally: Genealogical Assoc. N.S. - Contributions, Hon. M. More	2387

Res. 1309, Withrow, Alfreda: Genealogical Assoc. N.S. - Contributions, Hon. W. Estabrooks.....	2388
Res. 1310, Melanson, Lloyd: Genealogical Assoc. N.S. - Contributions, Mr. L. Preyra	2388
Res. 1311, Harvie, Leland: Genealogical Assoc. N.S. - Contributions, Hon. Maureen MacDonald	2389
Res. 1312, Taylor, Roy Scott: Genealogical Assoc. N.S. - Contributions, Hon. Maureen MacDonald	2389
Res. 1313, Spinney, Suzanne: Argyle Mun. Honour - Congrats., Hon. C. d'Entremont	2390
Res. 1314, Bourque, Roland: Argyle Mun. Honour - Congrats., Hon. C. d'Entremont	2390
Res. 1315, d'Entremont, Renette: Argyle Mun. Honour - Congrats., Hon. C. d'Entremont	2391
Res. 1316, Doucette, Raymond: Argyle Mun. Honour - Congrats., Hon. C. d'Entremont	2391
Res. 1317, Muise, Paul: Argyle Mun. Honour - Congrats., Hon. C. d'Entremont	2392
Res. 1318, Amirault, Odette: Argyle Mun. Honour - Congrats., Hon. C. d'Entremont	2392
Res. 1319, Doucette, Nettie: Argyle Mun. Honour - Congrats., Hon. C. d'Entremont	2393
Res. 1320, Blanchard, Neil: Argyle Mun. Honour - Congrats., Hon. C. d'Entremont	2393
Res. 1321, Doucette, Mona: Argyle Mun. Honour - Congrats., Hon. C. d'Entremont	2394
Res. 1322, Goodwin, Marlene: Argyle Mun. Honour - Congrats., Hon. C. d'Entremont	2394
Res. 1323, White, Justine: Argyle Mun. Honour - Congrats., Hon. C. d'Entremont	2395
Res. 1324, Doucette, Jane: Argyle Mun. Honour - Congrats., Hon. C. d'Entremont	2395
Res. 1325, Goodwin, George: Argyle Mun. Honour - Congrats., Hon. C. d'Entremont	2396
Res. 1326, Jacquard, Donnie: Argyle Mun. Honour - Congrats., Hon. C. d'Entremont	2396
Res. 1327, d'Eon, Dianne: Argyle Mun. Honour - Congrats., Hon. C. d'Entremont	2397
Res. 1328, Nickerson, Darren: Argyle Mun. Honour - Congrats., Hon. C. d'Entremont	2397
Res. 1329, Surette, Brian: Argyle Mun. Honour - Congrats., Hon. C. d'Entremont	2398
Res. 1330, Cottreau, Betty: Argyle Mun. Honour - Congrats., Hon. C. d'Entremont	2398

Res. 1331, Scott, Ben: Argyle Mun. Honour - Congrats., Hon. C. d'Entremont	2399
Res. 1332, d'Entremont, Adeline: Argyle Mun. Honour - Congrats., Hon. C. d'Entremont	2399
Res. 1333, Mills, Bill: Main St. Bus. Improvement Dist. Assoc., Mr. A. Younger	2400
Res. 1334, Hirtle, Ron - Commun. Champion Award (2012), Ms. D. Whalen	2400
Res. 1335, Whittleton, Jill & Kelly: Hfx. Cheer Elite - Cheerleading Contributions, Ms. D. Whalen	2401
Res. 1336, Beal, Todd - Commun. Champion Award (2012), Ms. D. Whalen	2402



HALIFAX, WEDNESDAY, MAY 16, 2012

Sixty-first General Assembly

Fourth Session

2:00 P.M.

SPEAKER

Hon. Gordon Gosse

DEPUTY SPEAKERS

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

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please. We'll now commence with the daily routine.

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS**NOTICES OF MOTION**

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

RESOLUTION NO. 1275

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

Whereas a petition is the most direct form of democracy, where Nova Scotians can tell elected representatives about their opinions on individual issues; and

Whereas Nova Scotians are increasingly using the Internet to do business and to communicate with others; and

Whereas an on-line petition asking this Legislature to deny Nova Scotia Power's application for rate increases has been signed by over 26,000 people;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House urge the government to modernize the rules governing petitions, to allow on-line petitions to be tabled, starting with the 26,000-signature petition calling for action on power rates.

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 Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism.

RESOLUTION NO. 1276

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

Whereas the Grand Day for Cobequid will be held on June 23, 2012, on Grand Lake in Wellington, to raise funds for the Cobequid Community Health Centre Foundation; and

Whereas over the past two years this event has raised \$142,000 for community health care, enabling the purchase of two EKG units and expanding cardiac care services at the centre; and

Whereas the Grand Day for Cobequid brings friends, families and co-workers together on the water, to canoe or kayak in support of health care in the community;

Therefore be it resolved that the House of Assembly extend best wishes and congratulations to the Cobequid Community Health Centre Foundation on their fundraising event being held this summer in Wellington.

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 Minister of Education.

RESOLUTION NO. 1277

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

Whereas Michelin North America's Waterville plant celebrated the 30th Anniversary of the first tire that was produced on March 29, 1982, on March 29, 2012; and

Whereas the Waterville plant produces one million truck tires annually and also recently celebrated the production of its 30 millionth truck tire; and

Whereas Michelin North America's three Nova Scotia plants - Waterville, Granton and Bridgewater - have produced 200 million tires since it first began producing tires in Nova Scotia 35 years ago;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulate Michelin's Waterville plant for reaching these milestones in the history of the plant.

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 Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage.

RESOLUTION NO. 1278

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

Whereas Holy Ghost Ukrainian Catholic Church, located in Whitney Pier, has been a vital part of Sydney and area since 1912; and

Whereas Holy Ghost Ukrainian Catholic Church has enriched the lives of not only the Ukrainian people it serves, but all members of the local community; and

Whereas the 100th Anniversary celebrations will take place from August 2-5, 2012, in Sydney, Nova Scotia;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House congratulate Holy Ghost Ukrainian Catholic Church on their 100th year of dedicated service to the community and extend their best wishes for 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 Minister of Natural Resources.

RESOLUTION NO. 1279

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

Whereas on Friday, April 13th, Susan MacConnell of Scotsburn, Pictou County, was chosen by CBC Live Right Now as their Inspiration of the Day; and

Whereas Susan MacConnell takes the Live Right Now Challenge to heart and makes an extra effort to lead a balanced life, juggling duties of mother, wife, volunteer, friend and employee, while trying to add physical activity to her family's life; and

Whereas Susan MacConnell has been an inspiration to her family, friends and co-workers by encouraging them to make small changes to lead healthier lives, such as walking breaks at work, leading by example as she has made her healthy challenges - habits that are here to stay;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia Legislature congratulate Susan MacConnell of Scotsburn, Pictou County, for being chosen CBC's Live Right Now Inspiration of the Day, and wish her continued health and happiness.

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 Halifax Citadel-Sable Island.

RESOLUTION NO. 1280

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

Whereas I Love Local (HFX) is a group of community-minded, independent businesses that are committed to supporting and strengthening our community and making Halifax an exciting and vibrant place in which to live; and

Whereas Open Halifax was a two-day initiative led by Gordon Stevens and I Love Local (HFX), which encouraged Haligonians to explore their city with free admission at galleries and museums, specials at local shops and restaurants, and free, family-friendly cultural demonstrations; and

Whereas on May 12-13, 2012, more than 80 restaurants, shops, galleries, and museums participated in the inaugural Open Halifax weekend, drawing thousands of people and earning real-time national attention through the sharing of experiences on social media;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly recognize the contributions of local businesses to the vitality of our communities, and congratulate Gordon Stevens and all of this year's Open Halifax participants on an extraordinarily successful event.

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 Truro-Bible Hill.

RESOLUTION NO. 1281

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

Whereas Stan Gabriel, now in his 80s, has been an active member of the harness racing community for more than 50 years; and

Whereas Mr. Gabriel has both raced and trained many horses, first at Sackville Downs and then at the Truro Raceway; and

Whereas the Truro Harness Horse Owners Association recently recognized Stan Gabriel's contributions to harness racing by bestowing on him the Senior Horseman Award;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia Legislature congratulate Stan Gabriel for being the recipient of the Senior Horseman Award and thank him for his many contributions to the harness racing industry.

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 Hammonds Plains-Upper Sackville.

RESOLUTION NO. 1282

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 Brooklin Craig, a Grade 6 student in Cole Harbour, didn't like celebrating Mother's Day and Father's Day at school because she knows a lot of kids who don't have moms and dads; and

Whereas Brooklin, with the support of her two moms, wrote to the administrators at her school, Astral Drive Elementary School, asking for a family day celebration; and

Whereas on May 7th, Astral Drive Elementary School kicked off its first Family Diversity Week, which was a week-long celebration of many kinds of families such as foster and adoptive families, those headed by gay and lesbian couples, single parents, grandparents and others;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly commend Brooklin Craig on the instrumental steps she took to develop the first Astral Drive Elementary School Diversity Week, which celebrated the many different kinds of families who live in our Nova Scotia communities.

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 Queens.

RESOLUTION NO. 1283

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

Whereas the Liverpool 545 Royal Canadian Air Cadet Squadron Command has been transferred to Captain Brian Oickle of Liverpool, Queens County; and

Whereas Captain Oickle's history with the cadets stretches back to the 1970s when he was an air cadet; and

Whereas Captain Oickle has been with the 545 Royal Canadian Air Cadet Squadron as a civilian instructor, supply officer and training officer;

Therefore be it resolved that the House of Assembly congratulate Captain Brian Oickle on having been installed as the new commanding officer of the Liverpool 545 Royal Canadian Air Cadet Squadron.

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.

Before I recognize the next member, I would like to remind members from all sides that the chatter in the Legislature today is very high and it is particularly difficult to hear. It is happening all around and I would ask that you keep your chatter a little lower or take it out of the room.

The honourable member for Pictou East.

RESOLUTION NO. 1284

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

Whereas the Lismore Seafood Plant opened on May 1st for seafood production in a once idle processing facility in Lismore; and

Whereas the new owner Frank de Waard of Aquashell Holdings of Wallace, Nova Scotia, and plant manager George Wright have made extensive renovations at the Lismore plant to have it ready for the 2012 lobster season; and

Whereas the Lismore Seafood Plant has created up to 50 new full-time jobs processing lobster and other fish species;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly congratulate Frank de Waard and George Wright for opening the Lismore Seafood Plant in Lismore and wish them much success in the seafood business.

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 West.

RESOLUTION NO. 1285

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

Whereas Mr. Bruce Lipsett is a well-known businessman in Bridgewater, Nova Scotia, who is the owner of Bridgewater Insurance and a valuable member of the volunteer community; and

Whereas Mr. Lipsett has contributed greatly to the success of many projects in the area serving on the board of The United Way, serving as a board member on the Lunenburg/Queens Development Association, being recognized as a lifetime member of the Kinsmen Club, serving as an auxiliary member of the RCMP for 17 years and providing significant financial support to the Lunenburg County Lifestyle Centre; and

Whereas Mr. Lipsett is enjoying life even more these days having turned over some of his business responsibilities to his very capable son Darren Lipsett, although he still continues to work hard as a volunteer and a strong community supporter;

Therefore be it resolved that members of this House thank Mr. Bruce Lipsett for his many years of volunteer service to his community, and wish him health and happiness in the years that lie ahead.

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 North.

RESOLUTION NO. 1286

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

Whereas the Kings Regional Rehabilitation Centre in Waterville has for 50 years been a supportive living and learning facility serving over 200 adults and youth who live with physical and mental health challenges; and

Whereas the staff of KRRC provide quality care and encourage family support through various programs designed to respond to cognitive challenges, autism, chronic mental illness, dementia, acquired brain injury, behavioural issues and physical disabilities; and

Whereas the clients and staff and volunteers of the Kings Regional Rehabilitation Centre also participated in a variety of events and activities in support of the community

and people with disabilities, including the Tools For Life Expo, the Special Olympics Torch Run, VON's Meals on Wheels program and the Apple Tree Foundation's Charity Golf Tournament;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly recognize Kings Regional Rehabilitation Centre for the excellence of its staff and programs and congratulate them on celebrating its 50th Anniversary of service for those who live with mental health issues and other disabilities, their families and to the community.

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. 1287

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

Whereas Carl Hall of New Germany, opening the Dairy Cone in 1997, decided he would run a family restaurant so he convinced his son Shawn and his daughter-in-law June to move to New Germany; and

Whereas Carl Hall and his family opened Guppies Family Restaurant on August 14, 2000 with a strong commitment to his community by offering fundraising opportunities for non-profit organizations and regularly contributing his time and skills to help out people with church and community suppers; and

Whereas Carl Hall decided to retire after 11 and a half years of successful business in New Germany and sold Guppies Family Restaurant in February of this year;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulate Carl Hall on his successful Guppies Family Restaurant, recognize his strong commitment to the community and wish him success in his retirement.

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 Guysborough-Sheet Harbour.

RESOLUTION NO. 1288

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

Whereas St. Andrew's Anglican Church, the first church built in Mulgrave, will celebrate its 110th Anniversary on May 20, 2012; and

Whereas St. Andrew's Anglican Church has been an important spiritual, educational and social community gathering place in the Town of Mulgrave for more than a century; and

Whereas the congregation will highlight this historic occasion with community celebrations which will be held from May 18th to 20th, 2012;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate St. Andrew's Anglican Church, the ministers and the entire congregation on their 110th Anniversary and extend our very best wishes as they celebrate this historic milestone.

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-Musquodoboit Valley.

RESOLUTION NO. 1289

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

Whereas the softball team, the Valley Royals, based in Pleasant Valley, Musquodoboit, won both first place in the regular season and the championship game of the playoffs in the Sheet Harbour Women's League in the 2011 season; and

Whereas the Sheet Harbour Women's League, with its defining rule that no more than three players under 19 may take the field at one time and its minimum age of 14, offers a high calibre of intergenerational softball in the area of the Musquodoboit Valley and the Eastern Shore; and

Whereas the 2011 Valley Royals consisted of Shelby Cole, Angie Cox, Crystal Deale, Alana Harnish, Sarah Harish, Julie Higgins, Karen Hutchinson, Lenaya Lemmon, Laura Leslie, Janette McInnis, Krista Oickle, Nikki Oickle, Sarah Redden, Heather Smith and Shayna Smith with coaches Darrell Harnish and Troy Smith;

Therefore be it resolved that this Nova Scotia House of Assembly congratulate the Valley Royals for their victorious 2011 season and wish the team an exciting summer on the Pleasant Valley field.

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 Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism.

RESOLUTION NO. 1290

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

Whereas Rooftight Construction, based in Fall River, is the recipient of the prestigious 2011 Nova Scotia Home Builders' Association Builder of the Year Award, which recognizes excellence in residential home construction; and

Whereas Rooftight was also awarded the Marketing Excellence Award for their radio campaign focused on the design of homes from a woman's perspective;

Whereas Rooftight has been in the residential construction business for 16 years and has been generous in giving back to their community by sponsoring various sports organizations and events;

Therefore be it resolved that the House of Assembly extend congratulations to Rooftight Construction on receiving the 2011 Nova Scotia Home Builders' Association Builder of the Year Award 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 Halifax Citadel-Sable Island.

RESOLUTION NO. 1291

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 Local Council of Women of Halifax was established in 1894, playing a vital role in securing social and political reforms, including those that encouraged and enabled women to participate more meaningfully and fully in public life; and

Whereas George Wright was a prominent Nova Scotian businessman and philanthropist who perished in the sinking of the RMS Titanic, bequeathing to the local Council of Women his home at 989 Young Avenue, now also known as the Council House; and

Whereas on April 15, 2012, the local Council of Women welcomed community members and descendants of George Wright to a commemorative reception in honour of their benefactor and in celebration of 100 years in George Wright's house;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly recognize the local Council of Women for its many path-breaking contributions to our community and extend congratulations on their 100th year in the George Wright house.

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 Truro-Bible Hill.

RESOLUTION NO. 1292

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

Whereas Dr. Bernie MacDonald is retiring from his 18-year position as co-president and vice-president of the Nova Scotia Agricultural College (NSAC) and has just finished addressing the 107th convocation ceremony in Truro and Bible Hill; and

Whereas Dr. MacDonald has worked for approximately 40 years in education, having taught for 19 years at the former Nova Scotia Teachers College, and started his vice-presidency at the NSAC in 1994 and was named co-president in 2007; and

Whereas Dr. MacDonald has worked as a consultant on adult education, curriculum development, and teacher certification, has extensive experience in the delivery of post-secondary education, and was a key partner in the development of several projects at the NSAC including a state-of-the-art poultry centre;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia Legislature congratulate Dr. Bernie MacDonald on his retirement from the Nova Scotia Agricultural College and thank him for his many years of hard work and dedication to education in 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 Queens.

RESOLUTION NO. 1293

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

Whereas the 545 Liverpool Royal Canadian Air Cadet Squadron is one of the finest organizations in Canada involving youths between the ages of 12 and 19; and

Whereas the 545 Liverpool Royal Canadian Air Cadet Squadron will celebrate their 60th Anniversary at their Annual Ceremonial Review; and

Whereas the program provides cadets with core values of community, citizenship, discipline, and leadership skills, while providing cadets with a sense of accomplishment;

Therefore be it resolved that the House of Assembly congratulate Liverpool 545 Royal Canadian Air Cadets on their 60th Anniversary.

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 Pictou East.

RESOLUTION NO. 1294

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

Whereas the 38th Annual Provincial Volunteer Awards Ceremony was held in Halifax on April 2, 2012 with over 70 awards being presented to outstanding Nova Scotian volunteers; and

Whereas Don Butler of Ardness, Pictou County was honoured with a Provincial Volunteer Award on behalf of the Municipality of the District of Pictou to honour him for his many volunteer contributions; and

Whereas this Provincial Volunteer Award is an acknowledgement of Don Butler's extensive history of volunteer service to his community, church, county and province;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly congratulate Don Butler on his Provincial Volunteer Award and thank him for his many years of volunteer service to his community and to his 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 Kings North.

RESOLUTION NO. 1295

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

Whereas Lavinia Parrish-Zwicker has been a dedicated member of the Annapolis Valley Regional School Board for 16 years, serving as board chair since 2006; and

Whereas Ms. Parrish-Zwicker approaches her work on the board with a passion for excellence and abiding respect for students, their families, teachers and staff; and

Whereas Ms. Parrish-Zwicker has been named 2012 School Board Member of the Year by the Nova Scotia School Boards Association;

Therefore be it resolved that members of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly congratulate Lavinia Parrish-Zwicker on being named School Board Member of the Year by the Nova Scotia School Boards Association and thank her for her exemplary service to education and the Province of Nova Scotia.

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.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS

MADAM SPEAKER: Question Period will begin at 2:34 p.m. and end at 4:04 p.m.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

PREM. - NSP: RATE INCREASES - HEARINGS ATTEND

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL: Madam Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Will the Premier appear in person before the proposed rate increase by Nova Scotia Power and oppose this increase?

HON. DARRELL DEXTER (The Premier): Madam Speaker, of course, the government has appropriate representatives who appear before the Utility and Review Board for the purposes of examining the rate filing and to ensure that they apply the appropriate expertise to that examination. We support, of course, financially and fund the consumer advocate. This was something that came about, in fact, as a result of the work that we did in Opposition. So all the tools will be used to make sure that the rate filing is properly reviewed.

MR. MCNEIL: Madam Speaker, what Nova Scotians are looking for is for the Premier to stand up to Nova Scotia Power. The venue for the Premier to do that would be

the URB - to show up and let everyone know that he would be opposed to the rate increase in 2013, 2014 and 2015. I can't understand why the Premier would not be opposed to the rate increases.

So will the Premier tell all members of this House whether or not he supports the rate increase that Nova Scotia Power is looking for, or is he going to stand with Nova Scotians?

THE PREMIER: Madam Speaker, we always stand with Nova Scotians. We did that when we delivered more than \$100 million in savings to Nova Scotians last year through a rebate on their home energy. We did that when we provided more than \$11 million worth of relief to people through the Heating Assistance Rebate Program. We did that when we ensured there was more than \$100 million in savings through conservation through Efficiency Nova Scotia. This is the government that stands up for Nova Scotians.

MR. MCNEIL: Madam Speaker, that \$100 million figure is a real popular one. It's the one that Emera or Nova Scotia Power take out of the pockets of Nova Scotians with the blessing of this government each and every year, investing hundreds of millions of dollars somewhere else and not here. What the people of Nova Scotia are looking for from their government, is for the Premier to stand up and protect the interests of Nova Scotia ratepayers and not Nova Scotia Power shareholders.

Madam Speaker, shortly after coming into power it was this government and this Premier that added an NDP tax on every power bill across the Province of Nova Scotia. We believe that it is the shareholders of Nova Scotia Power who should be paying that tax and not the ratepayers. Will the Premier of Nova Scotia do the right thing, as he said he would do before the last election, and force Nova Scotia Power shareholders to pay his NDP electricity tax?

THE PREMIER: Madam Speaker, as I've said many times before, there is no tax that we have put on this. In fact, we took the tax off, we took the HST off. So why won't the Leader of the Official Opposition stand up and say that he would not put the HST back on electricity?

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

**PREM. - NSP RATE INCREASES:
PREM./GOV'T. - AWARENESS TIME FRAME**

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Madam Speaker, my question is for the Premier. All Nova Scotians were shocked and angered when Nova Scotia Power planned to raise their power rates by 6 per cent over two years. That is an increase beyond the ability of Nova Scotians to pay and will cost Nova Scotians further job losses. My question is, when did the

Premier or anyone in his government - including staff - learn that Nova Scotia Power was planning such an increase?

THE PREMIER: Madam Speaker, what I can say is this. The Government of Nova Scotia was left with a utility that was privatized. It was privatized by the Progressive Conservatives and when they did that, I want to remind Nova Scotians that a former president of the Progressive Conservative Party was made the president of Nova Scotia Power. He was examined, at the time, before the Public Accounts Committee, and I want to read just a short passage about the privatization efforts that the Progressive Conservatives made at the time.

