



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Gordie Gosse

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

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

Fifth Session

TUESDAY, APRIL 2, 2013

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House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, TUESDAY, APRIL 2, 2013

Sixty-first General Assembly

Fifth Session

2:00 P.M.

SPEAKER

Hon. Gordie Gosse

DEPUTY SPEAKERS

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

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please.

The subject matter for late debate has been chosen, and the topic reads:

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 as of today, Nova Scotians are now facing an average of a 6 per cent increase from the Minister of Finance on user fees, further squeezing Nova Scotians and making life even less affordable under the NDP.

This was submitted by the honourable member for Yarmouth.

Before I start the daily routine today, I will look at a Speaker’s Ruling.

SPEAKERS RULING: Comments by Com. Serv. Min., breach of Law and the custom of the House (Pt. of order by Hon. C. d'Entremont [Hansard p. 126, 03/28/13]) Not a valid point of order.

On Thursday, March 28th, the honourable member for Argyle rose on a point of order respecting remarks made by the honourable Minister of Community Services on the previous day in answering a question during Question Period.

It was the position of the member for Argyle that the minister had revealed personal information about a client of her department, and that this amounted to a breach of the law and the custom of the House. He went on to give a number of examples of cases in various jurisdictions in which ministers had resigned after having disclosed personal information respecting individuals.

My first consideration is the right of all members of the House to freedom of speech. Members are free to say whatever they wish in the House, subject only to a few restrictions, such as not disparaging the Sovereign or the judiciary or using unparliamentary expressions.

My next consideration is whether a failure to follow what the member for Argyle alleges is a custom respecting ministers is something that falls under my jurisdiction as Speaker of this House.

I have considered this matter very carefully, and have examined a ruling by Speaker Donahoe, made on June 18, 1981, in which he dealt with an allegation that the Minister of Transportation had acted in a manner unbecoming a minister and had broken his oath of office. In considering the issue, Speaker Donahoe referred to the previous ruling by Speakers Lamoureux and Mitchener of the House of Commons respecting allegations against members.

Speaker Donahoe concluded that there was a distinction between a member's conduct and his or her execution of the duties of a minister. I agree with his conclusion. What a minister does, or fails to do, falls under the area of ministerial responsibility. It is a matter falling under the executive branch.

Speaker Donahoe stated, "If a minister breaches his oath of office as a minister, which I believe has not been established in this case, it is my opinion that it is not a function of this House to discipline the minister for such breach." Speaker Donahoe went on to say that the House was free to express its displeasure with the activities of a minister in various ways by substantive motion, including by a substantive motion of censure but that this was not what had happened.

It is my conclusion, if the member did something she should not have done as a minister - I am certainly not saying that I have found she has - that would be a matter falling under the executive branch and that there is not a valid point of order.

We will begin the daily routine.

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

MR. JIM MORTON: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to present a petition that has been signed by 70 residents of Solar Heights Subdivision in Port Williams, Kings County, and the operative clause reads:

“Therefore we, the undersigned concerned citizens demand that the Government of Nova Scotia take whatever steps are necessary to repair and resurface Jakeson Street during the 2013 paving season.”

There are 70 signatures on this petition, Mr. Speaker, and I have affixed my signature as well.

MR. SPEAKER: The petition is tabled.

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

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STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

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

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, may I make an introduction?

MR. SPEAKER: Most certainly.

MR. WILSON: In the gallery opposite, we have three individuals who work within the oncology division of health care and cancer care. With us today is Joan Hamilton, Karen Woodworth and Karen Henman - if they could rise and receive the applause of the House. (Applause)

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

The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

RESOLUTION NO. 62

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

Whereas today, April 2nd, marks Oncology Nursing Day, a day upon which we recognize the tremendous work of oncology nurses across Canada and here in Nova Scotia; and

Whereas oncology nurses are committed to providing quality, safe oncology treatment and care for people living with all forms of cancer; and

Whereas oncology nurses have demonstrated excellence in patient care, teaching, research, administration and education in the field of oncology nursing;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly recognize April 2nd as Oncology Nursing Day, and recognize the dedication of oncology nurses in our province for their commitment to patients and our health care system.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Education.

RESOLUTION NO. 63

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

Whereas autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a developmental disability that affects girls and boys around the world, and every year autism organizations celebrate Autism Awareness Day on April 2nd; and

Whereas Autism Nova Scotia, a non-profit association, provides programs and services to the autism community while helping families and professionals across the province access resources and quality information about autism spectrum disorder; and

Whereas around the world, Autism Awareness Day is celebrated with the “Light It Up Blue” campaign where iconic landmarks, businesses and homes in more than 45 countries are illuminated in blue to shine a light on autism;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly recognize April 2nd as World Autism Awareness Day, and recognize the dedication of Autism Nova Scotia and other autism support groups in our province for the valuable service they provide.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage.

RESOLUTION NO. 64

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

Whereas Theatre Nova Scotia’s 14th Annual Merritt Awards were handed out on Monday, March 25, 2013, at Casino Nova Scotia in Halifax; and

Whereas many Nova Scotian actors, directors, producers, and designers were honoured for their work in the past year, including Hugh Thompson for best actor playing Auto in Plutonium Playhouse’s *Whale Riding Weather*, Anne-Marie Kerr for best actress playing Jean Perkins in *Funny Money* for Festival Antigonish, Anthony Black and Christian Barry of 2b Theatre Company for direction of *The Story of Mr. Wright*, Daniel MacIvor for best new play by a Nova Scotian for *COMMUNION* by the KAZAN CO-OP, Hugo Dann with the Mayor’s Award for Achievement in Theatre, and Stephanie MacDonald with the Mayor’s Award for Emerging Theatre Artist; and

Whereas Theatre Nova Scotia, a non-profit organization, continues to encourage and support all aspects of live theatre in Nova Scotia through programs and services and its annual award celebration;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly join me in congratulating all the winners and nominees of the Merritt Awards for their contribution to Nova Scotia's strong and vibrant arts and culture scene, and wish them and Theatre Nova Scotia continued success in the future.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

HON. DAVID WILSON: I beg leave to make an introduction.

MR. SPEAKER: Most certainly.

MR. WILSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd draw the attention of the members to the east gallery, where we're joined today by Jeff Stockhausen, Kelly Wilson - and I can't remember the other lady's name, I apologize - but I ask all members to give them a warm welcome. (Applause)

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

The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

RESOLUTION NO. 65

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

Whereas April is Daffodil Month, and the daffodil pin represents a badge of courage and strength for the more than 6,000 Nova Scotians who will be diagnosed with cancer this year; and

Whereas cancer has surpassed heart disease as the single largest killer of Canadians, taking more lives than stroke, diabetes, liver disease, HIV/AIDS, and pneumonia combined; and

Whereas in 2013 the Canadian Cancer Society celebrates 75 years of eradicating cancer and improving the quality of life for Nova Scotians living with cancer;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly support the efforts of the Canadian Cancer Society by wearing the daffodil pin to show that Nova Scotia is determined to beat this horrible disease and to support Nova Scotians and their families who are living with cancer.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 31 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2010. The Finance Act, Respecting the Full Disclosure of Accounting Changes. (Hon. Jamie Baillie)

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

NOTICES OF MOTION

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Premier.

RESOLUTION NO. 66

HON. DARRELL DEXTER (The Premier): Mr. Speaker, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas Parents and Children Together, a family resource centre in Cole Harbour, offers important support services and programs to local parents, helping to build stronger, happier families; and

Whereas Beverly Barker and the staff of Beverly Barker Insurance Agency recently received the Co-operators Atlantic Community Involvement Award for giving back to the people of Cole Harbour through activities like Bowl for Kids Sake, a local toy drive, and the annual Harvest Festival; and

Whereas this prestigious honour includes a cash award which Beverly and her staff graciously chose to donate to Parents and Children Together;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this Legislature recognize Beverly Barker and her staff for their community spirit and generosity, and thank them for their valuable volunteer work that is helping to make life better for the people of Cole Harbour and the surrounding communities.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Kings West.

RESOLUTION NO. 67

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

Whereas today, April 2, 2013, marks the 10th Annual Oncology Nursing Day, a day to acknowledge the invaluable role oncology nurses play in our health care system both nationally and, indeed, here in Nova Scotia; and

Whereas this year's theme, Oncology Nurses: Inspiring Change, is reflected in the leadership qualities and high standards possessed by nurses who dedicate their lives to helping patients suffering with cancer; and

Whereas oncology nurses demonstrate, every day, both compassion and a high standard of excellence in patient care, teaching, research, and education in the field of oncology;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the Legislative Assembly acknowledge today, April 2nd, as Canadian Oncology Nursing Day, and extend our appreciation to our team of oncology nurses here in Nova Scotia for the extraordinary care and support they provide to both cancer patients and their families on a daily basis.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party.

RESOLUTION NO. 68

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

Whereas former Alberta Premier Ralph Klein passed away on Good Friday; and

Whereas Premier Klein became leader of the Alberta Progressive Conservative Party in 1992, won four straight majority governments and eliminated Alberta's \$23 billion debt in his 14 years as Premier; and

Whereas Premier Klein was a charismatic and transformational leader who kept everyday Albertans, whom he named Martha and Henry, in his mind before any major decision was made;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this Legislative Assembly recognize the remarkable career and many achievements of Ralph Klein, and remember his many years of public service.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect.

RESOLUTION NO. 69

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

Whereas on April 1, 1873, 277 souls perished during the sinking of the *SS Atlantic* in the waters off Lower Prospect in Terence Bay; and

Whereas this tragedy and the valiant rescue efforts of local residents are remembered each year by students in the communities of Terence Bay, Lower Prospect, and Shad Bay; and

Whereas as the communities celebrate this 140th Anniversary of this tragic sea tragedy, area residents have shown great initiative in the creation of the *SS Atlantic* Memorial Park in Terence Bay;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia Legislature recognize the efforts of area residents in remembering the sinking of the *SS Atlantic* on April 1, 1873.

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. 70

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

Whereas during the last year Justice W. Andrew MacKay was honoured as the recipient of the Dalhousie University Alumni Association Lifetime Achievement Award; and

Whereas Senator James Cowan described Justice MacKay as “an outstanding student, a great athlete, and then a professor, a senior administrator and president, that’s a marvellous career . . .” and referred to him as Mr. Dalhousie; and

Whereas Justice W. Andrew MacKay passed away on January 12, 2013 at the age of 83;

Therefore be it resolved that members of the House of Assembly take a moment to honour the passing of Justice W. Andrew MacKay for his contributions, not only to Dalhousie University, but to Nova Scotia and Canada.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Argyle.

RESOLUTION NO. 71

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

Whereas today is the 6th Annual World Autism Awareness Day; and

Whereas organizations across the globe mark today by holding awareness campaigns and educating the public about the diverse realities of the autism spectrum; and

Whereas Light It Up Blue is a unique initiative in which more than 600 cities around the world decorate structures in blue lights and illuminate them for the cause;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly recognize today as the World Autism Awareness Day, and encourage their constituents to take part and to educate others about the autism spectrum.

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. 72

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

Whereas Arnold Jones - husband, father, and community volunteer - had a long and distinguished career in education as a public school teacher, principal, consultant and special educator in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Mr. Jones assumed the role of Superintendent of Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority from 1980 until 1993, thereafter pursuing a second rewarding career with the Nova Scotia Association of Realtors until his retirement in 2011, and volunteered in many community organizations including the Canadian Cancer Society; and

Whereas Arnold, who was described as a great host, an enthusiastic worker, and a kind and caring man who took great pride in his family, passed away on August 17, 2012, at the age of 68;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly send condolences to Arnold Jones' family on the passing of this gentleman who will be missed by all who knew him.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Victoria-The Lakes.

RESOLUTION NO. 73

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 March 9th, Fred Lavery, co-owner of Lakewind Sound Studios, received the Studio of the Year award at the 2013 East Coast Music Awards in Halifax; and

Whereas Fred Lavery and Lakewind Sound Studios have been contributing to the music industry for many years, and since 1996 have won seven consecutive ECMAs, and five MIANS Studio of the Year Awards; and

Whereas in 2005, Fred was named the Music Industry of Nova Scotia's Producer of the Year, followed by the ECMA Industry Professional of the Year, and Producer of the Year and Industry Professional of the Year at the Music Nova Scotia Awards in 2007;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly recognize the significant contributions of Lakewind Sound Studios to the music industry, and congratulate Fred Lavery and his team on receiving this year's ECMA Studio of the Year Award.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Colchester North.

RESOLUTION NO. 74

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

Whereas one in 88 people have Autism Spectrum Disorder, affecting 10,000 Nova Scotians and their families; and

Whereas the prevalence of autism is increasing, and thus the demand for autistic-specific supports is increasing; and

Whereas wait-lists for access to student services, early intervention supports, and community-based housing options are increasing under this government, preventing people from getting critical supports;

Therefore be it resolved that the Liberal caucus call on the NDP Government to take meaningful action to address the needs of people living with autism on this World Autism Awareness Day.

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

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

Is it agreed?

I hear several Noes.

The notice is tabled.

The honourable member for Cape Breton West.

RESOLUTION NO. 75

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

Whereas many of us in this Chamber have experienced the joy of becoming parents; and

Whereas Defence Minister and Central Nova MP Peter MacKay can now add “dad” to his achievements because he and his wife Nazanin welcomed their first child into the world on April 1st; and

Whereas the new parents are overjoyed with the new healthy son, whom they have named Kian Alexander MacKay;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly offer congratulations and best wishes to Minister MacKay and Nazanin for a lifetime of happiness with Kian Alexander.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Preston.

RESOLUTION NO. 76

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

Whereas Justine Colley, a 21-year-old, fourth-year commerce student at Saint Mary's University with a great work ethic, has played basketball from a very young age; and

Whereas Ms. Colley has been a member of the Saint Mary's Huskies ladies basketball team for the past four years, and is classed as the best university woman's basketball player in the country; and

Whereas Ms. Colley, of East Preston, was named the Canadian Interuniversity Sport Player of the Year, becoming the first Atlantic Conference representative to ever win a Nan Copp Award;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House recognize Justine Colley for her contribution to the sport of basketball as she continues to lead the nation in scoring for the third straight year, racking up an incredible record, making her parents Kim and Eldon Colley, her family, her community, her university, and Nova Scotia extremely proud of her.

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. 77

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

Whereas Joe Peck, a volunteer with the Northside District Minor Hockey Association, has been shortlisted in the Kraft Hockey Goes On promotion, and is one of the 20 volunteers in Atlantic Canada and 100 across Canada who have put their respective minor hockey organizations in line to win one of five \$100,000 grand prizes or 20 second-place prizes of \$20,000; and

Whereas Joe has spent countless hours at the rink teaching hockey, promoting fun and the love of the sport, as well as running his own hockey programs and refereeing local games; and

Whereas minor hockey programs would not exist without the calibre of volunteers exhibited by people like Joe Peck;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Joe Peck, and recognize his community service to the youth of our area and making our community a much better place to live.

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. 78

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

Whereas in February the Yarmouth Consolidated Memorial High School Grade 9 boys basketball team hosted the Western Regional Basketball Tournament, the highest level of competition at the junior high level; and

Whereas on February 27th, the Yarmouth Vikings defeated Kings Edgehill in the tournament's championship game by a score of 53-38; and

Whereas the Yarmouth Consolidated Memorial High School Grade 9 boys basketball team consisting of Ethan LeBlanc, Ben Lyons, Anthony Oguntade, Will Devine, Josh Adams, Brett Donnolly, Josh Watkins, Keenan Brewer, Grayson Smith, and Carter Cunningham, under the guidance of coach Randy Fells and assistant coach Joel Durling, became regional champions just one week after becoming district champions;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly congratulate the Yarmouth Consolidated Memorial High School Grade 9 boys basketball team on an extremely successful season, and wish the team every future success.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Cape Breton North.

RESOLUTION NO. 79

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

Whereas the Northside Youth Centre has received a \$6,000 boost from the Cape Breton Golden K Club, the Ceilidh Golden K Club, and Eastlink Television, to help maintain programming in the coming year; and

Whereas Bob Stevens, president of the Cape Breton Golden K, credited the youth centres for doing a great job in helping the area youth and helping to make the community a better place; and

Whereas Sergeant Tom Ripley and Constables Paul Ratchford and Rebecca Walker are commended for their roles in creating safer and better Cape Breton communities;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly salute these community leaders for helping children at risk and making our communities a much better place to live.

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. 80

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

Whereas April is Autism Awareness Month and today, April 2nd, is World Autism Day, a day designated by the United Nations to raise global awareness of autism; and

Whereas today Autism Nova Scotia will be part of “Light it Up Blue”, a unique global initiative that helps raise awareness by lighting it up in support and celebration of World Autism Day; and

Whereas Autism Nova Scotia is a wonderful organization which supports individuals with autism, their families, educators, and health care professionals to help them, and indeed all of us, better understand autism;

Therefore be it resolved that all Members of the Legislative Assembly acknowledge today, April 2nd, as World Autism Day, and ensure that adequate early interventions and supports are available in communities throughout our province so that the skills and unique talents of persons with autism are both supported and realized.

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. 81

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 Morgan Messenger of Cape Sable Island has been named Rookie of the Year by the Maritime Junior Hockey League; and

Whereas Mariners head coach and general manager Laurie Barron said Morgan Messenger is an extremely skilled young player who had a big impact on the season; and

Whereas Morgan Messenger, who is 17 years old, finished with 34 points in 36 games and was also chosen to play in the CJHL Prospects Game in November 2012;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Morgan Messenger for earning this award and wish him continued success in his hockey career.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

RESOLUTION NO. 82

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

Whereas Destination Imagination is an educational program where student teams solve open-ended challenges and present their solutions at tournaments; and

Whereas Margaret's House is a local non-profit organization that provides meals twice a day for those in need; and

Whereas the 7 Sevens are a team of seven Grade 7 students at Caledonia Junior High who held a charity bingo night in aid of Margaret's House as part of their challenge to end hunger as part of their Destination Imagination challenge;

Therefore be it resolved that members of the House of Assembly recognize the 7 Sevens team of Genivieve MacDonald, Lauren Regan, Meggie Rennie, Olivia Colaiacovo, Sara James, and Megan McDonald, and team manager Kathy Colaiacovo on their outstanding efforts so far in raising almost \$2,500 for Margaret's House.

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. 83

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

Whereas Harris Sullivan is a retired New Brunswick broadcaster who lived and worked here in Nova Scotia for 40 years, including many years with the former ATV network, now CTV Atlantic; and

Whereas Mr. Sullivan has turned his talents to poetry, writing four books in his retirement; and

Whereas Harris not only writes poetry but performs it live with bongos, to the delight of cool cats and squares alike;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly congratulate Harris Sullivan on his new career, and wish him good health and many more years of inspiration.

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. 84

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

Whereas Chris Culligan of Howie Centre was awarded the Don Wells Trophy as the most sportsmanlike player in Atlantic University Sportsmen's hockey; and

Whereas Chris Culligan is currently the team captain with the University of New Brunswick Varsity Reds and a former Cape Breton Screaming Eagles captain; and

Whereas Chris is the third UNB player to receive the Don Wells Trophy;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Chris Culligan on receiving the Don Wells Trophy and wish him success in his future endeavours.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Yarmouth.

RESOLUTION NO. 85

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

Whereas the Basketball Nova Scotia Division 2 Provincial Championships were held in Sackville during the weekend of March 23rd; and

Whereas the Yarmouth Maple Grove Panthers competed in this tournament, finishing second in their round-robin play, advancing and winning the semifinals; and

Whereas after a close final game the Yarmouth Panthers, consisting of Summer Pitman, Sophie Surette, Sophie Atkinson, Sarah Faulkenham, Madison Boudreau, Dakota d'Entremont-O'Connell, Hannah Saulnier, Sydney Barr, Kaitlyn Mooney, Tori Kenney, and Julie Phillips, under the guidance of coaches Scotty Boudreau, Dave Atkinson, and Mary Saulnier, placed second in the provincial tournament;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate the Yarmouth Maple Grove Panthers on a successful basketball season and wish the team every future success.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

MR. ANDREW YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, I rise in accordance with Rule 43 of the House of Assembly Rules and Forms of Procedure to request that the business of the House be set aside for the purpose of discussing a matter of urgent public importance. Further, in accordance with Rule 43(2), I have provided you a written statement earlier today within the timeline. The motion in question that I have proposed to be debated is:

Therefore be it resolved that the business of the House be set aside for the purpose of discussing a matter of urgent public importance: the timeline for the review of the Maritime Link by the Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board, which was set in regulation by the NDP Government, does not allow enough time for proper and reasoned examination of the proposed project, and regulations should be amended to allow the board whatever time it deems appropriate to make a final decision in the best interests of Nova Scotians.

This matter clearly falls under the scope of ministerial action. It is also within the administrative responsibilities of government when the minister authorized the regular timeline, and it remains under the authority of the Minister of Energy.

I would therefore ask that the business of the House be set aside and that the request for an emergency debate be approved.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, I always thought it was three strikes and you're out. They have asked three times to have a debate - April 5th, October 30th and December 4th - on the Maritime Link. If you look in Hansard on May 17th, that same member spoke in favour of the Maritime Link. Once again, this is down at the URB where it can best be handled by an independent board. I do not understand why the member, after three times unlucky, would come again the fourth time. This is just wasting the time of the House with shenanigans. Thank you.

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

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, if the Government House Leader doesn't think it's an emergency that his government has signed on to a 35-year multi-billion dollar project without knowing how much it's going to cost, I don't know what definition would fit an emergency.

The URB has been handcuffed by the government, that is the very point that is at debate here and that's why we support the motion to have an emergency debate, so Nova Scotians can get their say about this incredible, expensive deal that the government has pre-committed them to and pre-cooked the URB process to come to their desired outcome.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

MR. ANDREW YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, just in response to the Government House Leader, this matter has not been discussed before the House. This motion is specific about the timeline which was put in regulation. You have the motion before you and there is nothing on the order paper of this House which deals with this issue.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. I have received more than the two-hour notice, as is required under Rule 43(2). Under Rule 43(4), I'm required to decide whether the matter is proper to be discussed. I have considered the factors set out in Rule 43(4A); this is a matter of grave concern to Nova Scotians, which concerns the administrative responsibilities of the government and could come within the scope of ministerial action. It is not on the order paper for discussion, and I have no indication that it is likely to be debated within a reasonable time by other means, so I will read the motion and ask whether the member for Dartmouth East has the leave of the House for the debate to take place.

