



DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Gordon Gosse

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House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 30, 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.

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Yesterday during Oral Question Period the Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism referenced a rating from the CFIB regarding tax competitiveness. He referred to the rating as "the facts." The minister failed to table the document in question and I've been unable to find it, even after checking with the CFIB's Web site.

The fact is that the CFIB said that Nova Scotia has a serious tax problem. They called Nova Scotia's tax facts "shameful," just about as far away as you can get from an A rating that the minister boasted about yesterday. This sort of padding of the government's resumé is unfortunate. I will ask the minister to correct the record and tell the House that the rating he referred to yesterday from the CFIB does not exist.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. CLARRIE MACKINNON: I would like to question whether that's a point of order or not, but I'm sure you will make a very appropriate ruling on that. Mr. Speaker, we leave that in your very capable hands.

MR. SPEAKER: Well, I'll take it under advisement and look at it and see if there's anything that was quoted from in that question. If it is something that is quoted from here, we have to table that information, so if it's a quote, we'll look for getting that information tabled. I will take it under consideration and report back to the House.

We will begin the daily routine.

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Justice.

HON. ROSS LANDRY: Mr. Speaker, as Chairman of the Committee on Law Amendments, I am directed to report that the committee has met and considered the following bill:

Bill No. 147 - Regulated Health Professions Network Act.

and the committee recommends this bill to the favourable consideration of the House, with certain amendments.

MR. SPEAKER: Ordered that this bill be referred to the Committee of the Whole House on Bills.

The honourable Minister of Justice.

HON. ROSS LANDRY: Mr. Speaker, as Chairman of the Committee on Law Amendments, I am directed to report that the committee has met and considered the following bills:

Bill No. 94 - House of Assembly Act.

Bill No. 144 - Insured Health Services Act.

and the committee recommends these bills to the favourable consideration of the House, each without amendment.

MR. SPEAKER: Ordered that this bill be referred to the Committee of the Whole House on Bills.

TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS**GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION****INTRODUCTION OF BILLS**

Bill No. 158 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 20 of the Acts of 1990. The Film Nova Scotia Act. (Hon Percy Paris)

MR. SPEAKER: Ordered that this bill be read a second time on a future day.

NOTICES OF MOTION

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

RESOLUTION NO. 2437

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

Whereas 14 years ago the United Nations General Assembly designated tomorrow, December 1st, as World AIDS Day; and

Whereas World AIDS Day is about creating awareness, fighting stigma, improving education, and mobilizing resources to further enhance our response to HIV and AIDS; and

Whereas events were organized this week by the AIDS Coalition of Nova Scotia and the Nova Scotia Advisory Commission on AIDS to acknowledge AIDS Awareness Week, and will culminate on the evening of December 1st with a Halifax World AIDS Day vigil being held at FRED on Agricola;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the Legislature acknowledge December 1st as World AIDS Day, and be ever mindful of the need to be united in the fight against HIV and vigilant in our support for those in Nova Scotia living with HIV/AIDS.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Argyle.

RESOLUTION NO. 2438

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

Whereas tomorrow is World AIDS Day, an opportunity for people across the globe to unite in the fight against the spread of HIV; and

Whereas we must show support for those individuals living with HIV and honour the lives lost to this horrible disease; and

Whereas there are nearly 75,000 Canadians living with HIV/AIDS, and we must take strides to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS here at home and abroad;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly recognize the importance of this day and do what we can to raise awareness of the disease by encouraging all Nova Scotians to exercise caution and get regular testing so that they can maintain good health.

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 Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal.

RESOLUTION NO. 2439

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 June 8, 2012, 60 young Nova Scotians received Diamond Jubilee Scholarships in honour of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II's Diamond Jubilee; and

Whereas the Diamond Jubilee Scholarships were awarded to Grade 12 students who are leaders in and have made significant contributions to their communities and the province; and

Whereas Matthew Cormier, a Dr. J.H. Gillis Regional High School student, whose accomplishments include being the student council treasurer and president of the Antigonish Junior Achievement Association, was named as a recipient of a Queen's Diamond Jubilee Scholarship;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of the House congratulate Matthew Cormier on his accomplishments and contributions to his community and wish him all the best in the future.

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. 2440

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 power rates have risen 25 per cent under this government's watch; and

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

Therefore be it resolved that the member for Waverley-Fall River-Beaver Bank still supports the Premier despite his inaction on power rates and the economy, which is hurting this province and the people of the riding of Waverley-Fall River-Beaver Bank.

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 Victoria-The Lakes.

RESOLUTION NO. 2441

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

Whereas Doucette's Rite Stop, located along the Cabot Trail in Ingonish Beach, was recently named Rite Stop Franchise Store of the Year; and

Whereas Doucette's is owned by Kenneth Doucette and is open seven days a week, with a new lunch counter being the most recent addition to the store; and

Whereas Doucette's Rite Stop offers everything from groceries to DVD rentals, greeting cards, and bakery items;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly commend Kenneth Doucette for his entrepreneurial skills, and wish he and his employees every future success as they service the needs of residents of Ingonish Beach and those travelling along the Cabot Trail.

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 Natural Resources.

RESOLUTION NO. 2442

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

Whereas Mike Simmons of Pictou has served as chaplain for the Northumberland Veterans Unit in Pictou for many years; and

Whereas Mike Simmons, or Padre Mike as he is often called, has dedicated many hours of his time, often going beyond the call of duty in order to provide service to the veterans in Pictou; and

Whereas Mike Simmons' love and respect for veterans knows no limits and as a result he has provided fellowship, guidance, and friendship for many veterans in Pictou County and made their lives richer;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia Legislative Assembly thank Mike Simmons for his years of service and commitment to the veterans of the Northumberland Veterans Unit in Pictou.

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. 2443

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

Whereas November 30th marks St. Andrew's Day, the official national day in Scotland named for the patron saint of Scotland; and

Whereas the Dartmouth and District Pipe Band held a St. Andrew's Day celebration at Durty Nellie's Pub in Halifax, to celebrate the holiday; and

Whereas the day's festivities featured spirited performances by other pipe bands in a celebration of this important Scottish holiday;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate the organizers of the Dartmouth and District Pipe Band St. Andrew's Day celebration and wish them success in their upcoming competitive season, as well as wish all Nova Scotians a happy St. Andrew's Day.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Cape Breton West.

RESOLUTION NO. 2444

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

Whereas Eunice and John Harker of Sydney were the honorary chairmen for the Subway 2012 Atlantic University Sport Women's Soccer Championship held recently; and

Whereas throughout this event John and Eunice Harker were able to showcase the best soccer teams in Atlantic Canada; and

Whereas during this event, Cape Bretoners were exposed to some of the highest calibre of athletic competition in the country;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate John and Eunice Harker for being the honorary chairmen for the Subway 2012 Atlantic

University Sport Women's Soccer Championship, and thank them for all their dedication that they have shown.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Bedford-Birch Cove.

RESOLUTION NO. 2445

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

Whereas the Little Fishers Club is an active fishing club for children of all ages located on the south jetty wharf at the Bedford waterfront; and

Whereas Angie Burke, Paul Carvery, Ronnie MacWeeney and Ingrid Wright created the club in September 2012 as a good way to give kids more time outside with their families and away from modern technology; and

Whereas the Little Fishers Club has 69 members and numerous volunteers including Louis Dorey, E. Wayne Kelly, Joan, Johnnie and Page Carvery, Stephen Lewis, Robert Gillis, Evelyn and Ashley Dicks, Linda McCurdy, Curtis Hunter, Ron Samson, Lloyd Kelly, and Kevin and Crystal Forbes;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate the Little Fishers Club, its organizers and volunteers for organizing a constructive and healthy pastime for children in the great outdoors.

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 Hants West.

RESOLUTION NO. 2446

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

Whereas George Elliott Clarke from Windsor, Nova Scotia, has been appointed as Toronto's poet laureate; and

Whereas throughout his career, Mr. Clarke has been a champion of African Canadian writers and termed the phrase "Africadian"; and

Whereas as poet laureate, Clarke will be the ambassador of the local literacy arts, a role he is most deserving of;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate George Elliott Clarke for his incredible accomplishment, and thank him for the work that he has done to further the arts in this province and across Canada.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage.

RESOLUTION NO. 2447

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

Whereas Wayne Pitman of Eastern Passage is the Nova Scotia provincial representative for the Veterans UN/NATO Canada Group; and

Whereas the group works tirelessly to support the Soldiers' Memorial Hospital in Middleton, Fishermen's Memorial Hospital in Lunenburg, the Veterans Memorial Park in Bass River, and the Forgotten Heroes Monument in Bass River; and

Whereas Wayne was one of six members of this tremendous organization to be awarded the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal for service and support to our veterans;

Therefore be it resolved that this Nova Scotia House of Assembly thank Wayne Pitman of Eastern Passage for his work with the Nova Scotia provincial Veterans UN/NATO Canada Group and congratulate him on the award of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal.

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. 2448

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

Whereas this year's Taste of Nova Scotia Prestige Awards were held Tuesday night at Casino Nova Scotia; and

Whereas over 800 nominations were received by the nominating committee from consumers; and

Whereas Chef Craig Flinn, owner of Chives Canadian Bistro on Barrington Street, was named the 2012 Gary MacDonald Culinary Ambassador of the Year at this year's Taste of Nova Scotia award ceremony;

Therefore be it resolved that members of the House of Assembly congratulate Chef Craig Flynn on his achievement and offer full support for his work to promote delicious, local Nova-Scotian produced food.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Victoria-The Lakes.

RESOLUTION NO. 2449

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

Whereas Hatcher Anderson Pharmasave is the local drugstore serving the home health care and prescription needs for residents of Neils Harbour and surrounding area; and

Whereas Hatcher Anderson Pharmasave was once known as the Cabot Pharmacy and is located at 247 New Haven Road in Neils Harbour; and

Whereas Hatcher Anderson Pharmasave president Chelsea Hatcher and vice president Alison Anderson ensure their pharmacy is stocked for the needs of the community at any time;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly compliment Chelsea, Allison, and all of the staff at Hatcher Anderson Pharmasave in Neils Harbour for their outstanding service and being available when the community requires their services.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Queens.

RESOLUTION NO. 2450

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

Whereas inquiry-based learning courses educate students in a variety of ways, including culinary discovery, music, and visual arts; and

Whereas on November 16, 2012, students in Grades 7 to 9 at North Queens Regional School held a showcase to display the work they completed during the cultural connections module of their inquiry-based learning course; and

Whereas approximately 130 elementary school students were invited to travel with passports through the cultural showcase, enabling those involved in the showcase to pass along their knowledge on the countries and cultures they chose to focus on;

Therefore be it resolved that the House of Assembly recognize and congratulate the students of the inquiry-based learning cultural connections module at North Queens Regional School for a successful showcase of their work and knowledge.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Yarmouth.

RESOLUTION NO. 2451

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

Whereas Jillian Goodwin owns a hair and tanning salon in Yarmouth which she has recently purchased after working there for three years, enjoys being her own boss and all the extra effort involved in being an entrepreneur, and also makes many donations to local benefits and events; and

Whereas on November 15, 2012, the Yarmouth and Area Chamber of Commerce held its annual business awards banquet; and

Whereas Jillian Goodwin was awarded Youth Entrepreneur of the Year, an award that recognizes an entrepreneur under 30 years of age who has demonstrated excellence in business, has started their own company, and has shown creativity in growing their business;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of the House of Assembly congratulate Jillian Goodwin on being named Youth Entrepreneur of the Year at the 2012 Yarmouth and Area Chamber of Commerce business awards banquet and wish her every future 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 member for Cape Breton West.

RESOLUTION NO. 2452

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

Whereas Constable Jamie Day, formerly of Louisbourg, was recently presented with the Constable of the Year Award for the Province of Alberta; and

Whereas Constable Day is the son of Norman and Lillian Day of Louisbourg and resides in Grand Prairie, Alberta, with his wife Mandy and his daughters; and

Whereas Constable Jamie Day's commitment to serve and protect his community is to be commended;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Constable Jamie Day on being named Alberta's Constable of the Year and wish him continued success in his career.

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. 2453

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

Whereas conservator Kelly Bourassa has been volunteering his services to the Kings County Museum in Kentville after graduating last year with a diploma in Conservation of Historical Objects from the University of Lincoln, England; and

Whereas Mr. Bourassa uses a personal blog to teach museum-goers and other interested amateur conservationists about conservation methods and the importance of conservation; and

Whereas by volunteering his skills via this blog, Kelly Bourassa offers valuable assistance not only to the Kings County Museum but to other museums that don't have access to a trained conservator;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House express their appreciation to Kelly Bourassa for sharing his expertise in the conservation of historical objects and for adding, through his work, to the archeological knowledge of Nova Scotia.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Halifax Clayton Park.

RESOLUTION NO. 2454

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

Whereas the Duke of Edinburgh Award, founded by His Royal Highness Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh, was introduced to Canada in 1963 and is currently present in more than 120 countries; and

Whereas the award encourages young people to become active and engaged citizens in the area of community services and challenges them to develop personal skills and learn what it means to exemplify leadership; and

Whereas Jonathan Ferguson, a Grade 10 student at Halifax West High School, successfully completed the rigorous requirements and received the Bronze Duke of Edinburgh Award at a ceremony on November 27, 2012;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly congratulate Jonathan Ferguson on receiving this prestigious award and offer best wishes for continued success as a leader in our community.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Yarmouth.

RESOLUTION NO. 2455

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

Whereas Andrew Cameron is in the construction development business in the Yarmouth area, building apartments for mature adults seeking to downsize or simplify their lifestyles and is actively involved in the Junior Achievement Program; and

Whereas on November 15, 2012, the Yarmouth and Area Chamber of Commerce held its annual business awards banquet; and

Whereas Andrew Cameron was named Entrepreneur of the Year which recognizes an entrepreneur who has demonstrated excellence in a new business while supporting the local community, and is active in service clubs and business organizations;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly congratulate Andrew Cameron on being named Entrepreneur of the Year at the 2012 Yarmouth and Area Chamber of Commerce business awards banquet and wish him every future 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 member for Richmond.

RESOLUTION NO. 2456

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

Whereas Diamond Jubilee celebrations are being held throughout 2012 to recognize the 60th Anniversary of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II's reign; and

Whereas the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal is a way to honour significant contributions and achievements by Canadians while honouring Her Majesty for service to this county; and

Whereas Gerry Doiron of Arichat received a Diamond Jubilee Medal in recognition of his commitment to his community, having been a member of the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 150 for 35 years, the Bar Chair, Chair of the Veterans Service Recognition Book, the co-chair of the Sick and Visiting Committee, as well as being a regular volunteer at the Legion's monthly breakfast;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of the House of Assembly congratulate Gerry Doiron on receiving the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal for being a positive role model in his community.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Richmond.

RESOLUTION NO. 2457

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

Whereas Diamond Jubilee celebrations are being held throughout 2012 to recognize the 60th Anniversary of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II's reign; and

Whereas the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal is a way to honour significant contributions and achievements by Canadians while honouring Her Majesty for her service to this country; and

Whereas Joan Clannon of Petit-de-Grat received a Diamond Jubilee Medal in recognition of her commitment to her community - Joan is the community economic development administrator with the Development Isle Madame Association, as well she is currently the treasurer for the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 150, has also served as the

Legion's secretary, she is responsible for the Isle Madame Veterans Comfort Fund, as well as a regular volunteer at the Legion and community events;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of the House of Assembly congratulate Joan Clannon on receiving the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal and for being a positive role model in her community.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Deputy Government House Leader.