He was asked, Madam Speaker, if they had done a study to show the benefits of privatization to the people of Nova Scotia and this is what he said:

“A private sector company does things on an economic basis. It also has a mandate in the sense that we have to have a good corporate system but no, I did not engage and I did not do and I am not going to either, engage in a major study on how we are going to be more effective. It is just a philosophy, just an approach to things that I believe in which I think works.”

MR. BAILLIE: Madam Speaker, the only thing that needs to be privatized today is Question Period because then maybe we'll get a truthful answer to a simple question like, when did you know that the power rates were going to go up? That would be very helpful and so I will ask the Premier again.

Nova Scotians are faced with a two-year increase in their power rates, 6 per cent over two years. Awfully convenient - it's the first time they've asked for a two-year increase. Did the Premier, or anyone in his government, or anyone on his staff, talk to Nova Scotia Power about providing a two-year increase, which conveniently puts the next time after the next election?

THE PREMIER: Madam Speaker, the reason why we have a privatized utility is because the members of the Progressive Conservative Party decided that on the basis of philosophy. They didn't need any studies. They didn't need to talk to anybody about it. They didn't need to see whether or not the people of Nova Scotia would benefit. If there is one thing that the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party can do the next time he stands up, it is to apologize to the people of Nova Scotia. (Applause)

MR. BAILLIE: Madam Speaker, the problem is not the separation of the power company from the government 20 years ago, the problem is the cozy relationship. The fact that that Premier is in bed with Nova Scotia Power today, that is the problem with our power rates. To point back 20 years or more, shows how cozy that relationship today is. That is the problem that Nova Scotians have today. They are so close that now we know

they are even commuting to work together on the corporate jet. That is what is offensive to Nova Scotians. That is what they deserve an apology for, not something that happened in the 1990's.

Madam Speaker, my final question for the Premier, my last hope in this round that we might get a straightforward answer about something that can be done today about the rising cost of power: will the Premier finally stand up for Nova Scotians and tell his cozy commuting friends no, to this power increase?

THE PREMIER: Well, Madam Speaker, I heard the Leader of the Official Opposition last night saying I was too cozy with big business. Now apparently the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party believes I am too cozy with big business, which I have to say is a refreshing change since for the last three weeks they were saying I was too cozy with unions.

Mr. Speaker, what I can tell the people of Nova Scotia is simply this: we would not abuse their trust the way that those Parties have done in the past. The Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party was the Chief of Staff to the Premier when they decided to do a tax cut and send \$155 cheques out to all Nova Scotians, an episode we haven't forgotten and neither have they.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition,

PREM. - NSP: EQUITY RETURN - REDUCTION DEMAND

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL: Nova Scotia Power keeps coming back to the people of this province and they show no signs of slowing down. What the people want is a Premier and a government to stand up for them and to stand up to Nova Scotia Power, but the Premier would rather defend Nova Scotia Power than stand up against them.

The company has a return on an equity, Madam Speaker, that is unacceptable, so my question to the Premier is, will the Premier come to the hearing in September and demand that the rate of return be reduced?

THE PREMIER: Well, Mr. Speaker, I know that the Leader of the Official Opposition would like to prey on people's ignorance but he knows and I know that they don't have a fixed rate of return. If they make 1 per cent, they get 1 per cent. It's not fixed in the manner in which he says.

Mr. Speaker, what I will say is this. Here we control what it is that we can do with respect to power rates and what we did was we took every single cent of Nova Scotia tax off electricity, something they oppose and something they would reverse if they have the opportunity.

MR. MCNEIL: Madam Speaker, not only would we not reverse the HST cut on electricity bills, we would take off the NDP electricity tax and put it squarely on the backs of the shareholders. So now that it's been cleared (Interruptions)

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition has the floor.

MR. MCNEIL: Madam Speaker, now that it's clear the only tax on electricity bills that the Province of Nova Scotia can control is the NDP electricity tax, when is the Premier going to stand up and take his own tax off power bills and put it back where it belongs, on the shareholders of Nova Scotia Power?

THE PREMIER: Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Official Opposition deals with what he thinks is a tax. Of course it's a demand-side management plan that returned \$100 million worth of benefits to the people of Nova Scotia.

MR. MCNEIL: Madam Speaker, it helps return \$124 million to the pockets of shareholders of Emera is what it does. The Premier wants to stand up for Nova Scotians and it's time he takes his NDP electricity tax off of every power bill that he has added it to and force Nova Scotia Power shareholders to pay for his bad decision. So will the Premier do the right thing and force Nova Scotia Power to pay his tax instead of asking Nova Scotians to do it?

THE PREMIER: Madam Speaker, there is, of course, no tax on electricity and the reason why there is no tax on electricity is because the members of this caucus voted to take it off and members of that caucus voted to keep it on.

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

HEALTH & WELLNESS: MENTAL HEALTH STRATEGY - GAPS EXPLAIN

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL: Today government revealed its much-anticipated Mental Health and Addictions Strategy. Two years in the making, today's unveiling told us nothing new that wasn't already known and should have been implemented two years ago. While the strategy identifies the importance of early intervention, Madam Speaker - there is no question early intervention is important - there is no mention made as to how government will address gaps to support geriatric mental health programs, no mention of support for university students, no mention for any programs to support women in domestic violence situations and the impact this has on their overall mental health. So my question to the Premier is, can the Premier please explain why the strategy failed to address these gaps?

THE PREMIER: Madam Speaker, the fact of the matter is the Mental Health and Addictions Strategy was released this morning. Not only was it released, it received wide

praise from mental health professionals right across the spectrum, but I will refer the question to the Minister of Health and Wellness for a fuller explanation to the Leader of the Opposition.

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for the question. I'm so pleased to be able to stand here and talk about the \$5.2 million in investment we're making to improve the mental health system in Nova Scotia.

This strategy has 33 actions, Madam Speaker, and it will result in a better response for people who are dealing with mental health and addictions services from one end of this province to the other. I want to thank all of those many, many people who were involved in developing this Mental Health and Addictions Strategy, their work is very much appreciated and their hard efforts have not gone unnoticed by this government.

MR. MCNEIL: Madam Speaker, as we all know, a strategy is not worth the paper it is written on unless resources are in place to fully implement it. While the Premier and this government brought forward a budget that ensured the administration of the Department of Health and Wellness grew by 3.8 per cent, the funding committed to mental health and addictions-based funding grew by 3 per cent.

Madam Speaker, they found \$300 million for Irving, they found \$50 million for Bowater but they found \$5.2 million for mental health. So my question to the Premier is, why is funding for mental health and addictions not a priority for your government?

THE PREMIER: The simple fact of the matter is that we have cut the costs of administration in Health and Wellness significantly. When we came to power the administrative costs associated with the health care system ran not only higher than the national average but among the highest in the country; it is now below the national average. The money committed to the Mental Health and Addictions Strategy is the single largest commitment to mental health in our province's history.

MR. MCNEIL: Madam Speaker, regardless, if the Premier would read his own budget he would see an increase in administration in the Department of Health and Wellness. There is not a professional in the mental health system, there is not a family desperately waiting for mental health assessments and there's not a family physician in this province who doesn't get frustrated with the wait times associated with assessments. The key, however, is ensuring that the programs are available to treat the diagnosis after the diagnosis has been made. My final question to the Premier is, why does the strategy focus only on assessment wait times while failing to address the very necessary treatment wait times?

THE PREMIER: Well, I'm not sure whether or not the Leader of the Official Opposition actually read the strategy, but what it does, in fact, is do exactly that. It looks to ensure that people get the kinds of services that they need. There has been a program in

place in this province for some time called the Strongest Families program, which helps parents dealing with children who have difficulties. It was run out of the IWK for the last little while just within the Halifax area.

When the Nunn Commission report came down, the Cape Breton District Health Authority went to the Strongest Families program and said this is the kind of help that we need. They put money into the program. That was expanded into Cape Breton and now, due to the work of the Minister of Health and Wellness and the Department of Health and Wellness, that program will now deliver that service throughout the Province of Nova Scotia.

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

PREM. - HEALTH CARE STRIKE: SERVICES - PROTECTION PLAN

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Madam Speaker, my question is to the Premier. There are 50 collective agreements up this year in our health sector, starting with 6,500 nurses who begin collective bargaining in just a few weeks. The president of the Nova Scotia Nurses' Union has already said that we're likely headed for a strike, and I will table that for the benefit of the House. My question to the Premiers is, will he bring a plan to this House before the end of this session to keep important health services open and available for patients who need them in the event of an impasse in future contract negotiations?

THE PREMIER: Madam Speaker, thank you to the member opposite for the question. I would remind the House that this is the Party that introduced legislation that would create chaos in the health care bargaining sector. (Interruptions) That was just now, that was in this session that they introduced legislation which would essentially create chaos. I want to share with the members opposite, this is an editorial from The ChronicleHerald on September 14, 2007, and this is what it says: "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."

MR. BAILLIE: Madam Speaker, Capital Health has an essential services plan yet they still had 500 cancelled surgeries and over 2,000 important medical procedures that were postponed, that is Capital Health. In other health authorities such as the Cape Breton District Health Authority there is no such protection for patients in the event of a work stoppage. I will quote recently from the just-retired CEO of Capital Health, Mr. John Malcom who says that ". . . Capital Health has a provision in the agreement with the Nova Scotia Government and General Employees Union to provide essential services." Cape Breton District Health Authority has no such provision, and I will table that for the benefit of the House.

Right now, in 2012, the Premier has a choice to make: will he protect patients and taxpayers or not? I will ask the Premier, why is he willing to let thousands of Nova Scotians go without important medical services over the dollars and cents of a contract negotiation?

THE PREMIER: Madam Speaker, I suppose we could do what the Progressive Conservatives did: they just opened the chequebook, wrote the cheque, and didn't care about the future of the province or what the burden that other governments were going to have to shoulder when they came into government. But we don't operate that way; in fact, what we are doing is we are engaging in a collective bargaining process. We are treating the excellent nurses and health care workers that we have, fairly. That is the best way to protect patient safety.

MR. BAILLIE: Madam Speaker, the Premier's history lessons about actions taken in the past are very interesting because they are such a sharp contrast to the "do nothing" approach, to the "stand by and let it happen" approach that he takes when it comes to interruptions, whether they're strikes or lockouts, or otherwise, in our important health services.

The most recent example, Local 42 at Capital Health, ended in arbitration and yet still there were 500 surgeries cancelled and over 2,000 important medical procedures postponed. The Premier could have resolved that one through some form of arbitration then, but he didn't, he let it go right to the end and we still ended up with arbitration where Nova Scotians will find out later how much they have to pay. The only ones that got locked out were the patients who needed important surgeries at that time, and of course the taxpayers, who are eventually going to have to foot the bill. My question to the Premier is, why has the Premier abandoned the patients and the taxpayers that he was elected to look after?

THE PREMIER: Madam Speaker, that is exactly what we're doing: we're looking after the safety of patients; we're protecting the interests of taxpayers. We're not going to do what the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party would do, which is implement mandatory - let me stress that: mandatory - arbitration that would lead to health care chaos and that would only bring in the illegal strikes that would cause massive disruption in our system. That would be a mistake.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

**HEALTH & WELLNESS - IWK ACT PROG.:
CUTBACK - APPROPRIATENESS CONFIRM**

MR. LEO GLAVINE: Madam Speaker, less than two months ago the Minister of Health and Wellness defended the IWK's so-called realignment of mental health services as the right thing to do. I will table that article.

Fast-forward two months later, and here are the facts: we have 12 children and youth currently in the program, for an occupancy rate of 100 per cent; 17 waiting for admission to the program; six waiting for pre-admission; and six who recently received assessments have also been added to that wait list, for a grand total of 29. This is in addition to the eight to 12 children and youth per month calling to access the program. My question to the Minister of Health and Wellness is, given it has only been two short months and wait lists continue to grow, was cutting back on the IWK ACT program still the right thing to do?

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Madam Speaker, I know that members of that caucus are very disappointed that this government has decided to invest \$5.2 million into a mental health strategy that will improve mental health services across the system. I'm disappointed that they can find nothing positive to say about the hard work that went into developing the mental health strategy.

We have examined best practices for mental health and addiction services around the world. The priorities that we have identified - early intervention and services such as the service that the IWK is providing are services that will make a significant difference in the lives of children and adolescents in this province. I am very proud of the work that has been done and the work that we will continue to do to unroll the strategy and see it have the impact that we desire.

MR. GLAVINE: Madam Speaker, I don't think we're dismissive at all of the advisory committee and the work they did. Unfortunately, the wait-time litany doesn't end there. The IWK ACT program is no longer doing any pre-admissions due to the fact that those coming into the program now will have to wait until Fall or winter of 2013 before they will be able to start treatment.

The Mental Health and Addictions Strategy, now less than six hours old, speaks to early interventions for both assessments and treatment, so when children are being assessed and sent to the program, they wait. You have done nothing, minister, but move these children from one wait list to another. For the minister to endorse this and play an active role in the underfunding that caused these changes, she should indeed be ashamed. My question to the minister is, how does waiting at least a year and a half for treatment benefit children and youth who so badly need it now?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Madam Speaker, the strategy announced today will see every child 18 months of age screened to pick up any delays and any problems and to do early identification. It will see clinicians added into the SchoolsPlus system across this province. It will add additional services throughout the province for addictions programs where they are sorely needed. It will see the support line for families that has been so effective in Cape Breton and in metro Halifax extended to the entire province. What this strategy does is divert people from the hospital system and provides the community-based services in communities where they should have been provided 20 years

ago or 15 years ago, when that Party was in power and they cut the guts out of the mental health system in Nova Scotia. (Applause)

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please. I would ask the honourable minister to retract the use of the word “guts.” It’s unparliamentary.

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Yes, Madam Speaker, when they cut the heart and soul out of the mental health system.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you.

The honourable member for Kings West on his final supplementary.

MR. GLAVINE: This minister knows that across Nova Scotia, except for Capital Health, we do not have the resources to deliver community-based programs. That’s the simple reality, and coming out of a mental health background, the minister should have started three years ago.

Madam Speaker, I feel like it’s Groundhog Day around here. If this minister was in Opposition, she would be screaming from the rooftops about the injustice. Yet now, when access is being denied, she becomes a chief apologist for a DHA that had no choice but to fund the minister’s desire for faster assessments by cutting back on treatment. The minister can ignore the facts. She can continue to deny much-needed treatment to children and youth. All I ask is that she do so having the best possible evidence at her disposal. We’ve asked for it. She has not provided that.

Will the minister commit to meeting with the IWK ACT staff and find out for herself and from the families waiting to access the program and tell them that she still believes the IWK’s mental health realignment was the right thing to do? Will she commit to me, yes or no?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Madam Speaker, we unveiled today a mental health strategy that will be implemented over three years. Its primary focus is on services for children and youth. We will be doing an evaluation and we will have a report card that will be available in terms of allowing transparency and accountability for how this plan is implemented.

Certainly with the IWK, their programs will be part of that process, and I have every confidence that with the additional resources that have been allocated - \$5.2 million this year, the largest injection of funds into the mental health system within any time that I can remember - we will see significant improvements and change in the system.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle.

PREM.: EMERA OFFICIALS - DISCUSSIONS REVEAL

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Madam Speaker, yesterday when asked about his mile high adventures with Emera executives (Interruptions)

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please. The use of "mile high" in the Legislature is unparliamentary. It did slip through yesterday, but it will not slip through again. I would ask that the member retract that, please.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: I retract that. We'll call it high-flying adventures with Emera and executives in their corporate jet. The Premier said: "It was, in fact, the most convenient way to get there." I'll table the Hansard on that one. Cushy seats, no waits with security, extra leg room, and knowing how Emera likes to throw a good party, there may have been some top quality in-flight entertainment. Yes, that sounds convenient for the Premier. Too bad the Premier isn't as interested in Nova Scotia's convenience. It would be convenient for Nova Scotia (Interruptions)

MR. GARY RAMEY: Is there a question? Ask a question or sit down.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: I must have hit a nerve, because I keep hearing from the member for Lunenburg West. He wants me to ask a question so much, he keeps asking it that way. It's the only time you hear from him. Anyway, I'll continue along with my question.

It would be convenient for Nova Scotians to have a Premier who was upfront with them and didn't hold secret meetings with power company bosses in corporate jets. It would be convenient for Nova Scotians to have a Premier who was serious about lowering power rates.

MR. RAMEY: Is there a question?

MR. D'ENTREMONT: Again, the member for Lunenburg West won't even let me get to a question.

My question through you, Madam Speaker, now that he has had his fun with his friends with benefits at Emera, and enjoyed the corporate perks, when will the Premier consider what is convenient for Nova Scotians and finally put their agenda ahead of Emera's?

THE PREMIER: Madam Speaker, as I pointed out earlier, it was that Party that privatized Nova Scotia Power, that set up the structure that we're left with. I want to make another point, because I remember when the tar ponds announcement was made that the then-Premier of Nova Scotia rented a private jet, flew to Sydney and took members of both

the Opposition Parties with him at the time, because it was the most convenient thing to do at the time.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: Madam Speaker, for weeks we've asked the Premier to reveal the details surrounding his discussions with officials at Emera and Nova Scotia Power but he remains silent. He simply wants us to trust him.

Now hopefully the Premier is able to forgive Nova Scotians who laugh at the suggestion that he's looking out for their best interests, especially when he is jaunting around with power company executives, having a jolly good time discussing Emera's issues in their corporate jets.

Madam Speaker, my question through you is, doesn't the Premier agree that it would be more convenient for ratepayers to know the full extent of his discussions with Nova Scotia Power and Emera, so they can decide whether or not the NDP-Emera agenda is in their best interests?

THE PREMIER: Madam Speaker, when the Progressive Conservatives privatized Nova Scotia Power, they didn't bother to do any studies, they didn't do anything. They just said it was on the basis of a feeling, a philosophy. Part of it, they said, was because when people have shareholders they have to work a little harder. They have to be more efficient, they have to work harder to earn people's money. That's what they said at the time.

The reality is that it is this government that took the HST off home energy, it is us who have been standing up for the people of Nova Scotia.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: Madam Speaker, something is wrong here. The Premier sees fit to jaunt around with power company executives, having a great adventure on their corporate jet. Then the Nova Scotians who paid for the Premier's lavish travel, asked a simple question - what did the Premier talk about with those executives? It's a simple question but they didn't get an answer. They didn't even get an apology. Since the Premier sees nothing wrong with his actions, it's reasonable to believe that he will repeat them.

Does the Premier really think that his personal convenience justifies reinforcing the notion that he and Emera are in cahoots to give big, shiny, expensive projects without telling Nova Scotians their true costs?

THE PREMIER: Madam Speaker, what I believe is that the Lower Churchill project is one of the most important economic and energy developments in the history of our province. I can also say this - I will table for the Progressive Conservative House Leader, a quote from his Leader. It says, "I am an opposition leader. This is one of the times when I actually (Interruption)

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable Premier has the floor.

THE PREMIER: Well, we'll table it again and we'll read it again because this is what it says; "I am an opposition leader. This is one of those times when I actually completely agree with what the government is doing and I have said so in the legislature of Nova Scotia."

Do we agree with Emera on the Lower Churchill project? Yes, we do because that's going to be better for all Nova Scotians. It's going to give us stable, long-term energy rates. That's the great thing about actually being independent. You can praise a company when they do a good thing and you can criticize them when they do the wrong thing.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

HEALTH & WELLNESS - ACT PROG.: DISMANTLING - MIN. RESPONSE

MR. LEO GLAVINE: Madam Speaker, rapidly-growing wait times are not the only challenge facing the IWK ACT program. While it wasn't damaging enough for the program to see the loss of valuable team members when youth mental health workers were fired, access to a psychiatrist for the ACT program has also been recently reduced. The full-time ACT program psychiatrist has been reduced to a 0.5 position and, to make matters worse, this same psychiatrist is filling a 0.5 position in the Young Tower program while holding down a full-time position at 4 South.

Access is being denied, the quality of the service being offered to children and youth is being altered. How can the minister sit idly by while the IWK ACT program is being dismantled right before her eyes?

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Madam Speaker, the IWK has adopted a new model in terms of the services they are providing to adolescents and families. It's a model called Choice and Partnership Approach (CAPA), it includes a first short visit shortly after referral and it ensures that young people will get into treatment sooner and matched up with the appropriate clinician with the right expertise to best meet their needs.

As I have explained many, many times in this House, the system that was there that the members of the Liberal Party like to defend, was a system that was broken, was a system that saw considerably more than 29 people on a wait list. It was a system that saw in excess of 700 or 800 people on a wait list and that is what we are fixing and there is a great deal of public support to fix that system.

MR. GLAVINE: Madam Speaker, the minister knows that there weren't 700 or 800 for the ACT program. The minister has spoken in the past of the importance of family reintegration, and I agree, it is important. However, the ACT program as it previously existed did just that. When a patient was admitted, parents were invited on the unit to interact with their children on weekend one, weekend two they were given a day pass, weekend three they were given a weekend pass to go home and so on. Now, in order to save

money and pay for faster assessments, staff shuts down the program Friday at 3:00 p.m. and tells everyone to go home.

My question to the minister is, will she table evidence before the end of today, which shows that sending children back to communities without necessary supports on a weekly basis is a more beneficial treatment plan than reintegrating children with families using appropriate assessments?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Madam Speaker, the IWK certainly does appropriate assessments for all of the patients they see. The new model that they have adopted is a model that will ensure that there are timely assessments, timely treatment with the right clinicians, better care sooner for families and children, and this is the approach that we, in this government support. The system that the Liberal Party are interested in defending and supporting is a system that was broken.

MR. GLAVINE: Madam Speaker, every weekend since changes were made a lot of the patients in the ACT program end up on 4 South. There have been patients of the ACT program who have ended up in emergency rooms just like I said to the minister as to what would happen. She should really speak to the IWK ACT program staff; the most tragic statistic of all, children are returning to the program on Monday morning who have regressed to the point where program staff, whom I met with, spent two days getting patients to the same condition they were in when they were released the previous Friday. Halted progress equates into longer stays, longer stays mean increased wait times for others waiting to access the program.

