



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Gordie Gosse

Published by Order of the Legislature by Hansard Reporting Services and printed by the Queen's Printer.

Available on INTERNET at <http://nslegislature.ca/index.php/proceedings/hansard/>

Fifth Session

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 10, 2013

TABLE OF CONTENTS	PAGE
PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS:	
Health & Wellness - Midwifery Serv.: West. N.S. - Expansion, Hon. C. d'Entremont.....	608
TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS:	
WCB - Anl. Rept., Hon. F. Corbett	608
STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS:	
EECD - Early Years Branch, Hon. R. Jennex.....	608
GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION:	
Res. 236, Com. Serv. - Persons With Disabilities: Contributions - Recognize, Hon. D. Peterson-Rafuse	612
Vote - Affirmative.....	612
Res. 237, Intl. Day of Pink - Recognize, Hon. R. Jennex.....	613
Vote - Affirmative.....	613

Res. 238, Parkinson’s Disease Awareness Mo. (04/13)	
- Recognize, Hon. D. Wilson	613
Vote - Affirmative.....	614
Res. 239, D’Eon, Nolan & Kim/Eel Lake Oyster Farm: Awards	
- Congrats., Hon. S. Belliveau	614
Vote - Affirmative.....	615
Res. 240, Dance N.S.: Contributions - Recognize,	
Hon. L. Preyra.....	615
Vote - Affirmative.....	616
Res. 241, TM Sakyong & Sakyong Wangmo: Daughter	
- Birth Congrats., Hon. L. Preyra.....	616
Vote - Affirmative.....	616
INTRODUCTION OF BILLS:	
No. 37, Innovative Transportation Act,	
Hon. M. Smith.....	617
NOTICES OF MOTION:	
Res. 242, Intl. Day of Pink (04/10/13) - Recognize,	
Hon. S. McNeil	617
Vote - Affirmative.....	618
Res. 243, Chambers, Roslyn: IMPACT Award (2013) - Congrats.,	
Hon. Maureen MacDonald.....	618
Vote - Affirmative.....	619
Res. 244, Insurance Brokers Mo. (04/13) - Acknowledge,	
Hon. S. McNeil	619
Vote - Affirmative.....	619
Res. 245, Walsh, Erica: Accomplishments - Congrats.,	
Hon. P. Paris	620
Vote - Affirmative.....	620
Res. 246, Richmond Rize U-16 Girls Volleyball Team:	
Tournament - Congrats., Hon. M. Samson	620
Vote - Affirmative.....	621
Res. 247, Shelburne Co. - Pirate Co.: Efforts - Support,	
Hon. S. Belliveau	621
Vote - Affirmative.....	622
Res. 248, Age Advantage Plus Prog.: Participants - Congrats.,	
Hon. M. Samson	622
Vote - Affirmative.....	622
Res. 249, Buchan, Helen/Corbin, Hollis/Mrs. MacGregor’s Tea Rm.:	
Best Shortbread Cookie in Can. Contest - Congrats., Hon. C. Parker	623
Vote - Affirmative.....	623
Res. 250, Gillis, Peter/Staff/Learners: Literacy Advancement	
- Congrats., Mr. L. Glavine.....	623
Vote - Affirmative.....	624

Res. 251, Maple Ridge Elem./Riverside Educ. Ctr.: Altruism	
- Congrats., Hon. J. MacDonell	624
Vote - Affirmative.....	625
Res. 252, Saulnier, Marcel/SaulTech/Staff: Serv. - Congrats.,	
Hon. W. Gaudet	625
Vote - Affirmative.....	626
Res. 253, Miller, Sgt. Terry/Guysborough Co. RCMP Dist.:	
Generosity - Congrats., Mr. J. Boudreau	626
Vote - Affirmative.....	626
Res. 254, Gannon, Debra - Church/Commun.: Contributions	
- Congrats., Hon. K. Colwell	626
Vote - Affirmative.....	627
Res. 255, Queens Co. Blades - Figure Skating Comp.:	
Members - Congrats., Ms. V. Conrad (by Mr. G. Ramey)	627
Vote - Affirmative.....	628
Res. 256, A'Court, Charlie: ECMA Awards - Congrats.,	
Hon. K. Casey.....	628
Vote - Affirmative.....	629
Res. 257, Ducks Unlimited - Anniv. (75 th),	
Mr. J. Morton	629
Vote - Affirmative.....	629
Res. 258, Boxall, James: Ryl. Cdn. Geographic Soc. Award	
- Congrats., Ms. K. Regan.....	630
Vote - Affirmative.....	630
Res. 259, So. Shore Players - Anniv. (20 th),	
Ms. P. Birdsall.....	631
Vote - Affirmative.....	631
Res. 260, Cresco: N.S. Homebuilders' Assoc. Awards - Congrats.,	
Ms. K. Regan	632
Vote - Affirmative.....	632
Res. 261, EI - Bd. of Referees Appeal System: Eradication	
- Condemn, Mr. G. Burrill	632
Res. 262, Weymouth Lions Club/Amateur Athletic Assoc.:	
Playground - Provision Commend, Mr. H. Theriault	633
Vote - Affirmative.....	633
Res. 263, Coldest Night of the Year (2013):	
Contributors/Organizers - Congrats., Mr. J. Morton	634
Vote - Affirmative.....	635
Res. 264, Jason Simmons Mem. Hockey Tournament:	
Organizers - Congrats., Mr. G. MacLellan	635
Vote - Affirmative.....	635
Res. 265, Covill, Dennis: Order of Canada - Congrats.,	
Hon. W. Estabrooks	636
Vote - Affirmative.....	636

Res. 266, Southwest Fusion U-14 (Muisse) Team: Carnivolley Volleyball Tournament - Congrats., Mr. Z. Churchill.....	636
Vote - Affirmative.....	637
Res. 267, Marshall, Dianne: Book Publication - Congrats., Ms. D. Whalen	637
Vote - Affirmative.....	638
Res. 268, Gaudet, Daniel: Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal - Congrats., Hon. W. Gaudet	638
Vote - Affirmative.....	639
Res. 269, Williams, Pamela: Accomplishments - Congrats., Hon. K. Colwell	639
Vote - Affirmative.....	639
Res. 270, Reid, Brian - Tatamagouche Fire Brigade: Serv. Pin (35 Yrs.) - Congrats., Hon. K. Casey	639
Vote - Affirmative.....	640
Res. 271, Intl. Day of Pink (04/10/13) - Recognize, Hon. C. d'Entremont.....	640
Vote - Affirmative.....	641
Res. 272, Digby - Anna. Christmas Daddies: Dedication - Congrats., Mr. H. Theriault	641
Vote - Affirmative.....	642
Res. 273, Yarmouth Skating Club - STARSkate Championship: Members - Congrats., Mr. Z. Churchill	642
Vote - Affirmative.....	642
Res. 274, Fagan, Sensei Ron: Karate/Self-Defence Training - Anniv. (40 th), Mr. A. Younger (by Ms. K. Regan).....	642
Vote - Affirmative.....	643
Res. 275, Murray, Kelly/Gr. 7 Class: Historica - Dominion Instit. Prize - Congrats., Ms. D. Whalen	643
Vote - Affirmative.....	644
Res. 276, Dukes of Kent - Anniv. (50 th), Mr. L. Glavine.....	644
Vote - Affirmative.....	645
Res. 277, Dart. Gen. Hosp. Aux.: Vols. - Congrats., Mr. A. Younger (by Ms. K. Regan).....	645
Vote - Affirmative.....	645
Res. 278, Perry's Gym/Local Athletes: Performance - Congrats., Mr. G. MacLellan	646
Vote - Affirmative.....	646
ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS:	
No. 91, Prem. - Sexual Assault Strategy: Release - Time Frame, Hon. S. McNeil	646
No. 92, Prem.: Early Childhood Dev. Prog. - Details, Hon. J. Baillie	648
No. 93, Justice - Sexual Assault Strategy: Committee Results, Ms. K. Regan	650

No. 94, EECD: Cyberbullying Task Force Rept. - Recommendations, Hon. K. Casey	651
No. 95, Prem. - Cyberbullying: Legislation - Introduce, Hon. J. Baillie	653
No. 96, Prem. - Sch. Review Process: Flaws - Awareness, Hon. S. McNeil	654
No. 97, EECD - Sch. Review Process: Suspension - Sch. Bds.' Response, Mr. E. Orrell	656
No. 98, EECD - Sch. Review Process: Min. - Clarify, Hon. K. Casey	657
No. 99, EECD - Child Care: Funding Model - Details, Mr. K. Bain	658
No. 100, Fin.: Personal Tax Revenues - Source, Ms. D. Whalen	659
No. 101, Health & Wellness: Orthopaedic Surgery - Wait Times, Mr. L. Glavine.....	661
No. 102, Com. Serv.: Target 100 Prog. - Results, Mr. T. Zinck.....	662
No. 103, Health & Wellness - Dr. Veljkovic: Departure - Explain, Mr. L. Glavine.....	663
No. 104, SNSMR: Funding MOU - Effects, Hon. K. Colwell	664
No. 105, ERDT - NDP Gov't.: Economic Breakdown - Confirm, Mr. E. Orrell.....	665
No. 106, Health & Wellness: Villa Acadienne - Replacement Plans, Hon. W. Gaudet	667
No. 107, Policy & Priorities - CBRM: Capital Plan - Budget, Mr. G. MacLellan	669
No. 108, ERDT: Strait Area Reg. Enterprise Network - Gov't. Response, Hon. M. Samson	670
No. 109, Fin.: Bracket Creep - Concerns, Mr. A. MacMaster.....	671
OPPOSITION MEMBERS' BUSINESS:	
PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING:	
No. 6, Next Generation Act	
Hon. J. Baillie	673
Mr. M. Whynott	675
Ms. D. Whalen	678
Mr. A. MacLeod	681
No. 35, Trade Union Act	
Hon. C. d'Entremont.....	683
Mr. J. Boudreau.....	684
Mr. Z. Churchill	687
Mr. K. Bain	689

ADJOURNMENT:

MOTION UNDER RULE 5(5):

EI System: Omnibus Changes - Condemn,

Mr. G. Burrill691

Mr. Z. Churchill693

Mr. A. MacLeod696

ADJOURNMENT, House rose to meet again on Thur., Apr. 11th at 12:00 noon697

NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3):

Res. 279, Insurance Brokers Mo. (04/13) - Acknowledge,

Hon. C. d'Entremont.....698

Res. 280, A Beautiful Bouquet Store: Achievements - Recognize,

Hon. R. Jennex.....698



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, WEDNESDAY, APRIL 10, 2013

Sixty-first General Assembly

Fifth Session

2:00 P.M.

SPEAKER

Hon. Gordie Gosse

DEPUTY SPEAKERS

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

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. Before we start the daily routine the subject matter for late debate has been chosen and I will now read it:

Therefore be it resolved that the changes to EI affecting seasonal workers introduced by the federal Conservative Government on January 6th, and the abolishment of the Board of Referees for the EI appeals brought about by the same federal omnibus changes to the EI system, be unreservedly condemned by all members of this House.

It was submitted by the honourable member for Colchester-Musquodoboit Valley.

We will begin the daily routine.

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle.

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to table a petition with the operative clause:

“We, the undersigned residing in Western Nova Scotia, namely the counties of Annapolis, Digby, Yarmouth, Shelburne and Queens, are petitioning the Nova Scotia Government for the expansion of Midwifery services into the western region of the province.”

Another note here, which was quite interesting, that:

“May 5th be acknowledged by the government as the ‘International Day of the Midwife’ and declared as a recognized day through out [sic] Nova Scotia.”

Mr. Speaker, there are 297 signatures, and I have affixed mine as well.

MR. SPEAKER: The petition is tabled.

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Deputy Premier.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: I beg leave to table the Workers' Compensation Board of Nova Scotia Annual Report 2012.

MR. SPEAKER: The report is tabled.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

HON. RAMONA JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to talk about an announcement the Premier and I made this morning regarding the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development's new Early Years branch. This announcement shows that our government is committed to ensuring Nova Scotia's youngest citizens have the supports they need to reach their highest potential, and we have come up with a plan to do so.

I've talked to many parents and grandparents, and they tell me that the health and education of their children and grandchildren needs to be a priority, and that the success of our province depends on the foundation our young people get early in life. I could not agree more. I'm pleased to say that we are improving the future success of our young people

through a greater focus on the early years, the basics, and safer and better schools. The Department of Education has expanded its mandate to include child development and is now the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.

This is a fundamental philosophical shift in how we do our work. Research shows that the years from birth to age six are the most important in a child's development. The province provides more than 200 programs and services to support children in those early years. Unfortunately for the average family, though, finding out how to access these programs and services can be confusing and frustrating, and sometimes opportunities are missed or the services are found too late.

The system has to be easy to navigate and responsive to the needs of our families. Over the past year the province has done a lot to develop a plan that simplifies the support system for parents and puts the focus back on families and children. Hundreds of Nova Scotians provided input and ideas on ways to improve and make life better for our children. The plan is about bringing expertise from across government into one team - a team that will meet the needs of families with young children.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank our Early Years Advisory Council co-chairs, Anne McGuire and Mary Lyon, and all the council members for their hard work and recommendations. I would also like to thank all Nova Scotians who took the time to attend focus groups, fill out surveys, or send us their ideas and their suggestions.

By working together, our government has come up with a plan. The province has created a single team of professionals and experts in child development to better support our children. That team will comprise the Early Years branch of the new Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.

Families also want a place in their own community where they can go to get the support that they need. The province has had great success with SchoolsPlus, and we are adopting the same approach with the new Early Years Centres. These centres will bring programs and services into one comfortable, accessible spot in the community where families will find it easy to get the support that they need. While more details of these centres will come in the future, I can tell you that these will be welcome resources in communities.

Based on the needs of the community, the Early Years Centres will provide support for young children and their families by offering seamless access to programs like early learning and child care, early intervention, and education for parents. Helping families identify issues early on is key to a child's development. The province will develop a comprehensive system to check in with parents when their children reach age 18 months, and again at 36 months, free of charge.

Early identification and supports are vital to giving our children the very best start in life, which is why we are developing a comprehensive, standardized 18-month and

36-month wellness visit, Mr. Speaker. This will be the complement to the current 18-month developmental screening included in the Mental Health and Addictions Strategy.

Mr. Speaker, this will ensure there is time to address developmental supports for children before they enter our schools and will help kids get off on the right foot when they get there. Our very youngest citizens deserve the best opportunities to be successful, now and into the future, and our government is making that happen.

Mr. Speaker, we all have a shared goal of ensuring our children have the very best start in life, and your support and the work of the Early Years branch supports this. Thank you very much.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester North.

HON. KAREN CASEY: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the minister's staff for providing a copy of her statement. I had an opportunity to attend the government's announcement earlier today regarding early learning. The announcement is very short on detail and the minister's responses in questions in estimates were incomplete.

As an educator, I am well aware of the importance of early assessment, early identification, and early intervention. Nova Scotia currently has an early intervention program designed to reach children with developmental delays, as early as possible. There are many sites around the province where parents can access that service, if they're prepared to wait.

Mr. Speaker, currently there are between 200 and 250 families waiting for that service. Many families have to wait between one and two years to get supports, if they ever get them; and some children age out of the program, waiting for service, and enter our public schools at a disadvantage.

The Ministers of Education, Community Services, and Health and Wellness have stood idly by for the last four years as children with needs go without service. A more immediate solution would have been to adequately fund the current programs and to hire additional staff so that the wait-list problem could be addressed.

In addition to the early intervention services, we have 23 family resource centres across the province, some of which have multiple sites and a broad range of services for families and young children. Again, these services are under-resourced and understaffed. The Nunn report recommended breaking down the silos and have cross-departmental co-operation so that these services would be more accessible and designed for multiple needs.

Mr. Speaker, this is not a new concept. Let us remind ourselves about this government's lack of commitment to children. They have slashed funding from public education by \$65 million over two years; the wait-lists in our public schools for

speech-language and psychologists' assessments continue to grow; wait-lists for early intervention continue to grow. As well, this is a government that spent nearly \$1 million on ads and promotions, while they watched these wait-lists grow. Although the government says that kids are a priority, their actions state otherwise.

Parents have no confidence that their children are a priority for this government. Today we heard about another plan but no action. The press release says that every Nova Scotian, including the very youngest, deserve the best opportunities to be successful. The Liberal caucus agrees with that, and that is why we have repeatedly asked this government to stop slash funding to education, to support the programs to meet individual needs, and to stop balancing the books of our province on the backs of our kids.

Folks at the announcement today were told that more details would be coming as early as next week. Would it not be more prudent, Mr. Speaker, to wait until the details were available, or was the decision to drag folks out again next week just a pre-election ploy? Nova Scotians deserve better.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cape Breton North.

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, I'd first like to thank the minister for providing us with an advance copy of her statement today. It goes without saying that every member of this House would agree that giving the best possible start to our children is a priority. Today's announcement, although welcome, is lacking in details. Providing parents with the necessary resources to support their child as they grow is important, just as giving our kids every tool they need to succeed is. Unfortunately, we still don't know exactly what those resources will be, where the early centres will be, or what services will be offered to them.

Accountability requires development of plans that include goals and objectives, timelines and targets, review and evaluation. Unfortunately, today's announcement does not contain any of those things. To make an announcement of such high importance to families in this province but provide no specifics is premature. Parents all over the province will hear of this announcement and be left with unanswered questions. Child care providers across the province will hear the announcement and not know where they'll fit within the government's future plans for the early years.

Low family income is associated with poorer outcomes for children, and the longer the child lives in poverty, the more pronounced difficulties will be. Under the NDP, the cost of living has gone way up, causing further hardship, particularly for those low-income families. Unfortunately, today's announcement does not address any of the NDP policies that have pushed families into such difficult situations. The minister told reporters today that she was reviewing the funding model for child care centres. We have stood in this House and asked both the minister and her colleague, the Minister of Community Services, the exact question. We have now received a total of nine different responses. Quite frankly, that's unacceptable.

The services provided in the early years program will matter to every parent with a young child. It will matter to those who operate existing programs. By making an announcement about this fundamental shift, without outlining exactly what the shift is puts families and child care workers even further in the dark. This program is undeveloped, and the NDP have kept families guessing long enough. The government has not been forthcoming with details on the future of child care in this province, and they were not forthcoming with the details of today's announcement.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Community Services.

RESOLUTION NO. 236

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

Whereas March 28, 2013, marked the first time that a newly-appointed joint committee of community and government representatives convened to discuss the transformation of services for persons with disabilities in Nova Scotia; and

Whereas the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities recognizes that living independently and being included in the community is a basic right; and

Whereas the Institute for Research and Development on Inclusion and Society will assist the government and community in developing a road map forward;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House recognize contributions of persons with disabilities as agents of change and as contributors to their communities in 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 Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

RESOLUTION NO. 237

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

Whereas bullying in all of its forms is a painful and complex problem with no easy answers; and

Whereas to make real change, a societal response is required to address the root causes of bullying and cyberbullying, such as discrimination, racism, homophobia, and transphobia; and

Whereas the province's approach through the Speak Up action plan empowers young people to make good choices in any situation and understand the impact of their behaviour on others so that they can navigate this ever-changing world;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly recognize International Day of Pink against Bullying, Discrimination, Homophobia and Transphobia in schools and communities, and support the efforts of Nova Scotians who are working to raise awareness of this important issue.

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 Health and Wellness.