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

PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. CLARRIE MACKINNON: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 155.

Bill No. 155 - Richmond-NewPage Port Hawkesbury Tax Agreement Act.

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

HON. JOHN MACDONELL: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 155 be now read a second time.

Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to begin debate on Bill No. 155, amendments to the Richmond Stora Enso Taxation Act. We are bringing forward amendments to the

Richmond Stora Enso Taxation Act at the request of the municipality. This legislation was first introduced in 2006, under the previous owners of the paper mill in Port Hawkesbury. As you know, the previous owner of the mill, NewPage, went into receivership in 2011, and as part of that process a new owner has come forward and reopened the supercalender portion of the mill.

Port Hawkesbury Paper GP Limited is the new operator of the mill, Mr. Speaker, and in late September the municipality signed an agreement with NewPage and Port Hawkesbury Paper GP Limited to amend the current taxation agreement authorized by this legislation. These amendments formalize in legislation the new taxation agreement between the Municipality of Richmond and the new operator. Through these amendments, the taxes for the current fiscal year through to March 31, 2013, will remain at \$2.6 million, half to be paid by NewPage and the other \$1.3 million to be paid by Port Hawkesbury Paper GP Limited. Beginning in April 2013 and continuing to March 2016, the municipality will receive \$1.3 million in taxes per year from the company.

Mr. Speaker, through the efforts of many stakeholders, including the province, employees, truckers and the municipality, more than 200 employees are back to work at the mill producing paper. We are pleased the mill is back in operation and this legislation is one component the province is carrying out to help ensure the residents of the Strait region are working. Through these amendments we are helping to create good jobs and grow the economy in rural Nova Scotia. So with those comments, I look forward to my colleagues across the way, members of the House, adding to this debate. I will take my place.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Richmond.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, it is with mixed feelings that I rise in my place as the MLA for Richmond to speak on Bill No. 155, the Richmond-NewPage Port Hawkesbury Tax Agreement Act. As a resident of Richmond County, and having had the privilege of representing the area for 14 years now, I have to say that the mill itself has always been an essential part of our economy, yet with previous governments, and even with this one, there seems to still be a bit of confusion, that regardless of the name of the mill, it is in Richmond County. Taxes being paid by the mill are paid to Richmond County. Any tax deal that is going to reduce those taxes, the burden will be felt by the residents of Richmond County.

Yet even when I see the release from the Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations, we're left to wonder, do they actually get that? In his release, it says, "The residents of Port Hawkesbury want to be able to continue to live, work and raise a family in their community," said Mr. MacDonell." I fully agree. I know that the residents of Port Hawkesbury want to be able to continue to live there. I know the residents of Guysborough and Inverness, Richmond, Cape Breton West, Cape Breton County, Victoria County and other places want that as well.

Even in the release the government doesn't even acknowledge that it is the residents of Richmond County that are making the sacrifice here by accepting lower property taxes. Maybe it was just someone in Communications Nova Scotia that made a mistake, but I would certainly hope the minister understands, the burden of this tax agreement that's being brought into legislation here will be borne by the residents of Richmond County, the ratepayers of Richmond County, not residents from the neighbouring communities.

I want to take a few minutes to go back a bit in history to what brought us here. Back in 2006, the previous owner of the pulp mill, Stora Enso, in light of skyrocketing power rates at that time, in light of challenges being faced, approached the Municipality of Richmond to say, is there any means by which we can make a deal on the property taxes that we are paying? The municipality sat down in good faith, showed leadership, I would argue, at that time and said, what can we do to assist while at the same time protecting the ratepayers of Richmond County?

At that time, in 2006, the assessment for the mill and all of its assets was \$3.2 million. That's \$3.2 million that was being paid into the coffers of the Municipality of Richmond to provide services for the residents of our county. After negotiations with Stora Enso, the municipality reached an agreement and I was asked, as the member for Richmond, to bring forward a Private Member's Bill that would have allowed an amendment to the Municipal Government Act in light of this new agreement.

What was that agreement? The agreement was that rather than paying the assessed value of \$3.2 million, Stora Enso would be permitted to pay \$2.5 million, a difference of \$747,150 for that tax year. For a small rural municipality, that is a significant decrease in its revenues. Yet the county showed good faith and wanted to see that mill succeed. In the agreement itself, there was an escalator clause into how much Stora Enso would have to pay and so as the years went on, it increased from \$2.5 million of what they would have to pay to \$2.6 million, which is what the case was when NewPage took over from Stora Enso and when Stern Group made its offer through Pacific West Commercial Corporation to purchase the assets.

For this tax year it was scheduled to be \$2.6 million. Needless to say, I've heard the Premier argue before that if nothing had been done, no taxes would have been paid. Clearly, this is an issue where it has caused a great deal of anxiety in Richmond County, because I believe the municipality has already shown that we have the oldest population per capita of anywhere in Nova Scotia right in Richmond County. The result of that is that the revenues that are coming to the municipality continue to dwindle and, needless to say, the pulp mill was a major element of the tax revenues for the Municipality of Richmond. So at \$2.6 million, it was still a difference of \$273,000 of what the assessed value was of the assets. So the owners were still receiving a generous tax break from what the assessed value was.

Mr. Speaker, the discussions that took place following NewPage going into creditor protection and the attempts to sell the mill were not easy ones, they weren't easy for anyone. I recognize that the province played a significant role in those discussions but I want to say again on the record, that when NewPage went into creditor protection, I stated very publicly here in this House and outside this House, that I was more than prepared - and I'm sure the same would go for the member for Inverness, the member for Guysborough-Sheet Harbour and the then member for Antigonish - to work directly with government to try to find a solution, to be able to be part of the discussions, because at the end of the day our constituents were asking us what the situation was.

I found it very unfortunate that in a good faith attempt to work together in a time of crisis, the government shut the door on any efforts to include the members for the Strait area. While it is unfortunate for myself, as an Opposition member and the member for Inverness as an Opposition member, I found it even more unfortunate that the member for Guysborough-Sheet Harbour and the then MLA for Antigonish were, as well, kept in the dark by the government.

When we met with one of the pension groups, all four of us, and questions were asked specifically, I made it clear I couldn't answer because the government didn't allow us to be part of the discussions and it became very evident from the answers from the member for Antigonish and the member for Guysborough-Sheet Harbour that as government members, they had no answers either. So obviously they were not part of these discussions that took place. That was most unfortunate because it was a very challenging time for the workers, for their families and for our entire community that continued to look to us for answers and we had absolutely none to give because the government chose to go at it alone.

When this same government announced the deal for Bowater, prior to announcing that deal, the Premier called together the Leader of our Party, the Leader of the Official Opposition, and the Leader of the Progressive Conservative caucus and provided a briefing on what the deal would be to Bowater, prior to its announcement. No such thing happened for this deal; there was no briefing, there were no efforts to invite the Leader of the Official Opposition or the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party to be able to ask questions to get some of the finer details. The government went at it alone, which led to much of the confusion.

One of the questions that has been asked, and I know that some of the government members have asked here in the House, they said we haven't heard anything from the member for Richmond on this deal. Mr. Speaker, the fact is that from the media perspective, other than our local paper, The Reporter and the Cape Breton Post on one occasion, I was never asked because most of you will recall that the individuals the media were primarily speaking with throughout this were the Mayor of Port Hawkesbury, Billy Joe MacLean, and the Deputy Warden for Richmond County, Vic David. They were the ones who were being asked.

Allow me to put on the record now, Mr. Speaker, because as you will know, I don't think you would find any member of the press who would say they attempted to reach me for comment and I wouldn't provide one, so it was hard to make a comment on a deal when you were never asked. With our new means of social media, I do have a Facebook site with 1,400 followers so I chose, if I wasn't going to be asked by the media, then I should at least post a message for my constituents and anybody else to see.

Let me read that for you today, this is the message that was posted the night - this would have been the Saturday night because Friday night the Premier announced that the deal had fallen apart and Saturday night the deal was back on, so this is Saturday's version, it said:

“Tonight, a cautious sense of relief is being experienced by everyone in Richmond County and the entire Strait Area.

I want to commend the government of Nova Scotia and Pacific West for reaching an agreement to operate the NewPage mill.

This could not have been done without the sacrifices made by the workers along with the woodland harvesters and truckers.

I want to assure all the mill workers and retirees that the pension issue will remain a top priority, as we try to find some means of addressing the pension shortfall. As you know my efforts to have monies paid for stumpage on Crown land directed to the pension fund were rejected by the government. It is my hope that an innovative solution can be found which will not only help the workers, retirees and their families but our entire region due to the significant economic impact those pensions bring to our communities.

There are many questions that remain, and those will be asked in the days and weeks ahead.

I want to personally acknowledge the efforts of Richmond CAO Warren Olsen, Deputy Warden Vic David, their team and the entire Richmond Municipal Council for their relentless efforts to protect the rate payers of Richmond County throughout these negotiations.

We are all hoping for a long and successful future for the mill.”

Mr. Speaker, that was my statement that was posted there to make it very clear what our position was on that.

There are many questions that remain, and the residents of the Strait area are still asking questions regarding this deal. I want to specifically go to the bill that we have here today and say a few words on how that agreement was reached.

As I indicated earlier, in 2006 the municipality brought forward an agreement which they had reached in good faith with Stora Enso. This time around, the negotiations really were not in good faith. What happened was that the municipality basically had to go to court to fight to protect the ratepayers of Richmond County.

As I mentioned in my message, I want to again personally commend both the CAO, Warren Olsen, and the deputy warden at the time, Vic David. Many of you will remember that our former warden John Boudreau passed away last year and our deputy warden was asked to step in at a difficult period to be able to be the voice and the face of the municipality through these very difficult discussions. I want to commend their legal team - which did a great job - their communications team, and the entire staff that worked on this, because unfortunately it did require a court action for the municipality to stand up for its rights.

Mr. Speaker, the question will be asked, where was the Government of Nova Scotia during this, and who did they stand with? I know the answer to that, and those who were part of the discussions on behalf of the government know the answer to that. One day we will have the opportunity to further discuss and further show the residents of Richmond County and the entire Strait area and the residents of Nova Scotia where the Government of Nova Scotia stood during these decisions.

But for today, the Municipality of Richmond went to court and they won. The agreement that was signed with Stora Enso in 2006 was upheld by the court. Walking out, the municipality could easily have told Stern Group, you must pay us \$2.6 million a year for the remainder of the agreement, which goes to 2016. But in an effort to show good faith, even after a court victory, the municipality sat down, they held discussions and they tried to find a way to see what Richmond County could do, what further sacrifices Richmond County could make, along with its ratepayers, to try to ensure that this mill will be back in operation. Mr. Speaker, they agreed to reduce the tax bill from \$2.6 million to \$1.3 million, a significant reduction which will be borne by the ratepayers of Richmond County. Hopefully the minister will remember that, that it's actually Richmond County.

This is something that has not been easy for the residents of Richmond County. Many felt that they had already made sacrifices to help Stora Enso in 2006, the same was extended to NewPage when they took over from Stora Enso, and now here was another company coming in that the courts had awarded a victory to Richmond County to continue the agreement at \$2.6 million. Even to this day there are many who are troubled by this, because it is the ratepayers who fear that there will tax increases in Richmond County as a result of this lost revenue. Hopefully, with the guidance of our new warden Steve Sampson, our deputy warden Alvin Martell and our CAO, and the staff and the entire council, they

will be able to find ways of protecting the ratepayers of Richmond County from any sort of shock as a result of this.

Just to give perspective, the municipality was scheduled to receive \$2.6 million for the next three years; it will now receive \$1.3 million. As a result of that, there is a difference over the next three years, there will be a loss of approximately \$4.8 million to the coffers of the Municipality of Richmond County. That's the number that needs to be kept in perspective. I believe Richmond has an annual operating budget of approximately \$10 to \$11 million; they will be losing \$4.8 million over the next three years from their revenues.

For anyone to question the commitment of Richmond County at trying to make this mill a success, those numbers make it very clear that the residents of Richmond have shown leadership to their municipal council and have shown tremendous sacrifice at surrendering these types of revenues, especially at a time when - Mr. Speaker, let's be honest, residents were hearing of government giving monies, over \$100 million, and yet the residents of Richmond would be surrendering \$4.8 million going forward for the next three years.

Mr. Speaker, that is the agreement that the municipality entered into. Again, they could have easily relied on their court victory to say no, but instead they agreed to this. But it raises significant issues and I believe Mayor Billy Joe MacLean, the former president of the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities, asked the question, are we now going into the future when companies wish to either buy assets in Nova Scotia and relocate to Nova Scotia, that property taxes are up as part of the bargain, that those can be negotiated by the province to try to either lure businesses here?

If that's the case, there should be an open debate about that as to whether that is going to be the case. That is certainly what the feeling was here, because Richmond didn't stand alone, Mr. Speaker. I'm very proud to say that the Municipal Action Committee that came together included Richmond, Inverness, Victoria, Guysborough County, Mulgrave, Port Hawkesbury, Antigonish County, and Antigonish Town, all stood together and supported the Municipality of Richmond. Certainly I want to say, as the MLA for Richmond, my sincerest thanks to those municipal leaders.

I believe all of them are still there, other than a couple. I know Herb Delorey has taken his retirement and Marney Simmons did not reoffer in Mulgrave, but I believe the rest are all still there, and I certainly want to commend them, as municipal leaders in the Strait region, for standing behind Richmond County because they, too, were asking the same question, will they be asked to surrender part of their municipal property taxes because of deals negotiated by the Province of Nova Scotia?

Hopefully the minister may be able to address that when he closes debate on this, because if it is going to be something that we do in the future we should have an open

discussion, because again the minister will be reminded that it was this government that extended an exemption for the Imperial Oil Refinery in Dartmouth, that are not paying what they should be paying in property taxes to the Halifax Regional Municipality. It was negotiated by the province, but the impact is on Halifax Regional Municipality's revenues. That's another example of where it has been done. This is not the first time this has happened, but if it's going to continue, there should certainly be an open discussion about that.

One of the other issues, Mr. Speaker, regarding this deal that I know was raised was that the Stern Group was given an exemption from paying Efficiency Nova Scotia taxes, like everyone else pays. To this day I don't believe we've actually been given the number as to what the impact is on that because, as you know, this government made the decision that Efficiency Nova Scotia should be paid for by ratepayers and not by the shareholders of Nova Scotia Power. So if the Stern Group has been given an exemption, what is the impact on everyone else?

Secondly, is that also now a bargaining tool that will be used by any businesses coming to our province that will say, well, we don't want to pay the Efficiency Nova Scotia tax either because Pacific West did not have to pay it as part of their negotiations with you? Again, we should have a discussion on that - is that part of our economic strategy that we use that as a means of attracting companies to our area? It's a very legitimate question to be asked.

Mr. Speaker, I want to as well point out again - and I did in my statement that I read earlier - about the workers at the mill, which exceeded over 500 at the time that NewPage went into creditor protection. There are now a little over 200 workers who have returned, who have made significant concessions in their wages and their benefits. They basically surrendered their pension plan from a defined benefit to now a defined contribution plan, which for all intents and purposes is easier known as an RRSP plan. They pay so much in and the company will match but they bear the entire risk.