My final question to the minister is, given the extra cost pressures associated with emergency room visits, stays on 4 South, coupled with the huge disruption to treatment, does the minister still believe closing the ACT program for the weekend was the right thing to do?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Madam Speaker, as I've indicated, the IWK have adopted a new model, one that will ensure that people will not languish on wait lists for months and months without any contact, while a very small number of people receive services. This is the right thing to have done and I fully support the new model of care that they have adopted. We are already seeing very positive results from that model.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants West.

ENERGY - NSP RATE INCREASES: FAM. BUDGETS - EFFECTS

MR. CHUCK PORTER: Madam Speaker, my question through you will be to the Minister of Energy. Nova Scotia Power has said that the average family will pay \$3.50 more per month on their power bill next year alone and an additional \$3.50 a month the year after that.

Madam Speaker, \$3.50 could buy a family a loaf of bread or perhaps a container of milk each month. The NDP said an awful lot in Opposition but as soon as they got into the government benches, quickly cosied up to the power company to drive through their expensive agenda. My question to the minister through you is, since the minister is refusing to keep the House open to deal with the real issues facing families, like rising power rates, which does he suggest families pay for - groceries or their electricity bill?

HON. CHARLIE PARKER: Madam Speaker, I don't think I'm closing the House down, I'm willing to stay here as long as the member opposite wants to stay. But \$3.50 is the rate that's proposed. The URB will determine whether \$3.50 is just or not.

MR. PORTER: Madam Speaker, the average family will pay \$42 more next year for electricity. That's \$42 less a family has to buy fuel for their car or school supplies for their children. Last year Nova Scotians' disposable income dropped 1.8 per cent, no wonder with the NDP's 2 per cent tax grab, taking \$4,000 from the average family in higher HST. My question to the minister is, since the minister is refusing to keep the House open to deal with real issues facing families, like the rising cost of electricity rates, which does he suggest families pay for - their children's school supplies or their electricity bill?

MR. PARKER: Madam Speaker, again, I'm willing to stay here as long as the honourable member wants to stay. Let's stay to debate these issues, but \$3.50 a month or \$42 a year, again, the URB will determine, they'll call in the experts they need, they will determine if this is fair and just. They'll call in interveners like our government will be intervening and I hope your Party will also consider doing that. In the end, we have a whole lot of initiatives to get off of coal, which your Party and previous governments relied on very heavily.

MR. PORTER: Madam Speaker, the real issues facing Nova Scotians is the stress on their pocketbooks and the bitter pill when they hear about double-digit increases in salaries for Nova Scotia Power executives. In two years Nova Scotia Power will have taken an extra \$126 from the average family from this rate hike. That's \$126 less to pay for recreation for their children or medications for their family. Since the minister is refusing to keep the House open to deal with real issues like the rising cost of power rates for families, which does he suggest they pay for - their medications or their electricity bills?

MR. PARKER: Madam Speaker, again, through the URB process, you, honourable member, will have a chance to intervene if you so wish on behalf of Nova Scotians. This government will be intervening on behalf of the ratepayers of this province. I know the URB will have the opportunity to look at all costs whether it's salaries or wages or fuel or all the determinants of a rate application. I would hope the honourable member would consider also being an intervener at that process.

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

COM. SERV. - TALBOT HOUSE: STANDARDS - COMPLIANCE DETAILS

MS. KELLY REGAN: Madam Speaker, for seven weeks now this government has attempted to justify its actions in the Talbot House case. Quite frankly, every response has come up short. The actions by government, the disrespect this government has shown to both staff and the board of Talbot House would certainly not have been tolerated by the government when they were in Opposition.

In several responses the minister has indicated the program did not meet the standards of compliance as set out in 2008. My question to the Minister of Community Services is, if standards are such a concern to the minister, why was there no direct discussion between her department and the board of Talbot House on standards and standards compliance prior to December 2011?

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: Madam Speaker, the situation with Talbot House was the fact that we discovered them a short period before the time that we took action immediately to sit down and talk to the board of directors. That's when we discovered that they weren't following the standards.

MS. REGAN: Madam Speaker, it was the department's job to be watching over Talbot House. That's why one would assume they brought in the standards of care.

Sean McSween is a professional pharmacist. He recently published on-line his experience with Talbot House, and I will table a copy of that. Mr. McSween spoke to the strengths of the program and how the executive director provided him with the necessary support to cope, to deal with his addiction, and to heal. He was rescued by the program, and he is not alone. Sean McSween is one of hundreds of people who have told us that without the Talbot House program they would be lost. They told us that the Talbot House program works.

Could the minister please table before the end of Question Period today the evidence they gathered which specifically shows that the Talbot House program was not a successful program?

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: Madam Speaker, let me clarify several things. We have never said that there were not some people who felt that they received good services at Talbot House. What we did do, as I've said over and over, was an organizational review. I don't have to table anything because all they have to do is read the organizational review. The review identified areas where the standards were not being met.

It is our responsibility to those people receiving the services. They would be the first ones yelling and screaming if they had people coming to them who were upset with the services that were being provided to them. It is our responsibility to make sure the services are being provided in a manner to meet the standards, plus that the tax dollars, as the funder

- we are the funder, and we are responsible for how those dollars are being used. I'm sure Nova Scotians appreciate a government that makes sure their tax dollars are being used in a wise manner.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Clayton Park.

PREM. - NSP: RATE INCREASES - PREM.

MS. DIANA WHALEN: Madam Speaker, the on-line petition started by Archie Stewart of Port Hawkesbury has now passed 26,000 signatures and continues to grow hourly. A little more than a week ago this petition had only a few hundred names. The people of this province are outraged at the proposed power rate increases for 2013, 2014, and 2015, and the petition is making that very clear. My question for the Premier is, what is the Premier doing to fight these proposed increases?

THE PREMIER: Well, Madam Speaker, as has been pointed out numerous times in the House, the government will indeed be at the Utility and Review Board for the purpose of examining the rate filing.

People of Nova Scotia should know that the structure of the company was one that was decided by the Liberals when they were last in power - they set out the relationship between Emera and Nova Scotia Power. The rules that exist around these things were essentially put in place either by the Progressive Conservatives or by the Liberals when they were in government, and of course Nova Scotians today live with those decisions.

MS. WHALEN: Madam Speaker, the message is clear: Nova Scotians cannot afford another rate increase from Nova Scotia Power. Period. They want a Premier who will do something about this, but according to correspondence between our office and Mr. Stewart, the Premier hasn't bothered to reply to messages from this group. I would like to table that one, actually. I won't read from it.

Madam Speaker, why can't the Premier take time out of his schedule to . . .

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please. I want to be clear about the process on that one. Let me confer with the Clerk for a minute, please.

Okay, thank you. The honourable member for Halifax Clayton Park has the floor.

MS. WHALEN: Madam Speaker, my point is that more than 25,000 people have signed that petition and the Premier has not responded to it. Every member of the Liberal caucus has affixed their name to the petition. My question to the Premier is, will the Premier affix his name to the on-line petition today?

THE PREMIER: Madam Speaker, in fact, I haven't seen the petition. I don't really know anything about it at all, but I can say this: if there are 25,000 people who have signed up on-line, there are 25,000 people who have lower power rates today as a result of the province removing every cent of provincial tax from their bills.

MS. WHALEN: Madam Speaker, it's becoming a little tiresome to hear about the benefit of the HST when we know that the electricity tax is larger than the HST amount - \$10 million larger - and that that was offloaded from the Energy Department. The cost of running Conserve Nova Scotia was downloaded to the ratepayers of Nova Scotia. That's a fact and it should not be the ratepayers who are paying that. That answer simply gets tired.

I would like to ask the Premier if he will personally attend the rate hearing - we've heard him say that government will be there - will he personally attend the rate hearing in September and oppose the rate increases, as the petition is asking?

THE PREMIER: Madam Speaker, what you know and of course what the member will never say, is that she and the members of her caucus voted against taking the HST off home electricity and if the desires of the Liberal caucus were true today, the power in Nova Scotia would be 8 per cent higher today than it is.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

ENERGY - NSP: RATE HEARINGS - MIN. APPEAR

MR. ANDREW YOUNGER: Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Energy. In a number of questions today we've learned that the Premier is refusing to appear in person at the Utility and Review Board hearings this Fall. The fact is there is a difference between being represented and actually participating to defend Nova Scotians.

Madam Speaker, will the Minister of Energy personally appear at the rate hearing this September?

HON. CHARLIE PARKER: Madam Speaker, certainly the URB process is an interesting opportunity and I will be conferring with my department staff to see who it is from government, from the Department of Energy, who will be attending. At this point I can't say for sure just who it would be.

MR. YOUNGER: Well, Mr. Speaker, the minister and the Premier - Madam Speaker. (Interruptions) Even the members of the government benches have done that all day today so, Madam Speaker, I certainly apologize on behalf of everybody in the House for that error.

Madam Speaker, the fact is we know that department officials have attended all of those hearings and they sit there and don't say anything. We know that because we've been

there and the Leader of the Official Opposition has been there to ask questions. I've been there to ask questions, at all of them, not just the general rate hearings but the recent ones. But the minister's department sits there silently and monitors it. There's a big difference between that and actually participating.

Madam Speaker, if the minister is not going to attend personally, if the Premier is not going to attend personally, will he direct his officials to oppose the Nova Scotia Power rate hike requests?

MR. PARKER: Madam Speaker, we will be there, certainly, to scrutinize the application. We'll be going over it thoroughly before the September hearing and we will be an intervener in the process to ensure that Nova Scotians receive the fairest possible rates here in Nova Scotia.

MR. YOUNGER: Madam Speaker, the fact is that the minister and the Premier have been asked this many, many times. You would think that by now they would know if they plan to attend. They can have their department officials go there, monitor the hearings, stay silent like they've done at past hearings, or they can take the Progressive Conservative Party's approach and participate in secret, backroom negotiations for a rate increase and then put out a press release calling a 10 per cent rate hike a "win" for Nova Scotians, or (Interruptions) The Premier could use that in responses in Question Period tomorrow.

Madam Speaker, what Nova Scotians want is for this minister to go down to the hearings, stand up and say enough is enough, the rate hikes have to end. Will he do that?

MR. PARKER: Madam Speaker, certainly we'll be there to represent the best interests of Nova Scotians and the 3 per cent proposed rate will be thoroughly scrutinized by government and again at the hearing application. Just for information, the Government of British Columbia - I believe that's a Liberal Government - is proposing applications there of a rate increase of 8 per cent this year, 3.9 per cent next year, and 3.9 per cent the year after. Compare that to what's being asked here in Nova Scotia.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Glace Bay.

ERDT - POWER RATES: BUSINESSES - CONCERNS

MR. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Madam Speaker, businesses are dealing with significant cost pressures. Especially concerning to all businesses are high power rates. The Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism doesn't seem to think so. On May 8th, the minister said, "... there may be some companies that consider power rates to be a factor ..." In fact, he went on to argue, "... I will reiterate that the cost of power may be an issue for some businesses ..."

So my question to the minister is, will the minister clarify his statements indicating that he feels power rates are not a serious concern for businesses in the Province of Nova Scotia?

HON. PERCY PARIS: Madam Speaker, I'm proud to stand in my place and say the most important thing that businesses consider - whether they be here in Nova Scotia or whether they be a foreign company looking to move here to Nova Scotia, or investigating the possibilities of being here in Nova Scotia - it's the people. It's the people who attract companies to Nova Scotia because we are educated, we are resourceful, we are well-trained, we are hard-working individuals.

The other day - I will reiterate once again, and obviously the member needs some clarification, I will say it again. Are power rates a factor? Well, do you know what? All of those things are factors, but the most important thing is human resources.

MR. MACLELLAN: Madam Speaker, what matters to businesses and what matters to the private sector is their profit, and revenue minus expenses is their profit. A big portion of expenses are human resource costs and input costs like power, particularly in industries like manufacturing and export. When power rates continue to rise, businesses have to make decisions about what to cut back on. Not being able to reinvest in such things as staff, new product development and other essential components make businesses less competitive.

In fact, the minister talks a lot about our manufacturing and export sectors but since March 2011, Nova Scotia manufacturing shipments or exports were down 11.1 per cent. Since January 2012, Nova Scotia is the only province to see negative growth in manufacturing shipments in the entire country, and I will table that information for the House.

My question to the Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism is, with such a dramatic effect on all sectors including manufacturing and our exports, will the minister admit that power rates are affecting our province's ability to grow our economy?

MR. PARIS: Madam Speaker, anyone with some common sense and some sound reasoning would realize that in 2012 there were some drastic bumps in the Province of Nova Scotia, one being the forestry industry. If anybody has been listening, we've had a crisis in the forestry industry.

Madam Speaker, do you know what? A fact that I will tell you about manufacturing is that in 2011, manufacturing increased by over 10 per cent in the Province of Nova Scotia and we led all provinces and territories in this country.

MR. MACLELLAN: Madam Speaker, we have 0.3 per cent growth in our GDP under this minister's watch last year, down from 1.6 per cent the year before - neither of which is even close to the national averages in the performance of economics in these

provinces. So essentially what we have under this government (Interruption) Yes, 20 years. If Waldorf and Statler would listen to my question, they might get educated on how the economy works.

What we have here, Madam Speaker, we have an underperforming economy, plain and simple. If nothing else, this performance should be a wakeup call to this minister. This minister needs to understand that skyrocketing power rates harm and affect - it has greatly negative impacts on the economy. This government continues to not take action to address these rates which affect the economics of our province.

Will the Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism appear before the URB at the upcoming Nova Scotia Power general rate application hearing to help protect our businesses and our economy against further power rate hikes by Nova Scotia Power?

MR. PARIS: Madam Speaker, I heard the member talk about education. I've stood in this House this whole session and I tried to educate that member opposite. I've even invited that member to come over to my office and I will sit down and I will have (Interruptions)

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism has the floor.

MR. PARIS: I made an offer to that member and I make that same offer to everyone in this House that we will educate any member of this House with respect to jobs. Here so that they can have an intimate understanding of the path we are on. I will do that. I will commit to that. Do you know what? We will do that and that's a standing offer. Any time that member wants an education, if he's serious about an education, the door is open.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cape Breton North.

EDUC. - BUS STOP: BULLYING - PROTECTION

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Madam Speaker, today we learned of yet another family suffering because of the inaction of this government. A young boy in Cape Breton with special needs was the victim of bullying and humiliation while waiting for his bus. The school board reportedly told the boy's mother they couldn't do anything because it was the jurisdiction of the bus stop. The issue of jurisdiction was addressed by the government's own task force but was overlooked in legislation.

My question to the Minister of Education is, what does the minister have to say to the little boy in Cape Breton and what immediate changes will she make to ensure his and other children's safety at the bus stop?

HON. RAMONA JENNEX: Madam Speaker, I can't speak to any specifics on any specific situation but I can say that this government is taking a very measured and comprehensive approach to making sure we are able to meet the needs of the safety of our children, inside and outside of school. We want to make sure that we speak with all of our stakeholders, our principals on how we can actually monitor and engage in the activities before we put anything forward in legislation. The answer is not legislation. The answer is action and we need to work through on how we are able to do that.

MR. ORRELL: Madam Speaker, the mother in D'Escousse told reporters she is outraged that authorities aren't doing more to stop bullying. Experts and families are not impressed by the government's legislation. However, the government could address this today and call the Progressive Conservative caucus' piece of anti-bullying legislation. Both of which would have provided tools to address this very situation. We heard the Minister of Energy say he's willing to stay to debate valuable pieces of legislation, I hope the Minister of Education and the Premier are willing to do that too.

My question to the minister is, will she agree to enact better and more effective legislation before the House rises so more kids do not have to suffer over the Spring, summer, Fall and into the future?

MS. JENNEX: Madam Speaker, what I can say here today is that we are working on making sure our children are safe within our system. We are hiring an anti-bullying coordinator to be able to look at the programs that are in schools, to be able to engage with the principals on how we can make our children safer.

I will say that legislation that cannot be enforced is not worth the paper it is written on. We want action and we need to do this in a measured, comprehensive manner. We need to make sure of how we approach this properly so our students are protected. What I stand on here today is we are working on that within the department, we are hiring an anti-bullying coordinator and we're making sure that we are going to have action to protect our students.

MR. ORRELL: Madam Speaker, we're willing to sit down and bring forth some of this legislation with the minister. The incident in Cape Breton, like many others, shows better legislation is needed now. There is legislation before this House that seeks to address bullying with a preventive and restorative approach, and with some teeth if need be, rather than properly keep children safe for the coming months the government wants to go home.

The government's refusal to work collaboratively with other Parties of this House has made the anti-bullying feeble and children deserve better. Will the Deputy Premier and House Leader agree to keep the House open so all Parties can work together to pass effective legislation to keep our kids safe now?

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Madam Speaker, after the Progressive Conservative Party was in power for 10 torturous years and doing nothing about bullying, nothing at all, sitting sessions of 15 and 17 days long, and now asking us how long we're going to stay here? We're going to stay here until we get the work of the people done and then we'll go. That's when we'll go.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester North.

EDUC. - SCHOOLS: ELECTRICITY COSTS - FUNDING ADJUST

HON. KAREN CASEY: Madam Speaker, Nova Scotia Power is currently planning to come before the URB for more increases in power rates over the next three years. Repeatedly government has been asked to intervene and stand up for Nova Scotians, who are finding it more and more difficult to pay their power bills and put food on their tables. These increases in power rates are also making it difficult for schools to absorb costs with no additional funding.

My question to the Minister of Education is, will the government make an adjustment to the funding to public education to cover the costs of increasing electricity in our schools?

HON. RAMONA JENNEX: Madam Speaker, we are making sure that the resources we are providing schools do meet the needs of the fixed costs that schools have. Thank you very much.

MS. CASEY: Madam Speaker, power rates have increased in Nova Scotia seven times in the last 11 years; that translates into close to 40 per cent that Nova Scotians are asked to pay for their power. In the past, school boards received funding to cover inflationary costs; those costs included such things as furnace oil, diesel, fuel, gas, electricity and other costs. What is different is that school boards are now being asked to absorb all of those inflationary costs with no additional funding and, in fact, those are on top of the across-the-board reductions to schools.

Programs are being cut, teaching positions are being lost, inflationary costs are rising. We know that these cuts are having a negative impact on our classrooms so my question to the minister is, will the minister now show some leadership, identify education as a priority and provide schools with the funding they need to protect the kids in our classrooms?

MS. JENNEX: Madam Speaker, I am showing leadership. We have a plan to make sure that every child in this province has what they need to succeed. We are investing in our students, we are investing in many new programs that will allow our children to succeed.

MS. CASEY: Well, Madam Speaker, in case the minister hasn't heard, parents and teachers do not agree with that statement. Declining enrolment has no impact on inflationary costs. Schools still must be heated, the lights must be on and kids must be transported to school.

This government has been asked to restore funding to education. This government has been asked to support programs for students with special needs. This government has been asked to identify education as a priority. This government has been asked to protect Nova Scotians from power rate increases. Madam Speaker, this government has said no to every one of those requests.

My question to the Minister of Education is, will the minister now take some action? Will she restore funding to public schools, will she allow boards to cover the increasing power costs, and will she protect our kids from her negative cuts?

MS. JENNEX: Madam Speaker, I'd like to remind the member opposite that this year we had the lowest teacher-to-student ratio in a generation. Our class sizes remain small. We have increased our funding per student in the province. We are investing in our students, we are investing so that we will have students who will have opportunities to succeed in the 21st Century. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston.

ENERGY - HARP: ACCESS - STATISTICS

HON. KEITH COLWELL: Madam Speaker, soon after taking office, this NDP Government cut the amount of assistance available to low-income Nova Scotians from \$450 to \$200 through the Heating Assistance Rebate Program.

The Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations at the time of the cuts said, "The number of people to benefit from this program will increase from 54,000 to approximately 70,000. That's an estimated increase of more than 15,000 households." I'll table that document.

Documents supplied by the department show that this increase never happened. In fact, the number of rebates that were given out by the government decreased by 4,000 people. That's a decrease of 4,000 households, Madam Speaker, and I'll table that document.

Will the Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations tell this House how many households he expects will access this program in this fiscal year?

HON. JOHN MACDONELL: Madam Speaker, I'm not sure that the final numbers are in yet, but I think they are somewhere in the 54,000 household range.

MR. COLWELL: Madam Speaker, in 2008-09 the budget allotted for HARP was \$29 million. Today it's \$14.9 million. In that time oil prices have gone up and so have electricity prices. Electricity prices have risen 20 per cent in the past three years. The average price of furnace oil this year in Halifax was \$1.16 per litre; in Sydney it was \$1.09 per litre; and in Yarmouth it has been \$1.22 per litre. I'll table that document.

All this time, wages in our province have remained at low levels of growth. People are simply not able to keep up with the cost of living under this government, especially those with already-low incomes.

My question to the minister is, how does slashing the rebate and freezing income thresholds help those who need the assistance to heat their homes?

MR. MACDONELL: Madam Speaker, I think the slashing he is referring to was from the previous administration, not this one. If he calculates the changes including the HST rebate on home heating, HARP, and the Good Neighbour Program that we fund through the Salvation Army, I think he'll find that over a two-year period people will be getting considerably more money from this government than they did from the previous one.

MR. COLWELL: Madam Speaker, I will remind that minister that the Tories proposed it in the budget that was never passed. The NDP, when they brought their budget in, did slash the extra money in the program.

In addition to slashing the rebate, the NDP has consistently under-spent in their budget allocations, between \$3 million and \$4 million each year. This is between \$3 million and \$4 million that does not reach low-income Nova Scotians who need it to help heat their homes. This program is directed at helping those who need it the most. The NDP should be maximizing their budget funds, ensuring that Nova Scotians get the most support they possibly can from this fund.

Madam Speaker, considering the heating needs of low-income Nova Scotians have gone up and the minister has been leaving \$3 million to \$4 million on the table each year, will the minister consider adjusting HARP, such as increasing the rebate or adjusting the income thresholds?

