



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

THURSDAY, APRIL 25, 2013

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House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, THURSDAY, APRIL 25, 2013

Sixty-first General Assembly

Fifth Session

12:00 NOON

SPEAKER

Hon. Gordie Gosse

DEPUTY SPEAKERS

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

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. Before we begin the daily routine, I will read the subject matter for late debate:

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly condemn the NDP's ability to erode Nova Scotians' incomes during each year of their governance while forcing more young Nova Scotians to vacate the province in search of work.

It was submitted by the honourable member for Hants West.

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

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STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, yesterday in the House there was some misinformation given on the province's funding commitment to the invaluable Early Intensive Behavioural Intervention - or EIBI - program. The misleading and inaccurate information provided by the member for Kings West has caused undue concerns among families. It is only right that the member for Kings West correct his mistaken comments and apologize to these members.

I can understand the member's confusion. It was so common a thing for Liberal Governments to break their promises to families that they assume that everybody does it. They are wrong.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable member for Richmond.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, we're clearly under the order of business Statements by Ministers, and what the Minister of Health and Wellness is providing now is nothing close to a statement by a minister in referencing information that took place in the House yesterday during Question Period or any other time.

I would ask you to rule as to whether this is an appropriate statement by a minister, based on the precedents of this House.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, if not indeed the Rules, it is the convention of this House that a minister can get up at this point and do a ministerial statement on a matter that relates to his ministry or her ministry. It's not a matter of debate whether - when it happened or whatever the issue is. He has not really responded to the fullness of this statement, so he's clearly within his rights to do this. (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: We're going to take a short recess. I think the Clerk has some information here, and it will take only a few minutes for us to get it to the floor of the Legislature. I think there's a precedent in the file here, and I will have a look at it. We'll take a short recess, and I'll have my results.

[12:13 p.m. The House recessed.]

[12:16p.m. The House reconvened.]

SPEAKER'S RULING: Purpose of Statements by Ministers (Pt. of order by Hon. M. Samson [Hansard p. 1360, 04/25/13]) Minister may continue within the parameters of Statements by Ministers.

MR. SPEAKER: Order. Thank you. I'm just reading from the Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules & Forms, 6th Edition, on Page 107: "The Speaker has emphasized that both the Government and Opposition contributions should be brief and factual. The purpose of the ministerial statement is to convey information, not to encourage debate."

I have a precedent-setting ruling back in March of 1988, and the Speaker at that time ruled:

" . . . I really don't think that it is in order that the government states its case on this matter under the heading of Statements by Ministers. I really think there are other opportunities for that to be done and the government can take advantage of those as it wishes . . ." And in this ruling, he said ". . . I am going to rule that the minister is out of order."

Now in this ruling here, I'd like to say to the minister that I would like for him to continue along the lines of Statements by Ministers, and not to raise debate in the House.

I will ask the honourable minister to continue, please.

MR. WILSON: Mr. Speaker, thank you for that ruling.

As Minister of Health and Wellness, I've explained the funding of the EIBI program in estimates earlier last week, Mr. Speaker. I suggest that the member for Kings West apologize for his misleading comments, and correct his statements about the EIBI program, because those questions were from him. I want to make it very clear to this House, and to all Nova Scotians with children who live with autism spectrum disorder, the province continues to fully fund the Early Intensive Behavioural Intervention program. We do this because it's a commitment to enhancing the program and services for people and families living with autism, to ensure they're receiving the best possible care, treatment, and support.

We fully fund the EIBI program. Provincial funding from the province is, in fact, \$8 million. There was \$4 million allocated originally in 2004, and then the Premier announced that an additional \$4 million in 2011 to be phased in over 2 years. The final allocation was disbursed in the 2012-2013 fiscal year; this was to ensure all eligible children for EIBI would be offered the program, Mr. Speaker.

The \$8 million is divided between district health authorities and IWK program, the Department of Health and Wellness centrally held funding, and the Nova Scotia Hearing and Speech Centre, because they all work in tandem to support the EIBI program. But I

want all members of this House, and the families living with autism, to know that the remaining \$4 million is there, and it's there specifically for the EIBI program and nothing else.

This is part of the process of growing the program, Mr. Speaker. Once the program and services are well established, the latter \$4 million will also be part of the district health authority's and the IWK's baseline budget. It's as simple as that.

Mr. Speaker, gone are the days of the lotteries that only allowed a select number of children to get help through the EIBI program. The new EIBI program is available to all eligible children prior to starting school. In fact, children seen by the program have increased from 114, in July 2012 to 143 in September 2012. In addition, the number of new cases has increased annually from 47 in 2010-11 to 97 in 2012-13 and parents are noticing the improvement.

In October last year, I had the opportunity to hear a compelling story of a Nova Scotia family with an autistic child. Like many parents of autistic children, Nancy and her husband began seeing signs that something wasn't right with their daughter, early on. At first they thought maybe it was a developmental delay related to speech but because all children develop differently, they didn't worry too much about it. By the time their daughter turned two, Nancy and her husband knew something was wrong. Their daughter became very regimented and stuck in routines and needed a lot of explanation about everyday events.

Nancy took their daughter to their physician and after an assessment, she was diagnosed with autism. Shortly after, her daughter was enrolled in the EIBI program and after just five months, Nancy began to see a noticeable difference in her daughter's development. Her daughter went through using only gestures to communicate, Mr. Speaker, to using complete sentences, like mommy, I'd like to have a snack. Nancy has said that she can't imagine where her daughter would be, developmentally, had they not been involved in the EIBI program.

Because of a program like this, Nancy's daughter has the skills to take her through school and beyond. That is why we are committed to funding this invaluable program. Living with autism spectrum disorder is challenging for both children and their families. We want to make sure that Nova Scotian children with autism have access to the support and services they need. This is why we're committed to funding this invaluable program and why the members opposite should know the facts.

MR. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the minister for his two-minute warning of his ministerial statement. For the record, if there is anyone in this

House who is confused by this issue, it is the Minister of Health and Wellness and the Premier and this government.

Mr. Speaker, on two separate days the member for Kings West asked the minister to clarify how his department's budget funded preschool EIBI. The first answer, on Monday was, \$4 million. Again, Mr. Speaker, a day later on Tuesday, the member for Kings West asked the minister, the minister said, \$4.1 million.

Mr. Speaker, as you can appreciate, neither one of these answers are \$8 million. If the minister was, indeed, providing funding for \$8 million, that should have been his answer - \$8 million should have been the answer, but it wasn't. Then yesterday, Mr. Speaker, the Premier was boasting about how his government increased funding from \$2 million to \$4 million - again inaccurate information.

Mr. Speaker, we were asked by families with autism to confirm whether or not there was \$8 million in the budget and that is exactly what the member for Kings West was trying to do. In fact, department officials indicated government was committed to funding \$8 million but they're not sure, at the end of the day, whether or not all that funding will be actually spent. Or, let me put it another way, they're not sure whether or not all that money will be passed on to the families with children with autism, is what they said.

Mr. Speaker, if there's anyone in this House confusing families it is the minister and this Premier. If the member for Kings West made a mistake, it is the same mistake that Nova Scotians made in June 2009 - he believed that government.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle.

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: I just want to go to a couple of statements or points in this. I'm not going to get in the middle of that debate, but ultimately, when I look at the statement by the minister, when he says that the EIBI program is available to all eligible children, it doesn't mean that all eligible children can access it. Even though there are many times that they talk about the lottery system versus the system that they have today, there is still a wait-list for this, and people are waiting far too long to get services for their children. Many of them, even though they are identified at an early age, sometimes have to wait a year or more in order to get it. If you're identified at three, you might not get any service until at least four before going off to school.

Those are the things that need work for this program. They need to expand it just a little bit more, especially in the rural areas of Nova Scotia, where it is still very difficult to find the clinicians and the professionals in order to offer the EIBI program.

Mr. Speaker, I too really can't thank the minister for the statement, because we did get it really late too. I hope that from now on we can stick to ministerial statements rather than debates between members.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Well spoken.

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

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

HON. LEONARD PREYRA: Mr. Speaker, before I read my resolution, may I make an introduction?

MR. SPEAKER: Most certainly.

MR. PREYRA: Mr. Speaker, in the east gallery today I'd like to introduce a member of the Nova Scotia Museum's marketing team, Victoria Castle. She is joined by her colleagues Lauren Oostveen and Daniel MacDonald. Victoria Castle is the recipient of this year's Best of the Web Social Media Award at the annual conference of Museums and the Web. She spearheaded the Titanic on Twitter project that reached hundreds of thousands of people during last year's Titanic 100th Anniversary commemoration, and I'd like to ask the members of the House to extend her a warm welcome. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: We welcome all our guests to the gallery.

The honourable Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage.

RESOLUTION NO. 813

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 Scotians and people from around the world tuned in during the 100th Anniversary of the tragedy of the RMS Titanic on April 15, 2012, to experience the vessel's original wireless messages in real time on Twitter; and

Whereas Victoria Castle, on-line marketing officer with the Nova Scotia Museum, won this year's Best of the Web Social Media award at the annual conference of Museums and the Web for the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic's Titanic on Twitter project; and

Whereas the project involved scheduling more than 80 messages, including iceberg warnings from April 12 to April 15, 2012, and resulted in the museum receiving more than 1,000 followers and reaching about 610,000 people;

Therefore be it resolved that the House of Assembly join me in congratulating Victoria Castle for receiving the prestigious Best of the Web Social Media Award from the museum community, and wish Victoria and the team she works with great success as they continue to promote our communities, culture, and heritage for Nova Scotia families.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, am I permitted to make an introduction?

MR. SPEAKER: Most certainly.

MR. WILSON: With us today we have some special guests in the east gallery, and I'd like to draw the members' attention. With us is the CEO of Doctors Nova Scotia, Nancy MacCready-Williams. We also have Dr. John Finley, president of Doctors Nova Scotia, who also is the pediatric cardiologist at the IWK Health Centre, and Dr. Natasha Deshwal, a family physician from Bedford who's recognized for her innovative collaborative practice specializing in women's health. So I ask all members to give them a warm welcome. (Applause)

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

The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

RESOLUTION NO. 814

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

Whereas May 1st is Doctors' Day in Nova Scotia and physicians are an integral component of Nova Scotia's health care system, providing high-quality care to Nova Scotia residents every day; and

Whereas many Nova Scotian physicians are national leaders in advancing patient care, research and medical education; and

Whereas Nova Scotians want to declare their appreciation and gratitude to all physicians across the province whose work positively impacts their lives and the lives of their loved ones;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly recognize May 1st as Doctors' Day in Nova Scotia, a day to celebrate the unique contributions and dedication of our province's physicians, and their tireless efforts towards improving the health of Nova Scotians.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 61 - Entitled an Act to Address and Prevent Cyberbullying. (Hon. Marilyn More)

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

NOTICES OF MOTION

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

MR. ANDREW YOUNGER: May I make an introduction?

MR. SPEAKER: Most certainly.

MR. YOUNGER: In your gallery today - I appreciate you granting permission for the use of your gallery today - we have a number of veterans and representatives related to the 70th Anniversary of the Battle of the Atlantic, many of them will be heading to Londonderry next week to join in celebrations there.

In your gallery we have the Royal Norwegian Consul Representative, Erik Nobbe; Canadian Navy veterans Kevin Power, Charles Dunbar and Ted Smith; Royal Navy veterans Vince MacDonnel and George McLeod - I apologize if I've mispronounced any

of these names; and Merchant Navy veterans Angus McDonald, Earle Wagner, Doug Himmelman, Cecil Ritcey, Norman Crewe, Millie Crewe, George Skelton, Peter Garnham, Peter Hutchins, and Naaman Bush. Representing HMCS Sackville, Canada's Naval Memorial is Captain Jim Reddy, Coxswain Craig McFadgen, Community Relations Officer Pat Jessup, Bill Gard, Wendall Brown, Don Mackey, and Bert Walker. I might add that also with us is Don Wilcox, who was 7 years old and aboard the Athena when it was torpedoed.

I think most members would be aware of the strong history that Halifax has with it and including right to the end when HMCS Esquimalt was torpedoed off Halifax Harbour. With that, I would ask the guests to stand and the members of the Legislature give them the warm welcome of the House. (Standing Ovation)

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

The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

RESOLUTION NO. 815

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

Whereas the first Sunday in May commemorates the 70th Anniversary of the turning of the tide in the Battle of the Atlantic where, in the longest continuous military campaign in history, Allied forces gained the advantage at sea; and

Whereas the Royal Canadian Navy grew from only 3,500 members to over 95,000 over the course of the battle, a battle in which Halifax played a major role as the staging point for military and supply convoys headed to support the war effort in Europe; and

Whereas the Canadian Naval Memorial Trust was established in 1982 to preserve the legacy of Canada's naval history and protects the World War II Flower class HMCS Sackville, the last of Canada's 123 corvettes, in a Halifax berth not far from where she would have sailed as part of Battle of the Atlantic convoys;

Therefore be it resolved that members of the House of Assembly acknowledge the 70th Anniversary of the Battle of the Atlantic, and recognize the critical contributions that the men and women of Canada's Merchant Navy, the Royal Canadian Navy, and the Royal Canadian Naval Reserve played in the conflict, and celebrate the efforts of the trustees of HMCS Sackville in ensuring that the sacrifices of more than 3,000 Canadians killed during the battle, as well as those who were wounded and their families they left at home.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party.

RESOLUTION NO. 816

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

Whereas Dianne Swinemar, the driving force behind Feed Nova Scotia, has announced that she will be retiring from that organization next June; and

Whereas Dianne has been working with food banks for over 22 years, has received many awards and recognition for her work, including an honorary Doctorate of Civil Law from Saint Mary's University; and

Whereas Dianne leaves big shoes to fill but her tireless efforts will make it easier for the next person to work at filling them so that millions of kilograms of food can continue to be distributed to those Nova Scotians who need it the most;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House send Dianne Swinemar the best of luck in her retirement next year and wish her continued success as she completes her term at Feed 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 Premier on an introduction.

HON. DARRELL DEXTER (The Premier): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to make an introduction today. We are fortunate to have with us two families from my constituency who I understand are visiting Province House for the very first time, so we want to welcome them. I was going to ask them to stand when I said their names but I think everyone is just a little too young to do that.

We have with us today: Patrick and Sunshine Connor, and their children Blessing, David, Timothy, and Joshiah; and Julie and Rob Laidlaw, and their children Brett and Lindsay. I was going to mention that these children are being home-schooled by their parents, which of course is a considerable undertaking for which they are to be congratulated.

I want to ask the House to give them all a warm welcome to be with us today. Thank you. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect on an introduction.

HON. WILLIAM ESTABROOKS: Mr. Speaker, I also have two friends, colleagues from many friendships over the years in the east gallery and I'm going to ask them to stand: the Chair of the Community Monitoring Committee overseeing Otter Lake, Jack Mitchell, and I guess I'll just introduce him as my councillor, Reg Rankin. (Applause)

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

The honourable Minister of Natural Resources.

RESOLUTION NO. 817

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 Equine Canada Federation held its 2012 Annual Awards Gala in Ottawa on February 8, 2013, and these awards acknowledged people across Canada who have made a significant impact in the Canadian equestrian industry; and

Whereas at this annual awards gala the Equine Canada Federation presented Susan Sellers of River John, Pictou County, a writer and an equestrian, with the 2012 Media Award, the Susan Jane Anstey trophy; and

Whereas Susan Sellers won the Media Award from the Equine Canada Federation for an article that she wrote and published in the magazine *Horse Sport*, September 2012, called *Remembering the XIX Olympiad, Mexico City 1968*, an article about her experience at the 1968 Olympics in Mexico, watching the Canadian equestrian team win a gold medal in show jumping;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulate Susan Sellers for winning the 2012 Media Award, the Susan Jane Anstey trophy from Equine Canada Federation, at their 2012 Annual Awards Gala.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

RESOLUTION NO. 818

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 Paradise Women's Institute, 95 years later, is still a healthy and vibrant community organization; and

Whereas the community of Paradise is the beneficiary of the work of this organization's dedicated volunteers, including the Welcome to Paradise signs, the installation of sidewalks, the establishment of the Paradise Heritage Garden, and the maintenance of the Paradise School, to name only a few; and

Whereas these individuals, committed to "For Home and Country", have been making a positive difference in their community at the grassroots level since the inception on March 22, 1918;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House join me in congratulating the members of the Paradise Women's Institute for their dedication and care to the betterment of their community, and wish them health in the years to come.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Cape Breton North.

RESOLUTION NO. 819

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

Whereas efforts are underway to revitalize the North Sydney Business Improvement Development Association to develop the downtown core of North Sydney; and

Whereas association members Wanda MacKenzie and Paul Finney are recruiting new members, and finding a new location from which they can work with the new Marine Atlantic Terminal to make downtown the action centre of the Northside; and

Whereas in addition to the important economic development, the association is also responsible for daily and seasonal housekeeping work that keep the community a beautiful one to be in;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate present and future members of the association for the community spirit and drive that will benefit the entire Northside.

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 Atlantic.

RESOLUTION NO. 820

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

Whereas the St. Paul's Family Resources Institute was established 25 years ago as an outreach ministry of St. Paul's United Church in Spryfield, providing many services to local families in need; and

Whereas the Family Resources Institute, or FRI, runs a community garden in the warm months, a toy store at Christmas, a café using local foods and recipes, and a food bank serving 130 families throughout the year; and

Whereas the food bank at St. Paul's FRI has just won the National Excellence in Food Banking Award from Food Banks Canada for its exemplary service to the community, an award to be presented in June at the Food Banks Canada Conference in Charlottetown;

Therefore be it resolved that this House congratulate St. Paul's Family Resources Institute and its supporters for 25 years of service to the community of Spryfield and beyond, and extend congratulations to the food bank and its supporters on their creativity and diligence as recognized by the Food Bank Canada Excellence in Food Banking Award.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

RESOLUTION NO. 821

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

Whereas Dominique Porter will be recognized by the Girl Guides of Canada in May at a provincial Youth Recognition Ceremony where she will be awarded the Chief Commissioner's Gold Award for her outstanding achievement as a member of the Middleton Rangers; and

Whereas from the time Dominique was a young member, she has been a very hard-working, community-minded member who was awarded the Canada Cord last year in recognition for her dedication to the organization - the highest award achievable as a Pathfinder; and

Whereas this participant in the Ranger level of Guiding completed 18 challenges of which community organizations such as the Lions Club, the Food Bank, and the Nictaux Fire Department were just a few of the fortunate recipients of Dominique's energetic and vivacious spirit;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly join me in congratulating Dominique Porter on being awarded the Chief Commissioner's Gold Award, and wish her 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 Argyle.

RESOLUTION NO. 822

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

Attendu que le 18 au 20 et 26 au 27 avril, plus que 30 étudiants et membres du personnel de l'École secondaire de Par-en-Bas présentent un spectacle de musique intitulé «La voix de la mer»; et

Attendu que ce spectacle musical décrit la vie d'une typique communauté maritime, leur amour pour la mer et les malheureuses tragédies de perte de vie en mer; et

Attendu que «La voix de la mer» a touché les cœurs de plusieurs et décrit très bien nos très belles communautés de pêche et les dangers en mer;

Par conséquent, qu'il soit résolu que tous les membres de cette Assemblée félicitent tous les participants de «La voix de la mer» sur un spectacle bien réussi et remercient Madame Yvette d'Entremont pour avoir présentée ce merveilleux spectacle musicale dans la région du sud-ouest de la Nouvelle-Écosse.

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

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

Whereas on April 18th to the 20th and the 25th to the 27th, more than 30 students and staff members of École secondaire de Par-en-Bas are presenting a musical drama entitled *La voix de la mer*, or *The Voice of the Sea*; and

Whereas the musical depicts the life of a typical seafaring community, their love for the sea, and the unfortunate tragedy of loss of life at sea such communities face; and

Whereas *La voix de la mer* has touched the hearts of so many and describes so well our beautiful fishing communities and, of course, the dangers of the sea;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate participants of *La voix de la mer* on a successful show, and thank Madame Yvette d'Entremont for presenting this great musical to southwestern 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 Hammonds Plains-Upper Sackville.

RESOLUTION NO. 823

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

Whereas BlackBerry employs over 400 highly skilled Nova Scotians at their offices in Bedford; and

Whereas in 2012 BlackBerry announced that it will be downsizing their Canadian workforce, putting the Bedford operation and hundreds of families who rely on those jobs at risk; and

Whereas our Premier reached out the CEO of BlackBerry directly to advocate for the families and jobs in Nova Scotia, and was successful in reaching an agreement with a company that would guarantee hundreds of good-paying jobs remain here in Nova Scotia, and prompted the company to develop the BlackBerry 10 Centre of Excellence in Bedford;

Therefore be it resolved that the member for Bedford-Birch Cove who represents many of the people who work at BlackBerry, and all members of the Legislature, acknowledge and support the government's investment that kept hundreds of Nova Scotians working at BlackBerry Bedford location.

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. 824

HON. WAYNE GAUDET: Monsieur le Président, par le présente, j'avise que je proposerai à une date ultérieure, l'adoption de la résolution suivante:

Attendu que la Semaine de l'éducation s'est déroulé du 21 au 27 avril 2013; et

Attendu que le Conseil scolaire acadien provincial reconnaît une enseignante de l'année à l'occasion de la Semaine de l'éducation; et

Attendu que madame Suzanne Belliveau, enseignante à l'École Stella-Maris du Conseil scolaire acadien provincial reçu ce prix pour l'année 2013;

Qu'il soit résolu que les membres de cette assemblée se joint à moi pour féliciter madame Suzanne Belliveau pour son engagement envers l'éducation de notre jeunesse.

Monsieur le Président, je propose l'adoption de cette résolution sans préavis et sans débat.

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

Whereas the Education Week took place during the week of April 21-27, 2013; and

Whereas the Le Conseil scolaire acadien provincial recognizes a Teacher of the Year during Education Week; and

Whereas Madame Suzanne Belliveau, École Stella-Maris, is the recipient of the Education Week Award for 2013;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly congratulate Madame Suzanne Belliveau, and acknowledge her contribution to the public education 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 Cape Breton West.

RESOLUTION NO. 825

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

Whereas on May 5, 2013, Mullins Rite Stop in Albert Bridge will celebrate the 80th Anniversary of the family business; and

Whereas the Mullins Rite Stop has served the community for generations; and

Whereas the Mullins family has worked long, hard hours to make their business a huge success, and today it is one of the busiest operations in Albert Bridge and the surrounding areas;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Ben, Eddie, Paul, and Frances as they continue the successful family business that has served their community so well for so many years.

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. 826

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

Whereas the member for Kings West issued a press release today containing incorrect information about funding for autism programs in Nova Scotia; and

Whereas the member for Kings West directed this misinformation at children and parents affected by autism; and

Whereas funding for the Early Intensive Behavioural Intervention (EIBI) program has doubled under the NDP Government, from \$4 million to \$8 million;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House recognize the enhanced program and services that exist for people and families living with autism as a result of this increase in funding.

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 Bedford-Birch Cove.

RESOLUTION NO. 827

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

Whereas Terry Kelly is a country/folk music artist, athlete, and professional speaker who won a double silver medal at the 1979 Canadian Track Championships and competed in the 1980 Paralympics in the Netherlands; and

Whereas Terry Kelly has released six studio albums and charted 11 Canadian country singles, has received nominations from the Juno Awards and the Canadian Country Music Association, and has won seven East Coast Music Awards; and

Whereas Terry Kelly has received numerous accolades, including the King Clancy Award, honorary doctorates from the University of King's College and Saint Mary's University, an appointment to the Order of Canada, and the Humanitarian Award from the Canadian Country Music Association, and was most recently selected Person of the Year by the Canadian Council of the Blind;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly congratulate Terry Kelly on his long and illustrious music career and his extensive community involvement, and wish him 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 Victoria-The Lakes.

