



DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Gordon Gosse

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House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 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'll begin the daily routine.

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

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STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Natural Resources.

HON. CHARLIE PARKER: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased today to launch the pilot for the Nova Scotia Moves. It's a program to support sustainable transportation in communities throughout Nova Scotia. Nova Scotians want better transportation choices that over the long term promote healthy living and help protect and preserve our environment for future generations.

Nova Scotians know that sustainable transportation is a way to help our citizens become healthier and our communities more connected; it's a way of providing young and old with access to the services they need; it's about creating strong, vibrant economies in our cities, our towns, and our rural areas; and it is also about reducing our energy use and greenhouse gas emissions so that we draw less heavily on our precious natural resources.

Mr. Speaker, I wonder if I might beg your indulgence to do an introduction?

MR. SPEAKER: Yes.

MR. PARKER: I am pleased this morning, in connection with Nova Scotia Moves, to introduce a couple of guests in our east gallery. We're pleased to have Wayne Groszko, who is a sustainable transportation researcher with the Ecology Action Centre, and also Andrea MacDonald, program manager, Clean Transportation with Clean Nova Scotia. They are in our east gallery and I'd ask all the members to give them a very warm welcome. (Applause)

Mr. Speaker, Nova Scotia Moves is also about reducing our energy use and greenhouse gas emissions so that we draw less heavily on our precious natural resources.

The transportation sector is one of the largest users of energy in this province. The province, through existing funding within the Department of Energy, and in co-operation with the Department of the Environment, will provide grants to support sustainable transportation programs in our communities. This program will support active transportation initiatives that encourage walking and biking, and it will support community transit options so that people who can't afford a car can still travel from one place to another. The fund will also support municipal land-use planning so that future development is designed in a transit-friendly way, where different modes of transportation are easily connected.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, programs that consider cleaner vehicle technologies and fleet efficiency will be eligible. We will support up to 50 per cent of the cost of a project run by municipalities, community groups, social enterprises, and other groups working to promote sustainable transportation. This pilot program has been designed in close consultation with municipalities and community groups across our province. Many of

them have already done excellent work in creating local plans for community transit and for active transportation.

To help provide people in the province with healthier, affordable, and more sustainable transportation options, we must engage with and support our communities. It is our job to help support them in this work. Through this program we want to empower those at the local level to build the systems and partnerships they need and to raise awareness among their residents about why transportation choices matter.

Mr. Speaker, the province is pleased to support this initiative, and if successful, will consider ways to offer further rounds of pilot program funding, certainly, within our budgetary means. This work will support other government initiatives such as Thrive! and jobsHere, and is an excellent example of collaboration between departments. It is also a great example of the work that this government is doing in collaboration with Nova Scotians across this province. By working with municipalities, volunteer organizations, and community groups, we can make great strides in designing a transportation system that is cheaper, cleaner and more convenient, and one that gives Nova Scotians greater choices.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage all Nova Scotians to work together to help shape the future of transportation in communities across this great province.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

MR. ANDREW YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the minister for the copy of his remarks this morning. Sustainable transportation is extremely important and I can recall a couple of years ago, it was either 2009 or 2010, when the government introduced the new greenhouse gas emission targets for the energy sector. One of the things that we raised at the time was that there needed to be, in conjunction and at the same time, a similar move around the transportation sector. So while it is a couple of years later than we had talked about, we are certainly happy to see this finally moving forward.

I think there are a number of questions that I hope will come forward, and I do recognize, Mr. Speaker, that this is a ministerial statement and it's really announcing moving forward with it. I do hope that we will see, as we move forward, some additional details of how this pilot would move forward - for example, how eligibility will be determined, what sort of projects will be eligible for funding and so forth - because I really think that, although I recognize this is a pilot project, the devil will be in the details.

There are a number of challenges, both in the urban and rural communities in our province, when it comes to transportation. The minister, in his remarks, noted the issue of urban land-use planning and one of the things that I hope will get addressed is - we look at places such as Bedford Common and Dartmouth Crossing, Burnside, Bayers Lake, even downtown Halifax, when you talk about the urban areas, where the municipalities have been reluctant to approve things like bus lay-bys and so forth, and they've often used

provincial legislation around the traffic authorities as an excuse not to provide for those things.

Well, of course, that makes many of these areas much less transit friendly. You know, our downtown here was created around that, and many of our communities, our rural communities in the province, were obviously not designed for bus transportation or other forms of shared and sustainable transportation. I hope that as part of this project the department and the minister will be looking at how to encourage those communities as they develop new areas, or as they redevelop some of their main streets, and so forth, to make those much more friendly towards transit, because at the moment many of them are not.

The other element that we need to address in this is many of our smaller rural communities need to have co-operative ventures for this to work. I hope the minister will be looking at supporting those sorts of things, because obviously it is not enough in many areas to just travel from one end of town to the other, it's actually important to be able to travel from one town to another town. That's something that I hope the minister will be looking at with regard to this.

The minister addressed the fact that transportation is one of our heavy energy users, and as we look at the increased price of gasoline - and I think we all recognize that that will continue to go up - I hope the province and the Minister of Energy and the Minister of Environment will be working together to try to find a way to encourage and support municipalities and community groups in their purchase of more energy efficient options, which are often more expensive.

We have seen a number of hybrid and alternative fuel transportation sources in this province, but I think we need to do more of that. We have seen ferries in this province, for example, that at certain times of the year run on biodiesel. Biodiesel often runs from fish waste, as opposed to the high water-use, high energy-use sources such as canola and so forth. So we can be using fish waste and making money from a waste product that is created in many of our rural communities to create that biodiesel. So I think that all of those things feed into that sustainable transportation issue, in addressing this.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, one of the last things I hope that the minister will look at with his colleagues, in terms of this moving forward, is the fact that Nova Scotia currently has one of the lowest levels of funding for municipal transit systems. If you look at the data that has been collected by the national transit association, they've noted that as you come east, the funding from provincial governments to municipalities seems to get less and less, to support that funding. If we want all of our communities in this province to succeed, if we want people who don't have cars or would rather make the choice and leave their car at home to succeed, and for our communities to be integrated and to support economic development in many of these communities, then we have to do that.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for his remarks today, and we'll be watching very carefully as this moves forward. It sounds like a good idea and it sounds like something that's supportive, so we hope that going forward, we'll see more details. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, this initiative is about helping people move about the province, and that's something that is important and something we support on this side of the House. I think of a couple of organizations in my area that do that - Strait Area Transit, which has their office in Port Hawkesbury, and L'Acadie, which is based out of Cheticamp. Those organizations are helping people get around our area and helping to link them up to other services.

I think about the importance of linking up with neighbouring transit services, and I know the government is recognizing that. My hope is that this initiative will help to further support that. I believe the minister referenced that in his remarks - speaking of which, I'd like to thank the minister for sharing an advance copy of his remarks this morning.

People want this service. In my area we've heard about it for years, and I was delighted to see Strait Area Transit form and start to provide the service. The government is doing real good in these areas. It is funding, as I understand it, upward of four-fifths of the cost, so when local residents are using the service, they're only required to pay one-fifth of the cost. Mr. Speaker, that's important particularly for people on fixed incomes, and we know that many people who need to use public transit are on fixed incomes.

I will also make the point that there are many people out there who enjoy using public transit because it's a good way to get around. I've used it myself this summer, and it's an efficient, friendly service. If there's something wrong with your vehicle or you are in a situation where you need the service, you really appreciate it.

I've been to other areas of the world where transit is looked upon very favourably by the population. I've been to Japan, where you can walk underground in Tokyo and you can take a train that passes by every two or three minutes to wherever you want to go. It's amazing. We don't have the population density to have that frequency of service here in this province, but I think people need to start looking at public transit as a very useful and effective means of transport. It certainly is in other countries.

I think we have been slow to adopt here, mainly because the economics don't support the frequency of the transit, and maybe it's not as convenient as it is in those other areas, but nonetheless, I will say that in my area, Strait Area Transit and L'Acadie provide meaningful service.

I want to mention something, too, about Strait Area Transit. I know they are looking at an incentive to try to help local people access the hospital at St. Martha's in

Antigonish, because a lot of people use that hospital and they are required to travel there. I'm hoping that further efforts will be made to help ensure people who want to travel from, say, Inverness County to Antigonish County, that there is an efficient way for them to do that by way of public transit.

Mr. Speaker, I particularly think about seniors and the physically challenged, they need this service, and that is why I'm pleased that we are here to support it today in the Legislature. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal.

HON. MAURICE SMITH: Mr. Speaker, before I introduce my bill today, I'd like your indulgence to introduce some guests we have in your gallery.

MR. SPEAKER: Most certainly.

MR. SMITH: Mr. Speaker, today I'd like to welcome Mike Cassidy, and I'd like people to stand, please, as I call their names. Mike owns Tri-Maritime Bus and I'm pleased to say Mike will start to provide an inter-city bus service here in our province, starting on December 1st.

As well - we appreciate how important this service will be for our university students - today we have with us some students. I'd like to welcome Jonathan Williams and Brian Foster, they are with Students NS; as well, we have Rebecca Rose, Nicole Cooper, and David Ethridge from the Canadian Federation of Students; and finally, we have with us Mr. Bernie Swan. Bernie is a policy analyst with the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal, and Bernie has been working hard to help prepare today's bill that I'm about to introduce. So I will ask the House to welcome all of our guests today.

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

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 133 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 292 of the Revised Statutes of 1989. The Motor Carrier Act, Respecting Inner-city Bus Service. (Hon. Maurice Smith)

Bill No. 134 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 260 of the Revised Statutes of 1989. The Liquor Control Act. (Ms. Diana Whalen)

Bill No. 135 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 260 of the Revised Statutes of 1989. The Liquor Control Act, to Permit the Operation of Businesses that Assist Others in the Making of Beer, Wine or Cider. (Ms. Diana Whalen)

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

NOTICES OF MOTION

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal.