MR. MACDONELL: Madam Speaker, the issue around both the heating assistance through HST - there used to be criteria and a cap of how much energy use, so that was removed by this government. On HARP, I think the limit of 10,000 kilowatts was reduced to 6,000 kilowatts, so more people could make use of the program, and actually, we believe to be lower-income individuals.

On the money that we give to the Salvation Army for the Good Neighbour Program - we don't actually control that program, but it used to be that individuals who use that

program could only access it once every five years. Now they can access it once every two years. So the amount of dollars - I heard one member say they get \$21 less; I think he's referring to \$11 - but in a two-year period they're up over \$300, so they're actually getting more money under this government than they were under the previous administration.

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

ABORIGINAL AFFS.: BEDFORD WATERFRONT - PETROGLYPHS

MS. KELLY REGAN: Madam Speaker, the infilling project at the Bedford waterfront has caused some concerns among local residents. There has been a discovery of possible petroglyphs at the waterfront. My question to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs is, can the minister please update this House on whether any investigation has been completed into possible petroglyphs in part of the Bedford waterfront?

THE PREMIER: I would advise the member for Bedford-Birch Cove that there is an analysis process that takes place and that the department looks at all the sites that are brought to their attention. Whether or not this particular one has been brought to their attention I can't say, but I'd be happy to find out and provide her with the information.

MS. REGAN: In fact, it has been brought to their attention. I will table two letters that were cc'd to me when this first came to light.

Madam Speaker, a year and half ago the coordinator for Special Places from the former Department of Tourism, Culture and Heritage wrote to the Waterfront Development Corporation strongly recommending an archaeological impact assessment be conducted, as the Premier can now see from that correspondence. The Waterfront Development Corporation responded, asking what the location, nature, and value of the possible petroglyphs were.

Can the Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage please indicate what actions the department has taken since that time?

HON. DAVID WILSON: Thank you to the member across the way for that important question. No question, the goal and the mandate of the department is to ensure that any heritage or any significant areas in the province are protected, and we're more than willing to ensure that we do that. We've done it on several occasions in the last number of months. As the Premier said, we will make sure that the member opposite has all the information that we have in the department or in the Department of Aboriginal Affairs to ensure that we protect any significant areas within our province.

MS. REGAN: This isn't the only issue of concern on the Bedford waterfront. At the final community consultation, residents outlined a number of concerns with the proposed plan. Now when I raised these issues with Waterfront Development, they said they didn't

have any more money to redraw the plans. So my question is, can the Minister responsible for the Waterfront Development Corporation please indicate whether community consultations will be taken into consideration in the final plans for the Bedford Waterfront?

HON. PERCY PARIS: Madam Speaker, I thank the member opposite for the question. Trust me, I know that I will be having consultation with the Waterfront Development Corporation about this very issue, and I will report back to you in an appropriate period of time.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

JUSTICE - TAAVEL DEATH: REVIEW - RELEASE CONFIRM

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice. On April 18th the province and the Capital District Health Authority announced a joint review of the tragic circumstances surrounding the death of Raymond Taavel. A press release promised that a progress report on the review would be provided within 30 days. The review is due on or before this Friday. Will the minister confirm that the progress report on the review will be presented before this House rises for the summer?

HON. ROSS LANDRY: We will honour our commitment.

MR. MACMASTER: Madam Speaker, Nova Scotians are interested in the procedures and policies of the East Coast Forensic Hospital because they can compromise public safety, as we have seen, and they do not give adequate public notification of a potential public safety risk. They are worried because it appears that the tragedy of April 17th was not an isolated incident and we know that, because another patient has failed to return to the hospital within weeks of the announcement of the review.

At the time the review was announced, the Minister of Justice had said, "There's accountability that needs to be measured." Madam Speaker, I can table that news article. We know the best place for that to happen is right here in the people's House.

My question to the minister is, will the minister be accountable to the people of Nova Scotia and demonstrate a commitment to transparency and accountability by presenting the progress report before Question Period tomorrow?

MR. LANDRY: Madam Speaker, I want to point out a significant difference between this government and the previous government. What we like to do is that we like to get the facts before we make broadcasts on what we're going to do and not going to do. We made a commitment. I answered the first question saying that we have until Friday and that we will honour and respect what we say - our word is our word.

MR. MACMASTER: Well, Madam Speaker, getting the facts straight and I can think of all the myriad of promises this government has broken, claiming they didn't know things were the way they are, since they've taken office.

What's important here today though, Madam Speaker, is the present. There was a review promised. A very unfortunate incident has occurred and we on this side of the House are asking for accountability and we're asking on behalf of Nova Scotians. The minister's reluctance to make a minor adjustment to the time the review is released begs the question, is the government hiding something? Tomorrow is the last chance for the minister to reassure Nova Scotians and do the right thing for the patients at the hospital who are also impacted when they are not returned, by tabling the findings of the review one day early.

My question to the minister is - and I'll ask him one more time - will the minister seize this chance to do the right thing and table the progress report tomorrow before the House rises?

MR. LANDRY: I will turn this phase of the question over to my colleague, the Minister of Health and Wellness.

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Madam Speaker, the answer to the honourable member's question is, yes, there will be information tomorrow available before the House rises. (Applause)

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clare.

TIR: WENTWORTH-COLLINGWOOD RD. (CUMB. CO.) - REPAIR

HON. WAYNE GAUDET: Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal. For months now the Wentworth-Collingwood Road in Cumberland County has been in serious disrepair. I will table some photos of the road and its terrible condition and maybe the minister wants to look at these photos.

Madam Speaker, the condition of this road poses a serious safety concern for travellers and the people in the area. They want to hear from the NDP Government and to see them take immediate action. So my first question to the minister is, will the minister commit to repairing the road in the near future?

HON. WILLIAM ESTABROOKS: I want to thank the member for the question finally. I would like to point out to the member, not that my travel plans are of great significance, but that is one of my travel routes to a destination I'm headed for on the long weekend. I give the commitment to that community that I will see the road personally during my travels.

MR. GAUDET: Madam Speaker, I certainly welcome the minister's commitment. This portion of the road has become treacherous for commuters. There is clearly not adequate space to pull off to the shoulder. If a driver was forced to veer to one side to avoid an animal or oncoming vehicle, they would end up in the ravine and, of course, this is unacceptable. So again to the minister, is this road going to be repaired soon?

MR. ESTABROOKS: Again, thank you to the member opposite for the question. This is an example of roads across our province that have been neglected for a long time. We have a plan in place to address these roads and many of the Opposition members have brought particular roads to my attention. Considering the particular case you've brought to my attention today in the House, I can assure you that I guess I better make sure that my Jeep is in good repair before I travel it.

MR. GAUDET: Madam Speaker, as the photos clearly show, the shoulder of this section of road has eroded completely to the pavement, leaving no space between the road and the steep embankment. A number of people use this road on a daily basis and they would like a time commitment from the minister as to when it's going to be repaired. So my final question to the minister is, when can these people from this area expect the department to fix their road?

MR. ESTABROOKS: Again, I thank the member for the question and it's of some concern that when we address specifics of this nature I can't respond directly to the member here in the House with the specifics. I am sure that the good people who work for the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal in that particular area can tell more specifically.

I want to assure the people in Wentworth-Collingwood, it's an important road. It's a road that carries children to and from school, it carries important economic uses in the community and it will be addressed in a timely fashion. Thank you for the question; much appreciated.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cape Breton West.

PREM: EMERA PLANE TRIP - ADVISABILITY

MR. ALFIE MACLEOD: Madam Speaker, yesterday when asked about Emera's decision to hold a swanky party on the Halifax waterfront for their executives, only a day after asking for yet another power rate increase, the Premier said, "It was ill-advised and very poor judgment on behalf of the company." Later we learned that very same company decided to fly the Premier to an announcement in St. John's on their corporate jet last November. All the while, the Premier is keeping Nova Scotians in the dark on what impact the Lower Churchill project will have on Nova Scotia's power bills. I guess he saves those decisions for the safe confines of Emera's corporate jet.

My question through you for the Premier is, doesn't the Premier agree that his own decision to jaunt around with Emera and Nova Scotia Power executives on their corporate jet while Nova Scotians are left struggling to pay their power bills, was ill-advised and showed very poor judgment?

THE PREMIER: Madam Speaker, the member seeks to distort the truth. The truth is, we paid the commercial rate for our trip

MADAM SPEAKER: Order please. Order. The terminology "seeks to distort" is unparliamentary and I have to ask the Premier to retract that, rephrase it.

THE PREMIER: The 'he seeks to' or the 'distort' part? (Interruption)

Okay, Madam Speaker, the member misrepresents the fact. The fact of the matter is that the full price of the flights were paid completely and appropriately as they would be. Of course, this is a very important project. This is about the Muskrat Falls project. It is about ensuring that Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Labrador combine one of the most important energy and economic development projects in our history.

There's a little video on YouTube I'm going to table a transcript of. It is the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party and this is what he has to say about the Lower Churchill. He says:

"I want you to imagine if we were able to take the hydro power of Newfoundland [sic], the tidal and wind power of Nova Scotia and the nuclear power and transmission access of New Brunswick and they all worked together we would be a green power powerhouse in North America. We could have cheaper, greener, sustainable energy at prices that attract industry that are a benefit to you in your home and to your businesses as well."

That was what the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party said about the project that we are engaged in signing.

MADAM SPEAKER: Order. While the Premier did restate his remarks, he did not retract that comment.

THE PREMIER: I retract the word, I guess it was 'distort' that you found - I'll retract it.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you. The time allotted for the Oral Question Period has expired. Thank goodness.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS' BUSINESS

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable Opposition House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Madam Speaker, would you please call the order of business, Motions Other than Government Motions.

MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable Opposition House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Madam Speaker we are certainly happy to waive our business to keep Question Period going if you so wish, but could you please call Resolution No. 997.

Res. No. 997, re Prem. - NSP: Rate Increases - Oppose - notice given May 10/12 - (Hon. K. Colwell)

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

MR. ANDREW YOUNGER: Madam Speaker - see during the debate, I'll get it right. It's in Question Period I get it wrong.

Resolution No. 997 is about power rates and the operative clause is, "Therefore be it resolved that members of this House of Assembly strongly urge the Premier to start showing leadership and stand up to Nova Scotia Power, instead of sitting idly by while power rates continue to skyrocket and life becomes less affordable for Nova Scotia families." That was submitted by the honourable member for Preston a number of days ago - I'm not sure which day exactly.

I would hope that all members of the House of Assembly recognize that power rates are a significant issue in this province. They are affecting every family, they are affecting every business and they ultimately affect the choices people have to make. The Premier would like to make a lot about decisions of other governments and there's no question, I certainly don't agree with the Tory decision many years ago to privatize Nova Scotia Power, but I haven't seen the NDP move to change that situation either. It's as much a talking point as it is trying to do something about it and trying to solve the problem. If what he's proposing is to buy it back then by all means he should stand up and say that because that is where he seems to be going the past couple of days.

The fact is if you look at the entire last Liberal mandate, power rates didn't increase. In fact, there was one right around election time so you could call that Tory or Liberal, but then there was only one power rate in the entire time the Liberals were in office

where it increased. But it has actually gone up more than 20 per cent in the three years since the NDP took office.

AN HON. MEMBER: How much?

MR. YOUNGER: More than 20 per cent and it has gone up more than 40 per cent in the past 10 years. The Premier would like to make a lot about the fact that they took the HST off electricity bills, but the fact is, by the government's own documents, that saved \$28 million last year - that's from the Premier's own press release, so we'll use his number - while doing what he said he wouldn't do during the election, which is putting the Efficiency Nova Scotia charge on ratepayers instead of shareholders has cost \$43 million. So, in fact, the combination of those two decisions alone has cost ratepayers more on their bills.

The Efficiency Nova Scotia charge has cost every man, woman and child in this province \$43 a year on power bills because the Premier didn't do what he said he would do during the election and put that charge against shareholders. The fact of the matter is, whether that is paid by shareholders or paid by ratepayers, the \$100 million in conservation savings still exists, so that's a red herring. What isn't a red herring is the Premier said during the election that shareholders should pay, and then put that tax on power bills. The cost of that is \$43 million and the HST savings is \$28 million, so that's clear right there. There's \$15 million that it is costing ratepayers without even counting the rate hikes that Nova Scotia Power has gone after.

The Premier and the Minister of Energy have stood up a number of times and talked about the fact that they appear at the hearings, they have representatives at the Utility and Review Board hearings and that's accurate. There are Department of Energy staff that sit there and monitor the hearings and I assume they report back to the minister in Cabinet. You rarely hear them say anything. They are there in a monitoring role and they say that at the hearings. What we're asking the Premier or the Minister of Energy is to actually direct his departmental staff or preferably the minister himself, or the Premier himself, to actually go there and be the voice of Nova Scotians and oppose the rate hikes.

We have also asked the Premier and the NDP to consider a number of other items which we've tabled as legislation and ideas we've put forward, all of which they've refused. They've refused to permanently take executive bonuses out of the rate base; they said no to that. They've chosen executives over ratepayers. We have asked them to do what they promised to do during the election and put the Efficiency Nova Scotia charge against shareholders instead of ratepayers. We're only asking them to do what they said should be done during the election and they refused that. The cost, \$43 million - choosing shareholders over ratepayers.

We have asked them to do performance and value auditing. It is true that fuel costs and the number of other areas are audited, but it is also true that they do not have audits that

are done to look at value for money in certain areas. We've asked that those be covered by shareholders but again, the Premier has chosen shareholders over ratepayers.

We have made suggestions of how to reduce the millions of dollars in regulatory costs so that Nova Scotia Power can continue to be properly regulated, but there is an incentive for them to lower rates so that the shareholders have to pick up a lot of the regulatory costs when they do not reach an agreement that would mitigate rate increases. Again the NDP refused that. It's another decision choosing shareholders over ratepayers.

Madam Speaker, we've suggested that the rate of return needs to be looked at because while the rate of return is not specified in a specific number in the legislation, how it is calculated and how it is viewed through the Public Utilities Act and the Electricity Act is mandated through legislation and the parameters are through legislation. Again, the NDP and the Premier have chosen shareholders over ratepayers. In each one of those decisions, instead of standing up with ratepayers, they have stood up with shareholders.

Recently - and I was happy to see the Minister of Energy and the Premier oppose this - Emera held a party just after announcing a rate increase, and I was glad to see the Minister of Energy say that he thought that was in bad taste, just as the other Parties did. I commend him for saying that. That is symptomatic of what is going on at Nova Scotia Power and Emera, in that they don't understand the reality on the ground.

The president and CEO of Nova Scotia Power saw a 23 per cent compensation increase in one year, when Nova Scotians have been asked to pay 20 per cent more for power over three years, and now another 6 per cent over the next two years and some deferred increases after that. This is a significant issue.

The other day there was a study that came out from the National Energy Board that said we had the highest electricity prices in the country. The Premier's answer to that was, no, no, look at the Hydro Quebec study that says we're the third highest. Well, you know Statistics Canada says we're the second, the National Energy Board says we're the first and Hydro Quebec says we're the third, depending on how it's calculated. Frankly, Madam Speaker, it doesn't matter much whether we're first, second or third highest in the country. It's still too high for Nova Scotians and it is affecting our competitiveness with other provinces. That is a very serious issue.

All provinces are facing shifts to renewables, to varying degrees, and so they are all under those sorts of pressures. We have also not heard the Premier or the Minister of Energy say that if Nova Scotia Power has to deal with stranded assets and they're going to pass that on as a cost, then they best do as much as they can to ensure that the value of those stranded assets is reduced by repurposing or selling some of those properties that may be stranded.

There's a very good example. In Halifax many years ago - I think they were still called Nova Scotia Light & Power Company at the time - dealt with a stranded asset down the road by leasing out the power plant for a film stage. Now it's their executive offices but it became a sound stage called Electropolis. That eliminated their stranded asset cost on that building. So even the stranded assets that Nova Scotia Power claims we'll all be stuck with if some of the actions are taken are again red herrings, because the fact of the matter is that there are things government can do to reduce the pain that Nova Scotians are feeling as a result of the continued rate increases.

It is not fair to Nova Scotians for the Premier and other members of his caucus to have stood in Opposition and complained about the exact things that they will not take action on. They didn't think it was good enough then to pass it on to the Utility and Review Board and now the Minister of Energy stands up every day and says, the Utility and Review Board will do a fine job. But it was these members who said that was not good enough, so why haven't they done that? Nova Scotians expected them to do something on that. It is not good enough to stand up and say that the problem is only because of increased fossil fuel and that we're shifting things. Because the fact of the matter is, it was this caucus over there that was also lobbying for the continuation of coal mines and the use of coal over many decades.

We didn't hear members of that caucus, as few as they were 20 years ago, standing up and saying there should be windmills instead of coal plants, they never said that. Go back in the record and see where they were lobbying for the continued use of coal in the province. Many of the attacks they want to use are things that they weren't even saying then, despite the fact they would like to have people believe that.

There is a choice that this government has. One item after another, many of them ones they spoke in favour of, such as renewable to retail, which the NDP spoke strongly in favour of in Opposition and now try to call it deregulation even though it doesn't work in a deregulated environment. The things that they spoke in favour of and advocated for in Opposition, they are against now that they are in government. I think there are a lot of Nova Scotians who question why there's such an abrupt turnaround from the things that they said they would do with Nova Scotia Power and on energy issues, are now suddenly opposed to and think are bad ideas. Almost every single one of those items that I just listed that we proposed, the NDP spoke in favour of when they were in Opposition and now stand and speak against and they haven't given a reason for that, not a single reason.

Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is, it's time for this government to give answers to Nova Scotians about why they continually, time after time, stand with shareholders and with the executives of Nova Scotia Power, instead of standing with ratepayers. Each one of the decisions they've made has cost ratepayers more. Now, after three years of this government, they pay 20 per cent more in electricity rates, 40 per cent over the past 10 years, but 20 per cent since this government took power. This government has yet to do any of the things that they spoke in favour of in Opposition to deal with these issues such as

bonuses, renewable to retail, dealing with the rate of return, such as changing the way the Utility and Review Board acts. All of those things were things that they said had to be done by government when they were in Opposition and now, they stand up in Question Period and speak against those things and that, frankly, is not fair to Nova Scotians. Thank you.

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

MR. MAT WHYNOTT: Mr. Speaker, I'm glad to stand today and join in the debate of this resolution that we have on Opposition Day. I think some interesting things were just said and I'd like to, of course, set the record straight when it comes to the things that are coming over, across the way, from that side of the House.

Last week I stood here in my place, I forget what day it was - I think it was Wednesday or Thursday, but I know that last week - we had math lesson and today we're going to have a little bit of a history lesson. I know the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal will enjoy this history lesson because he's a history buff, a former history teacher, I believe.

I stand here in my place as a young person, seeing the decisions that were made over the last 25 to 30 years, the decisions that were made that, in fact, have put Nova Scotia behind everyone else because of the Liberal Party, because of the Progressive Conservative Party.

Mr. Speaker, 1992 - I wasn't very old, I think I was seven - was a year that the Progressive Conservative Premier . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: Who was that?

MR. WHYNOTT: Progressive Conservative Premier Donald Cameron, Donnie Cameron as I think a lot of people called him, under pressure to tackle debt, privatizes the publicly-owned utility. Believe it or not, in 1992, during that time it was the largest private equity transaction in Canadian history at that time. It was the Progressive Conservative Party that sold that. Legislation establishes the way that NSPI pursues rate increases and sets executive compensation.

So, Mr Speaker, for some reason has the Progressive Conservative Party just changed or forgotten? I don't think so. I don't think that they've changed. They're the same old Tory Party that has been around this province for 252 years. (Interruptions) Now in 1993 - I was probably eight, one year later I was eight - the Liberal Premier of the day, John Savage, finished the paperwork of the privatization of the Progressive Conservative Party; he finished the paperwork for the Tories of the day. So during that time we remember that the Liberal Party of the day just decided to pay off teachers to leave the system. They said that they were going to deal with the debt that was left over by the Progressive

Conservative Party of the 1980s and the early 1990s and they decided to pay off teachers, lay off nurses, close hospitals and beds.

During that time they decided to have discussions with the federal government to bring in what we know now, today, as the harmonized sales tax, which is otherwise known as the HST. Now, the member for Dartmouth East talked a little bit about how there was one increase in power rates during the time that the Liberals were in. Well, do you know what, Mr Speaker, do you know what happened during the 1990s when the Liberals were in power? They brought in the HST and what did they do? They applied the 15 per cent to home energy - 15 per cent.

So I would say that not only did they have a small increase, as the member for Dartmouth East had said that they had a small increase in power rates, they had a 15 per cent increase in - what year? In just one year alone, Mr. Speaker, and I can tell you that Nova Scotians will never forget that.

So in 1998 I would have been - I think I was in Grade 8 - 13, I suppose, 1998, the Liberal Government of the day establishes Emera as the holding company for NSPI, legislation that created a level of the original NSP that will no longer be subject to provincial regulation. So Emera had its free rein to set compensation for executives and invest profits. The Liberal Party did that, but yet today they are talking about what, Madam Speaker? They are talking about all of a sudden the Liberal Party has this new brand, they have changed so much, which I believe they haven't and I know that Nova Scotians know that they haven't.

In 1999 the federal Liberal Government closes the Cape Breton coal mines that were the main source of fuel to Nova Scotia Power. They closed - and I know, Mr. [Deputy] Speaker, you will probably remember that when the federal Liberal Party closed the Cape Breton coal mines, forcing Nova Scotia to rely heavily on costly imported coal. Between 1999 and 2009, Progressive Conservatives, like the preceding Liberal Government, kept the policy of using coal as a main source of electricity. All the while the international price of coal rose, year after year - rising by 75 per cent. They did nothing, absolutely nothing, while other governments across Canada were doing more. They were getting off those things, or at least they were doing something. So the governments of Quebec and of Manitoba and of B.C. were moving forward with ideas, solutions to getting off coal, which we are shackled to today because of the Parties across the way.

In 2007 - we jump ahead to a few years - this would actually be the year after my first election that I ran in 2006, at the age of 20. I came within 526 votes of beating that minister. Anyway, in 2009 I was successful.