RESOLUTION NO. 238

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

Whereas more than 4,500 Nova Scotians are living with Parkinson's disease, and the number is expected to increase over the next 10 years as the population ages; and

Whereas April is Parkinson's Disease Awareness Month, which provides Canadians an opportunity to become better informed about this neurological disease and to offer support to those who are affected by it; and

Whereas for more than 25 years the Parkinson's Society Maritime Region has had an impact on every community across the Maritimes, been the voice for people living with Parkinson's, and is committed to finding a cure through support services, education, and advocacy;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House recognize the month of April as Parkinson's Disease Awareness Month, and recognize the contribution of the Parkinson's Society Maritime Region and its volunteers for their dedication to persons living with Parkinson's disease.

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 Fisheries and Aquaculture.

RESOLUTION NO. 239

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

Whereas Eel Lake Oyster Farm Limited of Ste. Anne du Ruisseau ended 2012 by capturing the Consumer Choice Product of the Year Award at the Taste of Nova Scotia Prestige Awards; and

Whereas Eel Lake Oyster Farm began 2013 by being named Aquaculturist of the Year by the Aquaculture Association of Nova Scotia for their outstanding dedication and service to the industry; and

Whereas Eel Lake Oyster Farm now produces a significant percentage of Nova Scotia's export of cultivated oysters;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of the House of Assembly congratulate Nolan and Kim D'Eon of Eel Lake Oyster Farm in Yarmouth County on their most recent awards and achievements, and wish them continued success.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

There seems to be a lot of chatter in here this afternoon. I wonder if the honourable members would take their conversations outside the Chamber so I can listen to some of the resolutions.

The honourable Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage.

RESOLUTION NO. 240

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

Whereas Dance Nova Scotia is dedicated to the promotion and development of dance, and strives to increase its availability to Nova Scotians of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities; and

Whereas Dance Nova Scotia, in partnership with the Canadian Dance Assembly, invites all Nova Scotians to participate in the 2nd Annual National Dance Week, April 22-29, 2013, to celebrate the positive impact of dance, as expressed through the Canadian Dance Assembly Dance Manifesto; and

Whereas the manifesto declares that dance, in all its diverse expressions, is a force for social good and human advancement that enlivens the body, engages the mind, and inspires the spirit;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly recognize the contributions of dance to our health, culture, and creative economy, and congratulate Dance Nova Scotia on its exceptional work in promoting dance as an integral component of Nova Scotia communities.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage.

RESOLUTION NO. 241

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

Whereas Nova Scotia's diverse culture and heritage contributes to vibrant communities that make life better for families and create better places to live, work, and raise a family; and

Whereas the Shambhala community contributes to the diverse fabric and prosperity of our province by sharing its cultural distinctiveness with the community at large; and

Whereas Their Majesties the Sakyong and Sakyong Wangmo of Shambhala recently welcomed the birth of their daughter, Jetsun Yudra Lhamo;

Therefore be it resolved that this House join me in congratulating Their Majesties the Sakyong and Sakyong Wangmo of Shambhala and the entire Shambhala community on this joyous occasion, and wish them all continued good fortune, health, and happiness.

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.

HON. MAURICE SMITH: Mr. Speaker, may I make an introduction?

MR. SPEAKER: Most certainly.

MR. SMITH: In the east gallery we have with us today three valued members of my staff. I'd like to introduce them and ask them to stand as I call their names: Brian Ward, the director of highway engineering services; Mike Balsom, the manager of traffic engineering and road safety; and Lashauna Smith, a policy analyst. I would ask that the House give these guests their usual welcome. (Applause)

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

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 37 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 293 of the Revised Statutes of 1989. The Motor Vehicle Act, Respecting Innovative Transportation. (Hon. Maurice Smith)

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

NOTICES OF MOTION

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Opposition.

RESOLUTION NO. 242

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

Whereas today people all over the world are wearing pink to unite in celebrating diversity and raising awareness to stop homophobia, transphobia, and all forms of bullying; and

Whereas the International Day of Pink has grown out of the initiative of two young men from Nova Scotia, David Shepherd and Travis Price, who saw a fellow student at Central Kings Rural High School being bullied for wearing pink, and then wore pink themselves to stand in solidarity; and

Whereas while the actions of David and Travis at the time were simple, the intent and message that by standing united, bullying can be stopped and is socially unacceptable, is as relevant and powerful today as it was in 2007;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House acknowledge today, April 10th, as the International Day of Pink, and be ever mindful that each and every one of us has the responsibility to stand up and speak out on behalf of the diversity of others.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Finance.

RESOLUTION NO. 243

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

Whereas the Dalhousie IMPACT Awards is an event held annually by the Dalhousie Student Union, in collaboration with Dalhousie University, to recognize outstanding individuals who demonstrate leadership, civic engagement, and exemplary contributions to the university community; and

Whereas the 2013 IMPACT Awards were held recently, on March 26, 2013, at the Dalhousie Student Union, and included the presentation of approximately 70 awards in five categories; and

Whereas the recipient of the 2013 Student Activist Award, which recognizes a student who demonstrates passion and commitment to social justice, leads by example, inspires others, and acts with integrity, and who is selected by members of the Dalhousie Student Union Council, is second-year law student Roslyn Chambers, who has deep family ties to the north end of Halifax;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this Legislature congratulate all the winners of the 2013 IMPACT Awards, including student activist Roslyn Chambers, and wish her and all of her fellow recipients continuing success and recognition in university and beyond.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Leader of the Opposition.

RESOLUTION NO. 244

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

Whereas the month of April in Nova Scotia is designated as Insurance Broker Month, a designation that has been acknowledged and celebrated since 2007; and

Whereas throughout the month of April a series of events will be held to raise public awareness of the incredible support, as well as the personal and professional advice provided by over 1,100 brokers from one end of this province to the other; and

Whereas honesty, knowledge, integrity, and service are among the core values and beliefs which shape the service provided by insurance brokers to clients in communities across this province on a daily basis;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly acknowledge April as Insurance Broker Month in Nova Scotia and extend our appreciation to all members of IBANS for their professionalism, caring, and support of all clients from one end of this province to the other.

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 Economic and Rural Development and Tourism.

RESOLUTION NO. 245

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

Whereas The ChronicleHerald hosted the 5th annual Nova Scotia Spelling Bee at the Citadel High School's Spatz Theatre on Saturday, March 30th; and

Whereas 54 students from across Nova Scotia competed for the provincial spelling bee crown; and

Whereas Erica Walsh, a Grade 6 student at Waverley Memorial Elementary School competed;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House join me in congratulating Erica Walsh on her accomplishments, and wish her continued success.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Richmond.

RESOLUTION NO. 246

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

Whereas the Richmond Rize Under-16 girls volleyball team competed at the Cape Breton Attackers Invitational Tournament on February 23rd; and

Whereas the Richmond Rize team beat the Attackers in the gold medal game; and

Whereas the team consisted of players Kaysha MacNeil, Megan Pierce, Kailey Landry, Hillary Benoit, Grace Starkey, Janelle Martell, Adonica Samson, Christine

Boucher, with head coach Trina Samson, assistant coach/trainer Mike Hawke, and assistant coach J.P. Boucher;

Therefore be it resolved that members of the House of Assembly join me in congratulating the coaches and players of the Richmond Rize Under-16 girls volleyball team for winning gold at the Cape Breton Attackers Invitational Tournament, and wish them continued success.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

RESOLUTION NO. 247

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

Whereas in 1722, one of the most brazen acts of piracy took place in Shelburne Harbour, where 12 ships were taken in a single day by a single gang of pirates, with many fishermen pressed into piracy on that day; and

Whereas Shelburne County is steeped in the history of iron men and wooden ships; and

Whereas the residents of Shelburne County have taken it upon themselves to promote those pirate and seafaring legends in order to provide entertainment and to encourage visitors to experience all Shelburne County has to offer;

Therefore be it resolved that the House of Assembly recognize and support the efforts of citizens of Shelburne County in their pirate-themed activities and their continuing efforts to have Shelburne County become known as Pirate County, 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 Richmond.

RESOLUTION NO. 248

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

Whereas Richmond Literacy Network and the Department of Labour and Advanced Education partnered to deliver the 5th Age Advantage Plus program in Richmond; and

Whereas the Age Advantage Plus program is targeted towards individuals between the ages of 55 and 64, with its primary objective to prepare older workers for new and immediate employment in their communities; and

Whereas on March 28, 2013 a ceremony was held at L'Auberge Acadienne INN to celebrate Marie Brow, Warren Fougere, Deanie Woods, Shelia Long, Lorraine Boudreau, Sharon McGrath, John Thistle, Rosaline Forgeron, Marlaine Burke, Brian Buchanan, Kate Silver, and Arlene Bussey's graduation from the Age Advantage Plus program;

Therefore be it resolved the members of the House of Assembly join me in congratulating each participant of the Age Advantage Plus program, for their hard work and dedication, and wish them success in obtaining employment.

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. 249

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

Whereas the Canadian Living magazine held a Best in Canada contest to find the best shortbread cookies in Canada and, as a result of the contest, eight bakeries across Canada were tied for the distinction of making the best shortbread in Canada; and

Whereas one of the winners of the Best Shortbread Cookie in Canada contest was Helen Buchan at the McGregor's Tea Room and Restaurant in Pictou, which is owned and operated by Helen Buchan and her husband Hollis Corbin; and

Whereas Helen Buchan makes her Best Shortbread Cookies in Canada from an old family recipe, which uses local ingredients, and she sells her shortbread cookies locally at McGregor's Tea Room and Restaurant in Pictou and has orders from across Canada for her cookies;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulate Helen Buchan and Hollis Corbin, of McGregor's Tea Room and Restaurant in Pictou, for winning the Best Shortbread Cookie in Canada contest and wish them continued success with their shortbread cookies and restaurant.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Kings West.

RESOLUTION NO. 250

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

Whereas the Valley Community Learning Association is hosting its annual fundraising event, the Literacy Mile, on May 11th; and

Whereas the Literacy Mile event is not only an opportunity to raise awareness and support of the literacy journey of many Annapolis Valley residents, it's also an occasion to recognize and celebrate remarkable personal achievements; and

Whereas during the past year 350 learners engaged in a wide range of programs that resulted in GED preparation, reading skills for employment, parents reading to their children for the first time, and just to experience the joy of reading;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the Nova Scotia Legislature congratulate Peter Gillis, his staff, and learners for going the extra mile to meet the challenges of literacy advancement.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations.

RESOLUTION NO. 251

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

Whereas the sympathetic urge to assist the poor of the world is a laudable sentiment to instill in young people; and

Whereas the distress and need of the people of Haiti continues; and

Whereas the students of Maple Ridge Elementary School in Lantz and Riverside Education Centre in Milford recently donated the proceeds of a fundraising campaign called Hearts for Haiti to the Canadian Red Cross;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulate the students of Maple Ridge Elementary and Riverside Education Centre on their altruism and concern for people less fortunate than themselves.

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 Clare.

RESOLUTION NO. 252

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

Whereas 2013 marks the 10th Anniversary for SaulTech Computers, located in Meteghan; and

Whereas throughout the years Marcel Saulnier along with his staff have provided outstanding service to their customers; and

Whereas SaulTech Computers have made a significant contribution to the economy of Clare;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating Marcel Saulnier and his staff for the exemplary service they provide to their customers and wish them continued success in future endeavours.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Guysborough-Sheet Harbour.

RESOLUTION NO. 253

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

Whereas in December 2012 the Guysborough County RCMP district spearheaded a One Warm Coat Campaign in the Guysborough County area; and

Whereas the One Warm Coat Campaign collects coats from those who are unable to donate and gives them, free of charge, to those in need; and

Whereas the organization was able to collect 95 coats and distribute them to Operation Christmas Spirit, Kids First and the Naomi Society, all of which service the Guysborough County area;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Sgt. Terry Miller and the staff of the Guysborough County RCMP District for their generosity, kindness and dedication to their community.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Preston.

RESOLUTION NO. 254

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

Whereas Debra Gannon was born and educated in Inglewood and Bridgetown, Nova Scotia and at the age of 22 she moved to Halifax where she met and married Louis Gannon; and

Whereas Debra joined New Beginnings Ministries and became the Chair of the Fellowship Committee, which entailed catering to such events as A Pot of Blessing, church anniversary dinners, church picnics and other special events, catering to over 500 guests as well as volunteering at African Nova Scotian Music Association Awards and devotes time helping with scheduling and administrative duties; and

Whereas Debra was also the first African Nova Scotian to be runner-up for Queen Annapolis in the 1969 Apple Blossom Festival; she was the first female African Nova Scotian to be appointed administrative assistant to a senior deputy minister for Nova Scotia and the first female African Nova Scotian to be appointed administrative assistant to the Premier of Nova Scotia;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House join me in recognizing Debra Gannon for her many contributions to her church and to her community and wish her every success in her future endeavours.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Lunenburg West.

RESOLUTION NO. 255

MR. GARY RAMEY: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the member for Queens, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas competitive figure skating is an excellent winter sport, combining physical activity with creativity; and

Whereas the Queens County Blades competed in the 2013 Valley Open in Berwick on February 16th and February 17th; and

Whereas Queens County Blades members Bailey Selig, Karleigh Huskins, Victoria Hopper, Lauren Amirault and Emily Dixon successfully competed with medal-winning performances;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly recognize and congratulate Bailey Selig, Karleigh Huskins, Victoria Hopper, Lauren Amirault and Emily Dixon for their success at the 2013 Valley Open Figure Skating Competition.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Colchester North.

RESOLUTION NO. 256

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

Whereas 34-year-old Charlie A'Court from McCallum Settlement, Colchester North, previously with a total of seven East Coast Music Award nominations and a two-time winner, was nominated for two more awards for 2013; and

Whereas A'Court was nominated and won the awards for Blues Recording of the Year and R&B/Soul Recording of the Year for his latest album, *Triumph & Disaster*; and

Whereas this well-known, talented, and socially-conscious musician has released a new song with a video, entitled *Not a Fan of Me*, which touches on every disturbing topic of bullying and the effects it can have;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Charlie A'Court for winning two prestigious awards at the 2013 East Coast Music Awards, and express our respect and appreciation for using his fame and talent to bring the topic of bullying to the forefront of our society.

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. 257

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

Whereas Ducks Unlimited Canada is celebrating its 75th Anniversary during 2013; and

Whereas Ducks Unlimited has been a leader in educating national, provincial, and local governments, as well as the public, about the importance of wetlands protection, its impact on wildlife management, and the preservation of clean drinking water; and

Whereas Ducks Unlimited projects, such as Miner's Marsh in Kentville and about 40 other projects throughout the Annapolis Valley, not only protect and conserve nature but also enrich our communities and enhance our quality of life by creating beautiful, tranquil places for us to observe and enjoy nature;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia House of Assembly congratulate Ducks Unlimited Canada, its members throughout Nova Scotia, and the Annapolis Valley chapter in particular, as we all celebrate 75 years of dedicated service to the protection of our natural environment.

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. 258

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

Whereas James Boxall, Dalhousie University adjunct professor and lecturer and director of the university's Geographical Information Sciences Centre, has supported an enhanced geographic and spatial education at all levels, from Primary through post-secondary school, and was the original proponent of the development of the Canadian Council for Geographic Education; and

Whereas James Boxall has worked internationally and locally on spatial information projects, including the HRM Sea Level Rise report and the LaHave River Protection Project, has been president of three national and regional associations related to geography, has served on academic and government boards, including the Geomatics Association of Nova Scotia, the Coastal and Ocean Information Network, and the GeoConnections federal program, and is a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society with the Institute of British Geographers and a member of the College of Fellows of the Royal Canadian Geographical Society; and

Whereas James has won the Royal Canadian Geographical Society 2012 Geographic Literacy Award, a prize which includes \$5,000, half of which will be donated to a charity of Mr. Boxall's choice, a new foundation to train teachers of Primary to Grade 12 in the use of geographic information sciences;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly congratulate James Boxall on his award and for 25 years of geographical research and education in the local, national, and international 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 Lunenburg.

RESOLUTION NO. 259

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

Whereas the South Shore Players was founded by Roy Portchmouth in 1993 to provide an outlet for amateur artists to engage in theatre productions, bringing the joy of live productions and quality theatre entertainment to generations of people in Nova Scotia, producing an average of two performances a year; and

Whereas the South Shore Players is celebrating its 20th Anniversary this year, thanks to the commitment of dedicated volunteers and amateur actors and stagehands; and

Whereas the South Shore Players is celebrating its 20th year with its production of *Inherit the Wind*, written by Jerome Lawrence and Robert Edwin Lee in 1955, with performances at the Pearl Theatre in Lunenburg between April 19th and April 28th;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulate the South Shore Players on its 20th Anniversary, and wish them success with their latest production, *Inherit the Wind*.

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 on an introduction.

MS. KELLY REGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to draw the attention of members to the gallery opposite, where we have been joined by the Member of Parliament for Halifax West, a member who is known to many of the members of this House, some of us more intimately than others. We've also been joined by the member's assistant, Afton Doubleday. So I would ask the members to give them the warm welcome of the House. (Applause)

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

The honourable member for Bedford-Birch Cove.

RESOLUTION NO. 260

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

Whereas Cresco homebuilders of Bedford have, for 20 years, demonstrated commitment to craftsmanship, innovation, and customer service; and

Whereas Cresco homebuilders claimed five awards at the Nova Scotia Home Builders Association Peter Kohler Peak Awards, held in November 2012, including Marketing Excellence, Most R-2000 Homes for 2012, Tech-Ready Ambassador, and Most Tech-Ready Homes for 2012, as well as the Judges Choice Award for the Most Outstanding New Home Over 3,000 Square Feet; and

Whereas Cresco homebuilders, helmed by principals Talib Abadali and Hossein Mousavi continues to transform Nova Scotian neighbourhoods into active lifestyle communities incorporating accessibility, schools, sporting activities, leisure pursuits, and shopping;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly congratulate Cresco homebuilders, their owners, and staff, on their record of innovative design and construction, and on their awards.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Colchester-Musquodoboit Valley.

RESOLUTION NO. 261

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

Whereas the system of appeals for employment insurance has, for many years, been comprised of Boards of Referees, tripartite bodies including local representatives from the business community and the labour movement, ensuring that appeals of decisions affecting EI claims have been heard by independent referees knowledgeable concerning local conditions; and

Whereas the constituency offices of many MLAs have commonly provided advocacy, support, and representation services to constituents before Boards of Referees, very often resulting in much-needed reinstatements of EI benefits and much-merited reversals of disentitlements, disqualifications, penalty assessments, and the like; and

Whereas the federal government has abolished the system of EI appeals based on a national network of Boards of Referees, and replaced it with a centralized appeal system lacking entirely in local representation;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly unreservedly condemn the eradication of the Board of Referees appeal system by the Government of Canada, and hereby register its profound disagreement with the removal of local labour and business leaders from the appeal process available to EI claimants in 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?

I hear several Noes.

The notice is tabled.

The honourable member for Digby-Annapolis.

RESOLUTION NO. 262

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

Whereas the Lions Club in Weymouth has identified the need for a playground suitable for children ages two to five; and

Whereas the Lions Club has partnered with the Weymouth Amateur Athletic Association to provide this playground to the community; and

Whereas the playground equipment is scheduled to be installed this month at the ever-popular Cricket Field in Weymouth;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assemble commend the Weymouth Lions Club and the Weymouth Amateur Athletic Association for recognizing the need for a playground in the village and for putting this plan into motion.

