



House of Assembly  
Nova Scotia

## DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Gordie Gosse

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### Fifth Session

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 3, 2013

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House of Assembly  
*Nova Scotia*

**HALIFAX, WEDNESDAY, APRIL 3, 2013**

**Sixty-first General Assembly**

**Fifth Session**

**2:00 P.M.**

**SPEAKER**

Hon. Gordie Gosse

**DEPUTY SPEAKERS**

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

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. Before we start the orders of the day, I would inform the House that the subject matter for late debate has been withdrawn.

We will begin the daily routine.

**PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS**

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to table a petition about grandparents' rights. The operative clause states:

“We, the undersigned, call upon the provincial government to establish legislative visitation rights for grandparents to ensure grandparents have regular access to their grandchildren in the event the parents of the grandchildren separate or divorce.”

Mr. Speaker, there are 328 names on this petition, and I have affixed my own signature to it as well, as per the Rules of this House.

MR. SPEAKER: The petition has been tabled.

**PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES**

**TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS**

**STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS**

**GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION**

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Justice.

**RESOLUTION NO. 93**

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

Whereas in Nova Scotia we are grateful for the work of hundreds of people who help prevent crime every day; and

Whereas on Tuesday, March 27<sup>th</sup>, we brought together many people to talk about how to build relationships in our communities to prevent crime; and

Whereas during the symposium, we celebrated the achievements of 20 individuals and organizations that have made Nova Scotia a safer place to live and raise a family;

Therefore be it resolved that members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating not only the Nova Scotians recognized as crime prevention leaders but the many people who have helped make our communities better places to live and raise families.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. CLARRIE MACKINNON: Mr. Speaker, I'm wondering if we could revert to the order of business, Ministerial Statements.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is to go back in the order paper.

Is it agreed?

I hear a No.

The honourable Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal.

### **RESOLUTION NO. 94**

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

Whereas Dr. Eveline (Dunbar) MacLeod has recently received an honorary degree at a special convocation ceremony held by Cape Breton University at the Gaelic College at St. Ann's, Cape Breton; and

Whereas Dr. MacLeod was awarded this distinction owing to her services to the Gaelic community, especially in researching and preserving weaving patterns used by Gaelic women here in Nova Scotia, but no longer in Scotland; and

Whereas Dr. MacLeod was founder of a Cape Breton weavers association and taught the patterns, not only to the membership, but also for many years at the Gaelic College summer school, and also in Scotland, thereby perpetuating knowledge for future generations;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of the House of Assembly join me in congratulating Dr. Eveline MacLeod on the recent honour bestowed upon her by Cape Breton University with the conferring of an honorary degree for her services to the Nova Scotia Gaelic community.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Education.

### **RESOLUTION NO. 95**

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

Whereas Lockview High School music teacher Joseph Cormier has introduced the classic and timeless art of music to more than 13,000 Nova Scotia youth during more than 30 years of teaching; and

Whereas the Prime Minister's Award for Teaching Excellence recognizes the efforts of outstanding teachers in all disciplines who instill in their students a love of learning, helping them excel and build a successful future; and

Whereas Mr. Cormier was a recipient of the 2012 Prime Minister's Award for Teaching Excellence for bringing the enjoyment and appreciation of music through innovative and communication technologies in the classroom that will help his students develop the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in the digital economy;

Therefore be it resolved that members of the House of Assembly congratulate Mr. Cormier on receiving the prestigious Prime Minister's Award for Teaching Excellence, and thank him for his continued dedication to Nova Scotia students.

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 Environment.

### **RESOLUTION NO. 96**

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



Whereas each province and territory presented the first-ever Council of the Federation Excellence in Water Stewardship Awards during Canada Water Week; and

Whereas the Clean Annapolis River Project is the first winner of this award in Nova Scotia, presented on March 19<sup>th</sup>; and

Whereas this year, the Clean Annapolis River Project is marking 23 years of education to the Annapolis Valley residents on the importance of protecting and conserving our water resources;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House congratulate the Clean Annapolis River Project on receiving recognition for its protection and conservation efforts, thank its volunteers for their dedication and hard work, and wish them 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 Natural Resources.

### **RESOLUTION NO. 97**

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

Whereas Nova Scotians are looking for transportation choices that are better for their health and the environment; and

Whereas the Nova Scotia Government has introduced new grants to encourage sustainable transportation projects as part of the Nova Scotia Moves program; and

Whereas the grants will support projects ranging from new bike paths and walking trails to collective approaches to public transit for more rural communities;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of the Legislature celebrate the 28 community groups across Nova Scotia whose projects were approved as part of the Nova

Scotia Moves sustainable transportation grant program that will help promote healthy living and preserve our environment for future generations.

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. 32 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 436 of the Revised Statutes of 1989. The Solemnization of Marriage Act. (Hon. John MacDonell)**

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. 98**

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 thousands of Nova Scotians don't know where their next meal will come from and many rely on local food banks, food drives, and other acts of kindness for assistance; and

Whereas every year Dr. Stephen Godin, Dr. Tracy Payne, and their staff at Cole Harbour Chiropractic organize a food drive to raise money and collect non-perishable food items for local families in need; and

Whereas this year the group raised \$140 and collected 171 kilograms of food to feed hungry families, and provide much-needed comfort and support to the community's most vulnerable citizens;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House recognize the kindness and generosity of Dr. Godin, Dr. Payne, and their entire staff, and thank them for their continued efforts to make life better for people and families of Cole Harbour.

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. 99**

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 Father John Williams is the pastor of St. Agnes and St. John the Baptist churches in Halifax, following postings at the former St. Joseph's in Halifax, St. Peter's in Sheet Harbour, St. Anthony's in Dartmouth, the former St. Lawrence in Fairview, and St. Mary's Cathedral Basilica; and

Whereas April 2013 marks the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Father John's ordination to the priesthood; and

Whereas celebrations of his 40 years of service will be held April 6<sup>th</sup> and April 7<sup>th</sup> at St. Agnes;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Father John Williams for his 40 years of priestly vocation, and wish him the very best as he marks his 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary with family, friends, and parishioners past and present.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism.

### **RESOLUTION NO. 100**

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

Whereas Mo Kenney of Waverley released her first self-titled album in Toronto; and

Whereas her 10-song album was produced by and features performances with Joel Plaskett; and

Whereas her CD, which can be classified as pop, with a side of folk/rock, earned the 22-year-old her first East Coast Music Award nomination in the Rising Star Recording of the Year category;

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

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Victoria-the Lakes.

### **RESOLUTION NO. 101**

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

Whereas April is Parkinson's Awareness Month; and

Whereas for than 4,500 Nova Scotians are living with Parkinson's disease; and

Whereas the Canadian Parkinson Society dedicates the month of April each year to raising awareness about the realities of this neurological disease and offers support to those living with it;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly recognize April as Parkinson's Awareness Month and show our support for the hard-working volunteers by raising awareness in our own communities.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Agriculture.

### **RESOLUTION NO. 102**

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

Whereas the general store used to be a retail fixture in many communities in rural Nova Scotia; and

Whereas James Conley Sr. began selling produce, hardware, and farm-related items in Noel over 40 years ago; and

Whereas in 2012, James Conley Jr. and sister Ethel Fahey celebrated 40 years of providing general goods for sale to the residents of Noel and surrounding communities;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulate James Conley Jr. and Ethel Fahey for their enterprising durability and for maintaining a link to Nova Scotia's retail history.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

### **RESOLUTION NO. 103**

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

Whereas esteemed Cape Sable Island businessman and community leader Basil Edward Blades passed away on March 29, 2013 at the age of 86; and

Whereas the late Basil Edward Blades is highly regarded as a pioneer in Nova Scotia's seafood industry with a career that spanned more than 50 years and included serving in various capacities on numerous industry associations and growing his business, Sable Fish Packers Limited, into the largest seafood processing company and employer in Shelburne County; and

Whereas the late Basil Blades, who came from very humble beginnings, was also a pillar of the community supporting many causes both financially and as a volunteer over the years leaving behind a legacy of what can be accomplished through hard work, determination and dedication;

Therefore be it resolved that the House of Assembly extend sincere condolences to the family of the late Basil Edward Blades.

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. 104**

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

Whereas daffodils are a symbol of hope; and

Whereas every three minutes a Canadian is told for the first time that they have cancer; and

Whereas the Canadian Cancer Society has dedicated April as Daffodil Month so people across the country can show their support for those living with cancer and help work towards a cure;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly show our support for those living with cancer and raise awareness about prevention and good health.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Natural Resources.

**RESOLUTION NO. 105**

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

Whereas the Eastern Canadian Fisheries Exposition was held on February 8, 2013 at the Mariner Centre in Yarmouth, Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Ronnie Heighton of River John was inducted into the Atlantic Canada Marine Industries Hall of Fame as a Mariner; and

Whereas Ronnie Heighton was nominated for this award by his peers and chosen by a selection committee for making a significant contribution to the marine industries in

not only his role as a long-time fisherman but his commitment and service to many associations and organizations in the fishing industry;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulate Ronnie Heighton for being inducted into the Atlantic Canada Marine Industries Hall of Fame as a Mariner and thank him for his dedication and work on behalf of the fishing industry in the Maritimes.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage.

#### **RESOLUTION NO. 106**

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

Whereas Matt Beazley of Eastern Passage and the staff of Matt's Bottle Exchange will celebrate 10 years of recycling refundable beverage containers in August of this year; and

Whereas Matt's Bottle Exchange launched Caps for Charity in July 2012 where the refund for all bottles returned to the exchange with caps on would be redirected to local charities, including the Eastern Passage-Cow Bay Community Food Bank; and

Whereas as a result of this program customers between July and December 2012 have donated over \$1,011;

Therefore be it resolved that this Nova Scotia House of Assembly thank Matt's Bottle Exchange for 10 years of business and community service making Eastern Passage a cleaner, greener and healthier place and wish him and his staff many more years of 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 Pictou East.

### **RESOLUTION NO. 107**

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

Whereas the LBR, a convenience store and gas bar in Lower Barneys River, Pictou County, was established in 1992 and purchased in 1995 by Calvin Mason; and

Whereas Calvin Mason has worked diligently to upgrade the LBR by establishing an agency store of the Nova Scotia Liquor Corporation and becoming the only gasoline retailer on the Northumberland Shore between New Glasgow and Antigonish; and

Whereas Calvin Mason and his business contribute extensively to community events and projects in the Merigomish-Lismore area;

Therefore be it resolved that this Nova Scotia House of Assembly congratulate and honour Calvin Mason for being a good corporate citizen and a team player in contributing to his community and to the Province of Nova Scotia.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Guysborough-Sheet Harbour.