In 2007 the Progressive Conservative Government adopts an NDP commitment on the eve of a potential election by removing the HST from home energy. Of course they got lauded. I think they got pretty good praise for that, as they should have, but you know what

happened, Mr. Speaker? In 2008 the Progressive Conservative minority government, with the support of the Liberal Opposition, rolled that back. Shame on them.

Those two Parties did nothing, Mr. Speaker. What a flip-flop. So between 2004 and 2010, we saw Progressive Conservative inaction on the province's reliance on coal. That leads directly to a 23 per cent increase in power rates for Nova Scotians.

In 2009, Mr. Speaker, just three short years ago, it was this Party and it was this government, within the first few weeks of forming the government, that removed the provincial portion of the HST off home electricity, just as we said we would. But do you know what? The two Parties opposite voted against it. Shame on them.

In 2010 we knew, as a province, as a government, and as a Party in this province, that we needed to ensure that we got off the shackles that were always on us when it came to coal and fossil fuels. We needed to get off that, and that's why we brought forward a Renewable Electricity Plan, something that was widely applauded throughout many different sectors. In fact, the David Suzuki Foundation gave Nova Scotia an award for having a vision for renewable electricity.

In 2010 again, Mr. Speaker, our government signed an historic deal with the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador to develop and have access to clean, renewable energy for our future. The deal will ensure stable rates for homeowners, for businesses, for generations to come.

At the time the Opposition Parties said, what a great thing it is, but of course today we see them saying that they are against that deal. They are against bringing in that energy, bringing it in to ensure that we have, and I know that in 2011 - this has already been tabled today, I believe - the Progressive Conservative Leader during the National Press Club said, "I am an Opposition Leader. This is one of those times when I actually completely agree with what the government is doing and have said so in the Legislature of Nova Scotia." I can tell you right now, Mr. Speaker, that the Party opposite is falling behind what that Leader said. The Leader said something that was a positive force, a positive thing for this province, and now they're going back on what they said - it completely goes back on what they said.

MR. SPEAKER: I would just remind the honourable member that he would have to table it.

MR. WHYNOTT: Yes, I tabled it.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you very much.

MR. WHYNOTT: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I said, the Progressive Conservative Party reverses its position in being criticized in the Lower Churchill deal.

You know, it's interesting to see that because that's exactly why I am a New Democrat. The reason why I'm a New Democrat is because this Party has a vision for this province, we have a vision because I can tell you as a young person growing up in the province and looking back on the decisions that were made on the things that were said.

You know, Mr. Speaker, the Premier said today, during the time that this whole privatization deal was going on, that it was in Hansard, at the Public Accounts Committee, that the former president of the Progressive Conservative Party of Nova Scotia, during the Buchanan days, then became president of Nova Scotia Power - his name was Louis Comeau - said that it had nothing to do with a study, it had nothing to do with moving the province forward, it had simply to do with philosophy. Shame, shame on that Party and on Louis Comeau, shame on him. Same thing here, Mr. Speaker, that the two Parties opposite, heaven forbid that they ever get back on this side of this House because I can tell you right now that Nova Scotia will be worse off if that ever happens.

You know, Mr. Speaker, we have a plan to ensure that Nova Scotians get off of the whole idea of being shackled to coal, something that's not an energy of the future. I can remember going to - even three, four years ago, you would never drive on the wonderful highways of Nova Scotia and see windmills, you would never see that; now you do, you see them popping up everywhere. In fact, we are bringing companies who are building these things - building windmills - to the province, bringing green companies to the province, ensuring that we have a future.

That is why I am a New Democrat. I'm a New Democrat because we believe in ensuring that the province lives within its means, that we have a future ahead of us. The two Parties opposite, they flip-flopped for many, many years on them forming government, the Liberals forming government, the Tories forming government: Liberals, Tories, Liberals, Tories. June 2009, Mr. Speaker, Nova Scotians elected a New Democratic Party Government, and I can tell you right now, because of this Party, because of this government, that over the coming generations this province is going to be a better place to work, a better place to do business and a better place to live because of this Party. Thank you very much.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants West.

MR. CHUCK PORTER: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have an opportunity today to rise and speak to Resolution No. 997. It's an important issue, as I think all members of this House would probably agree - the ever-rising cost of power rates. It's interesting to listen to some of the lessons the honourable member thought he might like to teach some people in this House, but I think his facts might have been a wee bit off. But anyway, it seems . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: Well, set us straight.

MR. PORTER: Oh yeah. Mr. Speaker, it's interesting to listen to the current government and that member stand on his feet and go on about all that was done and all that has happened over the years, that little lesson that he thought he was so brilliant on giving, but I can tell you, they have done zero in the last three years except watch energy rates rise by 20 per cent more. He stands in his place and he talks about legislation that was enacted to allow the URB to set rates and to follow a certain set of criteria in doing so. They have not stood on their feet; they have not introduced a bill that will change any of that.

This Party, Mr. Speaker, has stood on our feet and we have introduced bills, transparency, taking executive bonuses out of the taxpayers' and the ratepayers' premiums, talked about fairness. We haven't heard them talk about that at all. Obviously they're not interested in bringing that rate down at all. Not only that, they're not even interested in controlling what is going on and trying to stabilize it any. All that they've done so far is change the rules as to how quick we will get to more renewables and bankrupt the province. That's where we're heading with this government and everybody knows that. Everybody knows we cannot afford to get there. Nobody has ever said on this side of the House, Progressive Conservatives or Liberals, that I've heard, that they do not agree with green energy. I think they do, they agree with stable pricing, I know that we do.

We also agree that we have to get there at a pace that is affordable to the ratepayers and the taxpayers of this province and we are not doing so. We have decided, through the Premier and the Minister of Energy, that we would go and we would sign on to increase that much quicker than the plan that was put in place by the previous government, which was a good plan, an affordable plan that was well-thought-out. But that wasn't good enough, it had to be changed and that's unfortunate at this time, although working toward green energy is very, very important.

It's vital that we move forward, it is important to get off fossil fuels, but everyone knows, Mr. Speaker, that we are going to be on fossil fuels for some time to come, for years to come yet. It is going to take some time. We cannot afford - and when you think about affordability, I'm sure that that member who just spoke gets calls, too. Maybe not, maybe he's fortunate, maybe he doesn't take calls from people who are hungry, getting their final disconnection notices and that doesn't matter. Maybe that doesn't matter to him but I'll tell you who it does matter to, it matters to this member right here. It matters to this member standing right here, trying to get those people help. We've been doing that successfully.

What are we doing? We're listening to that member over there go on and rant and rave about this and about that, nothing that makes any sense, because he's not standing up for his constituents. What he's doing is forcing them into more hardship, that is what he is doing. Mr. Speaker, we've got skyrocketing power rates that we cannot sustain in this province.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable member for Hants West has the floor.

MR. PORTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, very much. This government has had an opportunity in the last three years - they're quick to criticize and stand up for what they think has been done in the past that has been wrong - they have had the chance for nearly three years that they've been in now, to right the ship if they think that they have all the answers. They refuse to step in, create a piece of legislation that would thereby change what the URB is enacted to do and enabled to do.

When we look at this whole thing, Mr. Speaker, they refuse to do that. No, this is an arm's-length body of government that says, we will set the rates. Well, that is still a body of government, paid for by the taxpayer, who is allowing and setting rates for private industry. So when we talk about, you know what, the private industry, we are pro-business, it is good that private industry can employ people, that can make money and they're great economic drivers in this province.

One of the problems here is that we have a private company being regulated by the government and told what kind of profits they're going to make. Those profits are coming out of the pockets of the people in Nova Scotia, Mr. Speaker, who cannot afford it. We know hundreds of millions of dollars are being taken from the people of this province who cannot afford to pay it - that is individual families, that is big businesses.

We've seen the struggles in big business, everyone in this House knows the struggles with regard to NewPage and with regard to Bowater and Minas Basin. We're seeing it in all of that industry, large corporations, what kind of energy costs and how they are affecting - their biggest cost, Mr. Speaker. Individuals are having difficulties paying the bills. We've seen that, we've heard that speech many times in this House and it is weekly that the phone is ringing and we're hearing from individuals.

I heard about another one today from my constituency, who is now \$2,300 in arrears because they can't afford to do both - feed and look after their family, Mr. Speaker, and pay the power bill, too. We're trying to figure out how we're going to help that family survive. The power was cut off, maybe they'll get it turned back on. Fortunately it's a little bit warmer out.

The member over there for Hammonds Plains-Upper Sackville or whatever his constituency is over there, he likes to barb. He likes to shoot his mouth off in this House and go on and barb. He had his chance, it's my turn now, Mr. Speaker. It's my turn to speak to this issue now and he should probably listen because it's important to look after your constituents. Maybe he's not interested in doing that. It's nice, he can stand up and think he's oh so smart, giving us all a history lesson. Last week he said it was a math lesson. God knows what it will be next week. Oh, that's right, we won't be here next week doing the people's business because the government has run out of business, but we're welcome to come back. We'll come back. (Interruption)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable member for Hants West has the floor.

MR. PORTER: Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, there is an opportunity to intervene here. We will be intervening. I will be at those meetings intervening on behalf of the residents of Nova Scotia. As the MLA for Hants West, as an elected representative, it is my duty to go to that hearing and represent the people across this province and tell them, no, we cannot do that.

The Premier and his government and his minister specifically can walk down that hall, they can tell the URB, they can put something in place that says, no, no more, it cannot be sustained, we cannot afford that, find the money somewhere else; you're making hundreds of millions of dollars in profit, figure it out. Take it from somewhere else. No, can't do that. Same thing - the Premier says he goes to Newfoundland and Labrador, he signs a deal, great; green energy, great. That's all wonderful, but what's the cost? Nobody can even tell us. If you think the ratepayers in this province aren't upset - they are. We've been hearing from them constantly, especially since the announcement of yet another hike. What are you going to do to stop it? Does anybody have the answer? So far, nobody has the answer. The only answer right now is, we work on the opportunity to stabilize things, is to say no, because we can't afford - businesses can't afford it.

The small business sector - there will be more businesses going out of business because they're not going to be able to afford to stay open. Times have been hard enough, we all know that. It's time to tell Nova Scotia Power and Emera that we cannot sustain and will not sustain another increase this year or next year. We're going to have to figure out another way. But no, no, that's not the way the NDP want to do business.

That member would think he was the saviour here. He stands up and he starts going on about having all the answers and what has been done in the past. Well, the past is the past. Yes, there have been Liberal Governments and there have been Tory Governments and there will be again, and for anybody who doubts that (Interruption) Well, that might be Utopia over there that that member is living in, thinks that the world is wonderful where he comes from, and I hope that it is for him. They all seem to have the answer over there, but so far the reality is they have no answers.

What are we going to do to protect Nova Scotians? I asked the question to the minister today: feeding our families or paying for the power bills? Putting them in activities and recreation to keep them healthy and fit or paying the power bills? Buying school supplies or paying power bills? Which is going to be? If people over on that side of the House don't think that it's that desperate, let me assure you, folks, it is that desperate out there.

There are all kinds of people, 25,000 or something today have signed a petition so far and said, times are hard, we do not want another increase in our power bills. We cannot

sustain it. We can't afford it. Where is the money going to come from? We can't do what we're doing now. We can't pay it now. How would you expect us to pay it in the years ahead? They can't do it. It is unfair to ask them to do that.

There is that opportunity, go to the URB, tell them these things have to be considered. "No" is the answer. We cannot allow this to happen. But that won't happen because the Premier, his minister, his Cabinet, his members over there in that Party think they're on the right track. Well, I can tell you, driving prices right out of this world for consumers and for everyday families is not the right track, not even close. "A better deal for today's families" was the slogan that they pitched when they were campaigning; a bitter deal for today's families is the reality, unfortunately - a very bitter pill to swallow when people are going to bed in the dark, going to bed hungry. Why? Because the government is taking \$1,000 more a year per person out of them in increased HST. (Interruptions) That's right, the honourable member for Lunenburg, get on your feet and have a say if you like. I'll give you the floor. Go ahead. Tell us. (Interruptions) You've got it right, you've all got it right, that's right. Mr. Speaker, they've got it right apparently.

It will be interesting how they decide they're going to work with their constituents when their power is being turned off, when they're trying to decide, their family is hungry and they're going to feed them. Are they going to open their doors and go purchase the groceries for them? I doubt that very much. Too bad that we have to be talking about that, but that's the reality of life in Nova Scotia. Maybe things are better in a couple of those constituencies or maybe they don't have those same problems. I can tell you, in rural Nova Scotia, in the constituency of Hants West, we have those problems. We have increased costs in everything and what does the government do? They decide that they're going to put the HST up 2 per cent and that's going to make life better for Nova Scotians. That has created considerable hardships for the people in this province. They know that, but they're being told, you don't need to worry about that, you just get on your feet on the backbench and you give a speech that my speech writer will write for you and you spin (Interruptions) That's right.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. (Interruptions)

Now, the way this works is that the member who's identified has an opportunity to speak and those who haven't been identified, don't speak. If they want to have a conversation, they go out in the back and have a conversation. That's how it works.

The honourable member for Hants West.

MR. PORTER: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to continue this afternoon on what I think is a very important resolution. Although I would have preferred to see a bill come forward, something that we could have talked about and maybe tried to get across, called, but we know that the government just doesn't do that. Unfortunately, we have to put all the bills forward that are strictly government bills and, as

I've said before, that is a process that is in desperate need of reform if we're going to work together in this House and try to put things forward. That doesn't seem to be the flavour at least of the current day and I know it has been an issue in the past.

There have been times in the past, Mr. Speaker - you've been here a number of years - and you know that Opposition bills do make it to the floor of the House. They do get passed in this House because they're good bills. Good bills, regarding issues around power have been put forward by this Party, by the Liberal Party, in an effort to say, okay, if you don't like it, I'll take a piece of it, put it in with something you might - do you want your name on it? If you're that arrogant, put your name on it. It doesn't matter to us, it doesn't matter a bit. Put their name on it if they like. If it needs to be a government bill, great. Put a bill forward that says to the URB it's time to say no.

Let's go in and change the rules. What's wrong with that? If they're so keen and they're doing it all right and they've got all the answers, Mr. Speaker, and they really are thinking about a better deal for today's family, then we would see that bill on the floor of this House. Instead what we're seeing is the end of the session coming with no bill anywhere near that, anywhere near, remotely near a better deal for today's family. Not one bill that has gone through this House reflects that and this is an important issue. There needs to be a bill on the floor of this House to change the rules that allow government to step in there when it needs to step in there. Transparency is important. The people of this province, the voters of this province, the taxpayers, the ratepayers, they want to be assured that they are being looked after.

The Premier and his government have a responsibility to the people of this province to see that they are looked after, not stand by and allow them to starve to death, Mr. Speaker, because that's what's happening out there. Power bills are being cut off. People are living in the dark. People have been cold this winter. (Interruption) I think that member just said something about intelligence over there. I don't know whether he's referring to my comments or not. (Interruption) That's what I thought.

Now, that would be, again, that large, big, big, arrogant attitude over there on the NDP side of this House, Mr. Speaker, who don't give a - who don't care, I know that was close, I was getting there. That's all right, I stopped before I said it but I'll tell you what, that you and everybody in this House and everybody listening know exactly what I was going to say, don't they? Yes, they do. They know. That arrogance is hurting Nova Scotians. It's doing nothing, not a thing to help Nova Scotians. A better deal for today's families, I think not.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

MR. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to join the debate for just a few short remaining minutes in debate on Resolution No. 997. I think this is a moment where

putting some kind of a summary, if you wish, on the past three years of the NDP Government can be seen in the context through Nova Scotia Power and what has gone on.

When the NDP got elected, I wrote my first article for the local Valley paper and I said there will be three or four areas on which government will be in the final - you know, the final test I guess, which is the next election, that they will be judged. I said one of them is how many low-income, middle-income Nova Scotians feel that they are better off after four years of the NDP Government. I said, you know, poverty, those who truly live in poverty and those who exist from one paycheque to another are at the break point in Nova Scotia. There is no question.

I looked at my BlackBerry just before the debate started, and I had four calls to my office just today on disconnection notices - just today. People in Nova Scotia, and I can assure you that those 26,000 who have already put their names, they're not worried about the history of the Liberal and the Progressive Conservative managing of power, they are concerned about what has happened in the last three years. That is where their judgment is coming on the last three years.

They now know, Nova Scotians are enlightened, the Premier gets up and talks about taking the HST off. Well, the HST, totally paid by Nova Scotians, was \$28 million and the NDP electricity tax - yes, for conservation and efficiency - is about \$43 million; a \$15 million difference. People understand that and they realize that it has just been shifted from one place, Nova Scotia Power, to the taxpayer. That should be addressed by the shareholders and that's where things have really gone off the rails.

You know, Mr. Speaker, the area that also is of concern is the amount of money that we have paid to the URB and to Nova Scotia Power just to have these hearings. I think we need to take a look at perhaps a different process: one where we have public-settlement meetings, prior to appearing before the URB. If no settlement agreement can be reached between Nova Scotia Power and all of its stakeholders, then any costs associated with the URB hearing and general rate application are to be borne by the Nova Scotia Power shareholders rather than the taxpayers of Nova Scotia. These costs should not be passed on to the ratepayers in any way whatsoever. This is a direct saving to ratepayers whether or not a settlement is reached.

Over the last three years regulatory costs at the URB have totalled \$4 million. During that same time frame Nova Scotia Power has spent nearly \$15 million appearing before the board. Ensuring Nova Scotia Power and not Nova Scotians pay those bills will reduce the cost of electricity for every ratepayer in the province.

I don't have a lot of time but I want to go back to an area that I believe, at the end of the day, will be satisfactory to Nova Scotians and that is breaking the Nova Scotia Power monopoly. There is absolutely a way to do it and this is going to expand, let me tell you this is going to expand. Berwick, Nova Scotia, has its own utility and Berwick residents get

their power 10 per cent below most of the rest of Nova Scotia; I believe Antigonish is somewhat the same. Those small five utilities and their autonomy are going to allow for developers to come in, and whether it's in-stream tidal energy, whether it's wind or whether it's geothermal, they are going to make arrangements with those five separate entities, and they are going to sell power directly to communities or customers and compete with Nova Scotia Power.

It will start small but it can grow; it will start small but we can be the beneficiaries when we put Nova Scotia Power - make it sharpen its pencil and that's why we can talk about audits all we want. We're now seeing that this monopoly is not running like a fine-tuned machine. There is waste inside Nova Scotia Power and we need that comprehensive audit whereby we get KPMG, or whoever, to take a look at how this monopoly is run. Those are things we can do and legislation can, in fact, impact the rate of return that the shareholders are receiving. I know one Nova Scotian who sold her shares in Nova Scotia Power because she felt it was now an unethical and greedy company. That's a statement, that's a huge statement, and I think we are going to see more of that take place.

This is truly a company now that needs to be challenged by more and more Nova Scotians. I can see this on-line petition growing to 40,000 or 50,000. They are making a statement, not just about Nova Scotia Power, they are making a statement about a government that has cosied up to Nova Scotia Power and allowed them to run with high salaries at the top executives, bonuses that are way out of line of any company in Nova Scotia. This is the judgment that they are going to be making.

Over the next number of weeks and months Nova Scotia Power is going to be front and centre and individual Nova Scotians are going to be doing their assessment of ways in which they can reduce their own power consumption, because that doesn't seem to be working very well. We've heard over the last number of weeks of Nova Scotians who have gone through a whole greening process in their homes to try to reduce energy. They've changed their major appliances. They've done all the things that they realistically can actually do, and they still are paying higher power bills than they were prior to going through this process.

The other area which seemed to not get a lot of media and a lot of play, I am hearing more from the average Nova Scotian who is becoming pretty upset over having to pay the power bill at Bowater and eventually, I think, at NewPage - or, I should say, not paying it fully but assisting with their power bill. This is something that the average Nova Scotian feels is ultimately wrong. They may be able to be given an explanation as to why it's happening and it gives a lifeline to Bowater and some long-term help to NewPage. Bowater is truly on a lifeline, we all know that, the residents of Liverpool and area know that. Why should we be paying to supplement their power bill?

Instead of the NDP deciding that Nova Scotia Power shareholders should pay for efficiency costs, they decided low-income Nova Scotians and struggling businesses should

pay those costs. These increases stretch budgets, put a strain on pocketbooks, and make doing business in Nova Scotia unaffordable and we are seeing a weakening of our economy. We had a question here in the House today that talked about Nova Scotia, its exports, its manufacturing. Those areas are not seeing any improvement and yet the rest of Canada have come through the recession; they are not completely on the other side of it but they are all making greater progress than Nova Scotia.

When you have a utility that has plans to make increases for the next three years, well then some small businesses are deciding with their back to the wall, they have tried to control costs and this is one cost that continues to go higher than what they can meet through what their companies will return.

The government member talked about the greening of our energy system in Nova Scotia and we all know that has to take place, that has to be part of our future, and it's why history is showing us that we probably should have gone down this road much earlier than what we have and we may not be so bad off. I don't believe for a minute that we should have power rates that are second to Whitehorse. I don't believe that for a minute. I believe that if we had a more competitive environment or a utility where Nova Scotians had a greater say in how it operated, I think we would be better off. So that is the challenge that we face and I think we've started to outline, as a Party, some of the areas where we would deal with Nova Scotia Power in a very different way.

I think the areas around salaries and bonuses are just not in line at all with the Nova Scotia economy; they are in a league all by themselves. You know, even with our neighbour province, the CEO of NB Power makes about one-third of what the CEO in Nova Scotia makes; that's just a reality. That's right, the members opposite have done a great job defending Nova Scotia Power and I can tell you Nova Scotians do not like that. That's something that really grates on Nova Scotians, that government would defend Nova Scotia Power. That is a line in the sand that Nova Scotians have now said to us, this government has crossed the line. They have not defended the ratepayer, they have not defended the average Nova Scotian, they have not challenged Nova Scotia Power.