The motion is that the business of the House be set aside for the purpose of dealing with an issue of urgent public importance, and the subject of the issue described by the member for Dartmouth East is:

“... the timeline for the review of the Maritime Link by the Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board, which was set in regulation by the NDP Government, does not allow enough time for proper and reasoned examination of the proposed project, and regulations should be amended to allow the board whatever time it deems appropriate to make a final decision in the best interests of Nova Scotians.”

Does the House agree to give leave for the motion to be debated?

I've heard several Noes, so I ask those who support the motion to rise in their places, pursuant to Rule 43(7).

As more than 10 members have risen, the member has leave under Rule 43(8), and this debate will take place today at the moment of interruption as provided under Rule 43(11).

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS

MR. SPEAKER: Question Period will begin at 2:47 p.m., and end at 3:47 p.m.

The honourable Leader of the Opposition.

PREM. - MAR. LINK: POWER BILLS - EFFECT

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, the Premier and the NDP are blindly championing a multi-billion dollar Maritime Link project when they can't even tell Nova Scotians what it will mean to their power bills. Make no mistake: the Maritime Link will increase rates for Nova Scotians and their families. Over the last four years, the energy policies of the NDP government have seen Nova Scotia Power raise their bills by more than 30 per cent.

So my question to the Premier is, will the Premier tell Nova Scotians what this multi-billion dollar project will mean to their power bills?

THE PREMIER: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I most certainly will. What this will mean is stable, secure energy for our region for decades to come. It means that the energy policy of this province will be local, reliable, secure, and tax-free - something that the Opposition Party is opposed to.

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, the only thing that is clear is that Emera will make a billion dollars over the life of this project. We know that it will be Nova Scotia ratepayers that end up paying that bill. Even the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador is touting the fact that ratepayers in Nova Scotia are going to pay for their energy project. This is not the Premier's plan, though; this is Nova Scotia Power's plan. It is clear that Nova Scotia Power is dictating energy policy for our province, not the NDP Government.

So my question to the Premier is, why is the Premier so willing to allow Nova Scotia Power to set energy policy for this province?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I remember a time when the Leader of the Opposition was busy flying to Newfoundland and Labrador to meet with the Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador to tell him, man, I am on board with this; I can't wait to see a regional energy policy in this country.

The reality is that it took this government actually working with Newfoundland and Labrador and with New Brunswick in order to be able to establish a project that was going to be lowest-cost, that was going to be reliable, secure, local, and of course, tax-free. Now, for some reason, the Leader of the Opposition opposes all of these things.

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition believes in protecting ratepayers. The Leader of the government of this province believes in looking after shareholders for Emera. Like everyone else that comes into this province, they see the Premier coming and they fleece him. That's what happened. Emera has had an opportunity to dig into the pockets of ratepayers for more than a billion dollars, while our Premier sits idly by. (Interruption)

No, he doesn't. He goes around and promotes the projects to the benefit of shareholders, at the risk of ratepayers.

Mr. Speaker, how can Nova Scotians trust a Premier to deliver affordable clean energy to this province via the Maritime Link when he won't even tell Nova Scotians how much that energy will cost? How can the people of this province trust a government that intentionally misleads the House of Assembly and all Nova Scotians when it failed to disclose . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. That is unparliamentary, the words "intentionally misleading".

MR. MCNEIL: I'll rephrase it, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

MR. MCNEIL: I'll take out the word "intentionally", Mr. Speaker. But I will say this, how can the people of this province trust a government that misled the House of Assembly and all Nova Scotians when it failed to disclose revenue overstatements by \$27 million? How can the people trust the NDP Government that raised taxes after promising not to, cut funding to public education and social programs? How can ratepayers trust this government will protect them against Nova Scotia Power when they have failed at every turn?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, this government has delivered on virtually every promise that we have made. We are delivering better care sooner to the people of Nova Scotia and we will deliver the most affordable, fairest, lowest energy rates for Nova Scotia.

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

PREM. - NSLC: PRICE INCREASE - ERROR

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, Nova Scotians got a rude reminder of the NDP cash grab this weekend when the Nova Scotia Liquor Corporation overcharged them on Saturday, March 30th, two full days before they were allowed to raise prices. They had one price on the shelves and another price at the cash register.

On top of the HST, on top of the user fee increases, on top of all the other NDP cash grabs, this is very frustrating for Nova Scotians, and unfair. So I will ask the Premier, just how many hands can the NDP put into the pockets of Nova Scotians at the same time?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I understand that on the weekend there was a problem with the computers at the liquor stores where they did overcharge on some products. They made the price adjustments that were supposed to come along later a day earlier than they should have. That meant that on some products, people paid less.

That's not a cash grab. A cash grab would be putting the HST on energy prices right across the province for every family. That's what the Tories did and that's what a cash grab looks like.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, the Premier has obviously bought the line of his Crown Corporation - that it was a computer glitch. It's funny how those computer glitches, under the NDP, always cost Nova Scotians more. One can only imagine what would have happened if the glitch had cost them less - it would have been fixed on the spot.

Mr. Speaker, someone over there decided to let it go and charged Nova Scotians more. This is the same Crown Corporation that, under their direction, tried to put out of business those small, independent, u-vints and home brewing companies.

Mr. Speaker, the fact is that Nova Scotians were undercharged - overcharged - again by the NDP. My question is, will the Premier apologize to the people who were overcharged and assure them that they can get their money back?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I'm in charge of a lot of things these days but, you know, ensuring that the computers at the liquor stores work correctly, I don't think that's my responsibility. I think that's the responsibility of NSLC just to simply make their things work appropriately.

He's right, some people were overcharged; some people were undercharged. The liquor commission agreed to refund anyone who was inadvertently overcharged. Mr. Speaker. That's not a cash grab. Putting the HST on home energy of every family, that's a cash grab; putting up Pharmacare fees by \$4.5 million, like the former Progressive Conservative Government did, that's a cash grab.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, raising the HST on virtually every item that people buy by 2 per cent, charging the average Nova Scotian over \$1,000 in extra HST under their administration - that is the mother of all cash grabs. Raising 1,400 user fees by 6 per cent when people's incomes are not going up - that is the mother of all cash grabs. And allowing a Crown Corporation under the control of this government to overcharge people - and knowingly do it - and do nothing about it, that also is a cash grab.

So I will ask the Premier, will he conduct a full investigation of what went wrong on Saturday and report back so all Nova Scotians can make up their own minds who the real cash grabber is?

THE PREMIER: You know, Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of things that we should probably make inquiries into; this is not one of them. As I pointed out, NSLC noticed the error, they refunded the people who requested refunds. They didn't ask anyone who was undercharged to pay an additional fee. But you know something, the real cash grab would be putting the HST on home energy, it would be raising Pharmacare fees by \$4.5 million, and it would be raising an ambulance fee from \$100 to \$600. That is what the former Progressive Conservative Government did and that is the anatomy of a cash grab.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Opposition.

PREM. - N.S. POWER STRATEGY: ADOPTION REASONS

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL: The rising cost of power has put a squeeze on Nova Scotia families and Nova Scotia businesses. Businesses have cited high power costs as their main concern in the past few years and the expected increase in rates will continue to add more and more pressure on their bottom line. Meanwhile, Nova Scotia families are struggling with 30 per cent increase over the last four years under the NDP Government.

Mr. Speaker, Nova Scotia has consistently had some of the highest power rates in the country so why is the Premier adopting the Nova Scotia Power strategy on rates and abandoning Nova Scotians?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I know it has been a long time since the Liberals have been in power but let's just cast our minds back. It was the last Liberal Government that actually created Emera; it's the one that brought forward the legislation to establish it in the first place. It was Liberal Governments in the 1960s and 1970s that established the strategy for Nova Scotia that led us into fossil-fuel burning power generation. It is the mistakes of the past made by former Liberal, and frankly former Progressive Conservative Governments, that have led to the energy situation of today.

When we came in on June 9, 2009 we would have loved to have been able to fix all those problems immediately, the problem is you can't. The fact of the matter is it takes a

strategy over a lot of years, and a lot of years to fix the mistakes made by Liberals and Progressive Conservatives.

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, unfortunately it is Nova Scotians who are living under the mistakes of the NDP Government over the last four years. They've caused energy prices to increase 30 per cent. Statistics Canada data shows that under the NDP Government, rates have risen by more than 30 per cent, I might add the largest increase in the entire country. This rapid increase is directly tied to the Premier's inability to stabilize rates. It is quite obvious that his policy hasn't worked.

Mr. Speaker, if the Premier can't tell us how much his multi-billion dollar project will increase power rates, how can Nova Scotians trust any part of his ineffective energy plan?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, the Maritime Link project has been thoroughly investigated; it has been vetted through a respected energy consultant, that is before the board now. What they have said is not only will it stabilize energy prices with low increases over the first four years, then after that the actual cost of that energy will decline. This is a good deal. This is a good deal for ratepayers and it is a good deal for Nova Scotians, unlike the policy of the Opposition which is to put the HST back on and increase everybody's rates by 10 per cent.

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, some of the highest rates in the country, an ineffective energy policy, the Premier sending out ministers and backbenchers across the province touting a multi-billion dollar project that he can't even answer the simple question how much it will cost Nova Scotians on their power bills - there is nothing that this Premier has done on the energy file that will give Nova Scotians any reason to trust him.

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, quite the contrary, the costs associated with the project have been filed with the Utility and Review Board. They are going to review the project. (Interruption)

You know, the Leader of the Opposition is yelling now because he doesn't want to hear the answer, but the reality is, the Leader of the Opposition knows that when the Liberals were in power, in one year the cost of electricity went up by 47 per cent.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Clayton Park. (Interruptions) The honourable member for Halifax Clayton Park has the floor, please.

FIN. - USER FEES: INCREASES - EXPLAIN

MS. DIANA WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance. Two years ago the NDP hiked over 1,400 user fees, and on Thursday we learned that the NDP was hiking the same fees again. Two years ago the NDP hike was 2 per cent on most

of those fees and this time it is 5.8 per cent on the same fees. This means that since taking office in 2009, the NDP have hiked government user fees by nearly 8 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the minister is, why is the minister hiking user fees again, issuing an additional 6 per cent across-the-board tax grab and further squeezing Nova Scotians?

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, no one likes it when prices have to increase, but the reality is that fees have not increased for a number of years, and the costs of delivering those services are going up. In addition, this is a year that this province will move back to a balanced budget - something I'm very proud that we have been able to do - and we've been able to do it without putting tolls on the highway and without turning our schools over to the private sector to build and run, like the P3 schools of the former Liberal Government. In fact, when it comes to user fees, the Liberal Party invented user fees in this province.

MS. WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, after years and years of demanding that the government of the day show proof to the NDP that these fee hikes in the past were based on cost recovery, suddenly the NDP Government is in control and they've hiked fees twice now, with no shred of evidence that these are actually cost-recovery - no evidence whatsoever.

This means that today running a small business is more expensive, food-handling courses are more expensive (Interruptions) No evidence on any of these, but we know that small business is going to be more expensive to run, and that it's more expensive to get your teacher certification, to get proof of maintenance enforcement fees, to get apprenticeship training. All of these things have raised the cost of raising our families and living in Nova Scotia.

Mr. Speaker, my question is, will the Finance Minister explain to Nova Scotians why she feels that she can hike user fees by 6 per cent this year, while Nova Scotians' average weekly earnings are almost 12 per cent lower than the national average?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I know that the honourable member is very concerned about the conditions under which small businesses operate in the province. That's why this government has reduced the small business tax rate and will reduce it again this year. That reduction has put \$78 million into the pockets of small businesses in Nova Scotia, something that I'm very proud of, and so are members of this government.

MS. WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, it's interesting that the minister would even touch the small business tax rate reduction for this year, given that she also monkeyed around with the threshold so that it is cost-neutral to the government. You're not losing anything, and business is not gaining anything; it's cost-neutral, so it's wonderful. It's no more than a

talking point for the chambers of commerce while you maintain not telling them the other part of the equation - which is really duplicity, if you ask me. It's a bit galling that the minister would raise it today.

Today the question is around user fees and how they have not been justified with any evidence that this generally 5.8 per cent increase is actually reflective of the cost of living increases and the cost of delivering those services. That was a principle that the NDP really felt strongly about in Opposition. My question to the minister is, why has the minister abandoned her past principles and why is she issuing yet another NDP tax grab?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, as I indicated, one of the key commitments of this government is to return to a balanced budget. We will fulfill that commitment on Thursday. Fees, and the revenue that is generated from those fees, contribute to good public services in this province. The basis for the increase is based on the rate of inflation, which is a fair way to do this. I look forward to having debate with the honourable member about many of the good things that will be contained in our budget on Thursday.

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

PREM.: FEE INCREASES/SENIORS' INCOMES - RELATIVE INCREASE

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, apparently the government believes impoverishing Nova Scotians is an accomplishment that they're going to try and take credit for on Thursday. Now we know that they have reached into the pockets of Nova Scotians raising 1,400 user fees to gain another \$11.6 million to throw into the government pot. There are 121 pages of new fee increases, and among those increases are fees for home support, user fees which are going up to \$12.10 an hour while the charge for cancelling a home support visit goes up to \$59.30 per occurrence. I ask the Premier, have the incomes of seniors who have to pay for these new fees gone up by 6 per cent to match the increase or is this just another NDP cash grab?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, as the Minister of Finance said, the fees generally go up with the consumer price index.

It does take a lot of gumption for the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party to stand up and criticize this government when it was the Progressive Conservative Government that put up the fees by \$26.7 million in one year when they were in government.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, here's what takes a lot of gumption: having the highest consumer prices in the country, driven by electricity, up 30 per cent under his government and then the Premier turning around and hiking user fees saying it's because consumer prices are going up, when it's electricity that's driving that increase. Wouldn't it

be better if the government actually considered the ability of Nova Scotians to pay for once instead of relying on that old story about consumer prices which they themselves are driving up?

Here we have this great opportunity with the shipyard contract and thousands of Nova Scotians who are going to need training and apprenticeship opportunities. Do you know what 18 of those 1,400 fees relate to? Apprenticeship training fees - they're raising 18 of them. I'll ask the Premier, how does raising the fees for apprenticeship training help young people in Nova Scotia or is it simply just another NDP cash grab?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, last year we returned almost \$70 million through the Affordable Living Tax Credit to people who need it the most. We took the HST off of home energy, bringing down energy rates by 10 per cent. Contrast that with what the Progressive Conservatives did when they were in power - they put up ambulance fees, they put up the Pharmacare co-pay, they put in place additional fees for home support services and they have the nerve to point to something like fees going up with the cost of inflation as somehow a cash grab.

No, when it came to experts in cash grabs, in taking money out of the pockets of ordinary Nova Scotians, and particularly in punishing those who are worst off in our society - no, not this government, but the Progressive Conservative Government that thankfully is no more.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, speaking of ambulance fees, something that the Premier spoke against when he was in Opposition, it should be noted that on Page 27 of the 127 pages of fee increases, that his government has approved, are fees for ambulances. Fees for regular ambulance services are going up to \$142.30; the fees for residents of long-term care facilities for the use of ambulances are going up to \$52.90; the fees for mobility challenged Nova Scotians, those who need transportation help, are going up to \$105.80 - unrelated in any way to the ability of Nova Scotians to pay.

Mr. Speaker, for those who do have to pay those fees, that is a real hardship. I'll ask the Premier, are long-term care residents and mobility challenged Nova Scotians able to absorb another 5.8 per cent increase under his government or is this just another NDP cash grab?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, every now and then a question gets asked that just makes you go "huh?" because the ambulance fees charged to people in long-term care fees were put up by the Progressive Conservative Government to \$134. It was this government that brought it down to \$50, so that it would be more affordable. It is this government that has a program for low-income Nova Scotians so that they don't end up paying ambulance fees. It was that government, the Progressive Conservative Government, that decided to put their hands into the pockets of the elderly, of those who most needed it, almost consistently.

It was the Progressive Conservatives who perfected the process of robbing seniors when they went into long-term care facilities of every cent that they had, until they were at the brink of poverty. It was the Progressive Conservatives who shook down every senior who went into long-term care for health care that anywhere else they would receive for free. That was the Progressive Conservative Government, Mr. Speaker.

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

FIN.: UNIVERSITY PAYMENTS - DETAILS

MS. DIANA WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance. On Thursday I asked the Finance Minister whether or not she was going to continue the practice of prepaying universities in a year where the funds do not belong. The minister's comments were of little comfort - she said "it doesn't really make any difference." The quote is exactly that.

Mr. Speaker, it certainly does make a difference. By moving payments around it allows the NDP to present budgets which are less than accurate - and we already know that the NDP failed to disclose a revenue overstatement in last year's budget.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the Finance Minister is, will the minister state clearly whether or not there will be an expenditure entry made in a fiscal year for which they are not scheduled, with regard to university payments?

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, as I've already indicated, I'm very much looking forward to Thursday when we will table a balanced budget in the Province of Nova Scotia, a very important day for our province. It will be a day when this province will be turning and moving forward, turning a page from the mismanagement and the bad financial planning of the previous Progressive Conservative Government and bringing us back to some financial sanity.

MS. WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, back in 2009 the NDP university prepayment meant that the following year they were able to show expenditures at a much lower level than the scheduled MOU would have required. Now, last year the NDP failed to disclose a \$27 million overstatement in the estimates and every year the NDP budget shows employment and operational expenditures inflated, to be much higher than the actuals reported later. If the Finance Minister is going to report any payment to universities in a year prior to this coming fiscal year, it will allow them to perpetuate this fiscal fantasy.

Mr. Speaker, my question is will the minister tell Nova Scotians if there have been any prepayments to universities in this fiscal year?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, as I already indicated, I'm looking forward to tabling the budget on Thursday. The details of the budget will be available at that time. They will not be available before that time.

I know it is driving the members of the Liberal caucus absolutely crazy that this government is going to be able to table a balanced budget, and there won't be these funds that we saw in the last Liberal budget tabled in this province, when they set up that ridiculous fund for health care that exceeded \$200 million, off the books, with a payment schedule that would only this year be finalized in terms of returning money to the Province of Nova Scotia. There will be none of that.

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

TREASURY BD. - AG BUDGET INCREASE: DENIAL - EXPLAIN

MR. ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Deputy Premier. It's no secret that this NDP Government has no respect for the Auditor General. In January 2012 the Auditor General pointed out that running up the province's deficit - the debt - was unethical. To that, the member for Halifax Chebucto said: very interesting, who asked you?

Earlier this year, the Auditor General unveiled a \$27 million budget cover-up. Media reports say the Treasury Board denied a budget increase to the Auditor . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The word "cover-up" is unparliamentary in many occasions. I'd ask the honourable member to retract the word, please.

MR. MACLEOD: Thank you for that correction, Mr. Speaker. The media reports now say the Treasury Board denied a budget increase to the Auditor General's Office that has been approved by the all-Party Management Commission.

So my question is, will the Deputy Premier explain why the Auditor General's Office will be denied a budget increase despite all Parties making the recommendation?

HON. FRANK CORBETT: I would think that the Auditor General would chastise me if I were to discuss the budgets of various departments before they are even tabled in this House, so I don't know what the member is talking about, Mr. Speaker.

MR. MACLEOD: Well, he's consistent. He doesn't understand anything.

Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General should be applauded for revealing the NDP budget trickery, not punished, but the Treasury Board is denying the Auditor General's Office a 2.3 per cent raise that an all-Party committee voted for. The Deputy Premier is a member of the Management Commission and he's the Chair of the Treasury Board.

Mr. Speaker, is this budget denial retaliation for the Auditor General's uncovering of the NDP's budget trickery, or is it just a strange coincidence?

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. "Trickery" is an unparliamentary word. Again, I'd remind the honourable member to retract the word "trickery," please.

MR. MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I apologize for that, and I would ask again, is this budget denial retaliation for the Auditor General's uncovering of the NDP's shell game, or is it just a coincidence?

MR. CORBETT: To the member through you, Mr. Speaker, what we put together at the Treasury Board with the Department of Finance is a balanced budget, which all Nova Scotians will be happy to see. That's what this is.

MR. MACLEOD: Nova Scotians can't trust this government to tell them the truth. The \$27 million trickery - cover-up - is proof.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. I reminded the honourable member early in that question on unparliamentary language, so I would remind the honourable member to please retract that word when he stands on his feet.

MR. MACLEOD: With pleasure, Mr. Speaker. I retract that word. I don't want to say it again.

This government's member mocked the Auditor General for doing his job. Media reports that the Deputy Premier is now denying the Auditor General's Office the recommended raise. The Auditor General says he will be forced to cut staff and do fewer audits. If the NDP have any more \$27 million mistakes planned, fewer audits must sound nice to them.

So, Mr. Speaker, my question is, what justification does the Deputy Premier have for overruling the express will of the Management Commission, and what other decisions of Management Commission does he intend to overturn?

MR. CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, I'll answer that the same way I did the last question. On Thursday we will bring a balanced budget to this House for all Nova Scotians to have so we can move forward, not like the former Party that saddled us with generations of debt or, may I say, their federal cousins that are cutting and slashing federal jobs in Cape Breton. When you see jobs lost at Parks Canada, when you see Service Canada cut, when you see veterans being affected - we won't do stuff like that. We'll stand up and fight it. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. "The Speaker has consistently ruled that language used in the House should be temperate and worthy of the place in which it is spoken. No

language is, by virtue of any list, acceptable or unacceptable. A word which is parliamentary in one context may cause disorder in another context, and therefore be unparliamentary.” (Beauchesne, 149) So I would just remind all of the honourable members to please take that as notice. Thank you.

The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

TREASURY BD. - AG BUDGET REQUEST: CHAIR - STANCE

MR. ANDREW YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Chair of the Treasury Board, following on the same theme. The minister may not wish to discuss what’s coming in the upcoming budget, but perhaps he will recall sitting across from myself and sitting next to his colleagues, and the motion moved by the member for Lunenburg - and I will table that - which approved the Auditor General’s budget request, with no freeze; in fact, an \$83,000 increase. The member sat across from us and raised no objections, and he did not vote against it.

So, Mr. Speaker, would the Chair of the Treasury Board like to tell the House whether he agrees with that motion, which he did not vote against?

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, one thing I won’t do like the member opposite is all of a sudden tell people, after a vote was taken at the Management Commission meeting say, well, I didn’t vote for it. We considered it at Treasury Board and we acted accordingly.

MR. YOUNGER: Well, Mr. Speaker, I guess that means he voted for it. The minutes don’t show who voted for or against it, but there you go.