RESOLUTION NO. 2064

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

Whereas on October 23rd Adsum held its 23rd Annual Successful Canadian Women's Dinner, recognizing the work of three women who work to improve the lives of women and children around the world; and

Whereas Mary Coyle, one of the three honorees at the Successful Canadian Women's Dinner, is the former director of the Coady International Institute in Antigonish and the institute's longest-serving director; and

Whereas in her time as director at the Coady, Ms. Coyle oversaw the advancement of the institute's leadership programs, international partnerships, and the new Coady facility on the St. Francis Xavier University campus;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate all three 2012 honorees, and thank Mary Coyle for her work on behalf of women and children both with the Coady Institute and beyond.

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. 2065

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

Whereas since 2008 food bank usage is up more than 38 per cent in Nova Scotia; and

Whereas the power rates have risen 30 per cent under this government's watch; and

Whereas this NDP Government agreed to hand out over \$590 million to six corporations only to watch them lay off 1,310 Nova Scotians, and \$245 million of that went to Bowater and Port Hawkesbury paper companies that slashed wages, rolled back benefits, and left pensioners in the cold;

Therefore be it resolved the member for Eastern Shore still supports the Premier's inaction on power rates, his inability to create jobs even through corporate welfare, and deserting this province and the people of the Eastern Shore.

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

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

Is it agreed?

I hear several Noes.

The notice is tabled.

The honourable member for Inverness.

RESOLUTION NO. 2066

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 Canadian American Club of Watertown, Massachusetts, celebrated their 75th Diamond Jubilee Anniversary from October 19th to 21st; and

Whereas this organization has supported many Nova Scotian Canadians who have made a new home in the United States, by bringing people together to celebrate Canadian heritage and traditional music; and

Whereas dances featuring Celtic music, offering the familiar sounds of home, have been a hallmark of the organization;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly acknowledge the Canadian American Club of Massachusetts on their 75th Anniversary, and wish them continued success.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Finance.

RESOLUTION NO. 2067

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

Whereas the Leader of the Liberal Party said in this Legislature that social work qualifications are insufficient to be Minister of Finance; and

Whereas the Leader of the Liberal Party also said a business background is the proper criteria to qualify one for an economic portfolio; and

Whereas the Leader of the Liberal Party should remember that seated four seats to his right is a social worker who once was the Minister of Economic Development, back in the day when there was a Liberal Government;

Therefore be it resolved that the Leader of the Liberal Party apologize to the member for Cape Breton South for disrespecting his experience and skills as a former social worker, mayor, and Minister of Economic Development.

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

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

Is it agreed?

I hear several Noes.

The notice is tabled.

The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

RESOLUTION NO. 2068

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

Whereas Rodney Habib is the owner of Planet Paws Pet Store, writes a very popular blog, and most recently has been featured in a weekly radio spot on Lite 92.9 to talk about the importance of pet nutrition; and

Whereas the International Summit for Urban Animal Strategies Summit Award was created to recognize those in the companion animal industry in various sectors; and

Whereas Planet Paws is one of four stores across Canada to be nominated for Store of the Year at the 2012 Summit Awards;

Therefore be it resolved that members of the House of Assembly congratulate Mr. Rodney Habib on his achievement after less than one year in business, and wish him many more years of helping us care for the furry members of our families.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Education.

RESOLUTION NO. 2069

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

Whereas the Tools for Life Conference, promoted and organized under the leadership of Jim Roy of Kings Regional Rehabilitation Centre, has successfully continued to grow in its seventh year of operation; and

Whereas the Tools for Life Conference provides an immense opportunity for community members from all walks of life to gain valuable knowledge and insight as to better ways and means of gaining employment, improving wellness, and learning about technology and literacy; and

Whereas the Tools for Life Conference goes beyond this comprehensive mandate and further supports their community by partnering with Feed Nova Scotia as well as several other advocacy departments and organizations both public and private;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly recognize the contributions made by the Tools for Life Conference and those involved with producing and promoting it as an event which assists many Nova Scotians from all backgrounds.

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 Dartmouth East.

RESOLUTION NO. 2070

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

Whereas the Halifax Regional Municipality held elections for all municipal districts in the Halifax Regional School Board on October 30, 2012; and

Whereas Dartmouth East resident Gin Yee was first elected to HRSB in 2004, re-elected in 2008, and in 2012 was elected as the representative for District No. 3; and

Whereas Mr. Gin Yee has since been elected as the new chairman of the Halifax Regional School Board;

Therefore be it resolved that members of the House of Assembly congratulate Mr. Gin Yee on his election as Halifax Regional School Board chairman and wish him success during his term.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations.

RESOLUTION NO. 2071

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

Whereas Queen Elizabeth II celebrated her ascension to the throne 60 years ago with her Diamond Jubilee; and

Whereas the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal was struck to commemorate this once-in-a-lifetime event; and

Whereas Cecil Dixon of Enfield was honoured with the presentation of a Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal for his dedication and commitment to helping when needed in his community;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulate Cecil Dixon on his Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal and acknowledge with gratitude the reasons for which it was awarded to him.

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. 2072

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

Whereas Allison Mahar recently released her latest novel, *Time Flies When You're Chasing Spies*; and

Whereas Allison has given her release statement a significant and commendable ask: "If parents can get their child to Page 10, I'll get them the rest of the way through"; and

Whereas like her first release *I, The Spy*, her latest work will have an appeal for all who enjoyed the Harry Potter series;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly recognize and congratulate my former student Allison Mahar, for her work as an author and innovative partner with David Bowlby on their Dempsey Corner Orchards operation.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Energy.

RESOLUTION NO. 2073

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

Whereas Shawn McNamara has served as a town councillor for eight years, representing the citizens of Ward 2 in Pictou, Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Shawn has worked hard as a town councillor and, as a result, has helped make the Town of Pictou a better place to live and work; and

Whereas the people of Pictou thank Shawn in recognition and appreciation for his years of dedicated service to the Town of Pictou;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulate Shawn McNamara for his eight years of service to the Town of Pictou and wish him every success in his future endeavours.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Colchester North.

RESOLUTION NO. 2074

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

Whereas for the last several years Yarmouth County resident Edd Morton has transformed his home into a winter wonderland during the Christmas season; and

Whereas with countless lights and decorations adorning his property, Mr. Morton's home has become a famous Yarmouth County landmark during the Christmas holidays and is known to many as simply Edd's Place; and

Whereas for many families throughout the tri-counties, it is a Christmas tradition to take an evening stroll or a drive to visit Edd's Place;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly recognize Edd Morton for the time and effort he dedicates to turning his home into a place that brings so much joy to so many during the Christmas holidays.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Kings North.

RESOLUTION NO. 2075

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

Whereas 2444 Kings County Royal Canadian Army Cadet Corps has been helping its members develop citizenship and leadership skills since 1959; and

Whereas the Lord Strathcona Cup is awarded annually by the Nova Scotia branch of the Army Cadet League of Canada to the cadet corps judged to be the best in the province in training its cadets in leadership, citizenship and physical fitness and in promoting interest in Canada's Army; and

Whereas 2444 Kings County Royal Canadian Army Cadet Corps, one of 28 corps in Nova Scotia, was the 2011 recipient of the Lord Strathcona Cup and once again in 2012, has been chosen the winner of the Lord Strathcona Cup;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia House of Assembly congratulate the members, leaders, sponsors, families and supporters of the 2444 Kings County Royal Canadian Army Cadet Corps on earning the Lord Strathcona Cup for 2012 and on being recognized as the best army cadet corps in Nova Scotia for the second year in a row.

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 Hammonds Plains-Upper Sackville.

RESOLUTION NO. 2076

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

Whereas on October 14, 2012, the Cobequid Community Health Centre Foundation held their 19th Annual Walk Run for the Health of Our Community in Lower Sackville; and

Whereas participants walked and ran for up to 10 kilometres around the community, following weeks of fundraising efforts which raised over \$82,000; and

Whereas the proceeds, in combination with an additional \$75,000 raised at their summer Grand Day event, will go towards funding a Steris Reliance Endoscope Reprocessing System for use within the Endoscopy Suite for screening colon cancer;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulate the members of the Cobequid Community Health Centre Foundation on their fundraising success and commend them for their tireless efforts of raising funds to better their community hospital.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Cumberland North.

RESOLUTION NO. 2077

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

Whereas Provincial Aerospace is an international aerospace defence company that provides customized Maritime surveillance training for global clients; and

Whereas Provincial Aerospace has recently announced the creation of up to 30 new, good jobs in their Halifax location; and

Whereas the Nova Scotia Government's jobsHere plan is helping companies like this create good jobs and grow the economy as we turn the corner on 20 years of Canada's worst economic growth left to us by previous Liberal and Progressive Conservative Governments;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House congratulate Provincial Aerospace on their expansion plans, which will create exciting opportunities for Nova Scotian families.

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 Deputy Premier on an introduction.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, in your gallery we have two distinguished people today. One is Riho Kruuv, Chargé d'Affaires for the Estonian Embassy in Ottawa. Beside Mr. Kruuv is a good friend of many in this House - and a friend and sometime arguing companion, but we always enjoy boxing together - my good friend and a good friend of many, John Soosaar. We'd ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of the House.

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

The honourable member for Lunenburg.

RESOLUTION NO. 2078

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

Whereas the Portia White Prize recognizes cultural and artistic excellence on the part of a Nova Scotian artist who has attained professional status, mastery, and recognition in their discipline, and enables the Province of Nova Scotia to promote excellence in the arts by honouring an outstanding Nova Scotian artist who has made a significant contribution to the province's cultural life; and

Whereas Laurie Swim of Lunenburg, whose work graces many private and public collections including the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, Nova Scotia Art Bank, Nova Scotia Designer Crafts Council, the City of Toronto Art Collection, and the Museum of Arts and Design in New York, has worked as an artist for some 40 years, developing unique and innovative treatments to fashion her imagery in textiles with fabric and thread; and

Whereas Laurie Swim is one of three artists who have been nominated for the 2012 Portia White Award, which was awarded on October 26, 2012, in Halifax;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulate Laurie Swim of Lunenburg on her nomination for the 2012 Portia White Award and recognize her commitment to artistic growth and professional development.

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 Guysborough-Sheet Harbour.