In fact, we've had a Premier who has stood in his place on numerous occasions during this session and has been quite apologetic, has tried to appease Nova Scotians and let them ease into what has taken place, to accept that and to accept increases for the next three years. This is the reality now that Nova Scotians are seeing and they don't like it one bit. I expect to see at the hearings in the Fall, in fact, because of the mounting pressure from Nova Scotians - not from this government, they're going to show up, take a back seat and watch proceedings from a distance - I think Nova Scotians in fact are going to cause an actual reduction. We won't get 3 per cent.

You know, 3 per cent and 3 per cent almost look like the cosiness and the unofficial agreement that Nova Scotia Power and the NDP have actually forged - only 3 per cent in 2013 and 3 per cent in 2014 and then watch out in 2015. I think we need a government, and

we need those people in power, to make a statement on behalf of Nova Scotians. We have not had a statement in their defence in the six weeks that we have been sitting here.

So, Mr. Speaker, it is a day when Nova Scotians now realize they're not getting the best return from this government. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. That ends the debate on Resolution No. 997.

The Acting Deputy Opposition House Leader.

MR. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Resolution 1093.

Res. No. 1093, Prem./NDP Gov't. - Rate Hearings: Attendance - On-line Petition Support - notice given May 11/12 - (Ms. K. Regan)

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

MS. DIANA WHALEN: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to get up today, on Opposition Day for the Liberal Party, and speak to this resolution. This resolution was submitted just on Friday, I believe, and it relates to the petition that is on-line right now that has been started by the gentleman from Port Hawkesbury to call on the Government of Nova Scotia to oppose the rate hikes that have been proposed by Nova Scotia Power that we know are going to be brought forward.

They've already asked for rate hikes in 2013, 2014 and 2015, Mr. Speaker. So that's coming up very soon. It's facing Nova Scotians who have already had an 18.5 per cent increase in their rates since the NDP Government were elected three years ago. That alone is such a huge increase on top of a fairly stagnant wage situation. We've heard that our wages have not been rising. We know our economy has been very flat the last number of years, and even though there are some hopefully more positive signs around the corner, right now people are hurting. That's exactly what the situation is.

What we presented on Friday was a resolution which we're debating today, which says: "Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly support the on-line petition's intent and call upon the Premier and the NDP Government to appear before the rate hearing, to deny Nova Scotia Power's proposed rate increases over the next three years."

It's a direct appeal to the government of the day - that is, the NDP Government, who in the past had spoken loudly against things that hurt people's pocketbook, issues that were squeezing people so that they couldn't live fully and couldn't afford the things that they think are needed for their children, for their families. We've heard here in Question Period over the last number of days the allusions, the references, to things like people having to choose between paying power and buying food or between paying power and tuition - all of the stresses that they have to make choices about.

I know every one of us have seen big increases. My own power rate has gone up really remarkably, very noticeably. One of the reasons for that is the addition of the electricity tax. We have coined that phrase, but it is in fact another tax right on our bills. Every time you get your Nova Scotia Power bill, it's been hived off as a separate line item so you can see it separately. The Premier today was saying, that's demand-side management that we've got there, a demand-side management charge. Do you think that DSM charge means anything to the people of Nova Scotia? They see it as an additional tax, that additional cost that's been tacked onto their bill is amounting to over \$40 million a year out of the pockets of the ratepayers.

I've said here before, when we talked about budgets and other things, that that money's gone directly to pay for what was essentially Conserve Nova Scotia. It's been renamed under the NDP as Efficiency Nova Scotia, but we had an agency doing that previously and the agency Conserve Nova Scotia was housed within the Department of Energy and the people who worked there were paid for through our taxes.

I understand the government wanting to unload that and to have fewer employees and fewer expenses, but you don't put it back to the ratepayers. Those ratepayers are paying the same taxes they paid before - fewer employees in that department, but our taxes haven't gone down, and we now pay an additional tax on top of our power bills. That is just downloading to your ratepayers, who are still the same taxpayers of this province. That is, frankly, wrong.

We have said and particularly our Leader of the Official Opposition, Stephen McNeil - I'm sorry, I'm not allowed to say that.

MR. SPEAKER: You're not supposed to say that.

MS. WHALEN: I am so glad you're awake. I forgot myself, and I do apologize.

The Leader of the Official Opposition, the member for Annapolis, has said repeatedly here that this is the wrong way to do it and that it should be the shareholders of Nova Scotia Power who pay for the programs that are going to reduce our consumption of power. The whole benefit of that is back to Nova Scotia Power so that they don't have to build new power plants. They are the ones who benefit. They are going to be able to defray the cost of building new, expensive coal-fired or whatever other kinds of power plants.

That's a huge multi-million dollar cost to that company. By encouraging supply control, our use of energy - let's not use these euphemisms; let's just say by encouraging us to conserve - the winner at the end of the day is Nova Scotia Power, who's going to avoid some huge costs in the future. By doing that, they win. Their profits stay higher. So why are we paying for it? Why are the ratepayers of Nova Scotia having to cover that cost? That's really the question.

While I'm up on my feet on this resolution, it would seem a shame not to take a little time to talk about the necessity for reform in this House. I know there are many people who pay attention to the Legislature and they wonder why in Nova Scotia we can't accept on-line petitions. The petition that we're referring to in this resolution today has over 26,000 people who have signed, and yet those signatures can't be brought here during our Orders of the Day and submitted under our business as a petition. That is so backward and so out of date.

I have been speaking since 2006, urging two successive governments to look at this, that other places are going to be doing it, that we need to get with the times. In those six years since I began to ask the government to look at that, I have written to Speakers who were Progressive Conservative Speakers of the House and I have written to the NDP Speaker of the House - the first one, the member for Pictou West had received my letters as well.

I am told the Assembly Matters Committee is where this has to take place - any change, any adoption of new rules like the acceptance of petitions. Is it any wonder, Mr. Speaker, that I am very frustrated that nothing has been done. That committee does not meet and as far as I know it has been over five years since the committee met. The only thing that the NDP Government has done to address this problem is they have stopped paying the Speaker for chairing a committee that never meets. So that was really a smart thing to do - let's not continue to pay the Speaker for chairing a committee that is never called.

I don't blame the Speaker of the House for never calling that committee, Mr. Speaker. I blame the government because the government is saying don't call them, we don't want to deal with House reform, we don't want to have the members of this House have a say in any improvements or modernization of this Legislature. Frankly, that is so backward and so out of touch with the people of Nova Scotia that we all need to stand up. In the last resolution that I read here in the House asking for on-line petitions to be considered, I asked that all members of the House speak to their House Leaders and speak to the Leaders of their Party to say that, enough is enough, and we can do something.

It's very frustrating to feel like you have no power if there are just one or two people that can control this kind of a sensible move forward. When I was up last speaking about this, I did mention a number of other jurisdictions that have moved forward. I think the most telling one is that the Parliament of Westminster which is our model for all that it be a British democracy (Interruption) Commonwealth democracy, thank you, that we pattern ourselves on - the Government of England, they accept on-line petitions, they do.

Now the City of Halifax accepts on-line petitions, right here at home. They did that a few years ago. They let people vote on-line as well and we approved that here in a piece of legislation a few years ago. At which time I mentioned why don't we? Why don't we also look at on-line petitions? Again, successive governments, and the NDP are the biggest

surprise to me because in Opposition, you would have thought the NDP were a progressive Party. You would have believed some of the sanctimonious things said by the NDP members and you would have believed that they wanted to move this province forward. We have three years of evidence that that is not the case, three years that they can't even tackle something as simple as a small modernization in this House. I've read other petitions here where members of the government say no, no to on-line petitions, that's too dramatic.

It's really rich that the members from the Third Party got up today - I believe the Leader of the Third Party got up and read a resolution in favour of on-line petitions. What's rich about that is that they sat in the Speaker's Chair, they sat on the government side and said no successively and, in fact, when I read the first resolution after the government had changed to the NDP, it was a former Speaker who is no longer in the House here, who represented Cape Breton North - I think perhaps I can mention his name, Cecil Clarke - who yelled very loudly no. As a former Speaker, he thought that was too dramatic as well or somehow a bad thing to do. I can tell you it's just rich how quickly people forget or how quickly they want to get on a bandwagon.

I think there are some smart members of the House here who know that the time has come and I do think that they should be speaking to their Leaders and particularly the government members, the backbenchers and the NDP members, need to sit up and say what is the harm in this? We have the people of Nova Scotia expressing views and they're doing it repeatedly. We had over 20,000 signatures on-line for the on-line petition that was begun by the Teachers Union called Kids not Cuts. These are parents, these are teachers, they're people in the community who want to be heard and there's no reason in the world why signing an on-line petition shouldn't be just as valid as signing a handwritten petition that you saw at the mall.

It is a question of democracy and we make ourselves entirely irrelevant if we can't judge the pulse of change and the technological change that has absolutely swept our society. We're here talking about things like on-line bullying, cyberbullying, and the impacts of that on people, on children, on schools. We understand that younger people, and even older people, are living a lot of their lives on-line, that's just the nature of life these days. If we want those younger people to be politically concerned, politically active, we need to listen to their voice. Their voices are being expressed, but they're being expressed differently than our grandparents expressed them.

A written petition was just fine for our grandparents and it may work just fine when you petition people who live on a street that need to get their road repaired, but it's not the same when you have an issue that's province-wide like this potential rate hike in three years in a row that we're looking at - 2012, 2014 and 2015 - having Nova Scotia Power coming to the URB actually asking for three years, permission to raise it three years running. This is just unbelievable because that was never the case in the past. They didn't come back expecting annual increments, which is now what they're trying to get past us here in the Legislature and at the URB.

Here in the Legislature we do have power. The Premier has said repeatedly, we don't have it, we've given it to the URB and we're arms' length. But we have to remember Nova Scotia Power gets all of its authority to operate through regulation. Their mechanisms, their *raison d'être*, everything about their work is determined by regulation and law. We gave them that monopoly and we can alter that monopoly and we can change some of the parameters. We can change things that are guaranteed, like their rate of return. The Premier said today during Question Period that the rate of return was just about their profit margin, but this is a regulated industry. We don't have the chance to say, we don't think we'll buy your product this week. We have to buy power.

We can try to control our use, but my goodness, the people of Nova Scotia have been hit in the head for controlling their use because if we use less, they charge us more because they're not using all of their facilities. Even when we cut out huge power users like power plants that are shut down for periods of time - I mean pulp and paper plants that shut who are huge users of power - we're hearing this perverse argument that ratepayers have to pay more because we've got power plants that are not being utilized and we have to pay for those mothballed plants.

It's really perverse. It defies the whole understanding of economics and the marketplace and that's why government needs to move in. That's why government has to say, we're going to set some different parameters for this regulated industry and we've had quite enough of allowing them to run roughshod over the people of Nova Scotia.

I go back to a 9.2 per cent guaranteed rate of return and none of us are getting that on our investments - none, it's just not happening. I know people who actually got that return and some people have actually contacted us and said they've sold their shares because they think it's unethical. It would not fall under ethical investing, that's what they think. It is being done at the expense of people who can't even keep the lights on or keep the heat on in their homes and that's not ethical to guarantee your shareholders that kind of return. We know that \$100 million a year are being taken out of Nova Scotia Power, given to their sole shareholder, Emera, and that money has been going to other parts of the world to buy power plants and expand the investments of Emera. That does nothing to help the people of Nova Scotia. It doesn't help to defray the costs and the operating costs of Nova Scotia Power.

I understand that my time has elapsed, but I look forward to hearing the debate further, both on on-line petitions and on the need for the government to act on these rate increases.

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

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to rise in my place to speak on such an important issue. No one, I believe, in this House wants to see an increase in power rates. We know the stress and burden it puts on Nova Scotians every day. One of the things

that the Opposition doesn't say over and over - we've been here for a number of weeks and we hear question after question from the Opposition members, from the Liberals and the Progressive Conservatives, about why we're not doing this, why we're not doing that. But you have to know why we are in the position we're in today.

They don't want Nova Scotians to remember decisions of past governments. They don't want that, they want to just ignore that. They want Nova Scotians to forget about why we're in the position we're in today, when we see Nova Scotia Power come before the utility to ask for an increase in power. Because of decisions of former Liberal and Progressive Conservative Governments, we are in the position we're in today. Their decisions, Mr. Speaker, even though they might be 20 years ago, they affect us today and they'll affect us tomorrow. What we needed - and Nova Scotia's got it - is a change in how we make decisions in the province and the decisions that are being made by government.

In 2009 Nova Scotians made a choice, Mr. Speaker. They were tired of the way things used to be done here in Nova Scotia. They made a decision to elect the New Democratic Party as a new government, and we're changing the way we do things. We have to remind Nova Scotians and those listening at home that when they hear the hot air coming from the Liberals and the Progressive Conservatives, they need to know - no offence to you, Mr. [Deputy] Speaker - that the reason we're in this position today is that we privatized - government privatized Nova Scotia Power. Not "we"; the government at the time. They, in 1992, under the Progressive Conservative Government, decided it was a good thing.

We heard from the Premier today that there were no studies on if this would be the best thing for Nova Scotians; that wasn't done, Mr. Speaker. That wasn't done because they just thought it was a good thing to do. They were trying to get back to balance - if you could use one of our terms that we've used - at the time. They just decided that they wanted to privatize Nova Scotia Power, and the year after that, in 1993, the Liberal Government ensured that that could happen. They finalized legislation to privatize the utility Nova Scotia Power here in the province. That's why it's not under the control of government. Even though the Opposition tries to paint a picture that Nova Scotia Power is under the control of government, it's not. It's a private company and we're all shackled by those decisions that former governments made in the 1990s. That's why we're here today.

As I said, we don't want to see power rates increased in Nova Scotia, but we need to change the way we do things. That's why when we came into government, we decided we needed plans, we needed strategies, something that was lacking the decade before we took over from the Progressive Conservative Government. It was lacking. They just did things on a whim - again, no offence to you, but they did things on a whim. So in 2003 we came forward with the Renewable Electricity Plan, and that's a plan that Nova Scotians should become aware of because it's an important plan. That plan ensures that in the future we're going to have stable . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage has the floor.

MR. WILSON: That Renewable Electricity Plan puts forth a plan for Nova Scotians to get off the use of fossil fuels. We need to break that trend because fossil fuels, coal prices, have increased by 75 per cent in the last almost-decade - 75 per cent. That's why we're seeing the increases we have from Nova Scotia Power every year when they go to the URB. We're going to be there to ensure that the rates that they're asking, or the increase that they are asking - they need to prove that they're warranted.

This is a system that we did not create. This is a system that we have to operate in right now, but we want to make sure that we get off fossil fuels. We need to get on more renewable energies like wind power, and it doesn't take anybody too long to recognize if they travel around the province. You just have to come into the province, the border of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, Mr. Speaker, to see the results of our Renewable Electricity Plan. We see windmills being erected all over the province so that we can get off the fossil fuel treadmill.

Also last year, when our province and the Premier, who has spearheaded and championed the Lower Churchill/Muskrat Falls agreement - I think that when we see that plan get in place we're going to see more stable power rates here in Nova Scotia. If you look across the country and you see which jurisdictions have stable power rates, you look at Quebec and Manitoba, and what do they have there? They have hydroelectricity. They have access to hydroelectricity, something that we don't have right here in Nova Scotia because past governments didn't feel it was important. They did not invest in it, and I wish we could change that overnight. I wish we could build that cable to Nova Scotia and have that power available for our ratepayers here in Nova Scotia, but we can't. It's going to take some time.

I know Nova Scotians are struggling. That's why we continue to provide for them important services. One of the first things we did, and I know we talk about petitions in this resolution and how important they are - one of the first things we did when we formed government was take the HST off of electricity, something that we went out to Nova Scotians and asked if they supported that. We did petitions and actually I think we had more than 20,000 signatures on a piece of paper that we presented on the floor of this Legislature when the Conservative Government was in. Mr. Speaker, I don't know if there's any "progressive" left but the Progressive Conservative Government at the time.

One of the first things we did was take the HST off electricity in Nova Scotia. And what did the other two Parties do - the Liberals and the Progressive Conservatives? They voted against it, so if they were still in power, the Progressive Conservatives, God help us, or the Liberals were in power, our rates would be 8 per cent higher today than they are. That's a shame. That's shameful for those two Parties to stand up now, yelling across the floor, saying we should do something when we did do something. They don't talk about

that. They don't talk about the good programs we're putting in place. They don't talk about things we've done in the past and a record that we can stand on in the next election.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage has the floor. If you have conversations you'd like to carry on, please feel free to take them outside the Chamber. The honourable minister has the floor.

MR. WILSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker; they're not bothering me one bit. I know the message we need to make sure Nova Scotians hear and that's the truth and that's the history of why we're in the position we're in today. By taking the HST off electricity, do you realize how much that is saving Nova Scotians today? Last year for 2011-12, by us deciding to take the HST off electricity, that put \$102.2 million back in the pockets of Nova Scotians. They don't talk about that. Over \$100 million that would have been taken from Nova Scotians if the other two Parties were in power right now, \$100 million.

One of the other things we did, Mr. Speaker, ensure that the best way for Nova Scotians to ensure they can reduce their power rate is to use less power. I think we are achieving that with Efficiency Nova Scotia and some of the programs that they have to offer to Nova Scotians and we need to ensure that Nova Scotians know about that. They don't talk about it. Some of their members talk about it once in a while and they actually say how good some of the programs are, but they don't talk about it on the floor of the Legislature. They don't want Nova Scotians to know that there are good programs out there that the NDP Government brought into force.

Under Efficiency Nova Scotia, Mr. Speaker, and you don't have to take my word for it, you can look at Hansard, just in a recent Public Accounts Committee, when asked how much money or how much savings did Nova Scotians have because of the programs that Efficiency Nova Scotia offers? Well, that's another \$100 million, over \$100 million in savings. So in one year, \$213.2 million was put back into the pockets of Nova Scotians. They don't talk about that, they don't want to mention that.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we on this side know that Nova Scotians appreciate those efforts. They know that we're trying to do our best with the mess that the former government left us and we're going to make changes. We're going to ensure that Nova Scotians reap the benefit of proper planning when it comes to energy rates here in Nova Scotia. We're going to get off fossil fuels.

One thing I know the member for Hammonds Plains-Upper Sackville spoke on - a past resolution about the executive bonuses being included in the rate requests from Nova Scotia Power. That's not under our watch, Mr. Speaker - last year we said they weren't allowed to do that. We said it again this year. Under the Progressive Conservatives they were allowed to do that.

We do not want to see that and we don't agree with that, that's why we're standing up for it. But they don't talk about some of the decisions we've made, as a government, when it comes to power rates here in Nova Scotia. A mess was left and my children are in jeopardy if we don't turn around the way and the practices we have to create energy in this province, but I can assure you we're doing everything on our side of the House to assure that my kids aren't shackled to fossil fuel prices like the Progressive Conservative Government would like them to have.

We're going to ensure that we have proper programs in place, that Nova Scotians can take every opportunity they can to save energy and the amount of energy they use in their home and I think we will recognize, Nova Scotians will recognize, in the next election that they voted against taking taxes off heating. We supported that. We support our most vulnerable Nova Scotians in this province, not the Progressive Conservatives, not the Liberals, we do. We have the Affordable Living Tax Credit that we put in place because we know times are tough for Nova Scotians. We not only took taxes off the heating, we took taxes off children's clothing and feminine hygiene products, something that they said that you couldn't do when we were in Opposition - we couldn't do that, you can't touch the tax system, you have to talk to the federal government. One of the things we did, we took it off, saving money for Nova Scotians.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The chatter may not bother the minister but it's starting to get on my nerves. The honourable minister has the floor.

MR. WILSON: Thank you. The other thing we did after forming government was to try to ensure that our seniors are taken care of here in Nova Scotia. That's why we ensured that any senior who is receiving the Guaranteed Income Supplement no longer pays provincial income tax. Under the former Progressive Conservative Government they paid that tax, just like they paid taxes on their heating, they paid those taxes too. They paid taxes on children's clothing and on feminine hygiene products. Under the Progressive Conservative Government, Nova Scotians paid more taxes. We're ensuring that we change the way government does business. We're turning the ship around.

We need to get back to balance. We've made some tough choices and decisions but they were important decisions to make. I know Nova Scotians appreciate the effort that we have, on this side of the House, unlike former governments who just did whatever they thought they could do. We make sure that we consult with Nova Scotians and that we ensure we bring policies forward that will benefit Nova Scotians.

Our Renewable Electricity Plan will ensure that in the future my children, my grandchildren won't be shackled to fossil fuel prices in the world market like we are today. I'm proud that our government has done that. I know my time is short, Mr. Speaker, but I need to ensure that Nova Scotians recognize that those Parties over there voted against lower power rates. The Liberals and Progressive Conservatives voted for higher power rates because they did not support taking the HST off of heating. I think they will be made

responsible in the next election when Nova Scotians ask them, why didn't you support lower power rates? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, it's a shame when good ideas are brought to the floor of this Legislature that the government can't get beyond themselves to consider them.

Today, related to this resolution, we put forward a resolution calling upon the Legislature to allow for the tabling of Internet-based surveys to be tabled here in the Legislature. To address comments by the Liberal Party today bringing questions to where we stand, we had a bill before this very Legislature to modernize the Legislature so that we could accept these kinds of petitions. It is the public speaking and we should be listening to them. Our record is very clear.

I was getting a kick out of the minister and his comments. Something struck with me and that was when he said we're changing the way we're doing things. I was reminded, during Budget Estimates, when the Minister of Finance was talking about the interest payments on the debt and saying how he hated to be spending that money and he said, but that is the legacy of the past. So I asked the Minister of Finance, why minister, given that you've added more debt per year than any other administration in the history of the province, are you continuing to add to the debt? (Interruptions) We know it's true because the Auditor General audits the books and we see where the deficit budgets have gotten us. My point is that I made the point to the minister; I said, this is not a legacy of the past, this is a legacy of the present government. Of course, he was speechless to that. (Interruptions) Obviously so.

The fact remains and I would love for the minister to stand up here and refute it, but he can't refute it because it's the truth and that is that this government has added more debt per year than any other administration on average in the history of the province. I've tabled that information and that's black and white. We look at the total amount of debt when this government took office and look at the total amount of debt by the end of this coming year and divide it by four years.