Mr. Speaker, this was a difficult decision for the workers and for their leadership but they did it. In fact, they agreed not to ask for wage increases for a 10-year period. So naturally there were significant sacrifices made by them. As well, the woodlands operators did everything I believe they could to try to be reasonable here and to try to help be part of the solution, but we're hearing more and more from them that the rates being offered now by the new operator simply won't allow them to make ends meet. So we have a problem on our hands. The mill needs fibre; those who supply the fibre need to make ends meet. Hopefully that is something that is going to be resolved.

One of the other issues that we were reminded of again this week was the impact to both the current workers, the retirees and their widows, was the fact that the pension plan was so severely underfunded. Workers who have returned, have returned knowing that the pension fund they paid into for 10, 20, 30 years has suffered a 30 per cent to 40 per cent loss

from the benefits they expected to enjoy upon their retirement. For the retirees themselves, they have received the letters and already the impact is being felt with reduced pension payments.

As if it couldn't get any worse, Mr. Speaker, it got worse because those who took the early retirement and bridged their pensions from the age of 55 to 65 have now received letters saying that the previous administrator of the pension plan made a mistake - made a mistake - and what a costly mistake that was made because it ends up that benefits were paid higher than what should have been paid for some retirees, and for others not enough was paid. So some retirees have now received letters saying you owe us \$20,000 that was paid in excess and if we add interest on your \$20,000, that's even more and plus, in order to be able to recoup the monies that were overpaid, we are going to charge you a 3 per cent charge on that. For one of the retirees I spoke to, the grand total of \$40,000 is what will have to be paid back.

So what has been proposed at this point is that starting March 2013, retirees will see a portion of their pension cut back even further because of this overpayment. My question was, well, what happens if you pass away, how will that impact your spouse and they made it very clear, it follows the estate. So the widows will be impacted by this as well.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I realize that the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education has said, well, it's not something we can get involved in and I'm not sure if I buy that because I think there is expertise in her department that should be offered to Morneau Shepell, who is the current administrator of that pension plan, as to what the options are to recoup those funds from the previous administrator who made the error. Workers did not make any errors here. They acted in good faith. They met the terms of their pension plan and the administrator made a costly mistake.

I believe that the province should be the first to say, while we can't be there to offer money to pay, we have some expertise within our department that we are more than happy to share with you as to what your options are. I would hope that the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education would be prepared to offer that expertise to the workers, to Morneau Shepell, to see if there is an ability to recoup those monies through a legal proceeding if necessary to protect the workers, protect the retirees, and protect the widows who rely so heavily on these funds.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, this continues to be a challenging time in the Strait area. I agree with the comment made by the member for Inverness that when driving up here to the city and taking the intersection on Reeves Street it is very refreshing to finally see steam coming out of those smokestacks again. But it has been a very difficult road and continues to be a difficult road, and for the residents and ratepayers of Richmond County those effects will continue to be felt for some period of time. As well, the question for us, even with this bill today - and the question that I hope the Minister of Service Nova Scotia

and Municipal Relations will be mindful of as well - is what happens when the agreement ends? There is debate over what the true assessed value of the mill and its assets is.

There are some who would argue that it should be based on the purchase price, and what is confusing for residents of the Strait area, especially in Richmond County, is that they know the supercalender mill is a billion-dollar asset. Many feel that the assessment should be based on the assets that are there, but if we go with purchase price, the actual purchase price of the mill is \$663,300. That is the actual price of that mill with a billion-dollar, state-of-the-art machine.

We will certainly be looking and hoping that the Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations and his staff will work closely with the residents of Richmond County, because if that is the assessed value at the end of the day, it will have an absolutely devastating impact on the revenues of Richmond County. The municipality only has one means of getting more revenue, and that's through its ratepayers.

Mr. Speaker, we're pleased that this agreement is going to continue for the next three years, but 2016 and 2017 are going to be a significant challenge for our municipality. One of the issues that I raised, and that I will continue to raise, is that while we are happy to see the mill operating again, we all realize that less than half of the workforce is back there. Those are skilled tradespeople who have had to find work elsewhere. Many of them have gone out West.

I had hoped, and I still hold out hope, that the government will put together a dedicated team to look at diversifying the economy of the Strait area. In fact, I had really hoped that we would see the same level of effort come to the Strait area from the government as went to the communities affected by the Bowater closure. In essence it's a very similar situation, because you have that many workers who are out of employment. As well, the reality has hit us again that we can't simply rely on one single employer to be the backbone of our economy in the Strait area - not only for Richmond County but for the entire Strait area. There needs to be a means of diversifying our economy and of finding opportunities for our existing businesses to grow and for new small and medium businesses to move in.

Mr. Speaker, I think it has been said in this House before, and it has been written, that the Strait area - and certainly Richmond, especially in the Point Tupper Industrial Park and across the bay - has gone through such a rollercoaster of hopes and dreams only to be, in so many cases, dashed. We have heard of the megaprojects coming in to the Point Tupper Industrial Park. We had an oil refinery at one point in the Strait area; we had a heavy water plant in that same park. We were going to have a liquefied natural gas terminal, but that didn't happen. There have been so many big projects that have been spoken about, and unfortunately they have not worked.

We are hoping that we'll see our economy grow, one job at a time if necessary, but the Strait area is in need of help from the government through assisting with either retraining some of the workers, finding new employment opportunities, and finding ways of diversifying that economic base so that we are not solely dependent on one large employer for our taxes and for employment.

I recognize that the government announced a new panel that's going to be looking at rural economic development, and I would certainly hope that the government would ask them to have an immediate focus on the Strait area to try to identify opportunities there so that we can grow our economy, so we can keep our young people home, and we can keep our skilled tradespeople working in our community as well.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I was pleased to have the opportunity for the first time since the House sat to be able to raise these concerns. I'm pleased that the minister has brought this legislation forward, and I certainly hope that any further press releases on this issue will recognize the sacrifices of the residents of Richmond County, because at the end of the day this bill itself has a direct impact on Richmond ratepayers today, and it will have that into the future.

Again, I can't say enough about my municipal colleagues in Richmond County who, ironically, have all been returned to office, with a new councillor in Petit-de-Grat, Rod Samson, who replaced our late warden, John Boudreau - every one of them has been returned. I have no doubt that either through acclamation or through election, that the residents of Richmond County, as difficult a process as this has been, realize the sacrifices and the leadership that were shown by our municipal leaders, that they've shown then and that they will continue to show into the future.

I certainly look forward to continuing to work with them for many years to come. Merci, M. le Président.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, we will be supporting this bill. We understand that it was part of the mix of incentives to attract the buyer for the NewPage mill, now called Port Hawkesbury Paper.

I want to acknowledge a couple of people - one was Victor David, the Acting Warden in Richmond County. Mr. David stood his ground and he didn't give away the store. He was under a lot of pressure; we do know what would happen to the local economy had that mill not resumed operation and what it would mean for the people of Richmond County to lose that as part of their tax base, to lose it completely. But at the same time, he did believe in standing up to try to get as much as he could for his municipality - and credit to him for doing that.

Also, I just wanted to make note of the Mayor of Port Hawkesbury, Billy Joe MacLean who, while not obviously representing an adjacent municipal unit, the Town of Port Hawkesbury, he was on public record saying that the company should not be asking for too much from the Municipality of the County of Richmond - he was publicly supportive of that adjacent municipality and their tax revenues which were at stake during these negotiations.

Mr. Speaker, there were a lot of sacrifices made for this mill. The residents of Richmond County made their sacrifice by way of allowing a reduced amount of tax to be charged to the paper mill because that means, of course, that they would have to pay a corresponding higher amount of tax to make up for that shortfall in the years ahead, so we certainly recognize their sacrifice.

We also recognize the sacrifice of the workers at the mill who have their wages capped for the next 10 years, and the sacrifice they've made to their future income. The wood suppliers, Mr. Speaker, I know that the mill is bringing in wood from New Brunswick right now, and that is keeping the price of wood down, particularly for the private wood suppliers. They are people I represent, and it's important that I put that on the record here this morning to make sure the members hear about that, because the more wood that is coming in from New Brunswick, the more supply, and the price of wood goes down and of course that affects our local suppliers.

Mr. Speaker, they too, as we all have, as every taxpayer in this province has, have now put money into that operation to sustain it, to try to keep it alive. We do hope that it is successful and that it will be here in 10 or 12 years' time, at which point I believe that we will achieve break-even on that investment and we will have the money that has been invested paid back by way of tax from economic activity of the mill. But it needs to be said that those private wood suppliers are taxpayers, too; they've supported the mill in that respect and now it would be nice to see the mill focus on buying more wood in the province. I will say with economics, every action you take, there is another reaction that takes place somewhere else.

I don't fault the managers of the new Port Hawkesbury Paper mill for trying to keep the price of wood low because it keeps the price of their product low and it keeps it competitive. At this point in time, particularly with the state of the paper market, we do need a competitive mill that's offering price-competitive paper. However, I know it's always a fine balance in tipping the scales in favour of the need to keep a business alive, but we must not forget about the need to keep the suppliers alive too. Without the suppliers we wouldn't have the mill either. I suppose we could bring all of the wood in from New Brunswick, but what a loss that would be to our province.

I think there is a role for government to ensure that those private wood suppliers are being paid attention to and that they're not inappropriately being taken advantage of, because they are an important part of the economy. While there is a good portion of people

who work in the mill there is a good portion also who work out in the forestry sector and from what we're hearing right now they're hurting. Some of them are not cutting wood right now because they feel they're actually not making any profit margin and in some cases, depending on the area where they are cutting, they could be taking a loss and that's significant and is only going to lead to more wood being purchased from out of province and dollars leaving our province. I think I've made my point there on that piece.

We know that the creditors, and we talk about this mill having an impact on the local area, I've heard people from around the province, different parts of the province, say we shouldn't have supported this mill, that the government shouldn't be supporting this mill. We must recognize that the activity extends well beyond the borders of the Strait area. We need only look at the list of suppliers, the creditors of the mill that delivered services to the former owner, NewPage Port Hawkesbury, and didn't receive payment for those services, whether they were supplies or actual services, so they've made sacrifices.

I think, of course, the taxpayers of the province have made an investment and I'll also call it a bit of a sacrifice because there is a risk to the investment. We do hope that the mill is around for a long time to come, it is a significant part of the economy, I always knew it was, but once I was elected I really began to learn how significant it is as part of the economy in that area.

There is one other group that I have been advocating for and that is the pensioners. We had witnesses called to the Public Accounts Committee this week, the Superintendent of Pensions was here and those pensioners have suffered. There need to be changes made, otherwise defined benefit pensions in this province are not what they seem to be. We had a pension review panel not so long ago do a review of pensions in Nova Scotia and there were issues that we've uncovered in the last while with the situation at NewPage that really need to be looked at. I don't think they were necessarily covered specifically in the pension review panel's report.

I do know there was great focus on essentially suggesting that pensions should be put in the hands of the four largest insurance companies of Canada, as the safest means of protection for people's pensions. As we've seen with the NewPage plan, we can't always trust that these large companies from away always do the best job. As we saw with the previous plan administrator, the error in bridging benefits has resulted in these pensioners now being faced with potential bills of anywhere from \$30,000 to upwards of \$60,000. I raise these points connected to this bill because these are people also who made sacrifices, the pensioners.

I will just mention quickly some of the issues we covered at the Public Accounts Committee, if any of the members are interested. We talked about solvency, the process where the NewPage pensioners voted on this - they didn't actually vote on it, that was part of the problem with it all. I won't cast judgment on extending the solvency from five years to 10 years, it was something that was requested by the employer and, I believe, by the

union as well. It was requested by a lot of organizations who were dealing with the stock market crash in 2008. But moving the solvency from five years to 10 years did carry risk, especially for a company on an unstable footing.

Hindsight is 20/20, but we see now that risk was very real because what happened when the solvency was extended from five to 10 years, the company and the workers didn't have to pay extra over the coming five years to bring the pension back up to solvency standard. Instead it was spread over 10 years so less money went into the plan. The point I wanted to make at the Public Accounts Committee is that the pensioners were faced with this decision without being given a clear explanation of what it meant. There was, in fact, a quote in the memo that said it wouldn't affect their pension benefits. We know that it certainly did because they are at 63 per cent today of what they should be and had the solvency requirement not been changed, that percentage would probably be much higher.

Also, there was no vote. Members had to write a letter. As you can imagine, if you got something in the mail with five pages of - one person referred to it as "legalese" - difficult-to-understand information, you were given that, but you were also not even given a ballot to vote yes or no for it. If you didn't pen a letter and send it in within 30 days, it was assumed that you were in favour of the changes.

The pensioners accepted risk without understanding what they were getting into. That's wrong. That needs to be changed. There is a role for government to watch out for pensioners in the future to make sure that doesn't happen to them.

Another point I brought up was about early retirements. We saw a pension plan that was stressed from the 2008 stock market crash further stressed by a company that was offering early retirements, which reduced their operating costs, which they wanted to lower their costs to make themselves more profitable. We know that any pensioner would appreciate the ability to retire early, but to allow this benefit to be offered with very little chance of extending it, to me it was irresponsible, even more irresponsible given the state that the pension plan was already under stress from the investment conditions and the reduction in the value of the plan at the time.

That is something that I don't think should have just gone through. I know the superintendent said it's not her role to get involved in that, but if her role is not to get involved in maintaining the integrity of defined benefit pensions, what's the point of having a defined benefit pension? You're just as well to have an RRSP because it essentially becomes buyer beware at that point and we have to remember too that these pensioners, the pension they have is a condition of employment. They can't opt in or out of the pension. So there is a role for government to protect them.

One of the other points that I brought up was the bridging benefit error and this had to do with - the member for Richmond also discussed this today - an error made by a previous plan administrator that was not caught - it should have been - in my mind, Mr.

Speaker. If this company is supposed to submit a report every three years to government, whoever is responsible in government for monitoring that should be monitoring it. If there's an error in the fund, that should be discovered. We see now because it wasn't discovered and picked up on, we now see pensioners receiving letters that they may owe upwards of \$60,000 in some cases, when their pensions are worth 63 per cent of what they should be at a point in time of their life when they can't take on a small mortgage - because that's essentially what a payment of \$30,000 to \$60,000 is for somebody who is entering retirement.

There is room for improvement. I hope the government will listen to some of these things that I'm bringing forward and take them as constructive suggestions and act on them so we can protect pensioners going forward.

The last thing I will say, we've spoken quite a bit on this bill this morning, is that we will support this bill because it gives Richmond County the power, as they have requested, to extend a tax concession to Port Hawkesbury Paper, and we do hope that this company will be around for a long time to come.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Richmond.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to clarify some of my comments earlier. The actual purchase price of the mill was \$33 million. I misspoke earlier. The impact of that is that the taxes paid to Richmond by the \$33 million, if we go by assessment on purchase price, will be \$663,300. The agreement is to pay \$1.3 million. So basically after the end of this agreement, if it goes based on sale price, that's what I was trying to tell the minister, that the sale price was \$33 million, the taxes paid will be \$663,000, which actually will be only less than half of what this bill already has given as concession. So I just wanted to clarify that. It was my error when I spoke earlier and I hope that Hansard can reflect the accurate numbers.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

MR. CLARRIE MACKINNON: Mr. Speaker, I was not going to speak in relation to this bill this morning. However, I have been moved to do so by the member for Richmond and to a lesser degree the member for Inverness.

I want to begin by saying that I certainly knew the boundaries between Inverness County, the Town of Port Hawkesbury, and the Municipality of Richmond, long before he was born really, or at least before he was born. In the 1960s I lived in Port Hawkesbury. I lived on Queen Street in Port Hawkesbury and I was the general manager of the local paper, the Port Hawkesbury Sun, which became the Scotia Sun. I had the pleasure of attending a lot of council meetings in the area. I covered Richmond County, I covered Inverness County, I covered Guysborough County I covered Antigonish County.