RESOLUTION NO. 828

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

Whereas yesterday in this House the Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations committed to partner with the Cape Breton Regional Municipality in their five-year capital plan; and

Whereas in order for this plan to move forward, the Province of Nova Scotia must recognize it as a priority; and

Whereas a resolution asking the government to support the commitment made by the minister so that the CBRM can go forward immediately with their capital plan received unanimous consent;

Therefore be it resolved that an all-Party delegation meet with the federal government to stress the importance of this Nova Scotia and CBRM priority.

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. 829

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 Nova Scotia School Accreditation Program requires schools to present convincing evidence that demonstrates improvement in set goals, which must be specific and strategic, measurable, attainable, results-based, and timely; and

Whereas Felix Marchand Education Centre in Louisdale set two goals: to increase by 5 per cent the number of students meeting or exceeding the provincial mean in operations according to the Early Elementary Mathematical Literacy Assessment by April 2012, and to increase by 5 per cent the percentage of students who feel a sense of safety and security on the playground and on the school bus by April 2012; and

Whereas on Tuesday, October 16, 2012, students, staff, school advisory council members, the Accreditation Committee, external review team members, and parents gathered at Felix Marchand Education Centre as the school was awarded accreditation through the Nova Scotia School Accreditation program;

Therefore be it resolved that members of the House of Assembly congratulate Principal Richard Britten, teachers, staff, students and everyone involved in achieving accreditation for Felix Marchand Education Centre, 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 member for Cape Breton North.

RESOLUTION NO. 830

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

Whereas the 16th annual Nova Scotia Skills Competition took place at Memorial High School, presented by Skills Canada-Nova Scotia, in partnership with the Nova Scotia Department of Labour and Advanced Education, Service Canada and the Nova Scotia Community College; and

Whereas the skills featured during competition included plumbing, welding, graphic design, electrical, carpentry and workplace safety, providing youth with an excellent opportunity to improve their skills; and

Whereas bronze, silver and gold medals were awarded at the end of the competition with some gold medallists becoming members of Team Nova Scotia, representing our province at the National Skills Competition;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate the organizational team that made this competition a reality and wish Team Nova Scotia luck as they showcase the outstanding talent our youth have.

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. 831

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

Whereas on April 21, 2013 Dress for Success Halifax held their 13th annual Tea Party to raise needed funds for this very important organization; and

Whereas we were introduced to the powerful work of Dress for Success through the testimonial of a past client, Shauna Morris, who bravely shared her personal story of increasing independence and success; and

Whereas the event included the official unveiling of the Spring 2013 collection of TURBINE by Nova Scotia designer Lisa Drador-Murphy, which delighted those in attendance;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this Legislature congratulate event co-chairs Brenda Saunders/Todd and Barbi Holland, and their committee, on this wonderful event which enables Dress for Success to continue helping women overcome challenges and succeed.

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. 832

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 on Saturday, December 1, 2012 the Argyle Municipal Historical and Genealogical Society sponsored a jewellery launch at the Archives in Tuskent; and

Whereas the society was able to retrieve a piece of the span of the Tuskent River Bridge that collapsed on November 9, 2010 and recognized a unique opportunity to preserve a small piece of local history while sharing the creations with its members and the public; and

Whereas the jewellery was designed by a local, practising reflexologist and jewellery designer, Doreen Murphy-Doucette, and crafted entirely from pieces of the span;

Therefore be it resolved that members of this House of Assembly congratulate the Argyle Municipal Historical and Genealogical Society for sponsoring this initiative and thank Doreen Murphy-Doucette for sharing her creation and wish her and the society 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 Clare.

RESOLUTION NO. 833

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

Whereas the Clare Search and Rescue Association started in 1983; and

Whereas volunteers are the backbone of every community in Nova Scotia and the people of Clare are proud of the many dedicated individuals who give of themselves each day to make our community a better place to live; and

Whereas the Clare Search and Rescue Association is celebrating its 30th Anniversary this year;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this Legislature join me in congratulating the Clare Search and Rescue Association for 30 years of dedication and service to the people of Clare.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Victoria-The Lakes.

RESOLUTION NO. 834

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

Whereas Amoeba Sailing Tours of Baddeck won the Collaborative Environmental Planning Initiative's inaugural Bras d'Or Lakes Golden Award; and

Whereas this award was introduced to individuals, businesses, and non-governmental organizations for their stewardship and dedication towards the preservation of the Bras d'Or Lakes and its watershed; and

Whereas Amoeba Sailing Tours were nominated for their conscientious and unique 90-minute boat tours from the historic, beautiful village of Baddeck that have informed thousands of tourists and locals over the years about the importance of the area;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Amoeba Sailing Tours, Beverly Bryson, and Captain John Bryson on winning the Inaugural Bras d'Or Lakes Golden Award and for being great ambassadors to protect our magnificent Bras d'Or Lakes.

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. 835

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

Whereas Betty Ye of Bedford won the annual Bedford Lion's Club Speak Out competition, a context held to foster public-speaking skills among high school students; and

Whereas Ms. Ye, a Grade 11 student at C.P. Allen High School, also holds a black belt in karate and studies Level 10 piano; and

Whereas Ms. Ye claimed first place in the Speak Out contest with her topic Smartphones in the Classroom;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of the House of Assembly congratulate Ms. Ye for her public-speaking skills and wish her well with all her endeavours, be they sporting, musical, or academic.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

RESOLUTION NO. 836

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

Whereas many Nova Scotians have come to look forward to the third weekend in May as race weekend; and

Whereas over the years the Scotiabank Blue Nose Marathon has hosted almost 70,000 runners and walkers, over 7,000 volunteers, and more than nine million gallons of sport drinks; and

Whereas this year marks 10 years running for the Scotiabank Blue Nose Marathon;

Therefore be it resolved that members of the House of Assembly recognize event chair Gerry Walsh, and all the organizers and volunteers of the Scotiabank Blue Nose Marathon for their tireless commitment to bring this event to fruition year after year.

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. 837

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

Whereas the Clean Across Nova Scotia event took place on April 19-20, 2013 to coincide with Earth Day and encourage people to get out and clean up their neighborhoods; and

Whereas on Saturday, April 20, 2013 the Friends of Clayton Park organized a litter pickup to give people an opportunity to pitch in and show their pride in our community by helping to clean it up; and

Whereas despite damp foggy weather, volunteers came out to show their concern for the environment and many bags of garbage were collected from Veterans Corner Park and along Willett Street near Lacewood;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly congratulate the Friends of Clayton Park President Matthew Andrews and his team for organizing this event and joining together to build community pride.

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 responsible for the Advisory Council on the Status of Women on an introduction.

HON. MARILYN MORE: It gives me great pleasure to introduce from the Speaker's Gallery Professor Wayne MacKay, who is the former chair of the Task Force on Bullying and Cyberbullying, and we are very pleased to have him join us today. I'll ask my colleagues to give him a warm welcome. (Applause)

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS

MR. SPEAKER: It is now 1:05 p.m. We will finish at 2:05 p.m.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

PREM. - NORTHUMBERLAND VETERANS UNIT: FROZEN FOOD - SAVINGS

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, today we heard from family members of the veterans in the Northumberland Veterans Unit in Pictou about the frozen food that has been served to our elderly veterans there. Government knows about this issue. It is where the NDP's misguided attempts to get "back to balance" have hit the homes and tables of our veterans. In cutting \$5 million over two years from the health authority in Pictou County, our veterans are eating standardized food.

My question to the Premier is, how much money is saved in the Northumberland Veterans Unit by replacing home-cooked food with frozen food?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, we want only the very best for our seniors, and for our veterans in particular. My understanding is that there has been a review of the situation done by the district health authority and that there have been a series of recommendations made with respect to this.

You will appreciate that district health authorities do not inform us when they make these changes. However, when it came to our attention through the Minister of Health and Wellness, we made sure that they were aware that we were dissatisfied with what was being received by our veterans and by our seniors. I understand that action has been taken, and those recommendations are going to be implemented.

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, while it's nice to know that the government is dissatisfied, veterans are still eating frozen food in Northumberland, Pictou County.

This government cut \$5 million out of the budget of the Pictou District Health Authority, and in order to meet their balance, they cut \$70,000 out of the food budget for our veterans. Last year, Veterans Affairs increased funding to the health authority while the health authority was cutting the food budget of our veterans.

My question is, does the government believe our veterans, whose average age is 90, should be subsidizing government's demand to get back to balance?

THE PREMIER: As I said, Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Official Opposition will appreciate that often the district health authorities make these decisions. They do not report them to the Department of Health and Wellness or, more specifically, to the government through any vehicle. They simply make these decisions.

Once they were brought to our attention, we reviewed them. There was an appropriate review and recommendations which are being implemented. In my view, it is important that we make sure that everyone in our care gets the appropriate level of nutrition, and that it is done in an appropriate manner. That's what I would expect. It's what I expect from the government, and it is what I expect for our veterans.

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, while this government is getting back to balance on the veterans in this province, Veterans Affairs has increased their budget to that district health authority. It's not good enough for this government to send down protocols. This government needs to stand up and demand that the money that this district health authority is receiving from Veterans Affairs is used to feed those veterans.

Mr. Speaker, our veterans are being asked to pay by feeding them the equivalent of airplane food on a daily basis. My question to the Premier is, will the Premier do the right thing by our veterans and demand that that district health authority use all the money that it receives from Veterans Affairs Canada to feed our veterans?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure - I was going to say I'm sure that he believes what he is saying, but I don't really believe that. I understand this is an important issue, and certainly as a person who had a loved one in a seniors' facility a short time ago - until my mother passed away - I'm very cognizant of the services that need to be provided to our loved ones who are in these facilities. If there is money allocated from the federal government for those services, then that's where they are spent. End of story.

The simple fact of the matter is that we look to provide the highest quality care for the people in our charge. You can depend on one thing, Mr. Speaker: unlike the Liberals, who robbed our seniors of every single cent they had until they were in the depths of poverty before they would supply anything, this government cares about the people in their

charge, will make sure they receive the appropriate services and where there are decisions that somehow impact them that are inappropriate, we will demand and see that they are fixed.

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

PREM.: MACKAY TASK FORCE - RECOMMENDATIONS

MR. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, for the past few months the Premier has been insisting that his government has implemented all of the recommendations of the MacKay anti-bullying task force. That is clearly not the case because as recently as today they continue to find new recommendations to implement.

Nova Scotians want to know that their government is doing all it can to protect our young children so I will ask the Premier, why didn't the government implement all of the MacKay task force recommendations in the first place?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, with all respect to the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party, I did not say what he alleges I said. In fact, what I said was that we accepted the recommendations. They were the basis for the action plan for the government. The government has set out a very clearly-articulated action plan that has included the implementation, through legislation, of a certain number of those recommendations, implementation by preparation through the departments in order to facilitate other recommendations and now what they will see is this is yet another part of the overall implementation of those recommendations, which I understand was well received by the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party and I think will be well received by the public.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, I guess like every other commitment of the government, whether it's that they won't raise our taxes or they won't close our ERs, Nova Scotians once again are being asked to listen very carefully to the fine print when the Premier says something - in this case, about the MacKay task force.

That task force was a complete and comprehensive review, including receiving advice from all of the experts and all of those involved in preventing bullying and cyberbullying in Nova Scotia. It is a whole plan. Nova Scotians want to know that their government is doing all that it can to stop the scourge of cyberbullying in its tracks. I will ask the Premier, was Dr. Wayne MacKay, the chair of that task force, consulted about the announcement that was made this morning?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I suppose when the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party says you have to listen very carefully to the fine print, that is a bit of a mixed metaphor although I get what he's trying to say. It is simply the case that there are many people out there - I have the benefit of getting the opinion of many people, regularly,

often turning up in the newspaper. There are those people out there who say that we ought to slow down, that we are overreacting to one case and that we should wait for cooler heads to prevail. Then there are those who say that we should speed up and we should immediately act on all of these things.

Instead, what we have done is taken the recommendations of Mr. MacKay, looked at them and investigated them thoroughly. It is one thing to say that you're going to implement something, it's quite another to be able to prepare and engage, to make sure you are able to accomplish what you say you are going to do. I can assure the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party that the minister spoke with Mr. MacKay with relation to today's announcement. I believe, in fact, he was invited to be with us today.

My point is simply this: Nova Scotia is now leading the country with respect to this issue. We're proud of the progress that has been made. We know that more must be done and we are doing it.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, let's just be clear - no one can accuse this government of moving too fast on this issue. That is the problem. In Opposition we have put forward bills and ideas on cyberbullying for over a year. The MacKay task force is 18 months old, and some of its recommendations apparently remain under consideration and no more than that.

Nova Scotia made national and international news for very sad and tragic reasons a few weeks ago. Now we have an opportunity, or the government has an opportunity, to actually truly put Nova Scotia in a position to make national news for all the right reasons, which is to implement all of the recommendations of the MacKay task force. To do all it can to protect our young people from bullying and cyberbullying.

I'll ask the Premier, will he commit now to ensuring that all the recommendations of the MacKay task force are not just considered, but are actually done, for the good of the young people who need them?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, as I pointed out already, the recommendation of the task force is, in fact, the foundation of the action plan that is going forward. Far from being just considered, I think the evidence that is before you and before the public is that there has been a program that has been implemented that recognizes the seriousness of the events that have taken place and the seriousness of the emergence of these new forms of bullying.

We have implemented those actions that we believe can best be used to combat these difficulties. As I've said, will there be additional action from the government? Yes, there will because that, in fact, is the way you go about implementing an action plan, through a series of actions over time that address the issue, in order to make sure that you are effective.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

PREM.: EIBI PROG. - DETAILS

MR. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I was hoping today that when the minister gave his ministerial statement that he would have, in fact, noted that in 2004 the member for Annapolis made a motion in committee and I seconded that motion, to put \$4 million into the EIBI program, which the Progressive Conservative Government of the day did do.

Mr. Speaker, the presentation that day in Community Services Committee was done by Norm Donovan. When Norm e-mailed me about the minister's statement on Monday night and families followed, I asked a simple question the second night. The Minister of Health and Wellness, during Budget Estimates, on two separate occasions, on two separate days, stated his budget provided \$4 million and \$4.1 million respectively, for EIBI funding, and I reviewed the Hansard video this morning. Yesterday the Premier stated that funding grew under his government from \$2 million to \$4 million - I'll table that - and today, department officials indicate that funding for \$8 million remains a commitment.

Now could the minister please indicate who we are to believe: the minister, the Premier or department officials?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, you know the member has raised a very important question. It's a very important question to me, it's a very important question to the members of our government. I stood with the members of the Autism Society, with the parents and with the kids for that announcement that day and I witnessed the absolute joy on the faces of those people who understood for the first time, who through Progressive Conservative and Liberal Governments were abandoned. For the first time they saw their kids actually getting the services they deserved.

The commitment that we made, we lived up to. We have lived up to it in every facet, including the funding. I hope, now that it is confirmed for the member, that when he stands up, he will apologize for the anxiety he has caused many of those people.

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, as the Premier said, it is a very serious issue and families with children with autism wanted me to assure them that \$8 million was available for EIBI, not what the minister had talked about in estimates. The minister stood in his place, not once but twice, and said his department provides \$4 million for preschool EIBI.

Mr. Speaker, \$4 million and \$8 million are two vastly differently numbers, so how are we to believe numbers from the minister and this government if we receive different answers from the minister, one from the Premier, and different ones from government officials?

HON. DAVID WILSON: On this side we all work together, especially when a Party like the Liberal Party gives misinformation to Nova Scotians and causes concerns for Nova Scotians. We work together and we stand together so that we can tell the truth to Nova Scotians about our commitment to autism. It hasn't wavered in the four years we've been in government.

We're going to continue to support the EIBI program and the men and women, the parents who are working to support their children who have autism. I'm very proud of our accomplishment, and I look forward to the apology from the member opposite.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Richmond.

JUSTICE - MACINTOSH CASE: PUBLIC INQUIRY - PREM. CALL

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, Nova Scotians remain outraged at the fact that convicted sexual predator Fenwick MacIntosh is now a free man because our justice system took too long to get him to trial. Rather than show leadership, the Premier said yesterday that if the federal government called a public inquiry he'd be happy to tag along.

Today federal Minister of Justice Rob Nicholson confirmed that the Harper Government will not call an inquiry into the MacIntosh matter. So my question is, will the Premier finally do the right thing and call an independent public inquiry into the MacIntosh case?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I have not seen anything out of the Justice Minister at this point. I don't know what position they are taking. I do know there are a number of different kinds of things that they do. I believe that the federal government should undertake an appropriate review of this. As I have said to the member opposite, there is already an internal review underway.

We look to have a formal reply from the federal government. We think their engagement on this issue is an important one. I am every bit as much concerned and disturbed by what I consider to be the failures of the system in relation to this matter. I want to see an appropriate review of it take place. I invite the federal Minister of Justice to undertake this review, and I look forward to receiving the reply.

MR. SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, the Premier may want to go outside and ask the media what was said in Ottawa today, where clearly the Minister of Justice has refused to call an inquiry. Regardless of the federal issues that are at play, the Premier knows that there was a significant shortfall that happened within the Public Prosecution Service of Nova Scotia. There is no doubt of that. The victims are now being asked by the Premier to wait a little bit longer, wait for a review being done internally by the same players who would have been involved throughout this to see what went wrong. Something that the

NDP, when they sat on this side of the House, would have clearly said was unacceptable for victims, but today in government, apparently, wait a little bit longer.

Why will the Premier not finally show leadership for victims of our justice system in this province and call a public inquiry into the MacIntosh matter?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, the member for Richmond knows - he was a practising lawyer, and he understands that the jurisdiction on this is split between the province and the federal government. I want to be really clear, I'm not pointing the finger at the current Conservative Government. Within a year of them coming to power, an extradition was undertaken, and the person was returned for trial - within a year of being elected. But there was a Liberal Government there for a long time. Passports were reissued time after time, instead of the appropriate action having been taken.

I agree that there needs to be a review. I agree that the victims of this predator deserve answers and I have asked the federal government to participate and to do the right thing in calling the inquiry, since this jurisdiction falls to them. I think that should be done. I am not ruling out a further review, other than the internal one, as well. We want answers, we want an eyes-wide-open review of this, and we will not settle for anything less.

MR. SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, if I can assist the Premier - I am still a practising member of the Bar and I can say that I've paid my own Bar fees to remain a practising member of the Bar.

These matters happened years ago. It wasn't under the NDP Government, we realize that. The Home for Colored Children wasn't under an NDP Government either, but those are victims today who are looking for answers and who are calling for justice and calling for change, and yet we have a Premier who's saying blame Ottawa, let's look at previous governments in Ottawa and let Ottawa go first and we will follow.

My question again is, when will the Premier finally stand up for Nova Scotians and call an independent public inquiry into the MacIntosh case?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, the member - is he still the member for Richmond? The reality is that there is a split jurisdiction here. We agree entirely - this is the odd thing about this. I mean, much of what the member says, I agree with. I think that people deserve to have answers. They deserve to ensure that there is a full vetting of the situation, but we also recognize the responsibility of the federal government. It's all too easy for the members opposite to say, just ignore that, just ignore the fact that there are other responsibilities, just ignore the cost that would be accrued, just ignore all that.

Well, no, we're not going to do that. We're going to do the right thing. We're going to proceed in the right fashion. I believe that the federal government ought to participate. I think there are many other kinds of reviews other than formal inquiries that could be

undertaken. I have not heard from the Minister of Justice, I have been referred to the comments that he has made in the press, but formally we have received no reply from them. I think we need to have their participation and engagement to, in fact, answer the very questions that the member has put forward.

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

PREM.: OUT-MIGRATION - REASONS

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, too many Nova Scotians are struggling to make ends meet today. In fact, we learned - I'll table this in a moment - that the incomes of Nova Scotians have actually declined by 0.6 per cent since 2009 while the cost of everyday items goes up and up. Whether it's power rates or the HST, Nova Scotians are paying more with less to spend. Perhaps that is why in 2012, over 18,000 of our fellow Nova Scotians chose to move away from our province to another part of Canada - I will table that for the benefit of the Premier.

I want to talk about elections around here. Clearly Nova Scotians are already voting with their feet on the record of the NDP Government when it comes to things like the cost of everyday items. I will ask the Premier, why did 18,000 Nova Scotians move away last year?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, as usual, the member has his facts wrong but I'm not going to bother responding to that - the question is purely rhetorical.

This morning there was a wide-ranging conversation with realtors in the province and one of the things they noted was that, although the market had slowed considerably, there was still growth in the market here and the reason for that was because of the growth in real wages for people in the province.

The simple fact of the matter is if the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party has his way, the shipbuilding contract down in the yard would not have happened. Those jobs would have gone somewhere else. In fact, what they would be building down there is condominiums rather than ships.

If the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party had his way, the RIM would now be consolidated back in Waterloo and the people in those neighbourhoods who rely on those for jobs would not be there. If the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party had his way, the IBM Global Delivery Centre would not be here, Mr. Speaker, and those 500 people who are going to be employed there would be working somewhere else.

We are working hard to develop our economy, to grow the opportunities for young people; that is what we are committed to - I still haven't figured out what it is that the

Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party is committed to in terms of economic development.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, just one more time - the reason that shipyard contract is there is because they earned it as the best shipbuilders in the world, on a contract from the Government of Canada. What Nova Scotians want is a Premier who doesn't spend their money on TV ads taking credit for it. What they want is a real plan to turn the economy around, which starts with our suggestions of lowering their taxes and freezing their power rates and creating real jobs - and perhaps then 18,000 of them wouldn't have moved away last year, according to Statistics Canada.

The Premier thinks that Statistics Canada is a rhetorical institution, I guess, but they count these things and 18,000 moved way - 3,000 net - a whole town gone because they're paying the highest taxes in the country, the highest power rates in the country, and no plan to change that. Mr. Speaker, that's the problem.

So I'll ask the Premier again, why does he think that 18,000 people moved to another part of Canada if it isn't his own policies of high taxes and high power rates?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, just because people at home are watching and they might believe what the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party says - the actual population in Nova Scotia went up last year. It increased marginally; it's not to the point where we would like to see it. Obviously we are pursuing a multi-faceted approach to this - we are doing it through lowering taxes like the small business tax, like the large corporation capital tax.

By the way, corporate taxes in our province are lower than they have been in decades, Mr. Speaker. We have a plan for the reduction of the HST now that we have fixed the enormous deficit left behind by the Progressive Conservative Government.

Over the last three years we have made tremendous progress in economic development: PROJEX, 440 jobs; 500 jobs for IBM; there is the shipyard contract; there is saving the jobs in Port Hawkesbury. I know that the member for Yarmouth doesn't think that adds to the GDP, but it does.

We have a track record, a proven track record of economic development in this province that we are very proud of, and we are working hard to make sure that people have opportunity here.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, you know we all try to be factual around here, and because there are people watching at home I will table, for the benefit of the Premier, the message of the minister for the financial statements of the province from the year 2009, the year that the Premier was elected, signed by his own previous minister who had come into office by the time the statements were done, which reports very clearly that the Public

Accounts for the year ended March 31, 2009, reported a surplus of \$19.7 million - not a deficit as the Premier continues to allege.

Of course he can't table anything to actually show that because it's not real, Mr. Speaker. He can call it something else, but those are the words of his own previous minister.

Mr. Speaker, imagine what the population of Nova Scotia would be today if those 18,000 Nova Scotians hadn't voted with their feet and chosen to move to another part of Canada because of the taxes and the power rates that he is subjecting them to. If that wasn't enough, they've added another \$1.7 billion to our provincial debt in four short years. Every child born in Nova Scotia today starts off \$14,000 in debt - perhaps that's why their parents are moving away, to free them from that burden.

I will ask the Premier, if he will acknowledge - the voting has already started, 18,000 people are already passing judgment on his record - why did so many Nova Scotians move to another part of Canada last year?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, just as long as nobody believes a single word of what was just said.

First of all, the Progressive Conservatives continue to claim that they had balanced budget after balanced budget. In every one of the last three years they overspent their budgets by literally hundreds of millions of dollars - that is not balancing the budget. They predicated their budgets on royalty revenues which for them were \$450 million, and for us it was \$20 million. So just think of that - \$430 million less because of services and because of programs that they put in place that we then had to support. That is creating a structural deficit of the worst kind.

Well, we fixed that mess, we continued to respect the collective agreements, and we didn't do what the other governments did, which was to freeze them and to roll them back and to take nurses out of the system. What we did was we had a reasonable approach, we fixed the mess that we found; we are growing our economy - adding not hundreds but thousands of new jobs in the province - and that is the economic record of this government.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Richmond.

JUSTICE: CYBER INTERNET SAFETY SOC. - FUNDING

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Justice has repeatedly stated that he is confident that there is sufficient funding available for addressing the issue of Internet harassment and on-line crime. Two years ago the Legislature was visited by the Cyber Program, it is a program which was started by the Truro Police and has recently moved under the direction of the Cyber Internet Safety Society, an independent

organization based in Truro. This is an important program which visits schools with an early intervention presentation teaching bullying prevention and on-line safety in an engaging way that connects with children.

Will the Minister of Justice tell Nova Scotians if his department has provided financial support for this important program in this fiscal year?

HON. ROSS LANDRY: Yes. Thank you.

MR. SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, I think the funding is worthy of that answer because I can confirm as well that the Department of Justice provided the Cyber Internet Safety Society with \$1,000 in the past year. The recommendations contained in the report of the Nova Scotia Task Force on Bullying and Cyberbullying speaks directly to the tools which are being delivered to young people by the Cyber Internet Safety Society. In fact, they are currently delivering this to students across the province and by the end of June will have visited 40-plus schools, reaching 25,000 students, with more and more schools wanting them to visit and to give their presentation. This is a proven success which should be built upon, and yet they have received a one-time grant of \$1,000 from this minister to help run their entire operation.

What contact has the Minister of Justice had with this organization and why is he only willing to spend \$1,000 in the form of a one-time grant to the successful organization with a proven record of engagement with Nova Scotia students?

MR. LANDRY: Mr. Speaker, I want to just maybe talk on a few different things.

AN HON. MEMBER: Answer the question. Try answering the question.

MR. LANDRY: Thank you, the voice in the background saying “answer the question.” I do plan to do that, but I plan to give it some context.

To answer it in the terms that the member is phrasing it is, of course, in the regular - the Opposition likes to put things in the negative. This government has a coordinator for cyberbullying. Today we made a number of announcements; there are recommendations going forward. The Justice Department has put consistent dollars throughout the province to various community groups to deal the issue of bullying and cyber-crime and other initiatives. We're looking at a wide approach and range to address many different issues in Nova Scotia. That organization that he refers to is doing good work, I don't question that. We have a coordinator, we have a number of other - I have supported them in different ways over the years.

To come into this House and start to put things in the negative context to destroy the good work that many volunteers across the province are doing. It's just typical of the Official Opposition to say, we'll whine and cry and complain, but won't acknowledge and

recognize the hard work that many Nova Scotians are letting us know and saying thank you as a government for what we're doing.

We are committed, and I am committed, as this morning I'm making that passionate cry and going to Ottawa yesterday to address this issue. The Official Opposition's perspective on the issue of cyber-crime is to throw more money at it, to try to make people think they're doing something, but they have no vested interest in it. We are committed to that. Thank you.

MR. SAMSON: You know, Mr. Speaker, when we hear the Minister of Justice attacking the Official Opposition for raising issues like this, it reminds me of an answer he gave just two weeks ago, which I believe made him a national embarrassment on the attack that he made on the Official Opposition.

The fact is that organizations such as this cannot live on charity. They obviously require funding if they're going to be able to carry out the work that they do. This is a program that received accolades from this Legislature when it visited, and we now know that it has received significant requests to provide this presentation throughout the entire province. Receiving a one-time grant of \$1,000 clearly calls into question just how much support this government is giving for this program, especially knowing that this is the minister who has allowed millions to be cut out of the Department of Justice at a time when we see these issues and these cost pressures coming throughout the province.

So I'll ask the minister again, how can he justify a one-time grant of \$1,000 for such a worthy program to combat cyberbullying in our province?

MR. LANDRY: Mr. Speaker, I'm not going to elaborate on the fact that he doesn't have his facts correct, which is a consistent position that he takes on issues, but I will turn it over to my colleague, the Minister responsible for the Advisory Council on the Status of Women Act, to elaborate on some of the great work that we're doing as a collective. Thank you.

HON. MARILYN MORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It has become obvious that perhaps the way we've approached funding community organizations and funding work hasn't been satisfactory. Certainly in discussions over a number of years and months, and particularly the last couple of weeks, organizations are saying that because of the recent incident, there has been an increase in their workload and the demands on their services. Their needs are under active consideration.

At the same time, we recognize the valuable work that each of these organizations do in terms of trying to make life better for Nova Scotians. We're also aware that we need a more comprehensive, coordinated approach to action on these issues. We need to be able to serve all Nova Scotians, not in particular towns or communities or regions. Trying to encourage the community groups and provincial organizations to work more

collaboratively together so we can better serve all Nova Scotians is our goal, and over the next number of weeks and months, there will be announcements showing how we're supporting community action. Thank you.

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

COM. SERV. - PUBLIC INQUIRY: NDP - COMMIT

MR. KEITH BAIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A settlement has been reached between the Nova Scotia Home for Colored Children and former residents, but the government has yet to settle. They have yet to establish a proper public inquiry. They've mused about a panel that falls far short of what those former residents deserve. They asked for a public inquiry. Others have had a public inquiry; they deserve a public inquiry.

So my question is - through you, Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Community Services - when will the NDP stop dragging their feet and commit to a public inquiry, since such significant public policy issues are involved?

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, as we always comment on this side of the House, we work together as a team. We have done a lot of work and have met, so I'm going to pass this along to the Premier as the lead of our team on this issue.

THE PREMIER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In fact, we've involved all of the departments in the consideration of the matters associated with the Nova Scotia Home for Colored Children. I have, in fact, been assured by the VOICES group that what they want out of the government at this point is not about money. They say that over and over again. It is not about money. It's about having a proper exploration of the issues associated with that institution. We agree with that entirely and what we are doing is proceeding with a comprehensive review. I hope to be in a position, shortly, to be able to announce further information on that with respect to the terms of reference for the review.

Mr. Speaker, I should point out that the announcement of the review was in response to information that we received from many different groups within the community, which included the VOICES groups, and the decision for the review was in large part based on the recommendations that actually came from the VOICES group.

MR. BAIN: Mr. Speaker, a public inquiry holds more power than a panel with no terms of reference. Inquiries have the power to subpoena witnesses, collect records, and give the former residents the opportunity to share their stories. In the past situations we have granted public inquiries and this situation should be treated no differently. So I'll go to the Premier with this question, can the Premier tell those who have come forward with evidence of horrific abuse what makes this situation any different than any other alleged abuse in Nova Scotia institutions?

THE PREMIER: How we deal with these matters is very much a function of the terms of reference of any kind of a commission, whether it's a review panel or a formal commission of some kind. It is the terms of reference which actually dictate the manner in which the matter will be investigated. That's why we think it is very important that we get a trusted person, or people, to ensure that the terms of reference are adequate to ensure an examination of all the issues. The simple fact of the matter is this: we are the only government that actually met with the VOICES group, we are the only government that actually met with the alleged victims, we are the only government that has proceeded to listen to the complainants with respect to these issues, and we are the ones who are acting on it.

MR. BAIN: You know Mr. Speaker, the bottom line is that the former residents of the Home for Colored Children deserve no less than any other victims of alleged abuse in Nova Scotia institutions. So my final question to the Premier is, rather than complicate and drag out the process even more, will the Premier commit to a full public inquiry for the former residents of the Nova Scotia Home for Colored Children?

THE PREMIER: You know, Mr. Speaker, if a little over four years ago the member opposite had made those same representations to his own government, we probably wouldn't be here today, right, we probably wouldn't be there today, if he had made those same representations. We are taking the time to make sure that this is done right. We are doing an appropriate review and the Progressive Conservative Opposition wants to cast stones at us rather than accepting the fact that they were government for 10 years and did nothing.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester North.

EDUC.: CYBER INTERNET SAFETY SOC. - DEPT. FUNDING

HON. KAREN CASEY: Mr. Speaker, the Cyber program has been mentioned here today already and those MLAs who took advantage of the opportunity would have seen the presentation when the Cyber program came to this House and put on an information session. That program is based in Truro and has been recognized as a model program for early intervention with regard to Internet safety. They are actively engaging students and teaching them safe and respectful use of technology. We know it's important that we have the tools in place to respond to harassment in the on-line world but it's just as important that we address the root causes of the issue.

My question to the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, would the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development tell Nova Scotians if her department has provided financial support for this program and how much?

HON. RAMONA JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, I know that the representatives from the Cyber Cops were working with our anti-bullying coordinator, Kathleen Richard.

MS. CASEY: Mr. Speaker, the recommendations out of the MacKay Report do speak to the need for a program which teaches our young people how to deal with technology and how they can help create a safe and respectful environment. We already have a program that does this and by the end of June of this year, they will have visited over 40 schools in our province and exposed this program to 25,000 students. Yet the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development and the anti-bullying coordinator, of which the minister has just spoken, were approached for support and they were told, "There are no resources available to support your efforts."

My question to the minister is, given that this program is already operational and more and more schools across the province are requesting the Cyber program to visit their schools, why are they being told to look elsewhere for their support?

MS. JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, I want to say that the work that's being done by the Cyber Cops is very good. I know that it engages our students and the work they are doing needs to be commended. We are making sure that all of our responses are coordinated through our anti-bullying coordinator Kathleen Richard, and as the minister that represents the Advisory Council on the Status of Women has already made reference to, we're going through each of these community groups very carefully to make sure that we have a comprehensive and co-operative approach.

MS. CASEY: Mr. Speaker, acknowledging that this group did meet with the coordinator and that the coordinator did say, no, there were no resources, my question to the minister is, will the minister commit to meeting with the Cyber Internet Safety Society, which is now responsible for that program, to determine how the province can best support their efforts because kids in our schools need this program?

MS. JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, I think that most members of this House of Assembly recognize that our member for Truro-Bible Hill works with the Cyber Cops and with their program.

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

LBR. & ADVANCED EDUC. - FCA LEGISLATION: NON-PROFITS - EFFECT

MR. KEITH BAIN: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is for the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education. The existence of Laing House, the Halifax non-profit drop-in centre for youth with mental illness, is being threatened by the NDP's crippling FCA labour legislation. The executive director, Maureen Fraser-McLaughlin, is very concerned about the bottom line and the possible impact FCA legislation will have on an organization that also relies on volunteers, and so are we. Not only is this legislation making Nova Scotia's economic environment unfriendly for businesses, it's also seriously affecting the non-profit sector.

My question through you to the minister is, was this the intention of the FCA or did the minister not think about the chilling impact on all non-profit organizations one bit?

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, what I will say to the member through you, the collective bargaining process is moving along as it should. I know both parties are meeting and it's moving towards a resolution, I would hope. That's the purpose of any labour legislation that would be passed by this government or hopefully any that were passed by former governments.

MR. BAIN: Mr. Speaker, we can see first-hand that FCA is negatively affecting small business and volunteer organizations, like Laing House, as we believed it would all along. We stood on principle that this was a bad idea. The Liberals, interestingly, said they were against it but were prepared to compromise with the NDP. There's a time to compromise but this was not it.

My question through you to the minister is, at a time when we have some of the slowest economic growth in the country and pay the highest taxes, the people of Nova Scotia deserve to know which one of the NDP's special interest groups is happy with the results of this legislation.

MR. CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite wants to keep churning up his anti-labour rhetoric, anti-worker rhetoric, but what we're trying to impart to that member is that both sides are at table and they're taking seriously their responsibilities to get in a collective agreement. Indeed, if the member really knew how collective bargaining worked, he would realize that this legislation actually comes and helps agreements happen not keep them apart.

MR. BAIN: Mr. Speaker, let's keep in mind that this is a non-profit organization. Laing House is another example of how the NDP do not know how to manage a modern economy. The NDP are happy to see their legislation cripple the economic and non-profit sectors, but we aren't. My question to the minister is, will the minister take responsibility for his government's actions on the FCA, which is killing even more jobs here?

MR. CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, what I will take responsibility for is the respect of an employer and employee to engage in meaningful collective bargaining, not like the Third Party. I was accused yesterday by the Third Party about forgetting where I come from. I come from New Waterford. I come from where a miner was killed. I know my labour history. I have done collective bargaining. I've respected people on one side of the table and they respected me back. That is something that group doesn't understand.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston.

SNSMR: LAND REGISTRATION ACT - ISSUES

HON. KEITH COLWELL: Mr. Speaker, in 2011 the NDP passed changes to the Land Registration Act which were supposed to clarify land titles in the province. However, it has come to our attention that there are still gaps being experienced by Nova Scotians. When faced with this feud over property lines, Nova Scotians are finding that their only recourse is through expensive court battles that can take years and cost thousands of dollars and in the end, a satisfactory outcome may or may not happen for both parties. Will the Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations admit there are serious issues with the present system?

HON. JOHN MACDONELL: Mr. Speaker, I have to say that I would find it hard to believe that anything instituted by any government may not have some issues, but I am hearing very little that is coming to my office as far as the issues that the honourable member raises.

MR. COLWELL: Mr. Speaker, I asked this question to the minister recently and his answer was, there are no avenues on a provincial level until 10 years after the problem has existed. The minister indicated that outside an expensive and prolonged court battle, Nova Scotians could only bring challenges forward to either the Bar Association or to the Association of Land Surveyors.

For Nova Scotians faced with this situation there is a gap and it's clear that the government has fallen short when ensuring that a system is in place that will actually give landowners clear title to their property. Will the minister consider a binding arbitration process to fill the current gap in legislation and regulation which fall under the Land Registration Act?

MR. MACDONELL: Mr. Speaker, I guess I will say I am a little curious that the question is being asked for a second time. The land registration system or migration, I guess as the member is referring to, the province does take responsibility after 10 years, so up until that time it is the responsibility of the landowners.

A big part of this obviously is the way the descriptions on deeds are interpreted, and I guess it's all in knowing where to draw the line, Mr. Speaker. So I would say that this government has no plan at the present time to make any changes. Actually, the number (Interruptions) That's what the courts are for: civil conflicts between individuals.

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

HEALTH & WELLNESS: LYME DISEASE - PUBLIC AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

MS. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, according to information that the Minister of Health and Wellness gave to me during Budget Estimates - and I do believe the minister

was correct - for the second year in a row, Nova Scotia had 50 or more people identified as contracting Lyme disease. While members of the Legislature may be aware that Lyme disease is contracted via a black-legged tick, members of the public may not be so aware.

Last year's public information campaign appears to have consisted of one newspaper ad, some pamphlets left at Access Nova Scotia sites, and the odd press release. Now that we know that the spike of 54 cases in 2011 wasn't a fluke - repeated again last year, when there were 50 cases - what specific plans does the Minister of Health and Wellness have for a public awareness campaign this year?

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, I'm a bit perplexed, because they yell when we do advertise about things and they yell when we don't advertise about things.

I can reassure all Nova Scotians and the member opposite that we take Lyme disease and the tick population in Nova Scotia very seriously. I could talk very loudly, Mr. Speaker, if I have to - we take it very seriously, honestly. That's why our government Web site makes sure that we have really good data on the areas around the province where we think there's a higher incidence of black-legged ticks in those areas. We're going to commit to another campaign this year.

I mentioned in estimates that I meet regularly with Doctors Nova Scotia, which has news releases out to all their members, so that physicians are aware, and to make sure they look for signs or symptoms of people who are ill. So we're going to continue to do that.

We talk regularly with the district health authorities and with the physicians, so we will do another campaign this year. We'll ensure that as many people know about the likelihood of contracting Lyme disease with the black-legged tick population here in the province.

MS. REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I think the member will remember occasions where I've stood in this House and said that I will not object to advertisements that go out that actually convey information to the electorate, to the public. We don't mind that. What we object to are the blatant, political, partisan advertisements that are just feel-good, please-vote-for-us kinds of advertisements that this government puts out day after day after day.

I have yet to see a commercial air for a sexual assault strategy, or what to do if you are raped, or what consent means, or how do I identify a black-legged tick, or what you should do when you go out into the woods and go for a walk. There's no information out there on a commercial - not one. Yet we hear, oh, we are going to yell. (Interruptions) Yes, I'm going to yell, because you're spending millions of dollars on partisan advertisements.

Mr. Speaker, if diagnosis and treatment are not immediate, patients are left dealing with a long list of debilitating symptoms, including arthritis and neurological symptoms.

Now, 50 diagnoses may not seem like a lot to the crowd across the way, but that disease severely impacts lives. Veterinarians are well informed about this disease. What is the minister going to do to ensure doctors know more?

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

Well I must say that we got to about 11 questions today because of the length of the questions and answers. It's not a very good average of 11 questions on both sides of the House. If we could shorten those answers and questions maybe down to a minute each, we sure would get along and get a lot more questions. Thank you.

The honourable Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party on an introduction.

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: I would like to draw the attention of the members to the west gallery and to a very special visitor who is visiting us today from North Sydney. She is here with an important job and that is to keep an eye on her dad, but I will add not only her dad but on all members of the Legislature in the last hour, and that is the daughter of the member for Cape Breton North, Ms. Breagh Orrell, and I hope all members give her a warm welcome. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: We welcome all our guests to the gallery.

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

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

PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 36.

Bill No. 36 - Provincial Court Act.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Justice.

HON. ROSS LANDRY: I move that Bill No. 36, amendments to the Provincial Court Act be now read a second time.

Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure today to speak about this bill. The amendments being proposed in this bill result from recommendations found in the Nova Scotia Provincial Judges' Salaries and Benefits Tribunal final report made public in July 2012. The tribunal, comprised of three members, was established by legislation to help ensure judicial independence - this is an important democratic principle. Under the Provincial Court Act a tribunal sets the salary and benefits for Provincial and Family Court judges. Government is required, under legislation, to act on the tribunal's recommendations, hence the need, Mr. Speaker, to introduce the bill to the House. To implement the tribunal's recommendations with respect to the judge's pensions, amendments to the Provincial Court Act are necessary.

In its report, Mr. Speaker, the tribunal recommended the judges keep the pension benefits they had before changes were made in 2010. In 2010 the Public Service Superannuation Plan, to which judges belong, was amended to change the way pension benefits are calculated and indexed. The tribunal reports also recommend that the future pension indexing should be decided by the tribunal.

Mr. Speaker, I respect the decision made by the independent tribunal. Their decision impacts some of the most important members of our judicial system, of our justice system, Provincial and Family Court judges. Judges play a critical role in the administration of justice in Nova Scotia, their work contributes to the overall efforts to ensure peaceful, safe and secure communities. As I mentioned earlier, the amendments brought forth today are required under the law and address recommendations made in the tribunal binding report. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Richmond.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise as the Justice Critic for the Official Opposition to speak to Bill No. 36, the Provincial Court Act amended. Obviously, we respect the work of the independent tribunal and the recommended changes that have been put in place here. Any time we have a bill that is dealing with our justice system and, as the minister acknowledged, the administration of justice it does give us a chance to reflect a bit on our justice system and concerns that may exist within it. And how timely that we would be having debate on Bill No. 36 today, that same day where Nova Scotians are starting to question the administration of justice in this province after a few very high-profile cases.

I think all Nova Scotians are familiar now with the Parsons case and the very troubling information that has come out of that, troubling behaviour that has been alleged in that incident and the fact that many are asking what exactly went on with our law enforcement agencies in reviewing this matter and exactly how did it get to where it got to?

Mr. Speaker, as well, the other major case in front of us - in fact there's a number of them - but one that's certainly very timely is the Fenwick MacIntosh case. I've renewed my

calls today on behalf of the victims, on behalf of Nova Scotians, that the Province of Nova Scotia show leadership and immediately call a public inquiry into this matter.

Mr. Speaker, as I have indicated, our hearts go out to the victims. One cannot imagine what they have been put through. They have been victims of crime and then when finally this matter went to court, when Mr. MacIntosh had his day in court, he was found guilty of those crimes. Yet at the end of the day, the Nova Scotia Court of Appeal came in December 2011 and said his rights to a speedy trial were infringed, therefore regardless of his guilt, they dismissed the convictions.

Mr. Speaker, on the day that happened I stood in this House and I called upon the Minister of Justice and the Attorney General to start some sort of a review of this matter. Typically, as to be expected, the minister said that well because this might be appealed, I can't do anything. Today we're being told by the minister that there is some sort of a review going on in the Public Prosecution Service, an internal review of the Public Prosecution Service reviewing itself, which begs the question, why could this not have been started in December 2011? How could that in any way have prejudiced the appeal going to the Supreme Court of Canada?

We all know that it wouldn't have but it was once again an example where this government, rather than leading, chose to drag its feet and to tell the victims to wait a little longer and to allow the victims to once again pin their hopes on the Supreme Court of Canada, that maybe somehow the Supreme Court would uphold these convictions.

Mr. Speaker, I have to say as someone who works within the justice system and as a Nova Scotian elected official, I don't think I could be more embarrassed by what the Supreme Court of Canada ruled. Not that the Supreme Court wasn't within its rights, but as a Nova Scotian I am embarrassed and we all should be embarrassed. The fact that when the Crown, on behalf of Nova Scotia, had to stand there and basically be ridiculed by the Justices of the Supreme Court for the delays and the bungling that took place, the fact that the Supreme Court Justices didn't even ask the defence to stand and present their case. They took a break and came back and dismissed the appeal.

I believe one of the commentators who was there said that it was almost painful to watch the Crown Attorney from Nova Scotia trying to justify the delays that took place in this matter. I tell you again, we should all be embarrassed as Nova Scotians. But we shouldn't stop at that. It's one thing to say that we're embarrassed by it, the question is, what can we do about it? What can we do to make sure this never happens again?

Mr. Speaker, the message in Fenwick MacIntosh's case is very simple, run away to another country and Nova Scotia and Canada will take years before they even bring you back. What a terrible message to give when we know the priority that we all place on anyone who sexually abuses a child. In this case Mr. MacIntosh, convicted by our courts, walks free because our system of justice somehow didn't get it right.

Mr. Speaker, we can stand in this House and say well there was extradition that was to blame. I don't for one minute say that wasn't a problem and we need to find the answers to what went wrong there. That would take some efforts by our federal colleagues. But as far as the investigation of the complainants, the laying of charges, all of that work came from Nova Scotia, not from the federal government.

For the Premier to say he's going to wait to get an official letter from the federal Minister of Justice saying they will not do a review or an investigation before I'm prepared to act is unacceptable. It's a lack of leadership; it's a lack of compassion for the victims and it's a lack of sending the message to Nova Scotians that our confidence in our justice system has been shaken and I am going to undertake everything I can to restore it. That is what we would expect from the Premier.

I would submit to you, and anyone on the government side who disagrees is welcome to disagree, that had the Premier been sitting as the Leader of the Official Opposition when this happened, he would have been the first to call for an independent public inquiry in this matter. But today, I have to say, he used one word regarding the Fenwick MacIntosh case that deep down I know in government is always a concern, but I never thought I would hear the Premier say it in this House. And that word, Madam Speaker, was a very simple four-letter word: "cost." One of his major concerns was the cost of an inquiry.

Madam Speaker, we have a government that stands in this House and says that, when it comes to Nova Scotians having confidence in their system of justice, where victims of sexual abuse are to have confidence that the system is working, at the end of the day and all the calculations for the Premier, cost is a major consideration. I would submit to you that when the Premier sat on this side of the House as Leader of the Official Opposition, when it came to making sure that justice was seen to be done, and that our system of justice was seen to be working, cost never crossed his mind. But today it does. The victims today have no doubt that the government now sees this matter as a financial cost to the province, rather than ensuring that we find out what happened, what went wrong - and more importantly, what changes can we make to ensure this never happens again?

I have to say that I'm not sure if the Premier and his government fully appreciate how the Fenwick MacIntosh case will go down in history in Nova Scotia as a black mark against our province. If they did, I believe they'd want to take action much more efficiently to deal with this matter. Yet what we're told is that the Minister of Justice is waiting for a review within the Public Prosecution Service. We're not sure when the review was started, if it started last week, the week before, or if it has been underway for some time. We're not sure who's doing the review. I believe the Director of Public Prosecutions indicated a review was being done, but those details haven't been provided.

When I asked the Premier in the absence - while the Minister of Justice was in Ottawa, I should say - he indicated that he wasn't sure if they'd make that review public.

Maybe in his closing comments, the Minister of Justice and Attorney General can advise Nova Scotians whether he will make public the review he has referred to that is taking place within the Public Prosecution Service of Nova Scotia. But the Premier wasn't sure. He didn't say no - let me be clear, he didn't refuse - but he wasn't sure if that was possible. Maybe the minister can further elaborate.

It was interesting to hear the Premier today refer to who was in government in Ottawa at a specific time. You know, I thought that was sad, to hear the Premier getting into politics when it comes to a question of administration of justice. We've said all along that we realize the Minister of Justice today was not the Minister of Justice when the MacIntosh case started, when the charges were laid. He wasn't even elected. So I don't blame him for that, and I don't blame his government.

We're not here to apportion blame. We're here to find out what went wrong, and the only people who can start that process are the government of the day. Yet somehow, the NDP have interpreted this to mean it's an attack against them personally, that somehow, they are to blame. That's the way they've treated this file, and so many other files: that somehow they are to blame. No one has suggested that. But when you're in government, and a wrong has taken place in the past, it is up to you to undertake the steps to correct that wrong. Yet this government has chosen not to do so.

Let's talk about the Home for Colored Children. The government that has dragged its feet for years on this matter indicated in the Throne Speech that it was a priority. Yet today - we started on March 28th, if I'm not mistaken. We're almost one month in, and we have yet to hear any details as to how this government intends to proceed with some type of public review of what happened with the Home for Colored Children.

Madam Speaker, when we talk about Bill No. 36 and the administration of justice and the role that judges play in that, we can also talk about the Nicole Ryan case - another very public case in Nova Scotia that made national news, and yet the Minister of Justice has again said he's happy with the review being done by the RCMP, that's enough - again, at a time when Nova Scotians are questioning our justice system, the administration of our justice system, whether it's well-functioning, from the police to the Crown to our judges. Again, the minister is happy to sit back and wait at a time when Nova Scotians are crying out for leadership.

As well, when we talk about the administration of justice and we talk about Bill No. 36 and the impact it will have on the judges of this province, I can't help but raise the issue of the court challenge that is being brought forward by the Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse regarding this government's heavy-handed tactics in establishing electoral boundaries in this province, which eliminated the protected ridings that existed.

I have to tell you, I'd invite the Minister of Justice to come down to Richmond, Clare, and Argyle to give the speech he has given us about the fact that those ridings are

still intact. I would hope he would come down and speak with Acadian groups in those areas and tell them that a right that they fought years for, that was granted to them by this province and taken away by this government, that somehow they should be satisfied with this government's actions. As if it wasn't bad enough, when the Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse asked to have the matter heard in French, the Minister of Justice said no.

It was interesting that during estimates I asked the Minister of Justice, why would you not agree to have it heard in French? His answer was that it would cost too much. When it has come to the rights of Acadians in this province, we've heard ministers use that answer before. I naturally asked the Minister of Justice, how much is too much? If you're going to say it is going to cost too much, what is the figure? Is it a hundred dollars, is it thousands of dollars, is it millions of dollars? What is it?

Sadly, the Minister of Justice had no answer. He could not justify his own answer. When the minister tells you we would not allow the proceeding to be heard in French at the request of Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse because it would cost too much, and then when you ask the minister how it would cost too much, and he can't answer that, again, it brings into question our administration of justice and how our courts are handled.

With Bill No. 36 we're talking about, in many ways, remuneration of our judges in this province. You would know, Madam Speaker, that we have a number of judges who can hear matters in French. In fact, under our criminal system, you do have the right to ask for your matter to be heard in French, and as a result of that, we do have very competent and capable judges in Nova Scotia who can speak French. Those judges are directly impacted by Bill No. 36, which we're debating here today, because it goes down to the question of remuneration and it goes down to the question of having an independent judiciary that is working separately from the legislative branch, separately from the executive branch of government, and is able to do so without interference taking place, especially on the question of their remuneration.

Obviously, when we're looking at this bill today, it does help bring into question some of the issues which are being faced by the judges of this province. At the end of the day, it would appear that we do have within the Public Prosecution Service, already on the payroll, lawyers who can speak French. When the minister indicated it would cost too much, again, one has to call into question how that statement can be made without further information being given.

In following up on that and talking about our justice system and our judges, the second request made by the Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse was whether the province would agree to submit the question to the Nova Scotia Supreme Court as a constitutional question. They have requested that, and the Minister of Justice said no, we're not prepared to submit it as a question. We haven't really been given an answer as to why we would not go directly to that step and we're left to wonder if it's for political purposes that the government doesn't want to see this matter dealt with by our courts, dealt with by

our judges, because the Fédération acadienne has argued, and will continue to argue, that the protected ridings - this is in Nova Scotia - were a right under the minority language provisions of our Charter of Rights.

Why the province would not agree, especially in this case one could argue it would actually save the province money by going directly and submitting the question to the court. Instead we're going to go to a more arduous process, which I would submit could potentially cost the government more. One is left to wonder, when we talk about Bill No. 36 ensuring the independence of the judiciary, in this case whether the Minister of Justice isn't somehow interfering in having this matter heard, by not allowing the very reasonable requests, which have been made by the Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse.

Again, it is imperative in a well-functioning democracy that your legislative executive and judicial branches are all working as they should work. Bill No. 36 is an important bill in ensuring the independence of the judiciary here in Nova Scotia, but I would submit again that when we're talking about this that there is some concern, and I'm sure the Minister of Justice would be aware about the caseload that is being carried by Crown Prosecutors here in Nova Scotia. I know on the issue of their remuneration that is something they, as an organization, have raised with the minister as well.

When we are talking about Bill No. 36 and issues around remuneration for judges, we must also be mindful of the fact that there have been very serious concerns raised with just how long it takes to get a matter heard in Nova Scotia. When you look at some of the criminal matters where a charge can be laid and before it gets to court, you're talking months, and in some cases years, it really does go down to the question of, is our administration of justice working in a timely fashion?

The Fenwick MacIntosh case is the extreme example of the justice system going wrong but we see more and more, within our day-to-day justice system, where defence lawyers are bringing forward the argument that the matter was not heard in a timely fashion. That, for us, as elected members, needs to be a concern both for the accused and for the victim. The outcome of the MacIntosh case, where someone who was duly found guilty by a court, is later thrown out because the system didn't work properly, has to be setting off alarm bells for all of us, especially the Minister of Justice.

I would certainly hope, as we continue debate on Bill No. 36 and as it moves forward that the government will reflect on the fact that Nova Scotians, the victims of Mr. MacIntosh, are crying out for action and are crying out for leadership. They want the government, they want all of us, to help restore confidence in the justice system. We can only do that if a process that is clearly independent, that is viewed as fair, that is viewed as examining all of the issues necessary, is carried out.

Again, I reiterate, we are not saying it was this government that was responsible for what happened with Mr. MacIntosh. What we are saying is that due to the fact they are here

today, they are the ones that can start correcting that wrong. We cannot do it for them. It calls for leadership - leadership from the Premier, leadership from the Minister of Justice, leadership from this government - for the victims, for their families, and for all Nova Scotians. I certainly hope before this House rises that we will see an example of that leadership. Merci.

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

The honourable Minister of Justice.

HON. ROSS LANDRY: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Normally, I would just like to move second reading, but I do want to comment on a couple of things by the member over there. I want to reiterate to all those victims that I understand the conflict they're in, and to be on a journey where you come forward believing that your voice would be heard. As the Minister of Justice, I sincerely acknowledge the pain and suffering that you're going through and that you've gone through in this system.

Am I happy with what happened in the past? No. Will we get answers to look to prove the system? Absolutely. Something that should be noted, though - I had the pleasure yesterday of speaking with the federal Minister of Justice, and he clearly pointed out to me that, when they came into power in 2006, that issue was moved forward quickly by their department, and any case in the future will be moved forward.

The same within the Department of Justice here in Nova Scotia: since coming into office in 2009 I made a commitment, and I am committed to ensuring the expediency of justice and the fairness of justice.

I do take exception when the Official Opposition tries to politicize that. We should be working together to try and see how we make this system better, instead of attacking it on political terms. It is so sad from where I sit, spending a lifetime as an investigator and dealing with crimes such as this, to have the Official Opposition be so critical of the system overall. I think it's important to question the system and to look at how we work together, but not to have that belief.

I also want to just switch and not dwell on that - I know that the member there doesn't have a whole lot of respect for the police or the Public Prosecution Service or the court process. This bill has to do with the pension in the budget, but their position and that member's position has been consistent in here. So I know - I hear it from officers across the courts. I'm hearing it on a regular basis - how saddened and how hurt they are by the Official Opposition and by that member's continual attack, at every chance that they can. It deeply roots the underlying spirit of the officers who do good work each and every day. I feel it is my responsibility to voice that and for him to understand that, take a shot on the issue, and work with me to improve that.

I am committed to addressing such issues and harms that have been done - the atrocities to those people who have been victimized and abused. I'm committed to that.

I want to talk just briefly on the Acadians. There is no change in the opportunity for our Acadian voice to be heard. The ridings are still there. I am committed to enhancing the quality of French language in this province and the voice of Acadians and the Acadian culture. That has not wavered and that should not change. That member tries to politicize that to divide our communities. Our communities should be unified and work together on the issue of whether someone has the right to take something to court. I fully support that, and that group can take their matter to court. I respect that, and I respect the court position and the fairness of that. They have that right. I look forward to them taking their case and hearing the result. I will respect the court's decision, and I will not divide people, based on language or culture. I respect it and hope that we enrich our society and enrich our community, and I move second reading of this bill. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 36. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Madam Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 37.

Bill No. 37 - Innovative Transportation Act.

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

HON. MAURICE SMITH: Madam Speaker, I move that Bill No. 37, the Innovative Transportation Act, be now read a second time. It's my privilege to rise today to talk about this bill . . .

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please. The chatter is a little high, and it's difficult to hear the minister even here, directly beside me. Order. I'm asking that the side conversations just be lowered a little or be taken outside the Chamber.

The honourable Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal has the floor.

MR. SMITH: Madam Speaker, it is my privilege to rise today to talk about this bill. It's an important bill that increases our flexibility in trying out new approaches to safely using our highways.

Bill No. 37, the Innovative Transportation Act, enables the province to allow pilot projects involving our transportation system that otherwise would not be permitted by the Motor Vehicle Act. Rest assured this is not a matter of ask for a pilot project and ye shall receive. Before a project is brought forward, it will be thoroughly reviewed by the department staff. The safety of all road users in Nova Scotia will always be the prime concern. Approval will not be a rubber stamp.

We have a responsibility to Nova Scotians to make sure the tests we oversee will be reasonable and safe. We take that responsibility very seriously. The Innovative Transportation Act gives us another tool to help us make the safest possible choice for Nova Scotians. Typically, when we consider new produces, new rules, or new ideas for our highways, we look at what has been done in other jurisdictions. That's a great place to start but as we all know, Nova Scotia is a unique combination of typography and history. Something that works in the wide-open spaces out West may not be as successful here where our roads have a few more turns and many of our streets were laid out before the birth of the automobile.

The Innovative Transportation Act gives us up to two years to make sure a proposed change is the right one for Nova Scotia. The current version of the Motor Vehicle Act dates back to 1932 and is very far-reaching. Under the Act a highway is a street, a lane, a road, an alley, a park, a beach, or a bridge. It even has some control over private property if that private property is available to the general public for the operation of a motor vehicle. This could include some parking lots as well. Right now the only way to test something that violates the Motor Vehicle Act is to amend the Act.

Let's say cyclists wanted to ride their bikes on Granville Street in the opposite direction of traffic. They can't do that now because riding the wrong way on a one-way street is against the law. Therefore we would have to go through the long process of amending the Motor Vehicle Act to allow that to happen. Once this Innovative Transportation Act is in place, a change like that can be considered and evaluated for a two-year trial period in a much more timely fashion. It's not just the rules of the road that we're talking about here but what operates on the roads as well. It's difficult to be specific because technology is changing almost as fast as we can imagine it.

We already have cars that can park themselves, what about cars that can drive themselves? That may not be that far away. Nova Scotians want to be ready to move quickly when these new ideas come knocking. Bill No. 37, the Innovative Transportation Act is what will help us be there. Thank you.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Before I recognize the honourable member there has been a request for an introduction.

The honourable Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism.

HON. PERCY PARIS: Madam Chairman, with your permission, I'd like to bring the attention of the House to the east gallery. I'm going to say we are blessed this afternoon to have in the east gallery a very prominent Haligonian and also, you can tell by some of the apparel that he has on that he cheers for the right team in the National Hockey League. I'd like to introduce Mr. Moe Hickey. (Applause)

MADAM SPEAKER: I welcome all of our visitors to the gallery today. I hope you enjoy today's proceedings.

The honourable member for Clare.

HON. WAYNE GAUDET: Madam Speaker, I'm pleased to rise to say a few words on Bill No. 37, Innovative Transportation Act. This piece of legislation, as the minister pointed out in his opening comments, will allow our province to have more flexibility to respond to testing and evaluating new, innovative modes of transportation on our highways.

Madam Speaker, who knows what kind of new, innovative transportation vehicles the future may bring? Apparently as we've heard, the current Motor Vehicle Act does not allow for some pilot projects, so this bill will allow pilot projects to be authorized for new, innovative modes of transportation.

Again, Madam Speaker, anything we can do in order to increase innovation in transportation is a positive step. On behalf of the Liberal caucus, we support this bill to go through second reading and allow this bill to go to Law Amendments Committee. Thank you kindly.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants West.

MR. CHUCK PORTER: I'm happy to stand for a moment to speak on this bill. This is something similar to what our caucus here put forward back a while ago with regard to - at that point it was Segways and allowing them to drive and we've seen a bit of that here in the province, certainly in Windsor. I saw one the other day actually going up the sidewalk. I haven't tried one yet, but they look like they may be interesting. I look forward to trying one at some point and I'm sure I'll get the opportunity.

I think this bill is a great opportunity for not only Segways, but for others as mentioned in the bill - and we might be an area that is interested in the pilot project. I know that council has met with the folks who operate the Segway, as an example, and I think that

they favour that opportunity and we look forward to what this might present going into the future.

So with those few words, thank you very much.

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

MR. MAT WHYNOTT: I just want to say a few words on this bill, and I want to thank the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal for bringing this bill forward.

This is something that, in particular, a constituent in Hammonds Plains-Upper Sackville met with me several times on this important issue about in particular, as the member for Hants West talked about, around Segways. Max Rastelli, they have a company known as Segway Nova Scotia and this is something that they've been pushing for, so this is a good step forward for sure, in particular allowing a two-year pilot project for specific areas in the province, allowing Segways to come for that particular product to be used in different areas across the province. I know, as the member for Hants West also mentions, the Town of Windsor, and I believe also some areas outlying Wolfville are interested in setting up tours for the wineries as well - and I think I read in the paper the other day that along the waterfront, in fact the Waterfront Development Corporation, I think, is working with Segway Nova Scotia to allow Segways to be used along our waterfront.

This is a very good bill and I want to put on the record, I know that the minister and his staff, and myself, and some other representatives from organizations across the province have met several times and I want to thank him and his staff for drafting this piece of legislation. Segways, in particular, are used in various jurisdictions across North America and, in fact, around world, but I know jurisdictions have implemented the use, and allowed the use of Segways. I know a few jurisdictions across the country, across Canada, have done so as well and, as I said, this is a great amendment and a good bill for this province.

With that, Madam Speaker, I'll take my place.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

MS. MICHELE RAYMOND: I'm very pleased to speak on this bill as there have been not only Segways but a number of other experimental vehicles which have been posited in my constituency. I guess I'd just like to make one very quick note.

I've never been on a Segway but I have some familiarity with it - well I guess I should probably say because one of my cousins was the lead designer on it, but it's very, very important and I sincerely hope that helmets will be a very significant part of this

because there have been injuries associated with Segways and there have been head injuries, so I would feel that I really was remiss if I didn't make that point right now. Thank you.

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

The honourable Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal.

HON. MAURICE SMITH: Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleagues on this side of the House, certainly, and the members of the Official Opposition and the Third Party for their kind words and support for the bill. Having said that, I move second reading of Bill No. 37.

MADAM SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 37. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Madam Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 42.

Bill No. 42 - Pension Benefits Act.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Labour and Advanced Education.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Madam Speaker, I rise today to move second reading of Bill No. 42. I am pleased to speak to this legislation that will make life better for Nova Scotian families by protecting the interests of couples who are not married. Right now the Pension Benefits Act has a broad definition of "spouse," which includes common-law spouses and same-sex couples. This change will make sure that it includes people who are living together but not married.

For people who are living with each other, the new Pension Benefits Act will use the same criteria as CPP, the Canada Pension Plan. A couple will only have to live together for one year in order to be entitled to pension, or at least three years if either of them is married to somebody else. The three-year time frame gives people time to resolve any legal issues associated with getting a divorce or separation.

In the new bill, which is not yet proclaimed, we had a heading that talked about the division of pension benefits on marriage breakdown. We have changed that to

“relationship breakdown,” so that we can extend the division of pension benefits to people who live together as well as those who are married to one another. Other changes that are in the bill are strictly housekeeping changes that clear up the cross-references that we had noticed after the Pension Benefits Act was passed in December 2011.

The department is continuing to work on regulations for this Statute, and we anticipate that it would be proclaimed later this year. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

MR. ZACH CHURCHILL: Madam Speaker, I'd like to thank the minister for his comments. The changes that are outlined in this bill are in line with the beliefs of this caucus. We support having access to pension benefits, and want to ensure that all people can retire in security. We will be supporting this piece of legislation.

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

The honourable Minister of Labour and Advanced Education.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Madam Speaker, I want to thank the members for supporting this bill, and I move second reading of Bill No. 42.

MADAM SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 42. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Madam Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 54.

Bill No. 54 - Widows' Pension Act.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Labour and Advanced Education.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Madam Speaker, I rise very proudly today to move second reading of Bill No. 54. This legislation will reimburse more than 100 Nova Scotian women whose husbands died as a result of workplace accidents, and who were denied benefits because they had remarried before April 17, 1985. This is when the equal rights section of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms came into effect, ensuring women could no longer be discriminated against based on their marital status. Every woman whose husband

is killed on the job should be treated fairly and compensated properly. In the past, this didn't happen. This wasn't acceptable to our government and we're doing something about it and we're doing the right thing today, Madam Speaker.

For years women were denied their spouse's benefits once they remarried. While this was addressed with change to the Charter, not all widows have been compensated for these unpaid benefits. In 1999 the government at the time passed Bill 90, to ensure that all widows who remarried after April 17, 1985, continued to receive their benefits, retroactive to the date of their remarriage. But those widows who remarried before April 17, 1985, were left behind. They have been compensated retroactive to 1999, not to 1985 as we believe they should have been.

Madam Speaker, I'm introducing this legislation today that will reimburse these widows for the benefits they should have received between those years in particular, 1985 to 1999.

I would be extremely remiss if I was to speak about this bill and not to include the champion of this bill, which I often say it should have been called the Bauman Bill. This person was Betty Bauman from Glace Bay who lost her husband in a coal mine in 1960, leaving her, at the age of 26, alone with three young daughters. For years Betty and many other widows in her shoes across this province have been working relentlessly to make this happen. For these women this issue is more than just about fighting to see whether this would be held up in court. It has been an issue of fairness. Denying these women their rights any longer would just not be tolerable.

Again, this legislation reimburses this group of widows for the benefits they were denied when they remarried. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

MR. LEO GLAVINE: Madam Speaker, I'm pleased today to rise and speak to the bill. I want to first thank the Deputy Premier for bringing this bill forward. As he said, Betty Bauman was certainly one of the champions that led the charge on the bill.

I had just barely arrived here at Province House in 2003 and I met Betty and a contingent of ladies who explained very well the whole case that they had won in provincial court only to have it overturned, as the government of the day supported the WCB in moving this to the Supreme Court of Nova Scotia. So these women like Betty and I guess for me, having entered a bill on at least five occasions, Shirley Shore became the face of this bill for me. She is a constituent and I started to call the bill, wrongly in some ways, but I called it the Springhill Widows Miners bill because it did affect many of those but as the Deputy Premier pointed out today, it is those widows who were affected by their husbands having died in a workplace accident.

So it really does in fact right a wrong where in 1985, with the advance of the Charter, these women now had every right to have benefits from that point onward but that did not happen. Shirley was one of the people who kept reminding me that no matter how many years you move along, it's important to right a wrong. In this case the wrong will not benefit a number of women because when I first met with their lawyer, Scott Stern, and five widows, there were about 140 women who could have received benefits from this provision, a provision they were denied because they married after their husbands had been accidentally killed, prior to 1985.

Shirley's husband Victor was 21 and Shirley was 18 and they had their first son, Tom of 10 months. We all know what many of them went through in those years and, in fact, for many of them who could have received those benefits, it certainly could have improved their quality of life. Today for 109, now through the passing of this bill, those benefits will come their way. Once again, I'm pleased that government is moving this forward and correcting a wrong that has been inflicted on those women, through no fault of their own and they will not reap those benefits. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants West.

MR. CHUCK PORTER: Madam Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today to speak for just a moment or two, as well, in support of this bill and thank the Deputy Premier for bringing it forward. Obviously it is something very much needed and it's reflective of some other things when we think about workplace safety in general.

We know it is that time of year we're celebrating - I shouldn't say celebrating, I guess we celebrate to some degree - the lives of those we have lost, in an upcoming walk. Some of us may be - I know I will be taking part in it in May and it's called Steps for Life and that's a spinoff of some other things that go on. It's a shame that we still encounter workplace safety. These measures that are being put forward are to protect the widows only in the past and I guess going forward making sure that we're doing the right thing, as well. This is something that this caucus certainly supports wholeheartedly so with those few words, thank you.

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

The honourable Minister of Labour and Advanced Education.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Madam Speaker, in a short closing, as someone who is known from time to time to be combative with other members in the House, I really want to tell everybody in this House that while I am particularly proud to sponsor this bill, I appreciate every colleague in this House and the good things they have either said on the record or said personally to myself. Every once in awhile we should all rise above and just do the right thing. It's not about somebody who didn't do something or somebody who did

something in the past, this is one of those moments that I think we all look through our own mother's eyes on this one and say this is the right thing to do.

I really do appreciate, whether it is the intervention on the floor here, or the kind words that were said, not so much even to me, but to the widows who were here last Friday. It means a lot to them.

Madam Speaker, it is with much delight that I move second reading of Bill No. 54.

MADAM SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 54. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Madam Speaker, will you please call Bill No. 55.

Bill No. 55 - Protection of Animal Welfare and Security Act.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Agriculture.

HON. JOHN MACDONELL: Madam Speaker, I move that Bill No. 55, the Protection of Animal Welfare and Security Act be now read for a second time.

I'm pleased to stand here today before my colleagues in this House and ask them to support amendments to the Animal Protection Act. As Nova Scotia's Minister of Agriculture, I'm bringing forward legislation that will increase animal protection here in this province. The message we want to get out there is that abusing animals is wrong and will not be tolerated, and that's the message I stressed earlier this week when I introduced these amendments to the Animal Protection Act at a bill briefing, hosted by Ainslie's, at the Fairview Animal Hospital and attended by the Nova Scotia SPCA. The event was perfect.

We know that Nova Scotians are angered and upset by stories of animal cruelty and abuse because pets are part of our families, and that is why we first started making changes to the Act in 2009 at the beginning of our mandate. Now we're going even further, and with these amendments we will be able to accomplish a number of things. Firstly, we are increasing maximum penalties for those who abuse animals to make them among the stiffest in the country. The maximum fines will now range from up to \$25,000 for a first offence to as much as \$75,000 for a third offence. Previously penalties ranged from \$10,000 to \$50,000.

Secondly, we are clarifying and expanding the definition of what constitutes distress for an animal. The definition now makes reference to anxiety; it also includes situations where animals are kept in conditions that are unsanitary or that will significantly impair an animal's health or well-being over time. This change will make it easier for SPCA investigators to do their job.

Thirdly, we are also setting the stage for effective regulation by clarifying the regulatory authority of the minister. These changes will allow me to develop effective regulation with respect to the standards of care for animals. This includes physical shelters such as dog houses, animal restraints, and tethers.

Finally, in an effort to put an end to puppy mills, these amendments will make it an offence to sell a dog commercially that has not been certified by a veterinarian. This step, the first of its kind in the country, is an additional tool that will help address the issue of puppy mills and focuses on sellers who are not ensuring the health and protection of their animals - and I just want to speak to that for a minute. It probably isn't as much an issue as the number of animals that are sold, but the health of the animals that are sold; therefore, we want to ensure that when people pick up their puppy from whomever, that it's accompanied by a document from a veterinarian that indicates that pup is in good health.

Puppy mills are one of the most upsetting issues when it comes to animal protection, and Nova Scotians I talk to don't understand how anyone can be so heartless and cruel to allow animals to be raised in unsafe, unhealthy conditions, and that's why we're taking this action.

I'm pleased to note that the Nova Scotia SPCA has applauded our government's commitment to animal welfare, and in particular the SPCA was pleased to see a reference to animal anxiety as part of a broader definition of stress in our proposed amendments. The SPCA described our amendments as promising - and I'll just quote from the statement: "The SPCA applauds government's commitment to animal welfare and we appreciate that they have been open to our input. It is clear that Government views the SPCA as an integral partner and stakeholder in this process." That is from Kristin Williams, the executive director of the Nova Scotia SPCA.

By increasing penalties, expanding the definition of distress for animals, clarifying the regulation-making authority of the minister, and making veterinary certification a prerequisite for selling a dog, I believe the proposed amendments I have just described will further strengthen protection for animals here in Nova Scotia.

Madam Speaker, I don't know if I will enlighten members opposite much, they may already know this. The first real change to the Animal Protection Act, or I should say perhaps introduction of the Act, was in 1996 by the honourable member for Clare when he was the Minister of Agriculture and Marketing at the time in Nova Scotia.

His government at the time brought in changes to the Act and the Act had been in place since 1877 and really charges could only be laid under the Criminal Code at that time. The government moved, and actually referred to it as the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty so the SPCA actually brought draft legislation to the government and asked them to implement this legislation, so the powers of the SPCA that we see for investigation of cruelty complaints was initiated by them to the government asking for that power. It wasn't something downloaded by the government onto them.

I look forward to the comments by my colleagues opposite. I think this is truly great legislation that should allay the concerns of people who are very concerned about the health and welfare of pets in our province. With that, Madam Speaker, I'll listen to the interventions of my colleagues. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

MR. LEO GLAVINE: I'm pleased today to make some comments on this important piece of legislation, Bill No. 55, the Protection of Animal Welfare and Security Act. I think there are a couple of things that do need to be pointed out and talked about and deliberated about in this House, in regard to this piece of legislation. Just a few years ago a bill came before the Nova Scotia Legislature, the Animal Protection Act, and it was a long time in the making. There were a lot of interventions, a lot of submissions and draft comments, and at that time we looked at legislation. I know my colleague, the member for Halifax Clayton Park did quite a study on what was happening in other jurisdictions, especially B.C., in Surrey, jurisdictions in the U.S., on how we could strengthen the Animal Protection Act so that the welfare of our pets could be safeguarded to a much greater degree. That Act separated agricultural animals and companions, or our pets.

I know at the time there were a couple of pretty significant incidents involving agricultural animals, and in fact it may have been one of the precipitating reasons as to why the government of the day, the Progressive Conservative Government, started to take a look at a stronger piece of legislation. Equally important was to make sure that our pets, our companion animals in Nova Scotia, were able to be safeguarded through legislation.

Now there is a whole debate around that perhaps that the Act, as it stands, could have prevented some of the cruelty that we have seen over the last three or four years because the Act does have provisions for steps to be taken when we know animals are being abused. That clause or the legislative piece which talked about animals under distress seemed to be so wide that there didn't seem to be enough specific and direct interpretation to allow - whether it be animal control officers, the SPCA, or other concerned citizen groups to be able to make the kind of investigation and then the conviction that needed to be done. That's what I believe.

In the last three or four years, a number of groups have started this process and wanted government to come forward with legislation that would be stronger, that would be

very specific, and that would have direct regulations that would assure Nova Scotians that steps are being taken and that there will be the ability to make sure that enforcement - and, in more serious cases, prosecution - takes place.

In some ways I believe the Act, the original Animal Protection Act, was a good piece of legislation, but I think that for whatever reason, the ability for enforcement did not seem to be able to be carried out. That's where so many of our problems have resulted from. We've had very serious cases of animal abuse in this province, and we have people who have been convicted a second and third time. Once again, these people were back on the streets selling dogs, in particular, and also with puppy mills still at their disposal. So obviously we've had a piece of legislation with either loopholes or a lack of will to make sure that prosecution did take place.

I felt very strongly that, whether it was three years ago, four years ago, or just last year, as the pressure mounted on government to do something around animal abuse in our province - the executive body can make changes to regulations, and could have made some of those changes long before today. However, that has not happened.

I firmly believe that when we're talking even just here in the Legislature, where we had one petition of over 2,000 names, another with about 6,000 names, we know that this is a considerable issue. Of course, we also know that probably 95 to 98 per cent of people really look after their animals. They are part of the family. We know that animals can be used in all kinds of therapeutic situations. They truly do have a place of higher regard than what some individuals - the treatment of them do occur.

I thought this was one of those perfect opportunities to reach out to thousands of Nova Scotians, to hear what they had to say about having stronger measures, measures with the ability for quick interventions to start to take place. This was where our caucus said, gosh, if Voluntary Planning were still in place, what a great opportunity to hear from hundreds - and I am sure we would have heard from thousands - of Nova Scotians, who would have said, here's the 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 that will make a difference immediately and will make a difference in the long term.

So I think that may, in fact, still be available to us. It's great to have consulted with some stakeholders, perhaps with a few groups. I know I've had the benefit of a number of groups and individuals who have come to my office to present on this particular issue, and I have learned a great deal from them. Of course, I'm hearing from them now around this piece of legislation because we all know that here in the Assembly we can pass a bill that, again, has wonderful intentions, the right motivations, and looks like it's going to accomplish a better goal - in this case, a better outcome for the lives of our pets.

That's certainly the hope in the long term, that the regulations will reflect what in this case literally thousands of Nova Scotians have said aren't quite right where they are, and they need to be corrected.

We know that the SPCA can only go so far if the legislation is not there to allow them to do the kind of investigations, or taking an animal that is in distress, that is suffering, that has all of the characteristics of harm being done to it. Neglect, as we know, is one of the big areas. So while there are very good things, strong things that the SPCA carried out, I think that the judgment here will be when this bill passes and we see what the SPCA and other groups will be able to do. The fines can be strong, but again, if we don't get convictions, then those fines will only be a deterrent to some extent here along the way.

This will be the real test, the acid test for this piece of legislation, because we have cases now where people have been convicted two or three times, and they're still out there selling puppies from a puppy mill.

I think one of the very, very big areas that I'm hearing will be very, very difficult to actually enforce. As this debate goes along and we get to third reading, perhaps the minister can provide a bit more detail and information around this area. That is the veterinarian's certification when it comes to the health of the animal that is going to be sold, because if you take a look, every day on Kijiji, you're going to find anywhere from 30 to 50 dogs that are for sale.

Are we going to make the kinds of changes here that will provide the kind of safeguards that we need? That's a very, very challenging area. Those people who we know well in our communities, who breed dogs, we know the kind of care that they provide for their animals. When we go to those kennels, we know right away and we see right away the difference of a person in a parking lot with four or five puppies for sale on the back of their pickup, versus those in a kennel.

Many of the kennels I know in my area, they don't even need veterinary certification in terms of their being sold. Their owners are doing the right things year after year. I think it's very important that our legislation reflects the challenges that we have around animal abuse and bring in those kinds of corrective measures.

It is interesting, too - I've heard, and our caucus has heard from a number of concerned citizens who bring information about the selling that currently goes on. Then when they go to take a look at some of those animals, just for their own proof that, in fact, all is not well, there are actually people who take the kind of time to identify through a Kijiji sale that an animal is not in good health and there are all the characteristic signs of abuse. I am hoping that the legislation will have the regulation and strength to be able to deal with those kinds of cases.

One of the times of the year that I have heard, and I know a number of my colleagues have heard, from Nova Scotians is during the winter months. We all know that animals that are permanently chained, permanently tethered, there are issues around the behaviour of those pets, in many instances. I think it requires that the legislation allow the SPCA, those who are going to enforce these regulations, to deal with an animal who is

suffering severe distress. Just having some type, if you wish, of cover and a frozen bowl of water and a food dish only in sight, that just does not pass the test, but up until now it has passed the test. There hasn't been the kind of enforcement that is truly needed when abuse is taking place.

If this bill moves in the right direction, then I think it can bring about some of the changes that many Nova Scotians are requesting from this Legislature that will be very enabling and provide the ability to intervene, bring in the interventions so that these animals will no longer be abused. Again, adding the word "anxiety" when characterizing distress, I think is a small step forward, but once again, will it cover all of the kinds of deplorable conditions and the deteriorating health of an animal that is often seen?

I know last year when I brought Shelly Hipson and a few others to meet with the deputy minister to get this issue on the books, get it registered with the minister and the department, some of the information, some of the photographs and so on that were brought forward were really - I guess the only word you can say, is that there was quite an emotional response from all of us to think that an animal could be treated this way. So whether this legislation is strong enough to change the direction in dealing with abused animals - I stated the other day when interviewed by the media around this issue of second and third time abusers of animals, I believe there should be a ban from those people having animals in the future. I think it now is well entrenched in their behavioural patterns and that they should be flagged and not have an opportunity in the future for further abuse of animals.

This bill is one that many of us here in the Legislature will speak to and like having a ban on the serious abusers. Fortunately they are only a very small number, but if they're allowed to go on to continue to have multiple occasions to abuse, we hope the court system will do just that, that there will be imprisonment, that there will be a lifetime ban on breeding animals, on selling animals, on having animals in their care to board and in any way I don't think they should have any opportunity in the future.

As I said earlier, I do need to come back to the fact that it is a good measure in the bill to say that a dog cannot be sold if it's not certified to be in good health by a veterinarian, but when we look at the way communications have dramatically changed and how the Internet gets information about the sale of animals very quickly in front of people, will that be a realistic measure to be able to curtail animals that aren't in good health?

One of the areas that I think is a very, very important measure - I think this is going to be the key to the success of this legislation and I am pleased the minister and his government have finally addressed this issue. This has been too long in a vacuum and too long unattended to by government. Right now there are not enough people to be able to enforce what is already there in the Animal Protection Act. We have to find some way, a concept much like our wardens - there are a lot of people who will volunteer for this if they were given the kind of status that would allow them, not just to tramp across somebody's

property, but when they have their full information about the abuse of an animal, an animal truly in distress, that they would be able to do something about it.

I think when you look at currently, and the minister can correct me, but I think there are really only a couple of officers who can actually carry out that kind of work. Having a system in all of our counties where there are people who are qualified, who are identified, who are prepared to volunteer their time - I know many people who certainly invest their own time and finances to currently try to do all they can to stop abuse, to identify it, to report it, all to no avail. If we look at the number of investigations by the SPCA and the number of times any kind of convictions have been carried out, we know that they are very, very few indeed.

I'm hoping that this is a bill that will go before the Committee on Law Amendments and I think we will hear from some very, very informed people who will come here and will present further amendments, and certainly will have ideas to strengthen the legislation, to make sure that it can be real and able to be carried out and advance the cause of animal welfare in our province. And with that, Madam Speaker, I take my place.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle.

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It is my pleasure to stand and speak to this bill, Bill No. 55, the Protection of Animal Welfare and Security Act, for a few moments. It was only last week that I had the opportunity and the pleasure to introduce a petition in this House signed by over 4,300 people, where the operative line was to strengthen the laws for animal protection, to provide better work for the organizations that do enforce - better enforcement - so that it doesn't happen that what we get to see on a daily basis in the paper, in the news, is where we see animals being abused in our province.

What came to light over the last number of months, of course, in southwest Nova Scotia, is the issue of Mojo. Mojo was a dog that was taken from its owner. It was one that had been completely neglected, a puppy who had probably one of the worst cases of mange - mange, I guess, is a skin condition and bug that gets into the skin and really starts to ravage that dog. If you saw pictures of the before, when the dog was finally surrendered - the dog was here on the steps of the Legislature not so long ago. It was a tremendous testament to the people who did pour out their hearts, and not only pour out their hearts, but pour out their money, to make sure that that animal got a fair shake in life.

Mojo and his owners at this point, Joey Wagner and his wife, from the communities of Clare and near Concession, need full credit for the work they did. What happened there, Mr. Speaker, is that the community was aware of a dog that was in a state that needed help, and after a number of phone calls to the SPCA, to animal enforcement, there really wasn't any help coming quickly. Apparently because of the caseload, it would have been some

time before either one of those organizations would be able to come and check out the situation, investigate the situation, and maybe seize the animal.

Well, time was going on, and the community and those who knew about the animal felt that it had to happen quicker than that, or the dog would probably end up dying. And that is really the case in this one - another day would have ended in Mojo's death. So the animal is surrendered, in this particular case. The owner, knowing full well that they couldn't do anything for the dog, and that they hadn't done anything for the dog, surrendered the animal. It was taken care of by that community, and at this point has cost Joey and the "Hope for Mojo" - there's actually a Facebook page for that - over \$6,000. The poor animal had to be shipped to P.E.I. to the veterinary college. It was the worst case of mange anyone had ever seen in their practice time.

But again, today the animal is where it needs to be. That did precipitate this petition, and people are still signing it today. I introduced it last week, but there are still people signing it, and I'll probably have another opportunity another day to introduce - or at least add more names to the 4,300 people who already did sign it.

Madam Speaker - we're having musical chairs of the Speaker's Chair right now. So for those of you that have been listening, I have been sort of referring to Madam Speaker and Mr. Speaker, so just to make it clear, I'm not making a mistake here, as much as it does happen quite a bit in this House.

What they called for in the petition was change to the law, and I think what we've seen today are a number of good changes to that law. I think we'll look forward to seeing what those changes are really going to do but it also provides sweeping power - not sweeping power, "sweeping power" is the wrong word - but a fair amount of power to the minister, the Executive Council, to make regulations that can be adapted to certain situations. What was happening before was they were saying that maybe things were too restrictive, that the Act wasn't allowing them to search and seize and those kinds of things, or even to seize the second animal if they found that the situation warranted it.

These will be things that I think we will be watching for to see if it's truly going to provide the change that we need, and I hope it does, because far too often we see these situations.

One issue that the member for Kings West brought up a few moments ago, too, is the issue of enforcement and the issue of enforcement is not really covered under this particular bill. It is something that the minister is going to have to come up with a number of solutions to.

I know in his scrums and speaking to Joey Wagner, Rhonda Boudreau, those people who came to the House last week, he felt there was enough man/woman power there in order to do it but maybe it was allocated wrong. So let's see if that reallocation of resource

can truly make a difference, to allow those investigations to continue, to allow seizures to happen, to make sure that animals are being taken care of.

I am a dog owner. I have been for a long time. Our first animal, her name was Boo, a beautiful little mixed dog, cocker spaniel/Nova Scotia duck toller. She was a sweetheart of a dog but after 15 years she wasn't quite herself anymore so we did have to make a decision there, which was very difficult and I thank my wife for helping me out with that one because it probably wouldn't have happened otherwise. But we're so lucky today that we do have another puppy in our lives. I don't know why I make decisions like this, quite honestly, Madam Speaker, because I kind of forgot, after 16 years, what having a puppy is all about, because it is a fair amount of work.

It's kind of funny, I went out looking for a shelter dog, hoping to do a rescue but quite honestly, as we rolled around, I ended up going to a breeder from Lunenburg County, a beautiful breeder who had these Entlebucher Mountain Dogs, an absolute great breeder who has a wonderful program, has the veterinary oversight on this one making sure that when the animal comes to us that the animal is of good health, good genetics and all that.

So looking at that side of the bill, I think that's also a good move to make sure that that Kijiji thing doesn't continue to happen, that anyone with an animal, with a dog that can be bred, that they just breed it for the heck of it and hope to make a few dollars on it. I think that's the wrong avenue for animals in this province. You really don't know what you're going to be getting in the end. They could be very sick to begin with and might have long-lasting genetic problems, and you are going to have to make a bad decision shortly after receiving that animal. Those would be things that I think are a good avenue in this bill.

Madam Speaker, I hope that the likes of Mojo doesn't happen again, I hope the likes of Gail Benoit doesn't happen again, if we know the news stories that revolve around her lifetime ban in selling animals. We need to have more opportunity, more enforcement, and I think maybe this might be able to get us there but, again, the allocation of resources is going to be very important to this one as well.

Madam Speaker, thank you very much for the opportunity to speak to this bill.

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

MS. LENORE ZANN: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to speak in support of this bill, Protection of Animal Welfare and Security Act. I would like to personally thank the Minister of Agriculture for presenting this bill, which I think is very important in Nova Scotia. As a dog owner myself - I have three, actually, and many of my friends have dogs - we felt, when this issue first came up, it was an important one for the province to take a look at and to actually move forward on. It still boggles my mind when I hear stories of abuse towards anybody - people, animals - and it seems strange that we have to actually put these things into writing to look after and protect innocent creatures, but in

fact we do. So it's nice to be able to see that in this bill they are speaking about anxiety, and these kinds of things which are more subtle but are so, so important as definitions of distress.

It's nice to be able to see, as well, that Kristin Williams' comments about the announcement are very positive. Kristin Williams, of course, is the executive director of the SPCA for Nova Scotia, and she has mentioned that she is very keen to assist government in achieving its goals for better protection of the animals and that she is very pleased to see that animal anxiety is included. Also, the SPCA applauds government commitment to animal welfare and appreciates that we'll be open to their input. She says "It is clear that Government views the SPCA as an integral partner and stakeholder in this process," and that she would also like to "personally thank and acknowledge Premier Darrell Dexter, Minister MacDonell, and Deputy Minister Penfound for this . . .

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please. I'd like to remind the member of two things - if you're quoting something we will need you to table it and, secondly, not to use the proper name in the Chamber, so I'll ask you to reframe that.

MS. ZANN: Yes, I plan to table this. She had quoted in an announcement actually that she would like to personally thank and acknowledge the Premier, the Minister of Agriculture, and also the Deputy Minister of Agriculture for their accessibility and also for their responsiveness, and she says it is very clear to the SPCA that this government has made animal welfare a high priority - and I would like to copy this and table it.

In closing, Madam Speaker, I just wanted to make a brief statement here for the many animal lovers in Nova Scotia, and the many of us who have these little creatures as our family really - some of us aren't lucky enough to have children, we just didn't either have the time or the ability to do so, but we do have animals in our lives and my three little animals, Buster Keaton from Los Angeles, Ruby Dee from Vancouver, and Ala Sakura from Nova Scotia, are all integral to my well-being and my peace of mind when I come home from the road and from Halifax.

So on that note I say thank you, again, to the government for passing this bill.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Clayton Park.

MS. DIANA WHALEN: This is a bill that I think is really important and it follows some outcry from the public about animal welfare. I know the minister started by saying one of the first bills brought forward was the new bill on animal protection which was really needed, absolutely needed. I remember at the time when we were involved in that and discussing what the points were. It had two points really, one part was very much the farm animals and that aspect which, as a city member, I certainly care about the welfare of animals on farms, but I was less concerned about that because I heard more from people

about pets. I thought that the bill was a little bit shy on the pet side and more heavily weighted towards farm animals, work animals, and so on.

I knew that there were concerns there around pets and how we were controlling cruelty on that side, and I remember at the time thinking the penalty should be stronger and, in fact, the member for Kings West had mentioned that I had done some research at the time. Some jurisdictions put a lifetime ban on owning pets to people who are repeatedly cruel to their animals. I know we haven't gone that far but the fines - I was reading the detail more today for second reading - the fines certainly are significantly higher, you've gone from \$10,000 to \$25,000 on one category, \$25,000 to \$50,000, also introducing the possibility of serving jail time if the fines are not paid or people don't take it seriously.

These are more serious penalties and I think that's important because really and truly some people just don't look after animals, don't recognize the pain and suffering, and they need to be held accountable. I wanted to say - and one reason I was so keen to get up and speak a bit on this bill today is to acknowledge how many people in Nova Scotia feel so strongly that they will write their MLAs, send us e-mails, written and typed letters that I've got through the regular post. I was amazed just even in this last winter around February we got a lot about the SPCA losing their funding, or at least saying - I know there was a dispute about that, but I was just reviewing two of the letters here that I happened to still have with me in my bag, and they were saying they were so concerned that the SPCA didn't have the funds to do the work they do to prevent cruelty to animals.

What really amazed me was that we have some very significant problems that relate to people - to poverty, to homelessness, and let's just say "people issues," where there's suffering of individual people - and for some reason that doesn't generate the amount of feedback that we got around animals. Without a doubt, people have a very strong connection to their pets and to animals in general. I would wish that they would correspond with us as much about some of the other social ills and the suffering of our fellow man.

At the same time, I was really struck by the depth of their feelings and the letters and e-mails that I was getting. Some of them we were receiving that were going directly to the Premier or the minister, and we were being copied on them, and I can only imagine how many letters the minister received. I got an awful lot in my office alone, and they use words like "heart-rending"; they talked about watching the news when the SPCA made their announcement, and a number of them say they had tears in their eyes, that they were crying when they watched the TV coverage of this.

It really affects people deeply, and I think that the bill before us today, the amendments that are here for animal protection, are an outcrop of that. They've come from the outflow of emotion and concern that the public has shown. I think it did show that in 2009 there was a good effort made to update the Act and improve it, but there were shortcomings or gaps. I think this is an attempt to fill in those gaps, to start to address the concerns around animal care and so on.

There are going to be a lot of questions around what regulations come into play. This is an area that remains a question. We don't know what regulations will come into play, but in reading the bill and the notes to the bill, a lot of it says this is going to expand the minister's scope or regulations are going to be provided in the future. I'd like to reiterate some of the comments of the member for Kings West in saying that this is an opportunity for the public to be heard. I really do hope this is not going to be done in isolation. It doesn't have to be an expensive way to communicate, but if the government were to open up e-mail submissions and letters and so on, I think that people have suggestions that would be important to listen to.

Again, I think that it's important that we acknowledge the depth of concern and caring that is out there in the public. Initially when the bill was announced, we didn't hear anything about tethering of dogs. Today, in the minister's introduction of the bill, there was a mention around standards in care for animals, which would include tethering and animal restraints, and I think animal houses; you talked about dog houses, I think, so what shelter they have. At the same time, I think there's a great deal of concern about the harsh winters, the cold weather and storms and animals being left outdoors.

I really think that needs to be part of it. It may not be the main piece, but it needs to be addressed in pretty clear language. It would appear that we have to wait for the regulations to see that spelled out. It's very different, and I understand that even from discussions I've had with other members. The concern in the city might be different from the country. I don't know if people have more dogs in the country or if our dogs in the city are more house dogs, always inside, but I've heard people say there might be a bit of a difference there.

We have to keep them from suffering. We have to keep them safe. We have to look after the animals that are in our care, absolutely. I don't think it matters if you're on a farm or a country home as opposed to living in the city. Certainly in the city we can see the animals because we live close together. They're not hidden down long driveways or lanes, and that might actually mean that fewer of them are being left out or being neglected, because it would very quickly come to light in a city suburb like the one I live in.

I do know there are a lot of dogs in my area. I don't have a dog only because our life is too busy in the Legislature. I've mused about it often, and I have been told to look at that later on when there's more time, because dogs do require a lot of care and attention.

In speaking about the care of dogs, I did want to mention that another concern might be dogs left in cars. We hadn't discussed that today and that wasn't the focus of our letters in February, when the weather was cold, but last year there were seven dogs that died in cars from the heat. That's also a very big concern, whether people are not aware, don't understand the concerns. Again, if others had the right to take action, those dogs may not have died, if people could move and do something about it so I would like to draw the minister's attention to that, just hoping that will also be included in the care and concern.

I'm certain the minister and his staff have a list of all animals that have died that have been recorded, I would hope that you know of the ones that have died from any neglect or concern like that, but certainly those figures have been gathered up.

Madam Speaker, the idea of the puppy mills is of grave concern and I don't think we've really, completely found the answer yet. My question is whether people will pay for that veterinarian certificate and so on, but it is an attempt. I think we're the first in Canada, was what was said in the press release or the minister's statements as well, so perhaps we can see how it works and try to enforce that. Again, the difficulty is the enforcement of it and part of that is asking individuals to be careful about where they buy their animals.

If you want to rescue an animal, you can rescue an animal directly from the SPCA or from a shelter of some sort. You don't need to and you shouldn't be going to buy animals on Kijiji or somewhere where you can't trace them. Hopefully people will learn that is just an invitation to encourage people to do more of this breeding of dogs because there's big money involved. At the end of the day, there is a lot of money involved for unscrupulous dog breeders who don't even care what breed of dog it is - they simply sell puppies. It's very distressing to see what the care is for those animals, in many cases.

I'm pleased to see we are the first to try something different. I have often complained here that Nova Scotia is too much of a follower, that we don't want to step out and be the first to do something and I think in this case, probably with the help of public concern and public outcry, we are taking some more dramatic steps.

I'd like the minister to consider, again, the idea of a lifetime ban for certain people. I know there have been names mentioned here in the House, names that have repeatedly come up in the press around cruelty to animals. I think it is more than warranted where there are repeat offenders and maybe it's not the third offence, but maybe the fourth. We need to say at some point, you are absolutely unfit to be a pet owner. We just have to lay it down. I think that is something we could look at from other places as well.

Again, in looking at this, I hope there will be consultation for regulations because always in Opposition I've been concerned about Acts that leave a great deal open to future regulations that government and their advisers and staff can come up with. I think it's important that other people have a chance to have a say in that and that we make an avenue open to the public to do so. I know that the minister will talk to veterinarians and I'm certain that certain professional groups will be involved, or the SPCA.

I wanted to just touch on the SPCA again. I know there was perhaps a little bit of a spat between the minister and the SPCA about whether or not they had their funding or adequate funding, whether or not they could carry out their work with the funding they were given. I think it's really important, not unlike so many of the other organizations and non-profit groups that are doing good work in our province, whether you're talking about groups that help children, women, poverty groups, child welfare groups, some of those are

non-profit agencies that are delivering services. The SPCA is our main group for delivering services that would help for animal cruelty and it's certainly the one that's known around the world. It's the name that's recognizable; it has over a 100-year history, people know the SPCA and they rely on it. I think we need to look at that and say, are they providing a service in a cheaper, more efficient manner than government could do? And I think without a doubt they are.

When I think back to my time on the Halifax City Council or HRM Council, definitely the cost to providing services is a lot if you have your own animal control people. It is much better to have a contract with an agency that can go do that, rather than having city staff (Interruptions) Yes, I know they have and I realize there might be some difficulties. I think they are the recognized agency that people know and respect. I think that we need to set standards for their care and their provision of service, but if they're doing the work we need to make sure they are adequately funded.

That's all I'm saying and I know the letters I got were not from people who worked for the SPCA or had any vested interest but they cried out to us. In fact they used the words like: I appeal to you to do something; please do something for the SPCA. So people really have a lot of respect for that group. I'm just saying they need to be supported so they can do the work that needs to be done.

If in another part of the province - because I know we have different agencies in different counties or whatever, maybe there are others (Interruption) - just the SPCA? Okay, good, I'm glad to hear that. Anyway, we just need to support them; that is all I'm saying. I think on behalf of the people who I represent in Halifax Clayton Park, they've been loud and clear in saying they want to see adequate support to the SPCA and they don't ever want to face a time when the SPCA says I can no longer do that work, I can't protect animals, I don't have the power or the legislation to do it right.

We're working on the legislation today so that they'll actually be able to move and take action when there is distress, when there is animal anxiety. That will be better defined and animals will be better protected as a result.

I still think this is a step in the right direction. There may be further that we should go, I think there are further measures needed and I'm looking forward to seeing who comes to Law Amendments Committee and what we might hear when the public has an opportunity to speak there. I do think it's a good thing that the minister was listening and that he has brought amendments forward that are going to strengthen this Act. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East on an introduction.

MR. CLARRIE MACKINNON: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. In the east gallery I would like to make an introduction. I have introduced these two special

people in the past, in fact maybe a number of times. They are Pictonians who do a lot of work for those who have been injured in accidents. I would like Mary Lloyd, the president of the Pictou County Injured Workers Association and Larry Maloney, the vice-president, to stand and receive a warm welcome from the House. (Applause)

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

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

The honourable Minister of Agriculture.

HON. JOHN MACDONELL: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the contribution by other members. I have to say the member for Kings West spoke so long and said so little, as far as giving me something that I could go back with. He didn't seem to like the Act, didn't say what was wrong with it, and didn't really offer me anything that was going to be helpful at all.

I want to make it clear that when I indicated that actually the first significant change for the Animal Protection Act came under the Liberals in 1996, which he indicated was a good bill, so we are amending the bill for the second time. Since 2009, Madam Speaker, the previous Progressive Conservative Government, under the minister who was from Colchester-Musquodoboit Valley, also made changes to the Act.

The notion that for some reason we're going to draft regulations and not consult the whole process around regulations, and I'll just refer members back to the fur regulations, the Fur Industry Act, when we started that process, my staff told me it would take three years to draft the regulations. I said I want them in one, we got them in two. I have to say, Madam Speaker, that was a lot of consultation with all the stakeholders. That is what I have indicated will happen, in terms of regulations for this piece of legislation.

I'm really hoping that at some point we will get all interested parties in a room, if we can, and I think what we would like to do is probably present a draft of regulations, looking at what regulations have been written across the country. We looked at what other jurisdictions were doing. I do want to say that in recent decisions by judges in this province, they have issued a ban on keeping pets by people who they felt they should do that so they have that power now so we don't need to put that in the bill.

It's not in the Act, the judges have that power now, they've been doing it. So the health certificate requirement is something that came from this minister. That was something I wanted in this legislation and I think when the member for Kings West talked about somebody selling pups from the back of the truck, the honourable member for Argyle indicated a kennel he knew, what a good job they did where he got his pup. If he

had agreed to meet them in a parking lot somewhere to get the pup from the back of their truck, then somehow there's something wrong with them for doing that.

If you go to the Atlantic Stockyards now, which used to be the cattle sales in Murray Siding, there would be people there who would probably be selling border collie pups out of the back of their truck. What we want to ensure is that they are healthy. If they are healthy, that's the requirement that we deem to be necessary. We'd like to think that if somebody goes somewhere to meet someone to buy a pup and they don't have that health certificate that number one, they don't buy it; two, they complain about it, they notify us. So the fines apply to farm animals as well as to pets.

There are two bodies that investigate animal cruelty in this province: the SPCA does companion animals, the province does farm animals. We've been doing this for a couple of years now. We took that responsibility away from the SPCA, which we assumed would give them a bit of a bump in funding in the sense it should release some funding that they were spending on farm animal investigations. The SPCA has a 100 per cent conviction rate presently in this province.

We look forward to moving on, seeing this bill move forward through the House and see what representations do come from the public or various organizations, to Law Amendments Committee. It would be my hope that certainly before June, if that's possible, that we can get underway on the regulation part of this. I have no date set for when they might be ready, I'd like to say by the end of the year and I don't think we're going to have to draft a lot of regulations.

I do want members to be aware that in terms of tethering - the member for Halifax Clayton Park mentioned the tethering in my speech - it was in my speech at the Fairview Veterinary Hospital. The media asked me about it, but I didn't see much in the media about my response to it. We've written the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association for an opinion. Their opinion is around kennels which says it shouldn't be the primary way to restrain a dog.

They also have a committee that is working on regulations around sled dogs and security pets. We wrote them back and said, well our interest mainly is around companion animals, dogs that are household pets for people, do you have a position? We haven't heard back from them yet on that but we would intend to incorporate whatever they could tell us into our discussions with people around what would happen around tethering.

I didn't hear much in the media around what I said about it but I have said something about it so I put that on the record here today so that people are aware.

It is an emotional issue, cruelty to animals, and I would like to use the expertise of animal health professionals as much as possible so we ensure we get to a place that is not

based on emotion but is based on the health needs of animals that people consider with a lot of affection in their homes.

Did we get this perfect? Probably not. I think we moved a long way in a short period of time that we've been in government, and that certainly doesn't mean that I'm opposed to listening into the future. Legislation is one of those things that can be fluid over time. We keep changing, and I am willing to look at that. With those comments I thank members opposite, I look forward to this bill going to Law Amendments Committee and move second reading of Bill No. 55.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 55. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 57.

Bill No. 57 - Language Schools Act.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Labour and Advanced Education.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to legislation that will help protect international students who get educated in our province. It will allow these international students to study at schools that value the high quality of education, for as long as it takes to complete their studies. Nova Scotia is the first province to introduce such legislation that will regulate language schools and protect our international students. This bill will ensure that the language schools meet a certain quality and standard - protection of students, and investment in their education.

Mr. Speaker, this bill will also protect Nova Scotia's reputation as an education destination of choice for all international students. It will ensure that international students will continue to have access to the best, highest quality education and training to prepare them for their future. We certainly value all of our international students and we want to continue to attract international students to this great province. They contribute to our economy and certainly to our diversity. This bill will also align with changes to the Federal International Student Program that require provinces to designate language schools.

Mr. Speaker, with these few short words I now move Bill No. 57 for second reading. Thank you.

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

MS. DIANA WHALEN: I'm pleased to rise today on Bill No. 57 which is this Act for international schools, called the Language Schools Act. This Act is for schools that are teaching English here in Nova Scotia. I was interested to see that there are 12 schools right now with 1,500 students, here in our province. One question that I would have for the minister is, at the end of the press release that was on the Web site - somebody told me earlier to look at the Animal Act on the Web site - but on the Web site it does say that this would relate to programs over six months. Maybe in his closing comments the minister might refer to which programs are covered because I do know a lot of programs exist in our province, which are summer programs and students come here from various countries to spend, perhaps six weeks to two months studying English and having the experience of being in an English-speaking environment, and so on.

One such program was actually run at the Cornwallis Business Park, down in the Valley, and that one that I heard of - I don't know if it is still going - but it was actually Arabic women who were coming to that program (Interruption) - I think they were coming from Saudi Arabia if I'm not mistaken. It was favoured because it was a very safe environment, it's rural, it's a small community, and they felt it was a very good place for women to go and study English and be in what they would consider to be, I guess, a good and wholesome environment.

In Nova Scotia we have some wonderful facilities, universities, private schools, facilities like Cornwallis Centre and those are offering an opportunity to create that school curriculum and bring students in for a summer.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The chatter is getting a little high and I would ask that you tame it down so that the honourable member for Halifax Clayton Park can finish her comments.

MS. WHALEN: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I said, we have a lot of opportunities to have language schools and they may not always be the longer term, six months or one-year programs. I would like to know if there will be standards set for the shorter programs that also exist, and I know there are study and learning tours that go on in the province as well, where students are toured around Nova Scotia and learning English at the same time. Some of them are quite small, so I'd be interested to know how that will be affected.

I'd also be interested to know how the industry as a whole feels. I do see that there were quotes made by East Coast School of Languages and they were positive, but this is a bill that I hadn't heard anything of prior to its introduction. I imagine we'll hear more of that when we get to the Committee on Law Amendments. I'm sure any schools that are impacted will want to have a say - I hope they know that it's coming through because it's

going to impact their business if they have to have a certain curriculum or standard that's going to be set.

As you know, we're a destination province for education and there's no reason why we shouldn't be as well for language education. I mentioned we have a lot of positives in that regard - the size of our communities, the friendliness of the people here, and our willingness to be friendly and open to talk to people and help them learn a new language. I think we have a lot to show people who come here, we have a lot of beauty and a lot of tourism assets that can help as well in learning a language.

I know that there are many who come to the city, I have neighbours who have often hosted students who are studying at the language institutes and have them in their homes. It's been wonderful for their children because they also meet people from around the world and get to interact as they're learning English, so we then benefit by learning the culture of another place.

I had the opportunity some years ago when I was recently graduated from university of living in other countries, and I know that there is a tremendous interest in learning English. The first country I lived in was Korea, I spent three years living in South Korea and that was some time ago before they had begun to travel much abroad themselves, and learning English was a very big thing for them and they had an insatiable appetite to take English classes and to hire English people to correspond and chat with them.

There were a lot of schools there that employed Canadians, and now I know many of them are travelling to Canada and, hopefully, more to Nova Scotia to do just the same thing. It was my first introduction to just how valuable it is to have that international language and for other countries, the people that gain the facility with English really do get a leg up in terms of employment and opportunity. We have something that's valuable that we can share with the rest of the world, and I think what we need to do is also be advertising it and be helping to promote our province as a learning destination. We do that with our universities; we have a fairly high ratio of international students at our universities.

And I would, since this really does involve international students, I would be remiss if I didn't mention at the same time that I think it's a great loss that our provincial nominee stream is no longer going to look at the international student stream. The federal government, the Harper Government has said that they want to control all of that immigration of the international students to Canada and that we don't have that opportunity anymore. I think it's particularly damaging to Nova Scotia because we have so many first-class educational institutions. We have many universities, we have some terrific community colleges, we have these language institutes that people want to come to and, therefore, we have a great pool of international students who are here, who want to make Nova Scotia their home.

If it is no longer a stream within the Nova Scotia Nominee Program, we don't have the opportunity then to have a direct influence on them staying in our province and encouraging them to stay. I think it's important that we note that that avenue, that stream, which I believe is the second most utilized stream in our province last year or the year before - I know the minister will have a look at that perhaps - the third most utilized was the community identified. I think it is skills, international students, and community identified for last year.

We're going to lose at least an avenue of capturing these well-educated international students who have already studied and lived and been here in Nova Scotia and I think it's really a travesty that we're not going to have that opportunity anymore. I certainly was not privy to whatever pressure was brought to bear on Nova Scotia for us to abandon that stream. Maybe we had absolutely no choice, but I would think within our own nominee stream, they've already capped us at 500 people and have never given us an increase in the number of primary applicants that we can choose. We're allowed 500 applicants, and bearing in mind that each one may come with a family unit, so there are more than 500 people, but we've only been given 500. They haven't given us any more in almost 10 years now, I think. It has been more than 10 years that we've had a nominee program. I believe it came here in 2002. So unlike, I believe, Manitoba, which has 5,000, we're in a much different category, and the international students are a big pool of really smart, wonderful, by and large young people that we could utilize to come and be immigrants to our province, so that is a problem.

I do believe some who come here to study in the language institutes may very well want to come back when they have a facility with the language, when they get the English under their belt and can speak well, that they'll want to come back and continue to study here in our province. It's another avenue to encourage people to come; it's another avenue to set a standard where we become the best in the country in terms of quality and the offering that we're giving to international students - the assurance that they'll get when they come here to learn English, that we have set standards.

I don't know if this has ever happened before; the minister didn't give us very much preamble on the bill. Perhaps he has a bigger closing statement, I don't know. In the press release that came out it says that this will also protect the student's investment if a school closes. If there is a school that has taken some deposits or money from students or perhaps the students have even come here - and these are private institutions, so if they become bankrupt or disappear or aren't sustainable, the students won't lose their investment and the money that they've put into that program. I think that is another good selling point as we try to market Nova Scotia as a learning destination. We don't have that many sectors that we can say we are really unique and special in, but education is one that we can.

We already have decades of reputation to build on. We have these wonderful institutions where students have been coming for a long time. Dalhousie is over 100 years old; I think Saint Mary's University has been around that long; and many others. We have

the basis of a wonderful education system and offering for international students, and we've been having students from around the world come here for many years, so then they can send their children, or people return to their own countries, move up the ladder and take positions in government or industry, and they're sending other people back here as well, because they know Nova Scotia and they know what we offer. In keeping with that, improving our language schools is a very smart thing to do.

I mentioned in the last bill that we might be the first to do something in the sale of animals, and here we have a first as well. It says that Nova Scotia is the first province to introduce legislation that will regulate language schools. I'm glad to see that we're first out of the gate. It doesn't mean we're going to be unique, though, because it says that the federal government is now requiring this of other provinces. The minister might want to relate to that as well, but it says that this legislation aligns us with the federal government's changes to their international student program that requires language schools across the country to be designated. We have a little bit of a jump on other places, but we're not going to remain the only province with these standards. It's going to be across the country eventually, so I hope that the government might have a plan to help the schools capitalize on the fact that we've got these in place.

I hope that if there are any regulations to be written, they'll be done in a timely fashion. I don't know about the time frame that the government is looking at to bring this properly into place; it always requires proclamation and so on. I think it is important, and if all provinces in the country are going this way, then let's capitalize on the fact that this legislation has been brought in here before any of the other provinces have done so.

Overall, I think it's an important move that we're doing this, that we've gotten out of the gate before other provinces, that we are going to set these standards. I would like to know whether or not there will be any standards set for schools that are summer schools or shorter-duration programs, because I think there's a big demand for those programs as well.

As I say, I think it's a priority that we protect the reputation we have in Nova Scotia as an education province and a learning destination. So with that I'll be interested, again, at Law Amendments Committee to hopefully hear from some of the other language schools that will have a stake in this and see what recommendations they have as well. Thank you very much.

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

MR. KEITH BAIN: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to very briefly speak to Bill No. 57, the Language Schools Act. As the member for Halifax Clayton Park has referenced, there are 12 language schools in Nova Scotia with about 1,500 students. I know that in particular McKenzie College Language Academy in Sydney and the International Centre for English Academic Preparation at CBU are both pleased with this legislation coming forward.

Mr. Speaker, this bill will assist in the efforts to attract more international students to Nova Scotia for language training. We look forward not only to the international students coming here but the benefits that could accrue as a result of their being here and, hopefully, remaining in this province. We look forward to the bill proceeding to Law Amendments Committee to hear what might be said and then carry on to third reading. Thank you very much.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Glace Bay. (Applause)

MR. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, thanks to the Deputy Premier and to the House for that warm welcome. I want to spend a few minutes, I'd be remiss if I didn't speak on this bill put forth by the government side and I think the Deputy Premier, certainly all the members of the House but those who have seen some of the impact that the language schools have had in Cape Breton. With the Cape Breton economy, I think it's important just to talk about some of those things.

I do look forward, as my colleague from Halifax Clayton Park mentioned, seeing what the teeth are for this bill. I think there are some important measures and there are some important aspects that hit the international students who come here to study and to learn our languages and, of course, move on to university because that is ultimately the idea and that is ultimately the relationship that exists.

The honourable member for Victoria-The Lakes just mentioned ICEAP, which has a direct relationship with CBU and provides a group of students who come over from mostly China, some influence in Saudi Arabia as well, and they bring students over. This school has had a tremendous relationship with CBU for, I think, about three years now. As we read, the member for Victoria-The Lakes referenced a story about how they are appreciative of this legislation moving forward and, in fact, had a hand in crafting some of this legislation.

The reality is that with 500 students, and that's pretty much their maximum, mostly located in Glace Bay at the former Morrison High School site, with a few of their advanced classes move out to CBU and then they naturally jump into the university stream out there at CBU. So it's a very good partnership and one that's important for us.

It's important for a number of reasons, probably the biggest one being the economic impact it has had. It's an amazing thing when you operate in such a fragile economy as many of the rural communities in the province do, you get to rely on those sources of income and those sources of revenue that without them you would be in trouble. I think that probably the two largest ones for Glace Bay and the surrounding area would, of course, be the Stream call centre, which we've mentioned many times here in the Legislature, and the ICEAP campus.

You know it's an amazing thing, Mr. Speaker, seeing international kids who are 19, 20, 21, walking the streets, accessing the restaurants and the shops and all that Glace Bay has to offer. You felt for a long time, with the out-migration and with the unemployment, there seemed to be a hollowing-out of our society and there's less people at the restaurants and there's less people at the grocery stores and the hockey rinks and just using the sidewalks and accessing the parks and those types of things. We've really seen an influx and an increase in those things in Glace Bay because of ICEAP. So certainly you feel that economically, you feel that socially and certainly the relationship between CBU, ICEAP, and my home community has been a great one.

I think that when you look at some of the changes that again were referenced by my colleague for Halifax Clayton Park about the immigration stream and the fact that with some of the changes, and students, if they come to Nova Scotia they're not fast-tracked through the immigration process where they get their landed status. That has been an issue for ICEAP, and I'm sure they have referenced that to the government. The reality is there are a number of factors that lead to immigration and permanent immigration, as in students come as 19- and 20-year-olds, they study, they reach their English proficiency, they enter in the CBU, and then they stay and have their lives and have their families, and spend many years in Cape Breton.

It's certainly a challenge, and that is one that we have to address with public policy, certainly from a municipal perspective, the provincial perspective, and the federal. So they are challenges but they are also opportunities. And I know that CBU has done great in the last number of years, and when you see a lot of problems and challenges that many of the Nova Scotia universities face, it seems like CBU is actually an anomaly with that, and it's for a number of reasons: the strengthening of academic programs, of course; their long-term facilities management projects that they've done very, very well; and of course, their immigration strategy.

There are partnerships across the globe with respect to CBU: many in China, Southeast Asia, the Middle East; I was part of one in Cairo, Egypt, for a year. It was an incredible experience, and it's an amazing thing to see the kids who started at that school - you start post-secondary when you're 17, in Cairo - and to see the difference those students went through from that point when I met them to when they're 23, 24, graduating here in Nova Scotia from CBU, from the engineering program at Dal, and the like.

It's an incredible thing for our culture and certainly has been a very worthwhile injection for Cape Breton University. I know that all the language schools across the province, in conjunction and in partnership with some of those other institutions, have felt the benefit, and I think this is a good thing. I'm glad I know that the Deputy Premier sees this and hears these concerns, and hears the ideas coming from CBU and ICEAP, and we look forward to moving this in this reading and finding out some of the details, because I think it will be beneficial for the province. And with that, I'll sit down.

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

The honourable Minister of Labour and Advanced Education.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, it's interesting in a debate around international schools and it invariably goes to English as a Second Language, and you had three Cape Bretoners following each other. I'm reminded of the story - and the member for Glace Bay may remember his father telling him stories about this gentleman. But Angus "Blue" MacDonald was a very famous councillor from the Town of Glace Bay, and he had a vocabulary unto his own. But he had very heavy Cape Breton slang, if you will, which I think we're all very proud of.

But nonetheless, the story about Angus "Blue" was that at the Dominion Command Convention for the Legion, Angus "Blue" got up and part of the discussion that day was should the proceedings be held in both English and French. And Angus "Blue" got up and he riled off his "thems" and "those" and "these" and "thats" and then he sits down, and some people applauded and some people didn't. But the story goes that this very British-sounding gentleman gets up and says, really, you know, comrades, does it really matter if we speak in English, French, or the language that gentleman just spoke in?

So, Mr. Speaker, I wanted to thank the members for their intervention. To the member for Clayton Park, I will endeavour to get some of those answers, especially around courses and lengths, and I appreciate this. The purpose of the bill is for really - on the other side is the protection of the students, too, when they come.

You know, we've heard some complaints about hidden fees, and we want to protect them. But it's also important that we protect our image, because, again, we are - and maybe I'm overstating this, but we are really the pioneer when it comes to international students because we have Coady Institute at St. F.X. I mean that's been entrenched. We've had people from all over the world, but more particularly, from the African countries. So this shouldn't be anything new.

To make sure everyone knows that there is a perception of bias here, Mr. Speaker, I should also tell you that my daughter is now beginning her master's degree. She's partway through it, and her master's is in English as a second language. She probably wonders what her father's first language is, too.

There are many things in here, and I want to tell the members opposite that I really appreciate their points of view, particularly in the items that the member for Halifax Clayton Park brought forward, which I have to say were reasonable and very thoughtful. I hope that we will be able to get those answers for her as soon as we possibly can through the department. With those few comments, I move second reading of Bill No. 57.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 57. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 59.

Bill No. 59 - Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Resources Accord Implementation (Nova Scotia) Act.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Energy.

HON. CHARLIE PARKER: I want to move Bill No. 59, An Act to Amend Chapter 3 of the Acts of 1987, the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Resources Accord Implementation (Nova Scotia) Act to now be read a second time.

I'm pleased to rise in the House today to speak about Bill No. 59, and it is certainly an important bill in the history of our province. This is about the designation of Sable Island as Canada's 43rd national park. I first announced the intent to make these changes back on October 17, 2011 - the signing of the memorandum of understanding for the establishment of Sable Island as a national park - and I introduced the amendment to the bill in this Legislature just yesterday.

These changes are the final stage in a process to make Sable Island Canada's 43rd national park and protect its unique ecosystems. The amendments put into law guidelines around oil and gas activity on and near Sable Island and the Emera amendments taking place at the federal level. The proposed legislative changes are a significant milestone in that process.

The Canada and Nova Scotia Governments have been working together for some time to reach this stage. We started by identifying which protection legislation would be the best tool to legally protect Sable Island into the future. It quickly became clear that we needed to work to designate Sable Island as part of the national park system, and I'm happy to say that through a federal-provincial agreement we were able to chart the course. The provincial and federal governments negotiated a parks establishment agreement that was signed by the federal Minister responsible for Parks Canada and the Premier at a news conference back in October 2011. The agreement outlined the terms under which the park would be established, and it included enshrining in legislation a ban on drilling from the surface and within one nautical mile of Sable Island.

I want to add that the petroleum industry has always been sensitive to preserving Sable Island's environment. Oil and gas companies have voluntarily complied with this drilling ban for years, and our work resulted in a memorandum of agreement between our two governments, with a commitment to move forward with the legislative amendments.

Our federal counterparts introduced draft legislation to create the Sable Island National Park Reserve in Parliament on February 12th of this year. Included were proposed changes to the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Resources Accord Implementation (Nova Scotia) Act. Those changes are currently being considered in Parliament. In fact, our Communities, Culture and Heritage Minister, who is also the MLA for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island, visited Ottawa recently to update members of the Senate on Nova Scotia's plans and progress on the legislative changes, and his testimony contributed to the federal legislative review process.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to say that Nova Scotia is also moving forward with amendments to the provincial version of the Accord Bill, that would advance the designation of the Sable Island National Park Reserve. The amendments mirror changes to the federal version of the Act and represent the final stage of the process.

Protecting Sable Island's environment and ecosystems has been the central focus of these legislative changes. In designating Sable Island as a national park, we are taking further steps to protect its environmental and cultural features. The amendments seek to put into law a ban on drilling on or within one nautical mile of Sable Island. I'm going to review each proposed change and explain the context.

I know that most members would have the bill with them or in front of them and the first change that is outlined there will establish a law to ban drilling from the surface of Sable Island and within one nautical mile. The drilling ban will help protect Sable Island's natural environment and ecosystems.

The second amendment outlines what petroleum-related activities would be permitted on Sable Island. These would include access to existing wellheads for safety and environmental protection and there are nine old wellheads on the island that were last used in the 1960s. Occasionally, sand blows away from these wellheads leaving them exposed, so this will allow them to be covered back up and be fully maintained. The second amendment would also restrict petroleum exploration activities to those with a low impact on the environment. This would include things like small soil or sand samples or stringing listening devices above the sand.

The amendment would also allow Sable Island to be used as an emergency evacuation capacity for offshore workers, if that was ever needed. It certainly also would allow access for operation maintenance and inspection of emergency facilities, including a helicopter landing pad. I'm sure we can all agree this is a necessary allowance to protect those working near Sable Island.

The third proposed change requires the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Board to consult with Parks Canada before issuing permits for any petroleum-related activities on the Island. Again, this would help protect Sable Island and ensure any proposed offshore activity respects the Island's designation as a national park.

I also want to reinforce the role of the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Board in enforcing strict regulations to ensure the safety of the environment, in connection with the petroleum activities. The board will work alongside Parks Canada to ensure that Sable Island is carefully managed and preserved.

Today's proposed changes represent the final step in a process that started with a memorandum of understanding between the federal and provincial governments back in 2010 and I'm very pleased to see it moving forward toward this final stage. Nova Scotia will continue to be involved in the management of Sable Island, as part of the Canada-Nova Scotia committee. The province will have input on the integrity and management of natural and heritage features on Sable Island.

There is perhaps no one more interested in the future of Sable Island, than well-known naturalist, Zoe Lucas. Zoe has been on the Island for decades studying the wildlife and flora and fauna and really helping to tell Sable Island's story. Zoe Lucas supports the move to make Sable Island a national park. Yesterday she said, "The designation of Sable Island as a National Park Reserve is the beginning of a new era for the island. . . Parks Canada will bring expertise and authority to environmental protection, the conservation of ecological values and the management of human activities." This show of support from Zoe Lucas confirms that designating Sable Island as a national park is a step in the right direction.

I want to thank our federal counterparts for their dedication to this process and who recognized the importance of preserving such a significant provincial and national landmark. Mr. Speaker, I also want to express appreciation for the support that we have received from the offshore oil and gas industry. From the beginning, industry has recognized how important it is to protect Sable Island and it has led the way in efforts to minimize the impact of activities in that area.

Today's proposed amendments are another step towards ensuring that the island gets the national profile and protection that it deserves. Sable Island certainly has been a part of Nova Scotia's history and a part of Nova Scotia's culture. It's often known as the graveyard of the Atlantic, home of the famous and beautiful horses, and a sandy ecosystem that does not exist really anywhere else.

Passage of the federal and provincial bills will allow the designation to be completed and Sable Island then to become a national park. Approving these amendments is the last step that Nova Scotia needs to make Sable Island Canada's 43rd national park and

certainly Nova Scotia's third national park. At the federal level, the amendments are now in the Senate and then will go before the House of Commons.

With those few brief remarks, I want to close and the process will unfold as it should, and with Parks Canada's participation and the participation of Nova Scotia as well. Thank you for listening.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Richmond.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise on behalf of the Official Opposition to indicate our support for Bill 59, the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Resources Accord Implementation (Nova Scotia) Act. As indicated by the minister, this is meant to assist in the development of Sable Island as a national park.

I've had the pleasure of fishing not far from Sable Island - probably closer than most have, on Banquereau Bank. I know that many of the fishermen from my area, especially the snow crab fishermen now - and probably from your area as well, Mr. [Deputy] Speaker - are not that far off the coast of Sable Island where they are fishing for snow crab. It's an important landmark both for us here on land and, certainly, for fishermen who are out there as well.

The amendments here, as indicated by the minister, mirror some federal changes that are taking place. It's going to amend in the final step to have Sable Island designated as Canada's 43rd national park, and we're certainly proud of that designation. The minister has already indicated some of the changes that are taking place regarding the ban on drilling from the surface and within one nautical mile of Sable Island, as well as some of the other rules that are in place. I'm pleased the minister has acknowledged that many of the companies involved in the exploration of offshore petroleum and gas have been cognizant and respectful of Sable Island and the unique area that it is.

With that, we look forward to this bill moving on to the Law Amendments Committee and making its way through the House and certainly hope that, in conjunction with the federal government, we will soon see the official declaration of Sable Island as Canada's 43rd national park. Merci.

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

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: It is my pleasure on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus to stand in my place today and support Bill 59, the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Resources Accord Implementation (Nova Scotia) Act.

As we all know, Sable Island is culturally important to the Province of Nova Scotia. The oil and gas industry has adopted this policy unofficially for years now, and it will protect Sable Island's natural ecosystem, limit the activity in this area, and help produce it

as our 43rd national park. We know the changes mirror the changes that are being made federally. It will give Parks Canada some control over the area, but Nova Scotia will still have input on how the island is used.

I look forward to this moving through to the Law Amendments Committee and going through the normal business of the House, and we as a caucus will be supporting this bill. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage, who is also the member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island.

HON. LEONARD PREYRA: Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to get up and say a few words here, both as the Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage, but also as the member of the Legislature for Sable Island. Bill 59, the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Resources Accord Implementation (Nova Scotia) Act, really doesn't do enough justice to the fact that this is really the implementation bill that will make Sable Island Canada's 43rd National Park.

I'm delighted to be able to say a few words at this significant milestone. It's really quite an historic event, I think, for the Province of Nova Scotia and for Canadians at large. As you know, the genesis of this bill goes back a long, long time and many people have called for this for decades. We're delighted to be part of a government, part of really two levels of government that have made this bill and this event possible.

On October 17, 2011, the Premier of Nova Scotia, along with Peter Kent, the Minister responsible for Parks Canada, signed a landmark agreement to make Sable Island a National Park reserve. It was a great honour for me, Mr. Speaker, to be a witness to that agreement and to be able to sign that historic memorandum which will help secure a future of greater protection for this unique island.

This bill holds significance for all Canadians. For Nova Scotians in particular it is especially meaningful because Sable Island is part of our natural and cultural heritage. You know with this bill and enabling agreement and the federal House, both levels of government commit to protecting Sable Island for everyone, including especially for future generations. The bill recognizes that Sable Island is a unique and fragile ecosystem of provincial and national significance. It is important that it is protected for present and future generations.

Mr. Speaker, Sable Island holds a special place in the hearts of Nova Scotians and Canadians across the country. Its recorded history is long and detailed and spans more than four centuries; 42 kilometres long, the island is located 290 kilometres from Halifax but it is an important part of my constituency.

Over the years Sable Island has been a place of ecological wonder, dramatic marine events, important meteorological and biological research, and artistic inspiration. Canada's first life-saving station, established in 1801, was built here. If you haven't had the pleasure of a visit, it has been described in this way: isolated and remote, a wild and wind-swept island of sand, far out in the North Atlantic. It is one of Canada's furthest offshore islands. It is a bird sanctuary, home to the Ipswich sparrow and others, and two 300-year-old lighthouses; several hundred of the famous Sable Island wild horses roam freely; and the world's biggest breeding colony of grey seals uses its extensive beaches.

Freshwater ponds hint at the life-sustaining freshwater lens floating below the island. Plants, birds and insects have adapted to life on Sable, some of which are found nowhere else on earth, Mr. Speaker. It's also the Graveyard of the Atlantic, as numerous shipwrecks are offshore.

I'm sure you'd agree, Mr. Speaker, members of the House, it's a perfect location for a National Park, preserved for all Canadians and the world at large, now and for future generations. Designating this national preserve was truly a joint effort, working collaboratively with the federal government partners and other stakeholders. It took a large team to evaluate which protective legislation would work best to legally protect Sable Island for the future.

As you know, Sable Island - the protection of Sable Island - has been developed largely under the watchful eye of the Coast Guard through the Shipping Act. It seems a bit of an anachronism, Mr. Speaker, but I do want to give a shout-out to the Coast Guard for the great work that it has done over the years in protecting Sable and controlling access to Sable Island.

We knew, Mr. Speaker, that Sable Island in this modern era needs greater protection. The Shipping Act itself no longer is as relevant to Sable Island as it once was and the Coast Guard has neither the capacity nor the authority any more to do the kinds of things that we require done on Sable Island. So it became clear that the best choice was to advance Sable for designation as part of the National Parks system, and through the federal-provincial agreement we began pursuing this plan.

We worked on the best way forward, Mr. Speaker, while considering various interests, including offshore petroleum resources. With that in mind, both levels of government agreed to present legislation to prohibit drilling on the surface of Sable and out one nautical mile from the low-water mark.

I want to refer specifically to a clause in this bill which establishes a principle that no person shall drill or conduct any exploratory activity on or within a kilometre off Sable, one nautical mile seaward of its low-water mark. It is an important principle and it bears repeating because it has been misunderstood by some of the people who have commented on this bill in other places.

The change in legislation will allow access to the island for non-intrusive activities such as emergency evacuation of offshore workers and for passive listening devices across the sand to pick up sound from seismic offshore. Just to be clear, it does not allow drilling from Sable within one kilometre offshore. Keep in mind here we're talking about natural gas in that region and not oil. People have misunderstood petroleum to mean oil, and of course, they have two very different implications for offshore regulation and pollution control.

Any activity that's conducted on the island will require adherence to a code of practice for protection of the island and it will be regulated by the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Board in consultation with Parks Canada. There will be a great deal of consultation on any activity that will be allowed on or around Sable Island and must conform to activity that will fit in with the Parks Canada *raison d'être*.

Once enshrined in law, Sable Island's surface will never again be drilled. Petroleum companies strongly supported this measure and volunteered to amend their discovery licences to follow this provision. These licences now have been amended and were approved by both federal and provincial levels of government. We are truly working together - government, business, environmental groups, and other stakeholders - to ensure that significant cultural, heritage, and ecological values of Sable Island are maintained, now and for future generations.

I want to give a shout-out again to a number of people who over the years have been great defenders and promoters of Sable Island. The minister has already spoken about Zoe Lucas who in many ways is the Jane Goodall of Sable Island. She has been there for over four decades and has really exercised great stewardship and great responsibility for it. The Green Horse Society has provided information and early warning systems for us over the years; Gerry Forbes, the station manager; there are a number of scientists who have been on Sable over the years; the Ecology Action Centre, Mark Butler; David Richardson, the former Dean of Science at Saint Mary's University; and the Friends of Sable Island, April Hennigar.

In any case, the amendments to the accord Act and this creation of Sable Island National Park is another step in the process of designating Sable Island as Canada's 43rd National Park. The Government of Canada and the Government of Nova Scotia will continue to carry out important work on Sable Island such as scientific research and environmental climate change, weather and atmospheric monitoring. All parties agree that the best way to protect Sable is to have a human presence on Sable Island and to conduct scientific research there.

The Government of Nova Scotia will continue to provide advice on the ongoing management of the island through the Canada-Nova Scotia committee. We'll provide input on numerous topics including ensuring the island's natural and cultural heritage is protected, studied, and interpreted for the benefit of all Canadians.

I'd like to commend Parks Canada for their consultative approach to the establishment of Sable Island as a National Park reserve, for their ongoing commitment to stakeholder consultation and inclusion. In particular, I want to thank Julie Tompa, the project manager, and Kevin McNamee, the director of Parks Canada, for the work that they've done in bringing us to this point.

I also want to note that this is the Sable Island National Park Reserve. The word "reserve" is there to allow for continuing consultation on the management and development of Sable Island. The Mi'kmaq community and the Mi'kmaq chiefs agree in principle with the creation of this National Park, and the federal government and Parks Canada have committed to continuing consultation with them, and of course we have the made-in-Nova Scotia process here, which is highly regarded and respected.

We look forward to continuing discussions with Parks Canada as they move forward to the development of the management plan and then with the actual management plan itself, and we expect to be an integral part of that plan. Mr. Speaker, Sable Island is part of Nova Scotia and Canada's history, and as part of the National Parks system, it will be a special part of our future.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I want to again take this opportunity to thank federal Ministers Kent and MacKay; the Minister of Energy and of Natural Resources in this House; a number of bureaucrats, Harold Carroll in particular; Kim Himmelman; and all the members of our hard-working staff and the huge team of people at both levels of government who've contributed to the success. Sable Island is a precious historical and ecological treasure and must be protected in the best way possible. I believe this bill does just that. Thank you.

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

The honourable Minister of Energy.

HON. CHARLIE PARKER: I want to thank all honourable members for their interventions, and I certainly also want to thank my colleague here beside me, the Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage. You can certainly hear his passion, and he's worked long and hard on this to establish Sable Island as Canada's 43rd National Park. It will be Nova Scotia's third National Park, so it is important for our province.

With those few remarks, Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of Bill No. 59.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 59. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, that concludes the government's business for today.

AN HON. MEMBER: But it was so much fun today.

MR. CORBETT: I know, but all good things must come to an end.

I move that the House do now rise to meet from the hours of 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. After the daily routine, we will be doing Public Bills for Second Reading, Bill Nos. 51 and 61, and after that, we'll do Private and Local Bills, Bill No. 43. For some real fun and games, we may do some Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is to adjourn.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The Adjournment motion was submitted by the honourable member for Hants West:

“Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly condemn the NDP's ability to erode Nova Scotians' income during each year of their governance while forcing more young Nova Scotians to vacate the province in search of work.”

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION UNDER RULE 5(5)

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

NOVA SCOTIANS - INCOME EROSION: NDP - CONDEMN

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to rise this evening and join in the debate on the resolution that all members of this House of Assembly “condemn the

NDP's ability to erode Nova Scotians' income during each year of their governance while forcing more young Nova Scotians to vacate the province in search of work."

In my time as MLA representing the great constituency of Cape Breton North, I've talked to all sorts of good, hard-working family people, from CEOs to fishermen, international representatives to small-business owners. The one thing that they all have in common and they like to talk about is concern.

Nova Scotia has a hard-working, dedicated and driven population. Nova Scotians want to have the ability to provide for their families and enjoy our beautiful province. As a general statement most people want to be able to make sure their kids have more than they had, regardless how good or bad your upbringing was.

We heard today, and we saw an article submitted that our weekly incomes have increased by 0.6 per cent since 2009. The cost of purchasing everyday items has increased by 10.7 per cent. With no jobs and people having to move to provide for their family, the whole family system breaks down. If I could, I have a neighbour of mine who I grew up with, lived in the same neighbourhood growing up, who moved away at a young age. He moved away and joined the Navy and after four or five years in the Navy he met a lovely young lady, had a couple of children and realized that living in Ontario wasn't the spot for him to be. He had a good-paying job in Ontario, but knew that the family life in Ontario wouldn't be what he grew up with and wouldn't be what he'd want his children growing up in, so they as a family decided to move back home, as every Cape Bretoner who moves away desires to do at some point in their life, be it to work or just to retire there.

He came home; his wife was fortunate with her education and background to get a good job, but he wasn't so fortunate. He had all kinds of skills and all kinds of training, but not able to get a good-paying job. So what was his decision? To try to work out West. He got a good-paying job out West and jumped from two or three jobs here and there, he was home, he was gone for a couple of months and back home, but realizing being home and on unemployment wasn't enough to provide for his family. So he ends up with a real good-paying job and he's out and he's gone eight to 10 months a year. What happens when he's away? He doesn't get to see his family, he doesn't get to spend time with his children, he misses out on all kinds of family activities - school concerts, hockey games, dance recitals, piano recitals. This is a man who is a good family man and spends all the time he can with his family, especially when he's home. Now being away eight to 10 months of the year, the family system breaks down.

I think the problem is he'd love to have his family with him out there or he'd love to be home, but in order to survive he has to make a decision. Now he's still doing the away thing, but my fear is that we're going to lose more people this way because of that. Some people will take whole families and move them from our Island, from our province because there's no work, which is eroding our system, as we talked about earlier.

We also hear about people who are young workers, who are working in trades, who are leaving to get their apprenticeship hours, but over the last year or so we've heard of them coming back and not being able to use those hours to apply toward their certification, to apply toward their red seal. So what are they doing? They're going out there and they're staying there in order to get their papers, their red seals. So that's four, five, six or more years that people are gone from our great province again.

We know that the incomes in the last four years are down, that they're the second-slowest growing in the country. Like I said, 0.6 per cent less earning than we did about four years ago. Obviously it's a terrible situation, but to make it worse we talk about inflationary pressures, the highest inflationary pressures in the country, it's combined for a 10.7 per cent increase in the last four years. Not only are we making less money, our goods and services are increasing. The gap has been very hard to deal with for our young people who are trying to start a family. They have student loans, they have mortgages and they have children who have needs. They have student loans, they have mortgages and they have children who have needs.

They want to provide for their families, Mr. Speaker, but with the lack of income and the lack of jobs, it's getting more difficult. As I talked about earlier, as a result, a difficult decision has to be made - stay here in Nova Scotia where the jobs are eroding? We know their wages are decreased and inflation carries the price of goods and services to unaffordable levels for them. Or they can move away from their beautiful province where their opportunities lie. We know we have the highest taxes in the country. We have the highest power rates in the country. Business confidence is the lowest in the country but worst of all, we don't see any plans to change this.

The NDP's recently tabled budget actually calls for more job losses, higher unemployment and a decrease in retail sales. When we question them on this on behalf of our constituents, asking hard questions like how are you going to fix this? How can we fix the inflationary pressures? How can we create a competitive economy here in Nova Scotia? All we hear is that our plan is working, jobsHere is working.

We're having a hard time finding out where those jobs are. In Cape Breton, Mr. Speaker, we have a disgustingly high unemployment rate of 18.6 per cent overall average on the island. Where I'm from, North Sydney, it is well over 30 per cent. Every day we hear the government bragging about the good job they're doing creating jobs. They may be creating jobs here in Halifax but outside of Halifax, in rural Nova Scotia, we're hurting.

We hear some people criticizing the moves of the NDP, which is easy to do because our economy is tanking, Mr. Speaker. We hear that they have increased the HST after promising not to, watch energy prices skyrocket with their bite-the-bullet energy plan, but we're not hearing a lot of solutions to these problems.

Unlike the other two Parties, Mr. Speaker, we are proposing a plan to put Nova Scotians back to work, decrease taxes, freeze power rates and stop wasteful spending. We feel that in order to criticize, we must give a solution and that's what we're doing. We've seen businesses close from one end of our province to the other. Jobs that we lost due to the closure of the Yarmouth ferry have their market impact even in places in Cape Breton Island.

We spoke to the owners of the Inverary Inn and they've seen their occupancy rates decrease since the closure of the ferry. When a government can make such awful decisions like that, we see very clearly there is no understanding of this economy and will continue to stand idly by as our young people leave our beautiful province in search of work for stable wages.

We can't create conditions like this in Nova Scotia as we've seen through the suffering people in the last four years. Mr. Speaker, Cape Breton lost 4,400 jobs in the last four years, 18.6 per cent unemployment and 11,000 people in Cape Breton are unemployed. That's 11,000 people who are not contributing to our economy, who are not contributing to our society.

Mr. Speaker, when we take that money out of our economy, we see what happens to Cape Breton. We now have a municipality that is looking for some money to do a capital plan to put people back to work because by putting these people back to work, we get our dignity back and we keep people home where they belong, with their families, so they can contribute to society by volunteering in different organizations, minor hockey, minor baseball. That's where we, as Cape Bretoners, want to be and that's where we want to stay, so thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg West.

MR. GARY RAMEY: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I noticed in that resolution, which I read, and found the grammatical structure a little obtuse, but anyway, the word in there is "condemn." You know, I know my colleague from Colchester-Musquodoboit Valley, he is sort of the resident expert on condemnation, I think, so I might have to ask him why. I don't think we should be condemned, I don't think I should be, or my colleagues. I have to defend them. Of course the premise is completely incorrect, so I'll offer up something here, and we'll see where we're going with this. And I'd like to focus it around, actually, three areas, if I could. You know, support we've put out there for families; support for students; and support for future jobs.

You know we engaged in the largest consultation probably ever in the province with the former Finance Minister when we got elected. We listened to what Nova Scotians said, not to what somebody in the Opposition Party said, but what Nova Scotians said. And by the way, people in those Parties could come out - as a matter of fact, in my area, lots of people from the Liberal and Progressive Conservative Parties come out, and they

expressed their views, and we listened to them, and the general consensus was that we were in a bad spot and had to fix it. So we set about doing that. I know there was one year, for instance, I know the PCs are condemning us here, but there was one year that there was \$695 million worth of unbudgeted spending made by that Party, and you know, that seems to me to be a little obscene.

But in any event, I want to focus on the positive. You know, Jack Layton said, let's not be boo birds, you know, let's be optimists, and let's move on and let's not roam around and wait around in despair. That seems to be what's happening every day in here pretty well, so we're going to go to the upside here, and I want people to know that when we did have to deal with the structural deficit, which some people deny, that we listened to what the poverty activists and other people suggested to us, and we introduced a Poverty Reduction Tax Credit to sort of offset the increase in tax, that provides tax-free quarterly payments to individuals and couples and families who find themselves in poverty. We also created the Affordable Living Tax Credit, which we recognize helps families. It's difficult and expensive to live in this particular economy. The world economy has been suffering for some time, and that Affordable Living Tax Credit helps families in low income - and moderate- income earners, too, keep more of their hard-earned cash.

We also understand that child care is important. It's important because families need to have good quality child care in order to go out and get in the workforce and contribute. Since 2009, when we were elected, we've created 600 new child care spaces, and we made about a thousand more subsidies available for parents across the province, which I know, from talking to people in my constituency, those measures have been very helpful.

Of course, this is kind of an old chestnut, but we should put it out there - we did remove the HST off home energy, and Nova Scotians, I suppose, should be reminded, since we're talking about this, that it was the Liberal Party who brought in the tax on home heating, which wasn't taxed until they signed the HST agreement. And when we brought forward legislation to remove it - they voted against it. But we also took the HST off lots of other things, like children's clothing, children's footwear, books, feminine hygiene products, first-time home purchases, new vehicles for the physiologically impaired, computers for the visually and hearing impaired and mentally and physically challenged, firefighting equipment used by municipalities and volunteer fire departments. So it was really quite a suite of products that we tried to cushion by putting those measures in place.

There are many things that our government has done to help make life more affordable and keep more money in the pockets of Nova Scotians, not the least of which - and this is, I think, significant - increasing the minimum wage from \$8.60 an hour, which it was when we took office, to \$10.30 an hour, which it was as of April 1, 2013. And there are lots of folks who are having hard times who really appreciated that.

Now, with regard to students, because my colleague was talking about students, our government has invested in Nova Scotia's students quite heavily. We increased the weekly amount of financial assistance students are eligible for, and we capped student debt. We introduced the Graduate Retention Rebate, which puts money back in the pockets of recent graduates who choose to stay here and work in the province.

You know, my son went to the University of King's College, during that double cohort year, and there wasn't anybody on his floor who was from Nova Scotia and a good many of those students have stayed here. We just heard a language bill discussed in here a few minutes ago and what were they talking about? The foreign students who come here and lots of those foreign students stay here.

In my area, my town is going up in population. We had a huge number of immigrants from Germany and Switzerland a few years ago but we're getting lots of people from the United Kingdom. I just talked to people who have moved here from Edmonton the other day. I talked to people who moved from B.C., so there are lots of people coming to the province, unlike the gloom and doom gang over there that want to say that's not happening.

We have also worked with post-secondary institutions, like the Nova Scotia Community College, to ensure students are getting education and training that employees are looking for. I hear this talked about a lot. I worked at the community college and I know how they do it. They talk to industry, industry says we need these workers and then they offer the training. If they think it's too much training, they suspend the course for a year, let those folks get absorbed into the market, and then do a new intake in the future.

We know that jobs are essential and very important to Nova Scotians. We had people in this very gallery, the Speaker's Gallery, we had people here from PROJEX, from IBM and the day we introduced them, the Opposition Parties were talking down the jobs they were bringing - 440, in one case, for PROJEX, and 500 for IBM. Those are good paying jobs, those are highly skilled jobs and they're jobs that our Nova Scotia students want. So talking down jobs, when you're standing over there on the other side, saying why aren't we growing the economy, discouraging employers from coming here.

Baskin Robbins makes all their ice cream here in Nova Scotia now, in a deal with Baxter dairies out of Truro. It doesn't make a whole lot of sense for people to be saying gloom and doom, when the economy is actually about to burst here a bit. We also recognize the very important role that small- and medium-size businesses play and we have reduced the small business tax on several occasions and in many cases, that's the first time in a long time that's happened. We recognize that training is important, both for people in the workforce now and for new people coming in.

Despite the cancellation of federal funding - which by the way in the context of Cape Breton, I think we could say lots about - our government continued to serve more

than 3,000 Nova Scotians who need help entering the workforce. Maybe we should take a tour of Cape Breton, let's go down Highway No. 19 - what's that, Inverness? What about the member for Inverness? Where was he when the Port Hawkesbury mill was going down? Not in a good place because he didn't say very much about it. Not in here anyway. Maybe he was talking to people somewhere out in the distance but he wasn't talking to people in here.

Let's go somewhere else. Let's go to Victoria-The Lakes. Where was that member when they were laying off people at Parks Canada? Where was he? Where is he now? (Interruptions) Talk to your friends in Ottawa. Let's go to Cape Breton North.

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

MR. RAMEY: They're stealing my time here by making all that racket over there. What about North Sydney, what about the people that got laid off at the post office there? Did we hear any chirping about that? Finally, what about the lovely Fortress of Louisbourg, what about the Parks workers who were laid off there?

There's been trouble in Cape Breton, we know that. We want the Cape Breton economy to grow, it's a beautiful place with beautiful people and you know what? Here's what I think in the final analysis about condemnation. Since the people on that side of the House seem to want to use that word, I would say the future starts here, I would say ships start here, I would say condemnation starts there. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Glace Bay.

MR. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise in my place and talk about this resolution and I know the member for Lunenburg West is very spirited in what he said there, even though it doesn't make a whole lot of sense and is pretty much factually incorrect. I'm not going to go there. I listened to the member for Cape Breton North and he made his points from his perspective and from the Cape Breton perspective and certainly from his caucus, and I'm speaking last here and I'm not going to go down the road of the government member who just spoke. That's not what I want to do here.

What I want to do is talk about the member for Halifax Fairview for a moment and some of the things he said last night. I had a ton of respect when that member was the Minister of Finance; I have a ton of respect for him now. I really appreciate extremely smart people and he is certainly one of those. I think that when he leaves this Legislature, regardless of the makeup and regardless of who is on what side, we will not be as sharp as a Legislature when he steps away. (Applause)

Mr. Speaker, the reason why I mention that member is because he said something to me on a couple of occasions during private chats, and he referenced it last night in his

speech. He said I implore all members and I encourage all members - paraphrasing, of course - to end the partisanship. He did say "on all sides," so he was talking about all three Parties and anyone who sits in this Legislature.

I think that when he says to me, again on different occasions, we don't get anything done here, there's a lot of truth in that and there's a lot of fact in that, Mr. Speaker. It's become - and I don't think this word is unparliamentary, or anyone would disagree with me here - this is a very toxic environment. I can tell you that I didn't get in here, I didn't come and do this to operate in this kind of environment - and I'm looking forward to next week when we're out of here, and I look forward to being back in Glace Bay. I love my job as it relates to my community, but the negativity and the toxicity that takes place here has gone too far. (Applause)

Again, the reason why I stress that, Mr. Speaker, is because we - and the point for that member for Halifax Fairview was that we have no opportunity now, we don't take the opportunity to learn from each other at all. There are smart people on all sides of the House, people with ideas and people who could really - again, we're in it to create change and that has slipped away with respect to the Legislature, I think. Someday I hope it's important to members that we somehow get that back. I don't know if we're on a one-way path this session - it looks like we are - but, hopefully, we revert that.

Again, I think the value in that, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that we can help each other, and not everything that another Party does is a bad thing. If you look at the budget - I didn't support the budget, and we didn't support the budget, because I truly don't believe that in the context of what took place with the prepayments and with the estimates, that it's balanced. However, I'm not focusing on that.

One example of a good thing in that budget was the insulin pumps. I think we've all been vocal on the support of that, and the fact that the government made that decision in this budget is a good thing. Again, that's why we're here - it's those good decisions.

I think it doesn't matter. I could care less about past Liberal Governments, Mr. Speaker, and I could care less about past Progressive Conservative Governments; I wasn't elected then. I know one thing - any of the mistakes that any previous government has made, just like this government they were judged by Nova Scotians, and Nova Scotians voted and decisions were made.

Again, that's not about the government of the day, that's the reality of it. So they can talk about decisions and things that happened - and democracy works and if they are so right and those governments were so bad, then we know why they're here now. The reality is that this is their choice.

What we're talking about, and what this resolution speaks to is the economy of Nova Scotia. What really bothers me - and I know that the government has their role and

has their focus on what they want to do - what bothers me is it's really not fair to paint the picture of optimism for our economy when the numbers don't support it. That's fundamentally what my issue is with the economic development plan and with the fact that we spend \$150 million per year - that's the budget for the current fiscal - on things related to the economy and the government will talk about some of the one-offs and some of the things that they like to focus on; however, it's the broad stroke that's the issue.

Our provincial unemployment rate, 9.3 per cent, is not reflective of what's happening across the province. Halifax is booming and it should be booming. We want it to be bigger and better and we want it to grow and be the regional centre for all different types of things, from the universities, to the ships, to transport, to finances - the financial sector which is big here now - all of those things. The reality is that Halifax and its booming economy, its local economy, shrinks and diminishes that overall number for unemployment in Nova Scotia. Go outside of metro and 9.3 is a dream, and Cape Breton is one example. I know these numbers have been tabled many times: 11.5 per cent in the Valley, North Shore is 13 per cent, South Shore is 13.2, and of course Cape Breton is north of 18 per cent now and climbing and we suspect that it will get worse during the next StatsCan report which comes out this week.

The point being is that it's one thing to celebrate the Halifax economy and talk about what things are working here, and the cranes in the sky and all those types of things, but it's borderline insulting to suggest that the rest of the province is booming and that things are great, and the member will get up and he'll talk about Cape Breton and he will, of course, turn the debate federal and talk about Parks Canada. I've certainly been vocal and I know that they've heard - the members in this room - with the Parks Canada cuts, I know what impact the EI changes have had in our communities.

But I also, to echo the comments from the member for Cape Breton West, Mr. Speaker. This is the Legislature of Nova Scotia, this is the place where we have to control what we can control and we control very specific policies with respect to economic development that make a difference. First of all, power rates have impacted our economy across the board and the point that it impacts an entrepreneur, it impacts a start-up, it impacts a small business looking to expand, it's ludicrous to gloss over that fact and say that isn't reality because it is. The red tape and some of those things that happen in the economy and with small businesses, and the Canadian Federation of Independent Business would certainly attest to the impact that that's had.

The fact is that our growth is only going to happen through innovation with respect to entrepreneurs and small businesses. I think that the mindset of taking a four- and five-person operation and turning that into a six-to-eight person operation, that's the way the economy will grow; 95 per cent of our economy is fuelled on small businesses. We always think corporations and those big conglomerates and those international companies, but that's not what keeps the economy alive. If you pull one out of the economy, if you took

the corporations out of the economy - the impact would not be as great as those small, independent operations.

The reality is that I think, in my own opinion - and I think I have credibility when speaking about business and economic development and those things - we've got to switch direction. Again, back to the point about previous governments, I could care less what corporate welfare took place in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s because I wasn't there, it wasn't under my control and regardless of what Party, I would like to think that if I was on the government side and I disagreed with an investment or would challenge that, then I would do so on behalf of the people of Glace Bay. That's all I represent now and they're the people that I like to hope to look after as best I can in this Legislature. It's 2013 and we've got to start acting like it's 2013 in this House with respect to how we steer the economy.

When you talk about the amounts of money that have gone out - I'm not going to pound that again because I'm short on time, but that is not the way to do things. It hasn't borne fruit for the province and we need a drastically different direction. We talk about out-migration and the member opposite talked about university and the NSCC, and all post-secondary education. Well, those opportunities are going to be there with small businesses, with start-ups, and inside the minds and the skills of those students themselves. We want them to start their own business, we don't want to have that reality - the mindset now is that people just know they are going to go out West, Mr. Speaker, and we've got to change that mindset.

In closing, the only thing I would like to add and mention to the government is that it's not the responsibility, these high unemployment rates and the things that are happening, they are not entirely responsible, but that is the reality and they've got to use the tools in their toolbox to fix those things and there is never one easy answer, but it's the direction that we have to be concerned about and we've got to take away the rhetoric and make sure that we are putting policies in place that put people back to work, and with that I'll take my place.

MR. SPEAKER: I want to thank all members for their participation in tonight's debate.

The motion is carried.

[The House rose at 5:30 p.m.]

NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3)**Tabled April 24, 2013****RESOLUTION NO. 808**

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

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

Whereas Frank William Nichols of North Kentville dedicated nearly 50 years of his life to the democratic process as a passionate campaigner and Party organizer for the PC Party; and

Whereas he was honoured as the Kings North PC Volunteer of the Year this past February at the AGM; and

Whereas Frank worked hard every day of his life and was so deserving of his successes, and he will be sadly missed;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly send condolences to the family and friends of Frank William Nichols and honour him for his contributions to his community.

RESOLUTION NO. 809

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

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

Whereas Joan Jones, a lifelong resident of Parrsboro, recently passed away; and

Whereas Joan was an energizing force, serving as town councillor, Main Street coordinator, and on a variety of boards, including the Parrsboro and District Board of Trade and Ships' Company Theatre; and

Whereas her storefront has remained a part of the downtown for more than 35 years, serving generations, and she worked tirelessly to keep the downtown thriving and full of opportunity;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly send condolences and best wishes to the family of Joan Jones, an exemplary Parrsboro businesswoman and a model of community and spirit and dedication.

RESOLUTION NO. 810

By: Vicki Conrad (Queens)

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

Whereas presentations of live music are important cultural events; and

Whereas these events bring communities and individuals together socially and creatively; and

Whereas Little River Folk, of Petite Riviere, has been supporting and presenting live music for eight years;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly recognizes and congratulates Little River Folk on its eighth year of supporting and presenting live music in Petite Riviere.

RESOLUTION NO. 811

By: Vicki Conrad (Queens)

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

Whereas MLA Constituency Assistants are the foundation of the provincial government through their understanding of the political process, possessing knowledge of how to access services, serving as facilitators for communication between constituents and their MLAs, and providing follow-up to constituents; and

Whereas Leitha Haysom, Constituency Assistant to the MLA for Lunenburg, in addition to strengthening the ability of her MLA to represent her constituents, has consistently risen above her duties to ensure respect, consideration and acknowledgement is provided to all constituents; and

Whereas today we honour all administrative professionals throughout Nova Scotia for the value and expertise they bring to their roles;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly recognizes Leitha Haysom for her contribution and dedication to the political process and her MLA for Lunenburg congratulates her on her outstanding performance in her position as Constituency Assistant.

RESOLUTION NO. 812

By: Vicki Conrad (Queens)

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

Whereas MLA Constituency Assistants are the foundation of the provincial government through their understanding of the political process, possessing knowledge of how to access services, serving as facilitators for communication between constituents and their MLAs, and providing follow-up to constituents; and

Whereas Margaret Keats-Hogan, Constituency Assistant for the MLA for Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage, has consistently risen above her duties to ensure respect, consideration and acknowledgement is provided to all constituents; and

Whereas today we honour all Administrative Professionals throughout Nova Scotia for the value and expertise that they bring to their roles;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly recognizes Margaret Keats-Logan for her contribution and dedication to the political process and her MLA for Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage congratulates her on her outstanding performance in her position as Constituency Assistant.

Tabled April 25, 2013

RESOLUTION NO. 838

By: Mr. Alfie MacLeod (Cape Breton West)

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

Whereas today is World Malaria Day; and

Whereas across the globe people will mark today by acknowledging the significant progress we have made in combatting malaria and other infectious diseases; and

Whereas though we celebrate the lives saved and the great strides we have made, we must remember that we have not eradicated this disease and there is still much left to do;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly acknowledge today as World Malaria Day and help to raise awareness of the disease for people in their communities and those who travel abroad.

RESOLUTION NO. 839

By: Jim Morton (Kings North)

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

Whereas the work of the Women's Institutes of Nova Scotia has been strengthening rural communities across the province since 1913; and

Whereas the Institutes provide Nova Scotia women with opportunities to enhance their own quality of life through education and personal development, and to benefit their communities by supporting projects such as farm safety, heritage preservation, healthy living, and educational opportunities for youth, among others; and

Whereas in Kings County, members of the Burlington, Cambridge, Delhaven, Grand Pre, Lakeville, Lockhartville, Medford, Port Williams, Scotts Bay, Sheffield Mills, South Berwick, and Weston institutes will be joining their sister branches in celebrating the 100th anniversary of the Women's Institute in Canada with special events and gatherings throughout 2013;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate members of the Women's Institutes of Nova Scotia for 100 years of dedicated service to communities across the province and acknowledge their exemplary contributions to Kings County, to Nova Scotia, and to Canada.

RESOLUTION NO. 840

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

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

Whereas in January of this year, Nova Scotia and Canada lost an extraordinary citizen, community leader, and history-maker; and

Whereas Daurene Lewis, Canada's first African-Canadian female mayor, Member of the Order of Canada, board member for national and provincial organizations, and a pinnacle in our community for decades, has left a legacy that will inspire future generations; and

Whereas I had the honour of serving with Daurene on the board of the Neptune Theatre and she inspired everyone who came into contact with her for not only her accomplishments, but for her philosophy towards life, and I think this quote demonstrates that: "I want people to feel valued, happy, and excited about their very existence";

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly send their condolences to the family and friends of Daurene Lewis and honour her achievements and the tireless work she did towards helping thousands of people realize their own achievements.

RESOLUTION NO. 841

By: Hon. David Wilson (Minister of Health and Wellness)

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

Whereas a recent World Health Organization report highlighted that about half of the world's population are at risk of contracting malaria and that in 2010, 219 million cases were reported worldwide; and

Whereas today, April 25th, is World Malaria Day, and this year's theme is Invest in the Future. Defeat Malaria, and since this day was established in 2007, the World Health Assembly has worked to reach a goal of zero malaria deaths by 2015; and

Whereas although the incidence of malaria and death rates are shockingly high, much progress has been made in the global fight against this preventable disease;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House recognize today, April 25th, as World Malaria Day and support this year's theme, Invest in the Future. Defeat Malaria.

RESOLUTION NO. 842

By: Hon. Michel Samson (Richmond)

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

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

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

Whereas Ben Mury of West Arichat received the Diamond Jubilee Medal in recognition of his commitment to his community - Ben has been a member of the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 150 for 27 years and has served as Sergeant-at-Arms for 20 years, and he is a key player at all the veterans' funerals and conducts them with dignity and respect for the family;

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

RESOLUTION NO. 843

By: Mr. Chuck Porter (Hants West)

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

Whereas this week is Provincial Volunteer Week, and the Town of Hantsport was delighted to honour Reverend Daniel Jamer as its 2013 Volunteer of the Year; and

Whereas in addition to his pastoral duties at Hantsport Baptist Church, Reverend Jamer has been very busy in his community, working with the local food bank and food drives; art classes and Paint the Port Art weekends; organizing the Heart and Stroke Indoor Walk for Health; promoting Movember and other cancer fundraisers; and supervising the kitchen for the Hantsport Fire Department Awards Banquet, fundraisers, and veterans' dinner; and

Whereas Reverend Jamer is also behind the monthly Dinner and Fellowship for Seniors, supervised community church services for special functions, and has worked with the Alzheimer's Society awareness campaigns;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly send congratulations to Reverend Daniel Jamer of Hantsport on being named the 2013 Volunteer of the Year, and wish him continued success with his important community work.