RESOLUTION NO. 2079

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

Whereas on October 8, 2012, the Canso and Area Minor Hockey program had an early start for the 2012-13 season; and

Whereas the coaches, managers, assistants, and board members volunteer their time to organize and implement the program; and

Whereas having children involved in the program promotes healthy physical activity and positive social growth and instills collaborative effort and teamwork in our youth;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly congratulate the coaches, managers, assistants, and board members on their volunteerism and wish them success in the 2012-13 hockey season.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Energy.

RESOLUTION NO. 2080

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

Whereas Sara Danielle Watters of Westville demonstrated a joy of life at a young age through competitive running events in both Ottawa and Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Sara Watters and her friend Courtney Roddick showed leadership in starting Westville's first Walk for ALS, exceeding their own \$5,000 goal by raising a total of \$9,100; and

Whereas in June of this year, Sara Danielle Watters graduated from Northumberland Regional High School and was awarded the \$24,000 St. Francis Xavier University J.P. McCarthy Scholarship, along with bursaries and awards from the Knights

of Columbus, Sutherland Harris Memorial Foundation, the Rotary Club of Westville, the Pictou East NDP Association, the Northumberland Student Council, and the Bergengren Credit Union;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia House of Assembly congratulate Sara Watters in recognition of her talent and leadership abilities, and wish her success in her university studies.

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.

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, would you please call the order of business, Private and Local Bills for Second Reading.

PRIVATE AND LOCAL BILLS FOR SECOND READING

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 117.

Bill No. 117 - Anne Murray Centre Tax Exemption Act.

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

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise to move that Bill No. 117 be now read for a second time, and just to say a few words about the need for this bill. First of all, moving second reading of Bill No. 117 in my most important job, which is as the MLA for Cumberland South, which includes the Town of Springhill, which is where the Anne Murray Centre is located, I don't think there's a single Nova Scotian who does not know by now that Springhill is the home of Anne Murray, one of the most famous worldwide, if not the most famous Canadian around the world.

I don't know how many members here in the House have had a chance to visit the Anne Murray Centre and visit Springhill - I hope most have and for those who haven't, I do want to take a moment and invite them to Springhill to experience the entire town, including the Anne Murray Centre, which is a real centrepiece of the downtown business district in Springhill.

Mr. Speaker, several decades ago Anne Murray allowed the centre to be built in her name, and was very generous to the construction of the Anne Murray Centre. She donated many important pieces of Anne Murray memorabilia, including her Grammy Awards, her gold and platinum records - of which there are many - and her various dresses and gowns that she has worn at Grammy Award ceremonies throughout the years.

It is a great place to visit, Mr. Speaker. In fact, I know from personal experience that you can even go into a recording booth and record yourself singing a duet with Anne Murray - now what could be better than that? I have exactly one copy of my own duet, which I will not be sharing with any members of the House of Assembly. It's a cherished recording of mine - perhaps at some future year I will play it out loud. I'm tempted to say that when I do play it at home for friends, they often say what a beautiful voice, and who is that who is singing with Jamie Baillie?

In all seriousness, Mr. Speaker, the Anne Murray Centre is a very important part of the downtown business district in Springhill, and it is important that it be put on a firm financial footing for this time and for all time.

There have been many initiatives over the years to ensure its longevity. Some recent ones that I just want to point out quickly are: my own work with the previous Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal, who has a connection to Cumberland County of his own, to get appropriate signage on Highway No. 104 to direct visitors into Springhill, so that they know that the Anne Murray Centre is there at Exit 4 - that was actually a joint effort of the Department of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism and the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal, and that work proceeds; in addition, Mr. Speaker, the Town of Springhill itself, its town council, has worked out this tax arrangement that is before the House today to enable the Anne Murray Centre to be on a firmer financial footing for all time.

I'm actually doing this at the request of the Town of Springhill that wrote me a letter and asked me to bring this bill forward as it requires provincial legislation. A resolution of town council was passed, asking that this bill come before the House for consideration and approval.

The Anne Murray Centre Board of Directors has written me to express their support of what is going on. I think it is important that all members know that, because this is part of a multi-part plan to ensure the long-term financial health of the Anne Murray Center and to ensure that it's there for many, many generations of Nova Scotians to come, to enjoy,

and also for the many visitors to our province, many of whom enter Nova Scotia through Cumberland County, many of whom drive through Cumberland County, and of course we want to encourage as many to stop and see the many great tourist features of Cumberland County when they are coming through. The Anne Murray Centre is certainly an anchor for Springhill and for Cumberland South that draws tourists off the highway and into our smaller towns and villages.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud, as the MLA for Cumberland South, to move second reading of this bill today, the intent of which, with the full support of the town itself and the Anne Murray Centre, is to place the Anne Murray Centre on firmer financial footing. Just very specifically, what the bill does is exempt the non-business part of the Anne Murray Centre, which is the museum part, from future property taxes. The Anne Murray Centre really has two pieces: one is the museum piece; the other is the gift shop, which is a business, which will continue to be taxed as a commercial entity in the Town of Springhill. That is the effect of this bill and that will go a long way to securing a very healthy Anne Murray Centre for many years to come.

With those few words, Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of Bill No. 117.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations. (Interruptions)

HON. JOHN MACDONELL: I don't have a recording, Mr. Speaker, but I am referred to as noteworthy.

I just want to stand in my place to support the member for Cumberland South. Questions by the municipality around the tax exemption established for the museum part of the Anne Murray Centre had come to staff at Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations. This legislation was under the advice of staff in my department and certainly we ensured that any hurdles that might have been in the way to prevent this were taken care of.

I think the member for Cumberland South is right, I can't believe there is anybody in Nova Scotia who wouldn't know the name Anne Murray and what she means to the people of Nova Scotia. I think this is a duly right move for the council to consider this and we're particularly glad to be able to support them and support the member for Cumberland South on his initiative. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 117. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

Ordered that this bill be referred to the Committee on Private and Local Bills.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, would you please call the order of business, Public Bills for Second Reading.

PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 131.

Bill No. 131 - School Board Members Duties Clarification Act.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Education.

HON. RAMONA JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 131 be read a second time.

I'm pleased to speak to this bill today. These amendments to the Education Act clearly define the roles and responsibilities of elected school board members. As we know, new and returning school board members were sworn in at each of the province's eight school boards earlier this month. This is the perfect time to introduce this legislation that will give them a clear definition of their duties and help them succeed over the next four years.

I appreciate the commitment that our school board members make to supporting student achievement in all of their regions. We have many talented, passionate individuals on our school boards who are dedicated to making a difference and helping students and families. For many of our school board members this legislation will not change what they are doing, they will know what their role is within our education system and that they are serving it well.

But we know there have been a few cases where board members were not clear on the scope of their roles and responsibilities. When Deloitte did an audit of the South Shore Regional School Board last Fall, they recommended that the province should do more to help elected members understand their roles. The Deloitte report found out that not everyone is clear on the role of the school board members here in Nova Scotia. Parents and community members have also raised this as a concern as well.

The Education Act currently defines the duties and responsibilities of virtually every key party within our educational system. It explains the duties of students, parents, teachers, principals, support staff, school advisory councils and superintendents. But when it comes to school boards, it doesn't define the roles and responsibilities of elected board members as distinct from the operational board.

Some of our school boards have experienced governance challenges over the past decade. I don't want to dwell on the negative but we know that in the past we've had cases where some school board members got caught up in discussing issues like bus routes or teacher hirings, for example, when these are the types of operational details that should be clearly handled by staff. This doesn't happen everywhere and I want to stress again that the majority of our school board members are doing a great job on behalf of the students in Nova Scotia.

But we have heard from parents, from sources like Deloitte and from those within the school board system themselves that we should do more to make sure everyone knows just what a school board member's role is within our education system. Yet, no government in Nova Scotia has ever taken the important step of defining elected members' roles and responsibilities within legislation. With this bill, we are doing that.

Mr. Speaker, in Kids and Learning First we made a commitment to look at our education system and make sure it is operating as efficiently and as effectively as possible to put students first. This is another step in that process. We are working with school boards to help them govern and operate as effectively as they can. This legislation clearly lays out the duties of the school board member in three key areas. School board members should focus on the achievement of all students enrolled in all of our school board schools and programs.

Elected members should respect that the superintendent is responsible for the day-to-day management of the school board and school board members should act in the best interests of the school board as a whole. We believe these changes will help boards govern and operate more effectively. I think school board members and staff agree.

Before we introduced this bill I did have the opportunity to speak with Jamie Stevens, the chairman of the Nova Scotia School Boards Association, and he was supportive of these clear definitions and Gin Yee, the newly elected chairman of the Halifax Regional School Board told us that “. . .these changes will help promote good governance in school boards by making sure school board members know clearly what their roles are, this will help all of us focus on helping our students.” I will table his remarks.

These amendments clarify that board members should focus on developing policy and making decisions while entrusting staff to implement those policies and the decisions. This is another step in helping our school boards.

In the Spring, Education Department staff held information sessions with perspective school board candidates to help them understand school board responsibilities. We went to eight regions of the province with those information sessions, before the election.

The department is now also holding orientation sessions for all of our new and returning board members. We continue to work with boards, the Nova Scotia School Boards Association and all of our partners as we focus on our shared goal of putting kids and learning first. With these words, Mr. Speaker, I will take my seat. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester North.

HON. KAREN CASEY: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill No. 131, an Act to Amend Chapter 1 of the Acts of 1995-96, the Education Act, Respecting the Clarification of School Board Members Duties. All educators and all members of this House, I think, would welcome a piece of legislation that would be designed to make things better for students in our schools. So it was with some hope, I guess, that I went to the briefing, read the press release, and again, sadly disappointed.

Mr. Speaker, Bill No. 131 really does nothing to make things better for students in our classrooms. The minister talks about roles and responsibilities and duties that are in the bill. If the minister had checked more closely, she would find that there is a section - Section 64, in fact, of the Education Act - which speaks to the roles and responsibilities of school boards. They are very clearly defined. There is also a suggestion in the press release and in the comments from the minister at the briefing that this will cause school board members to focus on student success and student achievement.

Mr. Speaker, I would suggest to you and other members of the House that people who offer to sit on school boards do that because they are interested in what is best for students. Otherwise, why would they do it? They come to the school board table with that motivation and with that passion to make things better for students, so to suggest that we need a bill to speak to that is really ridiculous. This is absolutely another opportunity for the government to say, we have a bill on education and it adds to the count, so at the end of the session there will be one more that they can say - we've brought before the House.