In fact, the mention was made of Billy Joe MacLean. Billy Joe MacLean was then a young councillor, as I was a young newspaperman. Anyhow, the situation that has spurred me to speak today was in relation to the member for Richmond saying that he had mixed feelings about this great announcement for the Strait area - mixed feelings. That member should be elated with what is happening. He should be elated, and furthermore, Mr. Speaker, I had to almost chuckle, but it was more of a joke, when that member said that he had to post, he had to do a posting to get coverage on this.

As a reporter in that area, I know that the media is somewhat more aggressive than he gives credit to them for and on every issue, that member is able to leave this Chamber and get tremendous coverage, tremendous coverage. He leaves here, he gets coverage on every issue. I, in fact, have relatives who are living in Richmond County and when I visit them, I see the member spread throughout the newspaper there, throughout the paper, the local paper, but on this issue, there has been silence. There has been hardly a whisper in relation to the good news announcement that was made here.

We, in fact, have heard nothing, nothing but criticism in relation to expenditures, even a TV advertisement is out there in relation to the expenditures, which, in fact, include this expenditure in the Strait area. The member talked about creating one job at a time. We, in fact, have saved 1,400 jobs - 1,400 jobs. I know the breakdown because in relation to NewPage, when NewPage went down, 37 companies in Pictou County - somewhat removed from the Strait - were, in fact, affected by that closure. Today we have people back in the plant.

Now the numbers are not as high as they used to be, but many, many jobs were saved; many jobs were saved in the forestry industry in the woods; many jobs were saved in trucking; many jobs were saved in maintaining the roads in the woods. A tremendous number - 1,400 jobs - have been saved by the action of this government. Where was the Liberal Party in relation to the Strait? What did the Leader have to say in relation to our endeavours to save jobs there? He referred to it as corporate welfare - corporate welfare, 1,400 jobs, corporate welfare, 1,400 jobs?

Bill No. 155 is a bill that I have to commend the municipality for, because many, many people have served on councils; many people in this House have served on councils. Between 1970 and 1973 I was on the Finance Committee of the Municipal Council in Pictou County. I was the chair of the Finance Committee from 1979 throughout the 1980s in East Hants, so I know something about municipalities and the actual (Interruption) Certainly, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable member for Halifax Fairview on an introduction.

HON. GRAHAM STEELE: Madam Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce to the House in the east gallery today, 21 Grade 6 students from the Halifax Christian Academy,

which is located in my constituency of Halifax Fairview. They are accompanied today by teachers Debbie Lynn Kitchen, Rhonda Faulkner, Donna Young, Catriona Fitzgerald and Kelly Sung. I'd like to ask them all to rise and receive the welcome of the House. (Applause)

MADAM SPEAKER: We welcome all our guests to today's proceedings, we hope you enjoy yourselves.

The honourable member for Pictou East has the floor.

MR. MACKINNON: Madam Speaker, as I was saying, those of us who have served on municipal councils know the sacrifice that is being made by Richmond County. There is a great sacrifice that is being made. We also know that these workers there, that the union there, that all the parties came to the table and tried to do whatever could be done to save that mill. The fact that it is a supercalender mill, the fact that it is the most modern calender mill, perhaps in the world, is really something worth saving.

That's not the message that we get day after day from the Liberal Party. All we hear is negativity, negativity. The chirping that goes on over there in relation to the negativity - all of the good announcements, I mean we're dealing with this particular bill and we're looking at what this has done for the Strait area. But even when we announced two major companies coming to Nova Scotia in one week, 940 jobs, we continued to hear that negativity. We continue to hear the advertisements that are coming out against what's happening in the Strait, against what is happening throughout this province. The Liberal Party may be interested in one job at a time, as the member for Richmond talked about, but we are interested in multiple jobs and we're showing leadership.

Bill No. 155 shows that all of us, except the Liberal Party, have been working in relation to trying to do something in the Strait area to keep the economy going in that area of the province. I have to say that that constant negativity that we're hearing - the kings and queens of negativity in the Liberal Party - does not do anything for the Province of Nova Scotia. It does not do anything for the Province of Nova Scotia. We have shown real leadership.

The member for Richmond talked about not being included. Well I'll tell you, I remember the Premier of this province - hours, just hours after the announcement was made that NewPage was going down the tube - I was on my way into Halifax and I got a phone call that the Premier is on his way to Port Hawkesbury, will you go with him? I remember that other adjacent members were there as well, and there were four or five of us who very quickly changed direction and took off to Port Hawkesbury because we had a Leader, a Leader who was concerned, showing commitment to the people of the Strait area. That Leader has been there for the people of the Strait repeatedly. He has been there day in, day out for the people of the Strait.

I wish I could say that the Liberal Party even paid a few minutes to the Strait area and there didn't have to be a posting of a statement, a posting of a statement. What a situation, to post a statement when you are one of the most capable people of getting coverage. When the member - I'm sorry I can't use "you" in this House, but you know who I'm referring to, Madam Speaker. It's that member for Richmond who has to do a posting, who can't get media coverage, who never is able to get any headlines anywhere. It's very unfortunate. Perhaps a more aggressive member down there could do a little better job.

Getting back to Bill No. 155, we have to say that this municipality has done its share, the Province of Nova Scotia has done its share, the workers have done a tremendous share, and the union was there throughout the entire endeavour. I wish the member for Richmond and the Liberal Party was there for the people of the Strait area. Unfortunately we had to wait until this Bill No. 155 came to the House to hear even a peep out of the member for Richmond - just a peep out of him, and this is so important.

Now having talked about the member for Richmond, I want to talk about the comments in relation to the member for Inverness. The member for Inverness knows, like I know, how important that mill actually is to the people of the Strait. He will not pass out any bouquets, for sure, and he certainly has not given the credit to this government that should have been given, and the leadership that was shown by the Premier and by the ministers on this side. However, he did say in the House very recently, when not a peep was being heard from the member for Richmond - the member for Inverness said that he was very pleased to look and see what he called steam coming out of that mill because he knows that the people of his constituency, as the member for Richmond should know, the people in his constituency are now gainfully employed because of the efforts of all of those who were involved and, in particular, the leadership that was shown by the Premier of Nova Scotia and this government to keep that facility going in the Port Hawkesbury area, in Point Tupper, in Richmond County, and we know the impact of that.

Billy Joe MacLean, who certainly served in this Legislature - and has never, I don't think, been a friend of this particular Party to any great degree - has actually given, as I call, bouquets to this government for the efforts that were made because he knows, as the member for Inverness knows, and the member for Richmond should know, that some real action and some real leadership was shown here.

So just in closing, I want to say that we have a tremendous contrast between this government and the two Parties opposite. We have a government that has a vision, a plan, and leadership in relation to jobs which is shown through what's happening in the Strait and Bill No. 155. We have leadership, a vision, and a plan in relation to health. We have leadership, a vision, and a plan in relation to education. We have leadership and a plan in relation to energy. We have leadership and a plan in relation to roads and the list goes on and on and on.

So what we have to do is contrast that to no vision, no leadership . . .

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please. I want to remind the member that it's Bill No. 155 that is on the floor.

The honourable member for Pictou East has the floor.

MR. MACKINNON: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I just want to say that Bill No. 155, of course, relates to a lot of those issues. It does relate to energy and jobs, and even in some degree to roads too because we had many people, including companies from Pictou County, that were involved in the road building efforts there for the mill activity.

Anyhow, Madam Speaker, I think I have made my points. I wasn't planning to speak but the member for Richmond certainly spurred me to get up and say a few words in relation to how this government has been there for the people of Richmond County, for the people of the entire Strait area, and I just had to contrast that with what did not happen on the other side. All of the members on this side, adjacent to and even quite a distance away, were there throughout this endeavour. I know some mention was made of the backbenchers here perhaps not being overly involved. We were involved, we stayed involved, we were involved throughout the entire process, and let's just contrast that to what other members did. So I am very pleased to support Bill No. 155.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle.

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Madam Speaker, I just wanted to say a few, quick words on Bill No. 155. I wanted to commend my colleagues in the PC caucus; I think they were there throughout this process as well. When the announcements were happening, our Leader was there, immediately after as well.

I want to know from the chief apologist of the NDP over there, he talks about those 1,400 jobs, and we've heard this government use that number many times, so I'm just wondering if maybe at some point that member or the Minister of Natural Resources or whichever member wants to release it, just to give us a breakdown of what those 1,400 jobs are. As hard as we may try, we can't seem to come up with that number, knowing that there are only about 200 people working at the mill today, compared to the number that was there before.

We understand you are talking about a whole bunch of other things but it would be nice to have a good breakdown of that number. With that, of course, we support the Municipality of Richmond and we support what is contained in this bill. It is with difficulty that we see a lot of things going on around it and of course the chief apologist for the NDP continually vaunting his Premier and everything that's going on here and trying to tie everything back to this 1,400-job issue. If the minister or others would like to present that 1,400 job number, I would appreciate to see that for our members in this House. Maybe

even before the House rises in a few weeks, it would be nice to see it maybe as a last-minute Christmas gift. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Natural Resources.

HON. CHARLIE PARKER: Madam Speaker, I'm pleased to rise here on Bill No. 155, an Act to Amend Chapter 51 of the Acts of 2006, the Richmond Stora Enso Taxation Act. There are a few comments that I wanted to address.

I certainly know the value of what has been done in the Port Hawkesbury or the eastern Nova Scotia region here with this mill. It's really a lifesaver for eastern Nova Scotia and Cape Breton Island. It's true, in this bill it shows the sacrifice that has been made by the Municipality of the County of Richmond, but truly, sacrifices were made by many people to put this transaction together to make it happen. The municipality was certainly one of them and we commend them for their fortitude in working to try to find an agreement. While I know it went to court, in the end I guess it was a workable agreement for both parties.

I also commend the workers, the unionized workforce at Port Hawkesbury. They made a sacrifice here to make this work and while not all the workers were able to go back, a number of them are still gainfully employed in that mill. In the bill it mentions the total figure of \$1.3 million annually, that's not what was once there, but it's certainly better than the \$420,000 that had been offered to them at one point. It's a compromise between what was offered and what they ended up with.

The municipality, the workers, certainly the woodlot owners have made a sacrifice here as well. Nova Scotia Power, government, Pacific West have all been involved to try to come together to make this work. Today in the industry there is an interdependency between pulp mills, sawmills, contractors, woods workers, and woodlot owners, more so than ever. I can remember as a child going down to the Port Hawkesbury mill in 1960, my dad was a contractor, he was a truck driver; he used to deliver pulpwood to the mill around that time. He was one of the first operators out of Pictou County that delivered wood to that mill in the early 1960s. But today, it's changed. There's a strong interdependency between sawmills, in particular, and the Point Tupper mill.

The other thing the honourable member for Argyle mentioned was about the jobs, there are 1,400 jobs here. I believe there's somewhere close to 300 that are employed at the mill itself but there are a whole lot of other workers employed running the harvesting machines or the forwarders or, you know, maybe even with a power saw. As my colleague has mentioned it's two per cent of our gross domestic product in the province, so that is a huge impact in this region of eastern Nova Scotia.

It's not just the mill workers and the woodworkers, those with chainsaws or those who are operating a machine, or perhaps a private woodlot owner that occasionally gets out

and cuts some work to make a little extra money to help pay their property tax - whichever - but it filters down right to the corner store and the local restaurant, local tire shop, the local mall, maybe even to the barber or hairdresser. It's a filtering affect.

The honourable member asked for the 1400 job figure - I'm sure we're going to be able to get that down for him, so we'll work on that for the honourable member, but it's mainly woodworkers and millworkers and some indirect jobs in our community.

It's not just in Port Hawkesbury and not just in Richmond County. Bill No. 155 is applying to the County to Richmond but the impact is far and wide - it certainly is in Inverness County, in Richmond County, in Victoria County, in Cape Breton County, but also the eastern mainland in my colleague's area of Guysborough-Sheet Harbour, and my colleague, the Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal Minister's riding in Antigonish, and also in Pictou County. My colleague from Pictou East just spoke here a few minutes ago, very passionately, very loud and clear, on the importance of this industry not just in that one pinpoint area but really throughout the whole region.

In Pictou County we know there are a number of sawmillers like Groupe Savioie, Williams Brothers, and Ligni Bel that's now going to be known as Scotsburn Lumber, and woodworkers and contractors. I was talking to one contractor just the other day, they just started again with Port Hawkesbury Paper and they done some work at one point with Stora Enso, and NewPage certainly before that, but they are gainfully employed cutting wood and doing silviculture work, so I know the impact is far, far and wide throughout the region.

The other issue that I'll mention is that now we have a forestry agreement with Port Hawkesbury Paper, I think it's much stronger, much better than the old agreement we had with NewPage. It's true the FFC certification will continue and that's good, that's good forest management, but we as a government now have much more control over the forestry practices that are going to be taken on our Crown lands in the region. We have a 20-year forestry utilization licensing agreement now with Port Hawkesbury Paper. It's a shorter period than was an original 50-year agreement with Store Enso or their predecessor, and with NewPage after that, but we as a province now control the stumpage rates, the use of the roads, the type of forestry practices that are ongoing.

Overall there is a part of that that will allow private woodlot owners to have a say in the amount of wood that is coming at them. It's been mentioned, I think by the member for Inverness, that there has been a struggle here for private woodlot owners, and we recognize that, it's a new company with many new initiatives and supply and demand here will create a balance in time, but the price that's being paid has not necessarily been as attractive as what was once paid in the past, although I do know it's much better than what was offered right now in the Province of New Brunswick, or even in western Nova Scotia. It's a higher price per ton, but in time the balance will come.

Certainly Pacific West needs these woods contractors, the same as the woods contractors needs the company, so it's an interrelationship that has to work together and in time the balance will be there. Nobody wants to see anybody go out of business, so the price is going to have to be sufficient that the contractors and woodlot owners will find a reason to want to go to the woods and cut some fibre or to sustainably manage their lands.

Over time I had some initial initiatives from contractors and woodlot owners, it's just not enough; I just want get by. But I think since we've been in this now a couple of months there is starting to be some balancing, I guess, and there seems to be more acceptance that there can be a way to work together and cut fibre and to make it work.

As an example, I heard on CBC Radio a couple weeks ago, David MacMillan was speaking with Don Connolly in the morning show. Some of you may have heard it. Mr. Connolly was pressing the silviculture contractor, you know, what do think of what the wood supply is and what's going on? He said the one bright light in all of this is government. They've shown some leadership and they're setting an example. They are allowing this mill to continue to operate and Mr. MacMillan described it as a bright light.

I also want to mention, Madam Speaker, that I've had a number of e-mails over time about the wood supply situation and one of them was a Mr. Greg Carter. He had e-mailed me several times, in some critical fashion, that he felt it was harmful to the woods industry, the price was not sufficient, and that he had suggested some other alternatives, but recently on November 23rd he e-mailed me again and he said this:

“Hi, Mr parker (sic), I have e-mailed you a couple of times regarding the newpage (sic) situation, I must admit I was wrong and your government was right to do the things you done to complete the sale of the mill, a job well done, myself and the seven people I work with are very gratefull (sic) the mill reopened.”

So I'll table that, Madam Speaker, for the perusal of the House if they so wish. There are a number of good initiatives that are underway and I think in time we'll see a partnership here between woodlot owners and contractors that will allow that mill to be profitable and successful for many years to come.