The Management Commission had three options to look at, and the NDP caucus made the motion that would prevent cutbacks in that office. The Chair of the Treasury Board had every opportunity to raise any concerns; he raised none. He didn’t even say that might be an issue. He did not give the Management Commission the opportunity to discuss the issue. It would seem that just as the minister did not inform Cabinet about a \$27 million budget error he knew about last year as Chair of the Treasury Board, he also decided not to inform the Management Commission members that he would not ultimately support the motion moved by his own caucus colleagues.

Mr. Speaker, is the Deputy Premier just trying to get back at the Auditor General for embarrassing him?

MR. CORBETT: I’ve heard that question before and it was done more eloquently. Mr. Speaker, the reality is that, as we’ve said before, things are brought to Treasury Board, we look at them, we bring them forward; we’re bringing forward a balanced budget and we’re bringing Nova Scotians forward. Thank you.

MR. YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, there are few Nova Scotians who would say that the Auditor General has not provided a valuable service to Nova Scotians, especially in recent years, pointing out where the government should be making changes to save taxpayers money. So does the Deputy Premier believe that the Auditor General's Office is spending taxpayers' dollars frivolously?

MR. CORBETT: Well, Mr. Speaker, at least that was a little bit different. I would say in his earlier question that he might have been impugning motive.

I'll say this, Mr. Speaker, every department is looked at during budget time in the Treasury Board, that's the reality. If it was done that way when the Liberals were in power, we wouldn't have probably inherited such a mess but that was the reality.

What we're trying to do, Mr. Speaker, is look at this budget line by line and figure out what's going on, whichever department it is and we give them all fair consideration, whatever that may be. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle.

COM. SERV. - CLIENT INFO: MIN. - ERROR ADMIT

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, last week members of this House witnessed the Minister of Community Services break a sacred trust she had with clients of her department when she disclosed the name and private information about a young woman in her department's care on the floor of this Legislature. The information about the woman's status was not in the public domain, and when her department published unfounded allegations about a priest last April, the minister said that she was in the clear because the report did not indicate any individual's name, and I'll table Hansard in which she said that.

This time she did indicate the individual's name eight times. Will the Minister of Community Services admit today that she made a serious error in repeating the name of a client of her department eight times when answering a question last week?

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite knows that you, as the Speaker, ruled on that, thank you, and he knows the answer.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: Well, thank you very much. Even though I do accept your ruling, there were some further issues on this one that in her duty as a minister, of course, that she should be talking to the Chair of Executive Council who, of course, is the Premier.

Mr. Speaker, unfortunately the woman's name was not the only thing she disclosed last week. Contrary to every convention in this House and privacy law that Nova Scotians expect members of Cabinet to uphold, this minister told members of this House and

everyone watching and listening at home about details of a young woman's behaviour and her progress and related to safety of an unnamed third party.

Will the Minister of Community Services admit that she would have done her job more completely or competently had she offered to discuss the details of this young woman's case with the member for Bedford-Birch Cove in private?

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite knows, you ruled on that. He knows the answer and I would ask him to get off his political soap box.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, she knows full well also that the Speaker's Ruling, your ruling, was such that she did not breach convention of this House but she did breach an issue when it comes to the confidentiality and the privacy of members and citizens of Nova Scotia.

Mr. Speaker, most shocking and disappointing, the breach of privacy that the Minister of Community Services committed last week was to discuss the competency status of a client of her department in public, right here on the floor of the Legislature. That's something that she should take on and admit to that she did wrong in this House. Maybe if she just admitted it, it would be a step forward in this.

The only person's competency that should be rightly discussed in this Legislature is that of the Minister of Community Services so since she can't answer the question, she is falling under the chapeau here, I'm going to ask maybe the Premier, who is the Chair of Executive Council, will you be asking maybe for her to at least apologize to the member, to the citizen that the name was brought forward in this House, or will you be asking for her resignation, finally, for her incompetencies?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, what I saw transpire in this House - and I had an opportunity to listen carefully to both the question and to the answer - I realized, in fact, that the asker of the question says that these kinds of questions actually distract from the issue and I have to say that I don't wholly disagree with that. What I heard was the question and an answer, both of which were compassionate about the situation, about the individuals who were involved, who were sincere.

I don't believe that either party was engaged in attempting to take political advantage of that individual, I believe they were attempting to ask and give information that was sincere. I think that is the job not only of the MLA but also the job of a Cabinet Minister.

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

COM. SERV. - AUTISM: COMMUN.-BASED HOUSING - WAIT LIST

MS. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, there are 10,000 people across Nova Scotia living with autism. Many of their families are concerned about housing options as their children reach adulthood. Sadly, when the time comes to find appropriate community-based housing, there is none.

Can the Minister of Community Services please tell members of this House how many people are waiting to get into supportive community-based homes at this time?

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, what I can tell the honourable member is that the reason we're in the position we are today is because both Parties - the Liberals and the Progressive Conservatives - never, ever strategized or planned with respect to persons with intellectual disabilities. You have to plant a seed, and you have to water it to make it grow. Decisions of the past affect what happens today and in the future. That is no different than in our personal lives; it's no different in government. If they'd cared back then when they were making those decisions, we would not be in the position we are in today. Thank you.

MS. REGAN: Mr. Speaker, thank you to the minister for the horticultural lesson.

In 2011 the Community Homes Action Group reported to the Community Services Committee that there are 650 people on a wait-list for residential services. This is 650 people. This is an urgent crisis that deserves urgent action. The Centers for Disease Control show that in 2001 the prevalence of autism spectrum disorders was one in 150; now it's one in 88. The need is increasing, the wait-lists are increasing, and still the minister is giving us gardening tips.

Will the minister, at the very least, tell members of this House if she recognizes that this is indeed a crisis?

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, I certainly am aware of the situation that we're in today - unfortunately, as I said, because of a lack of planning and strategizing in the past. But I can tell you that this is the first government that has made a commitment to move toward community options. We are the first government that is developing a housing strategy. We do not just speak words. We take action. Thank you.

MS. REGAN: Mr. Speaker, it has been four years. Nova Scotians had such high hopes for this NDP Government, and they had such high hopes that this minister and her government would not wait four years to act, let alone sit on a wait-list of 650 people in need of community-based housing. At a recent public consultation on housing for people with disabilities, the 120 attendees were very clear that they wanted to see immediate action.

Families and people living with autism and other disabilities want to know, when is the minister going to move past vision statements and horticultural tips and finally address this wait-list?

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, the honourable member may be talking about four years of bringing advocates together, four years of planning, four years of strategizing and going around this province talking to people and consulting. I know they don't believe in consulting, but do you know how many years they had, the two Parties over there? They had 250 years, and they did nothing.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester North.

EDUC.: PROV. STUDENT SERVICES SURVEY - MIN. AWARENESS

HON. KAREN CASEY: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is for the Minister of Education. Last year school boards were asked to submit provincial Student Services surveys to the Department of Education. On those surveys they outlined the number of students accessing direct student service and supports. The information was sent to the minister, and it also showed a number of students who were referred but were still waiting for service. This list showed students waiting for access to school psychologists and to speech language pathologists.

My question to the minister is, can the minister please tell members of this House when she received that information?

HON. RAMONA JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, this government recognizes that children in our school system need the support of school psychologists and speech pathologists. It was very interesting to note that I did go back and look at our supposed wait-list that was reported last week by the member opposite, to find out that this province actually is far ahead of every other province in Canada, that children on a list for an appointment, it takes about six to eight months to access service in this province.

MS. CASEY: I did table those surveys and I am pleased that the minister did look at them, but I am concerned that nothing has been done to respond to those. The school board submitted that information last year at the end of June and the survey showed that there were up to 2,000 students waiting for access to school psychologists and speech language pathologists. There were 650 students alone in elementary schools who are waiting for that access.

Mr. Speaker, people living with autism have been the first to tell us that communication deficits and the need for support by professionals is how you address their initial needs. Will the minister tell the parents of those children who suffer from autism whether she considered those wait-lists when she started slashing to five school boards already this year?

MS. JENNEX: I want to say that we have looked at the situation of children in our province with autism, and under the former government there was a lottery in place for them to get early intervention. This government has ensured that we have the funding and the availability for every child who is diagnosed with autism, or autism spectrum disorder, to have their early intervention - every child has the opportunity under this government. Thank you.

MS. CASEY: Well my question, Mr. Speaker, would be if this government is ensuring that every student with autism has access, then can the minister tell me why there are still 2,000 on a wait-list?

MS. JENNEX: I guess that we'll need to discuss the term "wait-list" because when you make a doctor's appointment you get an appointment, and I don't consider getting an appointment being on a wait-list.

There are 400 schools across our province and there are a number of students waiting to receive the supports of a school psychologist or a speech pathologist. It's not a 2,000 student wait-list. What we are looking at is that there are a number of students waiting to have their appointments, the same as in our private lives if we are waiting for a specialist appointment. You get an appointment and there is a time period to make sure that every child who needs service in this province will get their service in a timely manner. Every child in this province diagnosed with autism before they come to school has the ability to have the early intervention under this government - every child, not a lottery system.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

FIN.: LICENCE PLATE STICKER - COSTS

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance. Prior to the recent increases in user fees, the biannual cost to renew a licence plate was over \$200. So when a Nova Scotian needs a new sticker for their plate they must pay over a \$100 each year to be legal. Can the minister tell us what the actual cost is for the sticker, the postage to mail it, and the key strokes needed to update the information in the provincial database?

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: As I indicated earlier, nobody likes when prices go up on anything and I'm no different than anyone else; I'm true to my Scottish heritage in that regard. However I do recognize that the cost of providing services, public services, do go up and user fees in the Province of Nova Scotia had not gone up for a couple of years and for that reason we did increase fees. This is a year that the government will be tabling a balanced budget and departments do not have the capacity to absorb increasing costs of providing many of these services, because they have been working very hard to work within the envelope they've been given annually.

MR. MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, I must stand up for my people. I know them to be only the most hospitable of people, and they are not cheap, but the fee to renew a plate, in my mind, is absurd. It leads me to ask the minister the question, are these fees designed to cover the cost of plate renewal in the most affordable way for Nova Scotians, or are they needed to pay for her expensive NDP Government?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, in the process of increasing the fees, there were a number of fees that we did look at and protect from any increases. Indeed, there are many fees for many different services, and quite often these fees come nowhere close to covering the actual costs of providing the services. They are a small portion; they are really a token of the actual costs of many services.

We do attempt to look at the administrative costs associated with services. So indeed, the fee increases have been made, and they will allow for those important services to continue to be provided at reasonable rates for the people in the province.

MR. MACMASTER: Well, Mr. Speaker, the minister says that the fee actually covers only a fraction of the cost, but shouldn't we know what the cost is? Isn't that the job of government, to understand that? Shouldn't government also be figuring out how to deliver services more affordably? That's what we heard from this government.

I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to table a couple of things here. One was a promise not to raise taxes. That was made by the Premier in the television debate during the 2009 election. We know that wasn't held, because we saw the HST increase. We also know we've got a budget coming up here on Thursday, and we know that the Auditor General has poured cold water on this idea that the government was in a structural deficit. Had they been in a structural deficit, they'd still be in it, but we hear we're going to have a balanced budget.

My point is, this government should be doing something to made life affordable for Nova Scotians. My question for the minister, why do you choose an expensive user fee, which is obviously much higher than the cost to mail a sticker to somebody, to deliver the service when you promised your government would offer people more affordable lifestyles?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, this is a government that does care about people and the affordability of things that are basic necessities - things like home heat and electricity. That's why the very first thing this government did when we came into power was to remove the HST that that crowd over there had put on energy, with the support of the Liberal caucus.

We believe in affordability, and that's why we took the HST off home energy. That's why we're committed to ensuring it stays off home energy.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

HEALTH & WELLNESS: IWK AUTISM TEAM - ASSESSMENT WAIT TIMES

MR. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I'm sure the Minister of Health and Wellness can inform the Minister of Education about wait-lists, because he's got some big ones - some up to eight to 10 years.

Now, today is World Autism Day, so in light of this fact, could the Minister of Health and Wellness tell us how long a child has to wait for their appointment to be assessed by the IWK autism team?

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud of our accomplishment over the last three and a half years around autism here in Nova Scotia. We knew of a system that used to have a lottery to allow young people to be assessed and enter a program for autism. I think the system we have in place today has come a long way since the former government was in power. We're going to continue to work to ensure that our young people, especially our youth, get assessed and get into the treatments that they need, especially for autism, here in Nova Scotia.

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, parents are telling us that as recently as today, the wait to see the autism team at the IWK is anywhere from nine months to one year, so while the government talks about no longer having a lottery system for EIBI, there are still significant challenges when it comes to an actual diagnosis. In fact, some children age out, enter the school system, are finally diagnosed in the school system, only to go on a wait-list for special needs in the school system. Children with autism are on a perpetual wait-list.

Could the minister please indicate that if a child is lucky enough to receive a diagnosis prior to going to school, how long does it then take to receive EIBI?

MR. WILSON: Mr. Speaker, here we go again, the Liberal Party misleading Nova Scotians. They should be ashamed of themselves. Every single child in Nova Scotia who needs to get the EIBI program before they go to school will get it. That's a change from the practice of the past. I'm very proud of the accomplishments that we've managed here in Nova Scotia in our government over the last four years but it's typical of the Liberals to say just whatever. It doesn't matter if it's true or not.

MR. GLAVINE: Well, Mr. Speaker, I will listen to parents from this province over this minister any day of the week. I will take my lead from parents in this province who are on wait-lists at the IWK.

My final question to the minister, could the minister please indicate what they are doing to address the cascading wait for assessments and then EIBI?

MR. WILSON: Mr. Speaker, the Liberals will say anything but they don't have any solutions. Every child in Nova Scotia who needs to gain access to the EIBI program gains access.

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

The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

MS. MICHELE RAYMOND: Mr. Speaker, I rise today on a point of privilege of which I have given you notice. This is not actually the first time that I have almost needed to rise on a point of privilege during my three terms of office as representative for Halifax Atlantic but I do hope it will be the last.

My current term has been marked by a series of odd events which have seriously jeopardized my ability to function as a member by threatening significant personal consequences resulting from my position as an elected member. I was grateful for your assistance, Mr. Speaker, when in clear violation of Sections 37(b)(c) and 39(1), the Department of Finance had withheld my subsistence for some six months, refusing to issue payment from funds allocated to be held by the Speaker for the representation of every constituency in this province and insisting that Finance would only issue this to me by directly depositing my so-called indemnity to my personal bank account, something for which I would, of course, be personally and publicly responsible in the event of any error in the department's accounting or depositing practices. Every member of this House who remembers the interventions of the Auditor General in 2009 will understand the potentially disastrous consequences of this.

I was also grateful for your assistance, Mr. Speaker, when I was improperly named as a defendant in a lawsuit by a constituent upset that I would not undertake to have a civil servant fired for "disrespecting him." This appears to have been almost unprecedented in naming an MLA as a defendant although it was brought during the Spring 2011 sitting of the House by a man who referred repeatedly to advice from a family friend who, of all people alive in this province today, should certainly be well aware of the legal status of members of the Assembly.

This was appropriately corrected by the Clerk of the House, appearing in the Supreme Court of the province to have my name struck from the pleadings and I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the support of your office in the matter of this violation of Section 28 of the Act.

Neither have I requested the assistance of the House, Mr. Speaker, when my correspondence on behalf of constituents has been dismissed with the assertion that I am not writing as a member of the Legislature, despite my clear statements that I am also a member of the affected group, something which I could avoid only by not living in my own

constituency. For any member to refuse to speak on behalf of their constituents would be to deprive those constituents of representation and the logical consequence would effectively stifle all members who live in their own ridings.

I do, however, rise on a point of privilege now which affects all members of this House now and in future, having given you the written notice required under Section 29(2). It is because for my own safety, as well as for that of every other person who has agreed to serve as a member of this House or may do so in future, I wish to request your guidance and determination on a question which I believe fundamental to the continued survival of an independent legislative body in this province.

I would like to draw your attention to the House of Assembly Act, which constitutes the Legislature, and to request your determination on the significance of Section 33 forward, specifically the jurisdiction of the House as the court of record as constituted there with “. . . all the rights and privileges of a court of record for the purpose of summarily inquiring into and punishing the acts, matters and things herein declared to be violations of this Act.”

I am well aware, as should be all members, that by virtue of Section 38(1) of the House of Assembly Act, the Act does not and absolutely should not bar criminal prosecution for criminal acts. But I am not at all clear on what the jurisdiction of the House is if it does not in fact include those acts and offences which are specifically declared to be violations under the Act.

I'm gravely concerned that my service as a member may expose me to the possibility of inadvertently committing offences under the Act which may never be brought to my attention prior to prosecution outside of this House. I would like a clear statement as to the protocol which will be followed in the event of such possibility arising for myself or for any other member of this House. If Section 33(5) of this Act does not protect us from prosecution arising from our activities in this House or before its committees or before you, Mr. Speaker, no matter how inadvertent, then we need to know this outright.

In the absence of certainty on this matter and the assurance that I will not be subject to obstruction, threat, or intimidation in the course of my legislative duties through fear of present or future prosecution, my ability to perform those duties is severely and even terminally impaired.

More, I would submit that the privilege of this House - and the privileges of the citizens of this province, by extension - are breached when any member is subject to such obstruction, threat, or intimidation in that all are deprived of the certainty that the wishes of the citizenry of this province are being fairly and openly presented.

In reference to the House of Commons, whose basic privileges are extended to this House by Section 26 of our Act, Marleau reminds us that a 1974 Special Committee on Rights and Immunities of Members of Parliament reaffirmed that the purpose of privilege was “. . . to allow Members of the House of Commons to carry out their duties as representatives of the electorate without undue interference.”

In all of the cases mentioned above, I have been significantly impeded from continuance of my legislative duties. I am not requesting re-examination of these matters which were appropriately disposed of, but I do request that the House reaffirm, as was done in 1989 by the special committee, that a member has the constitutional rights and immunities applicable to that office, and independence in the performance of the activities and functions of that office, free from interference or intimidation.

With the above explanation, if you, Mr. Speaker, find that I have raised a prima facie question of privilege, I shall move the following motion:

Be it resolved that the following questions be referred to you or such body as you see appropriate for determination:

- (1) On the appropriate jurisdiction of this House as a court of record, as constituted under the House of Assembly Act;
- (2) On the protocol which is to be followed in the event of any allegation that a member has committed an offence under the House of Assembly Act, whether under Section 37 or at any other matter;
- (3) Whether the Speaker or the Leader of a recognized Party has an obligation to notify a member when any officer of the House, including the Auditor General under the Auditor General Act, Section 25, of alleged “inappropriate behaviour”; and
- (4) Whether the immunities of members in relation to actions taken during their term of office does or does not expire with their term of office, and at what point those immunities expire.

I would like to finish my term of representation, at least, with a clear understanding of my legal status as a member of the Nova Scotia Legislature, and I would hope that every member of this House also will have a similar assurance, now and in future. It will be very difficult indeed for the citizens of this province to get the representation they need if their representatives are unable to be sure of their status within the walls of this precinct.

With that, I will take my seat, and I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: I will take that under advisement and report back to the House at my earliest convenience.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. Earlier in Question Period today the member for Dartmouth East - I think it was in his first supplementary to me; I forget the exact words, but you can look it up - implied intent about retribution against the Auditor General. If you could review that part of Hansard and give a ruling, I would appreciate it. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Opposition House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, I believe if the Government House Leader looks back at what was said, I believe it was a question of whether there was desire of retribution rather than making the allegation. I believe the Government House Leader was given ample opportunity to answer the question, simply say, no, that was not the case so I think it is very clear there was no allegation of intent, instead it was a question that was put that the Government House Leader could have easily dismissed. For whatever reason, he chose not to do so during Question Period.

MR. SPEAKER: I will take that point of order under advisement. I will have a look at Hansard and I will report back to the House at my earliest convenience.

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 Progressive Conservative Party.

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, I know that shortly someone from the government side will get up and speak about their record and the events of the last little while and it might even be the Leader of the government, The Premier, himself. Nova Scotians are going to hear the sound of a government virtually patting itself on the back, from Yarmouth to Sydney and all points in between, but I hope they know what a virtual world the Leader of the government and the government is now living in when they break

their arm patting themselves on the back like that because whatever they say has to be weighed against the record of the NDP, particularly when it comes to budget matters: the \$27 million hole they didn't tell us about just last year; the idea that they think it is grand that they try to raise revenue on the backs of everyday Nova Scotians by raising the HST to the highest in the country, after promising not to; saying they are going to have a paper balance in a few days - four years late from what they promised Nova Scotians; the craziness of tabling a budget in this House that had zero dollars for health equipment, something that made no sense to any single, common sense Nova Scotian. That is the virtual reality that the NDP has created. I'm sure that Nova Scotians are going to hear more of it in a moment.

It can only be matched by the virtual reality of the Liberal Party, who claimed a balanced budget themselves in this House the last time they were in, but they did not count \$600 million of new debt on the backs of Nova Scotians. The Liberal Party, who managing their own Party, ran a deficit last year despite transferring money around between accounts in a way that no one yet understands - that is the virtual reality of both the government and the NDP . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The two minutes is up.

The honourable Premier.

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, was it just me or was there something ironic about the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party talking and nobody being able to hear him?

I'm pleased to rise and join the debate on the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne. First of all I'd like to begin this afternoon by thanking His Honour, Lieutenant Governor J.J. Grant for delivering the Speech from the Throne. I would like to note that this was His Honour's first session in the House of Assembly. I would also like to recognize, if I may, Mr. Speaker, and send our support to all members of the Canadian Armed Forces, wherever they are serving, as well as those who are in the reserves. (Applause) Finally, I would like to acknowledge the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the Progressive Conservatives for their replies to the Speech from the Throne.

I wanted to begin for a second by acknowledging the people of the riding that I represent in Cole Harbour. I have had the privilege now for more than 15 years - in fact, into my 16th year - to represent the good people of Cole Harbour. We are a community that is rich in tradition. The Cole Harbour Heritage Farm is a refuge among suburban and city life that many families in my riding take advantage of. There is the Cole Harbour Parks and Trails Association and the enormous work that they do to ensure that there are appropriate walking trails and facilities for people so that throughout Cole Harbour there is the opportunity for recreation.

Mr. Speaker, I could go on about some of the people who come from Cole Harbour, of course many hockey players, many contributors to volunteer organizations, not just in Cole Harbour, but right across the province.

Mr. Speaker, you would know that in addition to representing Cole Harbour I come from Queens County, I grew up in a little town called Milton, which is outside Liverpool; it is a picturesque part of our great province. I'm pleased to say that much of my family still lives in and around Liverpool; in fact, my sister lives right there in town, and my brother lives in the house that I grew up in on Milton Road West. And, really, that dichotomy that is represented by my experience is common to many people. We grew up in rural communities, and we now live in suburban or urban communities. And this is part of the change that has taken place in the Province of Nova Scotia.