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. 263

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

Whereas the Coldest Night of the Year fundraising walk in support of the Christian Ministries Open Arms Resource Centre and Inn From the Cold shelters in Kentville and Berwick, was held on February 23, 2013; and

Whereas the one-night event involved 41 teams, 281 walkers, 2,376 donors, and raised an incredible \$49,082; and

Whereas the Coldest Night of the Year walk was an unqualified success, rating seventh-best nationally in funds raised, third in the number of walkers, and finished an amazing second in terms of donors in this Canada-wide event;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia House of Assembly congratulate all of those who contributed in any way to the success of the Coldest Night of the Year walk 2013, thank the organizers for demonstrating the wonderful things that can be accomplished when people pull together in a common effort, and wish Open Arms and Inn From the Cold every success in its future service to the community.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Glace Bay.

RESOLUTION NO. 264

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

Whereas the 17th annual Jason Simmons Memorial Hockey Tournament took place on Easter weekend at the BAYplex, with 32 teams taking part in our community's exciting and intense adult hockey showcase; and

Whereas the annual tournament, known affectionately in the Bay as "The Simmons Weekend" is in memory of Bay-boy Jason Simmons, a talented athlete, a strong, proud individual, and a community volunteer who died tragically in a car accident in 1997 at the tender age of 24; and

Whereas in addition to competitive hockey, reuniting of friends and family, and an electric atmosphere at our rink, the 2013 Simmons will provide \$7,000 in much-needed scholarship funds for local graduates this year;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House join me in congratulating Sonny Macdougall, Brian O'Neill, Cecil MacQueen, Laird Wilton, and the Huff and Puff hockey team for their rock-solid organization of the tournament and commitment to the memory of Jason, and thank Jason's parents, Jimmy and Tena, for providing the Bay with the opportunity to celebrate the life and contributions of their late, great son.

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 Timberlea-Prospect.

RESOLUTION NO. 265

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

Whereas the Order of Canada was originally established in 1967 by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and is designed to recognize a lifetime of outstanding achievement, dedication to community, and service to our nation; and

Whereas on December 30, 2012, His Excellency, David Johnston, Governor General of Canada, appointed 91 citizens to the Order of Canada, one of which was Dennis Covill of Hacketts Cove, Nova Scotia; and

Whereas in 1969 Mr. Covill founded Nautel in Hacketts Cove, and over the next four decades it became a world-renowned, award-winning transmitter manufacturing company - Dennis has also endowed scholarships at three Maritime universities and made a substantial contribution for a new cancer unit at the IWK hospital;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Mr. Dennis Covill on being appointed to the Order of Canada and thank him for his dedication to the business world, higher education, and the health community, and wish him many more years of good health and dedicated service in making life better for his fellow Canadians.

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. 266

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

Whereas the Carnivolley volleyball tournament was held in Yarmouth over the weekend of April 6th to April 7th; and

Whereas the Southwest Fusion Under-14 (Muisse) team, consisting of Madison Burbidge, Kaylie Amiro, Sophie Surette, Kaitlyn Mooney, Bailey Gushue, Meggie O'Brien, Rileigh Mosley, Renee Cleveland, Sydney d'Eon, Kristine Babin, and Julie Phillips, under the guidance of coach Ricky Muise and assistant coach Jacinda Amirault, was one of the nine teams in the Under-14 division competing in the tournament; and

Whereas the Southwest Fusion Under-14 (Muisse) team won gold at the Carnivolley tournament, and the team has won gold at all three tournaments in which it has competed this year;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly congratulate the Southwest Fusion Under-14 (Muisse) team for their gold medal win at the Carnivolley volleyball tournament and wish them much continued success.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Halifax Clayton Park.

RESOLUTION NO. 267

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

Whereas author Dianne Marshall is well-known to Nova Scotians for her lively and surprising true stories, told on CBC Information Morning; and

Whereas Dianne has published her latest book, *True Stories from Nova Scotia's Past*, in which she shares stories and tales that provide insight into the way life was in early Nova Scotia; and

Whereas *True Stories from Nova Scotia's Past* will delight readers with more than two dozen stories, ranging from plots to assassinate the future King George V to rumrunners and ghost tales;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this Assembly congratulate Dianne Marshall on the publication of her new book, which brings to life our rich history in 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 Clare.

RESOLUTION NO. 268

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

Whereas a new commemorative medal was created to mark the 2012 celebration of the 60th Anniversary of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II's accession to the throne as Queen of Canada; and

Whereas medals are being awarded to Canadians who have made significant contributions to their community and our country; and

Whereas Daniel Gaudet of Grosses Coques was awarded the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal for his contributions to his community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Daniel Gaudet on being awarded the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal for outstanding contribution to 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 Preston.

RESOLUTION NO. 269

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

Whereas Pamela Williams received her bachelor's degree from Saint Mary's University and her law degree from Dalhousie University in 1984 and was called to the Bar in 1985; and

Whereas she spent the next 18 years as a lawyer with the Nova Scotia Legal Aid until she was appointed as a Provincial Court Judge in 2003 and later became an Associate Chief Judge of the Provincial Court in 2011; and

Whereas in February 2013 she became the first woman in Nova Scotia to be appointed as Chief Justice of the Provincial and Family Courts;

Therefore be it resolved that members of this House join me in congratulating Pamela Williams for her many accomplishments and her excellent contribution to the justice system in 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 Colchester North.

RESOLUTION NO. 270

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

Whereas Nova Scotia's fire departments are made up of individuals who are dedicated to serving others; and

Whereas these firefighters and first responders not only contribute hard work, skills, and time but often risk their lives and must deal with incidents of great emotional stress; and

Whereas firefighters seldom receive the accolades which they deserve, and most fire brigades hold a banquet and awards ceremony to thank their members and to present special honours;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly congratulate Brian Reid, a member of the Tatamagouche Fire Brigade, Colchester North, for receiving his 35-year service pin.

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. 271

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 today is the 6th Annual International Day of Pink; and

Whereas the Day of Pink was inspired by David Shepherd and Travis Price as an endeavour to raise awareness about bullying and show support for those who have been bullied; and

Whereas this courageous act has become an international symbol of anti-bullying with more than 8 million people taking part in activities to combat bullying;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly recognize today as International Day of Pink, and let today serve as a reminder that we must take meaningful steps to stop bullying in its tracks.

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 Digby-Annapolis.

RESOLUTION NO. 272

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

Whereas this past December the Digby-Annapolis Christmas Daddies celebrated over 40 years of raising funds for families in need; and

Whereas Leigh Everett and other founding members started the local Christmas Daddies hoping to do something good for the local community; and

Whereas before the association was ever a year old the first show was put on, and since then they have raised well over \$1 million for the people in need in that community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate the Digby-Annapolis Christmas Daddies on their dedication throughout the years, and wish them more years of success ahead.

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. 273

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

Whereas during the first weekend of March the StarSkate Provincial Championships were held in Port Hawkesbury; and

Whereas skaters from the Yarmouth Skating Club were awarded provincial titles - Shayleigh Doucet, provincial champion in the primary ladies A event; Kylie Landry, provincial champion in senior bronze ladies spins, and Chantal Surette, provincial champion in the senior bronze ladies event; and

Whereas Kylie Landry and Chantal Surette have qualified for Atlantics in the senior bronze ladies event and will be part of Team Nova Scotia at the Atlantics competition, and Yarmouth Skating Club member Sydney Newell is the first alternate in the junior bronze ladies event for Atlantics;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate these members of the Yarmouth Skating Club on their impressive provincial titles, and wish them all the best in future competition.

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. 274

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

Whereas Metro Karate Training Centre on Main Street has been building strong citizens for 10 years; and

Whereas Sensei Ron Fagan was the first Atlantic Canadian to compete at the Pan-American Karate Championships and the first to work his way to National A official ranking with the Referee Council of Canada; and

Whereas Sensei Fagan has since given back a tremendous amount to the Dartmouth Community through mentoring, holding anti-bullying seminars, and much more;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Sensei Ron Fagan of the Metro Karate Training Centre on his 40th Anniversary of continuous karate and self-defence training, which happened on February 28, 2013.

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. 275

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

Whereas every year the Historica-Dominion Institute challenges students in Grades 7 to 12 across Canada to participate in a mock citizenship exam to put their knowledge of Canadian history, culture, and geography to the test; and

Whereas teacher Kelly Murray, from Park West School in Clayton Park, took up the challenge with her Grade 7 Social Studies students and won the classroom grand prize, besting 1,000 other classes to win this honour; and

Whereas the Historica-Dominion Institute held a special Canadian citizenship celebration assembly at Park West School on February 19, 2013 to honour Kelly Murray and her winning Grade 7 class on their great achievement;

Therefore be it resolved that members of this Legislature congratulate Kelly Murray and her students for receiving this award and making her school and the Clayton Park West community very proud.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Kings West.

RESOLUTION NO. 276

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

Whereas the Dukes of Kent are celebrating a half century of singing and bringing joy to audiences in our region while demonstrating excellence by winning the Atlantic Canada Barbershop Chorus Championship 11 times; and

Whereas they have become known for their entertainment, inspiration, and through their love of music they live their mission statement, Enrich Lives Through Singing; and

Whereas men from across the Valley comprise the Dukes, they have the outstanding musical directorship of Perry Jackson, to whom we all owe a debt of gratitude for his 22 years at the helm contributing to a legacy of top quality barbershop music in the Annapolis Valley;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the Nova Scotia Legislature congratulate the Dukes of Kent on their 50th Anniversary and wish them every success 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 Bedford-Birch Cove.

RESOLUTION NO. 277

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

Whereas annually the Dartmouth General Hospital Auxiliary provides between 17,000 and 20,000 volunteer hours of service; and

Whereas the Dartmouth General Auxiliary also organizes fundraising efforts including this winter's Holly Tree Bazaar, with tables filled with baked goods, giftware, and knitted items; and

Whereas through their exceptional efforts like the Holly Tree Bazaar, since 1977 the Dartmouth General Hospital Auxiliary has contributed more than \$1.2 million towards hospital expansion and improvement;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly congratulate the volunteers of the Dartmouth General Hospital Auxiliary, especially President Sandy Lambie and Chairperson Bernice Turner, on this year's Holly Tree Bazaar and wish them every success on next year's event.

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 Glace Bay.

RESOLUTION NO. 278

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

Whereas the Nova Scotia Amateur Bodybuilding Championships were hosted in Halifax on Saturday April 6, 2013; and

Whereas a team training out of Perry's Gym and Fitness Centre in Glace Bay represented our region proudly, with commendable showings in their respective divisions; and

Whereas bodybuilders Brandon O'Donnell, Mitch Dowe, Mark Hennessy, Kevin Boutilier, Brandon Graham, Mary Ann Moore, Krista MacKinnon, and Ashley MacNeil utilized their work ethic, discipline, courage and skill to participate in this intense competition;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House join me in congratulating our local athletes and Perry's Gym for their performance and wish them the very best in health and fortunes in the coming year and beyond.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

ORDERS OF THE DAY**ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS**

MR. SPEAKER: Question Period will begin at 3:14 p.m. and end at 4:44 p.m.

The honourable Leader of the Opposition.

PREM. - SEXUAL ASSAULT STRATEGY: RELEASE - TIMEFRAME

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, sexual assault service providers and advocates across this province have called upon this government to implement the sexual

assault strategy to address the issue of sexualized violence. The Minister responsible for the Advisory Council on the Status of Women Act assured us in 2011 that the government was aggressively working on a strategy. Yesterday when questioned in the House on the sexual assault, the Minister of Justice insulted every Nova Scotian with his response to the question. So my question to the Premier is, where is the sexual assault strategy?

HON. DARRELL DEXTER (The Premier): Mr. Speaker, the government is working with those who are advocates in this area and with organizations right around the province and, in fact, are implementing a program which is designed to meet the needs of Nova Scotians with respect to this very important issue. The Leader of the Opposition would know that there are already in place, in some parts of the province, specialized medical personnel who are designed to deal particularly with those who are victims of sexual assault. He would probably already know that in the cases of those that are reported and go on to court, there are services in place which are designed to support those victims and to provide them with the services that they need in order to be able to deal with these very important issues.

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, we know that Nova Scotia has the highest rate of sexual assaults in Canada, 40 assaults for every 1,000 people. Given the staggering rate of sexual assaults in Nova Scotia and considering they were aggressively working on it in 2011, my question is, why is there no urgency from this government to act to implement a strategy to resource outreach initiatives, to support victims and bring aggressors to justice?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, the fact is we do all of those things already. We are, in fact, very aggressively dealing with these issues, trying to provide across-the-spectrum support. It is, of course, not enough just to engage in the post-event remedial issues, it is also important that we are addressing the causes associated with it and that is, in fact, what the government is seeking to do. It is a societal problem, which we certainly acknowledge. I know that even on the reporting side, I think the reports are pretty clear, even on the ones that come to our attention: there is literally many-fold more that don't get reported and, therefore, we are unable to provide the kind of help that we would wish to be able to provide.

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, it has been nearly four years. Victims, support workers and all Nova Scotians want action. My question to the Premier is, when will Nova Scotians see a complete sexual assault strategy for Nova Scotia?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, as with any strategy or with any action plan, often we do not wait until the strategy is complete or the action plan is complete. We try to put these things in place in advance, where they make sense. We have done some of that already with respect to specialized medical personnel; in fact, right across the province, those who are health care providers have already received training to deal with people who are victims of sexual assault and we're going to continue to do that and not wait until there is an overall strategic framework to do that. I would say that work is continuing. The Leader of the Opposition would know that this is a well-organized community. They have

been engaged with the government for some time on it. They have had support from the government to do some of the work they are doing in relation to this issue.

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

PREM.: EARLY CHILDHOOD DEV. PROG. - DETAILS

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, today's early childhood development announcement leaves far more questions than it answers. Everyone, of course, wants the best for our children, particularly in the early years, but a true comprehensive program is both real and meaningful and accountable for results. The handbook known and called *Investing in Early Childhood Development* says, "Accountability requires development of plans that include goals and objectives, timelines and targets, review and evaluation . . ." - I'll table that for the benefit of the Premier.

My question is, if the Premier is so serious about early childhood development, why are there no goals, objectives, timelines, targets, reviews, or evaluations included in today's announcement?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, the reality is that we're working with the McCain Foundation in relation to these Early Years Centres. They are designed on some of the best modelling anywhere, and the reason for this is that it requires actual consultation with communities to decide which services should be in each one of the Early Years Centres.

In other words, these Early Years Centres will be tailored to the needs that the community analysis determines, and it also means that they will be different - maybe different in one community than in another because, as you know, Mr. Speaker, the needs differ in different parts of the province. In fact, they can differ in different parts of a city the size of Halifax. So of course all of the measures that the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party is talking about will ultimately be part of our approach to the Early Years Centres. Right now, we are working with one of the foremost expert organizations in the development of those centres.

MR. BAILLIE: Well, Mr. Speaker, most people would come up with a plan, do all those things, and then announce it, not announce it first and spend all of their time on the glossy cover page and a fancy new slogan, and then go out and consult later. That's how you're supposed to plan.

Comprehensive early childhood development includes dealing with child poverty. It includes dealing with nutrition and brain stimulation, among other important factors. But under the NDP, the cost of living has gone up, causing further hardship to too many of our most low-income families.

Mr. Speaker, since we're talking about early childhood development, does the Premier realize that his own policies - raising taxes and power rates and making life

tougher for low-income families - will also have to be reviewed if we're ever going to have a true comprehensive plan for early childhood development?

THE PREMIER: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm really baffled by the commentary just provided by the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party. He seems to have missed the fact that over the last four years there has been more done to reorient income into the hands of low-income Nova Scotians than at any time in our past. Not only did we take the HST off home electricity but we also took it off children's clothing. We also took it off other necessities in the home.

Over and above that, Mr. Speaker, we also took large pieces of the income coming into the government from HST and transferred it to low-income Nova Scotians through the Affordability Tax Credit and the Disability Tax Credit. In fact, low-income Nova Scotians are now paying much less in the way of tax than they did when the Progressive Conservatives were in power.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, the whole problem is that this is a government that gives a little bit with one hand and takes a whole lot more with the other. That's why it's so tough on lower-income Nova Scotians today. But since we're talking about one hand and the other, it's also a government where the left hand and the right hand don't know what the other is doing. Today's announcement talks about three Early Years Centres to be set up somewhere in the province, but at the same time, 30 of our smaller community schools continue to be under review with no plan in sight for how that's going to change.

So I will ask the Premier, what does today's announcement say to those 30 rural communities whose schools continue to be under review?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I suppose the answer to that question could go just about any way, but I'll start with this: first of all, there is more money in the pockets of low-income Nova Scotians as a result of the initiatives undertaken by this government. That's the first thing.

The second thing is, to date there are 98 SchoolsPlus schools in this province where the services of provincial government or the services of community organizations have been moved into predominantly rural schools in order to be able to make them sustainable in their communities; we want sustainable community schools. These kinds of Early Years Centres will further enhance that initiative, to make sure not only are the schools sustainable, but the people in those communities and their kids are getting the services they require and, more so, Mr. Speaker, getting the services they deserve.

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

JUSTICE - SEXUAL ASSAULT STRATEGY: COMMITTEE - RESULTS

MS. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, yesterday when asked about the status of a province-wide strategy to address rape and sexualized violence, the Minister of Justice was non-committal, refused to answer my question, and then accused the Opposition of not having confidence in the police.

Mr. Speaker, a committee has been struck with a variety of stakeholders, including government, and has met on the strategy. My question to the minister is, where's the work of this committee?

HON. ROSS LANDRY: Thank you for the question. I'm not really clear on what the member is trying to get at, other than the fact that as the Premier had answered in an earlier question that a number of strategies have gone forward, a number of committees have met and work is being done across - and I'll give them one example: when we deal with the domestic violence court and all the componentry, and how we're measuring that and trying to get the feedback and the information from there and how to expand that program where the benefits are across the province and to address what we see as a very serious problem and concern in the province.

MS. REGAN: Mr. Speaker, this is not the first time I've raised this issue. I raised it with the government 16 months ago. The Minister responsible for the Advisory Council on the Status of Women Act said in this House on December 6, 2011, and I'll table that response: We are taking aggressive action. One would think that 16 months of aggressive action would at least result in a plan or a strategy to address this issue.

My question to the Minister of Justice is, what kind of aggressive action is the department taking, and why have we seen nothing addressing rape and sexualized violence?

MR. LANDRY: I thank the member for that question. I think that would be best answered by the Minister of Health and Wellness, as that falls in his area of responsibility.

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question. We've taken sexual assault very seriously in the government, we recognize that it crosses many departments, so as the Minister of Health and Wellness the department has taken the lead, with my deputy minister, to work with deputy ministers from Justice, the Status of Women, and Community Services, and to work with stakeholders like the Avalon Sexual Assault Centre.

We've provided a number of grants now that they support Nova Scotians through anybody who comes to their programs or through a 1-800 telephone line, Mr. Speaker. We've supported programs like the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner in two parts of the province.

We know we need to improve services for those individuals who find themselves a victim of sexual assault, so we're working with those partners to move forward on a number of initiatives that we already have implemented and we're going to continue to move forward to ensure that Nova Scotians have access to the support they need, especially those individuals who might find themselves a victim of sexual violence.

MS. REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I find it interesting that the Minister of Justice cannot answer this question, because the minister's Web site shows a picture of the Minister of Justice with representatives from women's centres, who were there to talk about sexual assault services on December 7th of last year.