**RESOLUTION NO. 108**

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

Whereas Queens County is home to a variety of talented artists and artisans; and

Whereas to be recognized internationally by peers through juried publication is an honour many artists strive for; and

Whereas goldsmith Andrew Danylewich of Liverpool has been chosen as one of 494 international goldsmiths and jewellers to be included in *500 Necklaces*, published by Lark Books, a division of Sterling Publishing;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly recognize and congratulate Andrew Danylewish for his inclusion in the Lark Books publication, *500 Necklaces*.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

**RESOLUTION NO. 109**

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

Whereas Sharon Kirsh, a native of Halifax long transplanted to Toronto, died yesterday of cancer, aged 62; and

Whereas Sharon, a Ph.D. in Psychology, a novelist, a therapist was beloved of her extended family and very many friends, all of whom are grief-stricken by her loss; and

Whereas Sharon was a sheer delight to know - kind, generous, funny, witty, insightful, chatty, open and emotionally sensitive and much loved by her mother Flo, her husband and daughter Dan and Malka Selchen, and her brothers Joel and Harry;

Therefore be it resolved that this House offer its sympathies to the family and friends of Sharon Kirsh, as we remember her life and note her passing.

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 Pictou East.

### **RESOLUTION NO. 110**

MR. CLARRIE MACKINNON: Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure and an honour for me to read this resolution on behalf of the MLA for Cape Breton Nova, the Speaker of the House.

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

Whereas on March 1, 2013, at the Cove Guest Home's centenarian tea party, nine residents were honoured in recognition of their 100<sup>th</sup> birthday; and

Whereas Jack Yazer, one of those illustrious residents, will turn 100 years old on April 7, 2013; and

Whereas for the past century, Jack Yazer has etched his legacy in the lives of our community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House join me in congratulating Mr. Jack Yazer on this remarkable milestone.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Lunenburg West.

### **RESOLUTION NO. 111**

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

Whereas the Nova Scotia Department of Justice provides one-time grants to support the efforts of community organizations to reduce and prevent crime through the Community Crime Prevention and Reduction Grant Program; and

Whereas the Lunenburg County Crime Prevention Association consists of representatives from Lunenburg County who are willing to volunteer their time, who take pride in their community, and who work together with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to create safer communities through education, awareness, and a reduction in crime; and

Whereas the Lunenburg County Crime Prevention Association has been awarded a one-time grant of \$1,000 to help with their programs, such as the Pace Car Program, the Pumpkin Patrol, seniors safety awareness, bike rodeos, and other important events within the community;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulate the Lunenburg County Crime Prevention Association on receiving this Department of Justice Community Crime Prevention and Reduction grant and commend their efforts to reduce crime in Lunenburg County.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Kings North.

### **RESOLUTION NO. 112**

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

Whereas the members of the Good Neighbour Club of Centreville marked the 7<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of their wonderfully popular, successful, and delicious Big Breakfast in February 2013; and

Whereas the club anticipated feeding a modest 40 people at its first breakfast in 2006 and were overwhelmed with the arrival of 117 hungry citizens and ran completely out of food, which they fondly consider their own story of the loaves and fishes; and

Whereas the 35 members of the cooking team now prepare 70 pounds of potatoes, 55 pounds of bacon, 55 pounds of sausage, 35 loaves of bread, 24 dozen biscuits, 45 dozen eggs, a roaster of baked beans, and seven litres of milk and feed an average of 250 souls at a typical Saturday morning Big Breakfast, and by doing so, have been able to make many improvements to the Centreville community;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia House of Assembly congratulate the members of the Centreville Good Neighbour Club for seven years of successful Big Breakfasts and for demonstrating the true benefits of community members working together for the good of all.

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 Pictou East.

**RESOLUTION NO. 113**

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

Whereas John Ashton of Bridgeville, Pictou County, began a lifelong interest in local history while still a teenager, and at that time began research into the stories and artifacts of local events from days gone by; and

Whereas John Ashton became a graphic artist and historical researcher who would design and establish interpretive panels at community kiosks across Pictou County telling the economic, educational, and social history of our communities, thus bringing our history to life; and

Whereas John Ashton recently published a book entitled *Past Times: Historical Stories of Pictou County*, which details many known tales including the story of a ship named the HMS Pictou, which fought in the War of 1812 and was sunk by “Old Ironsides,” formally known as the USS Constitution;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia House of Assembly congratulate and honour author, researcher, and graphic artist John Ashton for his contributions to the recorded history of Pictou County and the Province of Nova Scotia.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

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

MR. SPEAKER: Question Period begins at 2:37 p.m. and will end at 4:07 p.m.

The honourable Leader of the Opposition.

**PREM.: USER FEES/TAX CHANGES - TIMELINES EXPLAIN**

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Premier announced he will be making changes to taxes seniors pay in this province, yet days before the same Premier hiked 1,400 user fees by 6 per cent on top of the 2 per cent hike the Premier did only two years ago - among other things home care fees have been increased by 5.8 per cent.

These fee increases take effect this week, while the Premier's tax changes are supposed to take effect after the next election. So my question to the Premier is, will the Premier tell seniors why he has hiked user fees effective immediately but is waiting until after the election to fulfill his proposed tax changes?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, seniors this year, just as they have for a number of years now, who are on the GIS, come September will receive a full rebate of every cent that they have paid in GIS as a result of the initiative taken by this government. In addition, because of the work of the Minister of Finance and of our colleagues in the Cabinet, an additional \$22 million has been invested in providing home care services directly to those people who need it. This is an improvement in the lives of seniors, one that we're very proud of and one that I would hope that the Leader of the Opposition would agree with.

MR. MCNEIL: The Premier forgot to mention that he increased power rates in the Province of Nova Scotia by 30 per cent; the Premier forgot to mention that he increased 1,400 user fees in the province; he forgot to mention that he increased HST by 2 per cent - and, by the way, I just want to tell the Premier seniors also pay those fees and taxes.

Mr. Speaker, most savings that seniors will eventually see from the proposed tax changes will be swallowed up by other costs that the NDP have imposed on Nova Scotians. The Premier hiked user fees this week and he stood by and watched power rates increase by over 30 per cent. Seniors are struggling with the same cost prices other Nova Scotians are, often on fixed incomes. This means they are more sensitive to user fee hikes, to tax hikes of any kind, and they are more sensitive to the increase in power bills - and I might add 30 per cent under this Premier's watch. So my question to the Premier is, why is the Premier only interested in more election promises rather than tackling the real cost pressures seniors face today?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I would point out to the Leader of the Opposition that, in fact, the increases in power rates are the result of decisions that were made by Liberal Governments, who shackled us to the international fossil fuel markets, and that it was the increase in the international price of coal that drove the fee increases; in fact, something that we on this side are actually trying to ensure doesn't happen in the future.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, when the HST increase came in, we actually took that money from that increase and gave it to seniors, gave it to people on low incomes, not only to offset, but to more than offset the amount of money that would be paid by a 2 per cent increase in the HST. Seniors, as a result of that measure, are better off and, most assuredly,

they are better off because now, contrary to the wishes of the Leader of the Opposition, they no longer have to pay 10 per cent on the electrical and energy costs in this province.

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, what they pay is the NDP electricity tax - the very tax that they opposed when in Opposition. You know, saying one thing prior to an election, and then doing something else. This is yet another election promise. And every Nova Scotian in this province knows what an election promise from this Premier is worth. With no tax increases, and no promised program cuts, Nova Scotians watched as this Premier hiked taxes, he has cut \$65 million from education, and put social programs in jeopardy. And Nova Scotians are bracing for more of this tomorrow. The Premier doesn't have a revenue problem; he has a priority problem.

After breaking the election promises of 2009, how can seniors trust him to deliver on yet another election promise, Mr. Speaker?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, we keep our election promises, but I want you to think about this. The last time that the Liberals balanced a budget in this province was 1976; Nadia Comaneci got a perfect 10. People alive then could still remember when the Leafs won the Cup.

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

#### **TREASURY BD. - UNIVERSITIES: BUDGET ALLOCATIONS - DETAILS**

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, as a Leafs fan, I'm kind of offended by that most recent answer. My question is to the Chair of Treasury Board.

Many Nova Scotians are skeptical that the NDP will present a truly balanced budget tomorrow. And they have good reason to be, since it's the Treasury Board that approved the \$27 million hole in last year's budget. Prepayments to universities have also been used in the past to create the fiction of a balanced budget, but that practice belongs in the past and has no business in today's budgets.

So my question to the Chair of the Treasury Board is, has he provided our universities with their 2013-14 budget allocations?

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, I will say this, that tomorrow my good friend the Minister of Finance will present a balanced budget, and the details will be in there. Thank you.

MR. BAILLIE: Well, Mr. Speaker, in fact, the Treasury Board Chair has provided our universities with their 2013-14 budget allocations, and I have the letter that he sent to them right here, which I'll table in just a moment if he wants to refresh his memory. But there's something very interesting about this letter.



Mr. Speaker, it does point out how much they are going to receive for 2014, all of the universities, and it points out how much they received two years ago, in 2011-12. But what the letter is silent on is how much they're going to be accounted for in the year that we're just ending, 2012-13. Very convenient if the Chair of the Treasury Board plans to stuff two years of funding into the year that just ended.

I will table this letter from the Chair of the Treasury Board and I will ask him, why did he omit the current year information? Is it because he plans to prepay the universities and present a falsely-balanced budget tomorrow?

MR. CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, I answered this question in his first question. The fact is, if there's any history of prepays, all that member has to do is look in the mirror.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that the past is the past. They promised to be better. People voted for them because they said . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. Order.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, they didn't change. They rely on the same old tricks. That's what is wrong. They spent \$100,000 to get Deloitte to tell them that prepays should be in the past - something we fully accept, but they don't. Nova Scotians deserve a truly balanced budget tomorrow.

Will the Chair of the Treasury Board stand in his place right now and assure everyone there will be no gimmicks or prepays or other kinds of accounting tricks to balance the budget tomorrow?

MR. CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, I think the only tricks he's talking about are the tricks his memory is playing on him, because he seems to forget what they did. As I said, my friend the Minister of Finance will present a balanced budget for all Nova Scotians in this House, and it will be a good budget. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Opposition.

### **PREM.: JOB LOSSES - IMPORTANCE**

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, since the Premier has taken power, the economy has stalled and communities across this province are dealing with high unemployment rates. While it may create a newspaper headline or a good photo op, handing over hundreds of millions of free money to large corporations is poor public policy. Nova Scotians know this, and the proof is in the numbers: 6,400 jobs were lost last year alone, the same year the Premier handed over hundreds of millions of dollars to large corporations.

My question to the Premier is, will the Premier explain to Nova Scotians why newspaper headlines and photo ops are more important to him than getting Nova Scotians back to work?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I just want to correct what the Leader of the Opposition said. Of course, we don't hand over any money to anyone. What we do is make investments where we will see a return for the people of Nova Scotia.

In every instance where any money is invested by the province, it is done on the basis of a commercial loan. It is only forgiven, if it is forgiven, once money comes in, so that the people of Nova Scotia - for example, in the case of the largest industrial contract in our history, the shipbuilding contract - the people of Nova Scotia will realize more than a \$2 billion profit on that investment. That money will be used to support health, education, and the other services that are important for the people of Nova Scotia. That, I believe, is not just an explanation. It begs the question, what in the world would they do if they were in government? What in the world would they do?