So just to wrap up, I think it is a win-win situation. It's a win for the workers and their families. It's a win for the communities of Cape Breton Island and eastern Nova Scotia. It's certainly a win for the Port Hawkesbury, or the region of Richmond Municipality. So overall I think it's a very positive initiative. It's going to create 1,400 good jobs. We have the best supercalendered mill in the world and we have something to be really proud of there to work with and I think if we all work together, we'll have good jobs and a growing economy there for many years to come. So I'm pleased with the positives and I just hope we can all work together to see that mill and the spin-off create good jobs for many years to come.

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

MR. JIM BOUDREAU: Madam Speaker, it gives me pleasure to speak to Bill No. 155. When the member for Richmond spoke, he talked about mixed feelings but I think one of the things I would like to talk about is the mixed messages that came out of his speech as well.

No one in this House is questioning, nor should they question, the sacrifices of the residents and the leadership of the Municipality of the District of Richmond. The leadership and the residents of the County of Richmond are to be sincerely congratulated on this deal. This was a deal which, as the member indicated, they had won their case in court but they decided - the leadership and the residents - they decided that they would work with this company so as to ensure the survival of a number of good jobs in the Strait region and, in particular, a number of good jobs and a tax base for the County of Richmond because, make no mistake, if this mill had not been operational or was not operational, there would be a loss of revenue for the residents of the County of Richmond.

Madam Speaker, I also want to acknowledge, as some of my colleagues have, the sacrifices that have been undertaken by a number of people in this area. Certainly the contractors, the workers, the suppliers, the union, the woodlot owners, the truckers, just to name a few, have all sacrificed in order to see that this mill is operational and paying people, employing people and paying taxes to the County of Richmond.

I also want to make a point that the Liberal Party has been characterizing this deal as a situation of corporate welfare. I very much find that offensive because during this whole process I don't think any of us on the government side were ever focused on the concept of corporate welfare. What we were focused on was helping a community and a county to survive and a region to survive.

Madam Speaker, no one can question the resolution that this province, this government, and this Premier had for the people of the Strait region, no one can question that. The decisions that were made weren't easy decisions, they were difficult decisions but the point I want to make, and I want to make it in particular to the Liberal Party and to the member for Richmond, that this government stood on the side of the people. That's where governments should stand, on the side of people.

Now I'd also like to remind the member for Richmond that I had the pleasure to address the Strait Area Chamber of Commerce. During my address I spoke a lot about the fact that this deal, the survival of this mill, was the result of a lot of co-operation - a lot of co-operation from the stakeholders that I just referred to. During that speech, or after that speech, I had the opportunity to speak to a lot of people there. There were a good number of people who thanked me on behalf of the government and thanked our government for doing what they considered to be the right thing for the people of the region.

Much of my speech talked about the fact that it's important for us, as a province, to start working together to grow the economy and above all, to diversify the Strait region because no longer should we or can we depend upon single-industry towns or communities in this province. That's a mistake of the past and that's not a mistake that this government is going to continue. We want to diversify, we will diversify and we'll move in that direction.

I also want to make it very clear that the province did not negotiate a reduction in property taxes. The County of Richmond decided on their own, after winning a court case, to do what they considered to be the right thing for their residents. Again, they are to be applauded for that. They are not to be denigrated in any way, shape or form, they are to be applauded for that. Personally, I want to thank the Warden, Victor David, and the councillors for taking this step forward because the alternative was not something that we wanted to entertain, nor did they want to entertain.

Finally, Madam Speaker, I'd like to indicate that in this whole process the members of the Strait region were involved in this negotiation. There were many opportunities to talk, to discuss and to put on the table a lot of the concerns that were being voiced by quite a number of individuals. At no point in time did any of the Opposition members ever come and speak to me about this deal or their concerns with what was happening, not once. We were there at the meetings and we were there trying to ensure, as was referenced, the pensioners. As a direct result of that meeting with the pensioners, we did arrange meetings for the pensioners to come and meet the appropriate officials and people in Halifax. So that did happen, as did any bit of feedback that we got - it was brought into government.

In closing, again, I want to emphasize the fact that there was much leadership, great leadership, on this by the County of Richmond. I also want to take the opportunity to indicate that our Premier showed great leadership on this file as well. Within hours the Premier was reacting, as were his colleagues in government, as were the caucus members. Although the Liberals tried to not accept that fact, acknowledge that fact, or appreciate that fact, that's what happened.

Again, I find it very offensive when, almost on a daily basis here in this House, the Liberal Party refers to this agreement - which has, in essence, stabilized the Strait region - as some kind of corporate welfare, as handouts and giveaways. That's not the case, Madam Speaker. It's just pure politics - pure poison politics - when that kind of statement is made.

With that, Madam Speaker, I will take my place. Thank you.

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

HON. MAURICE SMITH: Madam Speaker, I too wish to rise today and say a few words on Bill No. 155. Just to reiterate, the title of the bill is the Richmond-NewPage Port

Hawkesbury Tax Agreement Act. A little bit about that agreement: perhaps I'm misreading him, and maybe I shouldn't put too much into what he has said, but somehow I'm reading what the member for Richmond County is saying as that Richmond County is somehow being penalized by this piece of legislation. I want to suggest that that is not at all the case.

This Act is before the House because Richmond County, the municipality, has asked us to bring it before the House. We're doing that in response to their request. In fact, because of the recent municipal by-elections, the decision that the leadership in Richmond County made was wholly endorsed by its population, because they voted them all back in in the municipal election. So the decision that Richmond County made was a decision made by its municipal leaders, fully understanding what they were doing, and not for a moment taken without an understanding that this was best for its people.

What was best for its people was that that mill continued to operate. The people in Richmond County who work at that mill have wages, which means that they can therefore pay their own provincial taxes or municipal taxes to the municipality. Without the concurrence and support of Richmond, it wouldn't have happened, but it's only part of the package.

As I think every speaker so far has said, everyone has had to make a sacrifice. To suggest that somehow Richmond County is being penalized by this bill is simply wrong, and I wanted to set the record straight on that.

The other thing I wanted to set the record straight on, Madam Speaker, is that the member for Richmond suggested that the members who attended and met with the pensioners at Port Hawkesbury were not in the know, that we had been shut out, that we weren't informed of what was happening. I went to several meetings with the pensioners at Port Hawkesbury. The only meeting that I recall the member opposite attending was the very first meeting, which was an FYI meeting set up by the pensioners so that they could convey their concerns to us.

I believe the member for Inverness attended that meeting, as well as the member for Richmond and myself, and I believe the member for Guysborough-Sheet Harbour was there as well. That was not a situation where we had any information to give them at that time. This was early on in the process.

We followed up with their concerns and we had subsequent meetings. At those subsequent meetings, indeed, the Premier himself came to Port Hawkesbury specifically to meet with the pensioners about the concerns they had. That was the follow-up to the original meeting, which my friend said we were kept in the dark about, and I just wanted to set the record straight that that certainly isn't the situation.

As well, another point I wanted to raise is this package that came forward didn't come forward without a tremendous amount of input from all those parties that had to come

to the table and make agreements. It was a hard slog to get where we got. In fact, up until hours before the final agreement came, people were working on it into the wee hours of the morning. That's not an exaggeration, that's actually what happened, and the Premier, as others have said, showed up in Port Hawkesbury within hours of the announcement of that mill's closure, of the NewPage bankruptcy, and he was there many, many times.

I think I can say there might well have been one time that I didn't attend with him, but on every single occasion that he was there, perhaps except one, I was with him and other members of our Party were with him. So we were certainly kept in the loop. We were certainly informed and we knew what was going on, and we worked collectively to make this happen. So I guess on that point I wanted to stress that that's what our effort was in it. For the member opposite to suggest that we didn't know anything about what was going on, that's certainly not true.

Now, there's a lot of talk, Madam Speaker, about the 1,400 jobs and I want to emphasize that it's 1,400 families in the Strait region and when I say the Strait region, I mean Guysborough, I mean Antigonish, I mean Inverness, I mean Richmond, I mean parts of Cape Breton County, and it goes into, as my friend, the member for Pictou East said, parts of Pictou County as well. This is a bedrock industry in this area and for us to come out and want to support it and to keep it going, and to be criticized for doing that is just, as has been said, trying to make - and not successfully I can tell you because they aren't succeeding on this one - political points out of saying that this is corporate welfare or whatever.

Well, I went to Port Hawkesbury two or three days after this meeting was finalized, and again the Premier was there and other members of our caucus were there. We met with the people who were concerned about this deal and just as an example, the chamber of commerce chair was at this particular meeting. I sat across from him and he shared with me a story. He runs a building supply business, a Home Hardware, in Port Hawkesbury, and also I believe in St. Peter's, and he indicated to me that all summer long he was selling these garage packages and for the entire time over the summer he sold one package through his business. The week that this deal was finalized in Port Hawkesbury, with the Port Hawkesbury Paper, he sold three packages that week, within days of this agreement. Within days of this agreement being inked there was a change in Port Hawkesbury. It was palpable. You could feel it in the air.

You knew it was happening and the people in Port Hawkesbury, in that area - and in my own constituency I get calls regularly from people who are supporting this and when we hear on the other side that this is somehow a negative, that it's corporate welfare, or that it's costing the province, this is a net gain for all of Nova Scotia, and we have to recognize it as such. For members opposite to in any way suggest it's otherwise, it's just misleading, really, and it's disingenuous for them to take that approach.

I guess there's one point I wanted to raise out of the comments that the member for Inverness had. He was suggesting that when the pensioners agreed to extend the time to make the pension plan solvency, when NewPage were still at the helm, somehow didn't know what they were doing. I believe that's a disservice to these people. I don't think they're people who don't know what they're doing. They had an opportunity to actually - as I understand it, they took it as an attempt to save the industry, because the company was saying, we can't afford to pay all this money in at one time, should we take more time to pay it? That was a reasoned decision that the workers themselves made, that the union people made. They agreed to go along with it.

Again, just to set that record straight, I don't want anyone to suggest that by my not speaking on this I would agree, as my friend suggests, that the pensioners in that area don't know what they're doing when they make these decisions.

Just in conclusion on the bill, I want to say that this is a good bill for Nova Scotia. It's a good bill for the Strait area, and in particular, I know from what I've been told by my constituency members that it's a good bill for Antigonish. Thank you.

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

The honourable Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations.

HON. JOHN MACDONELL: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the comments of all members. I take to heart the comments around the press release from the member for Richmond, and I agree with him. To the future, I make my commitment to him that I'll do a better job to ensure that the messaging on any communication coming from my departments is accurate. I'll take the responsibility for that.

My bigger concern - I may not be in the House at some future point, but I hope my lifespan is long enough that I'm around when the member for Richmond is canonized. I have to say, he and I came to the House of Assembly on the same election on March 24, 1998, and I recognize him as a member who can speak passionately about his constituency, no doubt about that. He has a gift. But I have to say that on occasion the sanctimonious nature in which he preaches can wear you thin. It wouldn't be quite so bad if most of it was accurate. With that, I move second reading of Bill No. 155.

MADAM SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 155. 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 Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. CLARRIE MACKINNON: Madam Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 156.

Bill No. 156 - Halifax Regional Water Commission Act.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations.

HON. JOHN MACDONELL: Madam Speaker, I move Bill No. 156 be read a second time.

It's my pleasure to begin debate on Bill No. 156, amendments to the Halifax Regional Water Commission Act. At the request of the Halifax Regional Municipality we are amending the Halifax Regional Water Commission Act to bring it up to date and make sure the commission is able to operate efficiently.

Since the legislation was last updated in 2007, the Water Commission has identified additional operational needs. Times have changed, and they have a product that has limited disposal options. They have identified a need to be able to use and sell energy produced from their waste by-products.

Madam Speaker, the changes the Water Commission is looking for will provide them with the same authority that other municipalities have when it comes to the operations of their water departments, which is the ability to use and sell alternative energy sources produced from waste by-products, subject to provincial regulatory approval.

In addition, Madam Speaker, the Water Commission has also asked to have the option to lease their lands for wind energy. All these amendments do is clarify Halifax Water Commission's ability to apply to use these technologies to create and sell excess energy. They will still have to apply for provincial regulatory approvals.

Madam Speaker, we are also bringing forward housekeeping changes to the Act, clarifying that this legislation prevails if there is a conflict with the Halifax Charter, in terms of the Commission's operations, and amending provisions relating to financial reporting as a result of decisions by the Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board. Through these amendments we are helping to streamline and modernize the Commission's operations. With those few comments, I look forward to members engaging in the debate.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

MR. ANDREW YOUNGER: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am pleased to make a few comments on this bill. I think this change makes a lot of sense. It is something that has been discussed, actually, for quite some time. There will be a number of members in this House - maybe, Madam Speaker, you may have actually been on the committee at the time,

too, where we were talking about the use of heat energy from sewage discharge to generate electricity and potential district heating systems and so forth.

This goes a little bit further than the issue I raised, but in the very first session of this current Legislature, in the Fall of 2009, I raised this issue in another bill that I had introduced - this covers some other issues, too, in fairness - regarding the Alderney Five Project on the Dartmouth waterfront where there was a desire to sell the excess cooling energy to projects such as Kings Wharf and across the street to the Queen's Square building, where Environment Canada was. I think they may have moved now.

I am pleased to see this happen. We missed the opportunity at the first Kings Wharf buildings to sell that energy there and so they will have electrically powered systems but that's okay. There are still many opportunities to come and perhaps one of the major opportunities we may see - well, two of them - the minister mentioned wind energy and I know that just behind my house they are looking at wind energy on the Lake Major Watershed. Probably if I stood on my roof I'd be able to see the turbines they want to put up, which has been talked about for a long time.

The other project, and probably the biggest one and the one that will impact the most people, in terms of seeing the visibility of it, will be the redevelopment of the Cogswell Interchange lands, which hopefully will finally happen at some point. With the proximity of the Halifax sewage treatment plant, there is an opportunity to use that heating and cooling energy - mainly heating energy, I guess - from that project, to provide district heating opportunities to that Cogswell Interchange site, which would give it the potential to actually be a green redevelopment.

Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to see this legislation move forward at this point. It is certainly something we will support and I suspect it was probably an oversight in the alignment when the Halifax Charter was created and the Halifax Water Commission was then moved to take over sewage operations, I think this probably resulted in an oversight at that time that nobody saw coming. This addresses that, so we're pleased to support it. Thank you very much.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm going to keep my remarks brief. We had some pretty good debate just now and I'll keep it short. I just want to put on the record that we're supportive of this bill. Thank you.

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

MR. MAT WHYNOTT: Madam Speaker, I'm just going to speak on this very briefly. This is a bill that actually affects some of the people I represent, in particular in

Pockwock. As many members know, Pockwock Lake is the water supply for Bedford, Sackville, Hammonds Plains, and most of Halifax, so this bill allows the Water Commission to lease the property to put up wind turbines. This is something that a group of people, a group of companies have come together wanting to put up, I believe it is seven windmills in that general area. It actually will benefit Nova Scotians, it's under the COMFIT program and they are applying to the COMFIT program, and hopefully they will be successful in that application.

What it does is it allows, under the COMFIT program, communities of which certain projects are being followed through on, benefit from this, in particular because they have to give money back to the community. For instance there has been talk around a potential scholarship for people in the African Nova Scotian community of Upper Hammonds Plains, as well as investing money into local community centres.