Mr. Speaker, I know you're aware of this, it may be that we are no longer in our home communities, but we have never forgotten the rural roots that we have; we go back often, we care about those rural communities, we want to ensure that they are able to not just survive but to thrive. And we look forward to the years ahead, and may they be prosperous, not just for the City of Halifax but for the beautiful Island of Cape Breton, for the communities of southwest Nova Scotia, and of course for rural communities wherever they are in our province.

Mr. Speaker, this government's vision is clear. The government believes in the people of Nova Scotia. We're making decisions today that will help the province compete for new business and for good jobs. We are competing for the kinds of industry that will create new jobs. We, as a government, are seeking to ensure that we are able to provide better care sooner for families from one end of the province to the other. We want to ensure that we treat our seniors with the dignity and respect that they deserve. We want to improve skills training and education. And we want to build a made-in-Atlantic-Canada clean energy solution for future generations.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to report to the members of this House and to all Nova Scotians that our province is starting to turn a corner. The changes that this government has made are helping make life better for families in Nova Scotia today. And we are creating an environment for success into the future.

I want to talk just a little bit about the Better Care Sooner initiative that this government has undertaken. You know, Mr. Speaker, for generations, Nova Scotians were told that the health care crisis in our province was unfixable, that the problem had grown too big. The former governments, both Progressive Conservatives and Liberals said the same thing, that the problem was simply too big and that, in fact, all the provinces, no matter where they were in this great country of ours, were trying to deal with these challenges without success.

The reality for Nova Scotians is that the other Parties, whether they were Progressive Conservatives or Liberals, had simply given up on the public health care system. But, Mr. Speaker, our government said that the right to health care means access to care, emergency care, when and where you need it. Our government refused to accept that there was no answer. And with the help of many, our government created the Collaborative Emergency Centres, or CECs as they have become known. Today, families get the care that they need when and where they need it. Families without a family doctor have access to same-day or next-day medical appointments. By coming together and working on a solution, Nova Scotians made this happen, Madam Speaker. Yet the Leader of the Opposition continues to criticize the CECs, even though other provinces have adopted and embraced the model in their own communities.

Madam Speaker, I'm sure you remember that just last summer I had the opportunity to chair the Council of the Federation, and I brought all the premiers from across the country to this province and many of them took the opportunity to learn about the innovative practices that we were putting into play in the Collaborative Emergency Centres. One of those premiers, the Premier of Saskatchewan, in front of the national press gallery came out and said, you know, we've come here and we've looked at the Collaborative Emergency Centres and we're going to take this home to Saskatchewan because this is a great idea. Actually, I think what he said is that we're going to steal this and we're going to take it home to Saskatchewan.

I remember standing there at that press conference and thinking to myself, here was the Premier of Saskatchewan, a man who was coming from the province where the original principles of public Medicare were first set out, where Tommy Douglas first put in place the fundamental tenets of public health care that much of the country now sees as part of the social fabric of our nation - here was the Premier of Saskatchewan coming to another NDP province to learn about improvement and innovation in health care that will propel those principles first announced in Saskatchewan into the 21st Century.

Madam Speaker, I want you to know that we were very, very proud, and we are very, very proud of this innovative practice, this advance in Medicare. I would just point out that I believe last week, or the week before last, that the Liberal Government of Prince Edward Island announced that it is adopting the Collaborative Emergency Centres and also will be joining our provinces 811 network.

The Leader of the Opposition said in his reply to this very speech that the "CEC model is just another way of saying that your emergency room is closed." Madam Speaker, the province has opened a Collaborative Emergency Centre in the Opposition Leader's own constituency - and I want to point out to the Leader of the Opposition, and to the member from Kings West, that not only has that stopped the closures - between September 1st and October 31, 2012, that emergency centre was closed 60 hours; for the same period this year, how many hours it was closed? Zero.

I wonder if the Leader of the Opposition is suggesting that this is not an important improvement for the families and the seniors of Annapolis. Madam Speaker, I understand it, the Liberals had their chance to fix health care and their focus, the plan that they brought forward - and I'm sure the member for Clare remembers it very well, he was a part of that government - they brought forward this plan that was heavy with layoffs, a thousand nurses, closing 1,500 hospital beds and pouring more public dollars into a system that was broken.

Madam Speaker, the Liberals decided that what they wanted to do was maintain the status quo and what they did was leave an even greater debt for our children to deal with. Nova Scotians cannot afford a return to the old way of doing things. The status quo is what got this province into the problem that we have, it is what got the province into the rut that we're in. A return to that old way will only put the province back in that same old rut. This province is finally starting to turn a corner, and the next few years will be critical to ensure that Nova Scotians benefit from the opportunities that are coming.

Madam Speaker, I want to speak a little bit about the Maritime Link. The Maritime Link is a made-in-Atlantic Canada solution that will provide clean energy at the lowest and fairest price. It will bring hundreds of good jobs and it will be an economic driver in the years to come, yet the Leader of the Opposition can't seem to make up his mind where he stands on this important project or, for that matter, even what his Party's energy policy should be.

In 2008 the Leader of the Opposition called on all political Parties to find an Atlantic Canadian solution and to build an energy corridor right here in Nova Scotia, in partnership with New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador. Up until last year, he fully supported the government's investment in the Maritime Link. Here's what he actually said in this House, Madam Speaker:

“We can no longer look at it as solely an issue for Nova Scotians to deal with. We need to begin to engage Atlantic Canadians and Atlantic Governments on the issue of energy security to make sure not only that our energy is secure, but that we have stable energy pricing so that businesses know what the economic environment is that they're working in.

He went on to say, and this is what I find particularly ironic, Madam Speaker, “We will stand beside any Premier or any Party who decides to do that.” Now today he is turning his back on our homegrown solution to bring stable energy rates to Nova Scotians.

During Question Period, Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition and some of the members of the Liberal Party were asking about the cost, the price, and I just wanted to table for your information and for the information of the Liberal caucus, the editorial that appeared in the Halifax ChronicleHerald, where they talk about the price of this energy. It says that: “If imports were raised to this level, (i.e., 30 per cent of usage) they say the

blended price for the fixed block and market energy would be eight cents per kilowatt hour.”

Imagine what an advantage this would be for Atlantic Canadians. When asked directly about the energy cost for Nova Scotians, the company, in their filing, pointed out that this would be less than a per cent a year for the first five years and then the actual price would start to decline, an enormous advantage for ratepayers, for businesses, for ordinary citizens in our province.

Instead of this, instead of doing what he said he would do, Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition and his colleagues are busily on the phone to Hydro-Québec, trying to make a deal. Can you imagine, they are suggesting that it is best to rely on Hydro-Québec - one of the largest monopolies in the world - to supply Nova Scotia energy needs. It's hard to believe. (Interruptions)

Madam Speaker, I can hear the Opposition members speaking and what they know is simply this - they would give away the integrity of the system to another provincial government. That's what they would like to do. (Interruptions) No, it wasn't 8 per cent. When you voted to put the HST back on home electricity, it went up by 10 per cent; 8 per cent is the initial block of energy that we will receive.

Madam Speaker, since my time as Leader there has been one area in particular that I have worked very hard to improve and that is providing better supports for our seniors. Our Party led the charge in Opposition for better, more affordable care for seniors and we continue that fight today. Today seniors represent a generation of people who have worked their entire lives to help build our province. They turned the wheels of the economy, they put down roots here, they raised their families here and, yes, they are the ones who paid the taxes that built the social welfare net that we have today. Yet, under previous governments, both Progressive Conservative and Liberal, seniors were forced to use their savings to pay for long-term care. This created unfair financial hardship for them and their families.

Madam Speaker, I knew that was wrong, my Party knew it was wrong, and of course Nova Scotians knew it was wrong, and that is why in Opposition we campaigned alongside thousands of Nova Scotians from one end of the province to the other to fix this unfair situation. Today, because of the work of this government, more long-term care beds are being added, more home care services are being significantly expanded, so that our seniors can live their lives with dignity. This government put nurse practitioners and paramedics in long-term care facilities so that seniors can get the care that they need without having to leave their homes.

In the last four years, Madam Speaker, 17,000 low-income Nova Scotians have benefited from not having to pay provincial income tax. That means an average of \$450 was put back into the hands of each one of the seniors who needed it most, and all the seniors benefited because we removed the HST off of home energy. It was a simple step

that made a real difference for families even though it is one that the Leader of the Opposition called bad, bad public policy. Apparently lower energy rates are bad public policy.

I'm very pleased that in the upcoming budget (Interruptions) you know if the member for Yarmouth wants the floor he'll have plenty of time. He would like . . .

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable Premier has the floor.

THE PREMIER: Thank you. It seems like the member for Yarmouth has lots to say when the microphone isn't on (Interruption) But you know something - in the entire time he's been here he has never contributed a single, solitary suggestion to the benefit of western Nova Scotia, not one. (Interruption) He has never brought forward a single project, has not brought forward a single solitary suggestion that we could act on to the benefit of western Nova Scotia.

I look forward to his Address in Reply and perhaps he'll have something to say about that because today, Madam Speaker, I am trying to address a group of people in this province who the members should be respectful of, and those are the seniors of this province, the people who actually built our province.

I am very pleased, Madam Speaker, to say that in the upcoming budget our most vulnerable seniors will be, again, looked after. More of the provinces poor (Interruptions) Madam Speaker, may I - I have the floor.

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please. The chatter is becoming far too loud. The honourable Premier has the floor and I would ask the members if they have a personal message for the Premier, or another member of the Assembly, take care of it another time.

THE PREMIER: Madam Speaker, I find it disrespectful to the seniors in our province; we are trying to address an important matter. (Interruptions)

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please. Everyone in the Chamber will have an opportunity to have their chance to say what they have to say when they offer Address in Reply.

The honourable Premier has the floor and I would ask you, again, to keep your chatter down or take it outside.

THE PREMIER: I'm very pleased in the upcoming budget our most vulnerable seniors will, again, be looked after. More of the province's poorest seniors will be exempt from paying provincial income tax. Starting on January 1, 2014, the number of seniors who will no longer pay provincial income tax will increase to 25,000. (Applause)

Another 4,000 seniors will have a portion of their income tax returned to them - those are 29,000 seniors who will be able to make choices based on what's best for them, not out of fear of not being able to make ends meet.

In addition, Madam Speaker, this year we will increase the maximum property tax rebate that is available to seniors by \$200 to \$800. This will help 4,000 seniors stay in their own homes and in their own communities longer. Our government and our Party are proud of our support for seniors. For too long, these people have been making choices based on fear rather than on their own need. They were being forced to turn to their families to help take care of them in their retirement. It was the previous Progressive Conservative and Liberal Governments who forced our seniors to undergo a humiliating assessment of their personal finances in order to pay for their own health care.

Thankfully, Nova Scotia is turning the corner. Families, seniors, and young people cannot afford to return to the old way of doing things. Both of the Opposition Parties are out of ideas. Their way of doing things harmed seniors, drove young people out of the province, forced chronic ER closures in rural communities, and put the province on a path to a \$1.4 billion deficit.

Madam Speaker, this week the Minister of Finance will stand in her place and she will introduce a balanced budget. This government said that it had a plan to bring the province back to balance. The past four years have required sacrifice and commitment from Nova Scotians. The credit for getting back to balance belongs to those Nova Scotians. Our province is one of only four in Canada that will table a balanced budget this year, and we will do that while protecting, preserving, and promoting the services families and seniors depend on. This government is working hard today to ensure a better and more sustainable future for Nova Scotians.

The last Liberal Government was defeated on a promise to improve health care by borrowing \$600 million and then claiming that the budget was balanced. The Progressive Conservatives, whose Leader has been trying to claim some higher ground, spent, on average, \$277 million a year in unauthorized year-end spending. That is spending that was unauthorized. It was spending that the House never had the opportunity to review. That year-end spending by the previous government added a billion dollars to the debt of this province. I always say that if you want to get out of a hole, you have to stop digging - and that is exactly what our government did.

In 2009, Nova Scotians elected an NDP Government because the status quo wasn't working. They wanted change. They wanted something better for the province. The NDP is delivering that change, and we are working toward preparing for the opportunities that are spread out ahead of us. Nova Scotians want to continue moving our province forward to a better future, for them and for their families, but if it were up to the members opposite, that progress would grind to a halt.

Nova Scotians have a choice of the NDP and of the old Parties and the old ways. Nova Scotians could choose New Democrats, who will seize every realistic opportunity. We seize those opportunities for a simple reason: because jobs mean food on the table. It means that a worker is taking home a paycheque to support his family. It means that loved ones can come home from Alberta. It means a better chance for kids and grandkids to grow up here in Nova Scotia.

Or Nova Scotians could turn back to a Party that would simply ignore when opportunity comes knocking. They could choose New Democrats, who would enable them to control their own destiny, building community-based industries while leading Canada and the world in creating a green economy, or Nova Scotians could turn back to a Party that would allow control of our environment to go to the highest bidder, ignoring the global challenge of climate change.

They could choose New Democrats who believe in local food, local energy, and made-in-Canada solutions, who believe that those are a stronger way to build our province and a stronger way to build our country. Nova Scotians could turn back to a Party who would give control of Nova Scotia's energy to Hydro-Québec, one of the biggest monopolies in the world. They could choose New Democrats, who are ready to invest in affordable housing, a healthy start in life for every child and a little more dignity for the seniors who worked hard their whole lives to build this province.

Nova Scotians could turn back to a Party that pays lip service to poverty reduction and a better life, or Madam Speaker, they can continue to support New Democrats, who know that the real enemies are poverty, joblessness and despair, who know that we must work with business and labour and everyone else who's ready to move Nova Scotia forward so that there is a better future right here. They could turn back to a Party who sees working people and labour unions as public enemy number one.

I said it before and I'll say it again, Nova Scotia is starting to turn the corner. There is renewed hope and optimism in communities right across the province and it's thanks to the NDP. Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I move adjournment. (Applause)

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: Madam Speaker, would you please call the order of business, Public Bills for Second Reading.

PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Madam Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 3.

Bill No. 3 - Support for Parents of Critically Ill or Abducted Children Act.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Madam Speaker, I move second reading of Bill No. 3, Support for Parents of Critically Ill or Abducted Children Act.

This legislation will let families focus on what is important during these difficult times. There are children and families not knowing whether they are going to keep or lose their jobs. No family should have to worry about what they are going to do or how they are going to pay their bills, or whether their job is secure and when they are ready to return to work, they will return to work.

I speak as a father and as a grandfather. I can only imagine the heartache facing families who need to take time off work because their child is critically ill or is the victim of a serious crime. It is a terrible situation that I wish no family had to experience, but unfortunately it happens.

Nova Scotians who need time away from work because their child is critically ill or a victim of a serious crime will no longer have to worry about losing their job. This legislation provides protection for families that I hope they will never need, but protection that will mean the world to them if indeed the crisis strikes. Without such a change there is no guarantee that the worker would have a job to return to at the end of such leave.

I am proud to say that this leave was championed by a brave, determined, New Waterford woman, Valerie Loveys, who had the unfortunate situation of living this very experience. Her daughter, Stephanie, died of cancer in 2008. Ms. Loveys has been fighting for this change ever since, so that parents could be with their children and not have to work at such a critical time in their lives. My heart and indeed my respect go out to Ms. Loveys for the ordeal she went through, and my congratulations for ensuring that Canadian parents and families have this time they need when they grieve.

In 2004, the provincial government introduced a compassionate care leave of eight weeks for family members who take time away from work to look after their loved ones, often in the last weeks of their lives. That leave may be too short when a parent or a guardian has to cope with a child's longer-term serious illness or injury. This June the federal Employment Insurance Program is being changed to allow parents and guardians to

receive up to 35 weeks of EI benefits if they need to take time off to provide care for a child's critical illness or injury.

This legislation, which falls under the Labour Standards Code, will ensure that parents are allowed 37 weeks of time worked, with protection to return to their jobs at the end of such leave. The 37 weeks includes a new 35 weeks of EI coverage plus the standard two-week waiting period. It will also allow a parent or guardian to have a longer leave if the child dies or disappears due to a criminal act.

Although these cases are rare in Nova Scotia, parents have already had to deal with very painful situations involving the loss of a child. Under the proposed amendments, parents and guardians will be allowed the following: up to 37 weeks off work to care for a critically ill child, up to 104 weeks off work if a child has died as a result of a crime, and up to 52 weeks off work if a child has disappeared as the result of a crime.

Nova Scotia is the first province in Atlantic Canada to extend this protection for families. Again, this legislation provides protection I hope that no family ever has to use. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

MR. ZACH CHURCHILL: I want to thank the Deputy Premier for providing our caucus office with information on this bill before presenting it, and for providing us with a briefing. I also want to thank him for his touching comments.

This legislation is in line with federal changes to the Labour Standards Code, and I know there are three other provinces - Manitoba, Ontario, and Quebec, I believe - that have similar legislation. Based on federal data that's prorated for Nova Scotia, this could potentially affect approximately 150 Nova Scotian families.

I want to also extend thanks and appreciation to Valerie Loveys for her hard work and her success in achieving this piece of legislation here. I know that Ms. Loveys' journey hasn't always been an easy one, and that, based on personal experiences that she had in her own life, and grievances, this has helped lead us to this moment today. The Liberal caucus will be supporting this piece of legislation, and we look forward to discussing it further at future readings.

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

MR. KEITH BAIN: I'm pleased to rise in my place this afternoon to speak in support of this bill as well.

First of all, I think it's important that we recognize the efforts of Valerie Loveys in bringing this bill forward. We can only imagine the turmoil a crisis like this would create in

anyone's life, and she is certainly to be commended. As the previous speakers have mentioned, what this bill does is bring the Labour Standards Code in line with the federal changes that were recently introduced. It's good to see that Nova Scotia is the third province to join, along with the other two provinces.

When you look at the circumstances, we hope this is something that doesn't have to be used at any point, but reality says it will happen and it's important that a bill like this is there in place to look after those, so the PC caucus will be supporting this bill as we move forward. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Richmond.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Madam Speaker, it's a pleasure to rise on Bill No. 3, Support for Parents of Critically Ill or Abducted Children Act. I listened to the comments made by the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education, the Government House Leader and the Deputy Premier and it brought to mind an issue as well that I think it would be useful to remind the government of. When the minister spoke about any families having to face a tragedy involving a child, the result of a criminal act, I think it's important that we remind the government as well that it's important that the Minister of Justice and Attorney General ensure that Victim Services are there to provide the necessary support to these families.

In the past my colleague from Halifax Clayton Park and, I believe, my colleague from Bedford-Birch Cove have raised concerns regarding families who had reached the maximum available to them under Victim Services and had difficulties in accessing additional funding for counselling and other supports. We know of families that have been impacted by this and so one would certainly hope that the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education will have the opportunity to have a discussion with the Minister of Justice. If we're going to see Bill No. 3 go through this House, that as well there be recognition that there is an important role not only to ensure that people have employment opportunities still available to them, that they do not lose their employment, but at the same time that the families receive all the possible support made available to them in Victim Services.

Madam Speaker, for those who are wondering what Victim Services is, it is a service provided by the Department of Justice. Pretty much any time you appear in court, whether it be for a speeding ticket or any other type of offence, for the most part the judge will order, if found guilty, what is called a victim impact surcharge. The fee from that goes into Victim Services, which is meant to assist victims of crime and families of victims of crime to access counselling and other related services that might be necessary.

Again, unfortunately in so many cases, governments have had to place limits on that, which has caused some issues for families, especially those of violent crime and those are issues that have been brought to our attention which, as I mentioned before, my

colleagues have worked very hard to keep that on the government's radar and to ensure that those voices are being heard here in the Legislature.

One of the other issues that I wanted to raise and maybe the Government House Leader can advise us, is that I do remember a few years ago, prior to the last election, where the now Premier, when he was Leader of the Opposition, introduced a bill regarding army reservists. It was similar legislation that said if any reservists went into actual theatre of combat, I think that is how it is referred to, that when they return, their jobs would be protected.

I remember that not long ago the issue was raised that that was never proclaimed so maybe the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education, the Deputy Premier, can look into that to see what the status of that legislation is because that received all-Party support. I remember that not long ago when someone raised a question of where it was at, it had not been proclaimed. Hopefully that has changed from the last time that was raised and maybe the Government House Leader will be able to check into that to see what the status of that legislation is. I do know it was years after its passage and it hadn't been proclaimed yet. I'm certainly hopeful that Bill No. 3 is not going to take that long to implement, especially under a majority government which is bringing it forward.

With that, those are the comments I wish to make. Certainly we will be supportive of Bill No. 3 moving forward. Merci.

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

The honourable Minister of Labour and Advanced Education.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Madam Speaker, I will endeavour to get the answer to the question that was put in debate as quickly as I can and hopefully before business ends today.

Now, Madam Speaker, I want to thank all Parties for their intervention on this bill. I look for speedy passage. I move that Bill No. 3 be read for a second time.

MADAM SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 3. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

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

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

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

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Clayton Park.

MS. DIANA WHALEN: Madam Speaker, it's my pleasure to rise on the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne. I don't think I need too many notes prepared for this because there are a number of themes that run consistently through this Legislature. I think that when we sat through the almost hour of the Speech from the Throne we got to hear the government's favourite themes - we got to hear their buzz words and their slogans and their jingles that have been running this government for the last four years.

Nova Scotians are familiar with them because of the expensive advertising that is run on a regular basis, Better Care Sooner and so on and so on - there's a slogan for education and health and finance, and you name it.

You know some good things happen in this province and they don't always have a jingle, but those jingles and slogans, I don't believe, Madam Speaker, have very much substance to them. That is really why I was anxious to rise today and speak to the Throne Speech that we heard the other day because it repeatedly spoke of everything being a first - it was the first for this and the first for that and the first time we ever had a Legislature, practically, the first time that sensible people ever got together here and discussed anything. You'd think that they had invented the Legislature, really. It was beyond reason - one of the things it said was they've got the first immigration strategy ever.

Well, Madam Speaker, maybe they're calling it a strategy but I was here when we had the first Minister of Immigration ever, when we had our first nominee agreement signed with the federal government and created an Office of Immigration. There was definitely consultation done - and I'm not talking about Liberal consultation here, we were not in government. We had a Progressive Conservative Government at the time that did come out with a paper on immigration that did set targets for immigration, they did consult with immigrants and with universities and with people who could support immigrants. So it's a little bit galling to think that suddenly this government, the one across the way here, says that they're the first ever to do a strategy on immigration.