This government is not changing the way they're doing things and it disappoints me when good ideas are brought forth here in the Legislature and they're just simply ignored. I can think of the amendments I brought forward for the NewPage pensioners back in December, they were defeated by the government and what does the government do? They turn around and bring forth something that has virtually the same intent. How many good issues are dying on the floor of this Legislature? How many good ideas are dying on the floor of this Legislature? (Interruptions)

As my colleague, the member for Victoria-The Lakes said, they're dying because they can't take credit for them and what a shame. I know when I was going around during my by-election one thing people said to me was, whatever you do don't embarrass us up there. If you get into the Legislature you work with Parties of all sides and get beyond the debate and get good things done for us. That is what I aim to do and that's why I bring forth bills in the Legislature in the hopes they get passed.

I have to bring up this point as well, we heard both members of the government side today say we're shackled to fossil fuels, particularly coal. I would like to ask the members - and the member for Hammonds Plains-Upper Sackville said he was giving us a math lesson today, I didn't hear any numbers in his speech, but I would love to know the answer. It's a simple question, if we completely - and he has an opportunity to answer - removed coal from the mix, would the price of energy go up or down? They're speechless, Mr. Speaker. Would the price of energy go up or down? No response, silence. I can tell you what the answer would be, this province right now, 58 per cent of our energy is generated by coal. Coal, according to the head of the URB - next to the Wreck Cove Hydro project and not the Muskrat Falls project, but next to the Wreck Cove infrastructure - is the cheapest form of electricity in the province; three times cheaper than wind, four times cheaper than the estimated costs of Muskrat Falls.

I'm not hearing a lot of rebuttal here. I think the government loves to speak about philosophy, but they don't like to speak about numbers and facts. (Interruption) Light on the facts. It would be irresponsible of government to completely come off coal tomorrow because as much as they say we're shackled to it, the facts and the numbers show that if we came off it tomorrow most people would not be able to afford to pay their power bills in this province, those are the facts. Again, silence on the other side of the House.

They claim that they've helped Nova Scotians by taking the HST off of energy, but what did they do? They raised it 25 per cent and now they're taking an extra \$400 million out of the economy every year which by the end of this year equates to \$4,000 out of the pockets of families in the constituency of Hammonds Plains-Upper Sackville. I think of that nice concert they have in the summertime on Weir Field in the constituency of Hammonds Plains-Upper Sackville, with a lot of 1980s rock groups that I often enjoy and I've yet to get to it, but I know the member has a tent there. I wonder if he tells his visiting constituents that his government has taken \$4,000 out of the pockets of the average family of four in Hammonds Plains-Upper Sackville. I bet he doesn't tell them that, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, when we look at - we were speaking today about a gentleman from the Port Hawkesbury area, Archie Stewart. As we know, he put forward a petition on-line, I think it's upwards of about 27,000 signatures now. What he is calling on is this Legislature to use its powers over the URB, to empower the URB to deny the general rate application increase proposed by Nova Scotia Power and why. He talks about the fact that Nova Scotia Power is making huge profits under the existing rates and they are protected.

They are risk protected because when the prices of energy inputs go up, they just pass that on to the consumer, Mr. Speaker. So they're not facing commodity risks and it's easier for them to make a profit. He had referenced that the current residential rates, to ask for more, is simply pure greed and usury on the part of Nova Scotia Power (Interruption) Thank you to the honourable member for Victoria-The Lakes, the current number is 27,044 signatures of Nova Scotians.

MR. KEITH BAIN: An hour ago.

MR. MACMASTER: An hour ago. So it obviously means something to Nova Scotians. The Progressive Conservatives introduced a resolution today so that those 27,044 people and counting, can have their voice heard in the Legislature by having that petition tabled here so that we could debate it here but the government, the NDP voted it down. Mr. Speaker. I think this calls into question as well, you know, what is this government doing and I started off my remarks by saying that we're trying to bring ideas into the Legislature and every time we try to bring them in, we hear stories about blaming us for the past. We hear stories that you had your chance, it's too late for you now.

Mr. Speaker, I would think if a good idea is a good idea, it should be embraced by this Legislature. I can tell you four ideas that the Progressive Conservatives brought forward here in the form of bills that were defeated by the NDP. One, we heard the Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage speak about the government taking the executive bonuses out of the power rates that Nova Scotians pay. Well, that's fine but if the government really believed in that, why would they not have supported our bill, to make it law, so that they wouldn't have to look at it every year. Every year going forward it would no longer be a question, the executive bonuses would be taken out of the power rates that we pay when we pay our power bills. Another idea we put forward was a Transparency in Power Rates Bill and that would provide that any rate increase granted to Nova Scotia Power that is attributed to government energy policy cannot take effect until debated and approved in our Legislature.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I think about the blind movement by this government to just increase renewable energy targets from 20 per cent to 40 per cent by 2020 without any regard for the numbers or the economy. Of course, I have just given you numbers and what do I hear on the side but silence because they can't debate the numbers. They can debate the philosophy but when somebody is paying their power bill, they care more about numbers than about philosophy. So that is something we wanted to bring into this Legislature by way of a bill and if it was approved, it would require energy policy to be debated here in the Legislature before it can be approved. We can blame Nova Scotia Power all we want but when it's the government setting the parameters for how they conduct business and when it's this NDP Government setting the parameters, all we're doing is seeing power rates rise.

So the third idea we brought forward was the Ratepayer Fairness Bill and as I've just mentioned, Nova Scotia Power assumes no risk for fluctuations in energy inputs. They just pass on the increased costs to the consumer. If that is the case, Mr. Speaker, they are not operating in an environment that has the risks that other businesses would face. So why should we be giving them 9.3 per cent profit per year? If they're running a monopoly and getting a virtually, risk-free rate of return, maybe we should be basing their rate of return on the risk-free rate of return plus something else. I can tell you, 9.3 per cent rate of return, the way things are set up now, I can tell you that Nova Scotians are having to pay more on their power bills for that. We want that brought into this Legislature to be hashed out so that a proper rate of return, recognizing the fact that they do not accept, they do not take on the typical risks of a company.

The fourth idea we had was the Power Rate Reduction Review Bill. This would establish a committee of people around the province so that people like the 27,000-plus who have signed the petition we're talking about here, have a chance to have a number of people around the province come forward to sit on a panel that can really bring information into this Legislature about why power rates are increasing, instead of the rhetoric that we hear from this government. They can talk about the price of coal increasing 70 per cent in the last 10 years. I wouldn't dispute that, Mr. Speaker, but they must also include, in those numbers, the cost of the other forms of energy that they're moving towards.

We only need look at the Province of Ontario and the recent Auditor General's Report there to see the errors that have been made in other jurisdictions. That references errors made in other countries around the world, around moving towards renewables too quickly, before people can afford them.

Oftentimes, Mr. Speaker, we're selling a renewable energy industry short because we're not allowing improvements to be made in the technologies before we move towards them so quickly. When we do, who gets hurt? The consumer does because they end up paying the higher rates.

The other things that we have called for, Mr. Speaker, is a review of the Muskrat Falls project. If we look at the other provinces in this country and what power rates people living in those provinces are paying, the provinces where people are paying the least are provinces that are taking advantage of their natural resource, whatever that might be. In Quebec it's hydro; in Alberta you see natural gas. What do we have here? We have natural gas and we have coal here.

Are we taking advantage of that? No, we're shipping our natural gas down to the United States and they're benefiting greatly from that and our coal, of course, we know in the case of - and I know, Mr. [Deputy] Speaker, in your area the Donkin coal mine, the coal is sitting under the ground. So if we are going to do something meaningful to help Nova Scotians, instead of this rhetoric that we hear from the government about us being shackled to fossil fuels and that we need to move towards more expensive renewable energy, at rates

that are unsustainable for our economy, I think we need to step back and look at what are our natural advantages. If we want to make a meaningful difference for people and their power rates that they pay, we need to look at our natural advantages and start capitalizing on them. If we do that, we will start to build a better economy in this province.

Mr. Speaker, with that I'm going to conclude my remarks and once again ask this government to start introducing some numbers in amongst the rhetoric. I think if they do, they're going to find out that their philosophy pales and fails Nova Scotians. Thank you.

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

MS. KELLY REGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know often when I sit here in the House and we hear people articulating their conflicting views of a situation, I think about my kids and I think, gosh, what would I think if my kids were sitting up in the gallery? I have to say there are times when I think that the lessons we try to drill into their heads, I think they would sort of throw those back in our faces.

One of the things that we've always tried to underline to our children is that you are responsible. One of our kids, for example, her habit was to say when you'd point something out, she'd say, well, that's not my fault, and she would always say that, and it drove us nuts because 99 per cent of the time it was her fault. (Interruption) No, no, it absolutely was her fault, trust me.

As your kids grow, you have the sense that they're actually starting to listen to you. When she was off at university I remember going to visit her in her dorm room and she had a sign up there that said: I am responsible. Our older daughter actually won a scholarship writing an essay about how she was responsible.

So often I want to say, when the members on the opposite side of the House start flinging facts and figures from 20 years ago, when the member for Hammonds Plains-Upper Sackville was in diapers - no, you're a little older than that, sorry about that. But when you start flinging facts and figures, when you start flinging accusations from 20 years ago, I really want to say to them you are responsible. You are the government now and whatever went on before, and Lord knows every government of every stripe has done things that maybe with hindsight they wouldn't have done or maybe they wish they hadn't done, or whatever, but the fact of the matter is, the government is the government now and you are responsible.

Quite frankly, when they open up their power bills, Nova Scotians do not care what happened in 1990. They are looking to this government for leadership on power rates and they are not getting it. While we've been sitting in here debating this particular issue, that petition has passed the 27,000 mark. If that doesn't tell you that Nova Scotians are upset about their power rates, I don't know what will. They know that whatever went on before, this government is the one that is responsible for what's happening now. They have the

power to change things and they know this government is not doing that. They have a laissez-faire attitude to power rates.

Let's just look at those power rate increases. In 2002, 3.1 per cent; 2005, 6.2 per cent; 2006, 8.6 per cent; 2007, 4.7 per cent; 2009, 9.4 per cent; 2012, 6.1 per cent, which is the general rate plus the fuel adjustment mechanism and the DSM charge, so that's 10 per cent. So you can understand why Nova Scotians are getting a little ticked off - well, more than a little ticked off - at seeing these continuous increases to their power rates. Good heavens, people I talked to opened their power bills in January and just about passed out, they couldn't believe what had happened to their power bills, and it wasn't because it was a cold winter because everybody in here knows it wasn't a cold winter. It was a huge shock to Nova Scotians.

Then you look at the Nova Scotia Power profits to Emera. In 2010 - and we'll go backwards this time - \$121.3 million; 2009, \$109.3 million; 2008, \$105.6 million; 2007, \$100.2 million; 2006, \$104.3 million; 2005, \$91.2 million; 2004, \$107.3 million; 2003, \$112.1 million; 2002, \$86.1 million; 2001, \$105.1 million; 2000, \$103.7 million. The total NSPI contribution to Emera between 2000 and 2010 was \$1.06 billion.

Why do you think Nova Scotians are so upset? They see numbers like that and they see Emera executives dining high on the hog when they are struggling to figure out what am I going to do this month, am I going to feed my kids or am I going to pay the electric bill? What do we get back from the other side? Well, we took off the tax - and not to minimize that the tax was taken off, that is helpful. But let's be clear, for business that was a flow-through cost, it was of absolutely no assistance to them, number one, and number two, for a lot of people that still wasn't outweighed by the DSM change.

For Nova Scotians, they don't see any benefit from having one tax taken off and another one put on that's actually more money. Why would they think this is some great deal because it isn't a great deal? All they can see is that their bill keeps climbing year after year, Nova Scotia Power is making fat profits, the shareholders get a guaranteed rate of return, and what do we get in return? We get a guaranteed price hike every year.

For Nova Scotians, these deals, these tax decreases that turn into tax hikes, have not been any help at all. We've heard all kinds of responses back from various ministers. We had the Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism saying some businesses might be affected by increasing power rates. I don't know of anybody who wasn't, unless maybe you were off the grid or something like that. We heard today about the Town of Berwick, where miraculously their cost for electricity is 10 per cent lower than it is from Nova Scotia Power. What does that tell you? There's something going on there.

Whether it's a Progressive Conservative bill or a Liberal bill, the government has decided, we're not going to take any of those ideas, we're just going to sit here and hope this storm passes. I don't think this storm is going to pass - 27,000 signatures on a petition

that, by the way, should be admitted here in the House. The member for Halifax Clayton Park has introduced this idea repeatedly. There is no reason why we cannot accept electronic signatures. There are ways to actually ensure that the signatures are coming from inside Nova Scotia - and that's what this gentleman has actually done, what Archie has done; I don't want to not use his last name. There is no reason why we can't accept this kind of thing, why we have to introduce it in a different way, tabling it instead of tabling a petition.

The fact of the matter is that people are signing that petition for a reason. They are completely outraged by the fact that yet again we're going to be hit with more Nova Scotia Power increases. Why wouldn't they be outraged? The fact of the matter is that this has gone on for over a decade. There is no reason why it needs to continue, except that the government doesn't want to stand down on that. Nova Scotia Power has raised its rates seven times in the last 10 years, and Mr. Stewart, on his petition - people have been writing messages on there.

They've written messages saying everything from the rates are ridiculous to claims that people are going to starve to pay their bills. We know that, because we're already hearing it in our constituency offices. We know that, because we get the calls, we get the e-mails, we see constituents who come in and say, what am I going to do now? I can't get any more assistance.

It's important that this government pays attention to this petition. It's important that the government pays attention to the Kids Not Cuts petition, too, but that's probably not going to happen. Really, if you look at the United Kingdom, they accept on-line petitions. Scotland, Quebec - this is not a new idea, I know the government is loathe to take new ideas, but it's not a new idea. There's no reason that we can't accept it. There could be some controls around what's accepted, but I urge the government to rethink their position on this and accept the petition and move to lower the rates.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Opposition House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, that concludes the Official Opposition's business for the day. I will now call upon the Government House Leader to give us the hours and order of business for tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, the hours for tomorrow will be 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. After the daily routine, we will be doing Public Bills for Third Reading, and then we'll see what happens after that.

Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now rise.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is to adjourn.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

[The House rose at 5:59 p.m.]

NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3)**RESOLUTION NO. 1296**

By: Mr. Allan MacMaster (Inverness)

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

Whereas seniors are valued people in our communities; and

Whereas the new Inverary Manor has been expanded from 60 beds to 71 beds, all within private rooms, with privates baths; and

Whereas the manor will share services with the Inverness Consolidated Memorial Hospital to continue the tradition of special care for our seniors in Inverness County;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly acknowledge the efforts of the board of directors of the County of Inverness Municipal Housing Corporation, and the management and staff of the Inverary Manor for making this project successful, and wish residents and staff many happy and comfortable years ahead in their new home.

RESOLUTION NO. 1297

By: Mr. Chuck Porter (Hants West)

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

Whereas the Nova Scotia Cheerleading Club Provincials were held at Exhibition Park in Halifax on May 5 and 6, 2012; and

Whereas the ICE All Stars Senior Cheer Team consists of Kaitlin Currie, Lynsey Currie, Michaela Atkinson, Stephanie Boone, Shaylena Boyce, Vicki Brown, A.J. Whitehead, Jenny Hatt, Meagan Laffin, Melissa Laffin, Lauren MacDougall, Brandi Macumber, Nick Woodman, Hailey Negus, Olivia Parker, Candace Kimball, Braedon Pinch, Taylor Power-Routledge, Cassandra Shanks, Dylan Landry, Drew Slaunwhite, Janelle Sparks, Shaylene Vouligny, Emily Walker, Shanna Butt, Hillary Cameron, Maria Smith, TeeAnnah Jennex, Ali McCulloch and Meredith MacLean; and

Whereas the Senior Team gave an excellent performance of skills and abilities and received 1st place in level 4 during the provincial competition;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate the ICE All Stars Senior Team on their determination and dedication and wish them continued success in future competitions.

RESOLUTION NO. 1298

By: Mr. Chuck Porter (Hants West)

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

Whereas the Nova Scotia Cheerleading Club Provincials were held at Exhibition Park in Halifax on May 5 and 6, 2012; and

Whereas the ICE All Stars Youth 1 Cheer Team consists of MacKenna Clarke, Maya Cochrane, Megan Condon, Julia Conohan, Trinity Cormier, Baylie Fletcher, Julia Hoogerwerf, Zoey Lee, Sydney Lowe, Neila MacDoanld, Emma Oakley, Haley O'Leary, Livvy Postma, Carlee Rick, Hannah Sabean, Jahmelia Sampson, Brooklyn Swinamer, Leah Hartman, Emily Gardiner and Gabbriella Strickey; and

Whereas the Youth 1 Tam gave an excellent performance of skills and abilities and received 3rd place during the competition;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly congratulate the ICE All Stars Youth 1 Team on their determination and dedication and wish them continued success in future competitions.

RESOLUTION NO. 1299

By: Mr. Chuck Porter (Hants West)

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

Whereas the Nova Scotia Cheerleading Club Provincials were held at Exhibition Park in Halifax on May 5 and 6, 2012; and

Whereas the ICE All Stars Youth 2 Cheer Team consists of Haley O'Leary, Livvy Postma, Hannah Sabean, Alexis Blair, Robyn Blanchard, Abigail Dixon, Braylynn MacDow, Hailee MacInnis, Abby Condon, Taylor O'Leary, Kayley Shanks, Emma Burgess, Alexis Harvey, Marissa Macumber, Curran Mullins, Melissa Sherman and Jacoba Benedict; and

Whereas the Youth 2 team gave an excellent performance of skills and abilities and placed 1st during the competition;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly congratulate the ICE All Stars Youth 2 Team on their determination and dedication and wish them continued success in future competitions.

RESOLUTION NO. 1300

By: Mr. Chuck Porter (Hants West)

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

Whereas the Nova Scotia Cheerleading Club Provincials were held at Exhibition Park in Halifax on May 5 and 6, 2012; and

Whereas the ICE All Stars Junior Cheer Team consists of Alexis Blair, Robyn Blanchard, Abigail Dixon, Braylynn MacDow, Hailee MacInnis, Abby Condon, Taylor O’Leary, Kayley Shanks, Miranda Brown, Laura Cooke Benedict, Hannah Gates, Alyssa Harvey, TeeAnnah Jennex, Jessica MacDow, Emma McCarthy, Ali McCulloch, Meredith MacLean, Madison Reed, Alyssa Rogers, MacKenzie Steeves and Monica Barkhouse; and

Whereas the Junior Team gave an excellent performance of skills and abilities and placed 3rd during the competition;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly congratulate the ICE All Stars Junior Team on their determination and dedication and wish them continued success in future competitions.

RESOLUTION NO. 1301

By: Hon. Christopher d’Entremont (Argyle)

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

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

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

Whereas on April 26th, 2012, a very special occasion took place when Jean Marie Cunningham and Jeremie DeViller welcomed their son into the world;

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

RESOLUTION NO. 1302

By: Hon. Christopher d'Entremont (Argyle)

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

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

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

Whereas on April 30th, 2012, a very special occasion took place when Kim and Todd Pothier welcomed their daughter into the world;

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

RESOLUTION NO. 1303

By: Ms. Pam Birdsall (Lunenburg)

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

Whereas May is Eyeglass Recycling Month and the Mahone Bay Area Lions Club is collecting old prescription eyeglasses and sunglasses as part of a unique recycling program throughout the United States and Canada; and

Whereas eye exams and eyeglasses can be prohibitively expensive in developing countries, and this program sees glasses collected and distributed to developing countries where eye care is often unaffordable and inaccessible; and

Whereas Mahone Bay Area Lions Club President, Cathie Now, is encouraging everyone to donate their old prescription eyeglasses, which will be shipped to Calgary for cleaning and categorization before being distributed internationally, by placing old glasses in specially marked Lions Recycle for Sight boxes;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly commend the Mahone Bay Area Lions Club for their continued participation in this important program, Lions Recycle for Sight.

RESOLUTION NO. 1304

By: Ms. Pam Birdsall (Lunenburg)

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

Whereas Simone Chia-Kangata, owner of Tummy to Mummy Maternity and Baby Shop in Mahone Bay, joined in with local new moms to participate in the Great Cloth Diaper Change in an attempt to break the Guinness World Record; and

Whereas the challenge, which took place on April 21st, saw more than 5,000 mothers and caregivers in nine countries simultaneously change cloth diapers, an event that coincided with Cloth Diaper Week held from April 16th to April 21st; and

Whereas Ms. Chia-Kangata, who wanted to participate to encourage the use of cloth diapers as a way to reduce landfill content and be more environmentally sustainable, also held a cloth diaper clinic at her shop in Mahone Bay to discuss the myths around cloth diapers as well as the benefits of using them;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly commend Simone Chia-Kangata for her environmental approach to cloth diapers and her promotion of and participation in the Great Cloth Diaper Change on April 21st, 2012.

RESOLUTION NO. 1305

By: Ms. Pam Birdsall (Lunenburg)

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

Whereas Pam Brewster of Lunenburg is involved with many volunteer activities, including assisting with Meals on Wheels, helping out at the Daisy, and volunteering at the South Shore Regional Hospital; and

Whereas Ms. Brewster first started volunteering at Lunenburg's Harbour View Haven in 2006 where she always arrives with a smile on her face, and is known for helping out with everything from addressing Christmas cards to serving breakfast, but is probably best known for showing up in costume for St. Patrick's Day to Halloween, and everything in between; and

Whereas Pam Brewster of Lunenburg was recognized for her volunteer work at Harbour View Haven during Provincial Volunteer Week, and her energetic enthusiasm;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly recognize Pam Brewster of Lunenburg for all her volunteer activities within the community but also for the many hats she wears, literally and figuratively, while volunteering at Harbour View Haven Home for Special Care.