That's all good stuff, and I just wanted to put that on the record. I fully support this, people in the community are looking forward - of course there are always some concerns around development, in particular for the windmills. It is a good thing and it allows us to get off coal. That is something that is very important to many Nova Scotians.

So, with that, Madam Speaker, I take my seat.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Clayton Park.

MS. DIANA WHALEN: Madam Speaker, I'm pleased to enter the debate and say a few words as well today on Bill No. 156, which is an amendment to the HRM Water Commission Act.

The move towards making it possible for the Water Commission to generate and then to sell electricity, in the same manner that municipalities can do, I think is a really positive one - anything that we can do that is going to promote competition and choice and, also, that really makes sense when it comes to helping the environment.

I know the member for Dartmouth East mentioned the issue that had come up some years ago where the Alderney Landing area was not able to sell some of the heat that they were generating to neighbouring properties simply because of the way the Act was currently written. It just didn't make sense, because you had heat that was just being released into the harbour and wasted, in a time when we're trying to control our greenhouse gas emissions, we're trying to control costs, and buildings could have reduced their costs by making use of that power and we were simply just letting it go either into the atmosphere or into the water - just a complete waste.

There are communities in Europe where entire communities are fueled by what we're just letting go from factories and from plants, just letting that go off into the atmosphere and the ether and not using it to heat homes and to fuel businesses and

manufacturing. I think we could learn a lot by looking at Europe and what some of the communities have done; it's very innovative. Certainly one of the biggest things is that we not have legislative and regulatory conditions that we've set here in the Legislature that prevent that kind of creativity and proper use of our resources.

If nothing else, the debate around greenhouse gases and climate change and responsible use of energy, trying to control our consumption of energy - all of that should really be driving us towards a position where we always default to the best use of resources and that we make it possible for various players in this system to be able to sell energy. The Water Commission now will be one of those players in HRM that's going to help.

I know the member for Hammonds Plains-Upper Sackville mentioned the idea of more wind turbines helping to fuel our city and our businesses. I think that's very important; we have to pave the way for a society that is going to be using energy more efficiently and not wasting energy and, wherever possible, reinvesting in facilities that are going to be good for the environment and sustainable, and using renewable energy as much as possible, so I am very pleased to support this bill and see that we give that power to the Water Commission.

The Halifax Regional Water Commission, Madam Speaker, as you would know as well, having been on council, is a well-run organization. They have some big challenges in HRM, particularly around the renewal of the infrastructure. In downtown Halifax, where we are here today, our building is very old and the underground services are very old. When the Act was changed a number of years ago, it actually allowed the Water Commission to take over the sewer services, as well as the clean water that we use for drinking. So they assumed responsibility for some very old infrastructure that has to be renewed.

I know the Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations is paying close attention, I see he's following my comments and I'm pleased because what I'm really speaking about is the need for us to get more support from the federal government to help us in renewing these facilities. If we don't get help like that - I've read we have millions of dollars - it's hundreds of millions of dollars - in the need to replace these old pipes and water systems. What we need to do is get help from the federal government in an infrastructure plan because without that the burden of this is going to fall to the people who are paying water rates. That's where the Water Commission has their income, coming directly from people who are paying rates for their water. That would put a huge burden, as you can appreciate, Madam Speaker, on the people here in HRM to do that.

What has really happened with a lot of infrastructure needs, whether it be recreational infrastructure like the Canada Games Centre which is in my area, that we fought for, those have really grown to meet the community needs. The cost of construction has grown beyond the capacity of municipalities to pay for it by themselves. In the past, it was enough to say if you wanted a rink or you wanted a facility or you needed to replace

your pipes, you could do it yourself, the municipality could do it. But costs of construction and construction materials have risen dramatically and it has really become very difficult for municipalities and, likewise, the Water Commission, to manage those kinds of costs.

Really, again, we always know there's only one taxpayer at the end of the day, whether it comes as a water fee, a cost for electricity or a direct tax from one level of government or another, there's only one person at the end of the day who is that taxpayer and we have to be conscious of the overall tax burden we're putting on people.

Whenever I see mention of the Water Commission it draws me to the concern about replacing the facilities that we have here in Halifax, on the peninsula. Madam Speaker, I'm lucky in my area that it's very new and that is not a concern we're going to have for some time, but in the older areas of Halifax, which we do treasure, we want to make sure that the water is safe to drink and that the facilities are up to a standard that is proper for protection of the environment.

I'm hoping that the minister and other members will take note of that and always take the opportunity to speak on behalf of the needs of the regional municipality as it comes up, in terms of replacing these old facilities and old pipes.

With that, Madam Speaker, I think this bill is a timely one, I think it's an important one and I certainly support it. Thank you very much.

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

The honourable Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations.

HON. JOHN MACDONELL: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I thank all members for their input, particularly the member for Halifax Clayton Park I thought touched on I think the greater pulse of the issue and around the ability to maintain infrastructure and the challenge that creates and anything that allows the commission to either generate revenue or defer or somehow help with cost, that benefits everybody.

The challenge is a great one and as far as the comment around pursuing the federal government for dollars for helping with infrastructure, we're not the only government that I know that pursues them on this. I think across the country this is a major issue, not to mention what the cities themselves, as a group, do. But for sure, there really is only one taxpayer who carries the burden for this.

I thank members on all sides of the House for their comments. This is quite, I think, a sensible, reasonable, forward-looking request, on the part of the Halifax Regional Water Commission, something you kind of expect in the 21st Century. I think for an NDP Government this is a direction that we definitely would like to see the commission, the municipality, corporations, or whatever take - a direction that lessens our environmental

input and uses a by-product to generate energy whenever that's possible. With those comments, Madam Speaker, I move second reading of Bill No. 156.

MADAM SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 156. 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 Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. CLARRIE MACKINNON: Madam Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 157.

Bill No. 157 - Halifax Regional Municipality Charter.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations.

HON. JOHN MACDONELL: Madam Speaker, I move that Bill No. 157 be now read a second time. It's my pleasure to begin debate on Bill No. 157, an Act to Amend Chapter 39 of the Acts of 2008, the Halifax Regional Municipality Charter. I'm so pleased that the members opposite are engaged. I know that they are particularly pleased whenever it's me who rises to my feet to speak.

Nova Scotians want strong, vibrant communities with the recreation service and amenities that they need. This legislation supports this and ensures that HRM has the appropriate legislative framework and tools in place to better serve its citizens. This legislation will allow HRM to erect a permanent building on the North Common which will house public washrooms and maintenance equipment to support the Emera skating oval. As we are all aware, the Oval is a popular recreation facility in the HRM. Approximately 130,000 skaters used the Oval last winter. At the moment these skaters only have access to temporary washrooms, and maintenance equipment to support the Oval is stored in temporary structures.

This amendment to allow the construction of a new permanent structure on the North Common is being made at the request of the Halifax Regional Municipality, and HRM will conduct public consultations on the building design. If at a future point the building is no longer required, the site must revert back to an open space. Madam Speaker, we also remain open to working with HRM to develop a long-term plan for all aspects of the Common. I'm glad to take my place and look forward to any interventions by the members opposite.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Clayton Park.

MS. DIANA WHALEN: I'm pleased to say a few words as well on Bill No. 157, which is an amendment to the HRM Charter. The Oval is the subject of this amendment. It's specifically to allow a building to be built at the Halifax Oval, which is, as we all know, a legacy from the 2011 Canada Winter Games. It's important that we mark the occasion, that something permanent will be put there.

It was a tremendous success to see the Oval actually maintained here in HRM, because what I thought at the time when it was being built was that the original plan had been to put it up, allow the public to skate on it while it was just a few months before the Games occurred, and then to dismantle it and remove all traces of the Oval on the Common. That had been the plan. I believe the member for Halifax Chebucto is looking at me. I know there was a great deal of debate at the time to see that become a permanent facility. Other communities had actually been promised the ice-making compressors and so on that went with that, so there were other communities waiting to use those facilities, and yet thousands of people had enjoyed the chance to come to the Halifax Common and skate on that Oval while it was just in preparation for the Games.

It was obvious from the start that it was a truly wonderful facility, a facility that brought people from around the province. I remember speaking to the member for Clare, who said at that time in 2011 people had come up from Clare because they had seen it on the national news. They had seen pictures of the people out on New Year's Eve skating and really were excited to come and see what we had here.

In the minister's opening statement he mentioned 130,000 skaters last year on that Oval and I think that's a cause for great celebration, too, that we had that many people going outside and getting active. I was reading the announcements today from Communications Nova Scotia and there was one on physical activity. I believe it was yesterday there was an event at Mount Saint Vincent University that was encouraging parents, and all people really, to get out and enjoy the outdoors, saying that the more kids are outdoors the healthier they are, the more activity they get.

It's just really heartwarming to go down by the Oval and see the families, everything from grandparents down to little children, skating on the Oval. It's a really necessary thing that we now move this one step forward and say it is going to have a permanent building to go along with that so that there are the amenities and the comforts that you need when you have 130,000 people.

Madam Speaker, I had the chance to go there just once last year to skate so I hope to do more this year; it was my first chance to get on the Oval. I really would recommend it to all members. It's a lot of fun and it's a great activity. Just to actually get out and see how it feels to be on that Oval was quite exciting. Again, I think it was a success of the community that the Oval was maintained. I know the former councillor for the area, Councillor Dawn

Sloane, worked hard with the community to get that to be a permanent facility, so did some of the neighbours, including Dr. John Gillis, who many of us know from his work on the radio and EastLink. He lives right across the street from the Oval and had been one of the community members who spoke loudly about the need for it and helped to raise money and helped to raise support that that be made a permanent facility.

As I say, the bill is short and sweet because it relates specifically to the need for a permanent building. It also talks about what happens if, in the future, which we can imagine, the building might not be needed. I know that for those members of the House who are concerned about any encroachment on the Common, it's important that we remember a lot of land has been given up to public buildings on the Common and I think that may be the concern of some members as we see another permanent structure.

The same thing has happened in Halifax Clayton Park where the Halifax Mainland Common is part of my riding. In that area it was originally purchased in the late 1980s, with the idea of having another Common in the growth areas of the western part of Halifax; it was prior to amalgamation. The land was all wooded and treed at the time and, in fact, there were no houses adjacent to it at that time, but today we have the Keshan Goodman Library; we have the big Canada Games Centre, which is very large; we have two soccer facilities on the land and a large high school.

I must say, those facilities have eaten up some of the natural land, definitely, but they have created a community campus that makes Clayton Park an ideal community to live in. At the time that the high school was being proposed, the Department of Education had wanted to rebuild a smaller school on the old site, or just maintain or renovate the old school that had mould problems in Fairview. But the community wanted a new school with the amenities that would come with a new school, the higher technology, again, they're using geothermal power, so it has got better impact in terms of its environmental footprint; they wanted to have a theatre, which they had never had before.

The tipping point on going from a renovation or an improvement of the old building in Fairview and building a new one, was that HRM offered the land on the Mainland Common and that was huge gift really to the Province of Nova Scotia and to the people of all of the catchment area of Halifax West because otherwise we would not have seen that new school. That land, and any land in that part of the city, is worth millions of dollars and I think at the moment it occupies about 13 acres of land on the Mainland Common for the parking, the outdoor facilities, basketball courts and so on and it is a large school.

On that school on the common there are about 1,500 students attending, so it's a wonderful school. It has been open, I think, nine years now and the community was delighted to have it located where it was. There had been community consultation, the parents and the others in the community were very supportive that HRM allow land on the common to be made available for a school.

Now, again, when we look down the road, if it's 50 years or 60 years down the road and that school isn't needed or they want a replacement, it's quite possible that that land would revert back again to be common land, which is the intent. But downtown, if you look at the original Common, it included lands where we have the Nova Scotia Museum, we have Citadel High School, we have the hospitals built on those lands. So it does create a controversy when you start to eat into more of the public lands and open lands, but I think the benefit on health and wellness, the thousands of people who are using the Oval, and the fact that as I drove into work last winter I would often see people walking across the street there carrying their skates, heading over to the Oval. It just has so many community benefits and developing that sense of community and good health, that I think those benefits far outweigh the danger of using a bit of the land for that.

If we have a lot of ball fields, for example, the public are not all out playing ball, so I think we're getting far more benefit from the Oval than we are from some of the other land there. I think we always have to be cognizant though of not using up all of the open space, and I think that is important, but this amendment to the HRM Charter, Bill No. 157, is certainly paving the way for that one permanent building to be placed there. I think it will be very appreciated by the public, and definitely HRM has asked us to do it. And I know that we try to work closely with the HRM Council in order to facilitate their needs and their reading of a situation; in this case, their read is that the public wants this and I agree with them that it's the right thing to do.

Madam Speaker, just on one other note about Bill No. 157 - given that the Oval is such an important part of the city, it's certainly a place where important celebrations take place. I know on New Year's Eve now there are about, I would say as many people up skating on the Common as there are at the Grand Parade enjoying the events there. It has become that popular in just a couple of years because, as I mentioned, in 2011 it was a temporary facility and now it has become that dear to people.

Madam Speaker, I really didn't want to let this opportunity pass without mentioning the chance that the government has to introduce a winter holiday in February. I think that it hasn't been mentioned in this session of the Legislature - and what better place to launch such an event than at the Oval? I think that would be perfect.

This February, the third Monday of course in February is a holiday in five provinces in the country now - this February will be the first year it's celebrated in British Columbia as well. That's making six of our ten provinces the beneficiary of a winter holiday, and I think that Nova Scotia will eventually follow suit. I think it could be a legacy for the NDP Government to be that forward-looking, to be the Party that decides to do this, and to not be the last in Canada, please, as we move forward on this. Again, we have five statutory holidays. I realize there is some objection to us having any more from the business community or employers, but it isn't right that we have five and Saskatchewan has eleven statutory holidays, that out West there are ten in British Columbia and in Alberta.

Madam Speaker, that opportunity I think is before us as well; I think it ties into Bill No. 157 because the Oval would exactly be a celebration of winter and a chance to celebrate a winter holiday in February - it would be perfect. So I'm sure that the members of the House will give that some consideration. I would really appeal to the NDP members to think of it, and particularly the Minister for Communities, Culture and Heritage because this is something that would really be a community celebration and this February, if you watch the news and see the provinces that are celebrating it, it really does celebrate community just as every day of the week celebrates it at the Oval. But if people had the day off, you would see an awful lot of wonderful activity outdoors in the winter.

So, Madam Speaker, with that, I certainly support the amendment to the Charter. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Madam Speaker, I love skating on the Oval. When I stay in Halifax here, when I'm here on business, I have a chance to run across the Common and go for a skate, and I love it. I think the people here in this city love it as well; we can see that by the numbers of people who come out to skate. I've been on there and what's amazing is you can have, what seems like - there has to be 400 or 500 people skating, but yet there's still plenty of room to skate as fast as you want. And nobody bothers you if you're skating fast, which I like, because if you want to go for a good burn around the Oval, it's good exercise - and why not?

So it's a great facility, and it's nice for Halifax to have that. I know there are probably lots of people who come and visit the city who would like to go for a skate. It's free, Madam Speaker, for people and that is wonderful because I think we need - we often have lots of opportunities for organized sport and physical activity but this is a good one that is unorganized and it is free, and it's available to everybody.

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please. The chatter is getting a little high, it's difficult to hear the speaker.

The honourable member for Inverness has the floor.

MR. MACMASTER: Don't worry, Madam Speaker, I won't be much longer, I know it's Friday. I know a lot of parents talk about - yes, I'm going around in ovals, maybe - I know a lot of parents talk about how it's difficult to bring their kids to sports and it's almost discouraging for them to be trying to take their children around, with all the demands to travel to this rink and that rink. What's nice about the Oval is that it's free and you can go just about any time you like.