Mr. Speaker, our role here is to try to look at legislation that will make things better and from the Education Department, from the Minister of Education, that should definitely focus on students. It should not be redundant; it should not be something that is already in the Act.

The minister spoke about comments from the chairman of the Halifax Regional School Board. I stood beside the chairman at the briefing yesterday and I listened to his comment to the media about - would this make any difference. His response was pretty clear - he said it won't make any difference with the Halifax board because that's already in our bylaws. So we're looking at a piece of legislation, which we had hoped - I think every member had hoped - would focus on students, would bring about legislation that would make things better for students in our schools. We have board members who, I would expect, might be a bit insulted by this piece of legislation because they are there in the best interest of students, they do make tough decisions in the best interest of students, and they

do want excellence for all students. To suggest that we need something in the Act to address that is, I believe, quite disrespectful.

Mr. Speaker, one more time we have seen a piece of legislation from the minister on education, which does not focus on kids. It does not focus on bringing about change but it does add to the count. Thank you.

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

MR. KEITH BAIN: Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to stand in my place this morning to speak on Bill No. 131. As a board member for 15 years in my previous life, I was very surprised yesterday when I saw the bill that came out from the minister because everything that's in this bill is already in the Education Act, the roles and responsibilities of school boards.

School board members, as has been mentioned by the member for Colchester North, go to be elected to serve the school board because they already are committed to the advancement of the education of the children within the system. Board members are policy makers and that is something that's spelled out initially when they become board members. Over the years when I was there, after an election the NSSBA always had a workshop and that would be telling board members their roles and responsibilities. This bill doesn't change a thing to that. The roles and responsibilities of board members are still there and it's important that they know that they are policy makers. We always have to remember that the board has one employee, and that one employee is the superintendent, and that the superintendent, it's his or her responsibility to enact the policies that the board has passed.

You know, the minister mentioned in her remarks that board members get calls about bus routes and everything like that. Well, board members are always going to get calls about bus routes, they're always going to get concerns that come from parents. But board members also know that when they do get those calls, they ask the questions: have you contacted the coordinator of transportation, have you contacted the superintendent? Board members are there, if they've gone through all that, from the coordinator to the superintendent and didn't get the answer from them, that's what board members are there for as well. So there are responsibilities that board members have that have been there, well, 21 years ago they were there when I was elected as a board member, and they're still there. So they do have the roles and responsibilities and I can't see what this bill will do, other than having, as the member mentioned, another bill to table in this Legislature, but I look forward to it going through second reading.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Queens.

MS. VICKI CONRAD: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to stand in my place to speak on second reading of Bill No. 131. I want to congratulate all of the newly elected board

members and certainly the newly elected board members at the South Shore Regional School Board who were sworn in on November 14th, this week.

There are eight new members on the South Shore Regional School Board and I want to congratulate and welcome back from District 1, Elliott Payzant, who is now vice-chairman of the board; from District 2, we have Elizabeth Crossland; and I want to congratulate from District 3, Cheryl Fougere; District 4, we have elected Jennifer Naugler, and Jennifer has also been newly elected as the chairman of the South Shore Regional School Board. In District 5 we have Elmer Garber; in District 6 we have Theresa Griffin elected, and our African Nova Scotian representative for the South Shore Regional School Board is Vernon Simms. The appointed First Nations representative, and a friend of mine, is also new to the board but not new to school board issues, and that is Charmaine Stevens from Port Medway.

I also want to extend congratulations to Superintendent Nancy Pynch-Worthylake as she continues her great work with this newly elected board. I also want to congratulate all of the staff at the South Shore Regional School Board who work diligently year after year to serve students and the school communities all across the South Shore.

Mr. Speaker, we're all very proud of anybody who puts their name forward during any type of election, whether it is school board elections, whether it is municipal elections, provincial elections, federal elections, or elections to any particular board. Any member who puts their name forward obviously does so in the best interests of the people they are looking to represent, whether it be school children and their parents or whether it be constituents from a broader geographic area.

Those people who put their names forward and come forward each school board election, sincerely want to do the best service and give the best service and provide the best quality environment for students right across the district they are running in. They sincerely believe in quality education for students. They sincerely believe they will do the best service they can during their term of election. All board members who are elected to those positions clearly understand that is the reason why they have put their name forward in the first place.

Sometimes, though, new members who find themselves sitting on a board, especially new members for the first time, may not always be aware of the roles and responsibilities of a governing board. Those roles sometimes need to be clearly defined so that there is that understanding of what that level of governance looks like. This piece of legislation does just that. It clarified the roles of board members, what their duties are, and how they service within the structure of the board.

This piece of legislation is going to be very helpful to school boards. It's going to be very helpful to new members who perhaps have never had the experience of sitting on boards before. We certainly have seen in the past, Mr. Speaker, not just school boards but

boards in various capacities perhaps not functioning as well and as efficiently as they could, if their roles are not clearly defined. We all know that school board members are elected officials who work hard, genuinely work hard to help our students succeed in their education. I think we all want a school board system that functions well and, indeed, helps our students succeed.

During my time as an MLA, I've certainly heard from people in my constituency and even board members themselves, having questions about the role of school boards. Certainly constituents sometimes are not clear on the roles and functions of school board members. Indeed, the honourable colleague across the way pointed out that some school board members, and most school board members, will receive calls from constituents or parents asking about school bus stops and suggesting changes that could be made. So clearly, constituents themselves are not clear on the roles and functions of school board members. I think this piece of legislation will certainly help clarify that as well, not only for school boards but also for the broader constituency.

We all know that these are elected positions and everyone should be clear on what their roles and responsibilities are, of school boards and of those school board members, Mr. Speaker. No government in Nova Scotia has ever taken this important step before in defining legislation for elected school board members' roles and responsibilities, as distinct from the board as a corporate entity. These legislative changes will help give elected board members a clearer focus on their primary role and taking a big picture approach that puts kids and learning first. I want to stress that it is about putting kids and learning first and there is no question that people who put their names forward to be elected officials, absolutely, certainly understand that it's kids and learning first.

A good example of putting kids and learning first, Mr. Speaker, is looking at the new build, the new South Queens Junior High School that is - actually we just put shovels in the ground a month and a bit ago. This school is a one of its kind in the province. The design of this school is a wonderful open concept. It's a design where it will allow children to get the benefit of working in open classrooms, and they are able to share ideas and work on projects within that open concept. This is truly a design that will set a precedent for new school construction in the province over many years to come.

The students have been a huge part of that new build, and that's so important that our students in Queens have been able to speak about this new school, they have shared in the concept design, they have shared in the planning, and they truly are the kids who will succeed. Indeed, Mr. Speaker, we are putting kids and learning first by involving our kids in one of the primary functions when they see that infrastructure built to serve their learning needs.

Mr. Speaker, this is a project that the province has invested in excess of \$7 million of monies. The school board, the newly elected school board members have also been very

clear about their support for this new school and this initiative, and I know that they look forward to seeing the doors open as well, as they serve the constituents of Queens.

I want to get back to the bill, Mr. Speaker, and talk a little bit more about the amendments. The proposed amendments of this piece of legislation define that school board members should maintain a focus on helping all of the region's students - and that's so important to help all of the region's students succeed. As I've said before, elected people, or people who put their names forward for elective position, certainly understand that their role is to help students succeed. Members are meant to act in the best interests of the school and all of its students, and all board members understand that - they absolutely get that - but this is clarity in defining the roles between the school board and the board staff.

Superintendents are responsible for the day-to-day management of school boards and implementing the decisions that elected boards make. I think that is a very important bit of clarity that needs to be understood and should be understood. Last November, the Deloitte audit of the South Shore Regional School Board recommended that the province help school board members understand their role - and I want to underline that and really emphasize that that was a recommendation that came out of that report from an audit of the South Shore Regional School Board - so that is what this piece of legislation does.

We're moving forward on that recommendation and we're defining clearly what the roles and the responsibilities are for school board members and how distinct they are from the board's operational staff, and this is clearly to help school boards govern more effectively, and that is so important

That's what the Deloitte audit clearly laid out and, unfortunately, we have seen in this province, over the years, dysfunctions among some school boards, and those dysfunctions - and it's not a slight on the members who have been elected, not at all, but what it is is a misunderstanding of what one's responsibility is within the mandate of that particular governing body, so our government has taken very seriously this recommendation by Deloitte and we are enshrining in legislation the overarching roles and responsibilities of board members. Again, I want to emphasize that this is not about any particular individual school board member, it's not about any school board that over the past many years perhaps have seen themselves in a situation where they have been seen, or it's perceived, that they are not governing effectively. What this does is it certainly assists board members in defining their roles and understanding those roles.

In addition to this legislation, our government held information sessions with prospective school board candidates this Spring, and that's another important piece that we have put forward, to hold those information sessions. There are also orientation sessions being held with newly-elected boards to explain the types of decisions they will face, such as school reviews or approving a budget.

These sessions and these orientation sessions are very important, especially for newly-elected board members who may not have served in a governing position in the past - perhaps they don't clearly understand the defined roles of a board's mandate. These sessions are very important. We want to ensure that our boards work effectively and efficiently and that they put kids and learning first in our school environments. Not everyone has that same understanding of those governing roles and what decisions they'll face.

As my colleague pointed out earlier, many school board members are faced with questions that they're not necessarily equipped to answer, but they direct those questions back to the appropriate staff within the school boards that can deal effectively with some of those questions.

By introducing these amendments, our government is outlining the roles and the responsibilities of elected school board members in a publicly-accessible way. We don't want to see boards fail. We don't want to see boards being perceived as not doing their jobs effectively. We don't want elected board members to be perceived as putting other interests first before kids and learning, because this government and this Minister of Education have clearly outlined our government's position on Kids and Learning First. That is the most fundamental guiding principle that will carry these new school boards through the next coming years. So it's very important that they understand their role, that they understand the importance of putting kids and learning first.