RESOLUTION NO. 1306

By: Ms. Pam Birdsall (Lunenburg)

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

Whereas the Mahone Bay Centre and the Town of Mahone Bay's Age Friendly Community Project, and the Mahone Bay Area Seniors Project co-hosted the first Mahone Bay Lifetime Homes Expo on Saturday, May 12th; and

Whereas the expo encourages people to think about the accessibility of their homes and their needs in their homes as they grow older, while providing information on the options they might need to consider, and allowing providers of care and housing to showcase their equipment and services; and

Whereas the Mahone Bay Lifetime Homes Expo featured many exhibitors and service providers, including representatives from South Shore Health and the VON, as well as key note speaker Dr. Don Shiner of Mount Saint Vincent University, a leading authority on seniors' housing in the Maritimes;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly commends the volunteers and organizers of the inaugural Lifetime Home Expo, and recognizes the important community support provided by the Mahone Bay Centre, the Town of Mahone Bay's Age Friendly Communities Project and the Mahone Bay Area Seniors Project.

RESOLUTION NO. 1307

By: Ms. Pam Birdsall (Lunenburg)

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

Whereas the South Shore Genealogical Society started the project Genealogical Sleuths: Youth and Seniors Partnering to Discover their History in October 2011; and

Whereas the project was funded by the Nova Scotia Department of Seniors Positive Aging Fund and will culminate in a conference called Celebrating Family History, to be held at the Lunenburg Community Centre on June 1st and 2nd, 2012; and

Whereas the event will feature displays and discussions by youth and seniors, musical performances from the Ernst Family Singers and the Riverport and Area Community Choir, as well as story tellers, silent auctions and a panel of guest speakers from across Nova Scotia and the Eastern United States;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly commend the South Shore Genealogical Society for sharing this important project that highlights family history and wish them a successful conference on June 1st and 2nd, 2012.

RESOLUTION NO. 1308

By: Hon. Marilyn More (Labour and Advanced Education)

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

Whereas the study of genealogy and family history has become a popular vocation for many residents in Nova Scotia and around the world, especially with the rise and influence of the Internet; and

Whereas the Genealogical Association of Nova Scotia is celebrating its 30th Anniversary in 2012 and continues to excel in its mandate to collect and preserve genealogical material and to promote the study of genealogy and family history in Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Sally King of Dartmouth is keenly interested in her family and local history and she has willingly and consistently volunteered to help out at almost every monthly GANS lecture, ensuring that refreshments are prepared and available to all who attend;

Therefore be it resolved that the House of Assembly congratulate Sally King of Dartmouth for her many years of important and continuing contributions to the Genealogical Association of Nova Scotia and to the genealogical community at large.

RESOLUTION NO. 1309

By: Hon. William Estabrooks (Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal)

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

Whereas the study of genealogy and family history has become a popular vocation for many residents in Nova Scotia and around the world, especially with the rise and influence of the Internet; and

Whereas the Genealogical Association of Nova Scotia is celebrating its 30th Anniversary in 2012 and continues to excel in its mandate to collect and preserve genealogical material and to promote the study of genealogy and family history in Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Alfreda Withrow of Hubley has spent 25 years as a member of the GANS executive, serving as Editor of *The Genealogist* on two occasions, for a total of 11 years;

Therefore be it resolved that the House of Assembly congratulate Alfreda Withrow for her many years of important and continuing contributions to the Genealogical Association of Nova Scotia and the genealogical and historical community throughout Nova Scotia.

RESOLUTION NO. 1310

By: Mr. Leonard Preyra (Halifax Citadel - Sable Island)

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

Whereas the study of genealogy and family history has become a popular vocation for many residents in Nova Scotia and around the world, especially with the rise and influence of the Internet; and

Whereas the Genealogical Association of Nova Scotia is celebrating its 30th Anniversary in 2012 and continues to excel in its mandate to collect and preserve genealogical material and to promote the study of genealogy and family history in Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Lloyd Melanson has been the Librarian at the Atlantic School of Theology for many years where he has volunteered to assist the GANS in many ways over the years, particularly as a meticulous proofreader for *The Genealogist*;

Therefore be it resolved that the House of Assembly congratulate Lloyd Melanson for his many years of important and continuing contributions to the Genealogical Association of Nova Scotia and the genealogical and historical community throughout Nova Scotia.

RESOLUTION NO. 1311

By: Hon. Maureen MacDonald (Health and Wellness)

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

Whereas the study of genealogy and family history has become a popular vocation for many residents in Nova Scotia and around the world, especially with the rise and influence of the Internet; and

Whereas the Genealogical Association of Nova Scotia is celebrating its 30th Anniversary in 2012 and continues to excel in its mandate to collect and preserve genealogical material and to promote the study of genealogy and family history in Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Leland Harvie has held several executive offices for GANS, including editor of *The Genealogist*, the association's much-applauded quarterly magazine;

Therefore be it resolved that the House of Assembly congratulate Leland Harvie, former editor of *The Genealogist* for his important and continuing contributions to the Genealogical Association of Nova Scotia and the genealogical community throughout Nova Scotia.

RESOLUTION NO. 1312

By: Hon. Maureen MacDonald (Health and Wellness)

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

Whereas the study of genealogy and family history has become a popular vocation for many residents in Nova Scotia and around the world, especially with the rise and influence of the Internet; and

Whereas the Genealogical Association of Nova Scotia is celebrating its 30th Anniversary in 2012 and continues to excel in its mandate to collect and preserve genealogical material and to promote the study of genealogy and family history in Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Roy Scott Taylor, former president of GANS, was instrumental in establishing the present office which GANS occupies on the corner of Stanley and Isleville Streets in Halifax;

Therefore be it resolved that the House of Assembly congratulate Roy Scott Taylor, former President of the Genealogical Association of Nova Scotia, for his important and continuing contributions to the Genealogical Association of Nova Scotia and the genealogical community throughout Nova Scotia.

RESOLUTION NO. 1313

By: Hon. Christopher d'Entremont (Argyle)

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

Whereas National Volunteer Week was from April 15th to April 21st, with this year's theme, "Volunteers: Passion, Action, Impact"; and

Whereas on Friday, April 20th, the Club des Audacieux in Quinan hosted the 30th annual volunteer banquet for the Municipality of Argyle; and

Whereas among the 21 volunteers who were honoured was Suzanne Spinney of Argyle, who was recognized for her devotion to so many organizations in and around her community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Suzanne Spinney on being honoured by the Municipality of Argyle, thank her and all volunteers for their dedication to others, and wish her continued success in all her endeavours.

RESOLUTION NO. 1314

By: Hon. Christopher d'Entremont (Argyle)

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

Whereas National Volunteer Week was from April 15th to April 21st, with this year's theme, "Volunteers: Passion, Action, Impact"; and

Whereas on Friday, April 20th, the Club des Audacieux in Quinan hosted the 30th annual volunteer banquet for the Municipality of Argyle; and

Whereas among the 21 volunteers who were honoured was Roland Bourque of Tusket, who was recognized for his devotion to so many organizations in and around his community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Roland Bourque on being honoured by the Municipality of Argyle, thank him and all volunteers for their dedication to others, and wish him continued success in all his endeavours.

RESOLUTION NO. 1315

By: Hon. Christopher d'Entremont (Argyle)

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

Whereas National Volunteer Week was from April 15th to April 21st, with this year's theme, "Volunteers: Passion, Action, Impact"; and

Whereas on Friday, April 20th, the Club des Audacieux in Quinan hosted the 30th annual volunteer banquet for the Municipality of Argyle; and

Whereas among the 21 volunteers who were honoured was Renette d'Entremont of Lower West Pubnico, who was recognized for her devotion to so many organizations in and around her community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Renette d'Entremont on being honoured by the Municipality of Argyle, thank her and all volunteers for their dedication to others, and wish her continued success in all her endeavours.

RESOLUTION NO. 1316

By: Hon. Christopher d'Entremont (Argyle)

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

Whereas National Volunteer Week was from April 15th to April 21st, with this year's theme, "Volunteers: Passion, Action, Impact"; and

Whereas on Friday, April 20th, the Club des Audacieux in Quinan hosted the 30th annual volunteer banquet for the Municipality of Argyle; and

Whereas among the 21 volunteers who were honoured was Raymond Doucette of Wedgeport, who was recognized for his devotion to so many organizations in and around his community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Raymond Doucette on being honoured by the Municipality of Argyle, thank him and all volunteers for their dedication to others, and wish him continued success in all his endeavours.

RESOLUTION NO. 1317

By: Hon. Christopher d'Entremont (Argyle)

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

Whereas National Volunteer Week was from April 15th to April 21st, with this year's theme, "Volunteers: Passion, Action, Impact"; and

Whereas on Friday, April 20th, the Club des Audacieux in Quinan hosted the 30th annual volunteer banquet for the Municipality of Argyle; and

Whereas among the 21 volunteers who were honoured was Paul Muise of Amirault's Hill, who was recognized for his devotion to so many organizations in and around his community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Paul Muise on being honoured by the Municipality of Argyle, thank him and all volunteers for their dedication to others, and wish him continued success in all his endeavours.

RESOLUTION NO. 1318

By: Hon. Christopher d'Entremont (Argyle)

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

Whereas National Volunteer Week was from April 15th to April 21st, with this year's theme, "Volunteers: Passion, Action, Impact"; and

Whereas on Friday, April 20th, the Club des Audacieux in Quinan hosted the 30th annual volunteer banquet for the Municipality of Argyle; and

Whereas among the 21 volunteers who were honoured was Odette Amirault of Lower West Pubnico, who was recognized for her devotion to so many organizations in and around her community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Odette Amirault on being honoured by the Municipality of Argyle, thank her and all volunteers for their dedication to others, and wish her continued success in all her endeavours.

RESOLUTION NO. 1319

By: Hon. Christopher d'Entremont (Argyle)

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

Whereas National Volunteer Week was from April 15th to April 21st, with this year's theme, "Volunteers: Passion, Action, Impact"; and

Whereas on Friday, April 20th, the Club des Audacieux in Quinan hosted the 30th annual volunteer banquet for the Municipality of Argyle; and

Whereas among the 21 volunteers who were honoured was Nettie Doucette of Springhaven, who was recognized for her devotion to so many organizations in and around her community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Nettie Doucette on being honoured by the Municipality of Argyle, thank her and all volunteers for their dedication to others, and wish her continued success in all her endeavours.

RESOLUTION NO. 1320

By: Hon. Christopher d'Entremont (Argyle)

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

Whereas National Volunteer Week was from April 15th to April 21st, with this year's theme, "Volunteers: Passion, Action, Impact"; and

Whereas on Friday, April 20th, the Club des Audacieux in Quinan hosted the 30th annual volunteer banquet for the Municipality of Argyle; and

Whereas among the 21 volunteers who were honoured was Neil Blanchard of Springhaven, who was recognized for his devotion to so many organizations in and around his community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Neil Blanchard on being honoured by the Municipality of Argyle, thank him and all volunteers for their dedication to others, and wish him continued success in all his endeavours.

RESOLUTION NO. 1321

By: Hon. Christopher d'Entremont (Argyle)

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

Whereas National Volunteer Week was from April 15th to April 21st, with this year's theme, "Volunteers: Passion, Action, Impact"; and

Whereas on Friday, April 20th, the Club des Audacieux in Quinan hosted the 30th annual volunteer banquet for the Municipality of Argyle; and

Whereas among the 21 volunteers who were honoured was Mona Doucette of Tuskent, who was recognized for her devotion to so many organizations in and around her community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Mona Doucette on being honoured by the Municipality of Argyle, thank her and all volunteers for their dedication to others, and wish her continued success in all her endeavours.

RESOLUTION NO. 1322

By: Hon. Christopher d'Entremont (Argyle)

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

Whereas National Volunteer Week was from April 15th to April 21st, with this year's theme, "Volunteers: Passion, Action, Impact"; and

Whereas on Friday, April 20th, the Club des Audacieux in Quinan hosted the 30th annual volunteer banquet for the Municipality of Argyle; and

Whereas among the 21 volunteers who were honoured was Marlene Goodwin of East Pubnico, who was recognized for her devotion to so many organizations in and around her community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Marlene Goodwin on being honoured by the Municipality of Argyle, thank her and all volunteers for their dedication to others, and wish her continued success in all her endeavours.

RESOLUTION NO. 1323

By: Hon. Christopher d'Entremont (Argyle)

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

Whereas National Volunteer Week was from April 15th to April 21st, with this year's theme, "Volunteers: Passion, Action, Impact"; and

Whereas on Friday, April 20th, the Club des Audacieux in Quinan hosted the 30th annual volunteer banquet for the Municipality of Argyle; and

Whereas among the 21 volunteers who were honoured was Justine White, of West Pubnico, a youth volunteer representing École secondaire de Par-en-Bas, who was recognized for her devotion to so many organizations in and around her community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Justine White on being honoured by the Municipality of Argyle, thank her and all volunteers for their dedication to others, and wish her continued success in all her endeavours.

RESOLUTION NO. 1324

By: Hon. Christopher d'Entremont (Argyle)

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

Whereas National Volunteer Week was from April 15th to April 21st, with this year's theme, "Volunteers: Passion, Action, Impact"; and

Whereas on Friday, April 20th, the Club des Audacieux in Quinan hosted the 30th annual volunteer banquet for the Municipality of Argyle; and

Whereas among the 21 volunteers who were honoured was Jane Doucette, of Wedgeport, who was recognized for her devotion to so many organizations in and around her community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Jane Doucette on being honoured by the Municipality of Argyle, thank her and all volunteers for their dedication to others, and wish her continued success in all her endeavours.

RESOLUTION NO. 1325

By: Hon. Christopher d'Entremont (Argyle)

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

Whereas National Volunteer Week was from April 15th to April 21st, with this year's theme, "Volunteers: Passion, Action, Impact"; and

Whereas on Friday, April 20th, the Club des Audacieux in Quinan hosted the 30th annual volunteer banquet for the Municipality of Argyle; and

Whereas among the 21 volunteers who were honoured was George Goodwin, of Argyle, who was recognized for his devotion to so many organizations in and around his community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate George Goodwin on being honoured by the Municipality of Argyle, thank him and all volunteers for their dedication to others, and wish him continued success in all his endeavours.

RESOLUTION NO. 1326

By: Hon. Christopher d'Entremont (Argyle)

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

Whereas National Volunteer Week was from April 15th to April 21st, with this year's theme, "Volunteers: Passion, Action, Impact"; and

Whereas on Friday, April 20th, the Club des Audacieux in Quinan hosted the 30th annual volunteer banquet for the Municipality of Argyle; and

Whereas among the 21 volunteers who were honoured was Donnie Jacquard, of Lower Wedgeport, who was recognized for his devotion to so many organizations in and around his community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Donnie Jacquard on being honoured by the Municipality of Argyle, thank him and all volunteers for their dedication to others, and wish him continued success in all his endeavours.

RESOLUTION NO. 1327

By: Hon. Christopher d'Entremont (Argyle)

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

Whereas National Volunteer Week was from April 15th to April 21st, with this year's theme, "Volunteers: Passion, Action, Impact"; and

Whereas on Friday, April 20th, the Club des Audacieux in Quinan hosted the 30th annual volunteer banquet for the Municipality of Argyle; and

Whereas among the 21 volunteers who were honoured was Dianne d'Eon, of West Pubinco, who was recognized for her devotion to so many organizations in and around her community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Dianne d'Eon on being honoured by the Municipality of Argyle, thank her and all volunteers for their dedication to others, and wish her continued success in all her endeavours.

RESOLUTION NO. 1328

By: Hon. Christopher d'Entremont (Argyle)

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

Whereas National Volunteer Week was from April 15th to April 21st, with this year's theme, "Volunteers: Passion, Action, Impact"; and

Whereas on Friday, April 20th, the Club des Audacieux in Quinan hosted the 30th annual volunteer banquet for the Municipality of Argyle; and

Whereas among the 21 volunteers who were honoured was Darren Nickerson, of East Pubnico, who was recognized for his devotion to so many organizations in and around his community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Darren Nickerson on being honoured by the Municipality of Argyle, thank him and all volunteers for their dedication to others, and wish him continued success in all his endeavours.

RESOLUTION NO. 1329

By: Hon. Christopher d'Entremont (Argyle)

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

Whereas National Volunteer Week was from April 15th to April 21st, with this year's theme, "Volunteers: Passion, Action, Impact"; and

Whereas on Friday, April 20th, the Club des Audacieux in Quinan hosted the 30th annual volunteer banquet for the Municipality of Argyle; and

Whereas among the 21 volunteers who were honoured was Brain Surette, of Sluice Point, who was recognized for his devotion to so many organizations in and around his community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Brain Surette on being honoured by the Municipality of Argyle, thank him and all volunteers for their dedication to others, and wish him continued success in all his endeavours.

RESOLUTION NO. 1330

By: Hon. Christopher d'Entremont (Argyle)

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

Whereas National Volunteer Week was from April 15th to April 21st, with this year's theme, "Volunteers: Passion, Action, Impact"; and

Whereas on Friday, April 20th, the Club des Audacieux in Quinan hosted the 30th annual volunteer banquet for the Municipality of Argyle; and

Whereas among the 21 volunteers who were honoured was Betty Cottreau, of Wedgeport, who was recognized for her devotion to so many organizations in and around her community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Betty Cottreau on being honoured by the Municipality of Argyle, thank her and all volunteers for their dedication to others, and wish her continued success in all her endeavours.

RESOLUTION NO. 1331

By: Hon. Christopher d'Entremont (Argyle)

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

Whereas National Volunteer Week was from April 15th to April 21st, with this year's theme, "Volunteers: Passion, Action, Impact"; and

Whereas on Friday, April 20th, the Club des Audacieux in Quinan hosted the 30th annual volunteer banquet for the Municipality of Argyle; and

Whereas among the 21 volunteers who were honoured was Ben Scott, a youth volunteer representing Drumlin Heights Consolidated School, who was recognized for his devotion to so many organizations in and around his community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Ben Scott on being honoured by the Municipality of Argyle, thank him and all volunteers for their dedication to others, and wish him continued success in all his endeavours.

RESOLUTION NO. 1332

By: Hon. Christopher d'Entremont (Argyle)

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

Whereas National Volunteer Week was from April 15th to April 21st, with this year's theme, "Volunteers: Passion, Action, Impact"; and

Whereas on Friday, April 20th, the Club des Audacieux in Quinan hosted the 30th annual volunteer banquet for the Municipality of Argyle; and

Whereas among the 21 volunteers who were honoured was Adeline d'Entremont, of West Pubnico, who was recognized for her devotion to so many organizations in and around her community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Adeline d'Entremont on being honoured by the Municipality of Argyle, thank her and all volunteers for their dedication to others, and wish her continued success in all her endeavours.

RESOLUTION NO. 1333

By: Mr. Andrew Younger (Dartmouth East)

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

Whereas the Main Street Business Improvement District Association was created in July 2008 to provide resources for local business members, networking opportunities, and to assist with the revitalization of Dartmouth's Main Street area; and

Whereas Bill Mills came out of retirement to assume the role of inaugural executive director of the Main Street Business Improvement District; and

Whereas on April 3, 2012, Jim Knox, President of the Main Street BID, announced the retirement of Bill Mills from the role of Executive Director;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly thank Mr. Bill Mills for his dedication and the birth of the Main Street Business Association, and thank him for setting it on a path for future success.

RESOLUTION NO. 1334

By: Ms. Diana Whalen (Halifax Clayton Park)

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

Whereas on May 2, 2012, the Halifax Mainland North Volunteer Recognition Committee held their annual Community Champion Awards dinner to recognize

outstanding volunteers who consistently dedicate their time and talents to improving the lives of others; and

Whereas Ron Hirtle was recognized at the dinner with the presentation of an award for his dedicated service to Fairview United Church, where he organizes fundraisers, leads the youth group, and encourages youth to participate in activities such as the Sunday suppers at St. Andrew's Church that help meet the needs of the greater community; and

Whereas Ron Hirtle has also been active with the Halifax Kinsmen Club, where he served in many roles, including president, and has helped Bosom Buddies and Pals fundraise for breast cancer research and has been a volunteer for the Heart and Stroke Foundation, Feed Nova Scotia, and Bryony House;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House congratulate Ron Hirtle on receiving a 2012 Community Champion Award for his outstanding contributions to his church and community and wish him continued success in all his future endeavours.

RESOLUTION NO. 1335

By: Ms. Diana Whalen (Halifax Clayton Park)

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

Whereas sisters Jill and Kelly Whittleton have been involved in Nova Scotia cheerleading since their time at Fairview Elementary School and they have volunteered as coaches with the local cheerleading club, Halifax Cheer Elite, since the club opened in 2003; and

Whereas Jill and Kelly act as key role models within the cheerleading community and through their volunteer work have helped young athletes overcome many obstacles and taught them the values of teamwork, equality, fairness, and responsibility, while raising awareness about the growth of cheerleading as a sport; and

Whereas Jill and Kelly helped lead three teams to become national champions for their age groups in 2011-2012 and followed this by coaching four separate teams to become NS provincial champions and recently helped athletes fundraise for a trip to the United National Championship in Florida;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House congratulate Jill Whittleton and Kelly Whittleton for their outstanding contributions to Halifax Cheer Elite and the sport of cheerleading in Nova Scotia and wish them continuing success in all their future endeavours.

RESOLUTION NO. 1336

By: Ms. Diana Whalen (Halifax Clayton Park)

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

Whereas Todd Beal has volunteered for over a decade with the Clayton Park Cubs, Beavers, and Scouts and has been a wonderful example of a parent and community member who gives back through volunteering to make life better for others; and

Whereas in 2003, as a natural extension to his volunteer activities with the Halifax North West Trails Association, Todd discovered geocaching, which is an outdoor treasure hunting game that uses GPS devices in an outdoor hide-and-seek activity that is a great activity for young people and families; and

Whereas in 2006, Todd Beal joined the board of the Atlantic Canada Geocaching Association and began teaching the joys of geocaching to a variety of local groups, including Brownies, Girl Guides, Cubs, and Scouts;

Therefore be it resolved that members of this House congratulate Todd Beal for receiving a 2012 Community Champion Award on May 2, 2012, from the Halifax Mainland North Volunteer Recognition Committee for his significant contributions to his community and wish him continued success with his volunteer work in the future.