I know they have times arranged for speed-skating and whatnot. It's a great facility, it's good to see the government bring forward a bill that supports the maintenance of the facility and we'll be happy to support it. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

MR. HOWARD EPSTEIN: Madam Speaker, thank you very much. Bill No. 157, of course, has a history and I think requires at least some brief explanation of its antecedents. It may be surprising to members to find that there is a bill before this Legislature that specifically authorizes a municipality to build a building on land that it owns and administers.

On the face of it you would think that this is an odd set of circumstances and indeed, it is. There's a piece of history that attaches to that because when it comes to the Halifax Common, it turns out that, in fact, HRM does not have the legal authority to, on its own, decide whether structures are to be built on the Common. This is because when the Common was originally created by Royal Charter, it was created in terms that stated its intention to be, and I believe I'm quoting here correctly, "to the citizens of Halifax forever."

Throughout the long history of the original grant and legislation that has created the various municipalities that we have in our capital area, it has become apparent that part of the obligation of the municipality is to maintain that space, the Halifax Common, for the benefit of all the citizens of Halifax forever. This has long been interpreted as meaning that there is no power that adheres to the municipality to build on the Common unless this Legislature specifically authorizes it.

What goes along with that is the idea that the Common, which is a very extensive piece of the Halifax peninsula as originally set out, should really be used for public purposes. This is why we see hospitals or the CBC building or the Citadel High School as specific, allowed uses on land that was originally part of the Common and was originally for purposes of military drilling and for the pasturage of cattle or sheep or for the general enjoyment of citizens to use however they will.

It also means, that is this idea of the Common being for the benefit of the citizens of Halifax forever, that all of us who are MLAs in the Halifax area, whether on or off the peninsula, take a very direct interest in that. Technically, at this point, the North Common, which we're discussing today, is in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Finance, the member for Halifax Needham, but of course all of the MLAs, especially those of us on the peninsula, take a direct interest in what goes on on the Common.

When I first was elected to public office in 1994, it was as a member of the City Council for Halifax. This was two years prior to the formal amalgamation that created HRM. In 1994, the City of Halifax adopted a very extensive plan for the Common. It was a

multi-volume document. It was a comprehensive document. It emerged from extensive public consultation. I'm happy to say that it was a very good document and it considered what the future of the Common ought to be, the whole of the Common, not just the North Common.

Unfortunately, what has occurred since that time is that on a number of occasions the city and HRM, subsequently, have tended rather to erode the import of the plan and have occasionally outright ignored it. This is a very unfortunate state of affairs but they have, I think, now come to terms with the necessity of rethinking that plan and creating, through extensive public consultation, a new plan. They are in front of us now asking for specific authorization to build a building on the North Common to service the Oval. The Oval has been very popular and we know that many people from all around the province, and visitors to our province, have used it in great numbers.

I myself, as I think other members, along with other members of this Legislature, have taken advantage of the opportunity to skate on that Oval and I think we all enjoyed it. I have heard no one say they haven't enjoyed using the Oval, it's a wonderful facility. Of course with a skating surface, you have to service it. There have to be chillers to keep the ice in place. There have to be Zamboni machines in order to clean the ice and maintain it. Therefore there have to be some structures in order to help accommodate that.

On the North Common there is what is clearly a temporary structure, I must say probably illegally constructed, that does exist to house the Zamboni. But the request here is for a building to service the Oval and it is appropriate that there be such a building but I think the context within which this comes forward is important. The point I really want to emphasize is that it is clear that there is no legal authority for HRM to construct buildings on the Common without the consent of this Legislature.

It is important that if HRM does come forward, on future occasions, to ask for the authority, that should really come forward in the context of a new plan that they've worked out for the whole of the Common. This is something that has been somewhat missing from the local land-use planning at HRM for some time. It is my hope that HRM is going to be able to get on soon with the necessary public consultation and generate exactly that plan, which, upon its adoption, will give us a context for making decisions that will be helpful rather than engaging simply with one-off requests from time to time.

This is a good request and we are certainly endorsing it. Thank you for the opportunity to speak briefly to this.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle on an introduction.

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: I just wanted to bring the attention to the west gallery. Joining us today in the gallery opposite are two gentlemen, one is my son, Andre and one is a visitor, an exchange student who goes to Drummond Heights

Consolidated School in Argyle, from Ecuador. Carlos and Andre, stand and receive the warm welcome of the House. (Applause)

MADAM SPEAKER: We welcome all visitors to the gallery today and hope you enjoy today's proceedings.

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

The honourable Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations.

HON. JOHN MACDONELL: Madam Speaker, I thank all members for their contribution and it is true that skating on the Oval is common and we expect it to be more common. With that, I move second reading of Bill No. 157.

MADAM SPEAKER: The question is for second reading of Bill No. 157. 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 Deputy Government House Leader.

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

PUBLIC BILLS FOR THIRD READING

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. CLARRIE MACKINNON: Madam Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 140.

Bill No. 140 - Transgendered Persons Protection Act.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Justice.

HON. ROSS LANDRY: Madam Speaker, I move that Bill No. 140 now be read a third time. This bill adds very clear and specific protections for transgendered Nova Scotians to our human rights legislation. It will ensure that businesses, employers, landlords and all Nova Scotians understand that we do not accept discrimination against people because they are transgender.

I've heard from transgender Nova Scotians that they see this as a valuable first step. They are hoping that these amendments will help all Nova Scotians to gain a better understanding and appreciation of their community.

At the Law Amendments Committee on Tuesday, a young man named Nolan Pike spoke very movingly about his experience as a young, transgendered person. He said that when he began to transition in his early 20s, he was afraid that he would lose his family and friends, that he would not be able to find work, and that no one would love him. I was so pleased to hear him say that instead he has found a great sense of support and belonging within the transgender community. He said that being transgender has been a beautiful experience for him. I know that this is not the case for all transgender Nova Scotians, but it should be.

I hope that this bill is the beginning of a new era for our province; one in which transgender Nova Scotians don't have to worry about threats, fears, or discrimination; one in which they know their community will accept them without question, and one where they know all Nova Scotians support them in their desire to live full, happy and healthy lives.

Madam Speaker, I now move third reading of Bill No. 140.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Richmond.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Madam Speaker, it's a pleasure to rise as the Justice Critic for the Official Opposition on third reading of Bill No. 140. As we have indicated all along, our caucus has been in full support of these amendments to the Human Rights Act. I do want to commend the Minister of Justice for not only bringing these forward, but for highlighting some of the presentations which we did receive at the Law Amendments Committee, and some of the moving presentations that we heard during that.

As I indicated on second reading, I had the privilege of meeting with Kevin Kindred, Rosie Porter and Kate Shewan, all part of the Rainbow Action Project that sought our support for these changes, which we were very pleased to give at that point in time. I certainly want to commend them for all the hard work that they continue to do. I've been proud to be part of a caucus and proud to be part of a political Party which both provincially and federally has certainly stood in support of the rights of all Canadians and have been leaders in that.

In fact, a former Prime Minister had as his goal that we would have a just society. I would submit to you that the changes today are one step forward in truly establishing a just society for us not only here in Nova Scotia but throughout our entire country. It's with pleasure that we see Bill No. 140 going forward for a third reading, and as indicated, we will certainly be giving our full support to it. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

MR. JIM MORTON: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise in my place this afternoon to speak to Bill No. 140, the Transgendered Persons Protection Act. The purpose of this bill is to amend the Human Rights Act to explicitly recognize gender identity.

I hadn't planned to speak to this bill, not because I have any concerns about it - in fact, I have been fully in support of it all along, and I've been very pleased that my colleague, the Minister of Justice, has introduced this bill. I know the Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage spoke at length and eloquently about the importance of this bill earlier, as did my colleague, the member for Truro-Bible Hill.

But you know, the other evening I got a call about the bill from a constituent of Kings North who is a member of the transgender community. She told me that she was delighted and grateful that the government had introduced this bill, and she was also pleased that all Parties had indicated their willingness to be supportive of the bill. She pointed out that this is such a significant bill for the members of the transgender community in Nova Scotia that there are celebrations and parties going on across the province in kitchens, living rooms, and community places - gatherings, she said - that more typically happen at funerals. So this is a very positive thing.

She talked - which I guess is my reason for wanting to stand and speak to this bill myself - about the importance of hearing voices of support from people everywhere in Nova Scotia, as well as from people in this House. It seemed to me, Madam Speaker, as I listened and participated in that conversation with my constituent, that maybe it was important for me to stand up and not just to feel support but to name my support for this bill.

My transgender constituent also talked about her own experience of growing up knowing about her experience of self, but she understood that what that experience was didn't seem to match what she saw in the experience of others. She had this feeling, she said, as a young person, that maybe she was the only person who had this experience. She didn't have others to share it with. Her experience of being in this world was one of isolation. The sense of not being able to speak about or perhaps not even having the language to speak about what is the core of one's self has to be a very difficult experience.

I do understand something about these issues, because as many of you in this House will know, I'm a social worker. I have worked for many years both as a social worker and as a family therapist with clients directly and with other colleagues who are working with clients directly. Over more than three decades, that role has brought me into contact with clients who struggle to find a comfortable place, a safe place in the world. I've been struck that one of the most damaging, debilitating human experiences is to be invisible - to be

invisible while at the same time instinctively knowing that to become visible, to share one's experience openly, involves huge risk.

There are reasons why people are invisible and stay that way. Sometimes staying invisible is about not being able to find the language to share, but I think more often it's the risk of ridicule, the risk of physical harm - actual harm, not just emotional harm, but harm to one's physical being - and the risk of being isolated, but in a new and yet more painful way. All of those risks help people stay silent.

One of the consequences of that experience, and one of the reasons why I think Bill No. 140, although it's only a few words, is so important is shame. One of the consequences of keeping the core of oneself private involves a sense of shame, and that shame, in turn, reinforces the invisibility. And I think shame robs individuals of their potential; shame steals capacity from communities and can give rise to thoughts of self-harm or anger, or certainly it can contribute, in the mental health world, to depression.

During my career I had the interesting experience over many years of quite frequently getting referrals of young adults from parents, often from religious leaders interestingly, from other people, young adults who were being directed my way because the presenting problem would be kind of a concern about sexual orientation that did not match some standard of what was normal. Often the request that would come to me would be to help people become - that young person become - more like the rest of us, as if we know what that might be, when, in fact, it seems to me, Madam Speaker, that it is closer to the truth to understand that the truth is that we're all different, that we're not all the same. We have similarities but, in fact, what's interesting about most of us is that we're individuals, that we all have unique ways of being.

Because of some of the educational experiences that I've had, Madam Speaker, I tended to approach each of these referrals by trying to open up conversations with that young person about their personal experiences, and it always seems to me to be somewhat of a concern and a disappointment about the nature of our world, that conversations like that seem to be safer in the therapy room than almost anywhere else, and in a better world we would have these conversations with each other in kitchens and living rooms, in places like this, like we're having today in fact, because we're making the world a little bit better today.

Frequently, you know, the most important thing that I would do in that therapeutic relationship would be to connect that young person with other people who are having similar questions and had found ways forward that may have been workable for them. I found, Madam Speaker, that the consequence of building those connections was almost always a kind of liberation and growth - not always the way the referral agent, whether that was the parent or whoever that was, perhaps imagined that change was going to occur, but what came from that was a new ability to utilize personal potential and to find ways to embrace more of what life has to offer; in fact to get on with life, not necessarily by

focusing on one's sexual identity, but being able to sort of put that in context and then get on with all the other things that matter to us, whether that's education or work or family, or whatever that might be.

So much of my understanding of the importance of Bill No. 140, Madam Speaker - and I heard members of the Opposition initially talk when we were debating this bill in second reading, or maybe when it was introduced, about how short the bill is but, you know, sometimes what's important is not the number of words, but the power of words; I think that this brief bill focuses on an important point.

So much of my experience in this has come from my, I think, privilege of being part of conversations, deep conversations, with people over many years, who are interested in exploring the core of their being, and I value that but, you know, another way that I've learned many things is through literature. If I have a hobby, it's probably reading novels that interest me, and I remember reading, quite a few years ago a novel - I would recommend it to everyone in this House - called *The Twyborn Affair* by Patrick White, a great Australian novelist who won a Nobel Prize for his work. *The Twyborn Affair* introduces a protagonist who explores personal identity from the point of view of life throughout the world in the 20th Century, but where one's kind of sense of one's sexual self doesn't necessarily match the kind of body one was given.

You know, I found that novel really interesting and I remembered as I was reading it, and afterwards for a long time I would be in a public place, in a restaurant, in a library, in a meeting, and as I looked around and raised for myself the question, I wonder what gender identity someone has, it began to occur to me, exactly as a result of Patrick White's work, that I couldn't always tell. I wasn't always sure. Maybe at one point what to me seemed obvious, wasn't really obvious at all. It reminded me, again, not to simply look at the surface of things because the surface of things so frequently masks what I think of as a deeper reality. In fact that deeper reality is often about a richness and a complexity that I've learned makes our world a much more interesting place, if we can only get to that.

So Bill No. 140, the Transgendered Persons Protection Act, is an acknowledgement that transgendered persons exist, that they have a right to exist and to be part of our society, to live openly and to live, as the Minister of Justice said in his remarks, without fear, but not only without fear, but can and must be welcomed as part of our larger community.

Of course, as some people have noted, and I know that the Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage noted this, of course there is a lot more to do. In our world there will always be a lot more to do. There'll be more to do in the community at large. Perhaps there will be more work to do in this House as we move forward and perhaps much of that work - I would guess because of the way I look at things - will be in our own hearts, in our own minds.

Madam Speaker, I think Bill No. 140 is a step in the right direction. During all those years of working with people as a social worker and as a family therapist, it occurred to me many, many times that the changes in policy that we can make in a place like this could make so much more difference than a therapy session. You know, it shouldn't be necessary for people to be in a therapy session to talk about something that is at the heart of their being.

It seems to me, Madam Speaker, that what the Minister of Justice has introduced here in this session is a bill that makes it more possible for us to have these conversations in all the public places that we need to have them, in all the private places that we need to have them. So today in this House, with just a few, powerful words, I think we're making such a change.

I can say, and I'll just end with this, that this bill for me, Madam Speaker, is an example of why I was interested in being a member of this House. I'm proud to support this bill and I am particularly proud to be a member of the government that has introduced this bill and proud for the difference that it will make to the future of Nova Scotia. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

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

MS. KELLY REGAN: Madam Speaker, I just want to make a few remarks today. I was quite pleased to see this bill come forward. During the last election and on some other federal elections, I had the chance to work with a very nice young man, handsome, smart and we had done some door-knocking together, so after my election, when he called up and said he wanted to chat with me about something, I thought that he wanted to maybe come and work for me or something.

He came over to my house and we sat down and he was nervous. I thought now that's kind of typical for somebody who wants to ask you for a job. Then he told me something that I had not seen coming. He told me that he was a woman living in a man's body. We had quite a conversation about when he knew that, what it had been like. For me it explained some of what I thought was shyness and I had thought he was probably just very reserved with people because he didn't know how they would take it.

Anyway, I promised him then that I would remember our conversation when I was in the Legislature. He did talk to me about the cost of transgender surgery and it remains very expensive for people who want to do this.