This NDP Government is three and a half years into a majority mandate, so women and girls of Nova Scotia, here's your NDP photo op - when can Nova Scotians expect this government to put the safety of women and girls before photo ops and announce some real action to combat sexual assault?

MR. LANDRY: I just want to reassure the member across, that as a minister and as a government we take any form of violence seriously and we're committed to that. That's why we have the Domestic Violence Action Plan, as you heard my colleague mention earlier, what is happening in the health area, and yes it's a collaboration. We are working across departmental lines. We are moving funds to address the issue within departmental departments to make sure we have a collaborative approach and working together to address these issues. We have a very strong budget for Victim Services overall. There is over \$3 million in there. We have the restorative programs that are happening around; we increased benefits to counselling, so we're committed on a number of fronts.

It's a matter of coming together and working in that collaboration to put forth the program and the collaboration is not only within the government departments, but across all stakeholders within the community. That's very critical that we have that open dialogue and that we work in those partnerships.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester North.

EECD: CYBERBULLYING TASK FORCE REPT. - RECOMMENDATIONS

HON. KAREN CASEY: Mr. Speaker, we can all recall the advice that the Minister of Education received from Dr. Wayne MacKay and the warning to the minister that steps needed to be taken, immediately, to try to begin to address the problem of cyberbullying. That was in February 2012.

In the minister's own task force report, there were three recommendations that spoke to Internet service providers and the Criminal Code. The minister's own response to that report, through Bill No. 30, was silent on both of those issues. My question to the minister is, why would the minister ignore critical important recommendations that should have been part of her immediate response?

HON. RAMONA JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, we have moved forward with the recommendations from the report and we have implemented an action plan with 40 actions in it. Many have started; many are in the process of starting, over the three-year period. We have more supports in our schools; 40 actions are underway in the Province of Nova Scotia to combat bullying and cyberbullying. I would like to say that we have had a very serious situation in Nova Scotia and I would like to say that our action plan is in place but if there are other areas where we can effect positive change, effective, research-based positive change, this government is going to move forward to do them.

MS. CASEY: Mr. Speaker, the recommendations that I spoke about that were in the task force report, speaking to Internet service and the Criminal Code, would have gone a long way to help this province. This minister has had ample opportunity - one full year - to respond to those recommendations and to those in particular. One recommendation, which was supported by the Liberal amendments to their Bill No. 30, that of course was defeated by the NDP; and again the amendments to Bill No. 102, again defeated by the NDP and included in the Bill No. 106, the Liberal bill, asked, "The Governor in Council shall direct the Minister of Education, the Minister of Justice and any other members . . . to enter into negotiations with the Government of Canada with the purpose of making changes to the Criminal Code (Canada) with regard to addressing inappropriate behaviour and bullying by electronic means, including Internet and cellular telephone use." I will table that.

Over one year has passed and only today has the Premier finally acknowledged that maybe there is a need to work with the federal government on the Criminal Code. This is one year too late. My question to the minister is, will the minister acknowledge today that her inaction has done nothing to help families bring bullies to justice?

MS. JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, since the comment was directed towards the Premier, I would like to ask if it would be okay if the Premier could speak to that. Thank you.

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I would just point out that none of those bills were defeated because they did not, in fact, come forward to a vote. The reality is that there is a constant, ongoing exchange between the departments here and the federal government about the kinds of changes that we see as necessary, whether it is with the Criminal Code or with other pieces of legislation. Certainly the Minister of Justice would have those kinds of conversations with his federal counterpart.

I would just point out that as it is now Nova Scotia is a leader in this country in its approach to cyberbullying and bullying, and has one of the best regimes anywhere in the country. We used a process - essentially a commission - to look at that issue and to thoroughly examine it. We took the benefit of that advice and we brought forward legislation and made policy decisions in that regard.

People in Nova Scotia should be proud of the record of the Government of Nova Scotia with respect to this. We acknowledge, and I hope everyone does, that things are always going to change, and more information will come forward. We will see events

happen that challenge our ability to be able to deal with them, but we do not shy away from them. We accept that, and we work toward better and more complete answers.

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

PREM. - CYBERBULLYING: LEGISLATION - INTRODUCE

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, one of the more important recommendations of the cyberbullying task force, Dr. Wayne MacKay's report, was that cyberbullying, a new and devastating phenomenon in our province and around the world, ought to be defined in law, including provincially, where the consequences, including restitution, can be spelled out for those who engage in cyberbullying.

I will ask the Premier, in light of that report, in light of the bills that have been brought before this House, to actually put a definition of cyberbullying into law so people can recognize it for the offence that it is. Will the Premier commit now to defining cyberbullying in Nova Scotia law and spelling out the consequences for those who engage in it?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, as I pointed out already, we have a constant ongoing dialogue with the federal government around issues like cyberbullying. Obviously if it is to be a criminal offence, then it must be defined in the Criminal Code of Canada, which would be something that - and I'm sure the federal government already has this on its radar, because I know that we have been working through the Department of Justice to bring these issues to their attention.

I know that the Minister of Justice is certainly aware that legislation needs to evolve to address new events, so that's what we're doing.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, the time for dialogue is over and the time for strong action is now. There are many offences defined in law provincially, and cyberbullying should be one of them.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, the time has come to give our courts and law enforcement officials the power to confiscate cellphones, laptops, and other electronic devices when they are used as weapons against our own children. So I will ask the Premier, will he bring in legislation to give the courts and law enforcement officials the power to take away laptops and cellphones and other electronic devices when they are used in such a destructive manner?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I don't believe the jurisdiction of the courts is limited in that regard. Anything that is used in the commission of a criminal act, I believe, would be capable of being confiscated.

I take the question very seriously. What I want the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party to know is that obviously a review of these matters is necessary. We are going to look at it in a comprehensive fashion, and we'll be doing so over the next little while.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that answer from the Premier. I will say that he may believe that the courts and law enforcement officials and others have all the tools they need, but they are not being confiscated now in these kinds of situations, and they should be. I hope he does bring a review and actual actions that we can all take together to stop cyberbullying in its tracks.

The MacKay task force was a comprehensive task force on the issue of bullying and cyberbullying. It consulted with a great number of Nova Scotians and produced a wide number of recommendations. Government has adopted them piecemeal, when in fact it represents a comprehensive whole.

I will ask the Premier, will he commit today to implementing all of the recommendations of the MacKay task force so we can together get on with the job of stopping bullying and cyberbullying and the effects that it's having on young people?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, we thanked Mr. MacKay for his review. We took all of the recommendations seriously. We didn't implement them piecemeal. In fact, we accepted the vast majority of those recommendations. They were implemented - the ones that we believed could be effectively implemented by the provincial government, and we did that in an expeditious fashion.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Opposition.

PREM. - SCH. REVIEW PROCESS: FLAWS - AWARENESS

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, parents, teachers, and communities across Nova Scotia have been put through a heart-wrenching process reviewing schools for closure. Last week, after hundreds of hours of work, including community meetings and board deliberations, the Minister of Education stepped in and requested that boards call off these reviews.

Last year, on April 11, 2012, the Minister of Education refused to intervene in a review because, "Under the legislative process the school review is very clearly mandated and it is not to be interfered with by the minister. The school review process is a very clearly articulated process where parents and community have the opportunity on two separate occasions to offer their input to the process and to the board."

It seems that the minister and this government stood behind the school review process enough not to get involved last year, so my question to the Premier is, at what point did the government decide that the school review process was flawed?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, school reviews and the allocation of budgets and assets are the responsibility of the school boards of our province. We elect them - their communities elect them to do this job, and of course we support those boards in their work.

The review process in this province has been altered a number of times, as the Leader of the Opposition would likely know. Unfortunately, they have become increasingly adversarial, and we don't like that. We want communities to be able to make good decisions around the allocation of the assets that we have. (Interruptions) I'm sorry, is there a further question there?

I believe what we are attempting to do with this is we made the request to the boards - and it was a request - to suspend the current reviews in order that we might work with them to find a less adversarial way to do what it is that they are trying to achieve, which is to get the best balance for communities in terms of the assets, capital expenditure, and operating funds that they have to provide the best possible educational service.

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, the school review process is no more adversarial this year than it was last year. Yet last year the board and the minister and the government supported it. (Applause) School boards across this province last September went about doing their business, doing what they've been elected to do, as the Premier said, and they've been doing it to follow legislation that has been put in place by this government and reviewed by the Minister of Education back in 2010.

The Nova Scotia School Boards Association stated that the minister's request could be all but a moot point because of legalities on the board decision. Even before the association raised this point, boards, including the South Shore Regional, were skeptical that they could heed the minister's snap request. They simply can't afford to maintain schools' needs so they can stay open and pay teachers and students support.

The government has said they are not going to provide any more money to school boards, so my question to the Premier is, how is the Premier going to protect classrooms in the wake of the minister's about-face?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, the minister did exactly what she should do, she waited for the completion of the process. It came to an end, I believe, on the last day of March. Within a day or so the minister made the request of the boards. That is as it should be. This year the boards will get more money than they got last year and this year they will receive the highest per capita funding in our province's history.

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, if this process is flawed, the minister should have stepped in at the very beginning instead of putting communities and school boards through what is a very difficult and gut-wrenching experience.

I want to remind the Premier, Mr. Speaker, that the South Shore Regional School Board is not getting more money. Five out of the eight boards in this province have seen a

reduction. Nova Scotians know this about-face by the minister and the NDP Government in the school review process is simply electioneering. If this government was truly committed to improving the school review process, it would not have waited until they were three and a half years into the majority mandate to do so. They would have funded public education so boards could have had the option of keeping schools open and supporting all students.

It's bad enough that the Premier has tried to balance the budget on the backs of children, Mr. Speaker, now he's playing politics with their education. Will the Premier admit to communities, teachers, parents and students that his government's request to call off the review was just an empty political manoeuvre, with no real commitment to help communities keep their schools open?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, quite the opposite. What the people of Nova Scotia know is that in working with the NDP Government, we are always prepared to listen to them. It's their community. We take very seriously the responsibility that we find ourselves with in terms of the finances of the province but we balance those with our desire to improve services to our citizens.

You only have to look at this year's balanced budget where it is not only balanced financially, it is also balanced in that we are extending more services, like the Early Years Centres that we announced this morning, like insulin pumps, like putting more money back into the hands of senior citizens. These are all things that improve the quality of life in our province and the best thing the Opposition could do to support that would be to vote for the budget, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cape Breton North.

EECD - SCH. REVIEW PROCESS: SUSPENSION - SCH. BDS.' RESPONSE

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, on April 3rd, two days after the school review process was finished, the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development wrote to school boards to request the school review process for the year 2013-14 be suspended. It got some headlines. Later that day the same minister said she's not able to interfere and all she can do is ask the school board if they will honour the request, and I'll table that article. My question to the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development is, how will the school boards stop the school review process?

HON. RAMONA JENNEX: The school review process for the upcoming year would start in October and end in March, so I've asked them to suspend putting identifying schools for the upcoming school year because it would be starting in October and ending in March, so I've asked for a suspension in the review process while we work through a better way. Thank you.

MR. ORRELL: Yesterday the president of the Nova Scotia School Boards Association said the minister's request has left them with more questions than answers. He said the Education Act dictates that the decision of boards with this regard is final, so boards have questions about whether they have the leeway to reverse this or not, and I'll table that article.

My question to the minister is, does the minister honestly believe the school boards can do anything to stop the school review process and keep schools, already slated for closure, open?

MS. JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, that is why I made the request of the board to suspend the process and to delay the decisions that were made in the current year. Thank you.

MR. ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, the minister put parents, teachers, students, communities, and school board members, through a nightmare process and then, at the eleventh hour, asked the school boards to do something she knew was not even possible. Some school boards had already made decisions about the fate of their small rural schools.

My question to the minister is, will she please stop spreading false hope to the Nova Scotians who were led to believe that maybe her announcement meant something, when it was really just political posturing to grab a newspaper headline?

MS. JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, we've listened to school boards, parents, and communities around this process. I have asked the school boards to suspend the process; it's a request that they have asked themselves. We are listening to Nova Scotians, we want to move forward in a more positive, collaborative way and make sure that communities and the school boards can work together collaboratively.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester North.

EECD - SCH. REVIEW PROCESS: MIN. - CLARIFY

HON. KAREN CASEY: Mr. Speaker, last year on April 11, 2012, the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development stood in this House and talked about the school review process and she said, "The school review process is a very clearly articulated process where parents and community have the opportunity on two separate occasions to offer their input to the process and to the board." I will table that.

Last week, when speaking of the very same process, the very same minister said the process was "adversarial and heartbreaking." and I will table that. So my question to the minister is - here is a complete contradiction - will the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development tell members of this House when she had that change of heart, when she had the recent flip-flop, and when this all came to light?

HON. RAMONA JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, the school review process is a very clearly articulated process that is problematic and adversarial.

MS. CASEY: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'll give the minister credit, she's taken two contradictory quotes of her own and put them together into a new one.

The Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning spent nearly \$1 million on ads and promotions while wait-lists for accessing speech-language pathology and school psychology were growing. It is the same minister who slashed funding to school boards and offered no additional supports to cover increasing costs, and then turns around and asks them to halt their decisions. On behalf of communities, parents, and teachers my question to the minister is, what does the minister suggest that boards cut in order to fulfill her latest political whim?

MS. JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, we very clearly heard from the communities that the process was problematic, it was not doing what the intention was, to review schools to the benefit of our children, and I'm looking forward to hearing from the school boards so we can move forward in a positive way.

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

EECD - CHILD CARE: FUNDING MODEL - DETAILS

MR. KEITH BAIN: Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development had a chance to reassure parents that they will continue to have a choice in what kind of child care they want for their children. When she had a chance to be clear she waffled; when given an opportunity to bring clarity to the confusion her predecessor created on the file, she ducked; and yesterday during estimates the minister muddied the water further by saying that Nova Scotians are seeing the beginning of a big shift.

My question through you to the minister is, will the minister be clear today and tell parents and small-business owners what this government's plans are for child care?

HON. RAMONA JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, this was a very important day for Nova Scotians because this is the day that we were able to discuss how we are going to be shifting, philosophically, how we take care of our youngest citizens. So today we announced that we are going to be providing an integrated service model in the department, working collaboratively along with our stakeholders in that process, and our advisory committee. I want to say that as we move forward we are going to be setting up some initial sites, but while this is happening, it will be business as usual in the Province of Nova Scotia. Thank you.

MR. BAIN: Mr. Speaker, let me break this down to help the minister. In December 2011 the minister who used to be responsible for child care attended a press conference

with CUPE where she said her department has begun discussing phasing out public funding for private operators. The minister said, "It takes a long time to change a system, but I think there's a great appreciation in government that something needs to be done."

I will table that, Mr. Speaker, so my question through you to the minister is, will the minister tell us today if the former minister was incorrect when she said that the NDP was bringing socialized daycare to Nova Scotia?

MS. JENNEX: It's very important that we recognize it is imperative that we support our youngest citizens in this province. We need to make sure that from birth until our children enter school, and throughout the system, we provide every opportunity for them to be successful.

The announcement today is providing an opportunity for Nova Scotians. There is going to be a shift with the integration of our services. We have created a new department under one roof. We will be able to serve the needs of our children, as I said, from Primary forward. There is no change in delivery of service in the Province of Nova Scotia. Thank you.

MR. BAIN: Mr. Speaker, back in February, two months ago, the Deputy Minister of Community Services appeared at the Standing Committee on Community Services. What he said was exactly opposite to what the minister said at the CUPE news conference. He said, "There is no planning around, in fact, actually moving away from our existing model." I'll table that.

Today the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development told reporters that child care funding is under review. So my question through you to the minister is, who is right and who got it wrong? Is there an NDP plan to change the funding model for child care or isn't there?

MS. JENNEX: We have it right.

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

FIN.: PERSONAL TAX REVENUES - SOURCE

MS. DIANA WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance. Last year the federal government expected revenues to grow by 6 per cent. However, they have now had to downgrade their revenue growth projections to 3.8 per cent. In short, the federal government has had to adjust its tax base estimates downward, and with that the feds are expecting lower revenue growth. This realistic adjustment is in stark contrast to what the Finance Minister is telling Nova Scotians today about our revenue projections.

My question is, with the province expecting to lose 1,100 jobs in the next year and clear indications of a slowing economy, where is the Finance Minister finding an extra \$145 million in new personal tax revenues?

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, private-sector economists at all of the major financial institutions review Nova Scotia's budget economic assumptions, and they compare them against their own forecasts. In addition to that, the Conference Board of Canada, APEC economists, and economists here in the universities all look at the economic assumptions of the department, and having done that, they concur with the assumptions of the department, and that formulates the estimates, the fiscal forecast, of our budget - a balanced budget - a balanced budget that restores really important services like the children's dental program that were cut by the Liberals in the 1990s.

MS. WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, standing behind assumptions and so on is flying in the face of a lot of the facts that I'm bringing today. Where's forecasting in the budget for a 0.2 per cent decline in employment next year? Just as important to note, the labour income growth last year was slower than it was even during the recession, and because of downgraded GDP growth, the federal government is expecting revenues to be a full \$17 billion lower than were predicted in the Fall. All of these are facts. We, too, are facing a slowing economy and nominal GDP is only expected to grow 2.3 per cent in 2013 and 3 per cent in 2014. With all of these facts affecting the tax base, it is very difficult for us to understand how the Finance Minister can provide a lot of bafflegab about how she's going to achieve this overly-estimated revenue future.

Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Finance tell Nova Scotians how provincial income tax revenue can be expected to grow at a whopping rate of 7 per cent in the medium term, when nominal GDP growth rates are forecast to be only 2.3 and 3 per cent, respectively?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, as I indicated, all of the economists in the big financial institutions in the country looked at the assumptions that were put together by the economists in the Department of Finance, and they compared those assumptions with their own forecasts, and they find the assumptions to be reasonable. In fact, they found the assumptions in the Department of Finance to be conservative compared to their forecasts for the coming year.

Many economists in this country are looking at Nova Scotia's economy in the coming year and out into the next year, as being growth in the middle of the Canadian provinces for the first time in many, many years, Mr. Speaker. This is the result of a number of very positive projects that are on the horizon. This province is turning the corner, with the shipbuilding contract, with the building of the Nova Centre, with the investment in IT by IBM. There are many positive job opportunities for Nova Scotians that will contribute to the GDP growth of this province, good jobs and good taxes that we can reinvest in programs for kids, seniors, and small business.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

HEALTH & WELLNESS: ORTHOPAEDIC SURGERY - WAIT TIMES

MR. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, according to a freedom of information request received in our office last month, more than 3,000 Nova Scotians - 3,132, to be exact - are waiting for hip and knee replacements in our province. Of these 3,000-plus patients, over half of them, 55 per cent of them, have been waiting more than the national benchmark of six months. In fact, a national report card produced last summer by the Canadian Wait Time Alliance gave Nova Scotia an F for our effort in knees, a D for hip replacement, and foot and ankle, of course, is off the charts, some of the worst grades in the country.

What specific action is the minister taking now to address the fact that 1,709 Nova Scotians have been waiting six months for their orthopaedic surgery?

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, access to health care services is a priority for this government. Our goal is to ensure that Nova Scotians can gain access, especially to the surgeries they need, as quickly as possible.

We know we need to work on the wait times for orthopaedic surgeries. That's why I'm proud that we just recently announced an additional \$2 million to increase the number of orthopaedic surgeries that we could do over a weekend, to really address those individuals who have been waiting over a year.

We're going to continue to work in that fashion, to ensure that Nova Scotians get access to the surgeries they need.

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, even with the planned 350 surgeries - they never all got completed before March 31st - there's still over 500 patients on the wait-list who have been waiting for more than one year. We have 1,700-plus patients waiting longer than six months, another 500 who have been waiting longer than one year.

Mr. Speaker, something is not working here. Can the minister please tell Nova Scotians waiting in pain for their orthopaedic surgery why the NDP plan for health care continues to fail them?

MR. WILSON: Quite the contrary, Mr. Speaker, it was the Liberal health plan of the 1990s that failed Nova Scotians. Our Better Care Sooner plan has made a real impact on improving the services that Nova Scotians get within the health care system and we're going to continue to work in that fashion.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

COM. SERV.: TARGET 100 PROG. - RESULTS

MR. TREVOR ZINCK: Mr. Speaker, on February 24, 2010, an announcement of the Target 100 program was made by the Premier and the Minister of Community Services. At the time of the announcement the Premier commented that this program was designed to connect real people with real jobs in their community, and not just any jobs, but good jobs with benefits, profit-sharing, and opportunities.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister tell the House today how many Community Services recipients have benefited from the good jobs with benefits?

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: Thank you for the question. The Target 100 program is a very important program. I believe that we're well up in the high - around 48, 50 in the numbers. It is a program that is different than others because it is being run by the co-operative, plus the other factor is that it's a higher level of employment for individuals coming off income assistance. It often puts them like in an assistant management position. It has been a program that has been working well for those who are involved. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. ZINCK: Mr. Speaker, at the time of the announcement the Co-operative Council stated that over the next few years it will have hundreds of vacant positions to fill. Well, it has been three years. My question to the minister is, why hasn't her department been successful in reaching the target of 100?

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned the first time, the fact is that the program is actually being run by the co-operative and we support the co-operative through the clientele that we feel have the ability and the education or initiative that they want to go forward with this. So if there's an agreement with the clientele that they want to be involved in this program, we support them from that angle. Then the co-operative supports them in finding the work and ensuring that they have the monitoring and support to make it successful for them. Thank you.

MR. ZINCK: Well, Mr. Speaker, we all know that the Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism doesn't believe in targets and the NDP track record on actual job creation has been abysmal. Can the minister tell the House today what changes her department will make to ensure the success of this program in future, so that we can connect those real people with real jobs?

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, in fact this government and this minister and the Department of Community Services and our hard-working staff are doing many things that have never been done in the province before. Not only are we working with Target 100 but we're looking at the whole ESIA, which is the employment income program, which hasn't been looked at. We're looking at it in a variety of different areas, including the employability of individuals, and we're working with LAE also, so we are doing things very differently. We're doing them in a holistic manner, bringing departments

together and providing opportunities that neither Party ever thought of looking at when they were in government.

We are moving forward with changes that are good and we'll see a difference in this province because we've already seen it. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

HEALTH & WELLNESS - DR. VELJKOVIC: DEPARTURE - EXPLAIN

MR. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I don't like to go back too far in political history because Nova Scotians don't want us to go back to when we were in power in 1999. They are going to judge this government on its ineffectiveness for the past four years. (Applause) But just for the record, the last time the Liberals were in government, the orthopaedic wait time was four months.

My question, again, is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. Late last month Nova Scotia lost a bright young orthopaedic surgeon. Dr. Andrea Veljkovic went to Toronto. Having been in the Valley for two years, her wait-list grew to 1,300 patients. There are not too many specialists like Dr. Veljkovic out there. In addition to ortho procedures she specialized in minimally invasive orthopaedic surgery for people with diabetes, a demand which will only grow in this province, not diminish. She was young, bright and innovative, apparently just too bright and innovative for this NDP Government. With wait-lists exceeding 3,000 patients, with her own patient load of 1,300, how could the minister afford to let Dr. Veljkovic go?

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, what we can't afford is a Liberal Government. Back in the 1990s, Nova Scotians will remember and health care workers will remember, and they can pretend it didn't happen but it happened. We're going to continue to invest in Nova Scotia. We have the first physician resource plan in the province's history. The Liberals didn't bring one in; the Progressive Conservatives never brought one in. We need to ensure that we have the right mix of physicians in this province so that we can improve services for all Nova Scotians. We're going to continue to work to ensure that Nova Scotians have access to the right doctors that they need and we're going to continue to work with all district health authorities to ensure that people have access to the surgeries they need.

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I think the minister is hearing the alarm bells going that the physician resource plan doesn't quite monitor the true clinical footprint of this province. This is a surgeon who wanted to stay. The district asked the department for the financial resources to keep her and the answer from the NDP Government was no - so much for autonomous local decision by DHAs. We have an NDP Government that can find over \$1 million for self-promoting TV ads, yet no money to keep an orthopedic surgeon here in the province. Can the minister tell us why self-promotion is more important to this government than keeping an orthopaedic surgeon to deal with our wait times?

MR. WILSON: Mr. Speaker, I'm trying to contain my laughter. If the Liberal Party was so concerned with health care, why in the world is health care called fourth, in estimates, in this Chamber? That's something I've never seen in 10 years. We are working extremely hard to improve services for Nova Scotians and we're going to continue to work in that manner. The Liberals have a track record in health and Nova Scotians will remember it.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston.

SNSMR: FUNDING MOU - EFFECTS

HON. KEITH COLWELL: Mr. Speaker, when the NDP broke their agreement with municipalities and tore up the MOU, they said there would be no cost associated with this decision. In fact, on April 5, 2011, the minister stated there would be no changes whatsoever. This should not impact their bottom line. Then again on April 6, 2012, the minister said that the municipalities are actually better off under these arrangements. Does the Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations still believe there has been no impact on the bottom line, as municipalities are better off after they tore up the MOU?

HON. JOHN MACDONELL: Mr. Speaker, first of all I'll set the record straight. We didn't tear up the MOU; we actually followed the MOU and the financial position of municipalities across this province is coming out of the changes that we made to the MOU. They are better off than when they entered the MOU, so I stand by my previous comments that it had no negative financial impact to municipalities.

MR. COLWELL: Mr. Speaker, what we have heard from the municipalities is that the minister has impacted the bottom line in all the municipalities across the province. For example, the minister tore up the MOU. That meant that municipalities had to come up with extra funding for education which was not budgeted for. In fact, in HRM the municipality is facing an \$8 million increase in education costs because of the minister's reckless decision.

Mr. Speaker, HRM faces an \$8 million increase for education costs due to the minister's decision. Does he still think there was no impact to the bottom line, and that municipalities are better off after tearing up the MOU?

MR. MACDONELL: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite, I think, lives in the world of "if I say it often enough it must be true." (Interruptions) I know that the members opposite find that amusing to use the term "turning the corner," because they're used to going in circles. (Interruptions) They should be so lucky.

One thing that came out of the MOU was that the rate for education tax was held at the 2010-11 level that they entered into the MOU. It used to be tied to CPI, and that has been removed. Really, the rate on the tax for education was held, and it's supposed to stay that way, I think, to 2015-16 or 2016-17 - I can't remember. I can get that number for the

members. Therefore, there really is no increase for those municipalities. The only thing that might cause the increase is if their assessment values go up.

MR. COLWELL: Mr. Speaker, the assessments did go up, and the government is going to collect another \$8 million for education costs. That means the municipality will be forced into the position of raising extra revenue or cutting services. They have been forced into this decision, because of the MOU - the province is going to assume more of these services that fall under provincial jurisdiction, which they refuse to do. Now the people of HRM are faced with higher taxes or further cuts to essential services.

The NDP Government has already cut \$76 million from out of the classrooms while collecting an additional \$8 million from HRM residents, forcing regional council to make tough decisions on essential services. Will the minister reverse this reckless decision and reinstate the MOU?

MR. MACDONELL: Mr. Speaker, I wonder if you could tell me if “delusional” is unparliamentary?

MR. SPEAKER: Certainly it is.

MR. MACDONELL: Mr. Speaker, I’ll rephrase my intended answer.

The member opposite actually was the minister in charge of the department similar to this department. I’m going to give him a little history lesson. I think it was the Regan Government - I could be wrong - but anyway, at one point in the past a previous government really took over the funding for education. Prior to that, education funding was done at the local level. The government took over that funding to the level of 85 per cent of the costs, and now municipalities are responsible for about 15 per cent.

When the member keeps saying this is a provincial jurisdiction, what the province actually did was remove 85 per cent of that education cost from local government, and they’re left with 15 per cent, which I think turned out to be a good thing for municipalities.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cape Breton North.

ERDT - NDP GOV’T.: ECONOMIC BREAKDOWN - CONFIRM

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, from February 2009 to February 2013 the price of energy went up 44.5 per cent. If we compare the four years before that to the price of energy, it only went up 6.5 per cent; then of course the previous government didn’t use dirty, imported coal to produce energy. During the four-year comparison, there is a 37.9 per cent difference in percentage increases; that is horrendous. The NDP has inflated the price of energy to the most expensive in the country and the price of their solution is well unknown. Yet small- to medium-size businesses, and everyday Nova Scotians, are left wondering why there are no jobs. Mr. Speaker, the province is not open for business. My

question to the Minister of ERDT is will he admit not only have the NDP jobs failed but they have created a perfect storm of economic breakdown?

HON. PERCY PARIS: The fact is that we have created a good environment for businesses right across the Province of Nova Scotia. Nova Scotians, for the first time in 20 years, are optimistic about their future, the big projects that we have on the horizon, the Maritime Link, the Nova Centre, the ships project. The fact that we've got PROJEX, the west coming east, IBM building a centre of excellence that could have been anywhere in the world, and they chose Nova Scotia. The horizon has never been brighter in 20 years.

MR. ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, if we look at the CPI in general for the last four years and the four years preceding that, the percentage increases are 11.7 and 6.9 per cent respectively. That means that all items within the CPI have increased by 4.7 per cent more than the four years before the NDP started their reign of terror. This means there is less disposable income for consumers and more expensive conditions for business operators. Shelter increased by an additional 1 per cent from the four years before, clothing 7.7 per cent, goods 9.5 per cent, and transportation 20.6 per cent. These numbers are significant. Now if the NDP had their way, I'm sure they would be hidden along with their \$27 million error. My question is, will the minister apologize for making life harder for Nova Scotians and adopt policies that actually grow the economy and create jobs.

MR. PARIS: It is indeed a pleasure to rise on my feet and talk about all the opportunities that have been created for Nova Scotians in the last four years. Just very recently, after the good Minister of Finance tabled her budget here in the House, she went to Cape Breton and she addressed the chamber of commerce. As a result of that the chamber was quoted in the Cape Breton Post - bear with me because I'm going to table this - and guess what the chamber of commerce said? This is by Paula Gallagher who is chairwoman of the chamber of commerce, and I quote - this is from Cape Breton Post and it is dated March 28, 2013, "MacDonald said one of the major initiatives in the April 4 budget will be a plan to simplify access to programs for small businesses. She also said the small business tax would be cut half a percentage point to three per cent - the lowest rate in 20 years." And I quote, "The budget reflects the fact that the minister and the government have listened to what matters to the business community." Paula Gallagher, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: I'd like to remind all the members it's improper to refer to another member by their name in any way during any proceedings in the House. I did hear the name MacDonald in that statement; I think they're referring to the Minister of Finance - this includes notices of motion and while reading from documents such as newspaper stories.

MR. PARIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for bringing that to my attention and I retract that.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The honourable member for Cape Breton North.

MR. ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the minister also told the chamber about lowering the threshold during that budget.

Mr. Speaker, from February 2009, Nova Scotia's increase in CPI was 10.8 per cent; nationally it was only 7.8 per cent. In the four years prior, Nova Scotia increased by 7.4 per cent and nationally we increased by 7.7 per cent. Remember the days when we had economic statistics that were lower than the national average, but in a good way? Four years is a long time and Nova Scotians are sick of this government's mishandling of our economy. Nova Scotia has the third-lowest percentage increase in weekly wages and almost 2 per cent lower than the national average.

My question to the minister is, will the minister commit to scrapping the failed NDP economic plan and provide relief for taxpayers who need a break?

MR. PARIS: Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge that the member opposite recognized that we do have a plan. The plan is called jobsHere and it is working. We are about to turn the corner.

Mr. Speaker, you don't have to take my word for it; I want to read another quote for you. This says - and I'm not going to start from the very beginning - referring to this government it says "great changes and approach for making it easier for businesses to get support and connect with the right agencies and services. It will be important to get the word out as this is quite a significant change to how business is done in the province especially how businesses interface with government. We will do what we can to spread the word."

Mr. Speaker, that is from Darlene Grant Fiander, President of TIANS and I'll table that.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clare.

HEALTH & WELLNESS: VILLA ACADIENNE - REPLACEMENT PLANS

HON. WAYNE GAUDET: Mr. Speaker, my question today is for the Minister of Health and Wellness.

Back in 2007 the municipal council in Clare forwarded a proposal to the Department of Health to ask government to replace the existing long-term care facility of Villa Acadienne, which opened back in 1974 in Meteghan. Villa Acadienne opened around the same time as the Tideview Terrace in Digby, and Tidal View Manor in Yarmouth. These two long-term care facilities have both been replaced in recent years.

My first question to the minister, has his department made a decision yet on replacing the Villa Acadienne?

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for bringing that forward. I know we recently met in my office where the member brought this to my attention, the concerns of his community. My commitment to him was, as soon as possible, to get down to see the Villa Acadienne in his area, in his riding, because I've tried to do that on a number of occasions across the province.

I've said in the past that the government is going to continue to be involved in replacement of long-term care facilities; we're going to continue to be involved in renovating existing long-term care facilities, Mr. Speaker. We're going to continue to assess the needs in the community, also with the investment that we are making in long-term care and home care. We'll be making those decisions as we move forward and implement the budget.

MR. GAUDET: Mr. Speaker, in 2011 the department staff started a review of existing long-term care facilities in order to develop a priority list for the department. So, again, to the Minister of Health and Wellness, could the minister please tell us whether the review is completed and, if so, will the minister table the replacement priority list before the end of business today?

MR. WILSON: We know the demographic shift and change that we're seeing here in Nova Scotia. That's why, as a government, we need to ensure we change policies. We ensure that services are there for seniors, and long-term care is one of those areas we need to continue to look at investing in, but also ensuring that seniors in our province have options, so they have options if they need to go into a long-term care facility - but more importantly, and from what I've been hearing, and I know many members of my caucus have been hearing from Nova Scotians, especially seniors, is that they want to stay in their homes longer. So we're going to continue to move forward on both fronts, ensuring that long-term care facilities are there in communities across the province, but ensuring that the services like home care are there for seniors also, so that they have good options for the care, the residence, and the support they need as they get older here in our province.

MR. GAUDET: Mr. Speaker, in recent months I have received copies of letters from individuals from Clare who have written the minister looking for an update as to when the Department of Health and Wellness will decide to move forward with replacing the Villa Acadienne.

So my final question to the minister is, does the minister know when the department will decide to go ahead and replace the Villa Acadienne in Meteghan?

MR. WILSON: I know the member brings this question forward because he is concerned about the seniors in his community, and as a government we're concerned about seniors in all communities across the province. That's why we're continuing to look at where we need to invest, not only in replacing long-term care facilities but renovating them and ensuring that they have the appropriate facilities across the province.

It has been a challenge over the last four years. We know that the finances of the province haven't been great. The Progressive Conservative Party that was in power for 10 years left us with a financial mess that we had to clean up. I was very glad to see that our government introduced a balanced budget, because then it gives us more options to entertain organizations; it gives us more options to look at projects like the Villa Acadienne and the replacement of that into the future. I know the member will look forward to any announcements that we have as we unroll the budget over the next coming months.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Glace Bay.

POLICY & PRIORITIES - CBRM: CAPITAL PLAN - BUDGET

MR. GEOFF MACLELLAN: The CBRM's proposed capital plan involves investment of \$300 million to tackle major challenges related to decaying community infrastructure and significant wastewater upgrades that are required, as well as facilities, recreation, and fleet modernization programs. During his speech to the Sydney and Area Chamber of Commerce last Friday, the Minister of Finance congratulated the CBRM and stated that their capital plan was, quote, "Interesting."

So my question is, can the Deputy Premier confirm that the CBRM capital plan has been considered during his government's budget deliberations, and have allocations been set aside to leverage federal infrastructure dollars?

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, our budget was well finished by the time that came out. Thank you.

MR. MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, the federal infrastructure funding was announced on March 27th. The CBRM capital plan was released long before that, and the prepayments to universities took place on March 28th, so in fact, what the Deputy Premier just said is not accurate.

If the entire province is to benefit from mega-projects on the horizon, then a sound, fact-based decision to support local employment is both financially prudent and good public policy. If municipalities can construct plans that capitalize on 25 cent provincial dollars, then this will provide our communities with a chance to stem the tide of rural out-migration.

My question to the Deputy Premier is, does he agree that the proposed CBRM plan could serve as a template for employing Nova Scotians while global, national, and provincial economies recover and return to health?

MR. CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, it's an interesting proposal we received in kind of a shell from the municipality, and we will be looking forward to seeing exactly where it is.

But you know, I don't know where the member was last Fall, if he slept through it or not, but that's when our capital plan was put forward, and this Fall we'll put another one forward.

MR. MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, the Deputy Premier sees what I see when he's home in New Waterford. He sees what 18.6 per cent unemployment looks like. He sees the impact on the families travelling out West and the impact that that has on the family unit. He knows that the CBRM cannot afford the \$90 million required for waste water upgrades in the next few years and he feels societal impacts that occur when families leave and never return to Cape Breton, as do you. My question to the Deputy Premier is, understanding both the challenges and potential for our island, will the Deputy Premier stand in his place today and endorse the CBRM capital plan?

MR. CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, what I will endorse is this government's investment in the mill in Port Hawkesbury, which that Party was against. That's what I will endorse. I will endorse Muskrat Falls, which we are for and they are against. I will support the dredging of Sydney Harbour, but one thing I won't endorse, when that member was with the federal member and there were unemployment rates of 21.8 per cent and they slept through that.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Richmond.

ERDT: STRAIT AREA REG. ENTERPRISE NETWORK - GOV'T. RESPONSE

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, the mayors, wardens and chief administrative officers of the Strait area have raised concerns over the decision by the NDP to move from 12 regional development authorities to six regional enterprise networks, to carry out economic development initiatives in Nova Scotia. The Strait area, which includes municipal units within the Counties of Richmond, Inverness, Guysborough and Antigonish, have a long history of working together on many fronts. They are concerned that having the Strait area divided between two regional enterprise networks will weaken the focus on economic development in the Strait. My question to the minister is, will the Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism advise whether his government is open to the proposal for a Strait Area Regional Enterprise Network?

HON. PERCY PARIS: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question. I think one thing that all Nova Scotians want is strong, economically viable communities. One of the things that should be known, when it comes to the regional enterprise networks, is that this is led by the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities. We are one of the stakeholders and the downsizing of the RDAs was one of the recommendations that was put forth a few years ago by Donald Savoie. The municipalities thought that this was an appropriate avenue to take and certainly as far as we, the government, are concerned, we are open to listen to anything. The door hasn't been closed on anything yet.