Really there's a lot of stretching of the truth throughout this entire Throne Speech. As I say, I didn't sit down to count how many times it was said but I'm sure there were at

least a dozen times that the government boasted that they were the first to do this and the first to do that. Really it starts to almost take away from any of the accomplishments the government has had when there's so much embellishment, so much boastfulness.

To begin with, Madam Speaker, that Throne Speech, I believe it was - somebody said, is it the fourth or the fifth?

AN HON. MEMBER: The fifth.

MS. WHALEN: The fifth that we've had, even though the government has been in for less than, well not quite four years, we've had five Throne Speeches. That's every time the House sits, we get another Throne Speech and the government. It's as if the government if they don't hear all of these accolades and all these boasts, they can't carry on with business.

They're very insecure, Madam Speaker, about where they're going. They need to write the script and have the Lieutenant Governor come in here with some fanfare and bring in some illustrious guests to join us and then go on in a fantasy about how wonderfully they're doing in government.

Madam Speaker, I know there are other members who are anxious as well on this side of the House to add a little bit of reality to that narrative - to begin with, the narrative that we're going to hear on Thursday with the balanced budget fiction that we are waiting to see. I've expressed my skepticism that that's going to be done in a straightforward manner. The Minister of Finance said - and it was quite amazing - she said to the business crowd at the Halifax Chamber of Commerce that not only would she have a balanced budget, which means reversing the \$277 million deficit that the government is carrying right now in this year, not only would she reverse it but she'd do it without harming any of the important services that we value so highly. Nobody saw that as being a realistic proposition. How are you going to turn around \$277 million that we need to find somewhere in the budgets of departments of the government and not cause any harm?

We know what \$65 million coming out of the Education Department has done in three years. We know there's been a lot of harm, a lot of unhappy parents, a lot of programs that have been cut, changes in the way we deliver education that has not been beneficial to the families and the children in this province. We know that there's been money cut, I think \$10 million out of the university budget, at a time when they need to keep current, they need to be able to invest in students. That's the only way we're going to compete in the future is if we have good institutions and we can attract students from other provinces as well because we don't have the population base to be able to manage that.

In the face of those cuts, which don't sound dramatic in and of themselves, \$10 million particularly may not sound like that much, but it's had a real effect on universities. They are hurting and they're having a difficult time in offering the level of education that

they are accustomed to doing so. We have a very fine reputation, and that's something we should value and something we should be doing more to enhance. As I've said before, bringing in students from other countries and from across Canada has been very beneficial to this province.

Overall, the speech, as I said earlier, was very long and very boastful. I wanted to get my copy of the speech, I wasn't certain that we were reverting to this today. I had my notes out earlier in order to speak a little bit to it, but I did want to follow through and have some points in particular as we go through.

First of all, it seems really unnecessary to have to recalibrate the government almost every time we come to sit here. It's more than once a year that we've been doing that with a new Speech from the Throne. I think other governments in the past have read one and set the course for their term in office. It's even funnier to see a Speech from the Throne here today, right before an election will be called. Sometime soon, we know it's coming. It's obviously the government taking that opportunity to kind of wrap up what they see as their accomplishments.

The substance for doing so is very thin. I'm sure others felt the same way, we heard the same phrases again and again as we went through there - boastful and really pretty empty phrases about turning a corner. I understand government wants to instill hope and optimism, that's obviously something we'd love to attain, but just this week, in fact I think it was yesterday, the *Globe and Mail* had an article about the coming budget and talking about where we were at and they're very skeptical as well in looking at it.

I'm going to read a quote for you just in the beginning of this and then I will table it because I know if I read from it, I should table it. This is from the *Globe and Mail* and it's written by Jane Taber who is their correspondent here in Atlantic Canada. It begins, "With one of the weakest performing economies in the country and little in the way of natural resources, Nova Scotia's NDP government is promising a balanced budget, succeeding where other provinces and the federal government have failed." It goes on, "... critics are curious about how this will be achieved when the budget comes down on Thursday," It goes on from there.

There are a lot of people that she interviews who are curious. There's \$277 million in this year's deficit and remember it's grown by \$66 million so the government loved always to say how well managed they are from year to year, but this year the revenues have not been there. We heard that at the quarterly updates. I know not many people turn their attention to the financial quarterly updates - that sounds pretty dry - but it's very important to the people of Nova Scotia to know as the year is progressing how well they are doing, how well is the government managing to their budget, how realistic was the budget to begin with?

What we've seen this year and we learned more recently from the Auditor General, the budget was understated on the revenue side by \$27 million so there was a mistake there, really it should have been \$27 million larger in the deficit right at the outset. In the meantime, even with that in it there's been a total amount of \$66 million that has changed to the negative for this province, and we're now at \$277 million in deficit. We don't know where the year is going to end up yet, so it could be worse than that. That is a huge amount of money in our budget.

I notice that the former Finance Minister also made light of the \$27 million, saying it wasn't very material, that the budget is \$9 billion and this is \$27 million, but I think what's more important is to take that \$27 million and measure it against the deficit that was reported. That deficit should have been \$27 million more, and that's over 10 per cent of what was reported - and 10 per cent is very material. When you understate your deficit by 10 per cent or more, that's quite a lot. That's a big mistake; it is a big boo-boo; it's not just a little thing that you slough off. I think it was disingenuous to compare that \$27 million to the total budget, because that wasn't the material amount that really mattered. It's the sort of thing that we're seeing a lot from the government.

Another perfect example is the speech - again, if I could go back to the Minister of Finance's speech to the Chamber of Commerce. Probably the biggest thing that she could say that might have pleased that audience was that she was going to continue reducing the small business tax, and we have been on a path of a half-point reduction, half a percentage every year for the last few years. It was actually a commitment, I believe, that was made before the NDP came to power, but at the same time it is a good one. We had high tax on the small business side, so I'm glad that they've done that.

However, what the minister failed to tell the business crowd this year was that while she continued to reduce the small business tax by another half a percentage, she was changing the threshold at which you would move from small business tax into corporation tax. Corporation tax is not 3 per cent like the incoming small business tax, which was 3.5 per cent. It's not 3.5 per cent or 3 per cent - it's 16 per cent. At a lower income level, those little companies will now have their higher dollar income fall into the corporation tax. That's great, because it bailed out the government - it allows them to lower a tax and still take in just as much money - but again, it's disingenuous. It's really not telling the whole story, to go to the business crowd at the chamber of commerce and tell half the tale. That's what I find is happening again and again.

This is a small tax - in an annual way, it's not a lot of money that we're talking about, but it matters to the business community. I don't think they appreciate the fact that the threshold was changed without any knowledge, without being told. We're told a lot of the small businesses will fall under that threshold; they'll remain in the small business category, and that's good. They will get the full benefit of the lower tax.

The trouble with this is that it undermines people's confidence in government. It undermines our ability to believe what we're hearing from government, and then, as I said, couple that with the endless advertising that this government is doing.

Madam Speaker, the advertising has been very constant. Anybody who watches the news at night or is watching in prime time will find that there's an endless amount of ads. Some of them are negative ads, as well, which again takes me back to why I'm pretty sure the government is at least trying to assess whether this is a good time to have an election. They are spending an inordinate amount of money on advertising, as well, that is negative toward the Liberal Party and to the Leader of the Opposition. Really, they've chosen an area where their record is very, very poor.

Tonight we'll be talking about the Maritime Link and the current review by the Utility and Review Board that is going on to look into whether or not the costs and information that are being presented are accurate, and whether it's a good deal for Nova Scotia. Missing in the whole discussion are two things.

One will be the timing: the URB is not being given adequate time to assess it, which we're going to hear more about tonight, and that's a very important point. If you are talking about a 35-year arrangement which is going to lock our province into this deal - when you're talking about \$1.5 billion, which is the estimated cost today by Emera - again, you're asking us to trust that what Emera says is exactly accurate.

You're asking us to wonder whether or not they've added escalators or inflation or interest charges in that because we've heard as high as \$4 billion is the actual cost, so three times being reported at the URB. Again, you're asking Nova Scotians to think it's a good deal to front all that cost, see a billion dollars go into Emera in profits over that time and then at the end of it all, for a dollar, give back the Maritime Link to Newfoundland and Labrador, just give it back. How is that a good deal? Once we've paid it off we won't have any asset in the future and no special arrangement, no protected prices.

Madam Speaker, all of those facts belie what we see here in this Speech from the Throne, which I felt was insipid and boastful and it was frankly very, very thin on any real details and just making up things, I believe, as they went along. I know there is no fact checker on a Speech from the Throne so I guess our opportunity to get up and speak to the Speech becomes a little bit of a fact-checker job. Of course, we don't have the legion of communications people that work for the government. They helped write this document, they probably would be good at vetting it if we actually asked them to but, of course, they don't report to us and they don't do our bidding. They write the story that the government wants written.

Again, we've said the budget is going to be a fiction and we think that there is an awful lot of fiction in this as well. The government certainly has referred to their power rates and to actually say that they're saying Nova Scotia's plan means the lowest, fairest

power rates ending the era of double-digit increases; we're guaranteeing double-digit increases, 30 per cent increases just since 2010. In fact, Madam Speaker, I think that the chart has been submitted a number of times but I have a bar chart that shows how much power has increased between 2010 and 2013, and by far the highest increases in the country have been here in Nova Scotia. Ours are up over 30 per cent in that time and the Canadian average is 21 per cent - double-digit across the board - but ours is the highest by 50 per cent.

I think that is a shame and it can't be explained the way the government does it, they've chosen one project to back, that this one project is suddenly going to be the fairest. How can you use words like fairest and cheapest when you haven't compared it to anything else? If you haven't done any comparison then you've just picked one out of the air and said all by itself, independently.

Again, Madam Speaker, the fear I have is the documents like this Speech from the Throne really make a mockery out of real policy about true debate, about being honest and direct with the people of Nova Scotia. People expected more of the NDP, I said that when they were first elected. There were high expectations, people thought there might be a greater level of accountability, openness, and fairness but that has not materialized. We have a more conservative government than the previous government, fiscally and in other ways. We have an abandonment of the social agenda that previously defined the NDP, and the principles that so many of the members across the way espoused, talked about, and showed great concern for have absolutely evaporated in the last four years. (Interruptions)

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable member for Halifax Clayton Park has the floor.

MS. WHALEN: Madam Speaker, my time has elapsed for the moment. I know that you would like to have an adjournment today. I move that the debate be adjourned.

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: Madam Speaker, that concludes the government's business for the day. I move that the House do now rise to meet again tomorrow at the hour of 2:00 p.m. Now I hand it over to the Opposition House Leader to give us the business for Opposition Day.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable Opposition House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Madam Speaker, following Question Period tomorrow, the Official Opposition business will be debate on Bill No. 17, an Act to Review the Public School Programs in Nova Scotia, and Resolution No. 42, which reads:

“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.”

With that, Madam Speaker, I would move that our business for today adjourn and we move into the next phase.

MADAM SPEAKER: The motion is that we do now rise to meet again tomorrow, Wednesday, April 3rd, between the hours of 2:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m.

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

The motion is carried.

We have reached the moment of interruption, and by leave being given earlier today to proceed with the emergency debate, we will now proceed under Rule 43; the resolution reads:

“Therefore be it resolved that the business of the House be set aside for the purpose of discussing a matter of urgent public importance: the timeline for the review of the Maritime Link by the Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board, the board which was set in regulation by the NDP Government, does not allow for enough time for proper and reasoned examination of the proposed project, and the regulation should be amended to allow the board whatever time it deems appropriate to make a final decision in the best interests of Nova Scotians.”

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION UNDER RULE 43

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

ENERGY - MAR. LINK: REVIEW - TIMELINE

MR. ANDREW YOUNGER: Madam Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise today and have the leave of the House to discuss what I think is an extremely important matter, and a pressing matter, that has been raised repeatedly in recent weeks by independent people outside of this Legislature, who are calling on the government to

amend the regulations around the Maritime Link Act, to allow the Utility and Review Board additional time to review the volume of information that has come before it.

Now, let's review why we're at the point we are. A number of weeks ago, some of the interveners wrote the Utility and Review Board and requested that the board extend the timeline for that process. On March 15, 2013, the board wrote a letter back and talked about a number of the issues that they had raised, but one of them pointed out, "The *Regulations* under the *Maritime Link Act* impose a strict timeline for the review and decision on this matter and accordingly, the Board is not in a position to give any substantial extension for the filing." And I'll table that letter. As a follow-up to that, the Utility and Review Board's Executive Director, Mr. Paul Allen, again noted that the timeline is governed by legislation and said, "The board can't go outside the regulations, 'said Allen, noting the only way this process will go on longer than 180 days is via an order in council.'" and I'll table that.

Madam Speaker, these requests have come from the Consumer Advocate, the Small Business Advocate, the Canadian Wind Association, the Sierra Club, Grand Riverkeeper Labrador, both the Third Party and the Official Opposition, all signing on as interveners of this and stating that, listen, there's a lot of information that's there that should be - for example, let me read a section from the letter of the Consumer Advocate, who is a non-partisan representative of consumer ratepayers in this province.

In his letter to the Premier, he says, "How the Board deals with this application is a matter of importance to not only Nova Scotia ratepayers, but to the Province as a whole. The decision of the Board will affect the supply and cost of energy for Nova Scotia for years to come. All Nova Scotians are entitled to be assured the Board has adequate time to access and consider all relevant evidence and determine what is the . . ." lowest-cost, long-term advantage. "We support any request that would provide the Board with further time to carry out its analysis and to arrive at a decision which will be the benefit for the Province."

So, Madam Speaker, this isn't about politics trying to delay a process. This is about the interveners that the minister himself said that he consulted with, saying, you know what? There's far more documentation and information in this process than anybody believed would happen, and it is only fair to Nova Scotians that all of that is able to go through.

A couple of weeks ago was the first deadline for interveners - or for the response as interveners. As late as yesterday, Nova Scotia Power - or Maritime Link Incorporated, which is the proponent - were filing corrections to that information. That's almost a month later that they're filing corrections to that initial data. Of course we're pleased that they're filing the corrections. That's very good, but it means that the interveners reviewing that information have lost almost a month in the process just from that very fact.

Madam Speaker, the other day I asked the minister if he would simply consider changing the Order in Council, which is a very simple process - to say, do you know what, we're going to let the board decide. This minister stands up repeatedly in this House and tells us how the board will make the best decision. Well, the board is telling us they would like that - they would be willing to make that best decision on how long is necessary, but he won't let them. He needs to answer to Nova Scotians about why he won't give them that power.

He stood the other day and said that the Opposition supported the Maritime Link Act, which would allow the review. Well, Madam Speaker, let me read from Hansard of that time, because he's absolutely right that we supported the Act. Let me read exactly what I said:

"I think we'll certainly support the bill, as imperfect as it is, and when I say imperfect, the one thing that I think is missing in this is the fact that we are left with a hastily-crafted bill that designs everything in regulation and says, well - it's basically a bill that says this allows the Cabinet to create regulations to do this.

I think it would have been better for the public, at this stage in the game, to have seen in the legislation a complete list of the issues that the board will cover in the review of the Maritime Link. There are many issues and we have to leave it to our belief that Cabinet will ensure that those regulations are appropriate and ensure an appropriate review, and I think we have mixed feelings on that. So we're going to have to wait and see what those regulations come out."

I'll table that. So yes, we voted for it because we believed the minister when he said, and when the Premier said, that they would allow the board to conduct a full and complete analysis of this. In fact, they have not.

I pointed out the fact that one of the risks in that legislation was what this government would do with regulations, but because it was in the dying days of a session, there was no real other option. We were either going to have no review at all or we were going to have a review that is crafted by the regulation - a review that for weeks the Premier and the Energy Minister had insisted didn't need legislation to happen, but which we raised and said, no, you do.

Madam Speaker, there is no way that anybody in this province can know whether this is the best alternative for Nova Scotians, whether the deal structure makes sense, without having a complete analysis of the information. The experts in the field - the experts who do this all the way through - have said with near unanimity that there is not enough time to review the information, so it makes no sense. The only reason that you would

continue with this time frame is if you felt that there was something that was going to make you look bad coming out.

The question is, does the government feel that giving more time will mean that the consumer advocate and the small business advocate and the Utility and Review Board will find out things that the government is hoping get missed?

We've all heard the civil lawsuits where the defendant in the lawsuit will bury the plaintiff in paper, so that they hope that in the disclosure - and that's exactly what's happening before the board now. I'm even willing to give the minister the credit to say that he may very well have felt, with the best advice, that six months would be long enough when he passed those regulations. He very well could have, but he has to be strong enough and he has to defend Nova Scotians in his position to understand that the people we rely on to ensure that this is being treated fairly - the small business advocate, the consumer advocate - are saying, you know what? We have now seen how much information there is going to be in this hearing and there is not enough time.

The minister is the only person in this province who has the ability to change that. If he doesn't change it, there is no reason for a single Nova Scotian to believe that this is the best choice for Nova Scotia. The fact is that there is an issue with being at the end of the energy line. The minister is right about that. In fact, this caucus was talking about that before he was. The concerns we have raised are about the deal. They are concerns that are no different than members who are before the boards such as the Canadian Wind Association, natural gas producers and, again, the Small Business Advocate and Consumer Advocate are raising - in fact, that board and the board's own council have raised some of those questions.

This is a deal where we are being asked to pay 100 per cent of the cost of a piece of infrastructure that we will not own at the end of the day. This is a deal where in Newfoundland and Labrador they are talking about the fact that they're thrilled to finally not be tied to Hydro-Québec and, in fact, now they are getting the best end of the deal.

Well, you know what? That's great for Newfoundland and Labrador, but that doesn't mean that it's automatically the best deal for Nova Scotia. And if this minister believes that this deal truly is the best for Nova Scotians, that the way it's structured is absolutely the best, he should have no fear about saying to the board, have the time you need, I know that when you review this information that Nova Scotians will find out that this is the best deal, that this is the lowest cost alternative, that this is the most secure supply. But the way that this is currently structured, it is almost a guarantee that some of the issues before the board will simply not be covered.

They have recently, just last week, the board had to move the hearing to Saint Mary's, and they had to move the hearing to Saint Mary's because their board offices won't have enough room for all the interveners. Well that's great, but normally what will

happen in some of the general rate hearings is if we get to the end of the four or five days that are scheduled, that all the questions haven't been asked, well okay we'll look at our calendar and we'll schedule another four or five days next month to continue this. This timetable does not even give the board that option. What that means - I don't know whether the minister thinks that the board should go into 24-hour sessions if that happens, like we've seen in the Legislature in some years, or whether he just thinks they should just say I guess those matter aren't going to be discussed.

The board already expanded the issues list, when they started this, by two or three items. They are going to look into the water rights management issue to some extent, they are going to look into the issue of what about the security of supply issue, what happens if Nova Scotia is faced with a brownout because the line goes down in northwestern Newfoundland and Labrador where Manitoba Hydro has said that's possible, and an outage could last 30 to 60 days, extended periods. They are going to look into that, which makes sense, but the minister, when they added those, did not extend the timeline.

The board does not have the time to go out and hire independent consultants, so instead they are going to rely on consultants that were hired by the proponents of this project, the proponents being the Premier, the minister, and Emera. They don't have the ability to go out because they don't have the time. The Consumer Advocate, again, same problem - they can't go out and hire a consultant to completely review this information. Why? Because any consultant they would choose to hire simply doesn't have the time to go through all the information.

Madam Speaker, time and time again in this House, this minister and the Premier have stood and said that they rely on the Utility and Review Board. They've stood and they've said that they rely on the Small Business Advocate and on the Consumer Advocate to make decisions and to help make decisions that are in the best interest of Nova Scotians. I wonder why it is that the minister thinks that now that those people are coming to him and coming to the Premier and saying they need more time, that he's now saying no and throwing them under the bus. Why is he doing that?

He needs to stand in this House and explain why because last week he said we consulted with the Consumer Advocate and we consulted with the board and they thought six months would be enough. And I believe him; I'm sure they said that at the time. But he also knows that since then - and I just tabled the letter - they have written and said you know what? It turns out it's not enough time, there is no way for us to get through that information. The Small Business Advocate has submitted a similar letter to the Premier; the Canadian Wind Association has submitted another letter; and I tabled another letter signed by most of the other interveners in the hearing.

You know, Madam Speaker, the reality is there is nothing wrong and nothing at risk by giving more time to ensure that the right decision is made for Nova Scotians (Applause) And you know what? Maybe, just maybe, the minister will be right, and if more time is

given they'll go, you know, this is the best option. But most Nova Scotians don't know, and increasingly more Nova Scotians are falling into that column of, I'm not sure that this is the best deal because I don't feel good about it, I don't feel good that the government isn't willing to be open and transparent about this. I don't trust the government because it feels like they're hiding something by sticking to this 180 days.

The fact is, on March 19th the minister said, if they feel they need additional time for interveners to review the material, that will be their decision. But he knew it wasn't their decision. The fact was, they don't have that ability but that's what he said to the media in that article. He said that the board could make that decision to do it but he knows it's only Cabinet's.

Madam Speaker, I call on the minister to stand up and say he will give them more time to prove this is in the best interests of Nova Scotia, that this is the right way to go. And if he doesn't do that, tell us what he's hiding. Thank you. (Applause)

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Energy.

HON. CHARLIE PARKER: I certainly welcome this opportunity to talk about energy issues. It's always exciting to have the opportunity to talk about my portfolio and about the importance of energy rates to Nova Scotians.

The Maritime Link is an important part of our energy plan here for this province as we work towards the lowest, fairest rates for Nova Scotians. As I travelled the province over the last number of weeks on our energy tour with the honourable member for Hammonds Plains-Upper Sackville, we had the opportunity to engage with a large number of Nova Scotians and over and over they said, it's great that first of all you're coming to our communities and talking about the issues and secondly, we welcome that opportunity to learn more about the Maritime Link.

There have been some questions raised here this afternoon and in previous Question Periods and directly from Nova Scotians. I've heard there's a lot of interest in the importance of the Maritime Link. I know one of the questions that has been asked that's on Nova Scotians' minds, whether the Liberal caucus is supportive of the Maritime Link as government is, I've been trying to figure it out, some days they're supportive of it and some days they're not. It's a little bit of a flip-flop to try to figure out exactly are they supportive or are they not? It's hard to know what their mind is thinking on any particular day. In fact, I want to mention that the Leader of the Opposition - I know a few years back he flew to Newfoundland and Labrador to lobby for the Lower Churchill, for the Maritime Link.