I can tell you, in all sincerity, the eight new members of the newly-elected board for the South Shore Regional School Board - again, Elliot Payzant, vice-chair, who has been with the South Shore Regional School Board for many years, clearly understands his role and his duties. He served very well as past chair of the South Shore Regional School Board. I have the utmost respect for Mr. Payzant. He serves on that board and has much experience as an educator for many years. He's very well respected in his community, and I was not surprised that he was re-elected as a school board member to the South Shore Regional School Board.

I know that with his past experience as chair and his experience on the board in the past, he will be able to mentor the new school board members as they start to see their defined role. He certainly will be one of those board members who will be able to, as I say, mentor those new school board members. I know that he will galvanize those members around the table and they will be a very effective board. They will get past the hurdle of a year or so ago when the board was perceived to be ineffective and clearly was ineffective for various reasons.

I have no doubt that those eight new members, those newly-elected members on the South Shore Regional School Board, will indeed understand their role, and they will carry out their duties as effectively and as efficiently as they can. I know those eight members will indeed put kids and learning first.

I just want to go back to the orientation sessions. The addition of information and orientation sessions will also help to ensure that elected school board members understand the role they are taking on and the process that they will work within and some of the decision making that they will be responsible for. In Kids and Learning First, our plan for Primary to Grade 12 education, our government and this minister have made a commitment, a very important commitment, to look at our education system and make sure that it is operating as efficiently as possible to put students first. So this government and this minister have been very engaged in the process and this minister has been very forward-thinking in terms of our education system and continues to reach out across school boards and right across the province in delivering that message about how important it is to put kids and learning first.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud of the accomplishments of this government and this minister for all of the good work that she has been doing in her capacity as minister. She surely understands how important it is to put our kids and learning first.

You know, education is fundamental to all of us in the province and having our young children get a head start in their early years is so important, and that's certainly what Kids and Learning First is all about. It's giving them that strong foundation, not just in the early years but from Primary to Grade 12, right through our children's educational journey. It certainly will lay a strong foundation for them, as they pursue other educational opportunities, whether it be secondary education through university or community college, or whether they're moving into the workforce right away, our Kids and Learning First will certainly give that strong foundation to allow our students to be better equipped as they mature and move into the working world.

So again, our government's commitment to look at our education system certainly is ensuring that it is working effectively and this legislation clearly defining our board members' roles will help that. It will ensure that the structure of governing effectively and efficiently within our school boards will indeed help build on that foundation for Kids and Learning First. This legislation is clearly a step in the process that we are continuing and that is putting kids and learning first.

Mr. Speaker, our government will continue to work with school boards to help them govern and operate as effectively as they can, and we're also committed to develop a schedule of school board performance reviews to help them govern effectively. I think that's very important too. Reviews are very important for many of us. You know, sometimes we're working in our various positions and after a while, if we're not being reviewed, or if someone is not questioning our progress or is asking us how we think we're doing, and if we don't have the ability to do some self-evaluation, sometimes we get a little complacent and we can start to blur the lines between what our roles are and what our responsibilities are and how we effectively communicate that.

So I think review processes are very important and this is one tool that we're providing to school boards so that we don't need to have a situation like we had seen with the South Shore Regional School Board where an independent review is being done to try to stem the flow of perception that something is not working effectively. So a review process partway in certainly will allow boards to evaluate, have an evaluation of their performance, for them to have a clear understanding and to see how they are effectively working, so that they can see that indeed, the mandate they are following is putting kids and learning first. So a review process is not a process that should be viewed negatively, it should be viewed as positive. We all benefit from evaluations, from reviews to allow us to do things better, Mr. Speaker. That's another defining piece of this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I can't stress enough how important this legislation is, how important it is for new boards, how important it is for newly-elected board members. At the end of the day we want to see our board members succeed, we want to see them achieve the goals within their school board's mandate, we want to see them really, truly be a key, playing a key role in our kids and Kids and Learning First.

Again, as I said previously, members of our communities who put their names forward for an elected position, whether it be for a school board, whether it be for any other type of board or whether it be for municipal representation, provincial or federal, Mr. Speaker, members of our communities who put their names forward do so with all sincerity and intention of serving the constituents they've been elected to represent, in a fair and democratic manner. They want to ensure the best services provided and certainly for school board members, they indeed want to see our children succeed. That is their first and foremost passion, our children.

Again, I want to congratulate the members of the South Shore Regional School Board and I want to wish them all the success as they move forward over the next several years within their mandate. I look forward to meeting them over the coming weeks, to personally give them my congratulations. I want them to know, as well, that as one of the elected members on the South Shore, my door will always be open to communicate with them, to assist them in any way that I can, to convey their concerns to the minister, to my government if they have any concerns. I want to offer them, Mr. Speaker, a partnership between my office, as the MLA representing the riding of Queens, and I want to offer them the partnership that they can count on, that they can come and speak with me if they do have any areas of concern.

Also, when I meet the members personally, I want to convey to them that the MLAs on the South Shore - myself and my colleague from Lunenburg, my colleague from Lunenburg West, my colleague from Chester-St. Margaret's - we have met in the past. (Interruptions) I hear Shelburne, Mr. Speaker, and Tri-County School Board is actually separate from the South Shore Regional School Board, so I haven't had the opportunity to meet the members of the Tri-County School Board.

What I can tell you is that over the last three and four years and even longer, since I've been a member in 2006, I have been meeting regularly with members of the South Shore Regional School Board, I have been invited into their Chambers, I have been privy to their discussions, their concerns. They have been very open and transparent with me over the many years.

My colleagues who I just mentioned and myself, we, too, have met on regular occasions, regular meetings with the members and the superintendent and staff as well. I expect that to continue with the new members and the new board. I look forward to that; I look forward to sitting down at first meeting with the new board, and with my colleagues, and to clearly state that we're interested in a partnership. We're interested in assisting them in their role and that we all have the same goal and that is to ensure the best education for our children, that is putting kids and learning first, to make sure that we all work together to strengthen that foundation that this government and this minister have clearly laid out.

Our kids are so important and our children's future is important, so we want to ensure that they have the best chance in life as they start out the door. Those of us who have children - mine are grown but certainly I remember the first day of school was always exciting and certainly in the early years when children are so eager to meet up with their schoolmates, they are thrilled to be learning; they want to learn, they want to be engaged. You know, when you watch your child step on the school bus, certainly for the first time, you want to make sure they are getting the best education; that they are getting the best in supports; that indeed, their learning is put first, before anything else, Mr. Speaker. That is clearly what this government has been doing and certainly the Minister of Education has put out a wonderful plan for future years.

Mr. Speaker, I'm soon going to take my place because I think I've pretty much laid out all of the - I'm going to take my seat because there may be other members who want to speak to this important piece of legislation. I look forward to seeing it move forward to the Law Amendments Committee and this certainly has my support. Again, congratulations to the South Shore Regional School Board and I look forward to meeting them very soon. Thank you.

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

MR. MAT WHYNOTT: Mr. Speaker, thank you to the Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism. I'm glad to stand on my feet on another Friday. I was able to stand in this Chamber last Friday and have the Opposition intently listening to me and I'm glad to see them here listening intently, as well, again today.

Mr. Speaker, it certainly is a pleasure to do this and I do want to recognize the newly-elected board members and the former board members who have put their name on the ballot this time, during the municipal and school board elections, but also the former members. In particular, I want to recognize Donna Hubbard, who is a school board member

for Sackville and area. She lives in Middle Sackville and grew up and taught in Sackville her whole life. She really was a true gem in the work she did as a school board member for the four years she served. She is a long-term teacher and she's done a lot of great things for our community. I do want to recognize her as someone who represented the Sackvilles, Beaver Bank, Fall River, Waverley, Windsor Junction - I believe that is all that she served.

People sometimes don't recognize the geographic size of school board areas. They are just massive and the school board members themselves don't necessarily get the credit for all the work they do on behalf of the people who elected them, so I do want to say that - as well as David Finlayson who served the communities of St. Margarets Bay, Timberlea, I believe, as well as Bedford and Hammonds Plains. He also served his community well in serving on the Halifax Regional School Board. I know he is a card-carrying Progressive Conservative, but he is a great guy to work with. He did stand up for the people he represented, and I do give kudos to him for the work that he did on behalf of the people that he represented on the school board. So again, David Finlayson didn't put his name back on the ballot, but I wanted to thank him publicly and on the floor of the Legislature for the work that he has done.

Now, we do have two new school board members representing those areas. One is David Wright. David Wright is from Sackville. He's very involved in the Gertrude Parker Elementary School through the School Advisory Council and the PTO. He has showed some true leadership, and I think that he will - you know, I'm not speaking on his behalf, but I think that as a new board member, defining the roles of school board members and putting into legislation is something that is positive, and we need to move that forward. So I think that certainly is a good thing. He has been involved in the Gertrude Parker Elementary School community for many years. He's a father himself, and it's good to see that he did win that. He's a young guy. He's going to be able to bring a different perspective as a young father bringing his kids up in the system, and I think that's a positive thing.

As well, Steve Warburton now represents the communities of Hammonds Plains, Bedford - out to St. Margarets Bay, I believe, or Tantallon - on the school board. He actually didn't have to run an election campaign. He was acclaimed, but again, nonetheless, I'm sure Steve has been involved in his community as well, as far as the school community is concerned, and putting his name on the ballot is a courageous thing.

Mr. Speaker, as we all know in this Legislature, we have people who run who are successful and people who aren't successful in their ultimate goal of being elected. That is something that I think sometimes we do take for granted. As I always say, we live in a political bubble when we are in this Chamber, and it really keeps us grounded. It keeps us grounded when we're able to get out to talk to our constituents, go to events, and go door knocking.

When I first got elected in 2009, I took the advice of the member for Timberlea-Prospect, where he said to me that you have to ensure that you keep in contact with your people. I have taken that advice and I usually put aside a couple hours a week, either on a Monday or on a Friday, to get out and do some canvassing to keep us grounded in what we do in this place. That's truly what it's about.

I look forward to working with the new board at the Halifax Regional School Board. I also want to congratulate Carole Olsen, who has been appointed the Deputy Minister of Education. She served many years as the superintendent of the board. I also congratulate the acting superintendent, Judy White. Mrs. White was my high school principal, and after seeing her at an event with the minister at a school in Sackville around the Restorative Justice Program, Mrs. White - I can't call her Judy, because it's still Mrs. White. She was my high school principal. She really did amazing things for the Sackville High community. Now that she's in the acting position at the board office, she will bring that leadership role that she has always played in our education system there. So I do want to give congratulations to Mrs. White as well.

You know, Mr. Speaker, over the past three and a half years I've received phone calls from constituents around various issues. One, in particular, is around this whole question of issues that really should be focused to the school boards. I always encourage constituents to get in touch with their school board member because they, too, are an elected body and the voices of the decisions of individual schools really go to the school board member and the staff at the school board office.

That's really, Mr. Speaker, what this legislation is about, it's about ensuring that in legislation we have the school board roles and responsibilities in law and I think that's an important piece, as noted by the two previous speakers on this side of the House. Sometimes their roles and responsibilities are in the bylaws of the local school board but, you know, the boards are in different places at different times and they may not necessarily have those bylaws and I think this is something that will give an overarching blanket approach for all school boards across the province. I think that is an important piece so that we are all working towards one common goal which is putting the kids first in our schools and that is key in this whole discussion. Anything we do in this Chamber when it comes to education is about the children and I think that is key as well.

Oftentimes I hear from people who will say maybe what we should do is get rid of the school boards. I don't think that is necessarily the case, I think that people on the ground running the schools, doing the business of the boards, need to have people to run the system. I don't think you can do that out of Halifax, I think you need to have regional centres to allow proper policy discussions to take place, proper curriculum discussions to take place and obviously those are at the board level and I think that is an important piece to recognize as well.

Mr. Speaker, we know that the positions that these board members take are important to the way that we run our system. One of the things that I think is key to note is the fact that Deloitte did a study to ensure that - we need to make sure that the boards are doing the right things and Deloitte did a report that recommended this very thing, that recommended the roles and the responsibilities for board members and this is exactly, I think, something that is moving forward.

It's interesting, I look back over time and sometimes some people will say you can't look at history but I think you should, I think that is something that is important. Mr. Speaker, when you look back in the 1990s in our education system - we have the roles and responsibilities of our school board members - and you look back when the Minister of Education in the 1990s decided to go full steam ahead with the system of P3 schools, full steam ahead. I think the school board members of the day didn't necessarily know who to turn to when it came to that and that is something, I think, that is so crucial to ensure that we actually have those responsibilities in legislation.

I think it's also important to recognize that no other government has ever put this into legislation for the many years that we have had school boards, and I know that they have diminished over the past number of years as far as the amount of school boards that we have in this province. No other school board has brought that into law and I think that's a key point here, ensuring that we put our kids first in everything that we do is key in that.

The proposed amendments in this bill, Mr. Speaker, will define that school boards should maintain a focus on helping all of the regions' students succeed, that's key. I remember being in high school and that is exactly what our teaching staff promoted for us - ensuring that we succeed in our home province is so important. Members are meant to act in the best interests of the school board and all of its students, again, key to ensuring that we deliver a good quality education for our young people so that they can build a foundation to stay in Nova Scotia, to build a home, and build a future here. That's key as well.

Also in the proposed amendments, they define that superintendents are responsible for the day-to-day management of the school boards and implementing the decisions that elected boards make. Those are some of the amendments that are in this bill, again, ensuring that we do put our kids first - key in everything that we do.

I do want to go back to the Halifax Regional School Board for a moment and recognize some of the people who did put their name on the ballot and were successful or were acclaimed. Obviously, Gin Yee, who has been on the board, I believe, for at least two terms anyway, who has now been elected as chairman by his colleagues at the board which is an important piece. I'm sure Mr. Yee will bring forward some good ideas for that board, and working with his colleagues.

I find it interesting that Steve Warburton who is the board vice-chairman, he is a first-time school board member, but was elected the vice-chairman which I think is accolades to what he brings to the table, and I congratulate him.

Someone else I do want to recognize who serves on the board I'm sure will recognize how important these amendments are to defining the roles and responsibilities of school board members would be Melinda Daye. Melinda Daye is - as many of you know, I've spoken in this House many times about two large African Nova Scotian communities that I have the pleasure of representing in Upper Hammonds Plains as well as Lucasville - Ms. Daye is not from those communities but she will bring the African Nova Scotian voice to the school board. I recognize her as someone who - actually during the election I was driving many days through the community of Lucasville, saw a few signs of hers and so as I saw in Lucasville, she did have some support from that African Nova Scotian community with regard to signs, but she will bring a good debate and a good vision for education in Nova Scotia.

Those are a few people that I did want to recognize, as well, because I know of them and the sort of things they will bring to that.

Something else this legislation brings, not necessarily in the legislation but I know our government has held many information sessions across the province talking about how important this is - I believe it was eight sessions - and, Mr. Speaker, what that does is it brings a level of consultation into the picture on how we develop a future for education in Nova Scotia. I know that this Minister of Education has done an extreme job in informing and consulting with our boards. They are an integral part of how we deliver the system that we have in Nova Scotia, and I look forward over the next couple of weeks, months, and years ahead, that we are able to work with them to ensure an ultimate goal of ensuring that our kids are able to succeed in Nova Scotia.

The other thing is, we want by introducing these amendments, we're able to ensure that outlining the responsibilities of the elected school board members in a public, accessible way - such an important piece of accountability for Nova Scotians.

We know - and we talk about this on this side of the House - around the whole question of the Kids and Learning First plan, that's our commitment to ensure a good quality education in Nova Scotia, a plan that moves us forward. The boards will be a part of that; the boards will be a part of ensuring we have a good system and ensuring that our students will succeed.

One of the other things that I think is important is a change that we've made recently around the question of capital projects. In the past the province would send a note to the board saying, okay, what are your priorities for capital investments? It's interesting that in the past those asks would probably come about every four years and, as we all know,

about every four years we have an election. It just happens that during that time, an ask for a brand new building happens during election time.

Mr. Speaker, what we have been able to do is change that because we know that boards' priorities change when it comes to capital investments. For instance, what we do now is we ask the boards every year - their priorities may change - to ensure that if there is a large growth in one area maybe that area might need a new school or that sort of thing. I think that is key as well. Being open and asking the boards what those priorities are is crucial to ensuring that we have a system that moves us forward, a system that allows our students to be successful. Again, that is another point of this legislation, ensuring that boards' and the board members' responsibilities are there for the public to see, through legislation, and that all boards are given an opportunity to be consulted on these things.

My understanding is that the boards were consulted on this - around eight sessions - and they were happy to see this moving forward. They wanted this, Mr. Speaker, and as I mentioned in the past, Deloitte did an audit of this. They recommended to us to do this, but yet the Opposition will say they don't like this idea. They think it's not a good idea. You know, that's something that again will define us from this side of the House to that side of the House, two Parties along the way who have been - they've governed, we did that, but it didn't work.

What we need to ensure is that Nova Scotians feel that their education system is right-sized. We have 30,000 fewer students over the last 10 years and yet what they would do is just throw money at it, it would just fix it. They think that throwing money at it would fix it, but they didn't have a vision for education. The only vision that the Liberal Party had was putting in place P3 schools, that in two or three years' time we are going to be paying through the nose for the decisions of the Liberal Party. Mr. Speaker, that is something that I guarantee Nova Scotians will know and I will continue to talk about.

The member for Yarmouth will say, well, you can't talk about the past. Well, I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, you can talk about the past. Because of the decision of the Liberal Party, we are paying through the nose, right now, as I speak, for the decision to put our P3s. That is not a way forward. We want to ensure that Nova Scotians know the contrast between this Party and those two Parties over there.

Mr. Speaker, I know the member opposite was over there chirping on, as he usually does, about calling me small-minded. That's not true, that he doesn't like me. You know, that's fine, but I can tell you that I will stand up in my place and I will continue to represent the people I have had the pleasure of representing, in Hammonds Plains-Upper Sackville, and contrast myself and this Party to that Party any day.

I know when the Liberal Party was in power, what would they do? What did they do? They made teachers work with no pay. That's what they did. They tore up the collective agreement and threw it out the window. That is not the way to respect the

collective bargaining process. That's not the NDP way. We recognize how important the collective bargaining process is. We don't legislate people back to work like the Tories did with the nurses.

I think this is exactly the sort of thing that Nova Scotians want to know. They want to know the difference between this Party and those two Parties over there. We tried it. We tried those two Parties over there, and I can tell you it didn't work. The fact that now, today, we are spending \$50 million more in capital investments such as the P3 schools is because of the Liberal Party.

Then, not even that, do we not then have to pay for - we have to make a decision on whether or not we're going to purchase those schools - between \$140 million to \$160 million more that we will have to put out because of the decision. They just wanted to delay it. They wanted to delay that decision. They couldn't make the tough decision when they were in government, so they delayed it for 20 years.

That's something that I think is crucial in ensuring that, as we move forward with this bill, Nova Scotians know the responsibility (Interruption) That's right. (Interruption) Yes. The reality, though, is that that Party over there, the Liberal Party, they laid off teachers. They sent them home without pay. They work for free. They rolled back their wages 3 per cent a year. They rolled them back. So now we have a Liberal Party who can't even stand on their feet and tell us how they're going to pay for all the things that they promised everyone. (Interruption)

Well, how are you going to do it? How are they going to do it, Mr. Speaker? It's irresponsible. (Interruption) Oh, he brings up the \$600 million. I know in health care it's \$600 million that that Liberal Party was going to borrow for capital investments. That's what they were going to do. They wanted to keep it off the books.

I'll give credit. I'll give credit where credit is due - the Progressive Conservative Party, when they were in power, they didn't do that. When they were in power, Dr. Hamm didn't do that. (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. It's nice to see our young members pretty animated this morning, but we do need to hear the discussion.

The honourable member for Upper Sackville-Hammonds Plains.

MR. WHYNOTT: Mr. Speaker, I love to hear a good debate, but I will tell you that, as I was saying, the Progressive Conservative Party - I will give credit where credit is due. I will stand in my place and do that. They didn't allow that to happen. The Progressive Conservative Party of the day did not allow that to happen. They brought Generally Accepted Accounting Principles into the way that we do our finances. They did that. They didn't hide money like that. The Liberals hid it.

So you know, Mr. Speaker, that is exactly the sort of thing, and that \$600 million. If that had gone through, do you know when we would have paid it off, that \$600 million in capital investment? This year. This fiscal year - 14 years later, and now this would be the year that we would pay it off. That is the sort of irresponsibility that I think Nova Scotians will remember of what the Liberal Party did. They will remember that, because I can tell you, I will be out door-knocking, I will be out at town hall meetings telling Nova Scotians what the Liberal Party did. (Interruptions)

I will do that, and I think that's something that I have a responsibility to do as an elected member of this House, by contrasting what we do versus what they do. The P3 school was probably the worst - well, I would say is the worst mistake the Liberal Party ever made, because we are still paying for it. We're still paying for that decision.

They're the ones who brought in the HST, Mr. Speaker, do you remember that? Do you remember that? They put it on a whole host of things that were never taxed by 15 per cent; they brought in the HST. That is something that, again, I want to contrast the way that debate is being structured in this House. The Liberal Party will promise anything in here, they'll promise anything out there to anybody, but the question is, how are they going to pay for it - how are they going to pay for it?

They have no plan, Mr. Speaker. I remember in the last election, the 2009 election, the Liberal Party promised over \$300 million of promises - \$300 million in promises - but you know I don't know how they were going to pay for it. We were going through the worst - they would have come into government, passed over by the Rodney MacDonald Government, the mess that was left over by Rodney, they would have found the stuff that was hidden, \$1.4 billion of structural deficit and then they would have said, oh, you know we can't fulfill our commitments. They probably would have sent teachers home, they probably would have laid doctors off, they probably would have laid nurses off, and that is not the proper way of doing it. We need to respect the collective bargaining process.

Mr. Speaker, I stand in my place talking about this bill, something that is a crucial way to go forward and I do thank you for the opportunity to stand up and represent the people that I have the pleasure of representing and I'll take my seat to allow some other good debate in this Chamber. Thank you very much.

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

MS. LENORE ZANN: That was a rousing debate there that we started off with today. Great to see everybody so engaged. Mr. Speaker, I am happy to stand in my place to speak on Bill No. 131, the School Board Members Duties Clarification Act. Coming from a family of educators - my father actually taught at the Teachers College in Truro and trained many of the teachers across this province right from Cape Breton through to Yarmouth, many of them that I run into still speak highly of my dad and remember the days of the Teachers College, when it still existed in Truro. My mother taught at the Truro Junior High

School for many, many years and my sister teaches at South Colchester in Brookfield; she is a guidance counsellor there. So education has been very, very important to me and in my upbringing I've been taught from an early age the importance of having a good education and having lifelong learning.

They say that one of the biggest things that helps depression is learning something new, so for our seniors and people that are no longer in the school system, the more that we can keep them learning and having programs in the different towns and villages where seniors can actually keep learning new things, that will keep them young. My grandmother lived to be 97 years old and she learned something new every day, she kept her mind active. I believe that our young people, our children, it's very important for them to start learning at an early age.

In fact, I attended a poverty conference in Truro recently where the focus was on early childhood development, which I'm very pleased to say that this government is focused on with our Kids and Learning First program. It was told to me there that kids start off, as babies, on an even playing field but within the first 18 months to two years of their lives that playing field can oftentimes get very uneven. Some children by the time they start primary school have only heard up to maybe 300 words or phrases in their tiny young lives. It's when people say, stop that, don't do this, go to bed, be quiet - things like this - it doesn't exactly help a child's learning ability as they get older. Whereas kids who are spoken to in full sentences and time is taken with them to actually get down on their level and speak to them face to face and use longer words, these kids have a much better opportunity by the time they hit preschool, to learn more and learn more quickly. They say that the reading, getting to start to learn to read at an early age, is very helpful as well.

Now our school boards are very important in the education system, however I think it is very important for people to know what the roles of school boards actually are. In Australia, for instance, where I originally came from, there are no school boards. We don't have school boards there. We just have the schools, the principals, the staff, and school boards don't exist and they actually function very well without them. Here in Nova Scotia we do have school boards; we have quite a large number of school boards - in fact eight for 900,000, which some would probably say is perhaps too many. At this point though this is what we have and I think that this bill is very important because it explains clearly and defines what the roles and responsibilities are of elected school board members.

Mr. Speaker, also in some provinces, these elected school board members are actually called trustees. They are not called school board members. They are called trustees, which defines even more clearly what their duties are as different from the operational staff at the board. Most people in the general public, really, if you ask them - what's the difference? I don't think they would be able to tell, that's why I think that having this in legislation is important.

As we now know, there are new returning school board members - some were sworn in just recently - at each of the province's eight school boards. In my school board, which is the Chignecto-Central Regional School Board, they had a swearing in on Wednesday. In fact, we have 17 members of that school board: Trudy Thompson has been re-elected as the board chair; Keith MacKenzie has been re-elected as the board vice-chair; we also have Gordon Anderson and Kaaren Barkhouse; Susan MacQuarrie is a new elected board member, or trustee as would be called in another province; Vivian Farrell is a board member; Jimmy Grue; Ron Marks; Wendy Matheson-Withrow; Marilyn Murray; David Myles; Margie Nicholson; Glenda Talbot-Richards, who is our new African Nova Scotian board member; Mackie Ross; Jamie Stevens; Adam Davies I believe is new as well; and Andrea Paul, our First Nations Board member. I'd like to congratulate all of the new members and the re-elected members. I look forward to meeting with them as I'm sure I will.

One other thing I would like to say too about school boards is that I really think it's important that we try to work together, that government and school boards work together to try and make our education system better. In the last couple of years I have, unfortunately, noticed a trend where it seems almost like there has been a battle-ground mentality between school board and government and there have been some swings and some blows and some public statements made. Personally, I don't think that is necessarily helpful to moving things forward.

As we've noticed with say, for instance, the public health authorities, when they were asked to find some savings, they actually worked very well with government to try and find those savings. They actually merged some services, which saved the public and the government about \$52 million and I think that is pretty amazing. I've been told by our public health authority in the Truro area that they actually enjoyed working with this government and trying to help, because this is good for the public. It's good for the way forward in the future, and I think we need to do the same thing as school boards. I think school boards and government need to learn to work together much better rather than butting heads constantly.

I did notice that under the last government, when the member for Colchester North was with the Progressive Conservative Party, I believe it was, she had some problems with some of her school boards. In fact, I think one of them was fighting over chairs, deciding who was sitting where, and she had had enough of that. I think she disbanded that particular school board. So again, it's interesting to see how different people deal with different situations with these boards, and as I said, I think it's good if we can try to work together to try to look after the best interests of our children. After all, isn't that what we're here for?

I also noticed, Mr. Speaker, that in a world of very difficult economic times, if you look at the front pages of the paper, there are fires in Europe. People are rioting in the streets because of austerity measures, because of cuts to this, that, or the other thing. Every single government around the world and across the country is battling to try to balance

budgets to try and avoid huge fiscal cliffs, as they say in the United States. They're just about ready to face a very difficult one, where they're spending trillions of dollars on basically an unwinnable war, which I think they're finally realizing is unwinnable, which is why they're finally bringing those troops home. That has cost the public trillions and trillions of dollars which could have been used for other things.

For instance, in New Brunswick, they just cut 30 per cent to school board budgets - 30 per cent, Mr. Speaker. Ontario, British Columbia, 30 per cent in Spain, the United Kingdom, Australia - there are examples of huge, huge cuts to school budgets and to education budgets. In New York City alone, they cut 14,000 teachers. So I would like to say that this government is trying to walk a fine balance here. We're trying to be very balanced in our approach in finding where we can find savings, because we have an aging population. We have seniors who are growing rapidly. The baby boomers are retiring. Their youngest kids are leaving the school system and are going on to university, and there are fewer children in the system now than there were. We've lost 30,000 children in our school system in the last 10 years - 30,000 kids. So we have more seniors and fewer students, and we have to look after our seniors, so a large portion of our provincial budget has to go toward finding ways to keep our seniors healthy as well as look after our young people.

I believe there was talk at one point that the government was cutting 22 per cent. That was in our first year, and the school boards were saying that we were going to be cutting 22 per cent. They began a tour talking about that, but it turned out that we cut 2.76 per cent - 2.76 per cent. If you actually take in the cost pressures along with that, which would be about 3 per cent, it worked out to be about 5 per cent, which is a lot less than the 22 per cent that was being talked about. It is also much less drastic than the 30 per cent cuts that are happening across the country.

Mr. Speaker, I have to say I am very (Interruption) Yes, actually we do have the highest per-student funding ever in Nova Scotia. We're trying to get it up there. It was very, very low at one point in time, and we are definitely raising that. Each year we have raised it, and I'm proud of that fact, although that fact doesn't seem to get out to the public very much. The more that we let people know - this is a very important point to make.

Our schools and our teachers need our support. School boards are important, and they need to also support our teachers. Teachers today have a very difficult job and a very different job than they had 30 years ago. We do have inclusion in our schools now, which means that teachers have very different children to teach and have to give different programs to different students.

For instance, in one class they might have six different programs they're teaching to different groups of children, IPPs, and also different behavioural problems, different challenges with health problems, and this is why EAs also come into the picture and are so important to our system and to helping our teachers do their job best, which is to teach.

I also believe that the Deloitte report found that not everybody is clear on the role of school board members, and that's why parents and community members who have raised this issue, I think, will be pleased that this bill is going to be able to clarify that role and define the duties and responsibilities of virtually every key party within the education system.

I speak well of this bill. I think it is timely, and I thank the Minister of Education for bringing this forward. With that, Mr. Speaker, I take my seat.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Guysborough-Sheet Harbour.

MR. JIM BOUDREAU: Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise in the House today to speak to this bill. As has been said on many occasions, school board members are elected officials and they work very hard to help our students succeed. As an MLA and as a member of the community, I certainly want a school board that functions well and helps our students succeed.

I'd like to take a moment to talk to the issue of the school board members. In the Strait Regional School Board we have had a long list of people who have served on that board, some of them for a number of terms and I believe that each and every one of them tried, to the best of their ability, to represent the concerns of the students and the community as a whole.

I would like to congratulate each of the newly-elected school board members, in particular Mr. Jim Austin, who is the member from central Inverness; Francine Boudreau, the member for east Richmond; Basil Johnson, who is the new Mi'kmaq representative on that board - and we're very pleased to have him join that board. Mary Jess MacDonald - a lot of you would be familiar with Mary Jess, Mary Jess has been board chairman for a long time and she was re-elected in this term as the board chairman.

One of our newer members, Richelle MacLaughlin, who has become the vice-chairman for the board - and Richelle, I am sure, will do an excellent job in that position. Brian Murray returns to that board, and Rosalee Parker from my own area has returned to that board as well - Rosalee has been representing that area for a number of years. Anne Peters is another member of that board who has served the students and the community very well and Lian Sampson is a new member elected, as is Jamie Samson. We want to welcome them to the board.

I want to speak in particular about two members - Mr. Clarence Reddick, who represents the African Nova Scotian community, and Mr. Reddick has served his community very well. On many occasions I had the opportunity to cross paths with Mr. Reddick when I'm attending various events in the communities of Lincolnville, Sunnyville, and Upper Big Tracadie. Mr. Reddick always handles himself with great pride and distinction. I really want to mention that. And I'm very pleased to see one of my former

students, a student I taught in St. Mary's, join the board, Mallori Nickerson, a graduate of St. Mary's Academy was elected to the board this year. I believe Mallori brings to the position a great deal of youthful enthusiasm, a great deal of understanding of the school system, being a recent graduate, and she is, I believe, going to be a tremendous asset for that board.

I'd also like to mention that the retiring board member for that area, Kim Horton, did a commendable job and I'd like to thank Kim for her dedicated efforts on behalf of the students in the area. One of the things I want to say, Mr. Speaker, is that one of the concerns that has always plagued the boards, I believe, is the fact that there hasn't been a clear distinction and a clear direction of what the roles and responsibilities were for the board.

This bill is a step in the right direction, it's a bill that is long overdue; it is a bill that I think will be welcomed and appreciated by all of the individuals involved in the school system, from the principals to the students to the board members and to the communities as a whole. I want to reiterate that no government in Nova Scotia has ever taken the important step of defining, in legislation, elected school board members' roles and responsibilities as distinct from the board as a corporate entity.

That may sound simple but it's extremely important. While I am talking about this first step, I would like to talk a little bit about some of the first steps that this government has taken as well. Sometimes it gets lost in the rhetoric and it gets lost in the negative energy that sometimes flows from the other side of the floor - well maybe a lot of times - and I would like to focus on the positive things that this government has done. It may well be ironic but it's true.

Now if we look at the positive things that this government has done, the firsts, we have opened five innovative Collaborative Emergency Centres in rural areas. That ensures ready access to health care. We've reduced waiting times for seniors needing home care, we've reduced the amount . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. I don't see the relevance of the current points being made by the member as to direct discussion of the bill on the floor.

MR. BOUDREAU: Mr. Speaker, what I was talking about was the fact that this is a first, this is a first of many firsts that this government has been involved in. I think it's extremely important that we try to focus on that. However, if the Speaker feels that's not the appropriate way to go, then please interrupt me.

I do want to say, Mr. Speaker, we have a road plan for the first time in five years; we have the first aquaculture policy and we have the first agriculture strategy. We've cut small business taxes for the first time in 20 years and we have a jobsHere program that is working.

Now the legislative changes that we have before us in this bill will give, as I've said, boards a clear focus on their primary role. It's going to require them to look at the big-picture approach, which puts kids and learning first. As was mentioned by previous speakers, an audit, a Deloitte audit, recommended that the province help school board members.

Now we could have done what previous governments did before, we could have ignored that. We could have just carried on with business as usual, which has plagued this province for ever and ever, but this minister and this government decided that we would take a positive step forward on that and we would implement some of the changes that the Deloitte audit recommended. So by doing that, we are showing that we are taking this problem seriously. We are enshrining in legislation the roles and responsibilities of school board members.

In addition we will be holding information sessions with prospective school board candidates and we will be ensuring - I should say we held sessions (Interruption) Eight, was it? Eight sessions - and we will be going through the process to ensure that all the school board members know what their roles and responsibilities are. It is extremely important that school board members know what their job is because over the years that has caused problems. We have seen boards dissolve. We've seen boards' powers diminished and so on and so forth. That's not progressive. That's the reactive approach to things. This government and this minister are moving ahead in what I would consider to be a proactive and progressive move to the future.

Our Kids and Learning First plan made a commitment to look at education, look at our system, and make sure that it is operating as efficiently and effectively as possible to put students first. I believe this legislation is another step in that process. It's a step in the process of redefining education in the province and I believe we're doing it in a way which is responsible. We could go in there and we could do as we've seen in other areas where there has sort of been slash-and-burn policies and slash-and-burn tactics, but this government isn't doing that. We're doing it in a reasoned, rational and logical way.

I know that sometimes disturbs folks on the other side of the House, especially my colleague, the member for Richmond, the idea of a reasoned, rational and thoughtful way, and I see that he's listening intently today. I'm so pleased to see that and I'm sure he's not going to say anything negative because he would agree with this wholeheartedly. You know, as a teacher, I think it's extremely important that we work with all partners in the school system.

In closing, I would like to congratulate this minister; I would like to congratulate this government on what I see as a very positive, proactive, reasoned, rational, and logical approach. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: If I recognize the minister it will be to close the debate.

The honourable Minister of Education.

HON. RAMONA JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate having the ability to stand here in my place and thank my colleagues for their comments on this very important bill.

At this time I also would like to say congratulations to all of our newly-elected board members and returning board members, and I wish them the very best at the beginning of their four-year mandate. They have a very important role to play in our education system. They are the folks who are in charge of making sure that the policies are developed with each of the boards in each of the regions that will best serve the success of our students in our system. So I wish all of our board members well and all of our newly-elected chairmen.

I would like to make a comment before I close debate that I am disappointed to see that the member for Colchester North did not support this bill. This bill is about good governance and I was also disappointed that the member for Victoria-The Lakes did not welcome this as a very clarifying piece of legislation added into our Education Act. This was recommended by the Deloitte review of the South Shore Regional School Board to make sure that we very clearly clarified the roles and responsibilities between the elected board and the operational board.

There has been a great deal of confusion over the years and I think, Mr. [Deputy] Speaker, you can agree, as a former educator yourself, that sometimes even ourselves as educators, the difference between board - and when we say board, are you talking elected or are you talking operational? This clearly delineates the difference between operational and elected boards. This is good governance. It has been welcomed by the leadership of people involved with school boards, very clearly recommended by the Deloitte report, and it is a very important first piece of legislation to do that in this province and I'm very proud that we have brought this forward.

With my final remarks, I would like to take the opportunity to close debate on this bill.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 131. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

Ordered that this bill be referred to the Committee on Law Amendments.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, that concludes the government's business for today. I move that the House do now rise to meet again on Monday, November 19th

between the hours of 7:00 p.m. and 10:00 p.m. The order of business will be Public Bills for Second Reading - Bill No. 133; Public Bills for Third Reading - Bill Nos. 105, 109, 112, 114, and 115; Committee of the Whole House on Bills - Bill Nos. 97 and 125; and if time permits, Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is to adjourn.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

[The House rose at 11:37 a.m.]

NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3)**RESOLUTION NO. 2081**

By: Leo Glavine (Kings West)

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

Whereas Gary Whittier is a great example of commitment to the community of Berwick through sports, church work, family, and 33 years in municipal politics; and

Whereas Gary has played a leading role in Berwick's exceptional offering of sports, recreation, and modern facilities in one of Nova Scotia's great sports towns; and

Whereas Gary continued to expand his knowledge of municipal governance during his many terms, and always demonstrated his integrity and strong values in both good and challenging times;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly express their gratitude to Gary Whittier for outstanding public service and wish him and his wife, Jane, the very best in retirement in the town they truly love.

RESOLUTION NO. 2082

By: Hon. Jamie Baillie (Cumberland South)

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

Whereas David Quinn is in his graduating year at River Hebert High School and is a member of the Senior Boys Soccer Team, the Raiders; and

Whereas when the new school year began, David was 19 goals short of 100 in his senior high school soccer career and was not sure if he could score enough to reach that magical century mark; and

Whereas that question has now been answered, as David connected for his 100th career goal and 19th this season and is going on to finish his high school career with 118 goals;

Therefore be it resolved that the all members of this House of Assembly congratulate 17-year-old David Quinn of the River Hebert High School Raiders on an

impressive high school soccer career and wish him every success as he makes plans for university.

RESOLUTION NO. 2083

By: Vicki Conrad (Queens)

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

Whereas Michelin North America Inc. offers the Bursary Award for Scholastic Excellence to the children of its employees to support challenging programs that fuel creativity, imagination, and innovation; and

Whereas in 2012, 19 high school graduates in Nova Scotia were chosen to receive financial assistance through this program to continue on their educational journey; and

Whereas Alexandra Stephenson of Queens County has been selected as a recipient of the Michelin Bursary Award for Scholastic Excellence;

Therefore be it resolved that the House of Assembly recognize and congratulate Alexandra Stephenson on having received a 2012 Michelin Bursary Award for Scholastic Excellence.

RESOLUTION NO. 2084

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

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

Whereas the Ignite the Spirit Campaign was formed to raise the Truro community's portion of \$5 million dollars to go towards the creation of the Central Nova Scotia Civic Centre in Truro; and

Whereas the Friends of Dave Gilroy Fund, as part of the Ignite the Spirit Campaign, was established in honour of Dave Gilroy, a past Town of Truro chief administrative officer who died in 2008 and a citizen who had a passion for sports and a strong desire to see Truro have a civic center; and

Whereas donations to the Friends of Dave Gilroy Fund have resulted in the Central Nova Scotia Civic Centre main atrium being named in memory of Dave Gilroy;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia Legislature congratulate the Truro community and everyone who contributed to the Friends of Dave Gilroy Fund and honour the memory of Dave Gilroy as a fine example of citizenship and the possibilities that can spring from philanthropy at the local level.