MR. SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to hear that response. Projects such as the Melford container terminal, the proposed Bear Head liquefied natural gas site, and possible expansion of NuStar Terminal in Point Tupper, present exciting possibilities for the economy of the Strait area, yet having the Strait divided between two regional enterprise networks - one for all of Cape Breton Island and one for Guysborough, Antigonish and Pictou Counties - will certainly weaken the focus of these projects and others for the Strait area. My question for the minister is, is the minister prepared to meet with the mayors, wardens and chief administrative officers of the municipal units in the Strait area to explore the possibility of a stand-alone Strait Area Regional Enterprise Network?

MR. PARIS: Mr. Speaker, I'm sure the member opposite will recall meetings that I had in his riding, requests made on his behalf, and I will say that one of the things that I've continually boasted about, and maybe the only thing I boast about, is that I consider myself as the most accessible member in government. So, the answer is yes.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

FIN.: BRACKET CREEP - CONCERNS

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance. In 2005 the former NDP Minister of Finance and member for Halifax Fairview understood bracket creep. If I may quote, it was said at the time, "There is no increase in the income tax rates but, let's make no mistake about it, this budget includes an increase in income tax, but it does it indirectly not directly. There are two principal ways the government is doing that, and one is that there is no inflation indexing of the tax brackets. So while inflation marches along, the tax brackets do not. Simply by virtue of inflation, more people move into a higher tax bracket." My question for the current Minister of Finance, does the current minister - if the NDP cared about bracket creep in 2005, why are they 0 for 4 in addressing the matter in their last four budgets?

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question. I've been in this House for 15 years, and one of the things that I do remember was when Premier Hamm and the government of the day decoupled the federal and provincial income tax systems. That led to provincial income tax no longer being indexed, so there's nothing new here. I don't know how many Finance Ministers we've had since that time, but I venture there have been three or four, anyway.

Taxes support the services that Nova Scotians rely on. I'm very proud that this year we've been able to bring the province back to a balanced position. We've been able to introduce some modest tax measures to provide relief to small businesses and to senior citizens and people who live with low incomes.

That's quite an accomplishment, given the mess that this government inherited. We will look into other tax measures in the future, but let's get this budget through, and I'll be looking forward to the support of the honourable member when that vote comes.

MR. MACMASTER: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think the minister highlights the importance of keeping one's word here in the Legislature. I know for myself I've always kept my word in here, which is something that members on the opposite side haven't, with respect to bracket creep.

We also have to wonder about how the state of this province would be if Nova Scotians had to endure what these members opposite suggested we do when they voted against balanced budgets in the last eight years before they inherited government, so that needs to be put on the record.

I want to quote, Mr. Speaker, one more time from the former Minister of Finance, and that is, "Let's make no mistake about it, this is a tax increase measure, the government's continuing refusal or inability to index tax brackets." He also said, "That is as much of a tax grab as if the Minister of Finance reached into your pocket or into your wallet or into your purse and took out the money."

My question for the minister is, does the current Minister of Finance feel as if she has reached into the wallets and purses of Nova Scotians and taken their money?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Well, Mr. Speaker, this Finance Minister is very proud that we are investing in services with this budget. We are restoring the cuts that the Liberal Party made to the children's dental program in the mid-1990s. We are providing insulin pumps and supplies to young adults. We have invested to ensure that ambulance fees are reduced in long-term care facilities. We have ensured that class sizes are capped for our children in Primary to Grade 3. We are providing . . .

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

OPPOSITION MEMBERS' BUSINESS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Progressive Conservative House Leader.

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, would you please call the order of business, Private Members' Public Bills for Second Reading.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Progressive Conservative House Leader.

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 6.

Bill No. 6 - Next Generation Act.

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

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, it's always good to see a Springhiller in the gallery, and I'm wondering if I might be permitted a quick introduction as I begin my remarks.

MR. SPEAKER: If you feel like it.

MR. BAILLIE: I do, Mr. Speaker. I just happened to look up and see Mr. Rick Clarke, president of the Nova Scotia Federation of Labour - and a Springhiller - in the gallery. I don't know if they noticed him on the government side, because he is sitting in the Opposition gallery, where, of course, he is more than welcome to be. I just wanted to recognize that he was there.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak in support of this bill, intergenerational reporting, a bill that I believe is of tremendous importance, because it would be a great step forward in the way that the province is governed, truly bring Nova Scotia into the 21st Century. The bill, quite simply, requires that in addition to the 12 months budgeting that goes on in this House, in addition to the day-to-day, short-term decision making that goes on on the government side, that once in a while the House and the government be required to report on the effect of today's decisions on the next generation of Nova Scotians, and that every five years the government be required to account for its decisions not just to today's taxpayers and voters and citizens, but to the next generation.

Mr. Speaker, that report, of course, would include the state of the province's finances and whether they are truly in balance or not, but also the state of the social health of the province, the state of the province's environment and whether today's decisions are creating an environmental deficit any more than they create a financial deficit, or a surplus, because young Nova Scotians want to know that they are being looked after today in all of these ways, even in the demographics of the province. Are more people coming to Nova Scotia than leaving, or the other way around? And what does that mean for the long-term economic and social well-being of the province?

These are the things that we want the government to report on and that all Nova Scotians want to know are being taken into account when government makes decisions. I'll give you a few examples, Madam Speaker. Nova Scotians now know that the Auditor General of Nova Scotia reported to the people that he believed the question of the ever-escalating pile of debt that is building up in our province, now the second-highest per person in the country, raises ethical questions about whether that is fair to the young Nova Scotians who are going to be left to pay the bills for today's decisions. Decisions that the

NDP have made today might look very different if they were required to account for those decisions to the next generation of Nova Scotians.

When the NDP came into office and repealed the balanced budget law, and started a string of four consecutive deficit budgets, that decision might look very different if they were required to answer not just to today's House of Assembly, but to a whole new generation of Nova Scotians.

The Liberals are no better. While they complain about deficits and debt, they go out and they do polling to decide whether they are going to be in favour of actually doing something about it or not. They flip and they flop. They look at polls to tell them whether it's right to stop the growth in debt, whether it's right to balance the budget or not. But if, like the NDP, the Liberals were required to answer that question, not just by relying on polls but also by answering to a whole new generation of Nova Scotians, perhaps even they would be dragged kicking and screaming into doing the right thing for our kids, and that is to say no more to the growth in debt, and all those bills that we hand on to them to pay, Madam Speaker.

In fact, even reporting to their own members, perhaps the Liberals wouldn't be running a deficit in their own Party's books if they knew that ultimately they have to look beyond just today, when they make their own decisions and that Nova Scotians can look and judge them, like they will judge the NDP and us, on whether we're ready to form a government based on whether we can even run our own affairs. Those are the kinds of decisions that people can only make when they know the facts about how each Party runs its own affairs, whether they complain about deficits but run them themselves, or not, that is one of the benefits of requiring these kinds of reports, Madam Speaker.

I'll give you another example. Power rates and power policy is another great example. One would have to wonder, would the decisions of the government be different where they commit Nova Scotia to 35-year, \$1.5 billion decisions, clearly leaving the bills for many more generations of Nova Scotians to pay, acknowledging that those decisions today will add 1 per cent or 2 per cent every year to our already sky-high power rates? Maybe if they were required to answer not just to today's Nova Scotia but to the next generation of Nova Scotia, those decisions would be very different.

Madam Speaker, one can just imagine what the last election campaign would have looked like if politicians were required to account for what they say in the long run. What Nova Scotians now know, four years into an NDP Government, is no one asked them, the NDP didn't ask them, the Liberals didn't ask them, no one asked Nova Scotians in the 2009 election, do you want to pay more for power? Are you willing to pay more for power so that the NDP can brag that they have the highest renewable targets in all of North America?

Perhaps Nova Scotians would have voted differently if they had been given an accurate question, and this bill would point to an accurate question. What we now know is

Nova Scotians have seen their power bill skyrocket by over 30 per cent, that they do not want to pay more than they can afford, and yet no one asked them that in the last election.

Madam Speaker, for the Liberal Party to run TV ads promoting a policy that actually jacks our power rates up even more and manages to eliminate any hope of private investment in renewables at the same time - that is an amazing trick. The very policies that they promote have been proven a failure in New Brunswick, in Ontario, in Texas, in California, in all of those places the very policies that they advertise on TV, both drive up our power rates and stop the investment in renewables at the same time. That is why it's important that they, too, be held accountable for what they say not just today, but for the future. The only responsible power policy that meets the test of today and tomorrow is to freeze power rates, not charge Nova Scotians more, and invest in renewables in a way that Nova Scotians can actually afford. That's why this bill is so important.

I could move on to taxes because the government has chosen to pull \$3 out of the pockets of everyday Nova Scotians for every \$1 the government, itself, plans to find in so-called savings to try to get to a balanced budget - \$3 from us for every \$1 from itself is not a balanced approach to budgeting. That is why so many Nova Scotians are skeptical about what the government is claiming about this budget because they are the ones who are left to pay while the government lets its own accounts off the hook.

Perhaps if the NDP were required to report not just to today's voters, but to tomorrow's Nova Scotians about why they want Nova Scotia to have the highest taxes in all of Canada, user fees that have skyrocketed beyond the ability of Nova Scotians to pay, and on and on and on, perhaps then we could get some sanity when it comes to tax policy in this province, perhaps then young Nova Scotians would stand up and say, when you do that more and more of us move away, more and more of us go to Ontario or Alberta, where there are more jobs, where there are lower taxes.

Lower taxes and more jobs go together, and only when you report on all of those things can you truly make responsible decisions as a province. But no one asks them; no one asks the very next generation of Nova Scotians who have to pay those taxes, who have to make those career decisions, who have to decide who to believe on jobs, on the economy, on power rates. No one asked them and that is the problem and that is exactly the problem that this bill will solve, hold all Parties to account for the crazy things they say today because, ultimately, tomorrow . . .

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please.

The honourable member for Hammonds Plans-Upper Sackville.

MR. MAT WHYNOTT: Madam Speaker, I don't even know where to begin with this bill because it's quite rich coming from the Progressive Conservative Party about accountability and trying to make decisions based on informed information that is informed. I find the Progressive Conservatives of Nova Scotia are the all-time big spenders

in this. Let's not forget that it was just prior to the 2003 provincial election it was the Progressive Conservative Party that said what we're going to do is pass out \$150 cheques to everybody in the Province of Nova Scotia - will that decision be the best thing for our next generations?

Madam Speaker, I've heard from many of my colleagues who have been in this House since that time and they said, at that point in history, people were donating those \$155 cheques back to charities. People were giving donations to campaigns - the \$150 cheques - because they were so enraged that the Progressive Conservative Party would give \$150 cheques to everybody across the province - cheques.

What would you do with a cheque? Of course, I would never say this in this Chamber, but why would you give \$155 cheques days before an election, Madam Speaker? Why would you do that? That is the reality about the Progressive Conservative Party.

Now I'm going to talk a little bit about the Liberal Party later but I do want to talk a little bit about the Progressive Conservative Party, Madam Speaker. Let's also talk about the Progressive Conservative Party in this Chamber that brought forward a plan when it came to refurbishing one of the much-needed infrastructure needs in our province, which was around physical fitness - physical fitness which some of us, including myself, need to do a little bit more.

The Progressive Conservative Party brought forward a 10-year plan. It was called the B-FIT program, a 10-year program to invest in recreational facilities right across our province. Madam Speaker, they brought forward a plan that would ensure that the next generation would be able to - this was an investment in what they called the next generation and this was going to be a sustainable program for 10 years so that we could really make a difference in the physical fitness of our communities.

What did they do, Madam Speaker? They spent it all in two years and when did they spend it? They spent it prior to an election. That is the Progressive Conservative Party, talking about investing in our next generation, investing with informed decisions - \$68 million that was spent in two years.

Another example, Madam Speaker, is they brought forward an example of a hospital in Colchester that was much-needed for that community. But the interesting part is they brought forward a hospital without a plan, decisions that could have been informed if they had a plan in place for our next generation, exactly what this bill is talking about, having informed decisions; but classic Tory, they didn't do it.

Another example, Madam Speaker, is allowing spending in government. Now this is a Progressive Conservative Party. I know Progressive Conservatives don't like government, they would prefer a smaller government, but this is what I find interesting. The Progressive Conservative Party, when they were in government in the last little bit, between 1999 to 2009, spending in government departments rose by 6, 7 and 8 per cent,

depending on the year you look. They were just handing over money, hoping to fix problems - classic Tory. They say they have a plan but never follow through on it. That's exactly the sort of thing that they're saying this bill would do, but maybe they would hire a fancy-pants consultant like Corpus Sanchez in 2008, to reform our health care system, a \$1 million consultant and there's only one person who got a job out of that, and that was the executive assistant to the Minister of Health who got a job out of that.

Another example of the Progressive Conservatives making decisions about our finances, we know that our offshore revenues peaked in 2008. We had over \$450 million in offshore royalties coming into the province as revenue, so the Progressive Conservatives built programs based on money that they could not guarantee would come in every year. The Progressive Conservatives did that, Madam Speaker, so I find it ironic that this bill is before us in the Legislature - and of course I could not forget the issue of the kiddie ATVs, a decision that I'm sure the Progressive Conservative members across the way would be hanging their heads in shame.

Madam Speaker, I've done enough to the Progressive Conservatives; now I want to talk a little bit about the Liberal Party because, of course, if this bill was to ever come forward, whoever had their way - now all three Parties in this Legislative Assembly, whenever the election is called, have the ability to form a government. That's the reality. That's what elections are.

One of the ways this bill would - we have to have accountability in the decisions of whatever Party is in power, but I can tell you that in the past, the decisions of the Liberal Party were to bring forward P3 contracts for our schools. We've been paying those fees. We've been paying those leasing fees for the last 14 years, and no matter who's in power in the coming years, the government of the day would have to decide whether or not we're going to buy those schools for our children. If we were to buy all of those schools - an additional \$250 million. An additional \$250 million is an example of when decisions in the past remain without having informed decisions.

Another example, Madam Speaker, is when the Liberal Party, luckily, didn't have their way, but what they did was that they were proposing to borrow \$600 million to pay down the debt of the DHAs - \$600 million, just borrowing the money, and how does that work? Another example of decisions made and not thinking about our future generations was the decision to close 1,500 hospital beds - 1,500 hospital beds that the Liberal Party closed, and they fired 1,000 nurses, told them to leave the province.

We're still paying for their decisions. That's the reality. That is the reality of the Liberal Party in this province. They tore up the teachers' collective bargaining rights and rolled back people's wages. This government has been able to contain government spending so that we don't see these large inflationary costs in our province.

The member for Yarmouth was speaking earlier today, and he was talking across the way about amalgamation. He said that he agreed with amalgamation. He agreed with

forcing the HRM to come forward. He said that was a good decision. Well, talk to the other municipal units during that time. People were not happy with the decision of the Liberal Government of that day.

You know, the only foresight the Liberal Party saw when they were ever in government was that they would put a tax on every bottle of liquor in this province. That's what the Liberals did, and they put it in their own coffers. They put it in for electioneering purposing, and I can't believe that the Liberal Party would do something like that.

I know what our government has done. We've ended "March madness". We've made sure that we've lived within our means. We've made strategic decisions and disciplinary decisions in how we spend our money. We are turning the corner on 20 years of the slowest economic growth in Canada, with large new projects like Muskrat Falls, the shipbuilding contract, and the Nova Centre. I wish I could go on, I really do, but thank you very much.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Clayton Park.

MS. DIANA WHALEN: It's a pleasure for me to get up and speak a little bit about this bill. Madam Speaker, when I looked at what this bill is about, it strikes me as highly unrealistic. It's a suggestion that every five years the government will report on financial and fiscal and different government policies that have come into play, and it will report on how that's going to affect people 45 years in the future.

It's clear that right now we see the difficulty in forecasting one year into the future. The NDP's current budget and estimates for the coming year are, again, part of a narrative that's been created by the government to go into an election with, to create a story that looks positive when in fact it is not - when all the indicators, financial and otherwise, are saying that we are not going to see huge increases in revenue. It's difficult for politicians and government staff to forecast one year out, let alone looking 45 years out to see the impact of their decisions. What sounds nice in this bill, it sounds nice to call it an intergenerational bill, it sounds like a good idea to consider the impact on the future, but it is highly unrealistic. I think that says a lot about what we see right there.

The Leader of the Third Party went on at some length about power policies and other issues that while very interesting really don't have a great deal to do with this budget. The one thing we know about the Conservative budgets and how they approach finance is that they say one thing and they do something different in government. The Leader of the Third Party has taken a page right out of Harper's book, the Prime Minister of Canada, and saying in Opposition that he's going to balance budgets, that he wants balanced budget legislation and so on, when in fact we only have to look at the last six or seven years here in Canada, under the Harper Government, and we can see that they took it from a huge surplus left by the Liberals to deficits every single year that they've been in power. They completely squandered large surpluses that were put in place through difficult fiscal

measures in the 1990s, which the NDP here in this province love to hearken back to. At the time when the Liberal Government took power in 1993, the province was bankrupt.

At the first Cabinet meeting that was held they were told that although they were only two or three months into the fiscal year there was no money in the coffers - imagine that, if you were in Cabinet and had to face the fact that the previous Progressive Conservative Government had completely squandered an entire year's worth of payments in two or three months, not even a quarter of the way through the year. That was what the Liberal Government was faced with, after years of just squandering money, wasting money and buying electronic toilet seats, and God knows what else, under the Progressive Conservative Government. We remember that kind of fiscal management and it was abominable; it was abhorrent. I think the Progressive Conservatives in Opposition and outside of government love to preach that they are fiscally responsible, that they're literally big "C" Conservative - they are not, the Harper Government has not been Conservative, neither have previous Progressive Conservative Governments in this province.

It is a bit ironic that it is the Liberal Party that had shown the greatest amount of concern for people, balanced with financial concerns. We are the Party that has found that balance. The opposite Party here, the NDP in government have absolutely abandoned all of their principles, all of their social democratic principles, all their "sister this" and "brother that", out the door, that's where it is - and the labour unions darn well know it. The labour leaders know that, the labour union members know that, your social democratic principles have gone out the window to be more conservative than the Rodney MacDonald Government was before you. (Applause)

It's difficult to encourage people to be active and interested in politics when there is so much hypocrisy that surrounds me today; it really is. The Leader of the Third Party is talking a good talk with this kind of intergenerational talk, but he knows how to cut a good deal for himself as well. The Leader of the Third Party has benefited considerably from federal appointments by Prime Minister Harper, including seats on the board of the Halifax Airport Authority . . .

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please.

MS. WHALEN: Yes?

MADAM SPEAKER: I would ask the member to retract the terminology "hypocrisy" - it's unparliamentary.

MS. WHALEN: Yes, I definitely will take that back. There are a lot of words we're finding in the last few weeks that are not acceptable here, so I will withdraw that word. Thank you.

Madam Speaker, I believe I have a couple of minutes left so I would like to continue.

I was mentioning that the Leader of the Third Party has benefited greatly from federal appointments from Prime Minister Harper, including seats on a number of boards including the Halifax Airport Authority and the Public Sector Pension Investment Board. The Leader of the Third Party stated that he stands for cutting wasteful public spending, all the while he has claimed stipends and travel costs from Prime Minister Harper totalling \$310,275 in federal tax dollars. The Leader of the Third Party earned \$25,000 to attend 25 board meetings and claimed \$9,000 in travel costs alone.

The member for Cumberland South has done all of those things while trying to speak about. . .

MADAM SPEAKER: Order please. Order. If the members continue to talk, I will ask them to leave the Chamber, and I won't give you another chance. When I call order, I mean order.

MS. WHALEN: We're talking here about whether or not people live by the philosophy that they espouse in bills like Bill No. 6, which is before us, this concern about the future, about good fiscal policy, about making decisions that are good for the future and I'm saying that there are things that we need to know about how people manage their affairs that have to do with emulating - and I'm talking about the Third Party and the Leader of the Third Party and how his stance today emulates that of Prime Minister Harper, when he was in Opposition, promising there would be only balanced budgets in the future and then in fact delivering us budget after budget that's been in deficit, year after year in deficit, growing debt every single year. That was an extremely right-wing, Conservative person, a right-wing Conservative Government, and yet, at the end of the day, we've seen year after year of huge deficits. That's what we can expect from the Third Party and they are speaking out of both sides of their mouth when they bring in this kind of a bill to ask us to consider something that is not even workable.

I was also speaking about the fact that the NDP Government has surprised everybody and, actually from the outset, has been more conservative than Rodney MacDonald's government, which was rather profligate in its spending, which kind of harkens back to earlier governments that we've seen as well. The Progressive Conservative Government, through the 1980s, added more than half of the debt that we currently carry on the books of Nova Scotia. They added it by not knowing how to say no, by giving to everything, by having huge largesse and all the while carrying the banner that they were conservative, which is completely an oxymoron; their behaviour and their name completely do not match. That's what we can expect in the future.

There are a lot of points that I want to raise this afternoon, but I think it's important that we point out that people and governments and Parties should remain true to what they stand for. In particular, we had years of hearing from the NDP in Opposition who took a very high moral stand on a lot of issues. Very often they were saying things that I liked to hear, that I thought sounded good, but even my own excitement about seeing a change in government - because we needed a change from Rodney MacDonald's years as our

Premier, we needed to go in a new direction - I thought, okay, we have an NDP Government for the first time, let's see where they go.

They have disappointed Nova Scotians across the board and they've disappointed their base and the union membership and the union leadership of this province. They've disappointed the poor who expected some real improvements in their lives, and across the board it's been a disappointing four years for Nova Scotia. Absolutely. Bill No. 6 doesn't offer any legitimate improvement to finances in this province and it's coming from a Party whose history does not support any fiscal management. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cape Breton West.

MR. ALFIE MACLEOD: Madam Speaker, it's a pleasure to stand here in my place today and say a few words about Bill No. 6. Every day I think about how our decisions in this House have an impact on the future of our children and our grandchildren. I think that all governments and all Parties need to be accountable to the young people who are coming forward. I believe that it is imperative that we understand the impact of today's decisions on our finances, on our future, on our environment, and on our social conscience as we move forward in this province that we all love so dearly.

Now we're in here, and we have different ideas and different thoughts of how things should be done. The one thing I do believe is that each and every person is here to try to do the best job they can for the people they represent and for the Province of Nova Scotia.

Nova Scotia has an aging population, and that means there will be fewer workers to support the retirees and the children of this province. To maintain a strong, fair, and resilient Nova Scotia, we need to plan for the future, and we need to plan now. Nova Scotia's ability to meet future challenges depends on actions that we take in this House of Assembly every day. Acting properly now avoids more drastic action later, when problems start to escalate.

So how do we do that? As a group, we have to look at where we're going and what the decisions we make are going to cost the people of the Province of Nova Scotia. What are those decisions going to cost your children and my children and our grandchildren? What are we going to be able to do to make sure that the kind of province that we've enjoyed is there for our children to enjoy? This bill is a start toward that: making sure that we look at the decisions we make, check them out, and see if they're actually going to work down the road.

Now, I don't think there's anybody in this House - and I certainly know that I don't think I have all the answers. There's nobody more surprised than me at the changes in the way technology and lives have been going on here in Nova Scotia. So to think that we, as a group, can sit here and make legislation and make decisions of where we're going in the

future without that future changing and without that future having different impacts than it has today would not be something that I think this group of people would want to do.

We all know that the variables are changing as we move forward. How we are going to move as a province is changing day by day, hour by hour. Now, no piece of legislation is perfect, but it has been my experience that we have to start somewhere. The Auditor General raised the issue of whether a deficit is moral. Well, do you know what? The reason he did that is because we load spending onto the young and we make future generations pay for services consumed today. This bill is to help address that.

It's time that we had a formal and transparent way of taking stock of what we're leaving behind, what we're asking our children and grandchildren to pay for. We need a process that makes us think and account for what it is that we are passing in this House of Assembly.

Madam Speaker, this bill helps to focus our thinking on doing the right thing. A few weeks ago - maybe a week ago - I was pleased to hear the honourable member for Halifax Clayton Park speak to the principle of transparency. I view the member for Halifax Clayton Park as a person with high character who does the right thing. It was very telling when she decided to defend the failings of her own Party leadership on another issue of transparency. It was a great example of an issue of how we should do the right thing. It was a great example of how politicians should be transparent about the things that they do, where people will have trouble believing they did the right thing. It was a great example of how politicians should account to a new generation for the actions of the past. I don't think she would have made the same choice herself and she would have been right not to do so.

Madam Speaker, now we're moving forward and looking at this bill. There's an argument that is essentially an aging population and a slower population growth is likely to produce a gap between spending and revenues. That gap will increase government debt, it will increase it higher and will impose higher taxes on our next generation. That means that higher taxes would mean smaller pay packets and less disposable income for the ordinary Nova Scotian.

With the workforce being a shrinking portion of the population as the population ages, the tax burden becomes heavier and heavier for the working-age person. By 2036 there will be 1.68 times more Nova Scotians over 65 than there are right now, according to the Department of Finance statistics. The number of people over 85 will have doubled. By contrast, the number of Nova Scotians under the age of 19 will have dropped by almost 12,000 people. The decline in the natural increase of the population started to accelerate in the first half of the 1990s, dropping from 4,800 in 1991 to 2,900 in 1995. This bill is important for us to help secure the future of the young people in the Province of Nova Scotia.

We need to look at where we are, we need to figure out where we have to go, and we have to figure out a way that we're paying for it and it's not our children and

grandchildren that are paying for it. This bill is a stepping stone towards that. This bill will make some more accountability in the process that we enjoy in the Province of Nova Scotia. The people in this House have a genuine interest, regardless of their political stature, in where we go. We need to work together to make sure that there is the ability for the young people of this province to enjoy the type of life that I've had the opportunity - I know most of you here in the House have had an opportunity - to enjoy.

If this bill were to be moved forward it would need work. But, Madam Speaker, if you don't start a journey you'll never complete it. This bill is the beginning of a journey that will help the young people of the Province of Nova Scotia. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable Progressive Conservative House Leader.

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Madam Speaker would you please call Bill No. 35.

Bill No. 35 - Trade Union Act.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle.

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Madam Speaker, it's my pleasure to stand and speak a few moments on Bill No. 35. I think this is the second time that we've put it through the House of Assembly; I think it's probably the second time or third time that we've had the opportunity to talk about it. I want to welcome a number of people in the gallery today to witness it without having to look at it on a little tiny TV screen that I know they do watch quite often on Legislative TV. I welcome them here today to the talk, Mr. Tracy and Mr. Clarke for being here today.

Many times that we've talked about this, it's about putting patients first. I believe patients, a lot of times when it comes to labour negotiations, that they tend to be put to the side and I think too often that has happened in the past, and one that I don't feel is right. It's not about protecting a political interest, it's about making sure health care services are there for Nova Scotians when they need them, even when there is a threat of a labour disruption. This bill provides for an alternative resolution of contract dispute in health care that avoids work stoppages or even the threat of those stoppages as well. At the same time the bill respects the collective bargaining process.

Last Spring, 3,300 Capital Health care workers were poised to walk off the job. Just the threat of a strike set in motion a series of events that caused real fear, uncertainty and disruption for thousands of Nova Scotians. Capital Health responded to the threat of a strike by cancelling hundreds of surgeries and appointments. Capital Health postponed 530 diagnostic imaging appointments, 430 surgeries, and 1,947 outpatient appointments.

Now I remind members that these are not simply numbers, there are people who are attached to those numbers, people like Lisa Morehouse. She is a single mother raising a

young child and she had cancer. Just as her treatments were about to start, they were postponed because of that threat, just the threat, there was no strike, just the threat. Those numbers also represent people like Mac and Marjorie Fiander.

Last Spring, because of the threat of a strike, Marjorie's surgery was cancelled overnight - outright. At the time Mr. Fiander wrote to the Premier saying that cancer doesn't wait for anybody, which is absolutely true, and that the cancellation was totally unacceptable. Few people can argue with him. Cancer does not wait. With full knowledge that the very threat of a strike would cause undue stress for thousands of Nova Scotians, some who were very ill, this government let hospitals ramp down. The Liberals look at it the other way, they actually said nothing and I know the government, when they get up to speak, probably will take a couple of shots at the Liberals as well.

This legislation will ensure government, no matter what political stripe, would put patients first. It ensures hospitals will stay open, that not another surgery would ever be cancelled, that no important test would be postponed because of a contract dispute. As terrible as the threat of a strike was, an actual strike would have been much, much worse. At the time the Capital District Health Authority said the system could only withstand a strike for a matter of days. The quote from Barbara Hall, who is the health authority's vice-president of person-centred care said, "The pent-up demand for all the other things in the community, for the elective surgeries that would be cancelled, that pressure will get larger and larger." I can also quote her as saying, "We don't feel that we could endure, with emergency staffing, a very long strike." I'll table that, it's an article from CBC News, April 11, 2012, so just about a year ago today.

Again, members should take a moment to think about what it would mean. How many Lisa Morehouses and Marjorie Fianders would there be? What would it say about our province if Nova Scotians couldn't count on getting the treatment that they need because of a labour dispute?

Madam Speaker, I am very interested to hear from the other two Parties, to hear if they stand with the patients or, of course, stand against them. As we've said before, this is not about the collective bargaining process, it's about making it better for patients and making it better for the health care workers who provide that service for us. They are an incredible group of people who work very hard for us, as well, and all we can say is that one cancelled surgery, one cancelled program because of the threat of a strike, is far, far too many, and that's what this bill aims to stop.

Madam Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to speak today and I look forward to comments from my colleagues.

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

MR. JIM BOUDREAU: I'm very pleased to rise today to speak to Bill No. 35, the Trade Union Act. Madam Speaker, since the beginning of the 20th Century, conservative

politicians have attacked workers' rights. The members opposite oppose minimum wage increases, and previous Progressive Conservative Governments attacked nurses and health care workers with Bill No. 68 and later Bill No. 1.

I want to quote the Leader of the Third Party. He says, "It's a mystery to me how the NDP make their decisions. That's something they'll have to account for." I'll table that, but I'd like to remind the honourable members that this NDP Government makes decisions based upon logic, reason, common sense, and what is good for the common person and the common good.

Perhaps the members opposite might like to visit the statue of Joseph Howe on these grounds, and perhaps look at what Joseph Howe had to say. It's interesting that I heard quite a bit of reference to the fact that this bill is not about politics. I beg to differ, Madam Speaker. This bill is all about politics. The history of the Progressive Conservative Party in this province is very clear. It's crystal clear. (Interruptions) I'm not going to listen to some of the sanctimonious comments over there. The reality is that we will be judged not on what we say but on what we do.

Bill No. 68 was introduced by the Progressive Conservative Government in 2001, and many of us standing here in this House remember that bill very well. I suspect that the honourable Minister of Health and Wellness would remember that bill very well. This bill was opposed in the House. The health care workers were angry, and even the government of the time - the Progressive Conservatives, the Tories - said that the binding arbitration they imposed was not affordable.

It's interesting that in the days after the bill passed - the one that they're talking about again today, so to speak - they did not impose a contract. "Instead, the Tories agreed to a form of binding arbitration, something they said the province couldn't afford" - and lo and behold, the province couldn't afford it. "Registered nurses wound up with an 18 per cent raise compounded over three years. Licensed practical nurses and other health care workers got just 7.7 per cent plus a \$1,500 lump-sum payment."

It's interesting that this group of people will bring this back again and try to revisit this when it has been rejected a number of times on this Legislature floor and it has been rejected by the public, but again, because of clear ideology they will bring this back. When I table some other documents you'll understand the fact that they don't have a plan, and I'll table this one.

Madam Speaker, the Progressive Conservative Government, as I was stating, didn't learn anything from the criticism they received on Bill No. 68, because just a few years later they introduced Bill No. 1, which again aimed to take away health care workers' rights. Bill No. 1 - it's right here in the Canadian Press: basically what happened here, this controversial bill, which was aimed at preventing strikes in the Nova Scotia health care sector - what happened was the government itself filibustered its own bill, convinced that they wouldn't get a chance to vote on it. So, this group, or this Party over there, brought

that in twice; the second time they filibustered and killed their own bill. Great. That shows that you're in control, and that you have a good idea of where you're going, and you have a plan. That's a really good plan. I would suspect that that would work very well.

Madam Speaker, today this bill attempts to continue the discussion around some of what are the most important workers in our province. Everyone knows just how significant workers in the health care profession and in community services professions are. The significance of these workers is not what is being debated today, Madam Speaker.

Again, we want to focus on what is being said today and what was done in the past and what was said is something that they don't believe in. They don't believe in it, they just put it out here as a way of trying to convince Nova Scotians that they have a plan, that they have a purpose. Okay - no plan, no vision. So, while the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party and the Party over there are busy fear mongering, okay, fear mongering, perhaps the rest of us, here will have a reasonable debate about this piece of legislation.

Now, I understand that arbitration may be an option. That does not mean the rights of workers should be stripped away. Taking rights from health care workers is a sure way to worsen health care shortages. Those workers are apt to leave and move somewhere with more desirable working conditions. The proposed piece of legislation means that bargaining decisions would be made by an arbiter, and as a union member and someone who has done some negotiations, I'm very clear, and I clearly understand what that means.

While arbiters can play an important role in the collective bargaining process, we need to understand the risks at stake with arbitration. Madam Speaker, I'm not surprised to hear this from the member opposite. It is his very Party, the Progressive Conservative Party, that let spending get so far out of control that our province's finances were in shambles. It was the previous government that allowed wage increases for health care workers to jump 2.9 percent year after year, a right that was not sustainable. It was the previous government that watched some wage increases jump as high as 5 per cent each year. And I'd like to table this document which indicates that an arbitration panel has awarded workers of more than a hundred different health care jobs in the Capital district, raises that could top 15 per cent. So, that's what arbitration can do to you, Madam Speaker, if it's not dealt with in a responsible way.

I obviously believe in fiscal responsibility and restraint, especially in difficult times. This government understands that, and that's why we're doing what we're doing. Now, through careful and diligent negotiations, this government was able to come to a wage increase agreement of 1 per cent a year. Negotiations work. How much time? One minute.

Okay. I'm going to use the phrase that the opposite side doesn't like to hear. We're turning a corner in this province; we're not chasing our tails. We're not chasing our tails. Now, Madam Speaker, I could stand up here and continue to make this a political debate,

or a financial discussion, but Madam Speaker, every member of this House knows that this piece of legislation puts patient safety at risk and truly shows that the Tory Party is a collection of yesterday's men who have no vision and are fixated on the failings of the past. It is therefore not something that our government is prepared to support. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

MR. ZACH CHURCHILL: Madam Speaker, I'm happy to stand and discuss this Progressive Conservative bill that has come forward. The Liberal caucus will be unequivocally opposing this bill. We see it as an attack on the collective bargaining process, and we don't think that is what this province needs right now. This will be a position that we do share with the government, that collective bargaining is a fundamental process by which employers and employees are able to reach contracts together. There's a balance of power within that relationship that the collective bargaining process keeps and ensures that the outcome is fair, and hopefully fair to both parties.

We see this bill as an attack fundamentally on that process and its fairness and its ability to produce a fair result, for both employers and employees. We see this as a bill that is driven primarily by the far-right ideology of the Third Party. (Interruptions) Well before the members of the government congratulate me too much, they might want to hear the rest of my comments.

A problem that we've seen in this Legislature that I think has been highlighted in the debates that we've had over the course of the last number of years, is the issue and the problem that ideological positions cause when we're tackling collective bargaining. We've seen the government take a very ideological stance on the other side of the political spectrum with first contract arbitration in its most severe form that we've seen in the province.

The Liberal Party did provide some amendments to that first contract arbitration legislation to make it what we felt would be more appropriate and fair to the collective bargaining process. We weren't shouting from on high like the Third Party was, that first contract arbitration would be the end of our economy or anything like that, but there were some issues in that piece of legislation that we thought should be addressed. Employers from across the province had concerns with it, small businesses had concerns with it and that is why we did filibuster that piece of legislation and try to make amendments to it to make it more friendly to the employer side as they had concerns with it.

This is the problem when you approach this issue from an ideological perspective; on the right you have the Progressive Conservatives treating employees as a problem and presenting ideas that would make the collective bargaining process unfair to employees and taking away their ability to strike. If you look at the suggestion that the Progressive Conservatives were making, this bill, if passed, would mean, step one, there would be

mediation, step two would mean arbitration, step three would mean decision of arbitration binding and that is not collective bargaining and we don't think it's fair.

On the other side, on the left hand side of this Legislature, we've seen the NDP treat employers as a problem, and I don't think that is fair as well. First contract arbitration, in the form it was presented, did cause a lot of concern with employers and their concerns were ignored by this government. That is why I think, especially when you're dealing with procedural issues like this, you need to keep ideology out of it and just look at the issue from a procedural standpoint and assure that the process is in place which will allow the fairest outcome for all involved. That is why this Party has continuously taken a compromise position when it comes to these issues in the Legislature, reaching for compromise between labour and employers.

That said, employees and their unions do have a responsibility to put forward fair requests when it comes to the needs of their employees, as employers have a responsibility to ensure that what they're giving their employees is fair and that everything is reflective of what each can accommodate and what each can provide and what each can give up in some circumstances. Having a collective bargaining process that allows those two sides to work out those issues amongst themselves is the only way to ensure that the outcome is going to be fair to both sides.

If you go forward with the Progressive Conservative way, employees lose the right to strike. I know that labour disruptions can be challenging for some to accept but they're a necessary part of the collective bargaining process. Labour disruptions happen, they'll continue to happen, and sometimes they should happen to ensure that employees are able to get what they need and what they deserve from employers, to ensure the outcome is fair for them.

On the other side, forcing a first contract arbitration on employers can potentially shift the balance of power the other way and allow employees to, perhaps, at certain moments - and we're not saying this is going to happen - but it does shift the balance of power to allow employees, we think, to ask for a bit more than the market, or their employer, could sometimes provide. That's why it's fundamental that we all stick to the principles of the collective bargaining process and ensure that both sides are able to work these issues out fairly. That will include, sometimes, out of necessity, labour disruptions, either lockouts or strikes, and that's okay. That's part of what our democracy is about. That's what having a fair relationship between employees and employers is about and that's what this caucus will continue to support - a fair collective bargaining process where the balance of power is in the middle, where neither side has an advantage over the other and where each side is able to use the tools in their employ to ensure their position is properly reflected, throughout that process.

How much time do I have left?

MADAM SPEAKER: About a minute and a half.

MR. CHURCHILL: This piece of legislation is concerning, especially coming from a caucus that still says they're Progressive Conservatives, but when you bring forth pieces of legislation like this, I really think that the progressive is there only in name and not in practicality, if you're trying to eliminate employees' ability to participate in the collective bargaining process.

I do not think that the Progressive Conservative Party, right now, is reflective of a moderate conservative movement under its current Leader. They have taken a very sharp turn to the right and it's no wonder that a lot of people are starting to call the Leader of the Third Party, a little Harper. It's because this Party is trying to define itself, to the people of Nova Scotia, as an alternative. In so doing they're taking a hard shift to the right to try to define themselves from the Liberals and the New Democrats. I think it's to the detriment of this House and it is going to be to the detriment of Nova Scotians. Thank you.

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

MR. KEITH BAIN: I'm pleased to stand in my place this afternoon to speak to Bill No. 35, the Trade Union Act, an Act to Protect Patients and Provide for the Fair Resolution of Contract Negotiations in Health Care and Community Services.

This legislation contemplates what effect a health care strike, or the threat of a health care strike, would have on Nova Scotians. We are talking about Nova Scotians at some of the most vulnerable times in their lives, people who are anxious and worried because they have a health issue. That is when the health care system should be there. It should be there when people need it.

Entry into our excellent Nova Scotia health care system should ease the stress on Nova Scotians, and most of the time it does, but we learned last Spring that even the threat of a strike turns the system upside down. Not knowing if the system will help you when you need it, or knowing that the help you need has been cancelled or postponed due to a labour disruption, is not acceptable to someone who is scared, someone with nowhere else to turn.

In preparation for a walkout, 530 diagnostic imaging appointments had to be postponed and about 430 surgeries, on top of the nearly 2,000 out-patient appointments, had been delayed. Of that, about 5 per cent of the postponed surgeries were cancer-related; 172 hospital beds were closed and there was an 80-85 per cent reduction in lab testing. It also stated that, if a strike had taken place, 130 operations would be postponed, every day, during the strike.

Madam Speaker, this bill strikes the right balance between ensuring patients' access to care, respecting the negotiating process and protecting the taxpayer. It ensures that important health services remain operating during collective bargaining and any ensuing unresolved disputes. It provides an alternative dispute resolution process so that

work stoppages or even the threat of work stoppages cannot cause health service interruptions because health care should be there when people need it.

Madam Speaker, this legislation is modelled on legislation in other provinces that has been found to be constitutional and respects the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, including the freedom of association. It allows the bargaining parties to work out a method of final dispute resolution. This bill leaves the door open on what type of arbitration is ultimately chosen, therefore allowing government and management to work with union leadership on the method that is most fair. It contains a provision that requires an arbitrator to consider the state of Nova Scotia's finances when determining a settlement, alongside other considerations such as comparable rates of pay and benefits in other jurisdictions.

Mr. Speaker, the member for Yarmouth has said that this legislation is far-right ideology, so this begs the question of whether he and his Party consider health care being there when people need it is far-right ideology.

You know, Mr. Speaker, last Spring even the NSGEU president admitted that the threat of labour interruption was disruptive. She said, “. . . the possibility of the strike has created chaos in the workplace . . .” I will table that.

No one who needs a test or delicate operation wants to hear that there's chaos in the very place they are going for help. No one worried about a parent or a sibling or a child who is sick, wants to learn that the people who are supposed to treat them are working in a chaotic workplace because health care should be there when people need it.

Mr. Speaker, this bill means that health care workers will not have to feel that their workplace is in chaos. It means that Nova Scotians will have complete confidence that they will get the care they need even if labour negotiations are taking place. Today, with this bill, we will see who puts patients first and who does not, because health care should be there when people need it.

Last Spring, Mr. Speaker, the then Health Minister stood on the sideline and watched as the threat of a labour stoppage struck fear in the hearts of Lisa Morehouse and Marjorie Fiander and their families. Standing beside the minister was the Liberal Leader. He decided to watch to see what happened before he took a stand. He told the media he, “supports collective bargaining and wants to see the sides settle their issues at the table.” I will table that. With all due respect, that's what everybody wants.

The real question for the Liberals and the NDP is who wants to bring chaos to hospital workplaces and turmoil to sick Nova Scotians while the collective bargaining process goes on because health care should be there when people need it.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to say that my Party, the Progressive Conservative Party, stands with patients and this bill means that the patients will always come because health care should be there when people need it. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Progressive Conservative House Leader.

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, that concludes the Opposition business for the day. I look forward to seeing what the hours and work is for tomorrow, so I'll pass that over to the Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. CLARRIE MACKINNON: Mr. Speaker, the House will meet tomorrow from 12:00 noon to 8:00 p.m. After the daily routine the government will call Bill Nos. 36 and 37 for second reading, and of course we will be going into Committee of the Whole House on Supply.

I move the House do now rise.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is that the House now rise to meet again tomorrow at the hour of 12:00 noon.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

We have reached the moment of interruption and the subject matter for late debate was submitted by the honourable member for Colchester-Musquodoboit Valley:

“Therefore be it resolved that the changes to EI affecting seasonal workers by the federal Conservative Government on January 6th, and the abolition of the Board of Referees for the EI appeals brought about by the same federal omnibus changes to the EI system, be unreservedly condemned by all members of this House.”

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION UNDER RULE 5(5)

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

EI SYSTEM: OMNIBUS CHANGES - CONDEMN

MR. GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, I rise in the place of the people of Colchester-Musquodoboit Valley to speak to a matter that is having a serious impact and negative impacts on the communities and the well-being of the people of our province,

namely the changes in the Employment Insurance system being introduced by the Government of Canada. I wish to draw attention this evening to two of these changes in particular, the new more restrictive EI eligibility rules for the seasonally unemployed, and the abolition of the Board of Referees EI appeal system.

First, as of January 6th, new regulations have come into force for anyone who has filed for EI three times or more in the last five years. People in this newly formed category are now required from the first day of their EI claim to accept employment that pays them 80 per cent of their previous earnings, and people in this same category, after six weeks, now are newly required to accept a job at 70 per cent of their previous earnings - and such employment can be anywhere within a 100-kilometre radius of a person's home. Now those most profoundly affected by these very significant changes in the EI system are employees, of course, in seasonal industries, those industries which are the complete backbone of the natural resource-based economy of rural Nova Scotia. (Applause)

Premier Dexter was absolutely right when he said that these changes reflect an astounding failure to comprehend the economic realities of rural life - people who work, for example, in the woods and who are typically, each year, laid off when the roads close. When that happens they don't fail to go down to Walmart and apply for jobs as Walmart greeters because somehow they are people that need a little bit of extra prodding - they don't do that because they know that two hours after the roads reopen they are going to be needed in their normal, regular jobs. From an employer's point of view seasonal businesses of all sorts from limestone quarries to the Christmas tree business, to landscaping, all sorts of seasonal industries are highly dependent, it is in the fabric of their business model that they're dependent upon a trained and experienced workforce being available for recall following cyclical seasonal downturns, and this is precisely what is provided by EI.

Prime Minister Harper has said that the purpose of these changes is to encourage more flexibility - "encourage" here, however, is exactly the wrong word here. The accurate word, the right word to describe what is taking place here, would be words like "force" or "pressure" or "make." The real import of these changes is to pressure, to force, to make people accept lower-wage employment than they would otherwise, thereby depressing wages overall and creating an ever-more-transient workforce, which are the real goals of the Harperist economic program.

Two: under the same omnibus legislation which brought about these changes in seasonal EI, the board of referees system of EI appeals has been abolished. Until now, if anyone wished to appeal a decision affecting their eligibility to benefits in EI, they could do so by applying to appeal before the local board of referees. This was a simple system in its composition. The boards all across the country consisted of three appointees: one who was appointed by a local board of trade or chamber of commerce to represent the business community; one who was normally appointed from a trade union, representing the labour movement; and a third who was a government appointee.

These board members were independent, operating simply on per diems while they did board of referees work. They were not - and this is significant - employees of the EI Commission. Their hearings were held - as any MLA who has represented a constituent in that setting knows - in more-or-less informal settings around a table. In other words, settings in which one would be able to demonstrate what is often the critical factor in EI eligibility decisions, and that is the credibility, the character, and the authenticity of the person who is making their argument about the case, which is something that cannot be established in any way better than it can be established around a table, face to face, eyeball to eyeball with another person.

All of that, 100 per cent of that system, which has operated so democratically and made so many opportunities for people to have wrongful bureaucratic decisions reversed and their benefits reinstated - all of that is gone now. It is gone with the current replacement of every board of referees in Canada with a new thing called a Social Security Tribunal, which is composed of full-time, government-employed, almost all Ottawa-based tribunal members, who will now hear submissions, we are grateful to know, via written submissions - and even, in exceptional cases, we are so gratified to know, via teleconference. In my judgment, it is no accident that the loss of a local, face-to-face voice in the appeals process is exactly coinciding with new rules which stand to intensify the number of people who are being cut off from their EI.

Therefore, this evening I am issuing a challenge to Scott Armstrong, the Member of Parliament for Cumberland-Colchester-Musquodoboit Valley, and the federal government's chief apologist on these issues to the people both he and I represent. This is a challenge to Mr. Armstrong to debate me publicly on the subject of the EI changes. (Applause) I challenge Mr. Armstrong to debate me publicly about the EI changes at any place of his choosing. I challenge him to debate me before the people we both represent at any time of his choosing. I challenge him to debate me before the people we both represent on the subject of these nefarious EI changes in any format which he would select - any place, any time, any format, and in any forum which Mr. Armstrong might select. I issue, this evening, this challenge on this very important subject, Mr. Speaker, because I believe that the authors of this egregious unfairness should be called to answer for the harm they're inflicting on our people. Thank you. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

MR. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, this is the first time I am actually a bit shy to get up, after such a great performance. The member for Colchester-Musquodoboit Valley articulated the concerns of a lot of Nova Scotians very well, I think, on this issue and always presents a primarily unpolitical viewpoint on a lot of the issues that we deal with in this House. I want to thank that member for his comments.

Coming from a rural area in Yarmouth, a large part of our economy is based on seasonal industries, fishing, our lobster fishery and our other fisheries are the backbones of our community, and herring fishing as well. All along the South Shore and around the Bay

of Fundy, that is the economic backbone of our area. It is a dwindling industry, Mr. Speaker, primarily because of the decisions this government made around the Yarmouth ferry, but our tourism industry is still important to our local economy, our tourism infrastructure is important, as well as forestry. We have a lot of woodcutters and folks involved in the forestry industry, which are all, because of no fault of the employees or the industries themselves, seasonal industries.

I think that the federal changes to EI that they have been pushing through the House of Commons, is a direct attack on those industries and will result in a damaging effect on the economy of Yarmouth, the economy of Shelburne, the economies of Clare, Argyle and really the economy of any region of Nova Scotia, which would be most of our rural areas, that needs a strong, seasonal component in their region.

Risks that we have here are: further out-migration from this province; further out-migration from rural Nova Scotia into either urban centres or out West, because most of these individuals who are working in seasonal employment, whether it is in the fisheries, forestry, tourism, a lot of these folks are involved in labour, and if their skills are not being used in our local communities, they are going to take those skills elsewhere and go out West. We have seen that happen over the course of the last decade.

We have had a problem, as a province, stemming that out-migration of individuals, despite all the boasting from government that they have stopped it and there are going to be all kinds of opportunities to come home, stats still show that a lot of our people are going out West because there's not work here. If you have this attack on the EI system continue, you'll have a lot more people who cannot work in these seasonal industries and they will go out West.

I know for many it was very upsetting to hear the federal Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, the minister who I worked under, not politically but in the federal Civil Service, it was upsetting to myself and to many Nova Scotians when she said, well, we just want people to work. Everybody wants to work, Mr. Speaker, and I think it speaks to a flawed assumption from the federal Conservatives around EI that it's being used and that Nova Scotians are gouging the system to simply live off the taxpayers' dime. I know that for any of us MLAs in rural areas, we know that's not the case. There are obviously some people who abuse the system - there will always be a small number of people who abuse any system if given the chance - but as we know, the majority of individuals using EI are using it to supplement their income because they're seasonal employees or they're transitioning into other fields of work.

So to have a minister stand up at a time when the economies of Atlantic Canada are, I would say, a bit recessed, and say, we just want people to go find work, you can find work, get out there and find it - I think that was very insensitive and was not reflective of the realities that our economy currently provides to those workers.

I have spoken with a lot of workers who are employed in our fish plants. They have worked there, some of them, for upward of 30 to 40 years. They're very hard workers, they're diligent workers, and they're very good at what they do, but because their career has been based in that one industry, which is seasonal, they have not acquired the necessary skills or education to perhaps go and seek employment elsewhere.

Plus, we do not have jobs in rural Nova Scotia right now. Rural Nova Scotia is going through a very difficult time, as we all know, and I hope we all recognize, including the government. There's not a plethora or huge deposit of jobs out there waiting for these people, so you have a lot of individuals who are very stressed right now. They're wondering if they will be able to continue living in our home rural communities with their families and continuing the work that they can do, if they're not able to supplement that work with employment insurance.

The same goes for our fisheries. There are a lot of people who make a lot of money by fishing. There are a lot of folks out there on the boats who do not make a lot of money. They get whatever percentage that they're allocated from the captain from the catch, and they are just making ends meet, but they are able to stay here and they're able to contribute to our local economies and put that money back into our communities because of the current EI system that's in place.

As legislators, I think it's very important that we challenge that fundamental assumption. The employment insurance system isn't a system that is just allowing people to be lazy or maintain ignorance or anything like that. It's a system that is upholding key parts of our economy in seasonal employment. I think it's up to all of us, including members of the Third Party, to challenge that assumption that the federal government has been putting forward on this.

I especially look at what we're going through in Yarmouth, and it's very worrisome to know what these changes to employment insurance are going to result in. We are already a community that is extremely stressed with a lack of jobs, with a tourism sector that has been dwindling without our access to our key tourism market in New England. We have a fishing industry that has been dealing with, at certain points in the season, very low prices or very low catches. People are telling me already that this is not worth it - this is not worth it, we're going to pack up, we're going to go out West like everybody else, because we're not able to do this work anymore.

It's interesting, especially when you look at the fishery, that there are other federal policies that are impacting independent fishers. The quota system does not allow them to go out and fish outside the season that's given to them, especially with the small hook-and-line fishermen. So you have this federal policy which is impacting our independent fisheries, the hook-and-line fishers, who cannot catch as much fish as they should be able to catch, even though it's out there, and who cannot make the livelihood out of that industry that they used to because of that quota system. Now we have another

federal policy coming down the pipe that's going to impact the other part of their income, which is the employment insurance part of it.

Forestry and tourism are essential parts of our economy. Seasonal employment, right now, is absolutely critical to the economy of Yarmouth, Shelburne, Clare, Cape Breton - everywhere - because it's what's keeping our communities alive right now and it's absolutely, I think, vital that collectively all three Parties in this Legislature start standing up to these changes a bit more. I know the Liberals have, the NDP have too, to their credit, and we'd like to have the Third Party stand with us in opposing these changes and protect our communities from what could be a very damaging result. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cape Breton West.

MR. ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I live in and represent an area that has 18.5 per cent unemployment - much like yourself - in an area that has a lot of seasonal workers, and like all members of this House of Assembly, our caucus has concerns about the EI changes and the potential impact on Nova Scotians and Cape Bretoners. But unlike the other members of this House, the members of this caucus will continue to bring our concerns and our views forward in a constructive manner. (Interruptions)

Mr. Speaker, it's fine if the members opposite want to make light of this situation, but I know it wasn't the intention of the honourable member for Colchester-Musquodoboit Valley when he brought this issue forward. It certainly wasn't the issue for the member for Yarmouth, but if the members on that side of the House decide that that's where they want to go then shame on them.

Mr. Speaker, our Leader and our members will continue to meet with concerned Nova Scotians and we won't stop standing up for their rights. Just after the crisis in Bay St. Lawrence, the Leader of our Party, the member for Victoria-The Lakes, and myself went to Bay St. Lawrence, went in a hall with 78 individuals who were concerned about their challenges with the EI system, and we listened and we talked and we got informed of the challenges that they were facing. But it didn't end there, it didn't stop there because when we left we went and we made phone calls and contacted individuals, and as a result of that, over 90 per cent of the cases were solved in the Bay St. Lawrence area. That speaks volumes about our commitment to helping people with the changes there in EI.

On top of that, Mr. Speaker, our caucus took it upon ourselves to get a meeting with the federal Conservative MPs in the Province of Nova Scotia and sat across the table from them and expressed the concerns of our constituents, who we represent, about the changes in EI. We didn't stand in the House and wail, we actually went and delivered the message to the people that could bring it back to the table where the decisions are being made; that's what we did.

We also, each one of our members, met with constituents, listened to their concerns and made sure that we brought those concerns to other areas. We took the time to sit down

with the people at Service Canada, the members from Cape Breton, and we asked the Service Canada people to explain, to give the real facts as to their understanding of what was going on with the changes - not something that we read in a newspaper article, not something that we heard from a group of people that wanted to create havoc; we went to the source to hear and try to understand the changes that were being made.

Mr. Speaker, we sat down with people who are in small seasonal industries, people who have seasonal employees working for them, and found out from them the challenges it was creating for them as employers, and for the people they employed. That's what is proactive, that's the way you find out the real story, and that is what we did.

Mr. Speaker, we met with and we've heard from individuals. The member for Colchester-Musquodoboit Valley brought up a very important point, when he talked about the changes to the appeal system. That has us very concerned; it has us very concerned. So we have brought those concerns forward. The changes to the appeal process are an area of concern that we will continue to speak out about.

One of the unfortunate effects of the changes has been the degree to which the NDP, and some Liberals, have been willing to spread rumours. People hear and read fear-mongering, and they react. But when we check the facts, we find out that much of what gets said, particularly by the federal Liberal MPs, is an exaggeration of the facts. (Interruption) Mr. Speaker, if that member has a lot to say, then I'm sure she would be welcome to speak at any time, if she gets permission from the Premier's Office.

Mr. Speaker, scaring people, like she likes to do, just isn't responsible. One of the things that is true is that the EI changes now pale in comparison to the great cuts to EI which were inflicted by the federal Liberals. The last time the Liberals got a chance, they carved deeply into EI, and many members remember that. I would hope that all members are prepared to condemn the deep cuts that the Liberals made to the EI system. Thank you very much.

MR. SPEAKER: I'd like to thank all the honourable members tonight for an excellent debate.

The motion is carried.

[The House rose at 6:23 p.m.]

NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3)**RESOLUTION NO. 279**

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 April is Insurance Brokers Month; and

Whereas people across the province seek the professional advice and assistance of insurance brokers every day; and

Whereas for the past six years we have honoured our exceedingly capable members of IBANS for the important services they provide to all Nova Scotians;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly acknowledge April as Insurance Brokers Month, and show our gratitude for both their enduring professionalism and the important service they provide to the people of this province.

RESOLUTION NO. 280

By: Hon. Ramona Jennex (Minister of Education)

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

Whereas A Beautiful Bouquet was most recently named the recipient of the Best Florist Award for the Year of 2012 at the People's Choice Award event at the Annapolis Valley Chamber of Commerce; and

Whereas A Beautiful Bouquet was further promoted in a recent volume of *Canadian Bride & Groom*, featuring gorgeous arrangements of alstroemeria, dahlia, lilies, and roses over a two-page spread; and

Whereas the staff and management of A Beautiful Bouquet work very hard to ensure that customers are well cared for and valued, making each floral arrangement special and tailoring each bouquet to their needs;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly recognize the achievements of A Beautiful Bouquet, and in particular, the efforts made by their staff, management, and ownership.