I had the opportunity to go on-line and Google the Lower Churchill and the Liberal Party and see what would come up. There were a number of interesting things there that did come up. Again, is the Party in favour of the project? Are they supportive of the project or not? One thing I found, it said that "Lower Churchill Crucial to Nova Scotia's Energy

Future.” Okay, that seems supportive on that particular day, I think it was February 14, 2012 the Leader of the Liberal Party had said that. On another day he had this to say, “Lower Churchill Deal Bad for Nova Scotians”, so it’s just the opposite on that particular day and that was on July 31, 2012.

Again, it’s hard to figure out which one they’re supporting. Then on August 13, 2010, the Liberal Leader said that as Leader of the Opposition “Supports Energy Minister’s Position On Lower Churchill.” It’s sort of wishy-washy, one day they’re supporting it, one day they’re not. I’ll table that. It’s very difficult to figure out what the Liberal Party position is on the Maritime Link and the Lower Churchill. That’s the evidence right there.

Maybe the member opposite that spoke before me can tell us whether he supports a made-in-Atlantic-Canada solution to our energy problems or whether they’re going to continue to support Hydro-Québec. I’ve heard a lot about their energy plan that supports Hydro-Québec from that province and I know there has been direct contact between the Liberal Party and Hydro-Québec so I don’t know what their energy plan is, but I’ll leave it for the public to decide whether they’re more supportive of an Atlantic Canadian project or of a Hydro-Québec project.

We’ve heard loud and clear from Nova Scotians that they want change and that the status quo was no longer acceptable. For far too long we’ve relied in this province on coal - on dirty, imported, polluting coal - and we believe it’s time to get away from the past and take some action, to have a plan of action for this province. The inaction that occurred over a number of years under previous administrations has to end.

I know that Nova Scotians have a lot of questions about the Maritime Link Project, as part of our energy plan in this province. We think it’s one of the most ambitious projects that has ever been undertaken here in Atlantic Canada, and that it really has the potential to change our energy future for generations to come. The Maritime Link is going to create thousands of good jobs for Nova Scotians and Maritimers and Atlantic Canadians.

We’ve already had expert witness testimony from John Dalton of Power Advisory Inc. that it is the best value for ratepayers. He’s an energy expert. His reputation relies on his professional opinion. He appears before public utilities around eastern North America, and he has to defend what he comes up with. In his opinion this project with the Maritime Link is the lowest-cost option for Nova Scotians. It’s more than \$400 million cheaper than the Hydro-Québec option, and it’s actually about \$1.5 billion cheaper than relying on natural gas and wind.

In addition, Nova Scotians will not only get the lowest-cost option because of his evidence, but the federal government is onside with this project as well. They have come up with a federal loan guarantee that will save Nova Scotians more than \$100 million. So there are many positives about the Maritime Link, including greenhouse gas emission targets that will be met. In addition, it will put us in an energy loop that will allow us to use

energy from other jurisdictions - whether it's New Brunswick, Quebec, or New England - but it will allow us to bring in energy at market rates that will allow us truly to compete on the continental scale.

I mentioned our energy tour. I had the pleasure of visiting a number of communities from Bridgewater and Antigonish, Sydney, the Pictou area, Port Hawkesbury, and as well, my ministerial assistant hosted a number of sessions in Yarmouth, Amherst, and Guysborough. So we heard from more than 500 Nova Scotians as we travelled the province, and they were pleased to hear that we had a very diverse portfolio, part of which is the Maritime Link. Part of our plan for energy in this province is local energy, reliable energy. It's tax-free energy, it's green, and it's efficient, and those are part of our reliability on a diverse source of energy in this province.

In Nova Scotia, I think we finally have a government and a Leader with experience and a plan, a vision, to lead our province forward on energy issues. I know that some Opposition members would prefer it if we relied simply on Hydro-Québec, but we don't believe that's the only option out there. We're on the verge of a very historic opportunity here in the province, with an opportunity with our sister province of Newfoundland and Labrador, and it has been described truly as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

The Maritime Link is an affordable, secure, made-in-Nova Scotia, Atlantic Canada energy plan which will provide us with the lowest, fairest rates for generations to come. I believe that as a government we are doing everything to ensure that Nova Scotia understands the details of the project. Our government wants to ensure this project offers the best option for our energy future, so we've asked an independent body, the Utility and Review Board, to undertake a thorough public review of the Maritime Link proposal. The six-month URB hearing process is an important step that will ensure Nova Scotians receive all of the information they require in relation to the Maritime Link/Lower Churchill project in a timely fashion. The URB will make an informed decision. They'll make an impartial decision based on the best evidence they have, based on the expertise that is available to them, whether it's John Dalton of Power Advisory or Emera's witness testimony or whether it's any other expert they require to come in to present the evidence to them.

Madam Speaker, we introduced the Maritime Link Act regulations, and all Parties in this House had the opportunity to debate that. Last Spring the bill was here and it was supported unanimously - the Liberal caucus supported it, the Progressive Conservative caucus supported it and, in fact, some of them wanted to say it was even their idea to bring it forward. So we were thankful for that support and showed that all Parties supported the idea of hydroelectricity from Newfoundland and Labrador.

I want to mention the one support that we appreciated hearing from was from the member for Argyle. The honourable member at that time, in May of last year, had this to say, "I think all Parties in this House have spoken to this issue on a number of occasions now. I can say that our Party will be supporting this bill because it is something we've

talked about for a really long time as well.” So, Madam Speaker, I want to table that as support from the Progressive Conservative Party, and we thank them for their support.

Madam Speaker, the member for Dartmouth East was also supportive of the Maritime Link Act when it was passed in this Legislature last May. He said, “I think we’ll certainly support this bill . . .” and “My hope would be that the minister and the Premier would actually be willing to consult with the Opposition Parties on some of the issues that should be covered in that, or even if they ultimately don’t agree with this, at least if the minister and the Premier would seek out our feedback in terms of what issues should be covered by those regulations. We would certainly appreciate that opportunity and we hope the minister and the Premier would do so.” That was a direct quote from the Energy Critic for the Liberal Party and, again, I’ll table that as well.

You know, Madam Speaker, our government has supported the Maritime Link not only here in the House but also there was an opportunity for draft regulations that were put out to the public to see what comment we’d get from the general public on the Maritime Link. That comment period was from July 16th until August 3rd of last year, and we encouraged Nova Scotians to come forward and tell us what they thought of the hearing process in support of the Maritime Link Act. Really, it was an open and transparent process and all interested groups could come forward and tell us what they thought.

We received nine comments from that regulatory hearing time in midsummer last year. There were a number of opportunities for non-profit groups and individuals to tell us what they considered were important before the regulations were finalized. The regulations did set out a six-month timeline for the Maritime Link URB hearing process and they were drafted with input certainly from the URB.

I want to point out, Madam Speaker, that there was something missing - we did not hear during that regulatory review period from either of the Opposition Parties. We did not hear from the Liberal caucus; we did not hear from the Progressive Conservative caucus during that regulatory review period in July and August of last year, so I assumed that they were happy with the timelines, with the period that was available to the URB to review the process on the Maritime Link on the Lower Churchill project. Certainly they had that opportunity. There were nine submissions received from the general public - not one from either Opposition Party.

Madam Speaker, the Opposition Parties say there’s not enough time here, but they were given lots of time during the regulatory review last summer to have their say if they felt 180 days, or half a year, was not sufficient for the URB to review this process and to make a decision. I don’t know, perhaps they were on summer vacation at that time, I’m not sure, but they didn’t come forward with any suggestions on the regulatory rules that were laid out. We believe that half a year time frame is the right length of time and that decision is not going to change.

There has also been the complaint there has been too much information that has come forward during the review process, and in many ways, Madam Speaker, that's misleading because a lot of that information that was out there is in public documents, public information. It has been available now for months to look at. As an example, the Atlantic Energy Gateway Studies is part of the material that was laid out there and that has been available on the Department of Energy's Web site for months now to look at. Certainly we support the Atlantic Energy Gateway initiative and working in co-operation with our neighbours in Newfoundland and Labrador, and New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island. So a lot of it is not new material and we feel what the Opposition is saying here really is a red herring, that a lot of that material was already available to people long before the hearing came along.

I know my time is limited, but we believe that the half-year period is sufficient time to review the material that's available, to cross-examine and to get the information that's required. Really, they have up until May 27th before the public hearing process starts.

Again, in closing, I thank you for the opportunity here to talk about the Maritime Link, which is going to provide us with the lowest-cost option for Nova Scotians and the lowest and fairest rates for the people of this province, and I'm looking forward to the day when power is switched on from the Lower Churchill project. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants West.

MR. CHUCK PORTER: I'm pleased to have an opportunity this afternoon to take part in the debate on what we certainly believed all along - it has been a very important topic in this House and will be probably for months ahead - and probably for years ahead, the way it looks right now.

It was interesting to hear the minister's comments there a few minutes ago when he began, if I can quote him to some degree and I'll get the key point of it here, when he started his comments a few minutes ago he talked about Nova Scotians having the fairest rates and the lowest fairest rates for Nova Scotians.

The debate really is a lot of this debate and the ongoing debate has been exactly that point. We've not yet heard what the rates will be. There are a lot of things we do know though, so I'm going to touch on a few of the things we do know. I'll come back to what we know about the rates - or what we don't know, I should say.

What we do know is people are still struggling today and have been struggling for some time to pay their high cost of power. We hear from them on a regular basis - I'm sure in your constituency you probably hear from the odd one as well, if not lots of them. I know where I come from we hear from quite a few of them and you can almost pinpoint the day in the week when you're going to hear from them, and that's the week they're reminded when that bill comes and they go, wow, yet another increase.

In January, when we saw the increase and the bills came in the new year, people were upset. We heard from a lot of people and they're asking, how is it possible that this is fair to Nova Scotians, to us as ratepayers?

The minister also spoke a few minutes ago about his energy tour, he was travelling around the province and getting input, and you know he has travelled all over the province and he's saying 500 people - what do we have living in this province? We're just shy of one million - 425,000 households? So, that says right there that there are at least 425,000 or more ratepayers in this province who are paying a power bill. You have small business, you have big business, and we've heard from them, all categories - there's nobody left out there.

What we do know is businesses are closing because they can't afford to stay in this province and pay the power bills. Businesses are laying people off. We know the economy has been bad; we know it's tough times in this province. We've just been making it tougher by seeing increases - a 30 per cent increase in the last few years in power bills alone, let alone all of the other things that businesses and individuals for that matter and ratepayers and taxpayers, and trying to manage a household have to maintain. The cost of food has gone up, everything has gone up. We know that. Everything has gone up.

They are saying we cannot sustain high power rates. We cannot continue to have rate increases and what we do know is that they just went up another 3 per cent in January, where the guaranteed increase again coming which will be here before we know it unfortunately - it will be January 2014 with another guaranteed rate increase. We've heard talk about guaranteed rate increases for the next decade - what will that mean? It doesn't attract anybody here; it certainly doesn't attract business, number one.

There's no reason for people - I talk to people all the time, young people getting out of school, another one the other day, a friend of mine, where is he going? He's going to Alberta to work and travel back because his family's here. I said, are you going to stay in Nova Scotia with your family and travel back and forth? If I can, but I might have to move because I don't know if that's going to work. There are so many scenarios like that - these are real scenarios.

We heard other members talk about the experts and the advocates and so on, but you know who the real experts are? The real experts, along with all those people, are those people paying that bill every month or every two months. Those are the ratepayers, the taxpayers in the Province of Nova Scotia; they are the experts to know whether it's good or bad for them. We can all stand in this House and speak as we wish about there not being enough time - you know what? Time is of the essence, yes, to some degree here, it is.

We could debate time until time is no more. We'll not agree. We already know that, that's just the way this place works, unfortunately. The taxpayers, the ratepayers - same people - they're tired of that; they're tired of those games. They want to see government

step up to the plate and do what is right. When they talk about this energy link to Newfoundland and Labrador, they look at it and go, well, we don't really know what to think. There has been a lot of debate. You go to the coffee shops, you talk to people in your office, you talk to your family, you talk to everyday people on the street, and they will make very good points. Some will support it. Some will say, what's the right answer? Some will say, what's it going to cost? Most importantly, people need to know what it's really going to cost. That's really the big piece here.

We've asked many times and the minister knows this, he's no stranger to this question - what will the cost be? Maybe he and the Premier and somebody else know the cost over the course of 35 years or more, what this means. You can't take lightly 35 years. Think about that - how much change is in the world in 35 years. A lot changes in 35 years. A lot can change. Technology, the development of other kinds of energy sources out there. We've been talking tidal out there in my backyard in the Minas Basin. We've all heard the story: we're waiting for better technology to help create that. We know that could be powerful. Thirty-five years is a long time to lock us into something that we don't know the cost of.

We have heard stories about loading it on the front end and having better rates and paying more on the back end, and vice versa, or it's wide open. It sounds like the power company has a variety of options. Maybe that's part of the deal with government and how they plan to make that all work. I'm not really sure. I'm not sure if anybody is sure. I'm not sure if they're sure, but for 35 years to lock us in, we know that people are going to be upset about that. They're already upset about the very thought of it.

They looked at Newfoundland and Labrador - and there are a lot of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians living in the Province of Nova Scotia. A lot of folks who come from there remember the deal over there. It's an emotional piece in Newfoundland and Labrador and what has happened between them and Quebec. We all know that. They look at that and go, yes, this could be good for Newfoundland and Labrador. We've heard that brought up as well. Maybe it is. Maybe it is good for Nova Scotia, but when you're signing a deal and you don't know what it means on the dotted line, what you're paying for, what you're buying, they look at the link itself.

They are going to pay for all these years, and then they're going to say, oh, we don't own that. That's like taking out a mortgage on a home, paying for 25, 30, 35 years - never living in the house, by the way; letting someone else live in it and not pay you anything is a good example of that - and then saying, you can have it, it doesn't really matter to us, my investment has been of no value whatsoever. The benefit to that person, the ratepayer, the taxpayer is - there is no answer to that point. We have not yet heard what the real costs are.

I think if the real costs came out, if we knew and we were doing some comparable analysis as to what wind might be or potential tidal might be or other opportunities to bring energy, gas perhaps might be - we still hear about coal, and more recently it has been, we

want to get off coal. Yes, at some point probably we're talking about that, but the reality is we've heard other experts say that coal is going to be around for quite a few years. We talk about economic development and creating jobs in this province. Have we ever thought about our own coal? It's there. Yes, it might cost a little more to get it out, but you know, you're putting people to work. Or we could just give away a few hundred million dollars - for what?

We do need to figure out the job piece, and the minister did say a few minutes ago - I did hear him quite clearly; I think I wrote it down - thousands of jobs will be created. (Interruptions) Where? Good question. Where will the jobs be created? In Newfoundland and Labrador? Good point, maybe. I guess there would be some jobs creating that link. It would have to be built and it would have to be put in the water. I guess there is some stuff that would have to be done on the Cape Breton end. There would be, I suppose, some infrastructure that would have to be upgraded along the lines.

What are we doing? We're spending a lot of money, and here's one fact that we do know: this project started out at one price, and before it's even off the ground and one nail is driven in anything, or one shovel is in the ground, \$2 billion has already been added. How do we think we're going to manage this? I wonder how Newfoundland and Labrador think they're going to manage this debt.

When I talk to people from Newfoundland and Labrador who have moved here, and people who still live there, they're saying, well, it's all going to go on the provincial debt. Where else are you going to get \$10 billion, \$11 billion, \$12 billion, \$13 billion, \$14 billion, \$15 billion? It has to go on the provincial debt, but they see it as an investment to some degree, I suppose, and will be well debated. We'll see what the end result will be, whether they support that totally or they don't.

I think as governments change, ideas change. There's any number of options that could change, and that's one of the other fears I think we, as Nova Scotians, have to take into consideration when we look at this deal. Here we are. We know we're going into an election sometime soon. I think that's probably fair to say. I'll even be realistic and I'll say within the next year we're probably going to be into an election. Well, that's fine. Perhaps the government is in a rush because they want to make sure all is said and done in their mandate, and they get this deal off the ground, or into the water, or whatever the right terminology might be here in this one. But let's not rush it, let's take the time, and the minister spoke, well there's been a fair bit of time, and we've got until May, and there's been this opportunity and that opportunity. We've made clear our position, you know, Mr. Speaker, on this whole ordeal, that we should be seeking out everything that is good.

But what we are forgetting are those experts that I talked about a few minutes ago. Those experts, Mr. Speaker, are Nova Scotia ratepayers. Those are the real experts. We have all kinds of great people behind the scenes that are referenced as experts who will put forward their letters, and their support and they'll ask - the Consumer Advocate people that

are there, and a variety of groups, all good people, all doing the right thing, and they're there intervening for the right reasons, too. Wouldn't it be amazing to see 200 or 300 or 400, or 1,000 Nova Scotians come forward and tell their stories, because their stories are real stories. Those stories are people putting food on the table. These aren't words that are just said. Or, am I going to pay my power bill or have it cut off? I know one woman who had her power bill cut off, because she couldn't afford to pay for it, and the unfortunate part is, they got a heavy rain and her sump pump couldn't kick in and her house flooded. I mean, it just keeps going on and on and on. That's just one story, one simple story from thousands - hundreds of thousands - of ratepayers.

We need to figure out - the minister's quote - the lowest, fairest rates for Nova Scotians. We're okay with that. We do agree with the lowest, fairest rates, and we've even put forward some ideas in this House, Mr. Speaker, we've put forward legislation. We're the only Party, by the way, that have stood up in this place, and anywhere else in public, and we've said, we'll freeze the power rates. Because we've done the math, we know how to do the math, and we know we can do that, while we assess, and reassess, and take a better look, and get energy from the sources that can provide it at the best rates for Nova Scotians. We don't care where it comes from. If the deal is the right deal, we're going to reach out to anybody who wants to supply energy, in this province and to this province. We believe you have to do that because that's what ratepayers want.

You talk to them, Mr. Speaker. You have them in your constituency, I'm sure that everybody's not thrilled that power rates have gone up since January, and they're not thrilled that they're going to go up again. I'm sure you have to hear from them just like the rest of us do. This is no shock. They want to hear you say, we want to work for you, and we want to be able to bring you the best rates. And you talk about confusion, and that's fair. As I said a few minutes ago, people will be confused because they don't know. We're so deep into the detail. You need to keep it high level, and you need to say, look, this is a good deal because - and the because part that's missing is, this is going to be the cost. We need to know it.

It's only right that you invest in what is fair and long term for Nova Scotians. We don't have a problem with that. We agree with the minister on those comments, but there's a piece he's left out. Again, if the Minister of Energy, and the Premier, or anyone else in Cabinet, or government, or on that side, or Nova Scotia Power, or anywhere for that matter, can give the price - give it. Tell Nova Scotians what it is, let Nova Scotians have a say. Don't just travel around the province, you know, Mr. Speaker, in all honesty, great thing. The minister's going around and he's holding his round tables, he's got 500 Nova Scotians out, but yet he's not told any of them what the price will be.

How can they actually buy in and say, that's a good, low, fair, long-term, secure price for us, when he hasn't given it? If it's there to give - or projected, even, somewhere close. Can you tell us that, we think that this is what it's going to be? But better yet, we need a guarantee because we're going to spend a lot of money. We are asking ratepayers

for a lot of money to invest. And I think that they would, the people in this province are smart. They would invest wisely. They want to invest wisely. They want to invest for the long-term. They want to know that that rate exists for them, that it is long-term, that it is fair. That's only reasonable. I think that if you're looking for that buy-in, you could get it. But you have to be transparent. You have to be upfront. You have to tell people what really matters, because it does matter to them. These are the people who are debating, should I stay, or should I go?

My daughter is going to university next year. I said to her, where are you going to go when you're done? Don't know. I want her to think about staying in Nova Scotia and being a teacher. That's what I want her to do. I want her to raise her family here. Why? Because that's good for our province. If there are real jobs to be had, then let's put jobs out there. Let's develop other energy sources that may be acceptable, that may be affordable, may be a long-term good investment, let's put Nova Scotians to work. And if people in this House, right here, Mr. Speaker, the people's House, don't think that jobs and the economy are important to people in this province, let me tell you, it's number one.

People are worrying about their jobs. They're worrying about long-term sustainability. They are very concerned about what the words long-term mean. They want to stay here, they want to raise their families here. They can't do it and they won't do it, and more of them, especially the young people, are standing up and saying we're getting out of here. We can't do it because we don't know, we want jobs, and they are not here. If you want me to stay in the Province of Nova Scotia certain things have to be guaranteed - good housing markets, good prices for this, good prices for that. Certainly when it comes to the end of the month and paying their bills they need to be able to pay those bills. The energy bill, we know, is going in the wrong direction. We need to do more for the real experts in the Province of Nova Scotia and that is the Nova Scotia ratepayers.

With that Mr. Speaker, I thank you very much for the opportunity this afternoon.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

MR. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased today to join the emergency debate. This is a very important topic to Nova Scotians. Constituents that I talk with and who come to my office are taking notice and they definitely know that there is a great deal to analyze and dissect around this issue. In terms of the debate it is around the fact that the URB has simply too short a timeline of 180 days to allow for submissions and the hearing process to take place. Now I know the Minister of Energy makes light of this and there were other opportunities, and so forth, to present submissions but the real intervening, the real look by the URB is in fact that six-month period and this is very much a moving project that keeps getting additional information added on as we move to the point where the project gets underway and moves towards an anticipated completion date of 2017.

At the present time there are literally thousands of pages of documents that are coming forward that the interveners are gathering, that a wide range of expertise are presenting. With all due respect to the abilities of Mr. Dalton, Mr. Dalton was given an agenda by government to make sure that the Maritime Link and its outcome and the analysis was going to favour the Maritime Link over any other project. In fact, I would like to see all of the monies that Nova Scotia Power and Emera are putting into the Maritime Link, I would like to see them develop true local energy.

Okay, yes, we're part of a region - and Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, P.E.I., and New Brunswick should certainly work together, and greater regionalization can help us all - but I'd like to take a look, and I've mentioned I think at least on one occasion how Germany has become the transformative nation with producing energy. In the year 2000 they had just a handful of companies producing power but they made a policy in the year 2000 that said any German can produce power. Can you imagine allowing the innovators, the risk-takers in Nova Scotia with that kind of a mandate, any of you can produce power. Germany went from a handful of producers to 800 and, of course, the big producers said we're walking on a path to insanity for the big industrial nation of Germany. Well from the year 2000 when they produced three or four per cent renewable energy they've quickly gone to over 25 per cent and by 2015 they'll be at 80 per cent with the nuclear power plants and thermal plants shut down.

I would love to see that kind of opportunity given to Nova Scotians. This would have been a real debate to see how Nova Scotians could respond. But, of course, we have Emera controlling and wanting to control power at least for the next 35 years beyond 2017, by giving us the Nova Scotia ratepayer investing in the project.

It's very interesting that the past estimates put the link at \$1.2 billion, but now we know it's going to cost at least \$1.5 billion. In fact, during the period of intervening, the 180 days, we're going to find out that a deeper analysis is going to move this project anywhere between \$3 billion and \$5 billion. My colleague, the member for Hants West was talking about the expertise and the ratepayers, because that is who is going to pay the \$3 billion to \$5 billion for this project, the financial model, and it puts you and me - it puts us picking up all that cost, all that risk.

In addition, failure of the project to repay the financial responsibilities defers the responsibility on the backs of the Nova Scotia ratepayers, the province, and the federal taxpayers through the federal loan guarantee term sheet. By fencing the project, the financial liabilities of Emera, NSPI, and NSPML are minimal, if any. None of us are financial experts, but this causes me much concern.

The estimates in the application to date are very thin and sketchy. This is why the 180 days needs to be expanded to at least one year, so that this full analysis can be done. Emera at the time of filing did not have any firm numbers on the turnkey contracts for those parts of the project concerning the submarine cable itself, the cable's marine installation,

environmental analysis or route surveying of the 200-metre-wide swatch of sea floor, the coastal grounding sites, major conversion stations, switchyard designs, et cetera. Those are going to come out in the hearings, and it's going to be very revealing. There are individuals and companies who have looked at this project for over 25 years. This project is not a year 2000 think process or just in the last four or five years. It has been looked at for many years.

Now, as we approach a start date - potentially a start date - well, I guess it's going to be a start date, because the URB in many ways has lost some of its true power in making a decision on this project.

The reality here, Mr. Speaker, is that when the Leader of the Opposition, the Leader of the Liberal Party, went and met with Danny Williams, it was indeed about securing a potential deal with Nova Scotia, but the deal was very much in the line of buying power from Newfoundland and Labrador, because we do have to move off the fossil fuel appetite and move toward a greater amount of renewables. When our Leader went there he was talking about what would be the best deal for Nova Scotians.

What we have seen over the past four years is our Premier working on the best deal for Emera and for Nova Scotia Power. This is not in any way the best deal for ratepayers. Something happened to our Premier when he flew the Emera jet to Newfoundland and Labrador, because he truly forgot about the average Nova Scotian and what we're paying now for our power bills. In fact, this reference here to the percentage change from 2010 to 2013 is the NDP legacy to Nova Scotians: the highest power rates at 30.3 per cent, outstripping every other province in Canada. I will table that, Mr. Speaker.

We know that this is going to continue on because the interesting way for Nova Scotia Power to increase the envelope of its monopoly under the ratepayer 9 per cent cushion on market rates for the next 35 years. Approval of this project, if found consistent under the terms of reference of the URB, will tie up any further opportunities for other private sector imports to assist to bring down rates in a Nova Scotia open market for many years.

We all know that where monopolies and when monopolies exist the only way to get the better price, to get the better deal is to provide competition. So in effect this project strengthens Nova Scotia Power's monopoly in this province. The URB also approved the RES and the RFQ approval system for new IPPs to be administered by Nova Scotia Power. This is not any semblance of the original open market design envisioned by Nova Scotia by any of the original Acts or regulations. In many ways Nova Scotia Power wants to have no direct competitors in Nova Scotia's wholesale electricity market for the next 35 years and we know that the NDP is, in fact, enabling Nova Scotia Power and Emera to do just that.

When I talk about Muskrat Falls to constituents and they want to know what my view is, I go back to when I was a high school student in Newfoundland and I heard Joey Smallwood speak about what was going to transform Newfoundland; of course, that was

the Upper Churchill Falls development, the creation of Lobstick Lake which would produce about five million kilowatts of electricity, and this would be part of Newfoundland's future economy.

But what we must realize is that during the time of literally no inflation, Newfoundland made a long-term, 69-year deal at the same rate. We may say Quebec should have reopened the deal; well, Quebec and Newfoundland and Labrador are working out the deal that was made by Smallwood during the time when inflation was pretty well non-existent. So going by today's figures, numbers, and analyses, no it isn't a great deal but it's the deal that Joey Smallwood saw as part of transforming the economy of Newfoundland at that time.

It's interesting that Manitoba Hydro International as they've started to provide some updating on cost analysis have now moved the price tag from \$5 billion to \$7.7 billion for the entire project - this is a 24 per cent increase in capital costs in just two years. Manitoba Hydro International went on to say - and this is the part that I feel we need to take a look at - they said it was the best deal for Newfoundland and Labrador, and they would not go so far as to say it was even a good deal for Nova Scotia. They projected that benefit to Newfoundland and Labrador from now until the year 2067.

Well, we're not even going to get to the year 2067 because after the 35 years when we get electricity building the Maritime Link we're going to be so generous that we're going to give the Maritime Link back to Newfoundland and Labrador. You can be assured that when 2041 does come, Newfoundland and Labrador and Hydro-Québec will work out shorter term, more sensible inflationary factors calculated in the next deal and they will continue to move power through Quebec. I feel that Newfoundland and Labrador is going to need the power that will come through the Maritime Link, or a good portion of it, and we are prepared to pay for this, and if electricity does move through the Maritime Link, Nova Scotia may not be one of the contract holders, it may all go into New England. So there is much to think about and to ponder about on this deal.

I believe the interveners should get the required time, not even a set number of days of 180, but simply have an open-ended opportunity for all the interveners to have a true say on whether this is a good deal for our province. Thank you.

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

MR. MAT WHYNOTT: Mr. Speaker, I'm glad to join this debate around the importance of Muskrat Falls to our energy security in our future of this province. I hear many things from the member for Kings West, but I wonder - I know he quoted Manitoba Hydro, but I think he made some assertions there and I wonder if he actually called Manitoba Hydro on the telephone like his Party did with Hydro-Québec on a whim.

I'm glad to be able to stand here and talk about this and of the importance of this project, the importance of securing a future for our young people, securing a future for energy security and stable rates, something that we haven't had in this province for many, many years.

I had the chance to stand in my place last week in the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne, to talk about how in 1977, the Liberal Premier of the day, they switched from having 100 per cent oil generation in Nova Scotia and then moved all to coal; so to speak, they put all of their eggs in one basket. The Liberal Premier of the day said, well, at least it wasn't as much as the utility had asked for. Mr. Speaker, do you know how much power went up in one year alone? Forty-four per cent, in 1977. The history books talked about it, the history books say what happened and we know that is the truth.

Our government has been able to - we've had a lot of issues that are of importance to many Nova Scotians. One in particular, as I go out to the constituency that I have the pleasure of representing, people talk about power rates, absolutely they talk about power rates. In the past we've had governments who haven't looked at the issue, they've just said, well, that's life. One of the things our government won't do is sit by the sidelines, we can't sit by the sidelines anymore, because we are turning the corner. We are turning the corner where we have the ability to create energy that is stable, reliable, tax-free, it's green, it's a made-in-Atlantic-Canada solution.

The Liberal Party says, let's just hand over everything to Hydro-Québec, let's do it, or sometimes they may suggest, let's just do natural gas, like they did in 1977, moving from one fossil fuel to another. It begs the question of our energy security in Nova Scotia. The Liberal Party talks about this supposed plan that they have for energy which, in the past - in fact, last week I talked about how it was basically less than a tweet you could do on Twitter, there was no substance to it, there's no substance to the Liberal plan for energy.

When we talk about that, when we talk about the Liberal plan, they never mention the new federal regulations brought down by the federal government around greenhouse gas emissions. They never talk about that. If they had their way, they would just let that go by the wayside and allow Nova Scotia to pay penalties and fines - continue to build coal-fired plants, allowing them to continue to operate in this province.

Nova Scotians don't want that anymore. That was back in the day. Why do you think BC Hydro, Manitoba Hydro, and Hydro-Québec all have low rates? Why? It's because (Interruptions) I look forward to hearing the member for Yarmouth stand up in this emergency debate. (Interruptions)

Getting back to what I was saying before, this is about having an energy security for this province that we've never had before, getting out of the days of double digit increases where governments - Liberal and Progressive Conservative - would just sit back and let it

happen. They voted against removing tax off electricity, off home heating, that last year put \$104 million back into the pockets of everyday Nova Scotians.

Another very interesting part I want to talk about is the issue of the - obviously, they want to talk about how much it's going to cost. Less than a percentage in the first five years of the project, and over time, the cost will go down. That's what we know. That's exactly what we know: \$1.50 to every bill. What this is doing is allowing Nova Scotia to have an energy portfolio not all in one basket - not all in coal.

What we know is that when we do that, we're tied to that one source of energy. For instance, in the last seven years - we know, because it's history - we know that because we've been tied to one source of international fuel, coal. Because we've been tied to that, the price of coal has gone up by 75 per cent on the international market. If we had known that back then, back when we moved from one fossil fuel to another - if we had known that today, because that's what history tells us - hopefully, the government of the day wouldn't have done that. But they did. They went from one fossil fuel to the other.

That's the other reality. At what cost do we move from one fossil fuel or one source of energy to another? Back then, it was all greenhouse gas emissions. For us to sit on the sidelines, the question has to be asked, what's the cost of doing nothing? What is the cost of doing nothing? This is why we need to build an energy mix in our province. Muskrat Falls is just one part of that.

The Liberal Party talks about how this hasn't been analyzed. I heard the member for Halifax Clayton Park getting up and saying this hasn't been analyzed. The government asked a very knowledgeable person by the name of John Dalton to issue a report, to talk about and compare different options, talking about Lower Churchill and comparing the cost to Hydro-Québec and then comparing the cost to domestic energy sources, such as natural gas and wind.

What we know, Mr. Speaker, is that if we were to switch 100 per cent of the energy that we need to Hydro-Québec, it would cost us \$402 million more. That's what John Dalton said. So why would we, as a government, want to have something more, that costs more than what the project of Muskrat Falls is? So that's \$402 million more than what is estimated for the overall cost of the project.

We also know that if we went completely to natural gas and wind, that would be \$105 billion more. So that's what we know, Mr. Speaker. Lower Churchill and Muskrat Falls, the Maritime Link, will improve our diversity and security of energy, it will improve our regional grid reliability, it will improve regional supply flexibility promoting price competition and it will achieve environmental and clean energy targets.

This is exactly what John Dalton, someone who relies on his own credibility in what he does for a living - to move forward, to bring forward a report that well, you know the experts in the Opposition say, oh well it can't be true.

Talking about energy, I mean this is an important piece of the puzzle, Mr. Speaker, but I want to talk about something that came to us all as MLAs the other day, from Mr. Crandlemire, the CEO of Efficiency Nova Scotia. He talked about what last year, in 2012, Efficiency Nova Scotia was able to achieve with the people of Nova Scotia, able to achieve in energy conservation. In the past we never had an ability to encourage people, to give them the ability to conserve energy in their own home and in their own businesses.

One thing that we do know now, within our Energy portfolio, that about 4.1 per cent of our overall energy was conservation, Mr. Speaker; 4.1 per cent may not seem a lot to the Opposition but it does mean a lot. In fact, we have been able, though Efficiency Nova Scotia that our government created - now I know the Liberals want to get rid of it, if they had their way they would get rid of it.

Mr. Speaker, what we do know is that we have been able to help homeowners in their own homes to conserve energy, not only saving them \$104 million from taking the tax off home heating, we have been able to save them in 2012 alone, over \$100 million in conservation. So if you add those two up, we have over \$200 million in savings for Nova Scotians.

So we have been able to retire - this is from Efficiency Nova Scotia that every single MLA in this Chamber received an e-mail last week from Efficiency Nova Scotia outlining some of the work that they've done. I know that the member for Preston, when Efficiency Nova Scotia was here during Public Accounts Committee, that he talked about - in fact, Mr. Speaker, I think he even used the words, thank you very much for making life more affordable for people in Nova Scotia. I tabled that in past sessions.

In Nova Scotia, homeowners, with the help of Efficiency Nova Scotia, have been able to retire 7,976 inefficient, old refrigerators, freezers and air conditioners, Mr. Speaker. Rebates offered on efficient products have resulted in 274,610 products purchased; completed energy efficiency upgrades to 28,397 homes resulted in an average annual saving of \$182 per household; 28,397 households received the residential direct install services for low-income families. Why would the Liberal Party want to get rid of that?

In 2012, alone, Nova Scotians saved enough electricity through efficiency programming to power about 16,000 homes; that's in one year alone. We have been able to bring forward an energy plan that will ensure the lowest, fairest rates for Nova Scotians. The Opposition can get up and go on about whatever they want, but this is the truth, this is what Nova Scotians wanted in the government and if the Liberals had their way, my question to the Liberal Party is, if they had their way would they cancel all of these deals? Are they going to cancel Efficiency Nova Scotia? Would they take the HST off home

electricity? And, if they had their way, would they cancel the Maritime Link. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, it has been interesting to hear both the Liberals and the NDP debating this important topic, since they've both locked in on either hitching their wagons to one solution or the other, without doing their own homework about what would actually work best to freeze power rates or actually deliver lower power rates to Nova Scotians.

I do want to give the Liberals credit for calling the debate today; even though they are a little late to the party, I'm glad they're finally here. I will table for the benefit of the House the press release from December 4, 2012, where the PCs actually caused an emergency debate on the cost of Muskrat Falls to happen in the first place. Leave it to the Liberals when they smell political opportunity finally, months later, to do the same thing, but, of course, we've been asking the government to show us the cost of Muskrat Falls, tell us how much that power will cost when it comes to our homes and businesses, for months and months now, but at least they're here.

One of the reasons that we supported this late, but better-late-than-never call for an emergency debate today is that the Premier himself, on behalf of the government has long ago made up his mind about how much Nova Scotians are going to pay and where they're going to get their power from for the next 35 years. That's why he and his government passed the Maritime Link Act and Regulations which forced the URB to do what they want them to do and if anyone had any doubt that that's what is really going on here all they need to do is look at the *Cape Breton Post* from just a few days ago - and I will table this quote from Premier Dexter, where he says "People, I think, may think that it has to do with the UARB hearing. But that project is going ahead and the only question is how that's going to happen." Now what kind of responsible, political Leader would make their mind up first and then tie the hands of the URB, the one body that we're supposed to rely on to determine what is the lowest and best cost for Nova Scotians?

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. Just a quick little note here. It is not proper to refer to any member by their name in any way during proceedings of the House, this includes notices of motion and while reading from documents such as newspaper stories. Thank you.

MR. BAILLIE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for that clarification. Those are the words of the Premier who long ago made up his mind, who before the Maritime Link hearings even start has sanctioned the project allowing Emera to go ahead with their work, incurring costs, accepting that a penalty will be payable by the taxpayers of Nova Scotia if there are any changes to the regulations in the future. It is not right to handcuff the people of Nova Scotia like that over so much money, over such a long period of time.

In the everyday lives of most Nova Scotians, when it comes time to make a major purchase, a home or a car, well, they do their homework, they look at all of the options available, they look at all the costs. This Premier wants Nova Scotians to buy a shiny new car regardless of the cost and instead of doing his own homework, instead of comparing all the options and finding the lowest-priced green power for the future of our province, he has picked one and signed on the dotted line and committed to it. Then, to try to show that it is the lowest cost, instead of doing a fair comparison to all of the other options what he does is he allows for hundreds of consultants, millions of dollars to be spent on consultants to try to show that that one choice works for Nova Scotians. Well, we could save a lot of money on all of those consultants and all of those hearings if we just had a Premier and a government that made these decisions in a businesslike way by asking everyone who can supply us with power, including Muskrat Falls, to come forward with their best bid for clean, green, renewable energy. Then we would know whether this is the right choice or not, but that's not what they are doing.

How ironic that in the last election the Premier and the NDP ran on a promise to stop the increases in power rates - and before anyone says, no, we didn't, in that virtual world that they now live in, we have the brochures and the advertising that was done by the government that made exactly that claim. Now their record four years in is clear: a 30 per cent increase in power rates, and that after they got into office the NDP decided on their own that they want Nova Scotia to not just go renewable - which, of course, is a goal everybody would applaud - but that we had to be the most renewable on the planet as fast as possible, regardless of the cost, regardless of the price, regardless of the jobs that are thrown aside along the way, and that is wrong.

Neither the Liberals nor the NDP want to talk about it, but the truth is the truth. The reasons our power rates are going up - the power company has admitted it, and the Minister of Energy has admitted it on occasion - is that the government is wanting the power company to buy renewable energy far faster than Nova Scotians can afford. That is the problem: a 30 per cent increase, and without any mandate to do it. One can just imagine if the NDP had asked Nova Scotians in the last election, are you willing to pay 30 per cent more so that we alone can claim to be more renewable than anyone else the fastest? What Nova Scotians would have voted if they had been given that question?

That, Mr. Speaker, is the problem. No one gave them the mandate to do that. No one said it's okay to lose 5,000 jobs because we have to have the highest power rates in the country. No one said it's okay that my household budget or my neighbour's budget has to be squeezed, or that seniors have to close off rooms in their apartments that they can't afford to heat because we have a government that wants to boast that they are the most renewable on the planet. No one was asked that question, and that's why we are where we are today, and that is wrong.

If anyone thinks that the Liberals are any better on this question, they are sorely mistaken. It's time the truth came from the Liberal Party as well. It's time the truth came

from there as well: as much as they like to complain, carp, tear down, and rip up, do you know what their answer is on energy? They had to photocopy a failed policy from New Brunswick and spend a lot of money on TV ads trying to convince Nova Scotians that it would do any better here. Somehow they have stumbled upon a policy that not only drives up our rates higher - which has been shown time and time again in New Brunswick, in Ontario, in Alberta, in California, in Texas, and in other places - but it actually kills investment in renewables at the same time.

Renewable to retail does not work, because it makes power rates more expensive for everybody and it eliminates any investment in renewables at the same time. It takes a special kind of genius to find a way to both raise our rates and reduce the opportunity for renewable investment at the same time, but that is what the Liberal Party has come to - even though right next door, their own review, which anyone who takes five minutes to do their homework can find out, has been found to be an absolute failure of a policy.

Now, after criticizing the NDP for wanting to hitch our wagon for a long, long time to one source, to Muskrat Falls, they are actually making secret phone calls into Hydro-Québec trying to hitch our wagon there. Mr. Speaker, they are exactly as guilty as the NDP are of going about trying to find political solutions to what is a very human and real economic problem in our province.

Even though they spent a lot of money from who knows where on TV ads, when their Leader was asked will your policy actually reduce power rates, do you know what he said, Mr. Speaker, on the CBC? What he said was, well actually no, we just want stable power rates.

Now how ironic is that, that is exactly the same sorry excuse that we hear from the NDP. The definition of stable for Liberals is the same as it is for the NDP, it means up and up and up. Stable means up. That is the exposed truth and it's time that Nova Scotians knew the truth about the crazy policies that both the Liberals and the NDP are promoting on power.

Mr. Speaker, if we're ever going to kick-start the economy of Nova Scotia, save those jobs, if we're ever going to create new jobs in all parts of our province, we need to put in place the fundamentals of a modern, dynamic economy. That means lower taxes that are fair and competitive. That means power rates that are fair and competitive. That means investments in our schools that allow every child to get ahead in the 21st Century.

When it comes to power, we can't afford more 30 per cent increases like the NDP have, we can't afford failed schemes like the Liberals use for their own political purposes that actually don't do a thing that's positive for our economy or for Nova Scotians. What we can do is freeze the increases in power rates in their tracks right now, stop the madness by instructing the power company that they should buy as much renewable energy every

year as they can, within the current rates. We can get to the same result - that green, renewable day we all want - we get to the same result within the current rates.

Mr. Speaker, anyone who understands how the economy works, anyone who has done their homework trying to get to the right answer, will know that every year the power company pays off a little bit more of those old plants, freeing up money within the current rates for investment in renewable. We will get to that same end result but not another job may be lost in this province, not another family having to make that awful choice, when they can't make their power bill, about what they're going to give up instead. We all get there together, to that renewable, affordable day that is so important to a modern, dynamic economy.

Thirdly, we can actually lower power rates. This has been shown by independent studies that instead of hitching our wagon to some expensive plan from Muskrat Falls or making secret phone calls to hitch our wagon into Quebec, if we actually made a businesslike choice and that is to review all of these projects, Mr. Speaker, free up the URB to make the best choice they can - because the sorry truth is, why did the government pass the Maritime Link Act in the first place, when we have a URB that when left to its own devices, would be free to do exactly what needs to be done, which is look at all of the options, no matter where they may be.

What Nova Scotians want to know is that somewhere someone has done their homework to find the lowest-price power for them, not hitch our wagon to one place, not hitch our wagon to another place. Where can we get the cheapest possible power that is also renewable in the future?

You know what, Mr. Speaker? We have spent 20 years under all Parties, watching one of those options whiz by our province into New England and that is natural gas, which may not meet the NDP renewable dream but it is two-thirds cleaner when it comes to emissions and it is a lot cheaper. The Utility and Review Board is not even looking at natural gas on its own, they have to join it up with wind. Why not look at it on its own? Why not reclaim that gas to generate electricity here?

I heard the member opposite talk about Manitoba using hydro. Well, they should check their own research because in Manitoba today do you know what they're investing in? Not more hydro, which they could, because it's too expensive, more natural gas because it is clean and cheap. So let's take our natural gas and burn more of it here and save Nova Scotia households a lot of money and build that economy that creates jobs for all the people of the province, no matter where they live, and is two-thirds greener.

If the government hadn't passed the Maritime Link Act, the URB would be free to pursue that option among all others. But the fact they felt the need to bring into this House a Maritime Link Act and regulations to restrict the URB is proof that neither the NDP nor the Liberals have a clue about how to actually get power prices under control, and that's

why this is an emergency debate. Because of three Parties, we have two who are in a state of their own emergency, because they don't know what to do other than play politics with something as important as the price of electricity, and that's what's wrong here today.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Richmond.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to rise to speak in this emergency debate, and I certainly want to commend my colleague, the member for Dartmouth East, and the Leader of our Party, who have continually put the issue of electricity on the front burner here in Nova Scotia, after listening to what Nova Scotians are going through, in order to try to find solutions.

I have to say the focus of my remarks was not going to be on the Third Party, but after what I just heard I have to say I can't understand why they're in Opposition, because after what we just heard from the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party, they have all the answers - they're right and everyone else is wrong. How is it possible that they're sitting in third place in this Legislature? Maybe if the Leader of the Third Party had somehow been involved with the previous Progressive Conservative Government, maybe they wouldn't be in Opposition.

But wait a minute - wasn't he the chief of staff, the top political position in the Progressive Conservative Government? Then how can it be, if he had all the answers to energy and to electricity, why is it that under a Progressive Conservative Government for 10 years we saw increases every year? Where were all of his answers during those 10 years? Whether he was chief of staff of the Credit Union, he still had the ideas. Why was he hiding them? Why wasn't he making secret calls at night to the Premier? Either the one he was chief of staff with, or the Premier after that? Yet suddenly today, he's got all the answers, and would lecture us. But with all due respect, Mr. Speaker, neither I, nor any of our caucus, nor any Nova Scotians, need a lecture from the Leader of the Third Party in this Legislature.

It's quite clear that energy is one of the main focuses that's on the minds of Nova Scotians, whether they be in Richmond County, whether they be anywhere in the province. Mr. Speaker, I had a lady who contacted my office about three weeks ago and she said, my power bill, from one month to the next, one billing period to the next because they're monthly billing periods, it increased by \$400. But she said, I didn't do anything differently. How is that? I said, well, there was a 3 per cent increase that the government of the day allowed to take place again. But even she said, I'm not that good at math but 3 per cent doesn't add up to a \$400 increase.

And it's true, so I asked myself, is it possibly just a fluke? It might be a billing error or something; maybe this is not something that's the norm, so I posted a message on my Facebook site, which is the new way of communicating with our constituents, and I gave her story, and said, has anyone else experienced something similar? And, Mr. Speaker, the

answer that came back - which is on my Facebook site for those who are friends on the site, I believe there's over 1,400 people - but people were sharing their stories of \$100 increases, \$200, \$300, and one was over a \$500 increase. And yet people were saying we've done everything possible to reduce our consumption. We've changed our appliances; we have changed our light bulbs; we're doing everything possible to consume less, but our power rates keep going up.

To their credit, Nova Scotia Power has agreed to look at all of their account information and do a review to see if there is some other explanation. But it's clear that this is happening in households throughout Nova Scotia, so we can sit here and we can blame each other, or we can try to find solutions. Is the Maritime Link a possible solution? Maybe. Is it the best possible deal for Nova Scotians? We don't know the answer to that. The Premier will tell us it is; the Minister of Energy tells us it is, yet the one independent body that has asked to look at this from a non-political perspective, looking at the finances, looking at the projections, looking at the terms of the deal, is being restricted in the length of time that he can reach a decision. That's the concern that we have.

I want to say that I'm proud of the fact that our Leader went, a number of years ago, to Newfoundland and Labrador, and started the discussion about how Nova Scotia might be able to benefit from that. We've never said that we're against it, what we've said is, is it the best possible deal? Have we entered into a deal that's in the best interests of Nova Scotians? That is the essence of the argument and I don't believe Nova Scotians are convinced of that, and I think they are looking for an independent body to be able to tell them whether they agree it is the best deal.

If we were the only ones in this province saying that we have questions about the Maritime Link, then one could easily say it's politics. But the Minister of Energy knows we're not alone. Interveners are asking the same thing, a group has formed of professionals that took time out of their busy lives to say, we're very concerned about entering into this deal, we have many questions. We should be listening to them. It's ironic in all this debate that we hear about what a terrible deal Newfoundland and Labrador entered into with Quebec years ago. Yet here we are rushing to enter into another 35-year deal.

If anything, history should tell us we should take our time, we should make sure it is the best possible deal. I would suggest that if we weren't on the verge of an election, the government would not be in a rush. But that is what it is pushing this. And for a 35-year deal, we should take our time.

I have to say, it was interesting today the contrast of messages we heard from the government. We heard the Deputy Premier when he was being asked about the issues with the Auditor General's funding and the error with the \$27 million in the budget, his response was, we're looking forward, the Opposition can keep looking behind at what happened last year and a few weeks ago, we're looking forward. Then the Minister of Community Services gets up and she starts talking about the governments for the last 250 years in Nova

Scotia and what they did. I'm not sure if you would call that looking forward, but if that's the case I don't want to meet her on the highway because I think she spends a lot more time looking in her rear-view mirror than she does looking out her windshield. (Applause)

But imagine, here we are in 2013 having a majority government talking about 250 years ago. That's what we had. But it gets better, because as ridiculous as it was for the Minister of Community Services, we have the Premier of the province get up and talk about the single largest power increase this province has seen under a Liberal Government. Naturally, I was quite surprised to hear that, so our question was, what year was it? The Premier, he's cagey, he didn't answer, he's politically smart. The member for Hammonds Plains-Upper Sackville (Interruption) anyway, as I said, the Premier is very politically smart, but the member for Hammonds Plains-Upper Sackville, with great joy, shouts out 1977.

We know that the member for Hammonds Plains-Upper Sackville wasn't born then, so we can't blame him for that. I'll acknowledge that. I guess I have to apologize, I was five years old and I'm a Liberal so I guess I have to say I'm sorry for what happened in 1977. How ridiculous can you get when a majority government sits there and refers to 1977 when we have Nova Scotians that are trying to decide, do I renew my prescriptions, do I go buy food or do I keep Nova Scotia Power from cutting off my electricity at my house? And they want to talk about what happened in 1977.

The mix of messages today was again amazing because every other day you will hear the government say what a horrible thing it was when the Tories privatized Nova Scotia Power. It was terrible. Yet today, Hydro-Québec, under the NDP is the fourth largest electricity monopoly in the world. But who owns Hydro-Québec? It's the people of Quebec, but somehow this government has decided that Hydro-Québec is evil.

I have my own suspicions as what the undertones of those are and they're not pretty, they're ugly, they're absolutely ugly. I can say to hear a Premier who was the chair of the Council of the Federation openly attack another province - whether they like it or not, Hydro-Québec is the people of Quebec. I don't know what they've done to this government, certainly federally they supported them, but they've done something. To now hear the Minister of Energy say we want a made-in-Atlantic-Canada solution. Well, Quebec is next door, not on the other side of the world. Do you know what Nova Scotians want? They want the best possible solution. They don't care where it comes from. They want to see lower power rates so that they can afford to heat their homes and they can afford to have energy security for their families.

I'm proud to be part of a Party that is prepared to look everywhere, prepared to explore every option, and prepared to do everything it takes to find lower electricity for Nova Scotians and a better future for Nova Scotians, and is not prepared to close any doors in seeking that solution. Merci.

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

MR. GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, my colleagues on this side have presented a range of important points in relation to this resolution. I don't want to repeat what they have already said, but I do wish for a few moments to focus on an element of the overall Muskrat Falls debate that sometimes is, though it ought not to be, cast into the shade in the midst of various discussions about things like project costs and electricity prices. That subject is the extraordinarily important contribution of the Muskrat Falls project to the most significant environmental challenge of our era: the mitigation of climate change and the efforts to bring into curtailment our province's aggregate greenhouse gas emissions.

I'm one of those people in Nova Scotia who holds the view that when this era is subject to the judgment of history and when governments of the early 21st Century are subject also to that judgment, one key criterion on which that assessment is going to be made will be what was done or what was not done on the era's pivotal question of greenhouse gas emissions and climate change.

In Nova Scotia, as elsewhere, on the matter of climate change we are in the position of three individuals who are described in the Old Testament - three lepers, in fact - who found themselves in a situation - it's a long story, but I'll cut to the chase - where they were at the gate of a certain city, a place where they were not permitted to be, and where they were also unable for a number of reasons to retreat into the city that they had just come from. They therefore found themselves in a position where they had no choice but to make a move. They had to make a move, as we have to make a move on greenhouse gases. So those individuals set out with some boldness into the future.

As we do this stepping out on this question under our government's leadership, we do so on the basis of a program which has a variety of important facets. We do so on the basis of the overarching goal of 40 per cent energy production from renewables by 2020. We do so on the basis of the range of government programs for bringing renewables onto the grid. We do so on the basis of salient industrial investments, and particularly I would draw attention to the investment in LED lighting in Amherst and the production of turbines in Trenton. We do so on the basis of the transformation from the sinecure-ridden Conserve Nova Scotia to Efficiency Nova Scotia, with the six-fold increase in expenditures on energy savings that has accompanied this transition. We do so on the basis of the development and the investment in tidal power, and we do so on the very important basis and foundation of Muskrat Falls and the Maritime Link.

Unlike some others who have contributed to this debate, I am not an expert in the energy field. I have, however, spent much of my life in the area of project development, in the area of what people sometimes call social entrepreneurship - that is, in the development and bringing to fruition and realization of co-operative or other sorts of community initiatives and projects. In the work of bringing forward projects in communities over my life one thing I have learned is that the development of projects that have a major scope,

projects which are bold, as the lepers were in stepping forward, projects which have kind of a breathtaking kind of characteristic about them, in the development of those kinds of projects, there is a very familiar pattern.

A project - let's say perhaps for a new co-operative - will go through the requisite period such projects have to have of research and detailed thought and consideration. That period will go along until the moment comes when it ought to come when a decision is made, as with the decision being made by the lepers in the Old Testament, it goes along until the decision is made that now is the moment to step boldly beyond the gate, now is the moment to step boldly beyond the city, now is the moment to step ahead and go to the place where we have to go.

When a project in a community is being developed and it comes to the point where that project is actually being concretely put forward, often there's a familiar pattern of difficulties that can take place. For every great project has a certain point, it has a certain moment when the adequate information is on hand for going forward but where every last little "i" cannot yet utterly be dotted and every last "t" cannot yet utterly be crossed because that's the point in the project when those questions simply cannot be answered with absolute exactitude and precision at that time.

Very often at this very predictable stage of the development of any kind of a major, bold, breathtaking project, there's something difficult that happens. Often at that stage of the project those who have not adequately taken in the scope of the project, those who have not taken in the scope of the project's vision, those who are heavy-footed by their nature, those who are actually, in fact, committed to staying in the gates or who are committed to returning to the city, they will invariably, they can be counted on repeatedly to ask for more study, for more research, for more information, for more time, in fact for more anything at all. It's like moving forward with the job of the moment, the establishing of the project.

Very often community organizers will tell you, very often they'll do so by focusing on the absence of that very type of detailed exactitude which precisely cannot be produced at such a moment in the development of any breathtaking, major project.

Mr. Speaker, I regard the continued questioning from the Opposition about the precise effect, dollars and cents, of Muskrat Falls on the power bills to come into people's homes in future years - I regard this continued pattern of questioning, along with the repeated calls for delays and reviews and evaluations of the Maritime Link, I regard these as considerations of this very predictable order in the development of any major project.

I propose that Nova Scotia at this moment does not need this kind of hesitant, heavy-footedness, not when it comes to climate change. In every project that is ultimately worthwhile and necessary, there does come a moment when those who cannot move beyond this nigglieness of negation have to be left behind. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to rise and join this debate here this evening. The point of this debate is that we're looking to see that the Utility and Review Board should have a little bit more time to step back and look at the facts and the circumstances around the power rates and the Muskrat Falls and the Maritime Link project, to see if it's a good project for the people of Nova Scotia.

Mr. Speaker, we just heard about the lepers, the gates, and not being able to step back and you have to go forward. We're in a different situation here today. We're able to step back, take a deep breath and try to determine if this project is the best for the Province of Nova Scotia. We heard a speaker talk this afternoon, earlier in the debate, about putting all our eggs in one basket, how every other Party is putting their eggs in one basket. Now I know the Easter season has just passed and he probably enjoyed his Easter with his Easter egg hunts but, we're debating a serious issue here, a real serious issue. We're hearing about stable power rates and they are saying at the lowest possible cost, but they can't tell us what the lowest possible cost is. I mean, we're all for stable power rates, but the cost - Nova Scotians can't afford the rate we're going at today.

Nova Scotia Power has said that it's going to cost 2 and 3 per cent a year in our power rates for the rest of the decade, and we hear this afternoon from the government that it's going to cost a half of a percentage point. Mr. Speaker, they talk about the travel around the province, the power tour they were on. I listened and sat in on one of these tours, and I agree that Muskrat Falls may be green, but I'm telling you the way they are speaking, that everybody is jumping up and down and they are partying in the streets about Muskrat Falls and the cost of power rates, that's not what I heard. They asked the same questions that we asked - what is the cost and what will the cost be on our power rates?

AN HON. MEMBER: Did you get an answer?

MR. ORRELL: We got no answer, but we also got time turned off. We were supposed to have a presentation for two hours, and an hour and half in that was enough, we had to go talk to the media. That was game over; we had no chance to ask the rest of the questions. So is it a good deal? We don't know. If it is a good deal, we're all behind it.

Mr. Speaker, if the information is accurate and it is a good deal for the people of Nova Scotia, then that's great. but to lock us into a contract for 35 years with no way out - if that's not a good deal the rest of us, our children and our grandchildren, have to live with that deal. Why should we rush into an agreement that we don't know enough about and we don't have all the information at our fingertips? If this is possibly the best deal, what is the big rush?

Mr. Speaker, we hear about Hydro-Québec and Newfoundland and Labrador, and we had a little history lesson on Joey Smallwood, the former Premier of Newfoundland,

who got into a deal with Quebec, and from what we can understand that deal with Quebec wasn't the greatest deal for Newfoundland. So do we, the people of Nova Scotia and the Opposition Parties over here believe that Newfoundland and Labrador is going to get the same deal again, that we're going to be the beneficiary of this deal and Newfoundland and Labrador is not going to be the one that benefits the most?

We hear of a thousand jobs, we hear of a thousand jobs here, we hear of a number of jobs there, but no one can tell us what the jobs are going to be and where they are going to be. Most of the construction in this business is going to be in Newfoundland and Labrador. We may have some upgrades to our power lines here and where the power comes ashore, and I look forward to that happening in my constituency and the constituency of the Victoria-The Lakes area where that power is going to come ashore - and if it creates us 10, 15, 20, or 100 jobs, that's great. We know that the cost of the project has already gone up. There hasn't been a shovel stuck in the ground yet, there hasn't been a key piece of cable laid in the ocean, and the project has gone up, but that's not going to be reflected in our power rates?

The aim of this is noble, to give the people in the position the information so they can make the proper decision. Unlike the lepers we're asking people to step back, hear the information, and make a proper decision. The Liberals have their plan on power and it's debatable - is it good or is it bad? We don't know that; we hear it's bad. We have our position on power rates - is it good or is it bad? We don't know that either; we think it is and that's what we're pitching to the Province of Nova Scotia.

We're hearing the numbers. We're hearing the numbers of what it's going to cost and how much it's going to cost to construct, and all the job numbers. But the numbers we want to hear - how much is it going to cost us as consumers and ratepayers when that power gets to our households? - we're not getting that. They can give us all the numbers and all the numbers that they want, but the numbers Nova Scotians want to hear - what is the final cost, what is it going to cost you the consumer, or me the consumer, and everybody in Nova Scotia on their power rates?

We support any project that's going to give us greener and cheaper power - any project. We'll live within that means. But if we're not hearing that cost - and we're not hearing it - why should we support it? If it's not the best deal for Nova Scotians, then we don't want to support it.

Then we heard the talk today again about our dirty coal and how the price has gone up when we changed from oil to coal. At the time, it was a cheaper alternative. The price of coal is going down again. We talk about greenhouse gas emissions. We have an institution, the sustainability institution at CBU, and if Muskrat Falls and the Maritime Link project is not the best for us, let's spend that money in CBU and develop a technology to burn coal cleaner. We know it can be done. It has been done at Point Aconi. The price of this project has already gone up, and there hasn't been a shovel put in the ground yet.

The plan in raising power rates - we want to freeze power rates and buy renewables at what we can afford. Can we trust the NDP to do what's best for this province? We know that's not the case already. Their so-called commitments - or as we like to say, promises - they didn't keep them. Can they make decisions that are good for the Province of Nova Scotia? We haven't seen that yet.

People want to look at the full slate of questions and make the tough decisions on whether this is a good deal or not. We know the interveners are calling for more time, but the Maritime Link Act is making it tough for the URB to make the decision that we need to hear. It's tying their hands on what decision they have to make. They looked at comparisons between different forms of power production in the province, but they lumped two or three sources together and they didn't study them all together.

We heard from Mr. Dalton, and we heard how reliable he is, and I don't doubt that. But when you make a phone call and ask for a price and don't check into what a negotiation price would be, that's not the best thing for this province. The government set those regulations that would not allow the URB to extend the time frame to make the decision that may be best for the Province of Nova Scotia. We know, as Nova Scotians, we need to know what the cost will be and what the end cost will be. We don't know those costs. How can the URB make the proper decision?

I heard earlier about Hydro-Québec, how it's now the so-called bogeyman, but I remember back last year when the shipyard contract was being talked about. At that time the independent NDP Leader stood in a CTV studio with the Premier standing behind him - or her - and they talked about how great a deal it would be if we shared that shipyard contract around with the rest of the country. Although the Premier didn't say anything at the time, I could see him in the background with his heading nodding up and down, yes, that would be a great deal.

Now they don't want to work with Quebec to give us the proper power, where we can buy power off them. We don't want to do that. We don't want to talk about where we can get the cheapest power. We just want to talk about where we can get a power supply that's green, stable - not necessarily cheaper, stable. We're not saying that's probably not the case, but I'd like to see this government give the URB the time they need to make the proper decisions, and if they think it's the right project, the URB will come up with that decision. If they're not scared to hear what the URB will have to say, give them the time to allow that.

When we consider Muskrat Falls, we're talking about a 35-year project that will have total costs, right now, of between \$4 billion and \$4.5 billion. When considering those facts, why does this decision need to be rushed through? We know the production of power is not going to take place for a long time yet, and I can't see the urgency of passing a bill or allowing the URB to make a decision within six months. So it would be our decision to let them make the decision that is best for the Province of Nova Scotia. Nobody knows if it's a

good project or not, we're hearing from all kinds of interveners and we want them to have the time, the URB to have the time to make the decision that's proper for Nova Scotians and make sure that we do get the cheapest, greenest and stable energy rates.

We don't know what that is, so allow the people in power to make that decision. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. I'd like to thank all the members in the Assembly for an excellent debate today on all sides. The time allotted for the emergency debate has expired.

The hours have been called for tomorrow. We will now rise to sit between the hours of 2:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m.

[The House rose at 7:01 p.m.]

NOTICE OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3)**RESOLUTION NO. 86**

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 Terri Lynn Blanchard of Ellershous is a member of the Hants County Arts Council; and

Whereas Terri's company is known as Transformed Life Photos and features unique photos and traditional shots; and

Whereas Terri is well known for her portrait, architectural, and landscape photographs, and loves to show and share her creativity through her work;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly commend Terri Lynn Blanchard for the creativity she brings to her Ellershous photographic business.

RESOLUTION NO. 87

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 Ivan Christensen, a resident of Centre Burlington, Hants County, is a proud member of the Hants County Arts Council; and

Whereas Ivan, who lives on the Cogmagun Road, works in oils and acrylics and has produced a vast array of paintings; and

Whereas Ivan is a talented artist who specializes in wildlife and landscape impression paintings;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly compliment Ivan Christensen of Centre Burlington for his talents in oil and acrylic painting and wish him every future success.

RESOLUTION NO. 88

By: Mr. Jim Boudreau (Guysborough-Sheet Harbour)

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

Whereas in January 2013, the Jackie MacAulay Memorial Tournament for the Minor Hockey Atoms, B-Division, took place in Baddeck; and

Whereas teams from Canso, Baddeck, and several other communities all competed in the tournament; and

Whereas the Canso Bluefins Atom B hockey team were undefeated in the tournament, winning all five games they played and brought the tournament banner home to Canso;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly congratulate the coaches and players on becoming the tournament champions and bringing home the banner, and wish them every success in their future hockey games and tournaments.

RESOLUTION NO. 89

By: Hon. Jamie Baillie (Cumberland South)

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

Whereas the Oxford Senior Lady Golden Bears won their second consecutive Northumberland Regional Basketball title in February; and

Whereas the tournament took place in Tatamagouche, where the Golden Bears came out firing on all cylinders in both games to defeat the Pugwash Panthers 66 to 38, then coming out victorious against the North Colchester Mustangs 89 to 30; and

Whereas the Oxford Senior Lady Golden Bears will now be the host for the Division 4 Provincials;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate the Oxford Senior Lady Golden Bears basketball team on winning the Northumberland Regionals and wish them continued success throughout the rest of the season.

RESOLUTION NO. 90

By: Jamie Baillie (Cumberland South)

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

Whereas the Oxford Junior Lady Golden Bears had a very successful showing at the Pugwash Invitational Tournament; and

Whereas the Junior Lady Golden Bears defeated the host team, the Pugwash Panthers, in the championship game 33 to 28, claiming the championship banner; and

Whereas members of the championship team are Makayla Rushton, MacKenzie Mattinson, Ashley Wheaton, Kathryn Hickman, Emma Oderkirk, Jennifer Wood, Kya Milton, Bethany Warwick, Rhyse Black, Taylor Mattinson, and Katie Osmond, and coaches Deiter Warwick and Kendall Black;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate the Oxford Junior Lady Golden Bears on winning the Junior Girls Invitational Championship and wish them continued success throughout the season.

RESOLUTION NO. 91

By: Jamie Baillie (Cumberland South)

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

Whereas the Oxford Regional Education Centre Junior Golden Bears brought home the Junior Boys Invitational Championship Banner in January; and

Whereas the Tournament was hosted by the Pugwash Panthers, with several teams competing; and

Whereas members of the Golden Bears Championship team were Cole Rushton, Wesley Black, Jonah Chapman, Tiarnan Whalen, Alex Rushton, Connor Patriquin, Charlie Nix, Kyle Emmerson, Alex Casey, Jeff Macdonald, and Jackson Black, and coaches Mike Hudson and Scott Chapman;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate the Junior Golden Bears on bringing home the championship banner and wish them continued success throughout the season.

RESOLUTION NO. 92

By: Hon. Karen Casey (Colchester North)

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

Whereas Harvey Gullon, manager of Home Hardware Eastern Distribution Centre in Debert, Colchester North, began efforts in 2005 to purchase 18 acres of land owned by the municipality, but was stalled because of concerns about the possibility of archaeological and historical remains on the site; and

Whereas a full archeological study, which prompted no results, has led to a land purchase through the Colchester Regional Development Association and of a nearby spur line from CN Rail; and

Whereas the expansion will see the 360,000-square-foot centre grow by another 200,000 square feet, with an expected increase in the number of people who work there from the present 240;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Harvey Gullon and the Home Hardware Eastern Distribution Centre for their patience over the last seven years, and for beginning their expansion project, which will not only see an increase in shipping capacity but also will allow a new material management system that has been on hold to finally proceed.