Fast forward a couple of years and this young person came to visit me again. She looked very different and her voice had changed but I could see that inside she was still the same wonderful person that I had come to know on the campaign trail. I just want to say that I commend that young person for coming forward to me and telling me about her story and I think that this bill today will be a step forward for people like my young friend. I hope

that this bill will make her life a little bit easier in the years ahead. Thank you very much. (Applause)

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester-Musquodoboit Valley.

MR. GARY BURRILL: Madam Speaker, in continuing the line of thinking about this important bill, which is being presented by my colleagues who have spoken to it, for a few moments I would just like to reflect on the extent to which it is our enormous privilege here in late 2012, in this House, to be involved in the passage of this bill. This overall, overarching area, it seems to me, the area of the expanded openness and the expanded understanding of the diverse world of gender identity and expression, this overarching area is really an area in which our society has made some of its most important and dramatic improvements and advancements, just in the course of our present lifetime.

What progress, we might just think to reflect for a moment, what advances there have been, just over the course of the last few decades. A person thinks about this naturally in terms of contrasts. I think about the world, for example, which I inhabited as a child and my memories of the inhuman ridicule in the community where I was raised, to which a person who was identified there as transgendered, was exposed. I think of the claustrophobic homophobia which prevailed in the closed gender and sexual expression environment of the high school that I attended. I contrast this with the much more open high school world in my own experience of Musquodoboit Rural High School - the high school world from which my own children, in the last decade, have graduated. This high school, which has its vibrant chapter of the Gay-Straight Alliance and defying in the process, I might say, a lot of stereotypes about rural communities with its vibrant chapter of the Gay-Straight Alliance. (Applause)

I am also struck - in speaking about these issues with those around the Gay-Straight Alliance in that school - by the tremendous conceptual sophistication with which many young people in that school are capable now of thinking their way progressively through these questions, distinguishing matters of sex and gender with striking theoretical and intellectual clarity in ways that are often infinitely beyond - in many cases, including my own - the capacities of their parents.

Thinking along the lines of these kinds of contrasts, I think of the place of great improvement we have come to in these most recent decades. I think of my own religious tradition out of the United Church and of how, in the 1990s, it was the case that many congregations of our denomination were simply convulsed as congregations strove to deal with the denomination's national position that the church was going to take an unqualified advocacy position in favour of the legalization of same-sex marriage. Congregations often were convulsed as they tried to deal with this often, to a great extent, I think, because at that time, less than 20 years ago, it was simply beyond what many moral, fine people of

character - it was simply beyond what they could culturally bring themselves to conceptualize or imagine at that not-so-very distant-in-time time.

I contrast this with how in just a few short years that particular whole issue has become such an integral part of what we now think of as our general cultural landscape of normality, as was made beautifully evident to me this past summer at the wedding of my goddaughter's sister and her same-sex spouse, a wonderful ceremony officiated by her mother, at which the whole rural community of Argyle Shore, P.E.I., gathered to join in thanksgiving and celebration.

Madam Speaker, tides change and the world improves. With the Transgendered Persons Protection Act, which proscribes discrimination on the basis of gender identity or gender expression, we are in a moment of just such a significant improvement. At moments of significant moving forward, it is very natural for us to turn our minds to those who, in such moments, we would like to turn to and pay tribute.

As the MLA for Colchester-Musquodoboit Valley, I would like to echo the words of the Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage and acknowledge the contribution of Denise Holliday of Upper Musquodoboit. For many years, Denise, in her former gender identity, published a community newspaper for the Stewiacke and Musquodoboit Valleys. Approximately 15 years ago, Denise made a gender transition. Over the course of that time, her radio show out of Dalhousie University has played a great role in deepening understanding of gender expression, gender identity, and transgender issues as a whole, and so also has the power of Denise's personal example in Musquodoboit.

At this moment, I also wish to speak of my friend Nate Hartley of Wyses Corner, Halifax County. Nate, who is in his early twenties and who has undergone a transition from his former gender identity, was the driving force in the establishment of the Gay-Straight Alliance at Musquodoboit Rural High School. By the power of Nate's character and example, Nate has done a tremendous amount to deepen understanding of issues of gender identity and expression in the Musquodoboit Valley.

In conclusion, I would like to acknowledge a truth which has been mentioned in this debate by the Opposition: the truth that this bill does indeed bring into view the question of the public fundability of transition-related treatments and procedures, which remains a question requiring continuing consideration. I would like to point out that for this very reason this bill could have been left for some future time when these matters would all have been resolved, but that is not what is taking place. What is taking place is the third reading now of a bill with this marvellous title - let's hear it for a second - the Transgendered Persons Protection Act.

AN HON. MEMBER: Say it again.

MR. BURRILL: The Transgendered Persons Protection Act. For there is never a perfect moment. There is only a right moment. This is it. (Applause)

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg West.

MR. GARY RAMEY: Madam Speaker, I will be brief in the extreme. I don't know what more we can say. The Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage spoke eloquently on this a few days ago, and the member for Kings North did as well, and of course, the very good barnburner speech that we just heard from the member for Colchester-Musquodoboit Valley.

I do want to acknowledge and mention something in regard to this bill, Bill No. 140. About a year ago, a lovely lady came into my office to discuss matters in relation to what we're talking about here today. This person is a lawyer in my community and a very bright, articulate, and fine person. At that time there were some concerns by this individual that I referred to the Minister of Justice, the Attorney General, who was kind enough to take some of his time and make a personal call and have a discussion.

I probably met with this person for at least an hour or an hour and a half, and I realized very quickly how important matters related to gender are. I did hear, as some people have already articulated here, her personal story, and to my amazement and to the great credit of my constituents in my community, she was able to stay in the community and continue her work as a lawyer with the support of the people who live in my community.

I can't tell you how proud I am not only of this person, but also of my community for totally accepting her as she transitioned, and I wanted to make sure I got that on the record.

Thank you, Madam Speaker, and with that, I will take my seat.

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

The honourable Minister of Justice.

HON. ROSS LANDRY: Madam Speaker, I just want to thank the members in the Liberal Party for their comments, and articulate as well my amazement - I guess I shouldn't be amazed - by some of the comments and words said by my colleagues here. It's quite moving and almost tearful in the sense of their commitment, their passion, and the beauty that they showed. It is truly an honour to be a part of this team and to be a part of this process with this piece of legislation.

I move third reading of Bill No. 140. (Applause)

MADAM SPEAKER: The motion is for third reading of Bill No. 140. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

Ordered that this bill do pass. Ordered that the title be as read by the Clerk. Ordered that the bill be engrossed.

The honourable Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. CLARRIE MACKINNON: Madam Speaker, that concludes the government's business for today. I move that the House do now rise to meet again on Monday next, at the hour of 7:00 p.m., with the House hours to be from 7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.

The order of business will be Public Bills for Third Reading, Bill Nos. 136 and 143; Bills for Second Reading, Bill No. 158; Committee of the Whole House on Bills, clause by clause, Bill Nos. 94, 144 and 147; and, if time permits, Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne.

MADAM SPEAKER: The motion is that the House do now rise to meet again Monday, December 3rd, between the hours of 7:00 p.m. and 10:00 p.m.

I want to thank all members for a very civil and engaging debate today and I hope that transcends into the enjoyment of your weekend, and perhaps we can bring that back again on Monday.

We stand adjourned.

[The House rose at 12:29 p.m.]

NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3)**RESOLUTION NO. 2458**

By: Mr. Allan MacMaster (Inverness)

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

Whereas Dr. J.H. Gillis senior girls basketball head coach Gail MacDougall recently earned her 800th career win behind the helm of the Antigonish school, in Nova Scotia School's Athletic Federation Basketball competition; and

Whereas Gail has served as head coach of the Antigonish school's senior girls basketball team for the past 33 years, with no present plans for retirement; and

Whereas Gail has led Dr. J.H. Gillis to the NSSAF Division i Provincial Girls Basketball Championship on three separate occasions in 1984, 1986 and again in 1990, while recording an enviable .649 winning percentage in her 33 years of coaching;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly extend our sincerest congratulations to Antigonish's Gail MacDougall on her outstanding career coaching senior high school girls basketball at Dr. J.H. Gillis, and wish her every future success.

RESOLUTION NO. 2459

By: Mr. Alfie MacLeod (Cape Breton West)

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

Whereas Karen Price, of Louisbourg, recently won third place in the recent Louisbourg Santa Claus Parade; and

Whereas Karen Price is one of the many people from Louisbourg who take great pride in their community; and

Whereas community spirit was alive and well in Louisbourg last week during the Santa Claus Parade, thanks to Karen and everyone else who participated;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly thank and congratulate Karen Price for all the effort she put into making the Louisbourg Santa Claus Parade such a success.

RESOLUTION NO. 2460

By: Mr. Alfie MacLeod (Cape Breton West)

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

Whereas Patricia Morris of Eskasoni received second place in the recent Louisbourg Santa Claus Parade; and

Whereas Patricia Morris made the special effort to travel to Louisbourg to help make this parade so great; and

Whereas special people, like Patricia, are what makes all our communities come together at this special time of year;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly thank and congratulate Patricia Morris for all her efforts to help make the Louisbourg Santa Claus Parade such a success.

RESOLUTION NO. 2461

By: Mr. Alfie MacLeod (Cape Breton West)

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

Whereas Deanna Burke, of Louisbourg, recently won the People's Choice Award in the Louisbourg Santa Claus Parade; and

Whereas Deanna Burke is one of the many people in Louisbourg who take great pride in their community; and

Whereas the fact that Deanna was chosen to win the award by the people in her community makes this award even more special;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly thank and congratulate Deanna Burke on being the winner of the People's Choice Award at the Louisbourg Santa Claus Parade.

RESOLUTION NO. 2462

By: Hon. Christopher d'Entremont (Argyle)

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

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

Whereas author Edna J. Leshan said, "a new baby is like the beginning of all things - wonder, hope, a dream of possibilities"; and

Whereas on October 7, 2012, Lacey Wood and Gari Nickerson welcomed their daughter into the world;

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

RESOLUTION NO. 2463

By: Hon. Christopher d'Entremont (Argyle)

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

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

Whereas author Edna J. Leshan said, "a new baby is like the beginning of all things - wonder, hope, a dream of possibilities"; and

Whereas on September 13, 2012, Kelly and Grant d'Entremont welcomed their daughter into the world;

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

RESOLUTION NO. 2464

By: Hon. Christopher d'Entremont (Argyle)

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

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

Whereas author Edna J. Leshan said, "a new baby is like the beginning of all things - wonder, hope, a dream of possibilities"; and

Whereas on July 16, 2012, Noline and Justin Armstrong welcomed their daughter into the world;

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

RESOLUTION NO. 2465

By: Hon. Christopher d'Entremont (Argyle)

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

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

Whereas author Edna J. Leshan said, "a new baby is like the beginning of all things - wonder, hope, a dream of possibilities"; and

Whereas on October 23, 2012, Natalie and Stephane Jacquard welcomed their son into the world;

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

RESOLUTION NO. 2466

By: Hon. Christopher d'Entremont (Argyle)

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

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

Whereas author Edna J. Leshan said, “a new baby is like the beginning of all things - wonder, hope, a dream of possibilities”; and

Whereas on July 24, 2012, Jessica Surette and Jeremie Muise welcomed their son into the world;

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

RESOLUTION NO. 2467

By: Hon. Christopher d'Entremont (Argyle)

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

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

Whereas author Edna J. Leshan said, “a new baby is like the beginning of all things - wonder, hope, a dream of possibilities”; and

Whereas on July 12, 2012, Keisha LeBlanc and Connor Robinson welcomed their son into the world;

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

RESOLUTION NO. 2468

By: Mr. Chuck Porter (Hants West)

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

Whereas this year marks Queen Elizabeth II's 60th Anniversary as Head of the Commonwealth of Nations and Queen of Canada and with it a Diamond Jubilee Medal is being presented in her honour to Nova Scotians, for outstanding service to their communities and province; and

Whereas Ron Spencer, at 79 years of age, is what hard work and dedication to his community is all about, having served as the Fire Chief in Summerville for a number of years, doing duty above and beyond what any community should expect; and

Whereas Ron was never allergic to hard work and today travels into Halifax working as a house painter;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly acknowledge the outstanding community work ethic of Ron Spencer, retired fire chief in Summerville, Hants County, while congratulating him on being awarded a Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal.

RESOLUTION NO. 2469

By: Mr. Chuck Porter (Hants West)

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

Whereas this year marks Queen Elizabeth II's 60th Anniversary as Head of the Commonwealth of Nations and Queen of Canada and with it a Diamond Jubilee Medal is being presented in her honour to Nova Scotians, for outstanding service to their communities and province; and

Whereas Andy Kirk, of Wilson Street in Windsor, is a retired Windsor Regional High School principal, before Windsor Regional became known as Avonview, and is a dedicated community volunteer; and

Whereas Andy, besides having served on Windsor Town Council for eight years and chairing the Windsor Rotary Club Community for Camp Mockingee, always shows considerable interest in students, many years after their graduation from Windsor Regional;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly acknowledge the dedicated community work and distinguished educational career of Andy Kirk, and congratulate him on being awarded a Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal.

RESOLUTION NO. 2470

By: Mr. Chuck Porter (Hants West)

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

Whereas this year marks Queen Elizabeth II's 60th Anniversary as Head of the Commonwealth of Nations and Queen of Canada and with it a Diamond Jubilee Medal is being presented in her honour to Nova Scotians, for outstanding service to their communities and province; and

Whereas Barron Blois, along with his two brothers, owns and operates an eighth-generation dairy farm in Gore, Hants County, known as the Courthouse Hill Farms Limited; and

Whereas Barron is an ardent supporter of supply management, is a past president of the Dairy Farmers of Canada, former Director and Chair of the Nova Scotia Milk Producers Association and Vice Chair of Dairy Farmers of Nova Scotia;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly acknowledge the dedicated community, provincial and national work and distinguished agricultural career of Barron Blois, while congratulating him on being awarded a Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal.

RESOLUTION NO. 2471

By: Mr. Chuck Porter (Hants West)

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

Whereas this year marks Queen Elizabeth II's 60th Anniversary as Head of the Commonwealth of Nations and Queen of Canada and with it a Diamond Jubilee Medal is being presented in her honour to Nova Scotians, for outstanding service to their communities and province; and

Whereas Freeman Swinamer is a dedicated volunteer with the Three Mile Plains Community Hall Association, going above and beyond the call of duty, too many times to

mention, while also serving as a member of the Hants County Exhibition Ox Association for three decades; and

Whereas Freeman has also been an ardent volunteer with the Windsor Agricultural Society, still finding time to volunteer as a minor hockey coach, while being an active participant and volunteer with the opening of the Three Mile Plains outdoor rink when it first opened more than 40 years ago;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly acknowledge the strong and devoted community work of Freeman Swinamer, of Mountain Road in Three Mile Plains, while congratulating him on being awarded a Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal.

RESOLUTION NO. 2472

By: Mr. Chuck Porter (Hants West)

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

Whereas this year marks Queen Elizabeth II's 60th Anniversary as Head of the Commonwealth of Nations and Queen of Canada and with it a Diamond Jubilee Medal is being presented in her honour to Nova Scotians, for outstanding service to their communities and province; and

Whereas Janet Kirk is a well-known and respected educator in the Windsor West Hants and Annapolis Valley Community; and

Whereas Janet is a former Principal of the Annapolis Valley's Community College in Kentville and has volunteered numerous years with her alma mater, Acadia University, including the recruitment of students;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly acknowledge the strong willed work ethic of Janet Kirk, while congratulating her on being awarded a Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal.