



DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Gordon Gosse

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House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 2, 2012

Sixty-first General Assembly

Fourth Session

9:00 A.M.

SPEAKER

Hon. Gordon Gosse

DEPUTY SPEAKERS

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

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

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

MR. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to table a petition with the operative clause:

“ . . . your petitioners call upon the Nova Scotia House of Assembly to use its powers over the Board of Commissioners of Public Utilities, the Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board . . . to deny any General Rate Application presented by NSPI requesting a rate increase in 2013, 2014 and 2015.”

There are 101 signatures here and I have affixed my signature to this.

MR. SPEAKER: The petition is tabled.

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

**Bill No. 113 - Entitled an Act Respecting Voluntary Retirement Savings Plans
(Ms. Diana Whalen)**

**Bill No. 114 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 9 of the Acts of 2002. The
Interjurisdictional Support Orders Act. (Hon. Ross Landry)**

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

NOTICES OF MOTION

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

RESOLUTION NO. 1675

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

Whereas on Saturday, November 3, 2012, athletes, teams, and valuable builders in the development of sport will be ceremoniously inducted into the Nova Scotia Sport Hall of Fame; and

Whereas Jack Graham, a native of Antigonish who now makes Halifax his home, will be inducted for his invaluable contributions in the development of tennis, not only in Nova Scotia but nationally and internationally; and

Whereas Jack has served as president of the Nova Scotia Tennis Association and chair of Tennis Canada, became the first Canadian to be elected to the International Tennis Federation Board, and as well served as a director for the International Tennis Hall of Fame located in Newport, Rhode Island;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly congratulate Jack Graham on his most deserving induction into the Nova Scotia Sport Hall of Fame, and extend our appreciation for his integral role in the encouragement and development of a new generation of tennis players both in Nova Scotia and throughout the world.

Mr. Speaker, before I ask for waiver, I know there are many communities that want to claim Mr. Graham, but we're just so grateful that he has been such a great part of our family on this side of the House.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party.

RESOLUTION NO. 1676

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

Whereas November 1st marked the first day of Holocaust Education Week; and

Whereas this is a time for Nova Scotians to remember the more than six million victims of the Holocaust and learn lessons from one of the darkest times in global history; and

Whereas we must honour the survivors and use this time to teach future generations the universal right to dignity, respect, and equality that is afforded to all humanity;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House reflect on the aftermath of the Holocaust and acknowledge the importance of educating our young people about these horrific events so that they may never be repeated.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

RESOLUTION NO. 1677

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

Whereas on Saturday, November 3, 2012, athletes, teams, and valuable builders in the development of sport will be ceremoniously inducted into the Nova Scotia Sport Hall of Fame; and

Whereas the pride of Inglewood and Bridgetown, Nova Scotia, the late Howard Jackson will be inducted for his invaluable contributions as coach and official in the sport of volleyball; and

Whereas as an accomplished track and field athlete himself, accomplishments which saw him inducted into the Bridgetown Area Sports Hall of Fame at its inaugural induction ceremony in 2010, the late Howard Jackson will be honoured tomorrow evening for his significant contributions to the sport of volleyball as an official coach and an educator at both the national and local levels;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly acknowledge the efforts of the late Howard Jackson for the instrumental role he played in the development of sport, the sport of volleyball in our province and country, and extend our appreciation to his family for their support of a tremendous athlete, sport, and a sports leader.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Victoria-The Lakes.

RESOLUTION NO. 1678

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

Whereas at the height of the depression in 1937, golf course architect Stanley Thompson was hired to construct the Highland Links Golf Course in Ingonish, which was built by the hard work of 400 Ingonish residents; and

Whereas the Highland Links Stanley Thompson Historical Society set a goal to have a life-size bronze statue that was unveiled on Sunday, September 16th, at the Highland Links; and

Whereas Victoria County set aside September 16th as Stanley Thompson Day to commemorate and pay tribute to the people of Ingonish who built and contributed to the construction of the Highland Links;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly thank Victoria County for dedicating September 16th as Stanley Thompson Day, and the Stanley Thompson Historical Society for its recognition of the community.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Preston.

RESOLUTION NO. 1679

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

Whereas Steve Giles was introduced to paddling at a very young age, joining the Orenda Canoe Club in Lake Echo; and

Whereas he won countless medals around the world, including a bronze in the C-1 1,000 metre at the 2000 Olympics in Sydney, Australia, and competed four times as an Olympian; and

Whereas he has been honoured by being inducted into the Nova Scotia Sport Hall of Fame;

Therefore be it resolved that members of this House join me in congratulating Steve Giles for his many accomplishments as he represented Nova Scotia and Canada around the world.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Cape Breton West.

RESOLUTION NO. 1680

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

Whereas Gowrie Memorial School has recently renamed their library in honour of Jane and Ron Armstrong; and

Whereas Jane and Ron Armstrong, a couple from Guelph, Ontario, have donated more than 1,300 books over the past 12 years to the library at Gowrie Memorial School; and

Whereas Jane and Ron visited Cape Breton 12 years ago, staying at a local bed and breakfast, which was owned by a teacher at Gowrie Memorial, where they learned about the state of the Gowrie school library;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly thank Jane and Ron Armstrong for their exceptional generosity to Gowrie Memorial School, and congratulate them on the newly named Armstrong Library.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Colchester North.

RESOLUTION NO. 1681

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

Whereas Royal Canadian Air Cadets, a Canadian National Youth Program for persons aged 12 to 18 years, was established to train young men for duties during World War II but now focuses on citizenship, leadership, physical fitness, general aviation, and stimulating an interest in the activities of the Canadian Forces in both young men and young women; and

Whereas there are 456 squadrons located across the country, with an approximate enrolment of 23,000 Air Cadets; and

Whereas 595 Phoenix Squadron of the Royal Canadian Air Cadets held their 15th Annual Ceremonial Review in Tatamagouche, Colchester North;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Leading Air Cadet Josephine Martell for receiving the Best First Year Cadet Award at her squadron's annual Ceremonial Review.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Argyle.

RESOLUTION NO. 1682

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: M. le Président, à une date ultérieure, je demanderai l'adoption de la résolution suivante:

Attendu que le sixième tournoi annuel de lob-ball des familles acadiennes de Wedgepost a eu lieu du 2 au 5 août à l'École Wedgeport; et

Attendu que six des huit équipes étaient composées des plus grandes familles acadiennes de Wedgeport, soit Doucet(te), Boudreau, Jacquard, Pothier, LeBlanc, et Cottreau et que les deux autres équipes étaient composées de petites familles comme Atkinson, Corporon, Muise, Surette pour en nommer quelques-unes; et

Attendu que le trophée Coupe Maringouin, qui est parrainé par Del Agency et Assomption Vie, a été remporté par la famille Pothier pour la deuxième année consécutive et qui a nommé Debbie Pothier et Jordan Atkins comme les joueurs précieux du tournoi;

Par conséquent, qu'il soit résolu que tous les membres de cette Assemblée me joignent pour féliciter la famille Pothier sur leur victoire et remercier les commanditaires, les participants, et les familles pour leur participation.

M. le Président, je demande l'adoption de cette résolution sans préavis et sans débat.

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

Whereas the 6th Annual Wedgeport Acadian Families Lob-Ball Tournament was held from August 2nd to August 5th at the Wedgeport School ball field; and

Whereas six of the eight teams were made up of the largest Acadian families from Wedgeport, namely Doucet(te), Boudreau, Jacquard, Pothier, LeBlanc, and Cottreau, and two of the teams were made up of smaller families, such as Atkinson, Corporon, Muise, and Surette; and

Whereas the La Coupe Maringouin trophy is sponsored by Del Agency and Assumption Life and was won by the Pothier family for the second consecutive year, with Debbie Pothier and Jordan Atkins named as the most valuable players of the tournament;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate the Pothier family on their win and thank the sponsor, all the participants, and the families for their participation.

I should have translated “maringouin,” which is a mosquito.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Bedford-Birch Cove.

RESOLUTION NO. 1683

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

Whereas Stanford Patrick Rosenbaum has been described as one of the most distinguished scholars of the 20th Century and was a graduate of the University of Colorado, Rutgers University, and Cornell University, as well as a Fullbright Scholar at Pembroke College, Oxford; and

Whereas Dr. Rosenbaum was particularly known for his research into the Bloomsbury Group, during the course of which he discovered and edited the original

manuscript of Virginia Woolf's seminal feminist text, *A Room of One's Own*, and taught at Indiana University, Brown University, and the University of Toronto, all while publishing many scholarly articles; and

Whereas Dr. Rosenbaum was a Carnegie Foundation Interdisciplinary Fellow and was also awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship, a Connaught Senior Fellowship, and a Killam Research Fellowship, and was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada in 1991, eventually taking early retirement so he and his wife could move here to Nova Scotia to be near their grandchildren;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly send our condolences to the family of Stanford Patrick Rosenbaum: wife Dr. Naomi Black, son Samuel, daughter Susanna Eve, and their families on the passing earlier this year of a man devoted to scholarship and family. He will be missed.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Inverness.

RESOLUTION NO. 1684

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

Whereas the 5th Annual Cheticamp Cape Breton Cancer Patient Fund Walk took place in July in Cheticamp; and

Whereas event organizers Lyne Larade and Darlene Boudreau were very pleased with the phenomenal turnout, with over 30 cancer survivors coming out to lend their support; and

Whereas the over \$20,000 raised at the walk was to help cancer patients with prescriptions, gas, lodging, and wigs;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly acknowledge the dedication of Darlene Boudreau and Lyne Larade in organizing a successful event that will be a support and comfort to so many members of their community in time of need.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Yarmouth.

RESOLUTION NO. 1685

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

Whereas on October 20, 2012, councillors in the Municipality of the District of Yarmouth were elected or acclaimed to their seats; and

Whereas new councillors Steve Paquette and Gerard LeBlanc will be welcomed by incumbents and acclaimed councillors Leland Anthony, Rick Churchill, Trevor Cunningham, John Cunningham and Murray Goodwin; and

Whereas the Yarmouth municipal council was sworn in during a ceremony on Thursday, November 1st with Murray Goodwin elected warden and Steve Paquette acclaimed deputy warden;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate the warden, deputy warden and councillors of the Municipality of the District of Yarmouth, and wish them the very best as they dedicate their time and energy to their communities.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Cape Breton North.

RESOLUTION NO. 1686

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

Whereas after Dave and Donna McKeough were killed in a car accident in June near Millville, an all-star lineup of Cape Breton musicians, singers and bands held a benefit in honour of the memory of the McKeoughs and to raise money for their three children; and

Whereas the sold out event took place at the Membertou Trade and Convention Centre where staff donated the facility and their services to the cause and musicians and industry representatives from across the province donated an array of items for a silent auction; and

Whereas the event was a testament to Dave's influence and popularity in the music community as a music teacher and a guitar player that so many of the area's most talented performers came out to honour him;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly take a moment to remember the McKeoughs and their contribution to the Nova Scotia music industry and thank all those who participated in this successful benefit concert.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Kings West.

RESOLUTION NO. 1687

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

Whereas Barry Corbin has coached, mentored and nurtured young athletes for more than 40 years in the Berwick area; and

Whereas Barry began his coaching career in 1972 by coaching softball teams and went on to soccer and basketball; and

Whereas Barry served as the Nova Scotia School Athletic Federation coordinator for more than 10 years and was inducted into Berwick's Sports Hall of Fame in June 2012;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly recognize and congratulate Barry Corbin for his outstanding contribution to sports in the Annapolis Valley.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Victoria-The Lakes.

RESOLUTION NO. 1688

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

Whereas the Village of Baddeck has been recognized as one of the top 100 investment neighbourhoods across the country by Canadian Real Estate Wealth magazine; and

Whereas over the duration of the research project, an editorial team used a host of statistics and industry analysis to form the 100 neighbourhoods including data on population, median price, capital growth, vacancy rate, crime severity index, infrastructure and proximity to employment centres; and

Whereas in the magazine's top 100 report, it listed Cape Breton as a popular tourist destination that attracts hundreds of thousands of holiday makers every year and said Baddeck was strategically placed to take advantage of the tourism influx;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly encourage investment in Cape Breton and congratulate businesses and residents of the Baddeck Village Commission on their recognition of being one of the top 100 investment communities.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Preston.

RESOLUTION NO. 1689

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

Whereas Margaret Diggs has lived all her life in East Preston and it was there she met and married her husband Robert, and where they raised six daughters and three sons; and

Whereas she was very active in helping to earn a living for her family, worked at various institutions until taking a cooking course and becoming a cook at the East Preston Daycare Centre, and finished her career as a homecare worker; and

Whereas she was also involved in voluntary work throughout her community and devoted much of her time and energy in the Prison Ministry, the Lake Echo Food Bank, East Preston Seniors Club, the Christian Woman's Group, as well as much involvement in her church;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House recognize the contributions that Margaret Diggs has made to her community on behalf of all Nova Scotians.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Argyle.

RESOLUTION NO. 1690

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

Whereas November is Pancreatic Awareness Month; and

Whereas despite being the deadliest form of cancer, the Pancreatic Cancer Association of Canada concludes that Canadians' awareness of this disease is alarmingly low; and

Whereas in November, people raise awareness by hanging purple lights in their yards or businesses;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly thank those who take the time to educate the public about this disease, and encourage all Nova Scotians to be aware of prevention measures and risk factors.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Colchester North.

RESOLUTION NO. 1691

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

Whereas the Royal Canadian Legion provides bursaries at both the branch level and the provincial level to assist students entering or continuing their post-secondary education leading to a recognized degree, diploma, or certificate; and

Whereas need, community involvement, and connection of parent, grandparent, or other family member to the Legion are some of the criteria considered by the bursary committee; and

Whereas Danielle McCully of Great Village, Colchester North, will be attending St. Francis Xavier University currently 2012-13;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly congratulate Danielle McCully for receiving a 2012 Debert Legion bursary, and wish her success as she begins her post-secondary education.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Cape Breton West.

RESOLUTION NO. 1692

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

Whereas Rebecca MacKeigan and her two horses, Comets Enchantment and Robby Bel Justa Dandy, recently competed in the New Brunswick Morgan and Arabian Show; and

Whereas Rebecca MacKeigan is from Albert Bridge, Cape Breton; and

Whereas for a third year in a row, Rebecca has been crowned Champion Junior Exhibitor and Canadian Morgan Horse Youth Challenger winner;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Rebecca MacKeigan on her successful year showing her horses, and wish her all the best in future competitions.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Bedford-Birch Cove.

RESOLUTION NO. 1693

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

Whereas Bedford resident Adam Steeves was with his family near the south side of Point Pleasant Park on September 24, 2012, when he noticed someone almost submerged and not moving in the icy water; and

Whereas Adam Steeves did not hesitate, but waded into the frigid water to secure the fully clothed man who was exhausted, cold and shaking, and pulled him to the rocky shore where he and another rescuer covered him to try to keep him warm; and

Whereas Adam Steeves stayed with the man, attending to him for several minutes until police and an ambulance arrived;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly congratulate Adam Steeves for his immediate assistance to a citizen in danger, thereby possibly saving a man's life.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Inverness.

RESOLUTION NO. 1694

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

Whereas Angus Campbell of Glenora Falls was recently awarded the Arthur Award for small but important acts of kindness by Stewart MacLean of CBC Radio's The Vinyl Cafe; and

Whereas this award recognized the kindness Angus showed 18 years ago when he bought 12-year-old Ambrah MacNeil a complete set of equipment so she could start playing hockey; and

Whereas Ambrah went on to win three provincial championships, played varsity hockey at Dalhousie University, and never forgot the generosity of Mr. Campbell;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Angus for his act of kindness which changed the life of young Ambrah.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Yarmouth.

RESOLUTION NO. 1695

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

Whereas on October 20, 2012, elections were held for mayor and councillors in the Town of Yarmouth; and

Whereas Pam Mood was elected as the new mayor for the town; and

Whereas newly elected councillors Jim MacLeod, Sandy Dennis, Phil Mooney and Madeleine Daues will join incumbents Ken Langille and Daniel MacIsaac on town council;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly congratulate the new mayor and the new returning councillors for the Town of Yarmouth, and wish them every success as they work hard for their community and represent the members of their town with dedication.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Cape Breton North.

RESOLUTION NO. 1696

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

Whereas a healthy lifestyle was the key message promoted by the Canadian Diabetes Association during its 9th annual Going the Distance for Diabetes fundraiser held in North Sydney this summer; and

Whereas 100 people registered, pledged money, and took part in a variety of activities, including cycling, running, jogging, and walking one of the number of distances mapped out by the organizers; and

Whereas Arlene Parsons, coordinator of the Cape Breton branch of the Canadian Diabetes Association, said an active lifestyle can dramatically reduce the chances of onset of type 2 diabetes;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate the Going the Distance organizing team for a fun and successful event that raised thousands of dollars which will help Cape Breton families, as well as go the distance to diabetes research.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Kings West.

RESOLUTION NO. 1697

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

Whereas Al Hale of Berwick started playing sports locally when just a young boy and became a well-known fastball player in the Valley area; and

Whereas Al Hale remained a formidable force in the field well into his middle age and recorded a grand slam homer to help his team win a victory in the Nova Scotia championships in the 1960s; and

Whereas Al Hale also was an excellent hockey player and was always helping fellow teammates whenever he got the chance and remained a quiet leader for many years in the Valley hockey arenas;

Therefore be it resolved that the House of Assembly recognize and congratulate Al Hale of Berwick as an inductee into the Berwick Sports Hall of Fame.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Halifax Clayton Park.

RESOLUTION NO. 1698

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

Whereas Nova Scotians are struggling under the NDP Government and are facing layoffs and job insecurity due to the mismanagement of the economy; and

Whereas the NDP Government seems to be only able to write big cheques to big companies, with \$590 million handed out to six companies alone; and

Whereas in total, these companies laid off over 1,300 Nova Scotians after cashing the cheques handed to them by the Premier;

Therefore be it resolved that the member for Antigonish urge the Premier to rethink his failed model of corporate handouts and work to diversify the provincial economy, and remind him that a strong economy is a diversified economy.

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

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

Is it agreed?

I hear several Noes.

The notice is tabled.

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. CLARRIE MACKINNON: Mr. Speaker, would you please call the order of business, Public Bills for Second Reading.

PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. CLARRIE MACKINNON: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 97.

Bill No. 97 - Fairer Power Rates Act.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Energy.

HON. CHARLIE PARKER: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise here this morning to move Bill No. 97, an Act to Amend Chapter 380 of the Revised Statutes, 1989, the Public Utilities Act, to Ensure Fairer Power Rates. I move that the bill now be read for a second time.

Mr. Speaker, I first announced the intent to make these changes on September 18th when I appeared before the Utility and Review Board on the general rate application hearing and introduced the amendment to the bill in this Legislature last week. These changes will bring greater fairness, predictability and certainty to electricity rates as we continue to move forward with our longer term plan to get us off of expensive, dirty coal and onto more renewable sources of energy.

The changes to the Public Utilities Act will restrict the costs that Nova Scotia Power can recover from ratepayers in a number of areas that are important to Nova Scotians. Mr. Speaker, these are the things that people are telling me that are important to them. They tell me that it's not fair that executives at Nova Scotia Power have had their bonuses and their salaries paid for by ratepayers, for years and years, when their customers are struggling to make ends meet and I agree; it's not appropriate.

Mr. Speaker, it's a matter of fairness, it's a matter of principle. I know I've been on the doorsteps in my riding in Pictou West over the last number of months and I've heard over and over from consumers of power that it's a struggle; it's hard for them to make ends meet and they just don't think it's fair that they also have to pay the executive salaries or executive bonuses. That's why I brought forward changes to cap the ratepayer-funded portion of executive salaries and not allow bonuses and incentives to be recovered from ratepayers. We think that is fair.

Based on the 2012 salary levels, this translates into a saving of more than \$0.5 million for that year. Until last year the practice had been for half the incentives and bonuses to be paid by ratepayers. This practice started under the Liberal Government and continued by successive Progressive Conservative Governments but last year the Utility and Review Board determined, in a settlement agreement, that Emera had to pay the full cost of incentives in bonuses for 2012. So we took action on it in the last hearing and our government intends to ensure that this will never happen again, never be paid on the backs of ratepayers.

Mr. Speaker, this removed more than \$200,000 in extra costs on power bills. The changes proposed to the Public Utilities Act will make that permanent, will make it forever and ever.

Mr. Speaker, these measures are significant and each one is a beneficial impact on ratepayers in this province. They all set the scales in a better balance. In the long term we can get at things like the high price of coal by getting off coal, but in the short term, we can make things fairer by passing this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I'll now outline some of those changes that are in the bill. First of all, cap executive salaries that can be recovered from ratepayers at a level that is comparable to a deputy minister in the Nova Scotia public sector; secondly, not allow executive bonuses to be paid, even in part, by ratepayers - shareholders must fully bear the cost of any bonuses; third, require that Nova Scotia Power follow multi-year rate applications to cut hearing costs, which can reach as high as \$2 million per hearing; fourth, strengthen the Utility and Review Board's authority to order an independent review, to look for savings in years that a rate hearing is not held; and finally, ensure that pending adoption of the current rate application, no additional rate increases can take effect until at least 2015.

So we're introducing these changes for the same reason we removed the 10 per cent provincial tax from electricity, Mr. Speaker, namely to make it easier for families and those on fixed incomes to manage their household budget. That alone saves the average household more than \$700 in electricity bills each year, a measure the Liberals and Progressive Conservatives who sit across from me voted against.

I think we're bringing more fairness, more predictability, and more certainty in electricity rates. Requiring Nova Scotia Power to file multi-year rate applications provides Nova Scotians with more predictability and certainty and will save millions of dollars in hearing costs from being paid by the ratepayers.

Mr. Speaker two points of clarification for the members opposite: multi-year hearings do not mean that Nova Scotia Power can go to the board and seek general rate increases outside of the board or the hearing process; also, the board will continue its job in determining what is reasonable to be charged to ratepayers. That does not and will not change.

Mr. Speaker, Nova Scotians want to know that the utility is operating at the lowest possible cost and whether there are more savings that can be found within that organization. That's what a board-ordered savings review will determine. These changes and other steps we are taking to stabilize electricity prices over the long term, really we are standing up for Nova Scotians. We know the rising cost of electricity is extremely hard on many people. It's why we have put in place a plan to reduce our reliance on coal and develop more renewable sources of energy such as wind, biomass, hydroelectricity, and even tidal.

Our renewable electricity plan establishes strategic goals and objectives for our electricity sector. One of the fundamental objectives is to strengthen our energy security through diversity. The renewable electricity plan seeks to ensure a more secure, a more stable, and more reliable supply of electricity by encouraging the development of different types of cleaner electricity and having that come from across the province and throughout the region.

The price of coal has gone up 75 per cent in the last seven years and that is the main driver, really, behind our electricity rates. Previous governments ignored that fact and we've been left to make up for their inaction. This fact makes ensuring that fairness, predictability, and certainty in electricity rates even more critical to families and others struggling in this province to make ends meet. The rising cost of electricity and our need to transform our energy sector into one that is cleaner, more diverse, and sustainable is really behind all our energy policies. Our plan gets us to where we need to be at the lowest possible cost to ratepayers. The Utility and Review Board will ensure that is the case.

We're taking measures to address the electricity issues that are causing Nova Scotians frustrations and challenges. Permanently removing executive bonuses, capping salaries that can be charged to ratepayers, limiting the number of hearings and ensuring board-ordered savings reviews - those are all changes that bring fairness and more predictability to electricity rates. These are not our first steps; they are part of our larger, stable, secure, and tax-free electricity plan that will ensure Nova Scotians get the lowest, fairest rates over the short term and over the long term.

I also want to remind members that the draft regulations that accompany this bill are available on the Department of Energy Web site for review or for comment. With those comments, I would encourage anyone to submit their thoughts to our Web site and I want to thank you for listening. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Queens on an introduction.

MS. VICKI CONRAD: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to make an introduction this morning. If all members could cast their eyes to the east gallery, joining us today is Cameron Strong, a teacher at North Queens Rural High School. With him are five of his students with the Grade 12 law class, and I'm very pleased they have come all the way

from North Queens to visit with us here today. I'll introduce the students that are with Cameron: Shelby Freeman, if you'd like to stand up; Erin MacArthy; Dominique Mailman; Cody Crouse; and Damon Wamboldt. Thank you so much for joining us and if all members could give the Grade 12 law class a warm welcome. (Applause)

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

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL: I'm pleased to rise to say a few words on Bill No. 97, the Fairer Power Rates Act that was presented by this government. Mr. Speaker, while there are some aspects of this bill that we agree with, it is a far cry from what is needed to rein in Nova Scotia Power. What is disappointing about this piece of legislation is the fact that it was not introduced three years ago, the fact that we have not reined in Nova Scotia Power's thirst for profit, that we have not reined in their ability to hand over hundreds of thousands of dollars to corporate supports, to their executives, and to allow that to continue to happen year after year.

It has been many times that the member for Dartmouth East has raised this issue in this House, talking about not only ensuring that compensation that is made to the executives of Nova Scotia Power is reasonable and fair, not just to the executive but more importantly fair to ratepayers. The member for Dartmouth East has raised the issue of making sure that when this company comes before the public that we have an open and transparent process, that performance value audits should have been done in this company for quite some time.

What I find interesting is now that this government has seen fit to enshrine in legislation what they said for the last three years the Utility and Review Board had the power to do clearly indicates, Mr. Speaker, that they didn't know, clearly indicates they've been asleep while Nova Scotia Power has been running roughshod over ratepayers, having their way. The only reason this bill is before the House today is to quiet down the furor of ratepayers that was taking place in a rate hearing in September. At the last minute the Minister of Energy shows up, he doesn't become an intervener, he shows up at a public hearing, taking time away from ordinary Nova Scotians who get an opportunity to show up and do a public presentation, and he lays out as if he's doing something to protect them.

I want to clarify something that was mentioned in the minister's remarks where he said it was the Utility and Review Board that said that Emera had to pay the compensation of executives. Leading into the last rate hearing, and actually I believe if he goes back and looks at it, because of the outcry by the public it wasn't made part of that by the company itself because they knew that the public had had enough of them paying an exorbitant amount in executive compensation and bonuses.

Mr. Speaker, it's pretty strange; we have a monopoly here that we've allowed for decades - I'll give the minister this, it has gone through successive political Parties - it has been worse, quite frankly, under the NDP but it has gone through successive political Parties. All of us have some role to play in this but what has happened is that we've allowed the compensation package of an executive of a monopoly to be solely based on share price. Nowhere else in the private sector, when you look at a compensation package that includes share price and some other incentives, does that private sector entity not have to worry about its customers, and that's what we have here.

We have a monopoly that has been paying its executive through share price and other incentives that aren't based on customers, aren't based on reliability of the system, not based on performance of the company, it's based on that share price, so the executive, instead of having to worry about whether or not their customers are satisfied with the product they are receiving, only has to focus on the fact that that share price continues to rise. With every increase in that share price the compensation for that executive goes up.

Mr. Speaker, we fully believe in and support the idea of removing bonuses and incentives out of any future rate hearing. As a matter of fact, if you look at the bill that's before this House, Bill No. 45 that was introduced by my colleague for Dartmouth East, it very clearly lays that out and I only wish that the minister had taken and looked at that bill and accepted that bill for all of the good merits that were part of it.

Mr. Speaker, the minister talked about how they are legislating multi-year rate increases and that they are leaving it out as if they're going to prevent Nova Scotia Power from having any future rate increases before 2015. It's simply misleading, it is simply wrong, and he knows that.

Mr. Speaker, Nova Scotia Power will be increasing power bills on January 1, 2014, and they will be increasing power bills on January 1, 2015, in the Province of Nova Scotia. For the government to stand in this House and say they are freezing, they're not going to allow power rate increases to happen for the next two years, is wrong. It is simply wrong. Power rates are going up under this NDP Government. This is nothing more than a way for a government to try to attempt to convince Nova Scotians that they are responding to a very real problem and the real problem is that Nova Scotians are finding it more and more difficult to live under this NDP Government. They're being nicked and dined at every corner.

Many of them are starting to believe that the NDP stands for the nickel and dime party, at every turn we go, and Nova Scotians would have had some more belief in this if this bill had said, we're going to cancel those rate increases of 2014 and 2015 and not allow power rates to increase in the Province of Nova Scotia until a performance value audit is done of this utility to make sure that this company is doing the due diligence that is required by every other private sector entity to find savings within its organization, to

prove to us that they have made all of the same tough decisions that every small business owner that is having to buy power from them has to do.

Mr. Speaker, there has been time after time where it has been proven they have not done that. If the government really wanted to do something for ratepayers in the Province of Nova Scotia, they would have put in place the value for audit of Nova Scotia Power, now, and held off on these rate increases that are going to take place in 2014 and 2015, if that was the case.

Mr. Speaker, if they wanted to do something for Nova Scotia ratepayers, they would have made sure they would have put in place that any profit that's coming out of this utility would have not just been based on equity but would have been based on service to customers who get power outages. We're getting power outages in the Province of Nova Scotia when there are no storms. Everyone recognizes when we have the kind of weather that happened down in the U.S. recently where we're getting hurricanes coming in at a more alarming rate, quite frankly, we're getting flooding on our coasts at a more alarming rate, all through the Eastern Seaboard. We know those things, you can't hold the utility responsible for what's happening there, but you can hold the utility responsible for the fact that they haven't done the due diligence on vegetation management, that on a beautiful summer day power is going out because they've not done the due diligence that's required to make sure that the vegetation in and around our power lines has been looked after.

If you go back to the more recent rate hearings, one of the places where the utility saved money was by reducing the service around vegetation management. They cut billions of dollars out of that service. Mr. Speaker, if you go back and look, not just by the utility but every independent review of power outages in the province, one of the single biggest issues around it is vegetation management, and where does the company go to make its first cut? It was in that service. The government was silent about that. If they want to improve reliability, then make sure that their profit is based on the fact, that of a reliable service, that we end up making sure that this company is making sure that they're doing the work that's required to move us forward.

Mr. Speaker, the other thing that the minister talked a little bit about today was removing the - and I was pleased to hear him say - removing the 10 per cent. He's taking credit for that 25 per cent tax increase on this portion of the HST when it comes to removing it from power bills. I don't hear them standing up taking credit for the 25 per cent tax increase on gasoline and every other consumable that they added the HST increase to. (Applause)

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk a little bit about the efficiency tax that is on every power bill. The minister is right, the government removed the provincial portion of the HST at the time, which was 8 per cent off every power bill in the Province of Nova Scotia - and they campaigned on that and Nova Scotians endorsed it. But what they didn't tell Nova Scotians was that they were going to add the efficiency tax to every power bill in the Province of

Nova Scotia. The 8 per cent tax saves somewhere around \$35 million for ratepayers; the efficiency tax that has been added to power bills is taking \$46 million out of the pockets of Nova Scotians.

Mr. Speaker, what is inherently wrong with this tax is that low-income Nova Scotians, the working poor who, we discovered this week, are going to food banks at an alarming rate under this NDP Government - the working poor are going to food banks at an alarming rate under this NDP Government - have to pay this efficiency tax on their power bill to put in programs that are rebate-based so that wealthy Nova Scotians can apply for these programs, they can do the upgrades to their house to reduce their energy consumption and then we rebate back to them. What we do is we take money out of the pockets of low-income Nova Scotians to put in the pockets of the wealthiest of Nova Scotians. It just doesn't make sense - how does anyone think that is fair?

We believe the efficiency program should be funded, but it should be funded by the shareholders of Nova Scotia Power, and not by low-income Nova Scotians. For the government to suggest that we were opposed to efficiency programs is simply wrong - to quote the Premier: It's simply not true. What it is, Mr. Speaker, we believe those programs should be funded through Nova Scotia Power and their shareholders. When someone walks through my office door looking for support to pay a power bill and they can't pay it and they don't know where to turn - and every MLA experiences it - you're looking for somebody to help them pay their power bill, you go to service clubs, you're looking for people in the community, finding ways and programs in the provincial government that can help them pay the power bill, go to DCS, is there any way we can deal with this?

When you look at the power bill and you see the efficiency tax, a tax that was imposed on them by this NDP Government, in the programs they'll never use, in the programs that members of this House could take advantage of, does that make sense, Mr. Speaker? No, it doesn't, no matter how you look at it.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. I'm having a hard time hearing the member this morning. There's a lot of chatter in the Chamber, and I'd ask the honourable members who want to have that conversation, please take it outside the Chamber.

MR. MCNEIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The efficiency tax that this government has imposed on every Nova Scotian is just simply taking the money out of low-income, hard-working Nova Scotians and putting it into the pockets of well-off Nova Scotians, many of whom could afford to do the home renovations that we're subsidizing on their own. And yet the very people who need that support the most are not getting it, are not being supported in the sense of home renovations, not being supported in the upgrades that are required to reduce their energy consumption - all they are doing is scrambling to find a way to meet the basic daily needs of their family.

What do we do? What does the NDP Government do? In June 2009, prior to the election, they write a letter to the Utility and Review Board saying that the efficiency tax being proposed by the previous Progressive Conservative Government should be paid for by Nova Scotia Power. Remember that being waved around during the election campaign? And then Nova Scotians responded and gave them a mandate, and shortly after that mandate, Mr. Speaker, they changed their mind and they took the efficiency tax that was proposed by the previous Progressive Conservative Government and fell in love with it and put it on every power bill in the Province of Nova Scotia, regardless of the income of that ratepayer, regardless of their ability to pay. Nothing mattered. They were just going to capture that efficiency tax, taking it out of the pockets of low income Nova Scotians and setting it aside so that the wealthiest of us could use it.

Mr. Speaker, I've been criticized by the NDP Government for having this debate about the efficiency tax - some members of the NDP Government, let's be fair - suggesting that we're opposed to efficiency programs. That's wrong. We believe Nova Scotia Power should be paying for those programs but what I find really interesting is the Premier has been criticizing our position about wanting to take the efficiency tax off of low-income, hardworking Nova Scotians who are having trouble meeting their daily needs. He has been critical of us for suggesting that. He has been twisting it around and finding all kinds of ways to manipulate it, but do you know what they did? When the Stern Group just signed a deal that Nova Scotia taxpayers gave them \$155 million, one of the things they did was exempt them from paying the efficiency tax.

So I want you to think about this, Mr. Speaker. We as the taxpayers of Nova Scotia, by this government, sent \$155 million to the Stern Group/Port Hawkesbury paper mill. We're actively involved with the money of Nova Scotian taxpayers, and we turn around and we exempt them from the NDP efficiency tax. At the same time, we are out there making sure that low-income - the working poor, the people who are relying on the food bank at an alarming rate in this province, are paying it. Now, does that make sense? No matter how you look at it, no matter how you justify it, it doesn't. If they believe that the working poor should pay this tax, why don't they believe that the Stern Group should pay this tax? Why is it that there is special treatment for some and not others? Here we go again picking winners and losers.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, families across this province are suffering and power bills keep coming up, coming up, coming up every time you talk to them, and they're feeling pressured by it. Another rate increase coming in 2014, another one coming in 2015. That will make it a 30 per cent increase under this NDP Government, Mr. Speaker, a 30 per cent increase, and our response today is that we're going to legislate, finally. The executive bonuses should be removed from the rate class, which they have been in the last rate hearing, but we're pleased that it's going to be legislated so for future use it won't be there. What we're talking about today is making sure that the power utility won't come back before the URB in 2015.

Well, Mr. Speaker, they had no intention of coming back before 2015 because they just got two rate increases in terms of general rate increases. So that clause that the minister is boasting about has no impact on Nova Scotians - zero. It will mean nothing to them. It will not impact their power bill in any way in terms of helping them. It will only impact it by allowing it to increase by 3 per cent in January and 3 per cent in the following January. But what the minister didn't say in his remarks is that the utility will be before the URB on a number of occasions in the next two years, it just won't be for a general rate increase.

As he notes there is a fuel adjustment mechanism, which is part of that. In the clause - in this bill - there's a phrase in there and some extraordinary circumstances could put them back before the URB, looking for more money from Nova Scotians. So this bill really means nothing when it comes to what is going to happen to power bills over the next few years.

Mr. Speaker, it's our belief that if this minister really wanted to provide relief to Nova Scotian ratepayers, he would remove the efficiency tax off every power bill in the Province of Nova Scotia and send that bill directly to Nova Scotia Power and say, pay up. Take some of the \$100-plus million you've been taking out of our province and shipping all over and investing Maine and St. Lucia, in Northeastern Pipeline - Emera is now recently investing with Algonquin down in New York. Take some of that money and put it back into Nova Scotia and back into Nova Scotians, if he really wanted to do something for ratepayers.

Mr. Speaker, this is an attempt by a government to quiet down the furor that the voters of this province have been sending in their direction because they've been silent on this whole issue. The member for Dartmouth East has asked on numerous occasions for the government, for the Minister of Energy, to appear before rate hearings to defend Nova Scotians and to stand up to the utility. That never happened. He showed up at the most recent hearing, at the public portion of it, made this hastily thrown together document, which has changed a little bit to the bill that we see today, just because he had to try to do something to quiet down the anger Nova Scotians were feeling.

But do you know what? They're not feeling very much comfort from this piece of legislation. While they believe it is great that the executive compensation is taken out of rates and put back where it should be, in Nova Scotia Power, if the shareholders want to pay their executive an exorbitant amount, go ahead, but don't ask the customers to pay for it, just like this NDP Government's efficiency tax should be paid for by those very same shareholders, to provide relief to Nova Scotia customers.

Mr. Speaker, one of the things that this government has been talking about - reining in power bills for the long term - it has been the talk when we had the debate recently about Lower Churchill. Time after time, this government gets up and talks about Lower Churchill providing stability of power rates. We want to know how much that will cost. What is the price tag on that project? We know that the portion in Newfoundland and Labrador has

gone up by 20 per cent and they haven't even started the project. We want to know what it means to the Maritime Link. I guess it's probably a pretty fair guess to suggest it's going to increase, too.

I would think that before the government wholeheartedly supports and endorses that deal, they would understand themselves what that cost is. I think they should be exploring the idea, the concept of connecting Atlantic Canada, but you need to look at that in the context of what it will mean to power bills at the end of the day.

I've been listening with great interest to what's happening in Newfoundland and Labrador. Mr. Speaker, I would suggest to you that in that province this is not a done deal either. Newfoundland and Labrador ratepayers are asking the question, what will this mean to us and what will this mean to power bills and what will this mean to the taxes in Newfoundland and Labrador?

What's concerning for us are two things: this government has no idea what the cost of this Lower Churchill project is and the impact it's going to have on Nova Scotia ratepayers. Do we think they should be looking? Sure they should. We'd encourage them to do that, but at the same time they need to be looking at other options. They need to be looking about whether or not, as the member for Dartmouth East has pointed out a number of times in this House - he's asked the Minister of Energy, have you picked up the phone and called the Province of Quebec? Have you talked to Quebec's utility? Should we be investing in strengthening transmission between New Brunswick and Nova Scotia? Should we be improving that connection? The answer has been, we're going to attach ourselves to what's happening in Newfoundland and Labrador. That is a very short-sighted view on how we're going to provide energy stability in our province.

They should be looking at it. The utility has every right to go over and decide what they're going to do. Emera can enter into any contractual relationship with whoever they want, but before the government endorses that project, before they say that is going to provide energy stability to the Province of Nova Scotia, they should know what it's going to cost.

How do you come up with that term? It's like buying a car and taking it home to your spouse and saying, I just bought us a car, I got a great deal on it. When she or he asks you, how much did you pay, and you say I don't know, I'll find that out tomorrow, what do you think they're going to say? How do you know it's a good deal? How do they know it's a good deal for the ratepayers? There are some pretty basic details that the government should know before they attach themselves to this project.

As they continue down the road, as this debate about Lower Churchill continues down the road in Newfoundland and Labrador and the discussion heats up in the Province of Nova Scotia at the Utility and Review Board, as we begin to get a sense of what the costs associated with this are going to be - as that is all taking place, the Minister of Energy

should be looking at other options. He should be looking at strengthening the transmission between New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, building a corridor that will allow us to purchase power out of Quebec or anywhere else where we can get a good deal on it and flow it into the Province of Nova Scotia.

It's our belief that the minister should be allowing renewable-to-retail in the Province of Nova Scotia to allow competition into a highly-regulated environment. Their own consumer advocate, the one who's been there to represent ratepayers, talked about it at the last hearing, about the need for competitive pressures to rein in this monopoly that we have in Nova Scotia. This is a simple way for the government to do that.

I know that the Minister of Energy should be aware of the fact that the municipal utilities in the Province of Nova Scotia are doing that very thing now. They're looking to arrange for power purchase agreements outside of our province to flow that energy into their utilities. It's a good thing for those utilities. It's a good thing for the people of Antigonish. It's a good thing for the people of Lunenburg. It's a good thing for the people of Berwick. You want to know why? Those customers have cheaper rates than the rest of us. (Applause)

Why would a government or any political Party be opposed to allowing that option to be made available to the rest of Nova Scotians? Because they like higher power rates? What they need to do - if it's good for the people of Antigonish and Lunenburg and Berwick, then it's good for the rest of us. The Utility and Review Board very clearly laid out that those municipalities had the right to do that. What was really refreshing was that they said to the monopoly, not only do these municipal utilities have the right to do that, but you're not going to charge them a stranded asset fee because that is the issue that this utility has been using over the heads of Nova Scotians. We cannot allow some competition in a highly regulated energy market because the monopoly has these stranded assets that we all should be worried about, the very things that half are being phased out by the federal government.

If this government really wanted to do something meaningful in the long-term for rate payers, force Nova Scotia Power to do an accounting of their assets. Force them to be open and transparent and tell us what the true value of those assets will be and what it means in terms of a stranded asset to the people of this province.

Mr. Speaker, that utility can't do that and it won't do it. You want to know why? It is because it gives them the opportunity to fear monger in the province, the very thing that the government has bought into. In the absence of any real substance, in the absence of any real change in the electricity market in the Province of Nova Scotia, they then adopt what has been coming out of Nova Scotia Power, the fear mongering tactics to suggest the sky will fall in. I don't think the people of Berwick think the sky is falling in. I don't think the people of Antigonish think the sky is falling in. I don't think the people of Lunenburg think

the sky is falling in. What they know is their power bills are increasing like the rest of ours and why shouldn't we have that option? Why shouldn't we?

You know they come up with this crazy scenario about what has gone on in Ontario, what has gone on Alberta and what has gone on in California. Mr. Speaker, I would suggest this government start looking at what is going on in Nova Scotia. Ratepayers are being fleeced every time they turn around and this government is allowing it to happen. Stand up to them. Stand up for ratepayers. Protect us.

Mr. Speaker, I heard someone say we are - well a 30 per cent increase under your watch, I wouldn't suggest that people feel that is standing upwards.

Mr. Speaker, I would say allowing Nova Scotia Power to use a stranded asset as an excuse every time they turn around is not standing up for Nova Scotia ratepayers. I would suggest looking at only one option to provide renewable energies in the Province of Nova Scotia, and that one being in Newfoundland and Labrador and not knowing the cost of it, not knowing what it will mean to power bills, is not standing up for Nova Scotia rate payers. If they really want to stand up for Nova Scotia rate payers then allow renewable to retail. Force the Utility to do a real audit of its own operation. Go inside of it. Make sure that they are finding savings internally before they come looking for money out of the pockets of Nova Scotians.

Mr. Speaker, I always liked this example - I've said it in this House and I've said it in other places - when the president of Nova Scotia Power so proudly acknowledged that he reduced his executive team from 12 to eight and how great that was, but when you ask the question, what did that mean to executive compensation, it meant nothing. In other words ratepayers were paying the same amount for four fewer people. That's not doing due diligence. That's not standing up for ratepayers. That's greedy and it's been allowed to happen. Those are the kinds of things that need to be looked at and assessed.

If the government doesn't want to adopt the issue of allowing renewable-to-retail, so be it - we'll do it when we get to government. The very thing they should do is stand up for ratepayers. (Interruptions) Mr. Speaker, I hear some noise over there but I can tell you that when the Liberal Party was last in power, power rates didn't go up 30 per cent. It wasn't the Liberal Party that took away rights from every retiree in this province when it comes to inflation of their pension - but that's a topic for another day.

I want to go back to the very thing - and this is power - if they want to do something for Nova Scotians, go after this utility. But not in a mean-spirited way, in a thoughtful way that forces them to operate like every other public entity, like every other private sector entity. Go inside it, ask them what they are doing - what are the decisions they're making and why are they making them? Is there a better way to deliver the service to the people of our province?

We don't ask that, and when we asked the Premier to do that for the last three years, he kept saying the Utility and Review Board has the right to do that. Well clearly that was wrong, because we're legislating it today, Mr. Speaker. Instead of making it an option for the Utility and Review Board, it should be mandatory that this utility goes under a performance value audit, because we know they're not interested in ratepayers, they are interested in shareholders. That is it, nothing else.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Energy could really do some positive things for the people of our province today: allow competition in a highly regulated market, allow renewable to retail, allow the rest of the province to have the same right that the municipal utilities have, allow the customers of Nova Scotia Power to have the same rights that the customers of the municipal utilities have and maybe we would end up with lower power rates just like they have. Move away from this idea that - we allow this utility to hold over our heads this whole issue of stranded assets, force them to tell us the value of those assets, how they arrived at that value, and what it will mean to ratepayers.

We know, everyone knows, the federal government is legislating some of those assets out of existence. They need to have some understanding of the value of those assets and they need to know how much is there as a stranded asset - tell us, let us understand where you are.

Mr. Speaker, one of the interesting things is the Trenton power plant, in this House there has been lots of issues around the whole issue of fly ash that's been down and around. There's been a huge investment by the utility in Trenton to try to deal with this issue of the fly ash that has been causing some serious problems for those who live near it. One of the questions we've asked is instead of making that kind of investment to try to deal with burning coal there - did you look at maybe converting that to natural gas? It would have provided the province with a better energy mix and it would have dealt with the issue that the residents in and around the Trenton plant are experiencing.

Mr. Speaker, there's a pipeline running through about 10 kilometres away from that power plant taking natural gas into the U.S. - why wouldn't we have looked at that as a possibility to provide some sense and some good energy mix inside the Province of Nova Scotia? I would say to you that the reason for that is probably because the investment to deal with the fly ash will probably give a greater return to the shareholders of Nova Scotia Power. That's why this company needs to be opened up - we need to begin to look inside of this - why are you making the decisions you are making?

This is an opportunity for this government to have a real, meaningful, long-term impact on dealing with the power rates in the Province of Nova Scotia, instead of attaching themselves to a deal that they don't know the price tag of yet and what it will mean to power bills. Let's use some of our own here - let's strengthen the transmission system between New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. Let's interconnect us so that we can go out and access power purchase agreements from Quebec.

Why would you be opposed to buying cheaper energy somewhere else? We know they're going to have to shut down the coal-fired power plants in Nova Scotia. Why wouldn't we be looking at other alternatives? There's only one reason - because the government has bought - hook, line and sinker - Nova Scotia Power's line around Lower Churchill, and it is good for them. It will be good for them because the rate of return will be based on a much higher level of equity in this company.

Mr. Speaker, while there are some things in this bill that are positive for the people of Nova Scotia, the ratepayers of Nova Scotia, there is not a single thing in this bill that will have an impact on power bills today. The compensation that they're referring to is not part of the last number of rate hearings. We're pleased to see it's legislated that it won't be part of any future ones. The issue they're talking about, about not allowing any rate increases, that's after 2015. Nova Scotia Power is getting their increases now.

Mr. Speaker, in this bill it talks about a value-for-money audit but it doesn't make it mandatory. It doesn't force this company to be opened up, to be looked at. The company will scream from the mountaintops - from the smokestack, I should say - saying, it's propitiatory information, there's stuff in here we shouldn't let out because of our competition. Well, there is no competition. What are they hiding? You know, you might be able to argue about whether or not the fuel should be opened up based on arrangements with different providers but the vast majority of this company needs to be exposed to the light of day, to allow all of us to get a better understanding of it - the issue around the stranded asset value, the understanding of how the municipal utilities are able to provide to their customers a cheaper rate, and why Nova Scotia Power can't or won't provide that same rate to the rest of us.

Those are all important conversations, important pieces that we need to be looking at, Mr. Speaker, and it is my wish that this government, instead of worrying about slogans and worrying about a pamphlet - worrying about a postcard they're going to send out - would really focus on governing and providing real substantive solutions. We've given them some; take them and use them. It will provide a real change for Nova Scotians. They will finally believe the government has been listening. This bill does not send that signal. This bill sends a signal that you're scrambling, that we're reaching for something, we've got nothing to hang onto and they're scrambling. So what do they do? The minister shows up at a public portion of a rate hearing and throws out a poorly put together document that he has had to change a few times between then and now, just to kind of make it look like they're doing something.

If they want to do something in this bill, if they really want to do something, put a halt to the rate increases in January. Delay that rate increase until you go inside that company and find out what else is going on in there that we don't know about. Find out what else is going on in there to the benefit of shareholders and not ratepayers. If they really want to do something for Nova Scotia ratepayers, then go do it. Don't put together a document that says, oh, we're not going to allow the new rate increases two years out,

when we know full well it's happening right now. That portion of this bill is meaningless. It means nothing to the people of this province.

Mr. Speaker, if they want to do something for Nova Scotia ratepayers now, remove that efficiency tax and send it to Nova Scotia Power to fill. That would be meaningful. That would be meaningful. That would be like doing something for the ratepayers and not the shareholders. It is time that this monopoly gets reigned in. It is time for Nova Scotians to have alternatives. It's time for Nova Scotians to be given a choice. It's time to allow renewable to retail. It's time to allow competition in a highly-regulated energy market in the Province of Nova Scotia.

Mr. Speaker, the Province of New Brunswick is allowing renewable to retail for the last decade. The most recent Progressive Conservative Government abandoned that policy. You know what is interesting, Mr. Speaker? During that same time as our power rates were going that way, in New Brunswick they were much more stable and increasing more gradually.

Why would you do away with a policy that is putting in competition, enforcing a monopoly to look inward, forcing the executives of Nova Scotia Power to look inward to understand the competition? In 2005, down at the URB, they wholeheartedly endorsed the idea that the municipalities have that right to arrange power purchase agreements outside of our province. It's on the record down there, they endorsed it. As a matter of fact, they also said, during that hearing, there would be no stranded-asset fee charged when you leave.

Why did they endorse that, Mr. Speaker? Because they underestimated the capability of those utilities, they never believed they would make it happen; they never believed they could do it. Well, to their credit, they are in the process of arranging power purchase agreements outside of our province and they were before the URB in September. When it was becoming a reality, the utility raised its head and said, wait a minute. We're going to charge you a stranded-asset fee of \$32 million. Do you want to know why? It is because they were trying to squash that deal because they don't want the competition.

Think about it, there was no stranded-asset fee even talked about in 2006 because the utility didn't believe it would be a reality for these municipal units, but once the municipal units showed them that not only was it possible, that they are prepared to do it, then the utility started scrambling and started looking for a number to add on as a stranded-asset fee, for nothing more than to shut down the competition that they would be having. Look at what they've done at every renewable energy project. Look at what they've done to the competition at every turn. They've squeezed them at every turn. Why? Because they're trying to eliminate the competition because they've got a pretty good deal, 9 per cent return on equity. As they gobble up all of these players, Mr. Speaker, it means their rate of return is increasing.

Let's be clear, this utility has reduced its rate of return a few times, in more recent days, but what's deceiving about that is that the take-home is much higher because the 9 per cent is taken off a much larger value of equity, so their actual profit is larger, even though the percentage is down. It was nothing more than a PR exercise to try to make it look like the utility was being the nice guy but they would like nothing more than to squash every private-sector, wind-farm, renewable energy project in the province and gain control of them because it's to their advantage and they don't like the competition.

These wind farms are operating in a pretty highly-regulated environment and the sky hasn't fallen - no, it hasn't. We need to open that up and allow renewable energy producers to sell directly. We need to allow the same rights that have been extended to municipal units, to municipal utilities, to communities, to allow Nova Scotians that right to have a choice. It does two things. It gives us the choice but it also forces the utility to do all of the due diligence that is required to look inward to find those savings.

Mr. Speaker, as this debate continues - and I know it will be here for a few days - I'm looking forward to hearing the comments of other members of this House. I'm looking forward to this bill going down so that we get a chance to really then begin to talk about what would really matter to Nova Scotians.

The only good news out of this bill, quite frankly, is that finally they focused on energy. (Applause) It's not quite in focus yet, but at least they see it. And that's one of the things that is important, because at the end of the day ratepayers are looking for relief, not continual rate increases that have been happening over the last three years. We need to provide them relief, and they're looking for their government to show them. For three and a half years there was nothing. Finally, even though it was in a hurry, they've put an energy bill on the floor that we can talk about.

They even called for an emergency debate on Lower Churchill even though they didn't know how much it was going to cost, nor do they know what it means to power bills - all they know is it's going to be a good thing. At least we talked about it and we'll continue to talk about it as it is being explored. That's what we need to do - lay out a number of alternatives that the people of Nova Scotia then can have an assessment and look at the ones they believe in, the ones that will have the most impact on their power bill, and the one that will have the best impact on their community.

We've laid out a plan, one that has been misrepresented on a number of occasions. The good news is Nova Scotians understand it. We're looking forward to this continuing down and hoping, just hoping, that as this bill moves through the process that the government will make some changes that will improve the lives of Nova Scotians today. When you think about this - the fact that the working poor in this province are relying on food banks, and one of the things that they use and one of the things they talk about is taking away from their disposable income is power bills, and the only thing this government has done is allow them to increase under their watch.

Those statistics are screaming out for government to respond, and they need to respond in a more positive way and an immediate way that will have an impact on those ratepayers and on those Nova Scotia families who are looking for help. It's not too late - the next rate increase won't happen until January 1st - it's not too late to put in this bill that increase won't happen. They can freeze that rate increase right now; they can force the utility to do a performance value audit now, not put some vaguely worded phrase in their bill. Do something that has teeth in it and means something to people. (Applause)

At so many turns, Mr. Speaker, this government has been promoting slogans instead of change. They've been promoting slogans that are important to them, not so much to Nova Scotians. From Better Care Sooner, as emergency rooms are closing . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: Back to Balance.

MR. MCNEIL: Back to Balance, the list goes on. Do something for ratepayers - take this bill, go back to the drawing board and put in place some positive things that will have an immediate impact today, not two years from now. Do something that will mean something to Nova Scotians today and not two years from now. The reality for Nova Scotians is they can't pay their power bill today; they're going to food banks today.

One of the reasons they're looking at this, not to mention the 25 per cent increase on the provincial portion of the HST that came in under this government on every other aspect of their lives from gasoline to every other consumable, but this bill is dealing with power. So let's do something for them on power. Let's allow renewable to retail; let's remove the efficiency taxes and send the bill down to Nova Scotia Power in their beautiful building down the street, that glass ivory tower, let's send that bill down to them and ask them to pay it, not ask the working poor and low-income Nova Scotians to subsidize a program that the rest of us can use. Let's do something positive for the ratepayers and not as this government has been doing - doing something positive for shareholders.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak on this bill and I look forward as the debate continues. (Applause)

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

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to speak on this bill at this time. The bill is very important - this debate is very important I should say for a number of reasons. We had a very urgent and recent reminder yesterday when Minas Basin Pulp and Power announced they were closing their operations, throwing 140 people out of work - 135 people to be exact. Hopefully, some of them will be able to work at the sister company, but 135 jobs lost. One of the main reasons that Minas Basin Pulp and Power gave for closing that mill is higher operating costs here in the Province of Nova Scotia. Those operating costs include taxes, they include the highest inflation for their other business inputs, and they certainly include the skyrocketing price of power. Minas Basin Pulp and

Power and those 135 jobs are one of the reasons that it is important that we get a handle on the high cost of living and working in Nova Scotia, including skyrocketing power rates.

Mr. Speaker, in the County of Cumberland there is Canadian Salt Company facing the loss of 35 jobs from their manufacturing operation, not the mine but the manufacturing operation, citing specifically higher operating costs and, more specifically, pointing to the rising cost of power as a reason why 35 good full-time jobs are going to disappear in Pugwash, Cumberland County.

Mr. Speaker, just this morning the Statistics Canada jobs report is out. Yet again Nova Scotia is down. From October 2009 to October 2012, 7,400 full-time jobs were lost across all of Nova Scotia. These are not coincidences. This is happening because in the last three years Nova Scotia has become an expensive place to live, an expensive place to work, an expensive place to create a job or hold on to a job, and 7,400 Nova Scotia families have paid the price by having their full-time jobs disappear in those three years.

Mr. Speaker, it's not only a story of jobs. Even for those Nova Scotians who are working, many of them at minimum wage, many of them not getting enough hours in a week to get by, the working poor who we should all dedicate ourselves to, they are now going to food banks and telling people at those food banks that they're there because they can't pay their bills, starting with their power bill, and no wonder, when the average wage in Nova Scotia has not gone up an iota in the last three years but the costs of living have gone up among the highest in the country in the last three years and that starts with power rates and it starts with gas prices, and it starts with everyday items like groceries.

Obviously, even if you're working, if your salary, your wage, or your pension is flat but your costs are going up, your standard of living is not going forward. It is going backwards. That is not a better deal for today's families as was promised to all of them, it is a worse deal by far for today's families and that is the reality in Nova Scotia today - 7,400 full-time jobs lost as of the end of October; we could add the 135 that we now know of at Minas Basin Pulp and Power that will be gone by the end of the year and when will it stop, Mr. Speaker, when will it stop and turn around?

Interestingly, the government blames all this on the tough economic times of our country but what we also know today is that almost 700,000 jobs have been added in all of Canada - added - going up, going ahead, moving forward, replacing all the jobs lost in the recession and some more, while Nova Scotia stands apart from the rest of the country for going backwards on jobs, backwards on wages, and backwards on our standard of living, putting an unfair hardship on the backs of Nova Scotians, both those who are working and can't get by on the salaries that they are earning because of their bills and those who have lost their jobs.

What is the government's answer to all of this when it comes to one of those bills, their power bill? It is this bill that we see before us today, the Fairer Power Rates Act. Well,

Mr. Speaker, I don't think anyone could put it better in an independent way than Rachel Brighten, who wrote in *The ChronicleHerald* in a column just three days ago that the Fairer Power Rates Act is "a political slogan dressed up as a piece of almost useless legislation." In the face of all these job losses, in the face of all this hardship, in the face of working families that can't get by and are turning to food banks, the government comes up with a political slogan dressed up as a piece of almost useless legislation. I will table this shortly, but I'm going to refer to her column again in a few minutes.

Mr. Speaker, when Nova Scotians look at this bill, they are going to ask one obvious question: what does it actually do to provide me with some relief on my power bill? Does it actually lower power bills? Does it actually make a difference to the current ever-increasing pace of our power bills? If the Minister of Energy wanted to tell Nova Scotians straight up what this bill will do for their power rates, he would tell them that it won't change a thing. It won't change the current rate of your power bill and it doesn't stop the ever-increasing rates that we have before us.

Both the Minister of Energy and the president of the power company have admitted that for the rest of this decade power rates are going to go up by two to three per cent a year, over and over and over again. That doesn't include Muskrat Falls, which, when it comes on line, we still don't know - the government doesn't know - what that will do to our power bills. The Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador has projected that it will be anywhere from 14 cents to 16 cents a kilowatt hour - well in excess of the high rates that we already pay here in Nova Scotia.

We already know what the NDP power policy, their electricity plan, does to our power rates. There are many experts out there who can testify to the true effect of the NDP plan on power rates. In fact, Madam Speaker, there are approximately 940,000 experts covering 500,000 households in Nova Scotia, that every month get a document that shows the effect of the NDP policy on power rates: up, year after year - up 25 per cent, and I've heard 30 per cent depending on where you are and what you pay. Every month Nova Scotians get a reminder of what the NDP Government has done about power rates.

For a Party that campaigned on lower power rates to then come into office and put in place an expensive electricity plan that actually tells Nova Scotians - it doesn't ask them, it tells them - that they have to bite the bullet and pay more, and then watches and pushes the power company as their rates go up 25 per cent in three years while their wages are flat and jobs are being lost - that is the NDP policy.

This bill, which does finally acknowledge the great unfairness, which has been pointed out by both Parties on the Opposition side of charging executive bonuses and excessive salaries to our rates - the bill does finally deal with that. Those amounts have not been charged to our power bills in the last two years for a variety of reasons, but that was voluntary, so now we're going to put it into a law. That is good, and symbolically important. In the interest of fairness, it's important, but let's not put in a bill called the

Fairer Power Rates Act when it's not going to make a stick of difference to the price of power in the Province of Nova Scotia.

What is behind the price of power in the Province of Nova Scotia is a lot of things. The NDP like to point to the price of coal and how it has gone up. They should update their charts. It has been going down for the last two years. If they're so concerned about things getting more expensive, that are embedded in our power rates, why would they stand up in this House as recently as this week and defend Muskrat Falls and insist that it go forward when the price of Muskrat Falls has just escalated by 20 per cent? When asked how much that will cost on our power bills when it comes to our homes and businesses, they continue to say, I don't know. Yet they're all in on Muskrat Falls, regardless of what that project will cost. They propose to have Muskrat Falls cover at least 10 per cent of our total power need.

Well, Madam Speaker, signing on the dotted line for 10 per cent of our total power without knowing how much it's going to cost is not fair to Nova Scotia ratepayers. This is not a government that is interested in fairer power rates. They can call that the title of their bill, but there is nothing in the bill that will actually lead to lower power rates. In fact, we hear the government say, we're interested in stable power rates, but we've seen that "stable" means "go up by 25 per cent." We hear them acknowledge that "stable" means it's going to continue to go up by 2 to 3 per cent more every year for the rest of this decade, and then we'll add another whatever per cent on top of that for Muskrat Falls. Well, that's not "stable" by any reasonable person's definition.

Now, if you're following the public pronouncements of all three Parties on power over the last little while, as all three Parties have put forward plans for power, you'll see a growing sense of frustration with all of us, because no one yet sees a practical plan that's actually going to reduce power rates. In fairness, that includes the Liberal plan. The Leader of the Liberal Party was asked in a CBC interview if his plan would reduce power rates. He paused for a moment and then said, actually, we're looking at stability in power rates - but that's exactly the same as the NDP says. We've seen their definition of stability: 25 to 30 per cent increases in three years.

The Liberal plan also leads to 30 per cent increases in power rates. I've heard the Leader of the Liberal Party criticize the government for pointing to provinces like Ontario and Alberta and calling it "deregulation" and so on. They insist, no, no, renewable to retail is not the same as that, look at New Brunswick. Well, Madam Speaker, we have looked at New Brunswick. I think everybody here has looked at New Brunswick. New Brunswick specifically did put in place a renewable to retail plan a few years ago. In fact, they wrote a report on it last year, reviewing the progress on that plan. Madam Speaker, on Page 14 of the New Brunswick plan - which I'll table in this House - their auditor determined that it was a failure, that not only did it not lead to lower power rates but there was no uptake on renewable to retail by people who would buy it, because their rates were higher. That's the reality - the audited, reviewed reality - in the Province of New Brunswick.

I heard the Leader of the Liberal Party say, well, a Progressive Conservative Government there cancelled it. They did - because it didn't work, because it was a failure, because it's another example of a cute slogan that doesn't actually do anything for power rates other than put them up. For all those who actually care about generating renewable power, it actually killed any interest on the part of investors in investing in more renewable power, for the very obvious reason that they won't have any customers because no one will buy it, because it's more expensive. That's what the review of that policy in New Brunswick showed.

So, Madam Speaker, the frustration with the NDP is shared by the Liberals because they too have fancy slogans that actually do nothing for the price of power. When they are asked if it will lower the price of power and say, well, actually, no, we are hoping for stability, they are exactly in the same boat as the NDP, where stability means up and up and up. In a province that has lost 7,400 jobs, in a province where working people can't make enough to cover their bills and are going to food banks, both of them have provided nothing to give them hope that they're going to get relief on their power bills.

Now, we've also heard in this House a debate about the efficiency charge on our power bills, as if it magically appeared a few years ago and was never there before, and that the answer - for those who want to believe that we can have our cake and eat it, too - is that it will just be wiped off our bills and we'll charge it back to Nova Scotia Power, as if that never happened before. The fact of the matter is that prior to the NDP putting that efficiency charge on our power bills, there was still an efficiency program, and it was paid for by Nova Scotia Power. Everyone who looked at it said that it was not working and the reason it wasn't working is because it was buried in our rates and nobody knew what they were paying for it. It was buried in our rates, it was still there. Nova Scotians were still paying for it.

So to circle it back into the general rates doesn't get Nova Scotians any farther ahead. All it does is leave it to Nova Scotia Power to run the efficiency programs and that wasn't working. You don't have to look very far to find other places that are at least being up front about the efficiency charge and putting it as a separate line item on our power bills and then calculating whether Nova Scotians are actually better off or not. Right next door in New Brunswick they are doing that right now, copying what was done in Nova Scotia, because they know, like most Nova Scotians know, that one thing that is in Nova Scotians' hands to control about their power bill, when they see their rates being out of control, the one thing they can control is the conservation of electricity.

Conservation is a good thing and many Nova Scotians have taken advantage of programs and have even spent their own money to put power-saving measures in their home to get their power consumption down so they can save a few dollars. In fact we've had almost 100,000 Nova Scotians do that through the Efficiency Nova Scotia program. That's a lot of people and a lot of households. They're doing it to take control of their own power bills in the one way they can when they see the rate out of control under this

government. They take control of their power bills by trying to conserve electricity and we ought to help them do that. We absolutely ought to help them do that and also be up front about the cost and not end up burying it back in the general rates.

I can't help but point out that as nice as it sounds, as long as Nova Scotia Power has a guaranteed rate of return, a guaranteed return on their equity, anything that puts that charge back into Nova Scotia Power is, by simple arithmetic, going to end up back on our power bills.

That's why one of the practical things we can do in this Chamber is actually kick the guarantee out from under Nova Scotia Power's profits and get back to a day when they are a company, like any other company, that has to earn their money the old fashioned way, by servicing their customers at reasonable rates. That is a practical thing we can actually do. When we do that, you won't find the efficiency fee, or any other fee that Nova Scotia Power has, being circulated back into the general rates because the guarantee is gone. That is why that is a practical way of dealing with our power bills.

All three Parties have argued about how much regulation or deregulation there should be when it comes to our power rates. Isn't it interesting that this very week, over at the URB we have lawyers for Nova Scotia Power; we have lawyers for an auditor, Liberty Consulting Group; we have lawyers for 16 other interveners and advocates arguing over whether all Nova Scotians were overcharged by up to \$22 million on their power bills because of the fuel purchasing practices of the power company. More specifically, they're arguing over the ability of the power company to buy and sell natural gas between itself and its affiliate, Emera. We now know that both Emera and Nova Scotia Power buy and sell natural gas on the open market and they buy and sell to and from each other.

Is the ratepayer protected when that happens? No, those transactions of buying and selling gas back and forth, from one affiliate to another, are done to the benefit of Nova Scotia Power and Emera. For those who preach deregulation, they should look no further than the mess at the URB this week and how the ratepayer would be even more exposed to rising power bills, to being overcharged, to bad intercompany practices if we weren't regulating, more heavily than we are – which is what should happen – the actions of Nova Scotia Power and Emera, particularly when it comes to the way they deal with each other.

The greatest argument for stronger regulation is taking place right now at the URB - not weaker regulation, stronger regulation so that ratepayers can be protected in the way that actually saves them, in this case, up to \$22 million on their power bill.

Madam Speaker, I just find it very interesting that both the NDP and the Liberals say they want stable rates and yet 940,000 people know that stable rates under the NDP means an increase of 25 per cent in three years; 750,000 people in New Brunswick know that what the Liberals are talking about leads to a 30 per cent increase in their power rates and every jurisdiction, every province, every state that has looked at renewable to retail

knows the same thing to be true. So there's no difference between the Liberals and the NDP when it comes to fancy slogans that actually do nothing but put power rates up, and Nova Scotians deserve better than that.

Madam Speaker, one other item in the bill that I do want to touch on - in addition to the symbolic but fair provisions to cap executive bonuses and salaries and get them out of our rates - is the provision that rate applications can only be done every two years. Again, it raises the question, what will that do for our power rates? Well, the answer is it won't do a thing for our power rates. Surely common sense tells us that when the power company knows it has to cover itself for two years instead of one, it's going to make sure that it increases our rates enough to get it through those two years. In fact, that provision might actually make things worse, if rate increases are padded to cover the risk of two years instead of just one as we have now. I don't believe any real analysis or thought went into that provision in this bill about what it might do to our power rates, other than it sounds good.

Madam Speaker, the NDP are trying to pitch this as a rate freeze, that two years from now this will result in a freeze on our rates, ignoring the fact that they're standing by while a 6 per cent increase is allowed to go through right now - 3 per cent this coming year and 3 per cent the year after that. Well, I tell you, if the government is truly interested in freezing our rates, they could start by making it true that the power company can only buy as much renewables as we can afford with the current rates. That is a real rate freeze that could happen right now - not two years from now, but now. Let's continue the pace to a more renewable future; that is a good thing. Nobody, neither the Liberals nor the NDP asked Nova Scotians if they are willing to pay 2 to 3 per cent more per year, compounded year after year, 25 per cent in three years, to get there. In fact, they were promised the opposite in the last election.

Both the Liberals and the NDP continue to hide behind that fact, that what is really driving up our rates is a rush to renewables that ignores the ability of the ratepayer to pay. If we were all, in this House, truly going to get up in our place and be honest with Nova Scotians about what's driving up the rates, we would tell them, as I am telling them, as we are telling them, regardless of whether it's politically correct or not, we are telling them every analysis shows that the rush to renewables is driving up our rates 2 to 3 per cent a year. The Minister of Energy counted it at 1 to 2 per cent a year, himself.

Madam Speaker, we all want to get to that greener place, Nova Scotians want us to get to that greener place but they want us to get to that greener place within the current rates. Anything more than the current rate is just another tax on our power bills. Both the Liberals and the NDP support that hidden tax and we do not because we believe the pace of change to renewables should go forward within the current rates.

Let me just be clear, if anyone thinks that means stopping renewables, they are wrong because there are lots of carbon-based assets on the books of Nova Scotia Power

that depreciate every year and as those coal-fired plants depreciate, as the gas plants depreciate, it creates room within the current rates to add more renewables. We can go to that more renewable in a way that can be consistent with rates the way they are today. That is a true rate freeze, and we're calling for that rate freeze by matching the pace of renewables to the current rate that the power company charges. That is a true freeze that can really be done, that allows renewables to proceed in a way that Nova Scotians can afford.

That is the practical, common-sense answer that Nova Scotians want when it comes to their power rates. Get rid of the guaranteed profit so the company is forced to earn its money by servicing its customers at fair rates. Match the pace of renewables to the current rates so that we can go forward with renewables in a way that isn't a hidden tax on Nova Scotians. That is a second practical way to give Nova Scotians some relief on their power rates. Those are practical things that can be done.

By the way, Madam Speaker, that was the plan at one point. The original Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act, which passed with all-Party support in this House a few years ago, said that we're going to get to that greener future, we're going to have more renewables, and we're going to cut emissions. We're going to do it in a way that's affordable to Nova Scotians, and we're going to do it in a way that allows for our economy to grow at the national average or better every year. It struck an important balance between protecting our economy, getting to a greener future, and matching Nova Scotians' ability to pay on their power bills. That was not just a leader in Nova Scotia but a leader in North America at the time.

What has changed since then? The NDP came in. They didn't touch the economy goals, but they jacked up the renewable goals without regard to the effect on our economy or on Nova Scotians' ability to pay. So we're rushing on renewables, but what's happening to our economy in the meantime? Well, are we growing at the national average or better every year? No. Just yesterday the Atlantic Provinces Economic Council reported that Nova Scotia has one of the slowest growth rates in the country at a whopping 1 per cent - 1 per cent - while the rest of Canada grows at 2.5 times that amount. Secondly, while the rest of Canada is adding 689,000 new jobs, Nova Scotia has lost 7,400. That balance has been gone, and those 7,400 Nova Scotians are the ones who are paying the price. For those who are working, with their power rates up 25 per cent in three years, they pay their price every month, because the balance has been lost.

Now, both the other Parties continue to support that, but for me and for us in the PC caucus, let's go forward with renewables in a way that's fair to Nova Scotians, that fits within their current power bill, that doesn't result in another hidden tax that's supported by the other two Parties, but also gets us to that renewable day. That's a practical thing we can do right now to freeze rates in their tracks.

Madam Speaker, when Nova Scotians asked all three Parties, will your plan actually reduce rates, we know the NDP answer is, well, for us stability means 25 per cent more and then 2 per cent or 3 per cent more every year for the rest of this decade. For the Liberals it means, well, no, we want stability, too, which also turns out to be 30 per cent more on your power bill. But for the PC Party, when Nova Scotians say, what can we do to actually reduce our power bill, we point to the independent studies that say let's build a regional market; let's build a regional electricity grid, which the Atlantic Energy Gateway study says could save all of us up to \$300 a year on our power bills. Let's point to the AIMS report that came out last week that says it will save at least 5 per cent on our power bills.

This is why the debate about Muskrat Falls is so important. By focusing only on that one project from Newfoundland and Labrador, which will supply more energy than we'll ever need, it excludes looking at other options like a regional grid that might actually produce cheaper energy, up to \$300 a year each on our power bills.

By building up the electric grid across the Maritimes we get access to imported power from Hydro-Québec, who are actually selling power on a long-term deal to the State of Vermont at 5 cents a kilowatt hour, while you and I, Madam Speaker, and everyone, when we open our power bills - you can check it out - we pay 13.1 cents a kilowatt hour. It gives us access to more hydro, not only from Quebec, but from the hydro projects of New Brunswick.

I hear people say, look at New Brunswick, their power is cheaper. Yes it is. It's not because of renewable to retail, which their own report said was a failure, it's because their energy mix includes hydro and it includes nuclear from Point Lepreau which is now back on-line, producing more electricity than they'll need, and it includes natural gas, not coming from us by the way, but coming from New England where they have a 100-year supply. The Bayside gas plant in Saint John is producing natural gas right now at 4.5 cents per kilowatt hour and they are using it to electrify New Brunswick. We could be bringing that gas here - and I do want to spend a moment on natural gas because it baffles me that we have a government that won't consider it; in fact, they outlawed it.

They outlawed it because, yes it's not renewable - although there is a 100-year supply, at least a 100-year supply - but it's very clean. It's two-thirds cleaner than coal and oil and the traditional methods of generating electricity. Burning more natural gas would get us two-thirds closer to our emissions targets and yet the government changed the law to allow Muskrat Falls to count against our targets, but won't do the same for natural gas.

And how ironic, Madam Speaker, that in the very week this year when Nova Scotia Power filed for a 6 per cent increase in their rates here the power utility in the State of Massachusetts filed their own rate application for the 21 per cent decrease in their power rates there - and the reason they gave was because they are using natural gas to generate electricity, and natural gas is very cheap right now. And it has been very cheap for several years and they believe it's going to stay cheap, because they have discovered a 100-year

supply in New England alone of non-conventional sources of natural gas and they are going to use that to generate electricity for years to come - plus 6 per cent in Nova Scotia, minus 21 per cent in New England.

Madam Speaker, it is going to bother all Nova Scotians to know whose natural gas they are burning in New England right now - it's ours; it's from our offshore gas. That's why their power rates are going down and our power rates are going up. We bring that power ashore and then it zips along that Maritimes & Northeast Pipeline all the way to Massachusetts, where they get cheaper electricity and we get more expensive gas.

Now, Madam Speaker, there are those who say, but that gas field offshore only has seven or eight years left, and the Deep Panuke one, which will start next year, we don't know how many years that's going to last, so maybe we shouldn't look at natural gas. But we have this pipeline already built, it's already built, and it goes from Nova Scotia to Massachusetts. We should learn the lesson now about watching our gas get exported when we could be using it here more than we do - we do use some of it at Tufts Cove, and we use a lot more at Trenton - instead of sending it away so they can have cheaper electricity rates. But when the day comes that 100-year supply in New England is available, more than they'll ever use, we already have a pipeline that can easily be reversed to bring that gas here if we have a regional energy grid, and use it to generate electricity for New Brunswick, for Nova Scotia, for P.E.I., and maybe even Newfoundland and Labrador.

The beautiful thing about natural gas, in addition to being very clean, is that it is the perfect match to renewables like wind, and we're investing heavily in wind because as we know, Madam Speaker, wind is non-dispatchable, meaning sometimes you can't use the wind to generate electricity. You need a source of power that can instantly be used in the place of wind. The fastest source to fire up when wind is not going to meet your electricity needs is natural gas, and it's also the cheapest. So for those of us who want more renewable and rates that we can afford, natural gas and wind are a perfect marriage. We have our own supply offshore and we have a pipeline down to a 125-year supply in New England, but we also have a government that won't let it happen.

Madam Speaker, in my own riding in the Town of Oxford, Oxford Frozen Foods looks at this same thing, and they say, we're going to invest in natural gas to heat our plant - where they employ 400 people, where they're the world's largest producer of wild blueberries and other products. They go all year long, including in the dead of winter, processing other products like carrots and onion rings as a world leader, but they're only going to be a world leader if they can stay competitive with their competitors around the world, and they're only going to be competitive if they have access to power at a reasonable rate.

They have decided they're not going to get that out of Nova Scotia Power or, quite frankly, under the policies of the NDP Government or the proposals of the Liberals, so they invested their own money to pipe natural gas from the Maritimes and Northeast Pipeline

into their plant. They have a very quick payback on that investment, because it's going to lower their power cost by that much.

Madam Speaker, because they've done that, they've made their plant much more competitive. They've secured those jobs in Cumberland County for years and years to come, but also, because they've done that, now Heritage Gas can go door to door in the Town of Oxford, household to household, hooking up private residences because gas is now in their town. When those hookups occur, they can save individual households hundreds of dollars a year on their home heating costs.

We talk a lot about electricity and we talk a lot about gasoline at the pumps, but let's not forget that Nova Scotia has the highest rate of homes that are heated by oil - by home heating fuel - and the price of home heating fuel has also skyrocketed. It can cost anywhere from \$800 to \$1,000 to fill up your oil tank now. That is a real hardship on many, many Nova Scotia families that doesn't get enough attention by this government.

One of the things that can really be done to help them out is to get more of them off home heating fuel and onto natural gas. You can take your home heating costs from \$2,000 or \$3,000 a year down into the hundreds of dollars a year with an appropriate use of natural gas, but there's no plan for that because the government has hitched its wagon to Muskrat Falls.

I'll be happy to find those numbers and table them for the benefit of the House, because do you know where they exist? They exist in Alberta, they exist in Saskatchewan, they exist out West where there are provinces that have natural gas resources that have gone and put in a plan. Over the years their governments have - governments of - well, maybe not all Parties, but certainly Progressive Conservative Governments have gone to the great effort to have a plan in place to get their homes off expensive home heating fuel and onto a much cheaper and cleaner source, like natural gas. We'll be happy to provide that to the House for the government's consideration and for the Liberals' consideration, because that's something we can really do that could make a big difference to the household budget of every single Nova Scotia who is currently locked in either on electricity or home heating fuel.

Let me return, Madam Speaker, to where I started. As we move to a more renewable day, as we debate power policies and fancy slogans that have been thrown around this Chamber, let's make sure that we remember what it is that Nova Scotians really want. They want a job to be there for them no matter where they live in Nova Scotia. They want to know that when they have that job, it's a job that pays enough that they can cover their bills - their power bill, oil bill, gas bill, grocery bill - and allows them to live a decent and humane life, and maybe even save a little money on the side for their retirement, for their kids' education. To buy the tools of their trade, to go back to school themselves and upgrade their education to get an even better job. To move ahead, to know that tomorrow can be better than today, to know that with a few extra dollars in their pocket they can

improve the situation of themselves and their family. To know that when all the bills are paid at the end of the month, you don't have to have a deficit, you don't have to put the rest on your credit card, you don't have to raid your RRSP, you don't have to tell your kids they can't go into hockey or they can't go to a concert because there's no money left after the bills are paid.

That's what Nova Scotians expect us to work on in this House. No wonder they're so frustrated when they see pamphlets and TV ads and fancy slogans and empty promises about power that actually do nothing to reduce the price of power. All they do is give people the impression that in this Chamber, we talk around and around in circles to try to distract Nova Scotians from the real issues of today.

The real issues of today are that people who have a job still can't cover their bills and are going to food banks; that 7,400 families have lost a job today - 135 more yesterday down in Hantsport. They want relief. They want relief on taxes like the HST, which is now, as everyone knows, famously the highest in the country. They want relief on their property taxes, which in many places have become among the highest in the country. They want to know that somewhere there's a plan to get them to a better day, and yes, they want relief on their power bill. They're starting to realize now that there is a hidden tax on the power bill, which both the Liberals and the NDP support.

They want to know, as we move to a more renewable day, that if they're going to be forced to pay more, they get a say in whether they pay more or not, but they've been denied that say. It's just been done for them. When they know that we're going to a renewable future and that we're going to do it in a way that respects the need to grow our economy and create jobs and respects their pocketbook, they support that. That's exactly what the PC position is. That is the true rate freeze - as many renewables every year as we can afford within the current rates. As the old coal-fired and oil-fired assets depreciate, let's add more renewables, absolutely, but keep Nova Scotians whole on their power bills. That's a real freeze.

Let's create that regional market that independent experts say could save us all from 5 per cent to \$300 real dollars a year on our power bills and actually allow more wind to be in the system, whether it's coming from P.E.I., which has great wind, or New Brunswick, which has wind, or from Nova Scotia - along with gas and Hydro-Québec. Let's make sure that we allow all of those potential sources to be lined up against Muskrat Falls and pick the one that works for Nova Scotians. That's what they expect their elected representatives to be doing.

So I started by quoting Rachel Brighton's column, which called this very bill "a political slogan dressed up as a piece of almost useless legislation." In that same column, Ms. Brighton also quotes the government's Deputy Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism as saying that economic productivity in Nova Scotia is "running at about 75 per cent of the national average." When we hear Minas Basin Pulp

and Power say they can't make a go of it, one of the reasons is because their operating costs are too high, which includes the taxes and the power rates they pay. That is what Ms. Brighton is talking about. They can't operate productively when they have the highest costs in the country. That's why our economic productivity is running at 75 per cent of the national average.

When they see other pulp mills close down, whether it's in Liverpool or Port Hawkesbury - yes, the world markets are terrible for newsprint but they also pointed out that they can't compete because of their power prices. I personally met with the employees and the management of both of those paper mills and they point to power rates. They know what they pay compared to their competitors in the rest of North America. I mean let's be clear, although it's a horrible market for newsprint, it's not going to go to zero. Somewhere in North America, someone is going to be making newsprint and coated paper and other paper products for years to come.

Why can't Nova Scotia be one of those places without a massive bailout? We can be. If we get our economic productivity up, if we get our input costs down, we could have people working in Liverpool today, we could have people working in Port Hawkesbury today without a massive bailout if their power rates were the same as their neighbours, if their taxes were the same as their neighbours. If they were as competitive as their neighbours, they would have a chance to be one of those mills that produces whatever newsprint there is left to be produced in North America.

We have lots of great advantages going for us as a province. Our Acadian forests are among the best in the world. Managed better, they can generate a very successful forestry industry for years to come. We have among the best newsprint makers in the world, employees trained over years and years of generations of experience. We have some of the best foresters in the world who go out and harvest our forests in a responsible way, who, with a little support from the government, not for a specific business but for their industry, as we manage those forests to a day where we have higher value-added species, where we have more progressive management practices in our forests, where we look worldwide for new products for those greater diversity of forest species, Madam Speaker, and with modern harvesting techniques we can build a great forestry industry.

So although over here we will continue to point out the folly of \$0.5 billion of corporate bailouts that the government has engaged in, and we know they're going to shout back, oh, so you wouldn't stand up for this town, or you wouldn't stand up for that town - let me tell you something, Madam Speaker, we will always support important industries like the forestry industry, like the fishing industry, like other industries that have been the lifeblood of rural Nova Scotia. Not by bailing out one company or bribing a foreign company to come in, but by getting the conditions right for those companies to succeed - lower taxes starting with the HST, better power rates, more competition, making it more competitive in the world markets. That is the way to generate real jobs and opportunity in rural Nova Scotia.

Madam Speaker, back to Ms. Brighton's column, I just want to quote one more thing before I table this document. She points out, "The consensus among economic forecasters is for gross domestic product growth of 1.5 per cent in 2012 . . ." and actually since this column was written a few days ago, that has now been amended again downward to a meagre 1 per cent by the Atlantic Provinces Economic Council - 1 per cent. The rest of the country grows at 2.5 times that. If we want to put that 1 per cent growth into the reality of the everyday Nova Scotian family, it means there are no new jobs. It means that we're going to struggle under the current policies to hold onto the ones that we have. It means that the stories of Minas Basin Pulp and Power and Canadian Salt in Pugwash and others are not going to end until there's a radical turnaround in the way our economy is managed.

Now, I see both the NDP and the Liberals accepting that we can have a hidden carbon tax on our power bills. Both of them waffle on taxes like the HST - a real hardship on our most vulnerable Nova Scotians. Both of them are fine to leave things the way they are but, Madam Speaker, it's time to get off the current track once and for all of accepting that Nova Scotia has to stay a have-not province; has to accept growth rates of 1 per cent or worse; has to accept that manufacturing companies are going to close; that rural Nova Scotia is going to go into reverse, in decline in rural places; stop borrowing more and more money to hand out to companies to bribe them to hold onto a few jobs; and get at the root issues of our economy.

The root issues of why jobs are being lost - high taxes, high power rates, those are the important things that we can deal with in this Chamber by balancing that budget once and for all and going on to lower the HST. By dealing with power rates in an open and honest way with Nova Scotians, maybe not accepting that we have to be politically correct all the time, but point out to them what's really going on with their power rates and then deal with it in a way that's both renewable and affordable. That's what Nova Scotians want us to do.

This bill does none of that; the Liberal plan does none of that. Everyone who has researched it will tell you that we don't need to have a guarantee on Nova Scotia Power's profits. We can force the power company to deliver good service at reasonable rates to earn its money. Everybody will tell you that if we match real renewables to the current rates we can freeze rates in their tracks - and everybody will tell you, including independent studies, that building a regional grid which allows us access to Hydro-Québec and natural gas for 100 years, and New Brunswick's energy assets, our own and our other Maritime peers', we actually lower rates.

Why don't we get on with doing that, Madam Speaker, and stop the silly sloganeering that we see going on around this Chamber and outside this Chamber here today?

So with those brief remarks, Madam Speaker, I will take my place and thank you for the time you've allotted to me.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cape Breton West on an introduction.

MR. ALFIE MACLEOD: Madam Speaker, I'd like to draw your attention and the attention of all members of the House to the gallery opposite. We have two visitors today from the community of Donkin, Hugh Kennedy and his wife Bernice. They are both very active in their community.

I'd ask the House to give them a warm welcome. (Applause)

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

The honourable member for Bedford-Birch Cove.

MS. KELLY REGAN: I'm pleased to rise in my place today to speak to Bill No. 97, the Fairer Power Rates Act. I note here that it's called the Fairer Power Rates Act but, really, it doesn't go far enough to produce those fair power rates. But you know, like the federal Conservatives, this government has become very good at coming up with slogans. We have the jobsHere program which apparently means part-time jobs here; we have Kids and Learning First which turns out to be kids and learning last; and Better Care Sooner which, in fact, really means record emergency room closures.

This bill was first discussed on September 19th during the public portion of the General Rate Application hearing. The Minister of Energy, who has refused to be an official intervener at any rate hearings, appeared as the member for Pictou West at a public portion to reveal that the NDP Government would be introducing legislation in the Fall.

The proposed amendments to the Public Utilities Act are from government's commitment last month to limit factors that affect efficiency rates, and they include a variety of different things including not allowing executive bonuses to be paid even in part by ratepayers; shareholders must fully pay any bonuses; capping executive salaries at a level similar to a deputy minister in the provincial public sector, and that shareholders must pay any salary above that rate; requiring NSPI to file multi-year rate applications to cut hearing costs which can reach \$2 million per hearing; strengthening the URB's authority to order an independent review to look for savings in years without a rate hearing; and ensuring no additional rate increases until at least 2015.

The bill, in many respects, adopts Liberal policies. I can tell you, I introduced a bill last Fall and again this past Spring that dealt with debt collection. I was quite pleased to see the other day that the Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations introduced a bill that adopted much of what we had put forward in that bill. Since imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, we do appreciate that the government has seen the light on a number of these issues and is, in fact, adopting Liberal policies.

We've been asking the Premier and the NDP Government to order a performance value audit for years now. The Premier has refused, the Minister of Energy has refused, and the NDP Government has refused. Now they're going to include it in their legislation. As well, they're making adjustments to NSPI salaries and bonuses. Again, that was another Liberal initiative.

You have to ask yourself, why didn't they just call Bill No. 45 - which we had already introduced - the Ratepayer Protection Act, as it covers these initiatives and much, much more? It's a more substantive bill and one that would actually help all Nova Scotians.

The most disturbing part of this whole bill and its creation is how it was first presented to the public. The Minister of Energy showed up at the public hearing not as an intervener but to just throw these things out. He could have intervened at that hearing, but he chose not to. He has been asked repeatedly by the Liberal caucus if he would appear as a formal intervener at the rate hearing, yet he has always refused; yet he showed up for some PR.

He takes time from the public late on a Monday night, in a display that was so partisan and biased and so filled with misrepresentations, gave little detail, offered no explanations of why he was even showing up there. So today we have some clarification on what he presented that night, some details, and we come to find that a considerable portion of this bill is simply clauses from Bill No. 45, the Ratepayer Protection Act, introduced twice now by my colleague, the member for Dartmouth East and the Official Opposition Energy Critic.

Madam Speaker, I would like to note that the Liberal caucus has been present at every rate hearing and every DSM hearing for the last few years. The NDP has never once intervened formally. (Interruptions) If the member for Lunenburg West would . . .

MADAM SPEAKER: Order. The honourable member for Bedford-Birch Cove has the floor.

MS. REGAN: As I said, the NDP has never once intervened formally. Instead, they've become the chief apologist for Nova Scotia Power. I'll tell you, when I talked to people in my riding - I mentioned in the House the other day that I've been going door to door. I started that last winter, sort of more in earnest than I had previously. I would go door to door and ask people, what are your top three issues? What are the things that are really bothering you? Sometimes they were federal issues, sometimes they were municipal issues, but at pretty much every door what I heard was "power rates." I remember one street I was on - it was a family that had moved here from Ontario, and they said that what stunned them, what left them absolutely gobsmacked, was what they were paying for power here. They couldn't believe what we pay for power here. They said that, quite frankly, it hampers what we're allowed to do here in the province with our family, because we're having so much money go out the door.

Now the NDP says that we want to deregulate the energy market, which is false. Unfortunately, they don't understand what deregulation means. (Interruptions) I thought the honourable member was growing a Movember mustache, but maybe I should watch for nose growing there, too. The NDP say we want to remove . . .

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please. I'd ask the member to retract the comment on "nose growing," as it implies dishonesty. It's unparliamentary. I would ask you to retract it, please.

MS. REGAN: By all means, Madam Speaker. Perhaps I should have said there is a Pinocchio aspect to his appearance.

MADAM SPEAKER: And again, it is implying lying, so I would ask you to retract the remark.

MS. REGAN: Absolutely, Madam Speaker. I will retract that statement.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you.

MS. REGAN: The NDP says we want to remove Efficiency Nova Scotia altogether, which is, of course, another falsehood. Am I allowed to say that - that it's a falsehood? (Interruptions) Well, it's simply not true, and I will use that phrase, because that is what the Premier is always saying. So they claim that the Liberals want to remove Efficiency Nova Scotia. That is simply not true. It's the NDP who placed this efficiency tax on every single Nova Scotian in the province - \$46 million.

Now, the Leader of the Third Party will tell you that that cost was already in there and it was hidden. The fact of the matter is you can legislate that. You can decide where that money comes from. If you reduce the amount of return that Nova Scotia Power gets for its shareholders, you can make sure that that doesn't happen.

In the meantime, this NDP Government let an industrial conglomerate come into Port Hawkesbury and exempted them from paying the efficiency tax. Now, you have to ask, how is that fair? A great big company that gets millions and millions of dollars from Nova Scotia taxpayers, they don't have to pay the efficiency tax, but the single moms in your ridings and the single moms in my riding have to pay for it? The folks who are struggling to make ends meet on a series of part-time jobs because the full-time jobs are disappearing, they have to pay the efficiency tax, but this company does not? Is that fair? I don't think so.

Honestly, Madam Speaker, it's nothing short of shameful. This NDP Government has done nothing to help Nova Scotians with their power bills. They cut the Heating Assistance Rebate Program - HARP - by more than 50 per cent. How does that help

low-income Nova Scotians? They tout the provincial portion of the HST cut as the saviour of all Nova Scotians, but in fact what they did (Interruptions)

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please.

The honourable member for Bedford-Birch Cove.

MS. REGAN: They tout their provincial portion of the HST cut as the saviour of all Nova Scotians when, in fact, their efficiency tax negates that tax cut. Nova Scotians are paying more in the efficiency tax than that HST cut on their power bills ever saved them. It's a meagre tax cut that did nothing to help low- and middle-income Nova Scotians.

I was out in my riding a couple of weeks ago talking to a businessman, and he said to me, this is the worst business climate I've experienced in 20 years. He's in the service industry, and he said, I thought at first it was just my industry and what I work in, or maybe it was my shop. He said, I don't know. So he actually had an assistant go to a program, a social media program, and in talking to other people who do the same kind of work, they said they were experiencing the exact same thing. People were not spending the kind of money that they have in the past, and the reason they're not spending it is because they do not have it.

That got me thinking. So I made a point of calling up some business owners, or stopping in to see business owners in a variety of different businesses, to see, what's your experience like, is business good? I went into a store that was shutting down, and I said, why are you going? There were a variety of factors, but the big factor was that people simply weren't spending money anymore. The discretionary income isn't there because all of their money is going to necessities.

People are making choices now, and the choice for far too many families in Nova Scotia is heat or eat. We've heard that this week with the HungerCount, where we have seen a huge increase - just below 40 per cent in the number of families accessing food banks here in this province. As I go around the province as Community Services Critic, I often stop in at food banks to talk to folks. What we hear is that the need is growing. We knew that even before the HungerCount came out.

It doesn't matter what food bank you go to. I went to one in the riding of Inverness that is probably the only food bank that's in a former morgue - at least, I hope it's the only food bank that's in a former morgue - in the former Catholic hospital there. They said there are a lot of people hurting. In Pictou, you go in and talk to the folks there and they say the same thing, a lot of people are hurting, and what they said they are experiencing is that people are moving from larger centres like New Glasgow out to Pictou, for example, so that they can access cheaper rents. The problem is that once they move to Pictou they can't get back into New Glasgow to go to doctor's appointments and things like that. They may

save on rent, but then they're spending it on transportation, because public transportation in this province is in such bad shape.

For people who are trying desperately to make ends meet, every little domino has an effect. For them, life is incredibly hard. It's brutally hard. You wonder how they're doing it, when we see increases like we've seen under this government, 30 per cent more. How are people supposed to make ends meet if they weren't even making it before?

Of concern is the fact that the Premier has frequently not been accurate about the Liberal plan, and has not been accurate on purpose about the Liberal plan. It's as simple as that. This bill is a meager effort, once again, by a floundering government trying to save their own skins. This caucus, the Liberal caucus, would force Nova Scotia Power to pay for the efficiency tax, not Nova Scotians.

Despite assurances from the Third Party that this would be hidden somehow, there is a way for that to happen. (Interruptions) I'm sure that if the member for Hammonds Plains-Upper Sackville would like to speak about it, he'll get his chance and stand up for Nova Scotians instead of Nova Scotia Power shareholders.

Despite the Premier's fear-mongering about the Liberal power plan, the NDP Government's new legislation copies a great deal from the Liberal Ratepayer Protection Bill which was introduced a year ago. The Premier and the NDP have spent a lot of time and expended an awful lot of energy attacking the Liberal power position, parts of which they're in the process of adopting.

We're happy that the NDP has seen the light and adopted many of the ideas we brought forward, including forcing NSPI to undergo performance value audits and legislating the removal of executive bonuses from power rates. It's just too bad that the Premier waited this long to actually act. The government's decision to introduce this legislation is an admission that the Premier was wrong on May 15, 2012, when he said, "The Utility and Review Board said there are numerous audits that take place at Nova Scotia Power, that they have looked at it in detail, that the cost of these audits do in fact get passed on to the ratepayers and that it was an unwise thing to do." So either he was confused or wrong when he said that because the current legislation is a step down from that position. The Premier and the NDP are now adopting Liberal policies and trying (Interruption)

Guys, sorry. I know you don't like it but the fact of the matter is that's what you're doing and, in fact, when I just (Interruptions) In fact, I just said that earlier and there was no noise from over there, so you agreed with it then and you don't agree with it now.

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please. I would remind the member to reflect the remarks through the Speaker and not across the floor to the others. Thank you.

The honourable member for Bedford-Birch Cove has the floor.

MS. REGAN: The Premier and the NDP are now adopting Liberal policies and trying to represent them as their own, it's clear that the Premier does, in legislation tabled in the House. For example, the Liberal Ratepayer Protection Act reads that, "Beginning in fiscal year 2013-14 and continuing on a biannual basis thereafter, the Minister shall direct the Board of Directors of the Corporation to complete and make public a performance and value-for-money audit of the Corporation." The Fairer Power Rates Act brought forward by the NDP says, "a value-for-money assessment examining the economy, efficiency and effectiveness of the operations and management of Nova Scotia Power Incorporated;" can be performed at the Utility and Review Board's discretion. Our bill goes further than this government's bill. If the NDP really wanted to place tougher regulations on NSP they would simply adopt a ratepayer protection Act because ours is mandated, theirs is optional.

The NDP Government chose to tax Nova Scotian residents and businesses, increase the cost of electricity and set up a system where many people are forced to pay a flat tax for programs they can't afford to access. A Liberal Government will strengthen energy efficiency programs, we won't cut them. Efficiency programs will continue to be run independently and we will ensure that Nova Scotia sees real measurable results in reducing energy efficiency. Any claims that we would cut efficiency programs are false; our statements at town hall meetings, in the Legislature and in public over the past two years demonstrate that has never been our position.

The NDP-imposed efficiency tax, a flat tax on every power bill, is driving up Nova Scotians' cost of electricity and it's also trickling down into the cost of goods and services as businesses pass along this cost. That is what I was talking about earlier when I said that I was out visiting businesses in my riding, this is what we're hearing, and it's funny because I remember when the HST increase was brought in. I remember talking to one of my colleagues who pointed out, he said two years from now is when you're really going to see the effect of this increase, no matter what happens right off the bat, and there will be repercussions, but about two years from now is when you're really going to see it because that is when people will realize they've gone through their savings and they don't know why.

They won't have the kind of discretionary income that they once had and they won't know why and they'll retrench. If they had any savings they are gone; if they didn't they are in debt, so they are in debt with their credit cards and they can't go out and purchase things on a discretionary basis that they used to. He predicted at the time when the NDP increased the HST, he predicted that we would see two years later big problems economically, and that is what we are seeing. When I drive down the street in my riding and I see stores closed, businesses shutting down, you have to wonder what is going on.

The Premier knows that this is having a negative impact on our economy. Part of his government's deal with Stern, in fact, exempts Stern from paying that flat tax. If it

weren't a concern, then why exempt Stern? The fact is it is a concern; it makes it difficult for every business, for every customer to make ends meet. But instead of dealing with that fact, you just give an out for one business.

It's a flat tax imposed by this government, and it costs Nova Scotians \$46 million each year. This is the highest-taxed jurisdiction in Canada. Liberals don't think that Nova Scotians should have to pay an additional tax when NSP and its parent company, Emera, are making record profits, and you keep looking back to that. Profit isn't a dirty word, but the fact of the matter is they are making those massive profits on the backs of Nova Scotians - and it's not fair.

It's disappointing to this side of the House, or at least to this Party, that the government decided to protect Nova Scotia Power's bottom line. Just three days before the last election the NDP said they felt that charging ratepayers this efficiency tax was wrong. They said it, and yet what did they do when they came into government? The NDP introduced legislation that put this tax squarely on the power bills of Nova Scotians.

In light of the hour, Madam Speaker, I would move that we adjourn debate on Bill No. 97 and we'll be able to pick up later. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: The motion is that we now adjourn debate on Bill No. 97. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Madam Speaker, that concludes the government's business for today. I move that the House do now rise, to meet from the hour of 7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. on Monday. After the daily routine we'll do Public Bills for Second Reading, Bill Nos. 94, 97, 102, 105, 107, 109, 111, 119, and 114.

With that, I wish you a good weekend, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: The motion is that the House do now rise, to meet again Monday, November 5th, between the hours of 7:00 p.m. and 10:00 p.m.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

We stand adjourned.

[The House rose at 11:58 a.m.]

NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3)**RESOLUTION NO. 1699**

By: Hon. Jamie Baillie (Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party)

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

Whereas the Springhill Lions Club celebrated its 1st Anniversary in October 2012; and

Whereas the club was acknowledged for digging deep to be compassionate in the past year and taking over the Toys For Tots program in partnership with the Salvation Army, participating in the Kidney Drive, Chilli Willi Week, the annual Christmas parade, coordinating an annual Easter Egg Hunt for local youth, making donations to cadets, Springhill Mixed Martial Arts, the Springhill Fire Department, a family who lost their home at Christmas, and much more; and

Whereas with a successful year behind them, King Lion Cory Galloway expects there will be big things on the horizon for the Springhill club;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate the Springhill Lions Club on its 1st Anniversary and wish them many more successful years to come.

RESOLUTION NO. 1700

By: Hon. Stephen McNeil (Leader of the Liberal Party)

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

Whereas pharmacists across Nova Scotia play an integral role in the delivery of health care; and

Whereas on October 21, 2012, the Pharmacy Association of Nova Scotia presented Certificates of Appreciation to members at its annual conference; and

Whereas Sean Gorman, of Bedford, was awarded a certificate in appreciation for his outstanding service to pharmacy in Nova Scotia;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly congratulate Sean Gorman on receipt of this certificate, and extend our appreciation to him for his

significant contributions to both the profession of pharmacy and to his ongoing efforts in improving our health care system.

RESOLUTION NO. 1701

By: Hon. Stephen McNeil (Leader of the Liberal Party)

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

Whereas pharmacists across Nova Scotia play an integral role in the delivery of health care; and

Whereas on October 21, 2012, the Pharmacy Association of Nova Scotia presented Certificates of Appreciation to members at its annual conference; and

Whereas Kim Sponagle of Bedford was awarded a certificate in appreciation for her outstanding service to pharmacy in Nova Scotia;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly congratulate Kim Sponagle on receipt of this certificate, and extend our appreciation to her for her significant contributions to both the profession of pharmacy and to her ongoing efforts in improving our health care system.

RESOLUTION NO. 1702

By: Hon. Stephen McNeil (Leader of the Liberal Party)

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

Whereas pharmacists across Nova Scotia play an integral role in the delivery of health care; and

Whereas on October 21, 2012, the Pharmacy Association of Nova Scotia presented Certificates of Appreciation to members at its annual conference; and

Whereas Craig Connolly of Bedford was awarded a certificate in appreciation for his outstanding service to pharmacy in Nova Scotia;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly congratulate Craig Connolly on receipt of this certificate, and extend our appreciation to him for his significant contributions to both the profession of pharmacy and to his ongoing efforts in improving our health care system.

RESOLUTION NO. 1703

By: Hon. Stephen McNeil (Leader of the Liberal Party)

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

Whereas pharmacists across Nova Scotia play an integral role in the delivery of health care; and

Whereas on October 21, 2012, the Pharmacy Association of Nova Scotia presented Certificates of Appreciation to members at its annual conference; and

Whereas Alicia Spence of Newport was awarded a certificate in appreciation for her outstanding service to pharmacy in Nova Scotia;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly congratulate Alicia Spence on receipt of this certificate, and extend our appreciation to her for her significant contributions to both the profession of pharmacy and to her ongoing efforts in improving our health care system.

RESOLUTION NO. 1704

By: Hon. Stephen McNeil (Leader of the Liberal Party)

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

Whereas pharmacists across Nova Scotia play an integral role in the delivery of health care; and

Whereas on October 21, 2012, the Pharmacy Association of Nova Scotia presented Certificates of Appreciation to members at its annual conference; and

Whereas Heidi Deal of Halifax was awarded a certificate in appreciation for her outstanding service to pharmacy in Nova Scotia;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly congratulate Heidi Deal on receipt of this certificate, and extend our appreciation to her for her significant contributions to both the profession of pharmacy and to her ongoing efforts in improving our health care system.

RESOLUTION NO. 1705

By: Hon. Stephen McNeil (Leader of the Liberal Party)

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

Whereas pharmacists across Nova Scotia play an integral role in the delivery of health care; and

Whereas on October 21, 2012, the Pharmacy Association of Nova Scotia presented Certificates of Appreciation to members at its annual conference; and

Whereas Brian Jarvis of Halifax was awarded a certificate in appreciation for his outstanding service to pharmacy in Nova Scotia;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly congratulate Brian Jarvis on receipt of this certificate, and extend our appreciation to him for his significant contributions to both the profession of pharmacy and to his ongoing efforts in improving our health care system.

RESOLUTION NO. 1706

By: Hon. Stephen McNeil (Leader of the Liberal Party)

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

Whereas pharmacists across Nova Scotia play an integral role in the delivery of health care; and

Whereas on October 21, 2012, the Pharmacy Association of Nova Scotia presented Certificates of Appreciation to members at its annual conference; and

Whereas Jennifer Isenor of Dartmouth was awarded a certificate in appreciation for her outstanding service to pharmacy in Nova Scotia;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly congratulate Jennifer Isenor on receipt of this certificate, and extend our appreciation to her for her significant contributions to both the profession of pharmacy and to her ongoing efforts in improving our health care system.

RESOLUTION NO. 1707

By: Hon. Stephen McNeil (Leader of the Liberal Party)

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

Whereas pharmacists across Nova Scotia play an integral role in the delivery of health care; and

Whereas on October 21, 2012, the Pharmacy Association of Nova Scotia presented Certificates of Appreciation to members at its annual conference; and

Whereas Melissa Smith of Halifax was awarded a certificate in appreciation for her outstanding service to pharmacy in Nova Scotia;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly congratulate Melissa Smith on receipt of this certificate, and extend our appreciation to her for her significant contributions to both the profession of pharmacy and to her ongoing efforts in improving our health care system.

RESOLUTION NO. 1708

By: Hon. Stephen McNeil (Leader of the Liberal Party)

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

Whereas pharmacists across Nova Scotia play an integral role in the delivery of health care; and

Whereas on October 21, 2012, the Pharmacy Association of Nova Scotia presented Certificates of Appreciation to members at its annual conference; and

Whereas David Gardner of Halifax was awarded a certificate in appreciation for his outstanding service to pharmacy in Nova Scotia;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly congratulate David Gardner on receipt of this certificate, and extend our appreciation to him for his significant contributions to both the profession of pharmacy and to his ongoing efforts in improving our health care system.

RESOLUTION NO. 1709

By: Hon. Stephen McNeil (Leader of the Liberal Party)

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

Whereas pharmacists across Nova Scotia play an integral role in the delivery of health care; and

Whereas on October 21, 2012, the Pharmacy Association of Nova Scotia presented Certificates of Appreciation to members at its annual conference; and

Whereas Kathryn Slayter of Hammonds Plains was awarded a certificate in appreciation for her outstanding service to pharmacy in Nova Scotia;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly congratulate Kathryn Slayter on receipt of this certificate, and extend our appreciation to her for her significant contributions to both the profession of pharmacy and to her ongoing efforts in improving our health care system.

RESOLUTION NO. 1710

By: Hon. Stephen McNeil (Leader of the Liberal Party)

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

Whereas pharmacists across Nova Scotia play an integral role in the delivery of health care; and

Whereas on October 21, 2012, the Pharmacy Association of Nova Scotia presented Certificates of Appreciation to members at its annual conference; and

Whereas Bill Skinner of New Glasgow was awarded a certificate in appreciation for his outstanding service to pharmacy in Nova Scotia;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly congratulate Bill Skinner on receipt of this certificate, and extend our appreciation to him for his significant contributions to both the profession of pharmacy and to his ongoing efforts in improving our health care system.

RESOLUTION NO. 1711

By: Hon. Stephen McNeil (Leader of the Liberal Party)

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

Whereas pharmacists across Nova Scotia play an integral role in the delivery of health care; and

Whereas on October 21, 2012, the Pharmacy Association of Nova Scotia presented Certificates of Appreciation to members at its annual conference; and

Whereas Susan Bowles, of Halifax, was awarded a certificate in appreciation for her outstanding service to pharmacy in Nova Scotia;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly congratulate Susan Bowles on receipt of this certificate, and extend our appreciation to her for her significant contributions to both the profession of pharmacy and to her ongoing efforts in improving our health care system.

RESOLUTION NO. 1712

By: Hon. Stephen McNeil (Leader of the Liberal Party)

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

Whereas pharmacists across Nova Scotia play an integral role in the delivery of health care; and

Whereas on October 21, 2012, the Pharmacy Association of Nova Scotia presented Certificates of Appreciation to members at its annual conference; and

Whereas Glenn Rodrigues, of Dartmouth, was awarded a Certificate of Appreciation for his involvement in the development and facilitation of minor ailments boot camp sessions;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly congratulate Glenn Rodrigues on receipt of this certificate, and extend our appreciation to him for his significant contributions to both the profession of pharmacy and to his ongoing efforts in improving our health care system.