



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Gordie Gosse

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Fifth Session

THURSDAY, MARCH 28, 2013

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House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, THURSDAY, MARCH 28, 2013

Sixty-first General Assembly

Fifth Session

11:00 A.M.

SPEAKER

Hon. Gordie Gosse

DEPUTY SPEAKERS

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

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please.

The honourable member for Argyle.

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I stand this morning on a point of order, and it is with regret that I rise on the point of order on a serious matter arising from yesterday's Question Period.

Yesterday, the House witnessed a minister provide various pieces of information about a client in the care of her department. Giving such personal information is not only a breach of the law but also is clearly unacceptable in this House.

In reviewing the precedents, it is clear to me that there is a well-established practice, so universal that it is an enforceable convention of this House. I will ask you to find that the comments of the Minister of Community Services were not in order and that it will be up to the minister and the Premier to do the right thing.

The situation I'm referring to happened when the minister was being questioned by the member for Bedford-Birch Cove. The member pointed out personal information about a particular person's case that may have been better suited for a private meeting and not in the public domain, but it is the responses of the Minister of Community Services that are so galling.

I will table the transcript and highlighted portions of the minister's answers that I believe are in question - and I think I have them right here. The minister is responsible for many very vulnerable people's personal information, so how can she be trusted after such a serious breach?

When I was minister of that department it was clear that it was completely inappropriate to give personal information in the House. All ministers learn that that is a hard line which they cannot cross. It is the custom of almost every minister of every department which possesses personal information.

According to Beauchesne, at Section 317, "Points of order are questions raised with a view of calling attention to any departure from the Standing Orders or the customary modes of proceeding in debate or in the conduct of legislative business and may be raised at virtually any time by any Member . . ." Clearly, Mr. Speaker, the custom of this House is that no minister should ever mention personal information about a client of his or her department. It is driven in part by law and in part by the deep sense of respect of what is fair to mention in debate in public. These customs are defensible as written rules and equally as important to good order and honourable conduct. Several ministers in Canada have been forced to resign for revealing personal information. I cite the following precedents as examples, but there are others, including in Nova Scotia, going back many years.

In April 1991, Ontario's Health Minister resigned for breaching the privacy of a man's medical records; in October 2005, New Brunswick's Family and Community Services Minister resigned after he released the name of a ward of the province to the media; in February 2010, New Brunswick's Minister of Justice resigned amid allegations that he broke the law and violated the privacy rights of a New Brunswick woman; and in March 2012, British Columbia's Minister of State for Multiculturalism resigned when he inappropriately shared government correspondence with a private company.

At the very least, I would respectfully ask that you find that the minister breached a custom of this House, and I would ask that you review this and come back with an answer at your earliest convenience.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, the member brings up an issue here that in the questioning there was information that was led by the questioner, and then the respondent - that was information that was public before that. It was in the public domain before the minister had responded. With those few comments I would like, when you make your decision, to have that in mind - that this was public knowledge before the minister responded. Thank you.

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

MS. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, in bringing up the question yesterday, number one, I did have permission from the mother and from the client in question. Number two, the information that the minister did offer up was not in the public domain before Question Period that day, and was not in my question as well. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: I will take the point of order under advisement, and I will report back to the House at my earliest opportunity.

Before we begin the daily routine, the topic for late debate has been submitted by the member for Bedford-Birch Cove:

Therefore be it resolved that the Premier, while in Opposition, called user fee hikes “across the board tax increases” but turned around and hiked 1,400 user fees and Nova Scotians are fully expecting the Minister of Finance to hike user fees late this afternoon, further squeezing Nova Scotians and making life even less affordable under the NDP.

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Finance.

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to table a Notice of Fee Increases, Pursuant to the Fees Act.

MR. SPEAKER: The report is tabled.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 5 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 5 of the Acts of 2011. The Elections Act. (Hon. Stephen McNeil)

Bill No. 6 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2010. The Finance Act, Respecting Intergenerational Reporting. (Hon. Jamie Baillie)

Bill No. 7 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 260 of the Revised Statutes of 1989. The Liquor Control Act, Respecting Injunctions. (Ms. Diana Whalen)

Bill No. 8 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 217 of the Revised Statutes of 1989. The Income Tax Act, to Provide a Food Bank Donation Tax Credit for Farmers. (Mr. Leo Glavine)

Bill No. 9 - Entitled an Act to Review the Funding and Delivery of Public Education in Nova Scotia. (Hon. Karen Casey)

Bill No. 10 - Entitled an Act to Promote the Development of District and Neighbourhood Geothermal Heating and Cooling Systems. (Mr. Andrew Younger)

Bill No. 11 - Entitled an Act to Review Ancillary Fees at Universities in Nova Scotia. (Mr. Zach Churchill)

Bill No. 12 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 376 of the Revised Statutes of 1989. The Public Service Act, to Establish the Office of Fire and Emergency Services. (Hon. Stephen McNeil)

Bill No. 13 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 260 of the Revised Statutes of 1989. The Liquor Control Act, to Permit the Operation of Businesses that Assist Others in the Making of Beer, Wine or Cider. (Ms. Diana Whalen)

Bill No. 14 - Entitled an Act to Support Diabetic Persons in Nova Scotia. (Mr. Leo Glavine)

Bill No. 15 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 1 of the Acts of 1995-96. The Education Act, to Ensure Appropriate Class Sizes for Grades Primary to Three. (Hon. Karen Casey)

Bill No. 16 - Entitled an Act Respecting the Review of the Green Energy Equipment Tax Credit in Manitoba for Implementation in Nova Scotia. (Mr. Andrew Younger)

Bill No. 17 - Entitled an Act to Review the Public School Programs in Nova Scotia. (Hon. Stephen McNeil)

Bill No. 18 - Entitled an Act to Support Students with Diabetes and Other Life-Threatening Illnesses. (Hon. Karen Casey)

Bill No. 19 - Entitled an Act to Provide for the Establishment of an Entrepreneur Stream Under the Nova Scotia Nominee Program. (Ms. Diana Whalen)

Bill No. 20 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 25 of the Acts of 2004. The Electricity Act, Respecting Renewable Energy Providers. (Mr. Andrew Younger)

Bill No. 21 - Entitled an Act to Ensure Appropriate Supports in the Classroom for Children with Special Needs. (Hon. Stephen McNeil)

Bill No. 22 - Entitled an Act to Establish Joseph Howe Day. (Ms. Diana Whalen)

Bill No. 23 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 217 of the Revised Statutes of 1989. The Income Tax Act, to Provide a Nova Scotia Sound Recording Tax Credit. (Mr. Harold Theriault)

Bill No. 24 - Entitled an Act to Develop a Multi-year Funding Framework. (Ms. Kelly Regan)

Bill No. 25 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 195 of the Revised Statutes of 1989. The Health Act. (Hon. Stephen McNeil)

Bill No. 26 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 31 of the Acts of 1996. The Sales Tax Act. (Mr. Harold Theriault)

Bill No. 27 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 120 of the Revised Statutes of 1989. The Daycare Act. (Ms. Kelly Regan)

Bill No. 28 - Entitled an Act to Review the Provincial Tax Regime. (Hon. Stephen McNeil)

Bill No. 29 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 213 of the Revised Statutes of 1989. The Housing Development Corporation Act, to Establish a Housing Development Corporation Board. (Ms. Kelly Regan)

Bill No. 30 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 213 of the Revised Statutes of 1989. The Housing Development Corporation Act, Respecting CMHC Funding. (Ms. Kelly Regan)

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

NOTICES OF MOTION

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Opposition.

RESOLUTION NO. 37

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

Whereas on January 26, 2013, Annapolis Royal, Nova Scotia, and Canada lost an exceptional individual in the sudden passing of Daurene Lewis: and

Whereas Daurene will be forever remembered for her leadership in municipal politics, her tireless work and advancement of Mount Saint Vincent University's Centre for Women in Business, and the leadership she exhibited as principal of two Nova Scotia Community College campuses in Halifax; and

Whereas Daurene's community-at-large became a much better place as a result of her volunteer activities with organizations such as the Vanier Institute of the Family, the Maritime Conservatory of the Performing Arts, the International Women's Foundation, and the ISIS, to name but a few;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of the Legislative Assembly extend our sympathies to Daurene's family and many friends and reflect upon and remember, through a moment of silence, the immense contributions Daurene Lewis made to our province and country.

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.

[A moment of silence was observed.]

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

RESOLUTION NO. 38

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, if I may, I would like to request a moment of silence after the reading of this resolution.

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

Whereas ECMA award-winning songwriter and Juno-nominated guitar player Jay Smith of Whitney Pier passed away yesterday, on March 27, 2013; and

Whereas Jay had an unmatched spirited drive in his guitar playing that made him the choice of recording artists Matt Mays and Gordie Sampson; and

Whereas musicians feel emotion on a deeper level, and their music is a gift that brings happiness into our lives;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly extend our condolences to Jay's family, and may our prayers and thoughts be with him this Easter weekend.

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.

[A moment of silence was observed.]

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Deputy Premier.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, with the indulgence of the House, would you please revert to the order of business, Government Notices of Motion.

MR. SPEAKER: There has been a request to revert to the order of business, Government Notices of Motion.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Finance.

RESOLUTION NO. 39

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall:

(1) read and table the message from His Honour the Lieutenant Governor transmitting the Estimates of Sums required for the service of the province for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2014, for the consideration of this House;

(2) table the Estimates Books;

(3) table the Crown Corporation Business Plans;

(4) table the Estimate and Crown Corporation Business Plans resolutions;

(5) deliver my Budget Speech; and

(6) move that the Estimates of Sums required for the service of the province for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2014, being Supply to be granted to Her Majesty, and the Crown Corporation Business Plans be referred to the Committee of the Whole House on Supply.

Mr. Speaker, for the information of the House, the budget will be presented on April 4th.

MR. SPEAKER: The notice is tabled.

[NOTICES OF MOTION]

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Richmond.

RESOLUTION NO. 40

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

Whereas Strait Area Transit is a unique, community-based public transportation model serving the Strait area of Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Strait Area Transit has provided much-needed transportation for the residents of Richmond, Inverness, and Port Hawkesbury to attend medical appointments, school, and other activities; and

Whereas at 4:00 p.m. on Monday, March 25th, Strait Area Transit suspended its operations due to financial difficulties, creating tremendous stress for its many users and employees;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly work together with provincial, municipal, and federal representatives to find a long-term solution to ensure the viability of Strait Area Transit.

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. 41

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

Whereas burn survivor Michael Gaultois is bringing his motivational message to local junior high students this Spring as part of a proactive effort to reduce grass fires; and

Whereas Michael was just 15 when he suffered burns to 90 per cent of his body and he hopes that his message about positive choices might save local youth from suffering the same fate; and

Whereas Michael also addresses first responders and emergency services personnel with the same message;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly acknowledge CBRM Fire Services, the Cape Breton-Victoria Regional School Board, the Department of Natural Resources, and the Cape Breton Regional Police Services for taking this proactive approach to a reoccurring Spring threat, and thank Michael Gaultois for sharing his personal story.

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. 42

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 Premier hiked 1,400 user fees late one afternoon outside of the Legislature in an attempt to avoid notice by Nova Scotians; and

Whereas the NDP hiked the HST after specifically promising not to, shifted two university payments into one year, and have consistently made spending projections and employee estimates higher than actuals; and

Whereas the NDP tore up the MOU with municipalities with no notice and failed to disclose a \$27 million overstatement in revenues;

Therefore be it resolved that the NDP's track record of university prepayments, consistent technique of making spending projections and employee estimates higher than actuals, and failure to disclose a \$27 million revenue overstatement highlights their inability to manage the finances of the province and brings into question the veracity of their budgetary reporting.

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 Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party.

RESOLUTION NO. 43

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

Whereas the Mayflower Curling Club team of Matthew Manuel, Ryan Abraham, Nick Zachernuk, and Alec Cameron are the 2013 Nova Scotia Under-18 Provincial Champions; and

Whereas this weekend the team will be travelling to Stephenville, Newfoundland and Labrador, to compete in the Under-18 Atlantic Curling Competition at the Caribou Curling Club; and

Whereas this is the first time the young team will represent their province in regional competition;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House wish the Mayflower Curling Club team all the best as they head to Newfoundland and Labrador today to proudly represent Nova Scotia in the Under-18 championships.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Kings West.

RESOLUTION NO. 44

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

Whereas the fate of our province and country lies in the hands of our youngest citizens; and

Whereas 14-year-old Cassidy Megan from Halifax, the original founder of Purple Day, was in Ottawa on Tuesday of this week to celebrate legislation tabled last June by the honourable member for Halifax West which recognizes March 26th as Purple Day for Epilepsy across our great country; and

Whereas Cassidy Megan founded Purple Day when she was just 9 years old, and today, March 26th, was set aside nationally and internationally in 70 countries worldwide to deepen our knowledge of epilepsy, dispel the myths, and improve the lives of those who are living with the disorder;

Therefore be it resolved that all Members of the Legislative Assembly be ever mindful of the social isolation and the work barriers experienced by Nova Scotians living with epilepsy, and acknowledge that our province and country are in great hands under the leadership of Cassidy Megan.

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. 45

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

Whereas on Saturday, February 23, 2013, the 1st Annual Steve MacDermid Memorial Scholarship Hockey Tournament took place in Baddeck; and

Whereas the tragic passing of Steve MacDermid last Fall not only left a void with his grieving family, but also in the sports community where he contributed much of his life to volunteering and establishing school teams in Baddeck and Iona; and

Whereas his devotion to his wife Grace, his children Ben, Caleb, and Jessica, and the love of sports resulted in \$5,400 being raised as the community honoured his memory by developing this scholarship;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly recognize the contribution and legacy the late Steve MacDermid has left to his community, and congratulate all volunteers and participants on their success with the 1st Annual Steve MacDermid Memorial Scholarship Hockey Tournament.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Colchester North.

RESOLUTION NO. 46

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

Whereas firefighters may be called upon to risk their lives to successfully do their jobs, yet they are often humble and modest about their acts of bravery; and

Whereas in 1981, 19-year-old firefighter Ed MacLean entered a burning house in Lake Ainslie, Cape Breton, three times before successfully rescuing 3-year-old Melanie Campbell, who had been hiding under her parents' bed; and

Whereas earlier this year, at a special celebration at the Lake Ainslie Fire Department, Ed had an opportunity to meet Melanie again, 31 years after he carried her from the burning building;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House congratulate Ed MacLean for his heroic efforts in saving Melanie Campbell's life, for his special recognition by the Lake Ainslie Fire Department, and for receiving the Heroes Award from the Valley Kempton and District Fire Brigade, in Colchester North, where he is currently an active member.

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. 47

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 after four years, Boyd Bond is stepping down as president of Eastern Passage Minor Basketball at the end of April; and

Whereas Boyd has been a mainstay of the basketball community, having coached the Eastern Passage girls team for eight years and the EPEC Junior High girls team for the past three years; and

Whereas Boyd devoted a large portion of his life to the sport in Eastern Passage, organizing work shifts and vacation time to ensure he was available for practices and games;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly salute Boyd Bond for his dedication and commitment to the Eastern Passage sporting community, and thank him for his service as he steps down as president of Eastern Passage Minor Basketball.

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. 48

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

Whereas the students of Basinview Drive Community School in Bedford have teamed up with local musicians to record a CD to raise funds to build a new playground for the younger students at the school; and

Whereas Thom Swift, Jeremy Fisher, and Meaghan Smith are among eight professional artists who recorded tracks on the CD, called Basinview Rocks; and

Whereas the making of the CD exposes the children to the joy of music, while providing them a new and safer place to play;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly congratulate everyone involved in this innovative funding project and wish the students good luck in selling their CD.

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. 49

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

Whereas on May 3, 2010, Petty Officer Second Class Craig Blake, a member of the Navy Fleet Diving Unit, was tragically killed by an improvised explosive device while in service of his country in the Panjwai District of Afghanistan; and

Whereas Petty Officer Blake was a natural athlete and loved to play sports, especially with his two sons Cain and Tie in Montebello Park near their Dartmouth home; and

Whereas community members, Councillor Darren Fisher, and members of Petty Officer Blake's family - Mrs. Priscilla Blake, and Cain and Tie Blake - have begun the process through the Halifax Regional Municipality to rename Montebello Park to Craig Blake Park in his honour;

Therefore be it resolved that members of the House of Assembly support the renaming of Montebello Park in Dartmouth East to Craig Blake Park in honour of Officer Blake's commitment and sacrifice.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Yarmouth.

RESOLUTION NO. 50

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

Whereas for many years, Rev. A. D. (Bill) Newell has been actively and generously giving back to his community including his involvement in the Rotary Club, the Yarmouth Food Bank, the Yarmouth Fuel Bank, the Yarmouth Fire Department, Big Brothers Big Sisters, and chairing the organizing committee of the 2013 Special Olympics Nova Scotia Provincial Winter Games, which were held in Yarmouth in February 2013; and

Whereas on April 15th, the 39th Annual Provincial Volunteer Awards ceremony will take place in Halifax; and

Whereas the Town of Yarmouth has selected Rev. Newell as its Volunteer Representative for 2013;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly congratulate Rev. Bill Newell on being named the 2013 Volunteer Representative for the Town of Yarmouth, and thank him for his many years of selfless and unwavering devotion to his community, which has had an incredible and tangible impact on the lives of many.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Leader of the Opposition.

RESOLUTION NO. 51

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

Whereas on May 25, 2013, members of the Soldiers' Memorial Hospital Auxiliary will commemorate 60 years of enhancing health care in the eastern end of Annapolis County; and

Whereas the Soldiers' Memorial Hospital Auxiliary is comprised of volunteers who contribute countless hours to fundraising to assist in purchasing equipment that enhances health care delivery to patients in their community; and

Whereas through the efforts of this organization, Soldiers' Memorial Hospital is a better-equipped facility;

Therefore be it resolved that the House of Assembly thank members of the Soldiers' Memorial Hospital Auxiliary for 60 years of providing support to the community and hospital, and congratulate them on a job well done.

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. 52

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 Strait Pirates' playoff run continues with their 4-1 series win over the Glace Bay Miners in the final of the Sid Rowe Division of the Nova Scotia Junior B Hockey League on Tuesday, March 26th; and

Whereas the Strait Pirates have advanced to the finals and await either the Brookfield Elks or the Sackville Blazers, who are playing in the Fred Fox Division final; and

Whereas under leadership of head coach Tim MacMillan, the Strait Pirates have played solid and disciplined hockey;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of the House of Assembly congratulate the Strait Pirates on winning the Sid Rowe Division final and wish them well in the upcoming finals of the Nova Scotia Junior B Hockey League.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Yarmouth.

RESOLUTION NO. 53

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

Whereas Virginia Stoddard has been a dedicated and tireless volunteer in her community for many years, giving her time and energy to the Hear! Here! Music Society of Yarmouth, the Yarmouth Art Society, the Yarmouth Public Library and Museum, Yarmouth County Museum, and the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia's western branch; and

Whereas on April 15th, the 39th Annual Provincial Volunteer Awards Ceremony will take place in Halifax; and

Whereas the Municipality of Yarmouth has selected Virginia Stoddard as its Volunteer Representative for 2013;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly congratulate Virginia Stoddard on being named the 2013 Volunteer Representative for the Municipality of Yarmouth, and thank her for her enduring dedication to those in her community.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Argyle.

RESOLUTION NO. 54

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 March 3rd, the Barrington Arena Lions Club won the annual Nova Scotia Lions Curling Club championship which was held in Meteghan; and

Whereas the Barrington Lions have been competing in the annual bonspiel for about 30 years and, although they have been runners-up in semifinals, they have never won; and

Whereas team second Robert Hopkins, skip Murray Atkinson, and third Billy Symonds, lead Mervyn Perry, and spare Paul Nickerson won the Phinney Trophy by a score of 7 to 6 over the Yarmouth Lions;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate the Barrington Area Lions Club, Robert Hopkins, Murray Atkinson, Billy Symonds, Mervyn Perry, and Paul Nickerson on winning this trophy, and wish them success in 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 Dartmouth East.

RESOLUTION NO. 55

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

Whereas Mel Boutilier was born on January 29, 1928, in Seabright, Nova Scotia, and vowed at an early age to always help others in need; and

Whereas for over a quarter century Mel has run the Parker Street Food and Furniture Bank, taking no salary for his work, providing food and other necessities to those affected by poverty; and

Whereas Mel has been the recipient of the Order of Nova Scotia, a Canadian Volunteer of the Year, and the Order of Canada;

Therefore be it resolved that members of the House of Assembly recognize the credo “Volunteers aren’t paid, not because they are worthless, but because they are priceless”, and congratulate the priceless Mel Boutilier on his 85th birthday, wishing him many more years of happiness and service to the community.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Victoria-The Lakes.

RESOLUTION NO. 56

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

Whereas Victoria County resident Calvin Hillier recently received a life membership award from the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 53 in Baddeck; and

Whereas Calvin has been recognized many times over the years for his volunteer work and dedication in both the Sea Cadet movement and the Navy League of Canada; and

Whereas Calvin was also honoured with the Navy League Long Service Medal and appreciation awards from Sea Cadet Corps in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Labrador, Ontario, and British Columbia;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Calvin Hillier on his awards and thank him for his ongoing and outstanding contribution to his community.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Colchester North.

RESOLUTION NO. 57

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

Whereas Kraft Canada runs a contest called Kraft Hockey Goes On, which awards \$1 million to local minor hockey associations across Canada; and

Whereas Richard Halverson, manager of the North Shore Recreation Centre, located, in Tatamagouche, Colchester North, was nominated as one of the top 100 nominees from across Canada; and

Whereas each grand prize winning nominee will win \$100,000 for their selected minor hockey association, and 20 second prize winning nominees will receive \$20,000 for their selected minor hockey association;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Richard Halverson, the only nominee from Colchester County, for the Hockey Goes On contest sponsored by Kraft.

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. 58

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

Whereas Connor Shepard from Louisbourg graduated on February 15th as a primary care paramedic from Medavie HealthEd school of paramedicine; and

Whereas Connor Shepard is the son of Glen and Eleanor Shepard; and

Whereas Connor is also one of Louisbourg's volunteer medical first responders;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Connor Shepard on this great accomplishment, and wish him all the very best in his 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 Cape Breton West.

RESOLUTION NO. 59

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

Whereas Ashley Hanna, a Grade 4 student at Mountain View Elementary School from Howie Centre, has made her schoolmates and everyone in her life aware of epilepsy, a disease that affects over 300,000 Canadians; and

Whereas Ashley Hanna was diagnosed with epilepsy when she was just 5 years old; and

Whereas Ashley is on a mission to educate everyone in her school about epilepsy, and on March 26th, which is National Purple Day for Epilepsy in Canada, everybody at her school wore purple;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate and thank Ashley Hanna; her principal, Jeannie Stone; and all the staff and all the students from Mountain View Elementary for making everyone aware of this Purple Day.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS

MR. SPEAKER: The time is now 12:02 p.m. We will finish at 1:02 p.m.

The honourable Leader of the Opposition.

PREM.: FIN. MANAGEMENT - FICTION

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, over the past three years the Premier has lost credibility when it comes to financial management. We know that his budget last year overstated revenue by \$27 million. This was more than an error. It was a conscious effort to make the numbers match the storyline instead.

When it comes to the management of the province's finances, the Premier has shown - time and time again - fiction after fiction. So why should Nova Scotians expect anything different next week?

HON. DARRELL DEXTER (The Premier): Mr. Speaker, what this government has demonstrated is some of the best financial management practices that the Government of Nova Scotia has ever seen. In fact, we have changed past practices to reflect greater transparency. We have done more in the way of multi-year budgeting. We have set targets and met them. We have ensured that the expenditures made by our departments consistently come in under budget.

That is the record of this government. It is a good one and we are proud of it.

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, he forgot to add that he added \$1.4 billion to the debt of the Province of Nova Scotia.

This come down to an issue of trust. This is a Premier who hiked 1,400 user fees late on a Friday afternoon, and today he hiked those fees once again, with an even greater number. He hiked the HST after specifically saying he wouldn't, shifted two university payments in one year, tore up the MOU with municipalities without notice, and failed to disclose \$27 million overstated in revenues in last year's budget.

If Nova Scotians could not believe last year's numbers, why should they believe next week's?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I understand that when it comes to the performance of the province and when it comes to the fact that we have a group of very hard-working people here who are trying to make sure that we balance the challenges that governments face with the opportunities that are out there, that is not something that the Leader of the Opposition and the Party that he represents want to encourage.

The reality is that this is the job we have. We are supplying the services that the people of this province require, because this government is about the people. This is about ensuring that they get what they need in order to be able to live lives of dignity, in order to make sure that young people are able to get a job when they need one, and in order to make sure that the children who go to our schools get the education they need. That is the job of the Government of Nova Scotia. We are doing it, and we're doing it within the financial ability that the province has.

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, the job of the government, and indeed any Nova Scotian, is to be open and honest and truthful. When you knew there was a mistake in last year's budget and yet you stood in this House and allowed that myth to continue, and continue for a year, and only pointed out by the Auditor General, it speaks to the arrogance and credibility of this government.

There isn't a single employer in the Province of Nova Scotia who wouldn't fire an employee who misled them. My question for the Premier is, did he fire the former Finance Minister, or did the former Finance Minister quit after tabling a budget he knew had a \$27 million error?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, try as they might, the simple fact of the matter is that the Leader of the Opposition misstates this completely. The former Minister of Finance followed the procedure that Liberal Governments would have followed in the past, which is to choose a date on which economic data is fixed, and it goes into the budget the way it should.

The Auditor General was advised of the incoming economic data. He was advised that it would be added in the first financial forecast. He accepted that, and in fact, he did a letter which was included with the budget debate that specifically said that he agreed with the revenue forecast for the province. That, of course, is the way that it should be done. He also put forward in his last report a number of recommendations with respect to transparency. As I've already pointed out, this is a government that is leading the way in Canada in transparency. We're going to adopt those recommendations and make the financial reporting of our province even stronger.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle.

COM. SERV.: CONFIDENTIALITY BREACH - MIN. RESIGN

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: My question is for the Minister of Community Services. Yesterday in Question Period, the minister revealed very personal information about an apparent client of her department. I tabled that information earlier. I've already cited a number of precedents and how it's virtually automatic that a minister resigns under those circumstances.

My question to the minister is, will she resign immediately and apologize to the persons that she hurt with her breach of confidentiality?

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, my answer is no.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: I guess there is not even an apology coming here. Mr. Speaker, it's not surprising that the minister fails to understand the consequences of her actions or how serious they are. The minister is responsible for hundreds of case files for very vulnerable people who must be able to trust her to keep their personal information confidential.

Last year, we called for her resignation over her handling of the Talbot House file and her department's public and personal dismissal of the respected executive director. Of course she refused at that time but shortly after, the Premier took away her responsibility

for that file and Addiction Services. The minister was caught up in multiple flip-flops about the fate of private daycares, and earlier this week, in the Speech from the Throne, it appears the Premier took that responsibility away from her too.

So I will ask the Premier, will he remove the minister from Cabinet for this shocking breach of confidentiality, or will he merely take away her responsibility for all her client files, one by one, until she has none left?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, yesterday in the House I reviewed the information that was provided by the minister, and I have to say, I've often thought that the questions that get asked are difficult ones for any minister. It's particularly difficult for ministers with portfolios like the Department of Community Services. I found the answer that the minister gave in relation to that file to be compassionate, to be understanding, and trying to address what is a very serious issue, and she did so. I think that was entirely appropriate.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: Clearly this Premier excuses every incompetence within this government. With every breach he stands by a budget cover-up of \$27 million, which his Treasury Board deliberately overlooked, but the Auditor General did not. He kept his minister around with demoted responsibilities in spite of a string of issues that shows that she is not up to the job and he himself thinks it's okay for a Premier not to know what is happening with his own government, but he is the Premier who ducked responsibility or leadership at every turn.

Will the Premier finally do something and remove a minister who divulged personal information in clear contravention of law, practice and decency?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, nothing really could be further from the truth. What the minister said was perfectly appropriate, certainly within the rules and has no bearing on the release of information, all of which was already in the public domain. It is simply the case that the minister takes each of her files very seriously and I think, like all of us, would wish nothing but the best particularly for those people who are vulnerable, who come to us with issues and problems.

The minister, I think, forthrightly says that when these kinds of issues come forward that she is demonstrating great leadership in trying to deal with the issues head on. In my view, she should be congratulated for that work and not chastised as the member for Argyle would have us believe.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

ENERGY: MUSKRAT FALLS - RATES

MR. ANDREW YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Energy. The NDP have claimed again yesterday that the Muskrat Falls project is the

cheapest solution for energy for Nova Scotians, yet they have not proved that or, if they have the proof, they are hiding the information from Nova Scotians. Even Emera says, “A final decision about how customers will pay for this new source of electricity, and over what period of time, will actually be determined as part of a general rate application process before the UARB in 2017.”

It’s interesting that the minister seems to know what the rate will be because he’s obviously telling everyone it will be the cheapest option but even the proponent of the project says they don’t know. Will the Minister of Energy tell us what the rate for Muskrat Falls energy will be when it is landed in Nova Scotia?

HON. CHARLIE PARKER: Mr. Speaker, certainly the Maritime Link provides many opportunities for Nova Scotians to provide the lowest, fairest rates for electricity in this province. It provides stable prices for 35 years. I would suggest the honourable member might want to read the Dalton report that will give the assumptions and the details on why this is the best deal for ratepayers in this province.

MR. YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, Mr. Dalton’s report has been widely discredited by many of the experts in the field who have said that it actually misrepresented a lot of the numbers. He actually made claims about organizations that the organizations themselves said were inaccurate. This is exactly what the NDP did with the recent call for proposals on renewable energy. They set up a process whereby Nova Scotia Power could undercut independent renewable energy suppliers and download the cost to ratepayers. If you look at the South Canoe project, as an example, it moves ahead with uncertain costs when in fact, Dalton, who the minister referenced, said that he told the department that there were risks associated with the way that would be done.

Once again, the NDP chose higher profits for Nova Scotia Power and Emera so they could spend that money outside of Nova Scotia over jobs and economic opportunities in green energy in Nova Scotia. Why did the minister allow the IPP process to be rigged so that Nova Scotia Power could download their capital cost to ratepayers while driving away new renewable energy investment that would have created new rural jobs in Nova Scotia and cheaper energy prices in this province?

MR. SPEAKER: I was having a little problem hearing today for a second there - did you say the word “rigged”? I think that word is unparliamentary.

MR. YOUNGER: I will withdraw that word.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

MR. PARKER: Mr. Speaker, certainly you’ve referenced Mr. Dalton of Power Advisory, a well-respected energy expert in the North American market. In fact, he has done work for this province since about the year 2000. Under various governments, he has

done work in New Brunswick and Vermont and various other jurisdictions in eastern North America, and he lives by his reputation. He has to defend his reports before public utilities like the Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board, and he has to have credible evidence, all the evidence will be cross-referenced by other interveners, and that's how he stays in business. He lives on his reputation. So I take umbrage with the honourable member's information on Mr. Dalton.

In reality we have a plan for energy in this province, certainly the Muskrat Falls is a part of that, but we've taken the HST off of home energy, we've introduced Efficiency Nova Scotia to provide relief for low-income - and really for all Nova Scotians, and we have a plan to have the lowest, fairest electricity rates in this province.

MR. YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, Mr. Dalton was asked about this on February 27th, and he said - and I'll table this from The ChronicleHerald, "Dalton said Tuesday he does agree that allowing the utility to charge its capital costs back to ratepayers does give the project 'a different risk profile' that the other projects had." So the minister is wrong. Mr. Dalton actually said that he advised (Interruption)

At the same time, this minister can't tell us the price of this energy. His department was presented with a proposal, which he decided to turn down, from a renewable energy in Cape Breton that offered a guaranteed rate for longer than 35 years, at a cost cheaper than Muskrat Falls, that offered almost all of its economic opportunities in Nova Scotia, instead of most of them in Newfoundland and Labrador, offered a lower carbon footprint than Muskrat Falls, and delivered jobs in Cape Breton. This minister and this Premier said no. I will table the comparative cost analysis by Cape Breton Explorations for their project, which the minister already has, of course.

So, Mr. Speaker, why did the minister refuse to allow a renewable energy project that offered to deliver fixed prices, good jobs in Nova Scotia, a new green investment in Nova Scotia, and instead choose to only support a project that costs ratepayers more than that one and helps make Nova Scotia Power even more money?

MR. PARKER: Mr. Speaker, our goal here is to bring the lowest, fairest electricity rates for Nova Scotians, and I have to ask the honourable member, what's the cost of the Liberal plan? I haven't seen that yet either. All I see is talk about Hyrdo-Québec, Hydro-Québec, and more Hydro-Québec, so when are you going to start standing up for Nova Scotians?

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

FIN.: UNIVERSITY PREPAYMENT - DETAILS

MS. DIANA WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance. Let me read a comment from the Hansard Subcommittee of the Whole House on Supply,

October 5, 2009 about prepaying universities and fiscal shell games, “Well, I have a view of why they did that. They did that in order to make this year’s books look as good as possible, knowing they were on the eve of an election.”

The members of the House might be wondering who said that. And I’m sure the minister is wondering who said that. Well, Mr. Speaker, it was the current member for Halifax Fairview, who was the Finance Minister at the time. He made these comments while he was continuing the very same practices that he was disparaging, while he was doing a prepayment to universities. That is what the NDP Government does, how they do business. Saying one thing, and doing another.

Mr. Speaker, after proving that the NDP is more than willing to say one thing and do another, and after having shown that, in past budgets, the NDP has been comfortable with playing financial shell games, the question for the minister is, how can Nova Scotians be certain that this Finance Minister has not pulled yet another prepayment in order to make this year’s books look as good as possible, knowing that they are also on the eve of an election?

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, universities are a really important feature of Nova Scotia’s economy and our learning environment. We’re very lucky to have a strong university sector in our province. And if universities are in a situation where they require support from this government on an annual basis, we work very hard to accommodate what those needs are. Whether or not there’s a prepayment in any year, it means that the next year, it might also be prepaid, but it doesn’t make any difference really. It means that the money is properly accounted for, the payments go to where they’re needed and this gives us the strong university sector that we enjoy in the province.

MS. WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, in their first budget, back in 2009, the NDP pulled the same sleight of hand that the former government had tried to pull - that was with prepaying universities in one year and not the next, in manipulating what the budget would actually show.

When the previous government front-loaded their budget prior to the 2009 election the NDP cried “foul” and, in fact, the Premier called it a “fudge-it budget”. If this is the legacy which is now the NDP’s record, shifting around payments, hiking fees, failing to disclose significant financial information - and this Finance Minister has given Nova Scotians no reason to trust her today - will the minister tell Nova Scotians if there has been any prepayment to universities in this fiscal year that will alter the true budget that we’ll be seeing next week?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, all of the details of the budget will be available for the honourable member and the public on Budget Day.

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

PREM. - BUDGET ERROR: AWARENESS - TIME FRAME

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, yesterday in Public Accounts Committee, and again in this House, we learned that the Treasury Board decided to ignore a known error of \$27 million in the budget that was presented to all Nova Scotians - that makes the decision to ignore that error a political one and not an accounting one.

When the Treasury Board decided to ignore that known error and allow an error-prone budget to be presented, they took the integrity of this government into their own hands - either that, Mr. Speaker, or they went right to the top.

My question to the Premier is, when did the Premier know - on what date did he know that his budget was wrong?

THE PREMIER: The budget was never wrong and there was never an error made. The information went directly to the Auditor General. He was fully aware of it; he wrote a letter stating that the revenue projections were correct so that is the case.

As to his complaint around the \$27 million, I would have known that when he issued the further report that came out a couple of weeks ago, in February, because as the Auditor General pointed out it was not material. In fact it was the normal practice for governments right up until he complained about this particular instance - the same practice that the Progressive Conservative Government would have used for years.

In fact, what he did was make a recommendation with respect to greater transparency, one that had the previous government changed, this would never have been an issue, but they didn't. Mr. Speaker, we're going to adopt the recommendation because it's the appropriate thing to do, and I believe that this will create a level of transparency and integrity on our books that is appropriate.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General was very clear that this is a significant error, it is a \$27 million error - \$27 million is a lot of money to every Nova Scotian.

Yesterday at the Public Accounts Committee the Auditor General said that the issue of materiality is irrelevant to whether you fix an error or not. If the budget is wrong and you know it, you fix it. That is a principle that all Nova Scotians will understand - but the Treasury Board, knowing that the budget was wrong, chose not to fix it. And when they made that decision they took the integrity of this Premier's government into their own hands.

So I will ask the Premier whether any of his staff were present at that Treasury Board decision - I hope he answers, because we are going to do a freedom of information request and find out if they are there or not. But he can save the paperwork and clear this up right now and tell us whether his office was present when that awful decision was made.

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, while I will deal with the freedom of information request when it comes, I can tell him that what came to the Treasury Board - I went back and checked on this - was not a decision. In fact, they weren't asked for a decision at all, because there was no decision to be made. That was made by the Department of Finance, and the only thing that came to the Treasury Board was the revenue information - for information, not for decision.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, no one elected the Department of Finance. They elected that Premier and that government to tell them the truth when they present budgets to the people of Nova Scotia. The Premier might want to talk to his own Deputy Minister of Finance, who in Public Accounts yesterday said that the department sent the information to the Treasury Board. When she was asked who made the decision, she didn't say they did; she said the Treasury Board made the decision. That is a matter of record in Public Accounts.

I will ask the Premier, if he is so callous about the integrity of his own government, why does he sit idly by while it is under such serious question?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, the question that the Leader asked is simply factually incorrect. It says things that people said and other things that are untrue. The budget is prepared by the Department of Finance. It's based on the budget revenue estimates - remember, they're forecasts that are done on March 1st. Everything else that comes after that at that time, as was the practice with 10 years of Progressive Conservative Governments, is included in the first forecast update. That is the appropriate thing to do, and that is exactly what was done.

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

COM. SERV.: AFFORDABLE HOUSING - WAIT LIST

MS. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Community Services please tell members of this House how many families are waiting for affordable housing in Nova Scotia?

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, what I can tell the member opposite with respect to wait-lists is that the wait-lists themselves have different meanings. We have people on the wait-list who may want to move to specific affordable housing, and they have to wait for that particular house or apartment to become available, because it's something they want.

I also can say we are the first government in the history of Nova Scotia that is going to do something about it, because we are going forward with the first-in-Nova Scotia housing strategy.

MS. REGAN: Mr. Speaker, to answer my question, according to eligibility stats provided by the Department of Community Services, there are 1,777 families waiting for housing. That's 591 in HRM alone. Can the minister please tell members of this House how many seniors are waiting for housing in Nova Scotia?

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, what I would like to say about housing in the province is that it takes time to build the infrastructure throughout the Province of Nova Scotia. It's too bad that when the Liberals were in 10 years ago they didn't plant the seeds to go toward that, to be able to build housing. The same with the Progressive Conservatives - we wouldn't be having this type of issue in the province if they had done some planning.

We are doing something. We have come forward with announcing we will be doing a housing strategy that is going to help seniors. It's going to be able to help those who are most vulnerable.

You know what? We do something. We do not just say words without action. Our words always come with action.

MS. REGAN: Mr. Speaker, for the minister's information, there are 2,518 seniors across the province waiting for affordable housing. The department has information outlining need for affordable housing, yet this government has waited for the final hours of a majority mandate to even begin consultation. It would seem this is not the same NDP that touted social justice when they were in Opposition.

My question is, why is it taking so long - could it be that this NDP cares more about polling numbers than the number of families and seniors in need of housing?

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: We have worked from day one becoming government, for seniors, for the most vulnerable in this province. We have invested over \$420 million throughout all our departments, we have been strategizing, and we have been consulting. It is not last minute - they may make decisions on the last minute for political reasons. We have worked very hard. I travelled last Fall throughout this whole province; we received well over 500 pieces of correspondence and e-mails. We have the stakeholders in this province supporting what we're doing, and they have been involved with this process from day one.

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

TREASURY BD.: BUDGET MEETING - MINUTES

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, the Premier says he didn't know about the \$27 million error in the budget. That leaves that awful decision squarely on the shoulders of the chairman of the Treasury Board, where the Deputy Minister of Finance said at Public Accounts yesterday the decision was actually made. The decision to present a budget with known errors to the people of Nova Scotia apparently was made at Treasury Board, chaired by the Deputy Premier. So my question to the Deputy Premier is, who in the Premier's office got minutes of, was told about, was informed about the decision to go forward with the budget that they knew was wrong before it went to the printers?

HON. FRANK CORBETT: I'll tell the Leader of the Third Party, once again, that it was presented to Treasury Board as an item of information.

MR. BAILLIE: That's good to know, Mr. Speaker, because if it was presented as an item of information that there was a \$27 million mistake and then the Treasury Board had to deal with it, we're finally getting somewhere. Now either the chairman of the Treasury Board took the integrity of the entire government in his own hands when they made the decision to go ahead anyway and not tell anyone, or he didn't.

So I will ask the chairman of the Treasury Board, the Deputy Premier, did he tell the Premier that he had just approved a budget with a \$27 million mistake in it?

MR. CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, the only mistake here is in the line of questioning from that member. We told him again how this was presented to us, and we acted according to what the Auditor General wanted us and told us to do.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, no one is going to accept that the Auditor General told them, or wanted them, to leave the mistake uncorrected and not tell anybody about it when they presented it on Budget Day. That goes against every principle of transparency and fair reporting, and quite frankly, it goes against every principle of good governance, where if you make a mistake you tell people, if you have time to fix it you fix it. You don't say \$27 million is not very much money in a province where \$27 million to every single person who relies on a truthful government is a lot of money.

So I will ask the Deputy Premier, the chairman of the Treasury Board, why did he allow an error-prone budget to go before the people of Nova Scotia uncorrected?

MR. CORBETT: Again, Mr. Speaker, the only errors are, again, in the line of questioning. We reported it in the first financial update. I don't know what more I can say to that member to get it through to him that's what we did.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

**HEALTH & WELLNESS - PARAMEDIC EXODUS:
AMBULANCE SERV. - EFFECT**

MR. LEO GLAVINE: Earlier this year paramedics sent an alarm bell to the Minister of Health and Wellness, and to all Nova Scotians, about the exodus of advanced care paramedics to other jurisdictions. In response the minister stated, “There’s [sic] paramedics that leave every year in the province, and there’s [sic] new ones that are hired. It’s just like any other profession, really.”

In talking to paramedics in my community, they are telling us that it is moving from a trickle to a stream. In fact, they found the minister’s statement uncaring in such an important part of the emergency health services here in Nova Scotia.

Mr. Speaker, could the minister please tell all the members of the House how an ambulance service will be able to retain its world-class stature if we are losing our most advanced and experienced paramedics to other jurisdictions?

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question any time I have an opportunity to talk about our highly-trained paramedics in this province. I stand by what I said earlier. There are paramedics on a yearly basis who choose to leave the profession here in Nova Scotia. It’s very challenging when we see organizations from other jurisdictions, like Alberta, coming to our province and recruiting our highly-trained medics. It’s something I’ve seen through my career as a paramedic, and it’s something I’ve seen through my career as a political MLA.

We’re working extremely hard to create an environment here in Nova Scotia that appreciates paramedics, that gives opportunities for them to stay in the province, especially those medics who have been on the ambulance for a number of years. I’m proud of the work that this government has done to improve the working environment that our paramedics work in here in Nova Scotia.

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I’m hearing quite a different story from our paramedics from across the province. Many of them expressed their frustration around a lack of recognition for the ever-increasing role we have asked them to play in our health care system, respecting what they are asked to do on a daily basis and the challenges associated with policies they are asked to work within.

Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Health and Wellness, given that the minister has likely heard some of the concerns expressed as well, could he please indicate whether he has spoken to EMC about these issues, and if so, when?

MR. WILSON: Mr. Speaker, as I said, I was very proud to be part of a government that has increased the awareness of paramedics. I want to congratulate the former minister who had the foresight to see, as we move forward with Better Care Sooner, that a key

component of that is our paramedics. They are working in a number of environments that they never worked in before. It is because we recognize the importance of their skills, their training, and their dedication.

I know there are some medics who have chosen to leave the province. I don't hold that against any paramedic who makes that decision. It is a very difficult decision to decide to work out West. I know you recognize those decisions that Cape Bretoners have made to choose to go somewhere else to find employment.

I can guarantee - and I want to reassure paramedics that we highly respect the work they do here in Nova Scotia - that I am going to continue to work as Minister of Health and Wellness, and on behalf of the government, to ensure that they have every opportunity to prosper here in the province and to grow their profession, and to show the respect that they deserve.

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, who the minister really needs to give more assurance to is the people of Nova Scotia. I can assure you there are more ambulances leaving for trauma situations with no advanced care paramedic onboard.

The strength of our world-class emergency health system lies squarely with our paramedics. We have an emergency health service that Nova Scotians are very proud of, and we should be. However, when you are losing your most experienced paramedics - those who can mentor others, those who can deliver your clot-busting drugs, and those who can work in nursing homes, not to mention those who arrive at the scene of serious accidents for the purpose of immediate treatment and care - you are risking a great deal.

My final question to the minister is, how is the minister going to be able to sustain all of the wonderful things they have mentioned in the Throne Speech pertaining to emergency services when we are losing some of our most experienced advanced care paramedics?

MR. WILSON: Mr. Speaker, I want to reassure not only paramedics but Nova Scotians of the importance of ensuring that we have the right number of paramedics across this province. We work every day to ensure that if a paramedic leaves, especially an advanced care paramedic, those positions are filled with advanced care paramedics.

By the end of last year, we had over 295 advanced care paramedics in our system; in 2010 we had 294. So we're roughly keeping the same number of advanced care paramedics in the province. We know the importance of trying to encourage those primary care paramedics and intermediate care paramedics, who are in our system, to upgrade their skills, so that they can take full advantage of providing the services, like clot-busting drugs, Mr. Speaker, a first in North America, if not a first worldwide, here in our province.

So we're very proud and I'm very proud of the work we're doing. We're going to continue to work with paramedics to try to address the concerns that some have, and I'm very proud to move forward and work with them, and really show the recognition that paramedics deserve here in our province.

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

TREASURY BD. - BUDGET ERROR: CONCEALMENT - MIN. CONFIRM

MR. ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Deputy Premier was asked to confirm what the Deputy Minister of Finance said in testimony before the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. She said it was, "political masters", the Treasury Board, that decided not to reveal the \$27 million budget error. The Deputy Premier, who is also the chair of the Treasury Board, said "no". With his answer, a single word, the Deputy Premier undermined the testimony of a long-time respected public servant and deputy minister.

Will the Deputy Premier retract his statement and confirm it was, in fact, his decision to hide the \$27 million error?

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, again, this is the same question regurgitated by another member from the same Party. I answered it before; it was given to us as information. If they can't understand that, I don't know what else to tell them.

MR. MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, all we're looking for is the truth. The Deputy Premier cannot have it both ways. Either the deputy minister is right when she said that the decision to cover up the \$27 million budget error was made by the Treasury Board, or she isn't.

Nova Scotians deserve straight answers. It's time for him to come clean. Will the Deputy Premier clear up this contradiction between his version of events, and that of the Deputy Minister of Finance?

MR. CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, the only thing that has to be cleaned up here is his quotes. That's the reality here, is the quotes that he is making may be inaccurate. So I would ask him to go and look at Hansard, and put forward the proper quotes. We stand by our statements, and we support our senior civil servants too.

MR. MACLEOD: You know, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to this sad affair, all the roads lead to the door of the Deputy Premier's office. The government says that this is all part of their normal budget process. So, Mr. Speaker, if error-prone budgets are normal under the NDP, how can we trust the budget that they're going to deliver to this House next week?

MR. CORBETT: I guess that falls under “what you can’t do with fact, you try to do with bluster”, and he is not very good at either one, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Richmond.

PREM: STRAIT AREA TRANSIT - ASSISTANCE

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, since 2008 Strait Area Transit has been providing an essential, accessible transportation for residents of the Strait area, specifically Richmond County, Inverness County, and the Town of Port Hawkesbury. Whether it be for medical appointments, to attend Strait Area Campus of the Community College, or to attend other activities, many residents came to rely on this essential service. Unfortunately, on Monday of this week at 4:00 p.m., the Board of Strait Area Transit announced that it was going to cease operations, effective immediately, due to financial problems.

My question, Mr. Speaker, is to the Premier. Could the Premier advise what actions his government is prepared to take in order to assist in restoring Strait Area Transit?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I don’t know the decision that he’s referring to, but if he’d like to send it over to me, I’d be happy to receive it. In fact, when I was last in the Strait, I met with folks from the Strait Area Transit, my understanding is that we assisted them with the issues and the requests that they had. If there is additional information I’d be happy to receive it and to have a look at it.

In fact, this government sees the question of rural transportation as a very important one. It’s becoming increasingly important because of the aging population. Seniors have to be able to get to medical appointments. They have to be able to get to grocery stores. They have to be able to pick up prescriptions. We know this is a growing issue, and we’re trying to address it in a very proactive fashion. Can we do everything at once? No, obviously not, but we are mapping out a plan for community transportation which will benefit the people in the province. In the initial instance we’re working with community-based options.

MR. SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, the Premier may have missed it, but I introduced a resolution earlier talking about Strait Area Transit and its closure and calling upon all members of the House to work together to find a solution. I was very pleased that that received the unanimous support of the House. As the Premier did indicate, I did have the opportunity in the Fall when Strait Area Transit was faced with financial problems to talk to the Deputy Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations and to the minister to seek financial assistance, which we’re very pleased that they did.

Unfortunately, even with that, the transit has found itself to the point that they were no longer able to operate past Monday of this week, and therefore the operations have ceased. I’m wondering if the Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations

could advise us as to what actions his department is prepared to take in working with all partners involved to restore this service immediately?

HON. JOHN MACDONELL: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question. I also thank him for the answer. It's our desire to meet with the stakeholders there. I think the member is aware that the department had given Strait Area Transit about \$120,000 last Fall, and another \$5,000, I think, two weeks ago. I think before we get too far down that road we want to have a discussion with stakeholders in the area, in particular the municipal units, to see what is possible to try to ensure the long-term sustainability of that service for the people in the Strait area.

MR. SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, I would certainly hope that the minister would be prepared to have that meeting as soon as possible. I can tell you, my office has been flooded with calls - parents of children who are attending the ROC in Port Hawkesbury, for example, on a daily basis. We're hearing from students who go to the community college, from people who have regularly-scheduled medical appointments, whether it be physio or dialysis, and they really have no option as to how they are going to get to and from now that Strait Area Transit has ceased its operations.

I was pleased to see in the Speech from the Throne that the government did acknowledge the importance of community-based transportation, so I guess my question to the minister is, is he prepared to commit to meeting with all stakeholders next week so we can restore the service as soon as possible?

MR. MACDONELL: Mr. Speaker, I don't know what the possibilities around that are. I'm just thinking about the Easter weekend. I will direct my staff - and I think they've probably been having some discussions already, but I will direct my staff as much as that may be possible to try to see if they could do that. I'd like to participate in that meeting, and I'm not sure if I can, but I'll certainly see that the people in my department try to arrange that as soon as possible.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester North.

EDUC. - SCH. BDS.: BUDGET CUTS - DETAILS

HON. KAREN CASEY: Mr. Speaker, my question through you will be to the Minister of Education. Yesterday, after two attempts, the minister was unable or unwilling to answer a very simple question: how many school boards will see budget cuts this year? I trust that the minister has been briefed on that by now or has read some media coverage, so my question is, how many school boards will see budget cuts this year?

HON. RAMONA JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, we have eight school boards in the Province of Nova Scotia, and three of those school boards will be receiving more funding based on the population that they have within their schools, and five school boards will be

receiving funding appropriate to the number of students that they have in their system. We were able to make sure that we have guaranteed that our permanent teachers will be able to retain jobs by capping the reductions based on the declining enrolment to most of the school boards to 1.5.

MS. CASEY: It would have been great to have that information yesterday, however, the minister now does know it. Cape Breton-Victoria, Chignecto-Central, South Shore Regional, Strait Regional and Tri-County will all see direct funding cuts courtesy of this minister. So my question to the minister is this, with increasing operating costs and increasing program delivery costs, how are these five boards that are receiving less money expected to pay the bills without affecting students in our classroom?

MS. JENNEX: We are investing in our students across the province. We have increased the funding per student by three per cent this year. We have a problem in our province that we are dealing with that is a nationwide problem with declining enrolment and we are doing that by investing properly and appropriately in our children in this province.

MS. CASEY: I'm not sure how comforting those words will be to the parents and students in Tri-County or in South Shore. Both of those boards, Mr. Speaker - courtesy of this minister - have had funding cuts for the last three consecutive years. At the same time, courtesy of her NDP Government, power rates have been allowed to increase by 30 per cent. In 2012, for example, the power bill for Tri-County was over \$1 million, the power bill for South Shore was over \$1 million, and both of those are increases yet funding to those boards have been cut.

My question to the minister is, as power rates are increasing, as funding to these boards are decreasing, what programs and services is this minister suggesting should be eliminated so the boards can pay their bills?

MS. JENNEX: I trust that the boards will make the appropriate decisions and no programs from our public school programs will be cut from any of our boards. Our boards are there to make the appropriate decisions and we are funding them to do that and if they are having any trouble at all with their budgets we will send people down to support them.

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

EDUC. - SO. SHORE REG. SCH. BD.: SCH. CLOSURES - MIN. PREVENT

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Education. Education is the key to a confident, bright future for our young Nova Scotians. Rural schools are the heart of our communities supporting the development of our young people. This NDP Government is on a destructive path destroying communities and tearing their

hearts out. My question to the minister, will you step in to ensure that the South Shore Regional School doesn't cripple the communities of the schools on the chopping block?

HON. RAMONA JENNEX: I would like to thank the member opposite for the question. This government is very much invested in our communities and our school communities. His question is, I find, a little perplexing in that we are supporting all of our schools in the province and if they are having any significant difficulties with any of the budget considerations we are most definitely there to support them. I want to say again very clearly we do support our community schools and our communities and the children that go to those schools.

MR. ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, there has been 1.5 per cent budget cut to the South Shore Regional School Board this year alone, which equals \$1.8 million, and I have a document here to support that. The local economy has lost 5,600 full-time jobs since February 2009, and I have another document here to support that. In *The ChronicleHerald* there was an article that quoted chairwoman Jennifer Naugler as saying, "I'm very concerned we're dividing those communities we thought we were bringing together."

The communities want to make this work. My question is, will the NDP commit to stop working against Nova Scotians and start working with them to create a prosperous, bright future.

MS. JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, we are working with communities and we are definitely working with the school boards. Our school boards have put their name forward and have been elected to make sure that every student they have in their district receives the appropriate, equitable - making sure that they are getting everything they need with their public school programs. They're working hard to do that.

I have met with all of the boards in the Province of Nova Scotia over the last couple of weeks and they know that we are there to work together.

MR. ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, the South Shore Regional School Board is very efficient. They have weathered years of cuts under the current government, with no support for positive growth. Rural schools truly are the hearts of our communities.

Last May, a group called the Small Schools Delegation met and presented a brief called *Schools at the Centre*. The group asked to delay reviews in order to address some of their concerns, and we know there was "no dice." The response they received - thanks for your unsolicited brief.

Will the NDP continue to opt for their preferred recommendations, or will they step up and realize the people are right and their plan is ripping the heart out of communities across this province?

MS. JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, as I said, we are there to work with our school boards to make sure that every student in our province gets the schooling they need, the proper education. We are investing in our communities, and if any board is having any significant problems we are there to work together, to work with the community to make sure that every child has the opportunity to succeed.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

AGRIC.: ANIMAL PROTECTION - DETAILS

MR. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, there are many disturbing cases of animal abuse in our province. Unfortunately, we've seen little in the way of animal protection during this mandate of the NDP Government until recently. My question to the Minister of Agriculture is, what tangible and effective changes can the people of Nova Scotia expect from this government in this session?

HON. JOHN MACDONELL: Mr. Speaker, that's a good question. It's our plan during this session to introduce legislation that I think will tend to mirror legislation across the country in other provinces, to increase penalties, in particular, and clarify some language in the present Act.

I want the member to be aware that this would be the second time in our mandate that we've made adjustments to that Act, so I ask him to hold on, I think it will probably be a week or two before that legislation gets introduced.

MR. GLAVINE: I thank the minister for that straightforward answer. However, it is a shame that the NDP Government has not acted upon animal cruelty matters until now. Cases of abuse and puppy mills and terrible breeding and living conditions for animals across the province have occurred while government sat idly by.

Mr. Speaker, many of the changes government can make to address these issues can be made in regulations, not in legislation; therefore, the NDP did not have to wait for the legislative session to make changes. My question to the minister is, why has the minister waited to make changes in legislation when the changes could have been made in regulations by the Executive Council at any time?

MR. MACDONELL: I'd like the member opposite to think for a second around the issue on the broader scope. It's an animal health issue. We rely in particular on the veterinarians who work for us to advise us on legislation or regulations around animal health. We think it's important to listen to the people who are professionally trained in this area.

To this point in my time as minister, which is coming on for four years, there's nothing that they've brought to us that would indicate that there's anything that regulations

would have to be tweaked. We are doing a review of that legislation; we have some ideas of changes that we think would be significant and would mirror legislation across the country, but I want to make it clear that we really depend on information from professional veterinarians on how to go about legislation or regulation in terms of proper care for animals.

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

EDUC.: CHILD CARE CTRS. - FUNDING

MR. KEITH BAIN: Mr. Speaker, two days ago we learned that the government plans to create a new department, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. On a number of occasions we've asked the Minister of Community Services, who used to be responsible for child care, to clarify a statement she made with regard to funding for child care centres, and at best, she has been inconsistent.

My question is for the Minister of Education. Will the minister tell members of this House what plans her government has for the funding model for child care centres in Nova Scotia?

HON. RAMONA JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to stand here today representing the early years component of the work that this government does. It is very important that every child in this province has the opportunity to reach their potential, so this government is making sure that we're looking at education and child development from zero, from birth, right straight through to their years of schooling.

I'm very proud to be able to say that we will be talking about these initiatives in the coming weeks, and I'm very proud that at this time I'm representing Education and early childhood development. I look forward to being able to discuss this . . .

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

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, would you please call the order of business, Government Motions.

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, I move that the adjourned debate on the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne be now resumed.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Opposition.

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise to continue my address to the Speech from the Throne. It has been interesting reading over the last few days to have an opportunity to truly assess what has been put before this House as a political document and election platform. I think, to be fair to the government, there were a few things inside this document which provide a little bit of encouragement and comfort for Nova Scotians.

I know just recently at Question Period we talked about the early childhood development announcement, that that was to be developed inside the Department of Education. Let me tell you, this caucus fully supports and believes that we, as a province, need to develop an early childhood development program to give every child the opportunity to succeed as they go from birth and move through toward their journey through public education.

I hope as part of that there will be early screening and early assessment so that we can identify any challenges that may be there for young Nova Scotians, and that we can provide some supports around not just that young Nova Scotian, but around the family of that young individual, to be able to provide the supports that are required not only to allow that young person to move beyond the challenges they may face, but also provide the family with the supports that are going to be required to help that development as it continues to go.

I will send a note of caution. We have seen what this government has done to the P to 12 education part of that department with drastic cuts - \$65 million. During Question Period today we heard just what the increase in electricity by itself has caused for the boards across the province. You can imagine if all of a sudden one of your largest budget items is allowed to continue to go out of control at a rate of 30 per cent, and government is not there to backfill that revenue, it has to come from somewhere.

Boards are left in the very difficult position of having to make tough choices - whether they provide librarian service, whether they provide supports in the classrooms to teachers. I can tell you, as I travel the province and get the opportunity to talk to parents, students, and teachers, they are feeling that crunch now - it's evident in classrooms across the province.

Any economist will tell you that the last place, no matter how bad the economic situation is, you should be cutting to balance your books is from your education system. It is the key, quite frankly, for our collective future that we ensure every child gets an opportunity to reach his or her full potential. And yes, I agree with the government, that

doesn't start at Primary, it starts at birth. And we need to make sure that as we build the early development program that we are providing supports not only for that young person who may require it, but also for the family. But we can't do that at the expense of public education and continue down the road of cuts and more cuts, Madam Speaker. And particularly when we're allowing the boards to have to suffer through the inflationary costs of all the other parts of their budget that traditionally governments have always been there to support and backfill.

A couple of other aspects of this budget which, in the announcement, were short on detail, and that was the rural transportation strategy. Madam Speaker, it is also a positive thing, on the surface. We need to make sure, though, of the details in and around that rural transportation strategy and what they look like. I know there's amazing work done in around Clare, with Claredon Robichaud who has done tremendous work with Transport de Clare, and other communities.

The member for Richmond talked about, today, that their service is actually being closed because of inability to be able to deliver that - and I want to thank the minister who's responsible for that, the Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations who has agreed to sit down with the community and see if there is a way forward to provide a solution. But we need to look at how we enhance that - and for every rural Nova Scotian who requires some transportation assistance, the answer and solution sometimes varies and is different.

So I hope that as the details start showing up of what this strategy will look like, that we get a chance, that the community has a real chance to have input. And one of the great things about this province, and I mentioned Claredon Robichaud, and there are others across the province who have an expertise in delivering transportation to rural Nova Scotians. I would encourage the government to rely on that expertise, bring them in to help them formulate this policy in development as it goes forward.

It's one thing to say it in the budget or in the Speech from the Throne, it's quite another what the details of that look like, And I would be remiss if I didn't add this piece - and that is it is a real issue in rural Nova Scotia in terms of some transportation, well, let's not ignore the fact that it is in many parts of HRM as well - we need to make sure that when we do a transportation strategy we do so looking at the entire province. While the delivery model may be different depending on where you live, the need is still the same and we need to make sure that we work toward that.

One of the announcements I was quite encouraged by was the housing strategy. I know the minister referenced the housing strategy earlier and I must say I'm looking forward to that strategy being released because, Madam Speaker, I think it is the single most important thing that we can do, particularly for low-income Nova Scotians, Nova Scotians who are struggling under the burden of daily living, that we provide them with an affordable housing program.

It has been said many times, I've said it publicly, and I'll put it on record here - only through the grace of God my parents bought a house before my father passed away. Otherwise, I don't know what my mother would have done with all of us, not owning a home. We were fortunate to be able to have a roof over our heads, where she could close the doors and lock them at night and make sure that we were all where we were supposed to be and put our heads down. I can't imagine what her life would have been like without that property, without that house, without her ability to be able to rest those precious few hours that she might have gotten in the evening with 13 kids running around - I don't know what her life would have been like.

There are Nova Scotians, Madam Speaker, who are struggling every day under the same situation, with the lack of either home ownership or the lack of affordable housing in all of its forms.

I know that all members of this House, regardless of which constituency they represent, understand and identify the fact that there are many different needs of housing. We need an affordable way for home ownership, we need affordable rental situations. We also need shelter, Madam Speaker, for those Nova Scotians who just may need an opportunity to find their way in out of the cold, find their way in out of inclement weather, needing a place where they can put their head down at night to find a way to rest.

Madam Speaker, these are a few of the things that I felt were in the Speech from the Throne that were actually positive, but I want to ring a note of caution around them because it's really the detail that's going to matter for Nova Scotians. The slogans are one thing, what we say is another, but it's the delivery model that will really matter to Nova Scotians.

This government has a history of having slogans, having a big announcement, and then when you dig into the detail of it, it's a very different looking scenario. Just yesterday the Minister of Finance talked about the reduction of the small business tax but they forgot to mention, until quite a bit later in the day, that they also lowered the threshold, to bump some of those businesses out into a much higher tax bracket, Madam Speaker.

It is important that as we move down the road of developing some of these strategies and getting them off the paper into practice and reality, it's important that we recognize that we have people inside our communities who are a great resource, who could be part of helping develop those strategies as we go forward.

Madam Speaker, I don't want to talk all positive about the Speech from the Throne, there are a few things that I think it's important that Nova Scotians know about. I will say that Nova Scotians are watching what this government said a few days ago. They're watching to see, really, the implementation and what it's going to mean. They're watching to see if, quite frankly, they've learned anything over the last four years. They're watching to see if they're going to turn their words into real action and real, meaningful results and so are we.

Madam Speaker, as we know, over the last four years, we've added \$1.4 billion to the debt of the Province of Nova Scotia. That's 10 per cent of our collective debt since Confederation; 10 per cent of our collective debt has been added to the books of this province under the NDP in four short years. (Interruptions)

Madam Speaker, I'm hearing all kinds of stuff in the Chamber; the justification of increasing the debt or breaking promises is something that they're reaching back to the 1990s. I'm going to tell you, Nova Scotians are living in today and they've got real challenges facing them, I would suggest that the government move into today. Nova Scotians are being crushed, quite frankly, by electricity prices. They are being crushed by the fact that this government increased 1,400 user fees, but if that wasn't bad enough, today they tabled in this House increases to 1,400 user fees, but at a much larger rate than they did the previous time.

Think about this, all of the members of this House have people coming into their constituency offices, struggling to meet their daily needs, to pay their power bills. What does this government do? Instead of helping, it finds a way deeper into their pockets. That's not going to help us move our province forward, that's not an economic development strategy.

Madam Speaker, when we looked at the Industrial Expansion Fund, as this government was, we have been very critical of the way that fund has been used. This government boasted about the fact that it moved from the Industrial Expansion Fund. They renamed it. They actually changed something, too - they should have called it the corporate handout chequebook, because all they seem to do is, the larger the number, they'll accept it. They write the cheque. For six companies, we have written cheques for almost \$590 million - almost \$600 million - and there are 1,300 fewer Nova Scotians working for those companies today. I want you to think about that: 1,300 fewer Nova Scotians working for those companies after we have given them almost \$600 million. Under any other circumstances, no one would even consider that a good investment. If they were in Opposition they would be railing away at that.

Imagine what they would say if either one of us had written a \$260 million grant to Irving. Imagine what they would have said to that: a \$260 million grant to Irving. He probably wouldn't have been able to make the bottom line if we hadn't given him the money, and what was interesting is how over the last year the government said it was an important aspect of winning the ships contract. Well, Madam Speaker, we just discovered it had nothing to do with it. It was an absolute gift by this government to the Irving family. That's what it was. No one is being employed by that.

AN HON. MEMBER: There are 12,000 jobs.

MR. MCNEIL: No, it's not. It didn't help them win the contract nationally.

ANOTHER HON. MEMBER: It did.

MR. MCNEIL: It didn't. Even the Irvings will tell you it didn't help them. Even the Irvings will tell you, Madam Speaker, but I'll tell you what - I'm pretty sure they would have said thank you. I'm sure they would have said thanks.

Madam Speaker, there is a lot of noise.

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please. There is a little bit too much chatter in the Chamber.

The honourable Leader of the Opposition has the floor.

MR. MCNEIL: Madam Speaker, there is a lot of noise in the back bench of that government. Maybe they are upset that the Premier overlooked them and left somebody who is retiring in Cabinet over them. That's going to be a great story they have to tell their constituents.

When you look at that, though, when you look at the amount of revenue that we have spent out to lay off Nova Scotians, no wonder there are 6,400 fewer Nova Scotians working today. What's really interesting is that there are actually fewer people working today than in the height of the recession. Let me say that again, in case they didn't hear it: there are fewer people working today than in the height of the recession - I want you to think about that for a second - and we have given away hundreds of millions of dollars free, and yet we haven't created the jobs that should have been associated. Not a single job guarantee associated to any of that money we've given out. Not a single protection for Nova Scotia workers. Here's your cheque, cash it, and we hope that maybe you'll create some employment in the Province of Nova Scotia. Madam Speaker, that's not good enough for Nova Scotians.

As I travel this province, I meet entrepreneurs from one end of this province to the other, people who are working two-, three-, four-, five-person businesses, who are struggling to keep their businesses afloat, who are working as part of building a community, who really see their employees are more than employees - they see them as members of their community, they see them as soccer coaches of their kids, or Sunday School teachers. They see them as individuals who are trying to build a community with like-minded people, and the last thing they want to do is lay off one of those employees.

But you know the frustration they feel when they see their government take their hard-earned tax dollars and just give it away, and they say, well, wait a second, what about us? What about my grandparents and my parents, who started these businesses in some cases, who have weathered through tough economic times before and have been here through it all? What about us? Why aren't you betting on us? Why aren't you supporting us? Why aren't you supporting us to help grow the economy across this province instead of

looking for someone else? They are saying the only thing that we seem to be receiving are fee increases or tax hikes and a fee is just another way for a tax now, that we've seen what is happening under this government.

Do you know what they see? A 2 per cent increase in the HST, 1,400 user fees have gone up twice now in the last four years. On top of that we've added \$1.4 billion to the debt of the Province of Nova Scotia. We've cut funding from classrooms that the children are in, power rates are increasing at 30 per cent. No wonder Nova Scotians are frustrated, no wonder Nova Scotians are saying, hey wait a second, what about us when they see their government write these large corporate cheques with no job guarantees and no commitment to the people of this province.

Madam Speaker, power has been quite a topic in this province. You may have noticed a commercial that I've been in recently. It is one of interest and I've been really pleased with the response of Nova Scotians around it.

HON. LEONARD PREYRA: Who paid for that commercial?

MR. MCNEIL: I think you did, Leonard. (Interruptions)

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable Leader of the Opposition has the floor.

MR. MCNEIL: Madam Speaker, to the Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage, I think I was referring to the ad that he did, but I will remind him that the ads that I have done we've actually raised the money and maybe he ought to try doing some fundraising to see what happens. To my point, the challenge for those members is that they can't stand it when someone does the right thing. They can't stand it when someone actually stands up and tells the truth, that's the unfortunate aspect of that group. They had an opportunity to govern and they've squandered it and instead of running on their own record they are now beginning to make up stuff, that Nova Scotians have stopped buying quite frankly. Nova Scotians bought it in June 2009, but do you know what? They said no thanks this time around.

Nova Scotians have been looking at the challenges that are being faced with the actual energy crunch that they're feeling. Never in the history of our province has a government been so tied together with the monopoly in Nova Scotia Power than we have right now. It is so bad today that we have the Minister of Energy traipsing around the province promoting Nova Scotia Power, thinking Nova Scotia Power should be the only game in town, thinking Nova Scotia Power should have the right to run roughshod over the ratepayers in this province. We don't share that view that the member does and it's why (Interruptions)

MR. PREYRA: You think Hydro-Québec should be doing it.

MR. MCNEIL: If the Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage knew anything about it, he would know that his government is actually buying power from Hydro-Québec as he's sitting there talking. He is also the same minister who thought the government was going to fall when it's in a majority state and he's a political science professor, so that explains a great deal.

When you look at what's being talked about by the utility around the Muskrat Falls project, one of the things that we and ratepayers are seeing is that the utility - Emera and Nova Scotia Power - can go to their shareholders and tell them exactly how much profit they are going to make over the life of this contract. They can tell them that Nova Scotia ratepayers are going to pay for this Maritime Link for 35 years, they can tell them that at the end of that 35 years we're going to give it back to Newfoundland and Labrador, with no commitment to the energy that comes through it. We'll have to buy it like everyone else, we'll be stuck to buy it, unfortunately. They can do all of that, they can do everything like that, but they can't tell Nova Scotians how much it's going to mean to their power bill. It's rather interesting.

MADAM SPEAKER: Order. There are far too many side conversations going on. If you have a conversation with a colleague, take it outside. The Leader of the Opposition has the floor. (Interruption) It's becoming difficult to hear. Everyone's doing it. Enough.

MR. MCNEIL: Madam Speaker, they can tell their shareholders exactly what this project is going to mean to their stock price, what it will mean to the company's bottom line over the life of this 35-year deal and yet we can't tell Nova Scotia ratepayers what it's going to mean to their power bill. We have to wait until 2017.

Think about this for a second. We're going to sign a 35-year deal, we're going to commit to it, without ever knowing what the real cost is to ratepayers until two years after we're into the deal. It doesn't make any sense, no matter how you look at it.

We can disagree perhaps on how we should deliver a mixture of energy to the province, but I don't think anyone thinks it's reasonable for the ratepayers of this province to sign an agreement that they won't know what it means to their power bills until two years after they've signed it. It would be like buying a house and two years later they're telling you, by the way, this is how much you paid for it. It doesn't make any sense. Yet, we have a government going around the province promoting it as the best possible deal. How is that the case?

What we have said is, let's look at all of the options. Let's do a true analysis of Muskrat Falls and let's not sign a single thing until we get an opportunity to find out what the cost will mean to the power bills of ordinary Nova Scotians. Let's give the Utility and Review Board the time that they require to analyze this project and also give them the ability and time to look at other options like buying power from New Brunswick, investing in our own Bay of Fundy in an aggressive way to harness our own energy, using some of

our natural gas to blend the mix (Interruptions) Madam Speaker, I'm sure if they behave themselves, the Premier will let them stand up at some point to talk.

The fact of it is, this is a 35-year deal. I've heard members of the government talk about Newfoundland and Labrador signing an agreement with Quebec. They signed a long-term deal that they didn't know enough about. That's what happened to the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, and this government is going down the same road with Nova Scotians but the difference is we're the Newfoundland and Labrador in this deal. We're the ones that are getting the wool pulled over our eyes. We're the ones taking all the risk and it is Newfoundland and Labrador that will be rewarded and it will be the shareholders of Emera who will be rewarded for that.

They talked about the three-legged stool of increasing the revenues and they certainly did that, we've seen that with the HST increase, with 1,400 user fees after saying they weren't going to do that. The one stool they're having a real problem with is economic growth. Under this government, we have the worst performing economy in the country. We have fewer Nova Scotians working today than in the height of the recession. (Interruption) The Minister of Finance is having a problem. Let me reiterate that, fewer Nova Scotians working today (Interruption)

Madam Speaker, I will be more than happy to have Nova Scotians judge me on how truthful I've been with them, compared to that government. You remember, no tax increases. You remember that - no tax increases, balanced budgets, remember that? Remember that prepayment stuff, how bad that prepayment stuff was? Well, wait until tonight or tomorrow to find that the next big prepayment is going to happen as we head into the next fiscal year. Remember, this is a government that says one thing in Opposition and does something very different. This is a government that tried to hold everyone else to a different standard than themselves. The good news is that Nova Scotians are catching on to the behaviour of this government.

Madam Speaker, I want to go back to where I was talking about the worst-performing economy in the country - fewer Nova Scotians working today than in the height of the recession. I want you to think about that recession, how difficult that was on all of our provinces, on the country. Yet this government has done something that no other government could do - they have fewer people working now than when we were at the height of the recession. It's unbelievable.

What did they do? They turned around and increased the HST. What did they do after those 6,400 Nova Scotians lost their jobs and many others are struggling under the escalating power costs associated under this Party? What did they do? They raised 1,400 user fees, not once but twice. It wasn't bad enough that Nova Scotians are struggling because they are afraid to take on Nova Scotia Power; it's not bad enough that they're struggling under the pressures of the utility; it's not bad enough that they're struggling to keep their jobs; it's not bad enough that under this government Nova Scotians are being hit

in every corner. What did they do? They turn around and dig into their pockets one more time.

Madam Speaker, when I think about it, I don't know if I've mentioned earlier that the debt of the province has grown by \$1.4 billion under this government. That's 10 per cent of our collective debt, in four years.

No tax increases - you know what happened to that. Do you remember that? What are we getting for that money? More Nova Scotians unemployed, that's what we're getting. What are we getting for that money? We're betting on someone else to come in and solve the challenges of our economy, instead of working and betting on hard-working Nova Scotians. What are we getting for that money? Reduction in public education funding. Kids are being punished, being forced - fewer resources in the classroom. Communities across this province are struggling, and what do they get from this government? Big cheques to big companies, Madam Speaker. Corporate welfare - give it away, let them have it. (Interruption)

It's interesting to hear the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture talking about being against jobs. Nova Scotians would like to see a few more jobs in the Province of Nova Scotia. When they're spending their money they expect to see some results. What we have is \$600 million and 1,300 fewer Nova Scotians working for six companies alone, Madam Speaker.

The member would remember the big jobs he has been promised down in the aquaculture community in his community. We're still waiting for them to appear. We know what happens: they write the cheque, and they give it away without any commitment or job guarantee to the people of the Province of Nova Scotia. That's the worst performance of any government in the history of this province when it comes to economic development, and it's the worst performance of any government in the history of this province when it comes to corporate welfare.

Madam Speaker, there's no question - you don't have to ask me, they can cross the province. They can ask Nova Scotians. (Interruptions)

I hear the member for Hammonds Plains-Upper Sackville in the background. I suggest to him that if he behaved himself he might get an opportunity to stand on his feet at some other point.

Irving saw an opportunity to come in and they landed and they grabbed what they could, free money, Madam Speaker, let me tell you that, in the guise that they couldn't win the contract without - we know that's not the case, they could have won the contract; we know that. There is no reason why this government couldn't have looked at having that money repaid to the people of the Province of Nova Scotia.

Madam Speaker, I do want to also talk about the issue that was brought up by the member for Eastern Shore around the forest industry. Obviously, as you know, in southwestern Nova Scotia it's becoming a big issue, a big concern, around what the future is going to be for those lands that we have paid a substantial price for and how we are going to use those. There is the issue around this community forest concept and it is worrisome to say the least on some members of the community of what potentially may happen. I think it's important that as we do this - and I would encourage all members of the government to actually pay attention to the member for Eastern Shore who has a depth of knowledge, when it comes to the forest sector, that I think surpasses probably our collective knowledge in this House. (Applause)

Madam Speaker, the issue for many private-sector woodlot owners is what is this strategy going to look like, what is it going to mean to the market - is it going to depress prices? In southwestern Nova Scotia, like indeed all Nova Scotia, there are mixed-use farms, there are people who work outside of their land and use the forest as a way to provide some additional income to their family. They cut a few little logs; they sell them. They are concerned about this massive amount of public lands and what potentially could become a place for a lot of mills to get low stumpage, quite frankly . . .

HON. LEONARD PREYRA: We bought it back from those people; we bought it back from them.

MR. MCNEIL: . . . and a way to harvest more of their product without actually having to buy it from the private woodlot owners. That is a real concern and I would encourage the member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island to stop talking and listen to the member for Eastern Shore, because I'm telling you it is a real concern.

MR. PREYRA: We bought that land back after you had sold it off; we bought it back.

MR. MCNEIL: Madam Speaker, it is a real concern. It's one more indication of what potentially will erode rural Nova Scotia. We need to be very mindful of the unintended consequences of the decision. Government has bought the land, it's there. Now what is going to happen with it? And let's not engage the citizens in a charade, let's be open and listen to what ideas they may have. It is a real concern to private woodlot owners in southwestern Nova Scotia and, I would dare say, across the province, that this land does not become low stumpage which depresses the private-sector market, because I'll tell you there are many families, there are many mixed-use farms, quite frankly, that rely on that income, require that income to feed their families and keep them afloat.

So it is critical that whatever decision is made around that that it is done in the best interests of all Nova Scotians and that it is done with the idea that that resource needs to be there for the long haul, and we need to make sure that that resource is not harvested in a way that it will depress private-sector prices and force private-sector landowners to look

for work elsewhere because they can't sell their product here in the Province of Nova Scotia.

Madam Speaker, it is important as we move forward that this government takes its time around those community forests and, for God's sake, don't do any more damage to the rural economy than you've already done. (Applause)

Madam Speaker, I know the members of the government are quite exercised by the fact that they're getting an opportunity to hear what I've been hearing from Nova Scotians, the frustration they've been feeling from this government, the frustration, the disappointment, the anger they felt over this government saying one thing when they've been heading into an election campaign and doing the exact opposite.

I can tell you, as you travel the province, Nova Scotians are quick to point out that this is not what they thought they were getting in 2009, this is not the government they thought they would get. Really, what I think highlighted it and underlined it was the reaction of the government yesterday around questioning around \$27 million - saying it's no big deal, it's only \$27 million, what's the big deal, \$211 million, \$238 million deficit - it's no big deal, they shrug their shoulders.

Well, it's actually a big deal to Nova Scotians. They're struggling and the government shrugs its shoulders. What's even more galling is the fact that we now know that the Minister of Finance stood in his place in this House and delivered a budget that he knew was wrong, he knew the numbers weren't accurate. We now know the Premier knew so we now know that they stood in their place and we now know that they knew that the budget they were tabling was wrong.

I don't think it's too much to ask, I don't think Nova Scotians think it's too much to ask, that you deliver on the facts that you have. The government knew that there was a \$27 million error in their budget but the problem with revealing that \$27 million error was it meant they would have had to actually then say they weren't on track. It really wasn't about being up front with Nova Scotians, it really wasn't about laying out the proposal, the ideas, the facts that they had; it was about trying to meet their storyline. It was more important that they met their storyline than it was about being up front with Nova Scotians.

As the days unfold between now and next Thursday, we're going to see more of it. We're going to find out how much they're going to be able to offload to last year, to balloon the deficit to whatever it may be. They didn't care if there was a difference between \$211 million and \$238 million so I'm sure they'll pick another number that's a bit higher than that and offload some expenses and be able then to try to convince Nova Scotians that they've balanced the books.

I don't believe Nova Scotians will be fooled. They didn't accept it when the previous Tory Government tried it and I don't believe they'll accept it from an NDP

Government. What they want from their government, they want the government to be open and frank and honest with them. Nova Scotians are prepared to do their part, they've done it for generations, they're prepared to do what's required to move this province forward but they can't do it when the government is not being forthright with them. They can't do it when the Minister of Finance would stand in this House and deliver a document that's inaccurate - and he knew it was inaccurate - they can't do it when their government is betting on someone else from outside of our province instead of investing in Nova Scotians.

Madam Speaker, we look forward to next Thursday when this budget is going to be introduced, but you know what's going to be interesting is the stories that come out before then, actually before Monday. As we know, the offloading of a number of expenses, we'll see how much universities are going to receive early. Or maybe it's another large chunk of cash they want to offload. Just like they told us they weren't going to raise the user fees, but not only did they do it once, they did it twice. They enjoyed it so much last time they increased them more this time.

We look forward to the opportunity (Interruptions) I'm like most Nova Scotians, I'm living in today, and maybe if the government started living in today they might actually be doing a better job than they are now. Maybe rural communities would have doctors. Maybe emergency rooms wouldn't have been closed for 17,000 hours under the watch of this government. Maybe six emergency rooms wouldn't have been closed. I'm just saying, that's the reality of today. That's the reality Nova Scotians have to deal with with this government. If they want to live in the past, I encourage the Nova Scotians who are suffering today - and they might want to do something to accept the responsibility they were given in 2009 and do their job.

Madam Speaker, with those few remarks I will take my place. (Applause)

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please. Perhaps before we move to the next member to speak we can ask everyone to take a deep breath. We're only into day two. It is becoming increasingly difficult to hear the member speaking, and I would ask that (Interruptions) Sorry, day two of debate. Day three, yes. You are right.

The honourable Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party.

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Madam Speaker, I'm glad you had everyone take a deep breath because I know how much they are going to want to listen carefully to what I have to say.

It is my pleasure to rise on the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne, something that is becoming an annual event here in this House. Speeches from the Throne traditionally have been less frequent, but with the NDP it's every year, and we can see why. Each year they have felt the need to press the reset button on their record and hope Nova

Scotians will forget everything that came before and start all over again - kind of like the *Dallas* dream sequence, which some members will remember, where one of the lead characters on *Dallas* was killed off one year, but that didn't go over very well with the viewers, so they made up a scene where that had all been a dream so they could start all over again.

That is exactly what is happening here today. It's just like that bad dream in that *Dallas* season so many years ago. The NDP is hoping that with yet another annual Speech from the Throne we will all think the previous year had just been a bad dream and they'll get a whole new season. Madam Speaker, we'll see how often that works.

We do have a Throne Speech. We have a whole new Throne Speech again, and there are a few things that I do want to talk about, just right off the top, that I agree with. For example, I was very pleased to see in the Throne Speech that the government intends to set aside a day in Nova Scotia to remember those who have been lost at sea - a very important part of the economic development of our province, the risks that people have taken in the past and present and will again in the future to make a living for their families, to build up their communities - primarily rural communities, fishing communities. How appropriate now, when we have such a recent reminder of the dangers that many of our fellow Nova Scotians face every year as they go to sea and fish to make a living.

The community of Woods Harbour had a very tragic reminder, as the Throne Speech notes, when we lost Katlin Nickerson, Billy Jack Hatfield, Joel Hopkins, Steven Cole Nickerson, and Tyson Townsend. Having gone through that together just in the last month, one of the things that struck me was that it was not just a loss for the community of Woods Harbour; all Nova Scotians felt that loss.

In fact, there were memorial services, benefits, and fundraisers across the province in places like Pictou, and here in the capital, in Halifax, I attended one myself, as I'm sure many members did, as we all shared in the grief of that community and those families, and we all understood because we're fellow Nova Scotians, the risks that are run to earn a living in our fishing communities.

In my own riding of Cumberland South we have a number of fishing communities - Advocate Harbour along the Parrsboro Shore. I haven't done a count but I'll bet you many, many members of this House represent constituencies where there are fishing communities, so we share in that loss together. For that reason I believe it's appropriate that we set aside a day every year where we remember the hundreds of Nova Scotians through the generations, who go to sea to earn a living. It's an important part of our history and our present and our future.

Madam Speaker, while we're on the topic of the past year and the human loss that we suffer together as a province, I do just want to take a moment and recognize a few of the Nova Scotians we all lost who are mentioned in the Throne Speech who I knew personally,

starting with our 29th Lieutenant Governor, Mr. John James Kinley, who I had the pleasure of meeting and whose family I know, a family that has done so much not only for their home community in Lunenburg but through public service and through charitable works for our whole province.

Of course we pause at times like this and remember the loss of the Kinley family this year and a loss that we all share because Nova Scotians lost a great contributor to the public life of our province.

I'd also like to just pause for a moment, Madam Speaker, and recognize the loss of Raylene Rankin of the Rankin family. I grew up with the Rankin family. I know many members here are fans of the music of the Rankin family. I know that we all consider it a little bit a part of ourselves when we hear the Rankin family on the radio or we hear their music played around our province and, in fact, around the world. Their success shows that we do have a unique, Nova Scotian cultural identity, very impressively captured in Mabou and area in Inverness but also in other places, that has value, that has meaning, that is an industry unto itself, a cultural industry that not only people here in Nova Scotia value and want to hear and see but people around the world are willing to pay to buy a ticket, buy a CD, hear them in concert.

Madam Speaker, the Rankins set a whole new standard of spreading the Nova Scotia culture, particularly musical tradition, around the world. Raylene, who people who know her know was a wonderful person as well as a gifted musician, know the loss that we all feel, not just the Rankin family, not just the people of Mabou or Inverness but all Nova Scotians share in that loss. That's one of the things that makes us a great province, no matter where you were born, no matter where you come from in the world, no matter what your background is, no matter what station in life you started off in or aspire to be in, that when we lose Nova Scotians like those fishermen and like Raylene, that we all feel that loss.

Madam Speaker, Ruth Goldbloom falls into that category, another Nova Scotian who I had the great privilege of knowing and calling a friend for over 20 years. Her signature accomplishment, of course, is Pier 21, now known as Canada's National Museum of Immigration. We all know how tirelessly Ruth Goldbloom worked to make that happen. We all know it wouldn't be there today without the work of Ruth Goldbloom and the team that she put together. What we may not ever know in total, what we may not ever be able to add up in total was all of the other things that Ruth Goldbloom did for our province. All of the charities, all of the causes, all of the stitching of our social fabric that she did behind the scenes. You can count it in the hundreds and hundreds of different gifts of time and fundraising to make this province a better place.

I say that, Madam Speaker, because certainly her roots were in Cape Breton, and the people of Cape Breton feel that loss. Her home when she returned to our province from Montreal with her husband Dick, was Halifax, and all of Halifax feels that loss. But we

know from having lived through it just this past year that all Nova Scotians, together, feel the loss of someone who made such a great contribution to our province as Ruth Goldbloom - another example of how when one family loses a member of their family, we all feel it.

Daurene Lewis, another example. I had the great privilege of working with Daurene on a number of community initiatives, including serving together on the board of Neptune Theatre. Daurene's contribution to Annapolis, to her area of the province, is well known. It was historic, and I'm proud that Nova Scotia boasts the town with the first African Nova Scotian female mayor. But her contributions spread to all Nova Scotia, and her loss - again, a loss for her family, a loss for her hometown - is also a loss for all of us.

Paul Comeau from Clare, who I only got to know in the last two years - so dedicated to the Acadian Community, so entrenched in the Acadian history, so proud to be an Acadian Nova Scotian - and by the way, a very, very good cook, as anyone who has been to his restaurant will remember. On the lighter side, the loss that we feel, that that home that he turned into a restaurant, that still remained a home, closed with his passing. When it closed not only did his family suffer a loss, not only did his community - Clare and the Acadian community - suffer a loss but all Nova Scotia suffered a loss, and I feel very privileged to have gotten to know him, if just in the last years of his life.

Pat Connolly, from our sporting heritage, fits into that category. From now on generations of Nova Scotians are going to go to the Halifax Metro Centre to watch a hockey game, or a basketball game, or any event and they are going to see the Pat Connolly sportscaster's box. I hope for years and years to come they'll know why it's called that, because for Nova Scotians who grew up here, who follow sports here, for the last number of generations in the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, and up to this year, they knew the contribution that Pat Connolly made to telling the sporting story of Nova Scotia in its many forms. We all share in that loss together.

Madam Speaker, in the spirit of coming together as a Nova Scotia family, I am very pleased that the government included those individuals and many others, equally deserving, who I would like to talk about, but didn't get to know personally, who we all lost as a Nova Scotia family in the last year. To see the government recognize them in this way, recognize the loss of our fishing communities like Woods Harbour and set aside a day of remembrance, I think, is an appropriate thing. I know when that bill comes forward we'll be right there to help the government pass it, so Nova Scotians can have a way of remembering for all time the people who have come before.

Now, Madam Speaker, I do want to go on for a moment and reflect on what the Throne Speech means to my own constituency of Cumberland South. As some members - hopefully all members - in the House know, but certainly as my fellow seatmate from Cumberland County, the member for Cumberland North, knows, and I know the member for Timberlea-Prospect has a history in Cumberland County, and there are others who

know it's a beautiful part of our province. It's a constituency, by the way, that has been touched by its own tragedies throughout its history, as all Nova Scotians know. I mention the fishing communities, but throughout time it has also been a heavy industrial area and certainly is most well-known for its mining history.

The people of Springhill in particular remember well the many mining disasters throughout their town's history. I know that we pause and remember the more recent ones - the fire of 1956, the bump of 1958 - here in this House, and appropriately so. They remain among the largest workplace accidents in the history of our province.

I am proud to have met the remaining surviving miners from those disasters. Herb Pepperdine, for example, I've mentioned in this House before, was trapped for nine and a half days during the bump of 1958 and tells the story to this day of how he and his fellow miners who were survivors managed through nine and a half days underground. Dr. Arnold Burden, who is very active to this day, was one of the first to go underground with the draegermen as a doctor to look for survivors and to treat them and bring them to the surface. This is a history that the people of Springhill share, but it's a history that all Nova Scotians share as we pause from time to time and reflect on this great Nova Scotia family.

Madam Speaker, when I compare the lofty promises made in the Throne Speech to the needs and the reality of Cumberland County, I have to tell you I am very disappointed that the government has nothing worthwhile to say to the people of Cumberland County that will make a difference in their lives.

We have a government that insists that it wants to do something good for our kids in schools and education. I can run down the list of schools in Cumberland County that are either in disrepair or in threat of closure, or have had expansion plans cancelled because of the squeeze that the NDP have put on our school board. Just yesterday in this House I raised the sad story of the reconstruction of River Hebert District High School, a commitment four years old with the funding in place - commitment and funding made by my predecessor, Mr. Murray Scott, the former member for Cumberland South who I had the great honour of succeeding, whose projects like that one I intend to see through regardless of where the resistance comes from, in the NDP or the school board as the case may be, for River Hebert residents.

Madam Speaker, there is a school, Primary to Grade 12 coming together, an economically vital piece of the community of River Hebert, Joggins and area with the funding already in the budget, half done when the hammer came down and the work stopped. It is not right that we have Nova Scotia students crawling over a construction zone to get into a half-finished school, where the tiles on the floor are all curled up from the mildew and the dampness and the moisture and, literally, the snow that comes into the school when it's snowing - or the gym that's as old as time itself. What message is the government sending to the students of River Hebert when they allow them to go to a school

in that kind of disrepair, particularly when we know the funding is in place to finish the job?

There's nothing in the Throne Speech particularly about education that the people of River Hebert, Joggins and area can rely on when they look to their government to finish that school. I worked through the school closure process with my constituents in Wentworth with the Wentworth Consolidated School. If there was ever an example of how broken the school review process is it is on living display in the community of Wentworth Valley, where they have a school with a stable enrolment and actually the projection shows a slight growth in enrolment in the coming years, with a teacher-to-student ratio the same as any other school in the province, with a centrepiece building for the people in the Wentworth Valley to build their local economy around, forced to the brink of closure to save a few hundred thousand dollars. The burden of proof fell to the parents and residents of the Wentworth Valley up against hundreds of pages of reports prepared by high-priced consultants that were actually riddled with errors.

When the parents were able to successfully poke holes in those reports they were held back and frustrated as they tried to make their point. When they asked the school board and the Department of Education, itself, for information about the state of the school, its roof and so on they were told no, they can't have that information. I personally had to fall back to a freedom of information request to try to get the community the information it needed to counter the faulty report of the consultant that the school board had hired. Even that wasn't enough, parents spent hundreds of hours working to keep their school open.

I understand that the school board's money is for education. What gets missed is it's not for bureaucracy, it's for schools, classrooms and kids. When we tell the school board that we need that school to kick-start our community's economy, I understand why the school board would say, we're here to run schools, we're not the Department of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism.

As we know in the Wentworth Valley and as I know many other rural communities are now seeing in living colour, that faced the same situation, it is about time that the left hand of government and the right hand of government knew what each other were doing and work together. On the one hand, the NDP has created this commission on the rural economy to go out and gather good ideas about how to kick-start our rural economy and I'm glad they did, I have met with that commission and have given them my own thoughts. I have encouraged them to get whatever they need from us or from anyone else to put together a good plan, we all want that.

Anyone who has thought about how to run a 21st Century economy is going to tell you that one of the cornerstones is a modern, decent, 21st Century education for our kids. How crazy is it that on the one hand we have a government with a commission looking for ideas to kick-start our small, rural community economies and on the other hand they are forcing the school boards to close schools in those same communities. That is an example

of the right hand and the left hand of the NDP Government not knowing what each other is doing and only strong leadership can bring all the hands of government together in one, coherent whole and that is sorely missing and it is the communities of Bass River, of Wentworth, of Hebbville, of many other small communities across our province that are suffering because there is no vision in this Throne Speech, there is no plan to kick-start our rural economy in this Throne Speech and there is no thought to education other than cut, squeeze, less, and in all the wrong places by the way, which is at the small school level.

The government goes out of its way to point out the enrolment is declining, of course, it's declining, it goes out of its way to count up the square footage in those small, rural schools, it goes out of its way to produce graphs that show funding going up and enrolment going down. What they miss is that, whether you're in downtown Halifax or whether you're in Wentworth or River Hebert or in many other places, the teacher/student ratios don't vary that much. When you look at it that way, you realize that it should not matter where you live in this province, you deserve a decent, fair, public education. That's what has been lost in the last few years under the NDP. Certainly for the people of Cumberland South, there is nothing in this Throne Speech to show them anything different.

Mr. Speaker, there's very little for seniors in this Throne Speech. The government has halted the long-term plans to create enough advanced care, long-term care beds for the needs of our growing population of seniors who need a higher level of care. They have said that the answer is home care and, of course, where that is available, where that is possible, where it can be done, that is part of the answer. For seniors who are able to and want to, we should stand by them so they can age in place in their own homes. Today in Nova Scotia, the wait list for long-term care for seniors who have been assessed as needing it, is higher than it has ever been in our history - 2,500 seniors are waiting for long-term care. Of that list, one-third are seniors who live in a part of the province where there is no home care available for them. They are doing what they need to do to get the care they need, with no help from the NDP.

Another one-third of that list are seniors who are actually in our hospitals, in our acute care facilities, waiting for a long-term care bed; I see some members laughing at that fact. I would invite them to visit the Sutherland Harris Memorial Hospital in Tatamagouche, which I did just recently. They will tell you, Madam Speaker, that in that 22-bed hospital there have been times this year where every single bed was occupied, not by someone in need of acute care but by a senior not admitted, just needing a bed and care until they got into long-term care, which surely at some point the government is going to learn is the least appropriate care at the most expensive price, when what they really need is long-term care.

In Cumberland South, in the community of Advocate, they have been waiting for two more beds - just two - for four years. The government came into office and they halted the call for tenders to construct those two beds. There are many residents of the Advocate area who have gone through the single-entry access system for assessment, Level 1, Level

2, who need long-term care and yet in that community they're still waiting. Those two, add to that long-term care waiting list, Madam Speaker, and it is not right. They don't just want to age in place, they want to age in their own community and for the cost of two beds, they have been told no.

Madam Speaker, part of the financial tragedy of all this is that the community actually did their part; they raised a lot of money, sold real property, put the money in an account to help contribute to the cost of building those beds. They just need a government that will work with them to get it done, but that's not happening. There's nothing in this Throne Speech for the senior citizens of Cumberland South, particularly those who need advanced-level care.

Madam Speaker, not just for Cumberland South, but for all Nova Scotia, I do want to point out the good chuckle that the government gave us in the Throne Speech the other day when they veered off into virtual reality - a little detour into the virtual world in the Throne Speech talking about NDP promises says they've "virtually" been kept.

Well, I don't know if their platform was recorded on an Xbox 360 or some other kind of virtual gaming system, but that has got to be one of the funniest lines yet recorded in a Throne Speech. I don't know what kind of virtual reality that statement came from, because in the real Nova Scotia voters remember the actual promises of the NDP - balance the budget and keep it balanced, first year; no tax increases; control government spending; keep our ERs open 24/7. The Premier, all his ministers, all the MLAs on the government side, they ran on those commitments, so to stand up now and say, well, we virtually kept them is actually an insult to the people of Nova Scotia.

While I'm on it, Madam Speaker, there is something I want to table, because like every government before, the NDP like to use the same old excuse that they didn't realize how bad it was financially when they got in. What a sad excuse to use; Nova Scotians have heard that one too many times before.

I'm glad there is one honest member of the government over there when it comes to describing the finances of the province before the NDP came in, because I did read with great interest a letter to the editor in *The Globe and Mail* just last month about the finances of Nova Scotia. I actually hope the Premier reads it at some point because he might change his sorry excuses about why he can't keep his promises except in the virtual world. This letter to the editor was written in response to an attack on Nova Scotia by one of our own Liberal Members of Parliament, Mr. Brison, who went out of his way in Toronto to describe our province in very negative terms - something I would never encourage another Nova Scotian to do, by the way.

It's okay for us to debate in this House the state of the province; it's okay to do that. It's okay to debate in our kitchens and in our family rooms about the state of the province. As my dad used to say - when you're in Pictou County you're from Pictou or you're from

New Glasgow, you can fight like cats and dogs, but the minute you go over Mount Thom you're all Pictou County residents. Well, the minute you cross the border, we're all Nova Scotians, and so I was disappointed to see that Liberal MP take such a hard shot at our province when he was out of province.

But that's not really the point, Madam Speaker. The point is that there was a very determined Nova Scotian who wanted to defend our province's financial record, who wrote a letter to The Globe and Mail talking about the state of our province's finances. I'll quote from it, and then I'll table it for all members to see, but this person wrote that "Nova Scotia's financial condition has greatly improved over the past decade." Well I think it's about time someone pointed that out, and I'm glad that this person did. In fact, they write, "The three deficits during this period have each been under 1 per cent of GDP."

Now what I find interesting about that is that in the past ten years it's true that there have only been three deficits, the three most recent ones, the three NDP ones - the seven before that, obviously the writer of this letter believes the seven before that were balanced. And I'm going to table that right now.

I just want to make clear for all members that the author of this letter is none other than the current Minister of Finance for our province, the member for Halifax Needham. I do want to take a moment and thank her for correcting the record, correcting the Premier's virtual storyline that, in fact, seven surpluses followed by three NDP deficits and that our position actually improved over the last 10 years. I will table that.

I know the member for Halifax Clayton Park is quite anxious to have a copy and I'd like her to. You see, Madam Speaker, the government's record is all wet and that's the point I'm trying to make.

In any event, just while I'm here, there is actually another honest member of the government over there, at least when it comes to the past - maybe not the budget just ended but at least when it comes to the past - because I heard the Premier say again, wrongly yesterday, that the NDP had inherited a big deficit when they came into office. In fact, I've seen their TV ads where he makes the same claim.

Madam Speaker, I happen to have the message from the minister for the Public Accounts, the audited financial statements of the government, for the year that the NDP came in. What's interesting is - I'll read it and then I'll table it - it says that the Public Accounts for the year ended March 31, 2009, reported a surplus of \$19.7 million. (Interruption) Well, that's the very first sentence of the message from the minister.

Now what happened was after the year ended and before the minister was required to sign this confirmation of a surplus, the government did change and there was a new Minister of Finance. So the Minister of Finance who actually affixed his signature to this message that says there was a surplus is the previous Minister of Finance, the member for

Halifax Fairview, so I will table that. They're getting quite a pile of these, I know, on the table but I think it's important that all members know that.

Now, Madam Speaker, while I'm in the habit of tabling things, I know we've been down this road before. Of course the government claims they inherited a deficit. We've proved over and over again, using their minister's own words that they didn't, so they changed the line. This is where we do get into the virtual world that the Throne Speech talked about, they changed their line. When we catch them they don't say it was a deficit, they made something up, they say okay, it was a structural deficit, as if there's any such thing.

Now, Madam Speaker, there's a whole set of rules called Generally Accepted Accounting Principles. Everything is defined in them. You're not going to find the term "structural deficit" there. But what is more interesting is that the Auditor General has actually weighed in on this recently. I have the relevant page from the Auditor General's most recent report, which I will table in the hope that facts will actually trump virtual reality someday with this government. What the Auditor General says is, "The following exhibit . . .", and he has a graph of all the surpluses and recent deficits, ". . . shows the fluctuation in Nova Scotia's results over the past five years and does not indicate the existence of a structural deficit." The Auditor General ruled out any kind of structural deficit himself. They'll have to come up with a whole new term, maybe the virtual deficit as they have to shift their line yet again.

Madam Speaker, on this same page which I am about to table, the Auditor General also reports the Province of Nova Scotia has incurred a surplus in eight of the past 10 years. Guess which two were not in surplus - the most recent two under the NDP. These are the words of the Auditor General, I'd be happy to table that.

I just think it's important that on the table should be all the documentation to refute this virtual world that the NDP live in and that they advertise in, so that Nova Scotians know for themselves that we have a government that came into office with a balanced budget, promising to keep it balanced and then didn't, promising not to raise taxes and then did, complained about power rates but then made them far worse. That's the virtual reality that the Throne Speech should have talked about.

I can even go on, Madam Speaker. We counted up the number of times the government attempted to pat itself on the back for all of the things that it has done to Nova Scotia over the past almost four years now. I'm sure there's a sprain over there somewhere, a tennis elbow or something from patting themselves on the back - 25 examples in a 17-page Throne Speech of a government attempting to pat itself on the back. The Throne Speech also has 25 pretty glaring holes in it of things the government did to Nova Scotia in the past four years that they chose not to talk about in their Throne Speech this week.

Number one - very importantly the Throne Speech neglected to mention that 6,400 Nova Scotians lost their jobs in the last year, 5,400 of them in the South Shore alone; that the unemployment rate on Cape Breton Island is 17.5 per cent; that there are some communities in Cape Breton where it's 30 per cent or more - and all of those numbers are up from before they came into office. For a government that likes to blame the worldwide recession, that somehow it's Greece's fault, or Cypress' fault, or Italy's fault, or Spain's fault, or someone else's fault - anybody's fault but theirs - the fact that they neglected to mention is that at the same time that the NDP lost 6,400 jobs, the rest of Canada gained 689,000 jobs.

Nine provinces went up, one province went down - that was not in the Throne Speech, but that is exactly what the government should be spending its time and energy on, fixing that, turning around our economy, kick-starting the economy of Nova Scotia instead of living in a world of virtual reality.

No deficit coming in - in fact, a surplus. The NDP threw the books into deficit, which is why no one is confident that it will truly be balanced next week - in addition to the \$27 million. They are also getting more money from Ottawa than ever before in our province's history - \$578 million more dollars and transfers to Nova Scotia now than five years ago. More money from Ottawa, borrowing all kinds of money and by raising the HST, by raising our taxes after promising not to (Interruptions) Madam Speaker, I hear people yelling EI, EI, do you know what would be great? A government that actually created jobs in Nova Scotia and focused on making real opportunities for people, instead of playing political games, like they are.

More money than ever before from Ottawa; \$1 billion more in HST that they've collected; and \$1.4 billion more in borrowing and they still can't balance the budget. I can't believe they would claim that they're happy with their financial record. With all of that extra money coming in in HST and in transfers from Ottawa and borrowing and they still can't balance the budget. When they find a mistake in their budget they try to hide that too - it's another \$27 million, and all that ends up in more debt, all that ends up in more bills being handed on to our children to pay.

I got this insert in The ChronicleHerald the other day, the HeraldMagazine and there was a little baby Nova Scotian - I think it was a boy, but I didn't look closely enough to be sure, but I think it was a boy crying - with the headline that on his birth he was already, he or she, \$14,008 in provincial debt. A lot of that has been piled up in the last four, short years. When we have a government that has a \$27 million hole in their budget and won't fix it, and won't even tell us about it, what they lose sight of is that \$27 million, that bill is passed on to that child, to that baby and every other Nova Scotian like him or her. That's why it's wrong to cover those things up because they're the ones that pay.

We have this commission now going around studying how to kick-start the economy. Thankfully we do, because clearly the government, the ones that people elected

to manage the economy, they have no ideas about how to manage the economy or create jobs. They lost jobs while the rest of Canada was moving ahead. If you look outside Halifax, this province actually has its own home-grown recession now because the economy of rural Nova Scotia actually shrank last year - the very definition of a recession. The economy shrank by 0.3 per cent in 2012. That happened alone under the NDP, alone here in Nova Scotia, alone in rural Nova Scotia - an outright recession. They don't have to blame Greece or Cyprus or Europe; they've done their own job on the economy of rural Nova Scotia here at home, an outright shrinkage.

You know what? Nova Scotians are voting with their feet, that's why we actually had record out-migration. (Interruptions)

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party has the floor.

MR. BAILLIE: Thank you. It's because of this record of economic mismanagement that causes our economy to shrink while the rest of Canada goes ahead that Nova Scotians are voting with their feet, why thousands and thousands of our fellow citizens are working in places like Calgary and Fort McMurray and Toronto and other places. Not a single one of them would do that if there was a job for them here at home. Not a single family would choose to spend so much time apart if there was a job for them here at home. Not a single hockey team or Boy Scout troop or Girl Guide troop would go without a leader if those parents had a job here at home.

The Speech from the Throne has nothing to say to those people. In fact, one of the biggest glaring holes of all is how little there is about the most important issue of our time - how to kick-start the economy of the province and get Nova Scotia growing, all parts of Nova Scotia growing again. Even though they had the shipyard contract land in their laps, even though they had the offshore exploration start up again and land in their laps, their only response was to run TV ads taking credit for it instead of actually figuring out how to get Nova Scotians working and participating in those opportunities. You either know how to run TV ads and take credit for things or you know how to actually build a modern 21st Century economy and provide opportunities for people and they have shown which side they're on. In a few moments I will talk about which side we're on which is clearly to spend our resources on actually creating those opportunities for all Nova Scotians instead of taking credit for them.

The components of a modern 21st Century economy surely - I will pause for a moment. I understand there's an important introduction, I'm happy to yield for that.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Clayton Park.

MS. DIANA WHALEN: I'd like to thank the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party for allowing me to interrupt his Address in Reply to the Speech from the

Throne. I wanted to draw the members' attention to the west gallery, which is not very crowded right now, but we have a very important guest from Halifax Clayton Park and his name is Stewart Whalen and he is my son from the area. He very seldom ever comes to the House so I'm very pleased. So I would like you to give him a warm welcome. (Applause)

MADAM SPEAKER: We welcome all of our guests to today's proceedings.

MR. BAILLIE: I am delighted to see the son of the member for Halifax Clayton Park here and would like to welcome him on behalf of the Progressive Conservative Party as well. I'll talk to him later about the YPCs and see if we have a chance with him. (Laughter)

Madam Speaker, the components of a modern, 21st Century economy, to make it grow, are self-evident to us, but clearly lost on the government, and the Liberals, too, now that I think about it. The components of growing an economy today include lower taxes for everyone, affordable power, frozen power rates for everyone with no special deals. They include stopping wasteful government spending, and directing our resources to important front-line services. And, in order to build a successful modern economy, you need a 21st Century, world-class public education system. The very thing that they have cut is not only a right of all young Nova Scotians, but an important part of building a modern economy.

So, Madam Speaker, how crazy is it that in a time of declining enrollment that there were still so many young Nova Scotian students in Primary, and Grades 1, 2, and 3 - our earliest grades - going to school in classes with 30 or more kids in them this past September? That takes a special kind of mismanagement, in a time of declining enrolment, to pull that off. That's what happened this past September and hopefully it will not reoccur, but there is nothing in the Throne Speech to tell Nova Scotians we won't see another example of that when the school year gets underway again next September.

Madam Speaker, I spoke a moment ago about the community schools in my riding. But the same is true of the small, rural community schools in many parts of Nova Scotia that find themselves on a school review list, that find themselves being closed as recently as last night, or in the upcoming year, and the Throne Speech is silent on the process that allows these things to happen. The process of reviewing these schools is broken. It doesn't take into account the economic needs of those communities, who need a school at the heart of the community to kick-start that economy and start growing the local area again. A government that sees these problems would actually say in the Throne Speech they're going to change that process. But that's not what they say. Their silence speaks volumes.

And in our hospitals, where budgets are limited, where there's no new money for health, we already know that, they continue to support 10 health authorities and 10 CEOs, and dozens of vice-presidents and hundreds of managers, and thousands of directors, while important services go wanting. You know, you walk into an emergency room in Nova Scotia today, Madam Speaker, you may not see a doctor, but you are definitely going to

trip over a vice-president or two on your way in the door. They have made their priorities for health care funding very clear, which is with all those administrators sitting in offices and not in ERs. Nova Scotians have seen that.

What they now know is that the Minister of Education and his government believe that giving money to Tim Hortons outlets in our hospitals is, in some twisted way, spending on health care. And we've raised this before, that in the Tim Hortons here at the Capital Health district, the government directs them to spend \$1.4 million a year subsidizing those Tim Hortons - they tell them to do it. Even the executives of Capital Health have said, we don't want to spend that money there anymore, we would rather spend it on important services. They put that in their business plan four years in a row, and four years in a row, the Minister of Health and Wellness has said, no, you have to keep spending that money on Tim Hortons, and we will count it as part of health spending. Well, it is not health spending, it is a subsidy of coffee, of all things, Madam Speaker, of Tim Hortons coffee, and they lose \$1.4 million a year doing it. (Interruption)

So, the time has come to cut off the Tim Hortons coffee altogether, cut off the subsidy altogether. Don't call that health care spending, it is not health care spending - redirect that money into something useful. We have made the suggestion that that money could actually buy an insulin pump for every single Nova Scotian child who needs one, who has diabetes and could benefit from an insulin pump. I will say that we're all getting the hint from the Throne Speech that there may be something coming and I sure hope that's true because spending money on Tim Hortons when we could be spending on insulin pumps is pretty important.

There are political Parties out there that call on the government to spend money on things over and over and over, but never point out how they would pay for it. The Liberal Party of Nova Scotia would be an example of that. Spend, spend, spend, and say you want to balance, say you're willing to make the tough decisions, but don't actually do it - spend and spend. But when it comes to these insulin pumps, where we are different from the Liberals and NDP is we actually found the money to pay for those insulin pumps. That's a test of whether you can govern or not - we actually found the money and they didn't and neither did they, but I hope they do. So if that's the hint of what's to come that's good and I hope they live up to it.

Madam Speaker, yesterday the government actually played a pretty sad sleight of hand on our small businesses. They felt free to announce they were reducing the small business tax by 0.5 per cent, but left out the little detail that the threshold to qualify for it was going to be smaller. In their own announcement, they said they were cutting the tax but it wouldn't cost the government anything. That can only be true if they are giving with one hand and taking with the other.

The same is true with their announcement that they want to create five doors for business. The problem, as we learned from that old show *Let's Make a Deal*, is you never

know what's behind door number one. But what we do know, in the case of Nova Scotia, is when we have a business wanting to expand here, or wanting to open, or wanting to locate here, when they do open that surprise door number one, what they find is the highest power rates, and the highest taxes, and a whole lot of regulations, and administrative penalties, and other things that get in their way. Madam Speaker, that is not going to help turn the economy of rural Nova Scotia around.

Today's announcement about user fees is not going to help either because it got a little bit more expensive this year, this week, to live and work in Nova Scotia. The government's defence that the user fees are going up by the amount of inflation is laughable when we know that inflation is the highest in all of Canada here because of what they have done to our power rates, what they have done to our taxes, what they have done to the cost of everyday items - up, and up, and up - and to use that as justification for also hiking our user fees is clear evidence to Nova Scotians why it's very expensive under an NDP Government.

No one knows better than the people of Cumberland County about the impact of user fees in the local economy because it is there that the Liberals put the toll highway in and not a single Liberal has been elected in Cumberland County since, and won't be for a long time and I hope that the NDP gets the message that the risk that they are taking because of the record of the Liberals in that part of the province.

With those few words, Madam Speaker, I will adjourn the debate on the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne for today.

MADAM SPEAKER: The motion is to adjourn the debate. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: I understand it's been agreed today to dispense with the previously-announced late debate proceedings under Rule 5(5).

MADAM SPEAKER: The motion is to dispense with late debate.

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 honorable Government House Leader.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Madam Speaker, I move that the House now rise to meet from the hours of 2:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. on Tuesday next. After the daily routine and Question Period, we will again be doing the Address in Reply and, if time permits, we will do the order of business, Public Bills for Second Reading, Bill No. 3.

MADAM SPEAKER: The motion is that the House now rise to meet again on Tuesday, April 2nd between the hours of 2:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

[The House rose at 2:45 p.m.]

NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3)**RESOLUTION NO. 60**

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 the Queen's Diamond Jubilee medal is a commemorative honour presented in 2012 to 60,000 deserving Canadians for their significant contributions and achievements in their respective communities and is recognized as a National Honour by the Canadian Governor General's Office; and

Whereas Alvin Atwell of Ellershouse has been an active community volunteer in his community for more than two decades, often helping with the Ellershouse United Church or the Ellershouse Community Hall and taking the time to assist with the Hants Senior Games Committee, Citizens on Patrol, the Nova Scotia Heart and Stroke Foundation and the Royal Canadian Legion; and

Whereas Mr. Atwell's dedication to his community was recognized when he received the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly recognize the significant volunteer contributions of Mr. Alvin Atwell of Ellershouse, congratulate him for being a recipient of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal and wish him continued success with all of his volunteer work.

RESOLUTION NO. 61

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 Michelle Herx is a well-known member of the Hants County Arts Council; and

Whereas Michelle is a painter and a skilled woodcarver who specializes in elaborate and whimsical walking sticks; and

Whereas besides her painting and woodcarving, Michelle is the founder of Quick as a Wink Theatre Society, where she still maintains an active role with the group;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly applaud Michelle Herx for her vast array of talents and wish her every continued success.