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, the closer we get to an election, the larger the Premier's numbers become on the return to the people of Nova Scotia. The fact of the matter is, he has handed over \$300 million of free money. Anyone with common sense will tell you that in order to grow our economy we need to diversify and grow it one job at a time. However, that doesn't fit with the Premier's photo op schedule. He just wants the splashy headline. That's all he's looking for. The corporations see the Premier coming.

While the Premier is handing over hundreds of millions of dollars to corporations, Cape Breton is struggling with a 17 per cent unemployment rate; the North Shore, 12.5 per cent; the Annapolis Valley, 10.4 per cent; and in southern Nova Scotia, it's a 12.2 per cent unemployment rate under this Premier's watch. What will it take for the Premier to learn that his corporate welfare agenda is not working for Nova Scotians?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, over the last seven years the Province of Nova Scotia has made more than \$80 million on commercial loans that it has given to companies in this province. That return is used for either further investment by bringing companies here or in the services that the people of this province need - not a single cent was given to Irving or to anyone else, a commercial loan.

The Leader of the Opposition can say otherwise if he wants, but he knows that it's untrue, and at some point in time he is actually going to have to account for that to the people. They know that what he says is untrue. The people who work in the yard, Mr. Speaker, the hard-working marine workers, the architects, the engineers who are there, the people who are reliant on that contract for the work that they do and for the paycheques that they take home to support their families, we on this side of the aisle support the working people of Nova Scotia. I'm not sure who they're speaking for.

MR. MCNEIL: Someone ought to tell him that he is the Premier of Nova Scotia, not the Governor of the Bank of Nova Scotia, Mr. Speaker, the way he is handing out money.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier likes to brag about lowering the small business tax rate, but what he forgets to tell Nova Scotians is that he also lowered the threshold amount. So the Premier is essentially penalizing success, so let's get it straight, right? If you are a small business in the Province of Nova Scotia and you've been successful, this Premier wants you to pay more tax, at the same time that he is handing out free money to large corporations.

With over 6,400 fewer Nova Scotians employed than last year, will the Premier finally admit he can't grow the economy by writing blank cheques to large corporations and abandoning hard working Nova Scotians?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, if the Leader of the Opposition had his way, he would walk away from thousands of Nova Scotian workers who will have good jobs, young people who will have a future in those industries, whether it's in Port Hawkesbury or in Halifax.

This government through its tax abatement in the small business tax, has put \$78 million back into the hands of small-business people, Mr. Speaker. The reduction, as has been laid out - the current reduction in the small business tax on the threshold means that more small businesses will qualify. They will get more money and the exact companies that he is talking about - the mega-giants, the Exxons, all of those - they won't get the small business tax break because that money will be repositioned into small business.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

### **ENERGY - MAR. LINK: REVIEW - URB TIMELINE**

MR. ANDREW YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Energy. You can almost - well you never get a straight answer on the Maritime Link out of the Minister of Energy, the Premier or, frankly, anyone in the NDP because they either don't have the answers or they don't want people to know them.

Yesterday the minister and his caucus colleagues carefully avoided giving any reason why they won't extend the timeline for the Utility and Review Board to make a decision in the best interests of Nova Scotians. To quote the Consumer Advocate, "All Nova Scotians are entitled to be assured the Board has adequate time to access and consider all relevant evidence and to determine what is the lowest long-term alternative." And I'll table that.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister change the regulations and allow the board whatever time it deems appropriate and necessary to properly review the Maritime Link, or will his

promise of last year of a complete, fair and transparent review by the board just go down as one more broken NDP promise?

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Environment (Interruption) Energy, sorry.

HON. CHARLIE PARKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure the Minister of Environment could answer the question adequately as well, but we all know that the Maritime Link is an important project here in Nova Scotia and in the Maritime region and it is going to provide us an opportunity to get the lowest, fairest rates for electricity for Nova Scotians.

The Maritime Link Act that set up the review with the URB was passed in this House unanimously. It was supported by the Liberal Party; it was supported by the Progressive Conservative Party; and supported here by government. When the opportunity came to have the regulations out for discussion last summer, did we hear from the Liberal Party? Not at all. Did we hear from the other Opposition Party? Not at all. There has been lots of opportunity there - plus we consulted with the URB and they indicated that the half-year timeline was adequate to fully address and review the situation, so it will continue in the six month time frame and we're looking forward to the decision by the end of July.

MR. YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, maybe he should have given it to the Minister of Environment, maybe we would have gotten an answer for once. The Minister of Energy - it's entertaining to listen to him because, of course, the fact is that he talks about supporting the Act, the Act which he insisted for weeks wasn't even necessary, and I will table the Hansard from that where I specifically said we'll support the Act but they put it all in regulations and we'll just have to hope they get them right.

Then he says, well nobody said anything last summer. Well, you know what, Mr. Speaker, last summer he promised us that the Consumer Advocate and everybody else said six months would be enough, well in March and in February when the documents were filed, the Consumer Advocate, the Small Business Advocate, the Wind Energy Association, almost all the other interveners have said you know what, it turns out that isn't going to be enough time. There was no way for them or anybody else to know last summer.

So Mr. Speaker, the minister previously promised a full and complete review by the Utility and Review Board. The Consumer Advocate, the Small Business Advocate, they all say that's not possible now, not possible. So will he keep his commitment from last year and allow the time needed to review the project fully or again is he simply going to break another NDP promise?

MR. PARKER: It's interesting the honourable member has to now quote himself in this House and put forward his own material, I'm not sure if he got it right or not. The URB is seriously looking at this issue, there is a lot of material there and a lot of it has been presented before, it's information on the Atlantic Energy Gateway and other information

that has been out for public review for a long time and I think six months is an adequate time period for the review, the URB has agreed to that and again I'm looking forward to their decision by the end of midsummer.

MR. YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, the NDP spend so much time claiming that the Opposition have said things that we have not said that we have no choice but to quote ourselves back; it's the only time that he listens. I really have to ask to get the minister's earpiece checked because I think part of the problem is the earpiece might not be working and so he doesn't always hear what we're saying.

Mr. Speaker, we're talking about billions of dollars coming out of the pockets of ratepayers and we're talking about the profits of Emera being propped up once again by the NDP. He says it's the cheapest and best option, he complains when people like the Consumer Advocate say that more time is needed, that what he's saying is wrong and that a review can't be done in that six months. Is the minister saying that the Consumer Advocate and the Small Business Advocate are wrong, and if not, what is he trying to hide?

MR. PARKER: I think the honourable member might want to check his sources there but the URB has a role, has a job, has a responsibility to examine all the evidence, to cross-examine witnesses, to call in expertise if they require and make sure that everything is there that they need to make an informed decision. They are going to do just that, that's their role, that's their responsibility and if I had more time I'd tell you a little bit about perhaps what the Liberals are proposing here for energy but we'll save that for another day, I don't need a lot of time but I'll discuss it another day. URB has a role and responsibility and they're going to do their job with the six-month time frame.

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

#### **EDUC. - SCH. REVIEW PROCESS: SUSPENSION - EXPLAIN**

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Education, parents, students, school boards, and communities across the province have been put through heartache and turmoil over the potential closures of rural schools for months and months. Some communities and towns have actually been pitted one against the other as they go through a flawed school review process. Now, on the eve of an election, the minister flip-flops on school closures and I'll ask her, why did the minister put so many families, students, and school boards through the wringer if she was truly going to suspend the process all along?

HON. RAMONA JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, I just want to clarify that I'm not able to put a halt to anything. What I've done today is, I have asked the school boards to suspend the review process for the year 2013-14 and to delay any of the decisions that were made in the year 2012-13. I've asked the school boards that, and I will hear back if they're going to honour that request by April 30<sup>th</sup>.

MR. BAILLIE: Actually, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Education is in a position to halt these things and chose not to for the last two years. In fact, I have here with me a quote from the Minister of Education just last year, which I will table, where she says, "Parents are going to have to recognize that not all schools will stay open." Those are the words of the Minister of Education, who then went on to say, "I know we'd like to each have our own little school, but we do have to sometimes take a deep breath and move our children off to another school." Those are the words of the Minister of Education last year. I'll table that for her.

Mr. Speaker, everyone who read that - parents, school boards, students - took the minister at her word, that she was going to force them down this awful road. So now that she has flip-flopped, will she apologize to the school boards, to the students, and to the parents who took her at her word when she said they were just going to have to realize that schools are going to close?

MS. JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, as everyone knows, the schools are the hearts of our communities and schools are very important in every one of our communities. The request that I made today is not going to save all of our schools in the province. We have an issue with declining enrolment and we have excess capacity, but we have a process that we inherited, that we did try to improve, and it didn't work.

I am hearing back from parents and community members that this process has been adversarial and heartbreaking, so the process finished on March 31<sup>st</sup>. I've asked the school boards if they would suspend the process.

If the honourable member will look at legislation, I am not able to interfere. All I can do is ask the school board if they'll honour the requests that I've made today, and we'll hear back by April 30<sup>th</sup>.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, the minister has had four years to fix the process if she thought it was truly broken, and she chose not to. This announcement today has nothing to do with enrolments or a process. It's all about election year politics. That's what is going on today.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, just last May the minister was asked about stopping this school review process, and she said - and I'll table her own words - just last May, she said, "Definitely there will be no moratorium on the school review processes." Those were the words of the minister last year. Now that we're in an election year, she has flip-flopped.

So I will ask the minister, will she admit that today's announcement is nothing more than political posturing on the backs of our rural students?

MS. JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, what I'm standing here and admitting is that I'm listening to Nova Scotians. This process has not been working the way that it should be working. We inherited this process. We did work on it over the last couple of years.

I'm hearing back from communities, I'm hearing back from school board members, and I'm hearing back from full school boards that this process is not working, so we are asking the school boards. I cannot call a moratorium. There is no legislative capacity for the Minister of Education to do that.

I can ask the school boards. I made a request of the school boards if they will suspend the process while we work together with all of Nova Scotia, with all departments of government, with the UNSM, to come out of the end of this with a process that is going to work for our students in our communities.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Glace Bay.

### **ERDT - MAR. LINK: POWER RATES - EFFECTS**

MR. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, the Maritime Link deal that the NDP is rushing through the URB process contains too many unknowns. As we are discovering, the NDP either don't know or won't tell Nova Scotians what this deal means for our future power rates. Small and medium-sized businesses have consistently ranked energy costs as their main concern for the last number of years and the NDP's silence on the impact of power rates is distressing. My question is, can the Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism tell Nova Scotian businesses what this multi-billion dollar project will mean for their power rates, their competitiveness and their ability to remain a vital part of their communities past 2017?

HON. PERCY PARIS: Mr. Speaker, what Muskrat Falls is going to mean to the business community of Nova Scotia is stability and security - it's about their future. We are on the right track and I don't know where the member opposite is coming from.

MR. MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, where I'm coming from is that small businesses rank energy and power costs as their most critical costs - that's where I'm coming from, that's the question, that's what I'm asking. This minister should know how this multi-billion dollar deal is going to affect small businesses in Nova Scotia. He certainly doesn't seem to know what the deal means for small businesses, the same businesses that have cited soaring energy as their top concern for as long as this government has been in power. This minister is out of touch so my question is, why would a Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism blindly champion a multi-billion dollar deal for which he has no idea of the final impact on the Nova Scotia economy?

MR. PARIS: Mr. Speaker, I'm at a loss here and I'm at a loss because of what Muskrat Falls means to the region of Cape Breton. The jobs that it's going to create for Cape Breton Island is unbelievable and all members of this House should be grateful and thankful. For businesses all across this province and for residents it's about the future of energy in this province - stability.

MR. MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I'm looking forward to seeing how the Maritime Link is going to create an influx of jobs in Cape Breton that the minister is talking about. I will agree with one point, he is definitely at a loss, there's no question about that.

This minister has sat silently while energy costs have increased 30 per cent in the last year alone - the largest increase in the entire country. He has been silent while businesses have struggled to stay afloat with these soaring energy costs. Last year the NDP failed to disclose a \$27 million overstatement in revenues even though they were advised to by the Auditor General. Either the minister knows the impact of this multi-million dollar deal on the cost of power for businesses in Nova Scotia and he's choosing to not disclose it, or he simply has no idea what the impact is past 2017. We certainly all believe it's the second one, but I will ask that minister. Will he tell Nova Scotians which scenario it is?

MR. PARIS: Mr. Speaker, all Nova Scotians want good jobs. They want sustainability, they want a future. There are many Nova Scotians, ex-pats, who want to come home. Muskrat Falls is a step in that right direction, it's a step in the direction for all businesses - small, medium-sized, large - to create stable electricity and energy prices for the Province of Nova Scotia to ensure the future of good jobs in the Province of Nova Scotia.

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

### **PREM.: CANDIDATE PROMISES - VERACITY**

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, on May 12, 2009, the then-candidate for Premier promised, "... to balance budgets, to not add to the debt and to make the provision that we can for the capital spending that is achievable." I will table that quote for the benefit of the Premier. Those were the words of the candidate for Premier while campaigning in 2009.

Since that time, the NDP has added over \$1 billion to our provincial debt and tabled four consecutive deficit budgets and I will table the projected net debt of the province in the budget which shows that it has grown by \$1 billion under his term in office. Now, Mr. Speaker, the Premier is promising to balance the budget yet again.

So my question for the Premier is, why should Nova Scotians believe the Premier of 2013 when they were let down so badly by the candidate for Premier in 2009?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, quite the opposite. The reality is that during that election campaign one of the key platform planks of the day happened to revolve around the question of stimulus spending that was coming from the federal government, from Mr. Harper. And in fact, the Progressive Conservatives of the day, you may remember had laid out a plan for about a billion and a half dollars' worth of spending, and the question that was routinely put to all of the Leaders at that time was whether or not we would maximize



the investment that was put in place by the stimulus spending of the federal government. We said that we would, and we did.

MR. BAILLIE: That's what the Premier says now, but it's not what he said when he was the candidate for Premier in 2009, as that CBC article shows. In fact, Mr. Speaker, when the Premier came into office Nova Scotia had a \$19.7 million surplus. I have with me the message from the minister that accompanied the financial statements of the province that year, which clearly shows that - and I'll table that for the benefit of the House. It is kind of ironic that the government changed between the end of the year and when the message from the minister was signed, and of course it was signed by the new NDP Minister of Finance of the day, the member for Halifax Fairview.

So, Mr. Speaker, just like that famous Lucy and Charlie Brown cartoon, the Premier is, once again, holding the balanced budget football for Nova Scotians to take another kick at. We all know how that ended for poor old Charlie Brown - now we are paying the highest taxes in all of Canada, skyrocketing power rates, expensive user fees, and on, and on, and on.

Will the Premier admit that, just like Charlie Brown, Nova Scotians are flat on their backs because of his failed attempts to balance the budget?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, in the very last year of the Progressive Conservative decade, they overspent their budget by \$408 million - \$408 million more than they budgeted and they claim that that was a balance. Now, it happened that there were revenues that came in that same year, but nobody would call that a balance, that you set a budget figure, and then miss it by almost a half a billion dollars and go around and tell people somehow your budget is balanced. You want to talk about a kind of hocus-pocus, that is Progressive Conservative hocus-pocus.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, the Premier can say what he wants. His first Minister of Finance signed on the dotted line that they inherited a balanced set of books - that's not disputable. The Auditor General signed on the dotted line that the Premier inherited a balanced set of books - that is not disputable. And, in fact, I was so pleased to see the Premier's second and current Minister of Finance write a letter to the editor of The Globe and Mail, which I will table, saying that Nova Scotia has had three deficit budgets in the last 10 years, and all three, of course, are the most recent three.

So, unlike the Premier, the previous Minister of Finance for the NDP, the current Minister of Finance for the NDP, and the Auditor General all say that they inherited a \$19.7 million surplus. Here we are, four years later, not the candidate for Premier, the actual Premier, raised the HST to collect an extra billion dollars, added another billion dollars on top of that to our provincial debt, hikes up user fees, and makes it very expensive to live here.

Will the Premier finally admit the truth of what his current minister, his past minister, and the Auditor General says - that his failed attempt to manage the province's finances have made Nova Scotians pay the price over, and over, and over again?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I don't know what the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party thinks. Departmental spending has gone down, departmental spending every year has come in under budget, we have managed to roll back what Deloitte pointed out was going to be a \$1.3 billion deficit that is completely, totally and absolutely attributable to the former Progressive Conservative Government.

On top of that, I was surprised to see, as I'm sure a lot of people were - not just in my caucus but in the Liberal caucus and in the Province of Nova Scotia - I was surprised to see at the last convention the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party standing in front of a podium that said, "Stop More Jobs." That's what the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party is up to.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester North.

#### **EDUC. - MAR. LINK: PUB. SCH. PROGS. - EFFECTS**

HON. KAREN CASEY: Mr. Speaker, my question is through you to the Minister of Education. The Premier and the NDP Government continue to boast about the Maritime Link when they can't or won't tell Nova Scotians what the price of power will be, or what impact it will have on the delivery of service. Rising power rates are forcing school boards to make tough decisions as this government continues to cut funding to education. School boards are being asked to do more with less.

My question to the minister is, can the Minister of Education tell Nova Scotians what the multi-billion dollar Muskrat Falls project will mean for the cost of delivery of public school programs in our province?

HON. RAMONA JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, that is a very interesting question and I will say that the Muskrat Falls project will have no impact on the school boards and the budgets.

MS. CASEY: Well, Mr. Speaker, I expect that the minister may regret saying that because people are expecting that stable prices or lower prices, or whatever they're boasting about, will be transferred over to the school boards that are paying huge electricity bills, but I guess there's not going to be any impact so they're on their own.

School boards are facing rising costs in 2011: the South Shore board paid over \$1 million for power rates; Tri-County paid \$1.2 million; and CSAP paid over \$1 million. So, Mr. Speaker, the cost of power to these schools and to these school boards continues to grow, yet this minister has cut funding and has taken away any of the money that had been given to boards to pay for those costs.

My question to the minister is, when will the minister stand up for the people she is supposed to represent, show some leadership, and protect the funding that goes for our kids?

MS. JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, we have been investing in our children in our province through our funding formula, which has been improved with our school boards. That funding formula runs through a model where we include all of the costs that a school board has, including the teachers' salaries. All of that runs through a funding formula so that we make sure we are funding each and every child in this province appropriately.

This budget that's coming forward is increasing spending on our children and our per-child cost is going up over \$300 more per student in this province.

MS. CASEY: Mr. Speaker, the funding formula is a formula that is designed to distribute monies to school boards, but the inflationary costs which had formerly been covered have not been covered and that is what's killing school boards. That's where their money is going.

This minister and her NDP Government are tying Nova Scotia to this multi-million dollar agreement, at the same time gutting public education. How can parents trust that this minister will ever stand up in the best interests of kids when she continues to reduce the funding? Five boards are getting less money in this minister's wonderful budget.

MS. JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, we are protecting the boards that have had significant enrolment decline, these school boards have been protected with our funding. We are making sure we are investing in our students. We have SchoolsPlus, we have Succeeding in Reading; we are making sure that our math is going to be meeting the needs of our students so that we graduate successful students into our society.

We have been investing in our children, we are doing things differently. We have significant challenges and we have met them with our school boards. Every child in this province will have the opportunity to have a very good education, thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

### **PSC - CIVIL SERVICE: REDUCTION - STATUS**

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of the Public Service Commission. In the Spring of 2010 the Minister of Finance promised to reduce spending, he said, "We will reduce the civil service by ten per cent by 2013." At the time there were 10,813 positions, so reducing the civil service by 1,000 was the promise. Every year since, this government has stated they have made no progress on this commitment. Can the minister report any progress this year?

HON. MARILYN MORE: I'm pleased to report - and certainly more details will be available after the budget - but we have made significant progress in that commitment.

MR. MACMASTER: Well, Mr. Speaker, I am kind of laughing because I might be psychic, one of my predictions may be coming true. One thing I noticed every year when this government tabled its budget in each of the past years, they reported that they needed about 700 people more than they actually used in the previous year and at \$100,000 per person if you look at salaries, benefits, and office space, we're looking at an amount of over \$70 million that this government has had every year within its budget to play with.

So, Mr. Speaker, are we going to see the same tactic used this year, or perhaps the minister is giving us an inkling now, will the estimated actual job numbers more closely match each other?

MS. MORE: You have to compare apples to apples and I can say on the floor of this Assembly that we have fewer full-time equivalents than when we came into office and I certainly will be very pleased to provide the details in the future.

MR. MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, the minister may be setting us up for, I guess, clearing this issue up if they have been over-inflating their FTE numbers by upwards of 700 a year in each of the last three years, and if magically that number is erased this year we'll know that they were fudging their numbers all the way along and if they balance the budget tomorrow this is one of the ways in which they've played with the budget to balance it.

Mr. Speaker, over 12,000 people have lost jobs during this government's term. They have raised the HST to pay for the expense of their governing, they broke their promise not to raise the HST and they also broke their promise, unless we're seeing something different today, to reduce the size of government. So my question for the minister is, when will this government stop playing with numbers to justify tax increases and make it seem like an achievement to balance a budget?

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. I'd remind the honourable member that "fudging the budget" is unparliamentary and I'd ask the honourable member to retract that please.

MR. MACMASTER: I can't think of another word to replace that but I do retract the word.

MS. MORE: It's no surprise to the members of the House of Assembly that we were on an unsustainable path in terms of our expenditures over the last number of years until we became government. Certainly the FTEs in the Public Service rose by 1,000 between 2003 and 2009 and we have worked very, very closely with the civil service. We know that we're in a time when a public expects us to live within our means and at the same time they want to ensure that they have quality programs and services which are delivered

by the civil service. We are very pleased that within a very tough situation we have been able to reverse that trend.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

### **HEALTH & WELLNESS: CNS - FIN. TRANSFERS**

MR. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, every time you turn on TV Nova Scotians are watching ads about the virtues of the collaborative health centres, because we're finding out they aren't emergency centres, even though every community doesn't have one and despite the fact that ERs were closed over 17,000 hours last year. In fact, supplementary Public Accounts since fiscal year ended March 31, 2010, show that \$6.3 million was transferred by the Department of Health and Wellness to Communications Nova Scotia - all of this at a time when this minister and the previous minister and the ministerial assistant and the deputy minister have stated repeatedly that we can't afford an insulin pump program.

Could the minister please tell us why people with diabetes were told there was no money when \$6.3 million has been spent over the last three years on advertising and communications?

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud of the accomplishments that we've been able to make over the last three and a half years as a government. When we came into government we were left with a financial mess. We knew we had to do business differently in the Province of Nova Scotia. (Interruptions) The Progressive Conservatives left us with a financial mess. We had to do things differently. We chose a different path. We didn't choose the path of the past Liberal Government when it comes to reform in health care, the cut-and-slash approach that they took back in the 1990s. As a former health care worker, I remember those days.

We chose to work with district health authorities and we chose to work with clinicians who work within the health care system here in Nova Scotia to make improvements, to have better access for Nova Scotians to the services they need. We're very proud of our accomplishments in Health and Wellness.

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, with all due respect to the minister, there's a difference between informing Nova Scotians and brainwashing them with their own taxpayer dollars. The reality is that the faster an individual with uncontrolled diabetes is introduced to pump therapy, the better the patient outcomes, and the greater the savings to our health care system. For the last three years this NDP Government has spent the same amount of money it would cost to fund a comprehensive insulin pump program on self-promotion. In fact, of the \$6.3 million transferred to Communications Nova Scotia, \$1.8 million has been spent on advertising graphic displays so the minister has fancy backdrops and props and video production.

My question to the minister is, why is funding self-promotion more important than funding an insulin pump program?

MR. WILSON: Mr. Speaker, one of the things we've done is change the model of care within the health care system across the province. Collaborative Emergency Centres are one of those changes. The 811 system is another change. We need to ensure that Nova Scotians know how to access health care services.

We asked Dr. Ross, who is a well-respected emergency room physician, to go around the province, to try to evaluate and figure out how we could change the process of doing and delivering health care here in Nova Scotia. In the report that he delivered to the government, one of the key areas that he said was to ensure that, if you're going to make changes to the health care system, you inform Nova Scotians. If they don't know about 811, they're not going to call it. If they don't know about the changes of Collaborative Emergency Centres or how to access primary care, they're not going to access it.

We take full advantage of ensuring that Nova Scotians know about the changes we're making, and I think the system here in Nova Scotia is better off for it.

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

#### **COM. SERV. - MAR. LINK: ELECTRICITY RATES - EFFECTS**

MS. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Community Services please tell the members of this House what the multi-billion dollar Maritime Link project will mean for electricity rates for low-income Nova Scotians after 2017?

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, the Maritime Link will mean hope for those individuals who are more vulnerable, low-income, because there will be stability in our energy rates in this province that we have never seen in the history of Nova Scotia. So it's hope and stability.

MS. REGAN: Mr. Speaker, people on income assistance can't eat hope; they can't heat their homes with hope; and they can't buy clothes for their children with hope. This government's inability to tell Nova Scotians how much power rates are going to increase with the Maritime Link project gives us all reason to be concerned.

In 2011-12 there were 11,300 income assistance clients who reported electricity in their monthly budgets, and that came to an annual cost of \$12.9 million, about \$1,141 per case. As well, there were 1,391 cases reporting utility arrears that totalled almost \$1 million - \$920,000. This minister should have a vested interest in ensuring that we have a full understanding of power rates before the government blindly signs on to this multi-billion dollar project - this has a direct impact on nearly 30,000 clients and her department's ability to deliver services.

Will the minister please tell us today what impact the Maritime Link will have on power rates - like a dollar figure - for income assistance clients?

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: Well, Mr. Speaker, we not only give hope, we give action - that's something that group on the other side never did. They always gave a misleading hope, as they do today. The action that we have taken is we have invested \$420 million to help the most vulnerable in this province. We created the Affordable Living Tax Credit; we created the Poverty Reduction Credit. We're giving back, the HST is not being charged on home heating for those individuals and all Nova Scotians.

We're also helping seniors with respect to the GIS - they no longer have to pay income tax; we also have, over the years, increased the Property Tax Rebate for Seniors by \$200 in the first year; we've helped foster families by increasing their per diem; we have helped people who are on disabilities by increasing their enhanced family numbers amount per diem. There is a long, long list that I can continue on with that we have done to support Nova Scotians. The next part of that list is to create stability in energy, which is critical for Nova Scotians.

MS. REGAN: Mr. Speaker, there was no answer there; there was no dollar figure there about the Maritime Link. Sorry guys, the question wasn't about all these other programs, the question was about the Maritime Link - and the minister knows it.

This minister is responsible for housing; her department is responsible for income assistance. Her department pays nearly \$13 million a year on power bills for clients. Surely she knows what the impact will be of the Maritime Link on her department's ability to deliver services.

Will the minister please share with Nova Scotians what impact increased power rates from the Maritime Link will have on her department and her clients?

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, the impact will be stability, something that we would not have from either the Liberals or the Progressive Conservatives. It means we are the first government that has brought forth a very, very good housing strategy that we'll be looking at in terms of our cost for power as part of a housing strategy, which means we're going to have stability. So stability is the key word. Nova Scotians have that comfort that they know in their future, and for generations to come, they're going to have a consistent, stable energy rate.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford-Birch Cove on a new question.

#### **COM. SERV. - POWER RATES INCREASES: WOMEN'S CENTRES - IMPACT**

MS. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Community Services please tell the members of this House what impact the multi-billion dollar link project and

its guaranteed increase in power rates will have on the delivery of services at women's centres, family resource centres, or transition houses after 2017?

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, once again it will be stability along with the fact that when we became government, for the first time in decades the transition houses and women's centres got an investment of \$500,000, and they recently got another investment from this government. So it's not only stability. It's investing in those people, because they're so important to us. We see it, as a government - the job that they do - and it's a job well done.

MS. REGAN: Mr. Speaker, non-profit agencies are telling us they cannot absorb any more cost increases. This government has imposed a freeze on direct grants, while costs continue to soar. Calls for services are increasing. Non-profit agencies, much like schools and hospitals, are asked to do more with less.

If the Minister of Community Services cannot tell members of this House how much power rates are set to increase with the Maritime Link project, how can she freeze budgets for not-for-profit agencies, squeezing community supports even further?

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: Well, firstly, Mr. Speaker, it is not correct to say that we have frozen any of the grants. We have not done that at all. And once again, what any organization needs when they're planning for the future is to know about stability. The problem that they face today is because of the fact that the past decisions of relying on fossil fuel have created a situation in today's society where the energy rates are going up because we're relying on coal, which has gone up 70 percent. So I believe that those non-profit organizations are going to be very pleased with a government that has a plan for stability in their energy rates for years to come.

MS. REGAN: Mr. Speaker, agencies see their budget lines for power increasing. They're being forced to cut outreach, cut staff, and cut hours in order to make ends meet. Affordable housing organizations are having to sell units so they can meet their increased operating costs.

If the Minister of Community Services will not offer an increase in funds to organizations that deal with increased power rates, can she then tell them, please, what they are to cut? Is it programs? Staff? Beds? Counselling services?

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: Once again, Mr. Speaker, what we're talking about is stability for the future. We also provide Efficiency Nova Scotia to those particular organizations.

Since it's Question Period, I would like to know what it's going to cost to have Hydro-Québec - who had to turn off their big logo, which is a Q, this winter, because they didn't even have enough power to run their own Q. So how do they think the power's going to get here to Nova Scotia? We'll be in the dark.



MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester North.

### **EDUC.: ADVERTISING/PROMOTIONS - COSTS**

HON. KAREN CASEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question through you is for the Minister of Education. Will the Minister of Education tell members of this House how much her department spent on advertising and promotions during the last year?

HON. RAMONA JENNEX: Mr. Speaker. I look forward to Budget Estimates, and I will be very glad to answer that question at that time. Thank you.

MS. CASEY: Well, I guess the minister doesn't understand the difference between actuals and projections, because I'm asking for actuals - their actuals that were spent.

For the information of the minister, I will share what her department provided, so nobody needs to wait until tomorrow. Mr. Speaker, the minister spent \$130,000 on promoting her education plan. She spent nearly \$75,000 on promoting class size ads when parents were furious at her. She also budgeted half a million dollars for lunch bags. (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester North has the floor, please.

MS. CASEY: Mr. Speaker, my question to the minister is, has the minister any idea what has been spent in her department for promotion in the last fiscal year?

MS. JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, I definitely will bring that forward. I don't have the number at my fingertips, but I would like to make a correction around the Play-Talk-Learn bags, which are a resource that we send out to all of our youngest students in this province. It has interactive material, books and learning materials to have interactions. It was over three years, it was not a lunch bag, it was resource material for three years for our children, which is very interesting. We did it in-house and we worked with our department and child experts to make sure that we had the appropriate materials. When the member opposite was in the position I am she contracted that out and only provided those materials for very few children in this province.

MS. CASEY: I think Nova Scotians would be more interested in the minister knowing what's going on in her department rather than trying to pick apart somebody else.

When you add up the promotional numbers that I just gave you, it's \$750,000. Now Mr. Speaker, over 1,100 support positions were cut from our public education system, 700 teachers lost their jobs and at the same time the minister spent three quarters of a million dollars on self-promotion. So will the minister please tell the students who lost their EA support, those on wait lists for speech language pathology, those who need extra support - will she please tell them why did she find, and where did she find, \$750,000 and why did

she choose to use it on self-promotion election promises rather than helping those kids who needed it.

MS. JENNEX: I'd like to make a few corrections. We had a number of teachers in this province that retired over the last number of years and those are the numbers that she is citing. We have as many teachers in the province with fewer students than we've ever had. The numbers I will bring forward, but these numbers that keep coming up are not true numbers. We had 710 retired the same as every other situation over many years of teaching. We have the lowest teacher/student ratio ever in this province. In terms of our support, the people that support our children with needs, those numbers have not changed. I don't know where she's finding these numbers, thank you.

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

**PREM. - CBRM CAPITAL PLAN: SUPPORT - CONFIRM**

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, the Cape Breton Regional Municipality has taken an incredible initiative in preparing a capital plan to partner with provincial and federal governments. The goal of this plan is to ensure a prosperous future for the municipality; it focuses on infrastructure improvements and building a progressive dynamic port city. My question to the Premier is, will the Premier support the CBRM proposal.

THE PREMIER: I had the opportunity to meet with the Mayor of CBRM when I was last in Cape Breton. We had a great chat about the budget, he presented me with a portfolio. I indicated to him at the time that we were waiting to see, among other things, what the new Building Canada Fund was going to look like, but I told him that I was supportive of multi-year budgeting on capital projects, that we were willing to work with CBRM.

Now that they had outlined the, kind of, broad-brush projects, that we were willing work with them in order to dig down into those projects and to determine what they would cost, and to work with him in putting forward those projects to the Building Canada Fund over a multi-year period and to try to achieve what we both want, which is strength in infrastructure in the province.

MR. ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, it's important to develop capital plans for municipalities and more so to continue the communications between municipalities and the province. Open and honest negotiations are the key components of successful capital planning. If the mayor is not being given a clear commitment financially, what direction or criteria has your government given to the mayor to assist with evolution of his plan?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, what I told the Mayor of Cape Breton Regional Municipality was simply this: we had introduced a capital planning process that was different than that in the past. In fact, we looked very much through the Department of

Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal at multi-year budgeting, as we did with a five-year road construction plan, that we felt this was a good model. I congratulated him and his council for having the foresight to bring forward a multi-year plan and we agreed to work with him.

As the member opposite would know, we actually bring out capital budgets in the Fall, so that contractors who are looking to participate in bids on projects will know in advance of the Spring budget that those projects are coming forward and therefore, will be better able to prepare for those bids.

We look forward to working with the Mayor of CRBM on this, to the benefit of the people of industrial Cape Breton and, of course, of all those communities within the regional municipality but also because we think this is a good model for the rest of the province. We believe that others, through the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities may want to also participate in.

MR. ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, I believe there was a specific ask in negotiations with the Premier at that time. Now if the CBRM was a big company, I'm sure the cheque would already be in the mail. We believe it would be better to be a productive partner with municipalities rather than work against them.

Will the Premier commit to open and honest negotiations, while ensuring the outlined projects that are desperately needed are followed through completion? What I'm hearing is, it sounds like will he commit to that, especially in the Fall?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, it's one of those days where a question is getting asked and an answer is being given. Quite frankly, I think we're on the same page, even though the answer and questions seem to be missing each other.

The reality is that we want to work with the CBRM. They have top-lined some estimates on some projects and as I said to the mayor, and he seemed to be quite open to this, you know we're willing to work with him to look at the projects on those lists, just as we did with the dredging of the harbour in Sydney, we were a full partner in that project. We look forward to being a full partner in other projects, along with the federal government and we're going to do that not just for CBRM but for the other parts of the province as well.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

### **HEALTH & WELLNESS - MUSKRAT FALLS: POWER RATES - PATIENT SERVICES**

MR. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, the Muskrat Falls project poses more questions than answers. Certainly after the minister's visit to Berwick, the e-mails to my office indicate a lot more questions. A rushed process through the URB, coupled with the fact that

the Premier and the Minister of Energy either know and won't say or don't know and don't care what the deal will mean for power rates.

Mr. Speaker, hospitals have been challenged with increasing electricity rates under this government and the previous government, in fact. The most recent annual report of Capital District cites their increase in plant and utilities budget to increases in electricity rates. I will table that document.

Could the Minister of Health and Wellness tell us what this multi-billion dollar project will mean for power rates and whether services to patients will be cut as a result?

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to say that we've been working extremely hard with our district health authorities across the province to ensure that we look at the budgets of each district health authority to see where we can divert or save money, especially around health administrative costs and reinvest that into front-line health care.

What it means to our province and to the health authority, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the Muskrat Falls is stability, something that we've never seen under the former Liberal Government back in the 1990s.

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, it goes without saying that hospitals can't function without power. Turning off the lights in operating rooms is not an option. Reducing the hours of operation of hospitals and scaling back on the delivery of health care is not an option.

Despite this NDP Government's boasting that this is a good deal, not one person in government can or will tell anyone how much power will be. Why would the Minister of Health and Wellness champion a multi-billion dollar project if he doesn't know whether there will be a negative impact on the delivery of front-line health care services?

MR. WILSON: Mr. Speaker, I know that Nova Scotians want government to react to the increased costs of electricity over the last number of years. We've been shackled to fossil fuel costs for decades - decades. We have to do things differently, and that's why we're doing things differently in community services, in education, in health care. We're going to do the same thing with energy. We cannot do what the former governments have done and shackle ourselves to fossil fuel, we need to have a diversified renewable electrical source of energy here in the Province of Nova Scotia, and the Muskrat Falls project will not only create economic wealth in the province, but it will allow us to really have control of our own destiny when it comes to energy here in Nova Scotia - something we've never had for many years, and we blame it both on the Liberals and Tories of the past.

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, there seems to be a lot of blame going around. I would love to see the \$3 billion or \$4 billion that Muskrat Falls will cost the Nova Scotia ratepayer be invested in Nova Scotia in our innovative companies to produce energy.

Some of the biggest users of electricity in this province are hospitals. Every other hospital in this country has been spared the 30 per cent three-year increase in energy costs that this NDP Government has allowed. Again, they remain silent, and the impact of the unknown is as challenging to hospital budgets as it is to Nova Scotians' pocketbooks.

Could the Minister of Health and Wellness please indicate for all members of the House what impact the multi-billion dollar Muskrat Falls deal will have on the ability for hospitals to deliver front-line health care services past 2017?

MR. WILSON: Mr. Speaker, what it's going to have is a positive effect when those health administrators work towards providing and preparing a yearly budget. Right now we don't know how much power is going to be next year, but I know under the Muskrat Falls agreement, when that power comes into Nova Scotia it's going to be more stable, the lowest power rate that we can get here in the Province of Nova Scotia.

I want to thank all those health administrators, the health authorities across the province who have worked extremely hard over the last three years to control costs. We're being recognized on a national stage, on some of the innovation that we've had not only in health care but in other areas, by Ministers of Health who are Liberals, who are Conservatives, who are looking at our model here in Nova Scotia - not only in health care but in other areas of departments and services that we provide. We're not going to do what the Liberals did when they were in power - when it came to health care, they allowed health care authorities to run huge deficits. Our health authorities are running balanced budgets, they're doing it in a responsible way, and we're going to continue to work with them in that manner.

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

#### **FIN. - EMPLOYMENT NUMBERS: ESTIMATING - DETAILS**

MS. DIANA WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance. Yesterday the Minister of Finance avoided answering a simple question about whether or not she was prepaying universities yet again. This is something that Deloitte advised that she should not do, and yesterday it was the second time that she simply refused to answer the question. If there was not prepayment in the 2012-13 fiscal year, the minister would have given a simple "no" for an answer.

This speaks to another budgetary fiction that the NDP are fond of and that is estimating employment numbers that are much higher than the year end actuals show. Will the Minister of Finance tell Nova Scotians if she will be continuing the practice of her predecessor of estimating employment numbers at higher rates than are shown by year end actuals?

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of different themes in that question and, once again, characteristic of the members of the Opposition, a lot of misfactual information, information that's not factual.

I will be very pleased tomorrow to stand in my place and table a balanced budget for the Province of Nova Scotia, putting us on a new path to a much brighter future. (Applause)

MS. WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, in fact there's one theme in the question and that is that we can't trust the kind of financial work that the government is doing, whether it's prepaying universities or whether it's stacking the numbers on your employment FTEs. Either way it makes the figures less and less reliable.

Mr. Speaker, there's a lot of financial fictions in what we've seen over the last three years with the NDP Government's various budgets that they have brought in. We certainly question the math that the NDP have used to estimate FTEs over those last three years. It has been a practice of the previous Finance Minister, we've seen no evidence that the current Finance Minister is going to do any differently in this coming budget.

My question, Mr. Speaker, is will the minister finally abandon the NDP inclination to inflate in Budget Estimates, especially when it comes to employment figures?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I think most members would have read the Deloitte review of the state of the province's finances four years ago when we became government. You know that review indicated that Nova Scotia was on an unsustainable path, that we would be facing a \$1.3 billion deficit this year.

Mr. Speaker, I think the advice we got from the expert panel of eminent economists was a very sensible group of recommendations and this will accumulate tomorrow in a plan that has succeeded, a multi-year plan, returning this province to a balanced budget and fulfilling one of the key commitments of this government.

MS. WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, the minister carries on with another one of the famous fictions that are coming out of the NDP Government. That is a fiction they've had the audacity to put into advertisements on television, to suggest that they have actually cut the deficit by \$1 billion or \$1.4 billion or whatever the figure.

Mr. Speaker, that was never an actual deficit. It never happened, it was fiction. It's rather galling to see that as a claim that you've actually trimmed that money when it was never, ever in the deficit to begin with.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the minister is, why should we trust you tomorrow or today in these fictional figures that she's just throwing out there with no backup?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I have to say the honourable member's idea of audacity and mine are quite different. My idea of audacity is putting tolls

on the highways of Nova Scotia. My idea of audacity is building P3 schools. My idea of audacity is user fees on pap smears and cancelling the children's dental program. A balanced budget putting this province on a better path to prosperity is not audacious.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Glace Bay.

### **ERDT - EMPLOYMENT RATES: IMPROVEMENT - CONFIRM**

MR. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, the NDP have been fond of saying that we are turning the corner. We're certainly turning the corner. To use the Deputy Premier's term, this falls under the category "if you say it enough times, you believe it."

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that Nova Scotians are having a hard time believing this NDP spin. The 6,400 Nova Scotians who lost employment last year are having a really hard time believing this NDP spin.

Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism explain to Nova Scotians who are worried about finding work or maintaining their jobs that the worst employment performance in Canada is "turning the corner"?

HON. PERCY PARIS: Mr. Speaker, proof that we are turning the corner is when, in the Fall, we announced PROJEX Engineering coming from Calgary to Nova Scotia. Further proof of that is when we announced that IBM was going to locate here in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Further proof of that is when we made those investments in companies in Cape Breton. Further proof of that is when we signed on with Muskrat Falls to create jobs and stable energy prices in the Province of Nova Scotia. Further proof of that is Nova Centre, right across the street, when we signed on along with the federal government to create more employment, to create a brighter future for all Nova Scotians. The proof is truly in the pudding.

MR. MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, right now the unemployment rate in Cape Breton is 17 per cent. There are 4,000 fewer people employed on the Island over the last year. So what proof is that that Nova Scotians need about the state of the economy?

The minister knows full well that if there were not work outside the province, these numbers would be much higher and better reflect the grim reality we're facing on the Island. The minister just suggested that an influx of jobs related to Muskrat Falls for Cape Breton. The only things we've learned about the NSP jobs plan for Cape Breton is that the Lingan will be closing if the link comes online. The economy of Cape Breton desperately needs a boost.

My question is, will the minister tell Cape Bretoners how a 17 per cent unemployment rate and thousands of jobs lost is "turning the corner," and how many jobs will be created in Cape Breton as a result of the Maritime Link?

MR. PARIS: Mr. Speaker, if the member opposite had his way, we wouldn't have a NewPage Port Hawkesbury today - 1,400 jobs that we invested in because we believe in Cape Breton. If the member opposite had his way, we wouldn't have invested in businesses like Billdidit, Copol, East Coast Fabricators - hundreds of jobs that we've invested in so that there would be jobs in Cape Breton. Unlike the federal government that's taken jobs out of the province, we're putting jobs in.

MR. MACLELLAN: Although every geographic region in the province outside of Halifax is suffering, one of the more concerning trends hits every community. Youth in our province are continuing to struggle under the NDP. Young Nova Scotians face an unemployment rate of nearly 19 per cent. These are the same young Nova Scotians who have been saddled with enormous student debt loads and are choosing to look out west to find work. Young people need a reason to stay in their communities to live and to raise a family, but to do this they need good, stable employment.

So my question is, will the minister stop reading talking points and explain to young Nova Scotians how a 19 per cent unemployment rate is "turning the corner"?

MR. PARIS: Mr. Speaker, I find that rather funny, and rather ironic, that the member over there would talk about speaking notes when he stands up there reading from a script.

I could go on about the investments that this province made in Cape Breton and that we will continue to make in Cape Breton to create and maintain good jobs, unlike that Party over there.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

#### **EDUC. - HOME SCHOOLING: LEG. CHANGE - PARENTS CONSULT**

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Education. We learned today at Public Accounts Committee that parents of over 800 children in Nova Scotia give up jobs and money to be home with their children to give them a home-schooled education. We do know that the Auditor General has concerns about tracking the progress made by those students, but we also learned that there have only been two incidents in the last three years that have been cause for concern for the department to interject.

Will the minister confirm that she will consult with all home-schooling parents before making any legislative changes which will affect them?

HON. RAMONA JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member opposite for that question. We have a unique situation in this province, the parents do have the right to choose their child's educational journey. We have many home-schoolers in our province



who are doing a fine job with their young people. Many of my friends are home-schoolers. I know that many of us would like to have had the opportunity to do that.

The question that the member brings forward is will we be consulting with members of the home-school community? Absolutely, this is part of what we will be doing. We'll be working with our home-schoolers with anything - excuse me, Mr. Speaker, I was being interrupted. I have made the commitment that we will be working with the home-school community.

MR. MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the minister for her commitment on that. I know we have only a few seconds left, but I would ask her, could she give parents of home-schooled children a statement of comfort today, so that they can be assured that the department will respect their decision to educate their children and not take a heavy-handed approach in implementing the recommendations?

MS. JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, I hope that my words are of comfort to our home-schoolers. We are going to make sure that if there are any changes with the procedures in Nova Scotia it will be in consultation with our home-schooling community.

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

### **OPPOSITION MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Opposition House Leader.

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

### **PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING**

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Opposition House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 17.

### **Bill No. 17 - Blueprint for the Future of Public Education in Nova Scotia Act.**

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester North.

HON. KAREN CASEY: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to stand in my place and speak to Bill No. 17, a Blueprint for the Future of Public Education in Nova Scotia Act. It can also be called a comprehensive review of the public school program. We know that the public school program impacts every student in our province who attends public schools and we know that it's a broad range of policies, goals, outcomes, procedures, assessment tools, strategies, whatever.

We know that it's important if we're going to have a look at how we deliver public school programs that we take the time not to tinker around the edges, not to pick something off when the public seems to think it's the topic of the day and hope that we're responding to that. What we're looking at is a complete, comprehensive review so things like the school review process as one of the parts of the public school program would be part of that comprehensive review.

That public school program, Mr. Speaker, will be the goals and policies that shape the way we deliver public school programs. We have a number of students who are in our public school system who rely on and depend on a curriculum that will provide them with the skills and the training, the information they need when they graduate. It's important that the government takes a look at, are those current, are those relevant, are those curriculums that we are offering ones that are in the best interest of our students?

We know that we are currently asking our students to go out into an environment that is different than it was 10 years ago. We know that the jobs they will be going into will require different skills, and we have to make sure that what we're offering is designed to meet those needs.

Unless you ask the question, Mr. Speaker, of, what is it that we want our students to know when they graduate - what skills do we expect them to have, what skills do the employers want them to have - then we need to ask, is the curriculum that we are offering appropriate and is it providing an opportunity for them to have those skills?

We know that with the advances in technology that many of our students are going into high-tech positions so the question is, are we providing a curriculum that helps meet that? A comprehensive review of the public school program will allow people who are experts in their field to look at that. For example, with respect to employment opportunities, we would be making sure that those people who are in our businesses that are hiring these young people have some input into whether the graduate that they're receiving is well trained. Does the graduate that's coming to them now fit the job description that they have?

Until we have a review of that, we don't know. We hear from some of those employers who say, no, who say the skills these kids have aren't matching up with the jobs that we have available so it's time to bring those people in and let them be part of a review that would help us design a curriculum that will better respond to the student needs.

We know that when our students go off to university or community college that we want them to be as well prepared as possible and we want them to be able to transition into a post-secondary learning institute with some degree of success. In order to do that we need to know what it is that universities are looking for in our young kids. So a comprehensive review does require bringing in experts who can help shape the public school system in the future.

We know that in our current system we have a model of inclusion and we have heard people who say that model is not working. So if we're going to change the model, we need to look at what's good about the model that we have and hang onto that, and what needs to be changed. Again, that calls for us to bring in people who have some expertise, and in many cases that will be your parents and your teachers who come in and say, this is what I found with the inclusion model that we currently have.

We have in our schools very diverse learning needs. As a result, we have something to be very proud of in the province. Over the last number of years we have been very successful in early identification, early intervention, and early response to special needs that students have. We have information that we didn't have 10 years ago about learning styles and also how you match a program to an individual's learning style so that they can have success. If we're not motivated by what's in the best interests of our students and how the program can best meet their needs, then we have failed our students. In order to make sure that what we're doing and how we're doing it and what we're delivering is the best it can possibly be, you need to have that review.

Madam Speaker, this bill provides the framework for that to happen. That doesn't mean that everything will change, but it does mean that before something is changed we look at the impact it is going to have on our students and we don't introduce something, wait to see what the outcome is, realize it was wrong, and then start scrambling to pull it back. Unfortunately we've seen some of that tinkering in the last four years and, unfortunately, our students are paying a price for that. We need to make sure that we don't do that, that we understand the consequences - both positive and negative - of any decisions and any changes that we make, and that we provide a program that responds to those.

I talked about the inclusion model, and about the diverse needs of the students in our schools. Statistics tell us that 1 in every 10 people has some form of learning disability. Now, if you can imagine that - and you certainly can't apply that consistently, 1 in 10 - but if you have a class of 25 or 30 students, you could have three, on average you could have three. You may have seven and you may have two. But we know that you will be hard-pressed to find classrooms in this province that don't have some students there who have a learning disability. And we need to make sure that our teachers, who are trying to respond to the needs of these students, also are aware of the best learning style for that particular student, and match a program to that.

Talk about autism as an example. And this is probably one of the best examples of where we have progressed with early identification. We know that in the 1990s, we had one in 1,000 students, it has jumped to one in 88 students in our schools who are on some part of the autism disorder spectrum. Those numbers are huge and our teachers who are in our classrooms are trying to keep up with understanding the disability, understanding the condition, and responding to it. For many of them, that has never been part of their teacher training program, their B.Ed. program, or any other kind of professional development. So if we want to be able to fully respond, we have to be able to give our teachers the professional development that they need, that they have not gotten when they were in a

B.Ed. program, but that they have the background knowledge and the skills that they need, so, professional development and how it's delivered, part of the public school program.

There are so many different programs and policies that do have a direct impact on kids, and normally we think they don't. We normally think policies are broad-ranging and by the time you filter down to a student in the class, it has very little impact. But it certainly does not. I will go back and use it probably as one of the policies that has the greatest impact, and people, I don't think, recognize the seriousness of it, and that is inclusion. I mentioned that before. We have a policy, and I strongly support the policy of inclusion. Every child in the province has a right to a public education. And we have a responsibility to provide them with the best education possible. So it's not a question of, do we have a policy on inclusion? The question is, is the model that we're using to deliver programs to students the best model? Are we able to help every child as best we can so that they can reach their full potential?

You know, we look at what's happening in our schools now, where funding is cut to our public schools, it has been cut the last three years. And what's happening is that schools are trying to deliver more with less. Many school boards are working very hard, and making tough decisions to protect the classroom. But we have a number of kids whose needs are very demanding, and those needs, and those programs, are very costly. So when you decide that you're going to cut funding from public schools because the enrolment has gone down, I think it's a big mistake. Just because the numbers have gone down doesn't mean that the needs of the students there have changed. In fact, as I've said, the research that we have shows that their needs are more complex and more diverse. We know more about how we can provide programming for them, and we know that those programs are costly.

We have to make sure that we don't make short-sighted decisions, and that we don't, as I said, tinker around the edges and pull \$65 million out, or pull a program out, or do this or do that without recognizing and asking ourselves a question: what will this do to the child in my class who is autistic, who needs support from a TA or an EA, who cannot cope in a busy environment? What does that mean for that child? Boards have made tough decisions, and they have made those decisions in the best interests of kids, but they cannot continue.

So what we're saying is, let's look at what it is that we need to be offering and how we offer it, and what it is that kids need when they graduate, and make sure that the skills that they have match those that are in the labour market as being a demand. Let's also make sure that they have the skills that they need so they can be successful in post-secondary education.

This particular bill, Bill No. 17, provides an opportunity for that comprehensive review, which would include those experts who need to come in and help us formulate a public school program that will meet the needs of every student in our province. Thank you very much.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg West.

MR. GARY RAMEY: It gives me great pleasure today to speak for a few minutes on Bill No. 17, the Blueprint for the Future of Public Education in Nova Scotia Act. I think I'm reasonably well qualified to say a few things about this. I taught in the public school system for a few years, and then in the community college system for quite a few years, and also at the University of Alberta. I think I've got a reasonable range of experience there.

I also think it's important to examine what the purpose of an education is. The purpose of an education, in my opinion, is to become an independent learner and not to become a fact memorizer. I was in Public Accounts today and I was listening to one of the people there, Dr. Lowe, and he was recounting a situation where he talked about learning about the unification of Italy - Giuseppe Garibaldi, and Victor Manuel II and that sort of thing. My response back to him was learning about the repeal of the Corn Laws in England in 1846 and the economic impact it had on Great Britain. Nothing wrong with learning that, of course, and it may be very valuable at some point in my life, I don't know.

AN HON. MEMBER: In this debate, perhaps.

MR. RAMEY: Maybe even in this debate, I don't know. But really, the purpose of an education is to become an independent learner so you don't need a teacher, so that you can learn things yourself. Because the education system in any province, including this one, is not static but ever-changing, the education system has to be looked at intensely critically at all points in time. It doesn't necessarily require experts from any particular field to come in and tell us what we need to do. Some of it, I think, is pretty obvious, and maybe even as plain as the nose on our faces.

I do also want to say that in Nova Scotia, at least from my experience - and there are quite a few other teachers in this room. I think the member for Kings West - we were accusing him of being from someplace else earlier on today, but Kings West - and the member for Timberlea-Prospect, and the member for Guysborough-Sheet Harbour, and all kinds of them - the member for Hants East. There are a lot of teachers and a lot of people with experience in teaching in here, as well as the Minister of Education, and of course, Halifax Citadel-Sable Island as well.

There are a number of members in this House who have a pretty good idea of the education system and what it's all about. I would like to say to all teachers in the Province of Nova Scotia how much we appreciate what they do every day. It's not an easy job. Surprisingly, and I think a lot of the teachers in here would admit this, it's sometimes a very lonely job. Even though you're surrounded by people, it's sometimes a very lonely job.

I guess my argument would be, Madam Speaker, that over the past year, and actually since we've been elected, we have introduced a number of changes and we have

introduced a plan, and that plan is called Kids and Learning First. I think that particular plan produces some very good results for us now and in the future.

Over that time that I'm referring to, Madam Speaker, since we've been elected, we have launched or expanded several initiatives to help our young people succeed in the classroom. I concur, by the way - and I'd like to thank the member who spoke previously, many of the things she said I absolutely concur with. Just a few of these initiatives that we've introduced include: more help for young readers, and we know that's an essential skill that you absolutely have to have if you want to become an independent learner; more time for math; a new resource for students with autism spectrum disorder, and we know that's something that was in much demand by our population; keeping class sizes low; and I particularly like this one, a credit that encourages students to practice leadership in their communities because what we all ultimately become when we graduate from school is we all become citizens and it's not a bad idea to know what a good one is.

We undertook these initiatives that I'm referring to, and others as well, because the education system faced and continues to face a number of challenges. More and more money, for instance, was being spent every year on education, but our students weren't necessarily doing any better on their assessments.

We did review the education system and we did listen to - and here are the experts I like to listen to - families, teachers, school boards and community members. They told us quite clearly that we had to do things differently. The result of that was the Kids and Learning First strategy.

We also made changes to the funding model for school boards to ensure that there was fair and equitable funding for all the boards. We are also increasing funding to school boards this year; per-student funding is going up 3 per cent and per-student funding now will be at its highest level ever in this province. Of course new teachers will be hired this year, Madam Speaker, as well.

Now the increased funding will also mean more psychologists, more speech pathologists and other experts for students with special needs. My wife actually is a speech pathologist who is retired now, but had worked in the school system for years and told me that on many occasions pre-Primary screening is where you caught a lot of the potential problems that might develop in the future; auditory discrimination problems being one of them. If you have auditory discrimination problems you have trouble decoding words, sounding out words and, therefore, you are going to have trouble reading. If you can nip that in the bud, you are way ahead of the game and that's what we should be doing.

So special education like my colleague, the member for Colchester North, said is very important to the government. The province is providing more help for students and families who need that extra support and that, of course, is essential.

We've increased funding for other special education projects as well. An initiative like SchoolsPlus will be available in 98 schools - which is quite a few - at a cost of \$2.5 million. That's a model that I've never gone anywhere where I haven't heard good things about it.

I want you to know, too, that we've got about 120,500 students in school in Nova Scotia and we learned this morning - those of us who were at the Public Accounts Committee - that we have about 850 students who are home-schooled. The province committed \$1.4 million, too, for something else that I think is very important and that is for mental health clinicians to work alongside guidance counsellors in all SchoolsPlus schools. We know there are mental health issues in young people's backgrounds. We know that some of those people will not go to a clinical setting in a hospital to get help and we know if we bring the service to them, they are much more likely to take advantage of it.

For the first time, Madam Speaker, the province has an action plan to take on something else that's a heartbreaking issue, and many members in here have spoken about it, and that is the issue of bullying. There are probably very few of us who haven't been bullied at some time in our lives ourselves. Sadly, there are people in adulthood who still continue to be bullied.

Speak Up, which is an action plan to address bullying and cyberbullying behaviour, includes more than 40 actions to help reduce the number of incidents of bullying. And this plan takes on bullying and cyberbullying in many ways to get at the root causes of the behaviour and reduce its effects on our young people. We know that the bully is often the individual with the problem, not the person who's getting bullied. Bullying is a community-wide issue that needs a community response, and the Speak Up plan, I'm proud to say, reflects that.

That plan has met, by the way, with accolades, and is being looked at by other provinces as a model, Madam Speaker, and it fits in with some of the other things that have been happening here as well, which is our Better Care Sooner plan, which is also, in a completely different dimension, being picked up by provinces like Saskatchewan and P.E.I.

Now, we've also been helping students by expanding opportunities for workplace learning. Madam Speaker, new skilled trades centres announced for Cole Harbour and Forest Heights, which is down in the Chester Basin, Lunenburg County area, will let students explore trades like construction and transportation. Just on that note, I know the member for Colchester North was speaking about trying to get the programs in schools to line up or sync better with what business people want - let's say people in manufacturing or construction, or whatever - and I totally agree with that.

What happened in the community college system, for instance, there are advisory boards for all the trades, and those advisory boards consist of people from the business community who come in and advise the staff at the college on exactly what sort of skills are

required, and that gets translated down into the high school system as well. I had started something when I was at the community college in Bridgewater called a vocational transition program, where we used to bring high school students in one day a week - it was on Fridays - introduce them to trades. They'd do a circuit - one a month through four different trade areas - and then if they decided to come to the college after, they got advanced admission status. And that sort of morphed into O2 later on.

The co-op program - and co-op programs I'm totally in favour of, by the way - which gives students hands-on experience in a workplace, is now available in 85 of the province's 87 high schools. And the Options and Opportunities program is a big success with students and employers around the province.

So, Discovering Opportunities will allow students in Grade 9 - we're starting early here - to learn more about workplace learning and opportunities available to them, Madam Speaker, and the new Personal Development Credit allows students to earn a credit for developing skills in leadership, languages, and the arts, through community-based programs like Junior Achievement and Cadets. Those Junior Achievement programs, for those who have participated - and some of the people who have been teachers in here probably have participated in those, and others as well - are absolutely top-notch. If you want to get a dose of reality on any given day, and you go to be a mentor in one of those programs, you can learn a lot yourself.

These initiatives have also been met with high praise, Madam Speaker. For instance, Valerie Payn, the president of the Halifax Chamber of Commerce - I think most people know who she is - says, ". . . Kids and Learning First has a strong focus on supporting teachers and equipping students for opportunities in Nova Scotia's growing economy." And we know we're going to need those students because of some of the work that is booked in our future. She says, "Programs like co-op, skilled trades and personal development bridge the gap between learning and doing, giving students access to mentors in the business and entrepreneurial sectors." And a big dose of reality for a good number of students is what's absolutely required.

You know I always used to be moderately put off when I would go to a university registration day and I'd walk into the place where the students were buying their books, and on the wall of the place where they were doing it, which was often in a library or something, there would be a huge cardboard cut-out of a cheque hanging on the wall so that students who were buying their books and had never written a cheque in their lives - and they were like, let me see, 18 or 19 years old, and going off on their own to study independently - would have this template there so they would know how to fill out a cheque.

You see, there's some kind of a disconnect there, I think, in the practicality of an education. I mean, you're going to have to rent an apartment or a house, you're going to have to get a mortgage, you're possibly going to have to write a cheque at some time in



your life, so it might be a good idea to learn those things somewhere on the way through the system.

Carol Logan, the director of Human Resources for the Prince George Hotel, which has been a great partner in our O2 program, has said that her firm appreciates the chance to give students valuable work experience and help train the workforce of the future. That's great feedback from those who deal day after day with young people.

This House will hear in the budget how we are doing more to help children before they start school. Our children deserve the best possible start in life to help them develop to their full potential. Catch it early, get it looked after, move on. The budget will continue on our strong commitment to help parents and children, and before I take my place - which I'm rapidly coming to the end of this - I'd also like to add a few other successes.

The students in our International Baccalaureate program are the best in the world. Our Grade 4 students were the best in Canada when it comes to reading. More parents than ever before are learning how to help their children make good career choices through the Parents as Career Coaches program, and I could go on and on. Under the Kids and Learning First plan, we are indeed turning the corner on education as we are turning the corner in so many other areas.

With those few words, Madam Speaker, I thank you very much for allowing me this time today and I will graciously take my place.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cape Breton North.

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Madam Speaker, I'm pleased to rise to speak to this bill this afternoon. But I'd like to start by telling the general public and the teachers out there how much I respect what teachers are doing here in the Province of Nova Scotia under very difficult situations.

I just heard from the member opposite about all the success that the teachers and students of this province are having and that's working in an education system that has been going through a very tough time under this present government, which has cut over \$65 million over the last few years from the Education budget. So our teachers and students must be really, really good to be able to succeed in a situation that's being cut, cut, cut.

I worry about a bill that insists it should be cited as a blueprint for the future of Nova Scotia because we've heard that with our bullying bills that have been introduced by the present government: more studying and reporting than actual enforcing or correcting the situation.

While no member of the House could argue against a comprehensive review of our public education system, one of the biggest questions I have is how much is it going to cost? The school review process that the NDP Government has gone through over the last

few years must have cost the government a fortune. That money is money that could be put into the classroom on front-line education. By reviewing the present system, will it allow us to determine the future direction of the education system and will it allow us to predict what the future holds and how many students with certain requirements or certain types of education we will need, and if we are producing enough, are we going to start changing our curriculum in order to allow other areas of the education system to flourish?

How much will a comprehensive review of all provisions and aspects of the public school system total? To bring in experts, we know that's expensive. We've had lots of studying with our bullying situation, had all kinds of recommendations and the recommendations don't seem to be going anywhere. It's just another example of a Party working for appearances.

How many times do we need to talk about things? Madam Speaker, I would like to remind the House this is coming from a Party that hired a consultant to figure out how to run their small office.

The scope of this proposed legislation is vast; how deep are we going to go into the system? To what degree are we going to implement the proposed recommendations and how will it affect our students?

Bill No. 17 calls for a cross-jurisdictional review of curricula, methodology and assessment strategies. Is there any indication of how long this review is going to take, and if we're going to do a cross-Canada review, will it take even longer? We've been talking recently about Muskrat Falls and the intervener process and the URB - can the review be done in the time frame that's proposed and if not, will it be given more time if needed so that we can complete the proposed process? While a review of the public school system is important, again I ask, what's the cost to our taxpayers?

Madam Speaker, each member of the House knows that Education is one of the most important departments in government. We've heard many conversations about the education system in the last two years that I've been here and all of it is around finances and the ability of the education system to employ the proper numbers of people and proper kinds of teachers so our students can achieve quality education.

Having assurances that such a review would lead to improvements for our young people is very vital. We cannot afford to throw money away and study things that won't be implemented. It seems like right now both Parties have that feature in common. That being the philosophy that as long as it looks good, people will buy it. (Interruption) I did.

Well, Mr. Speaker, Nova Scotians are smarter. Our province offers some of the best education in the world and they are doing that with massive cuts in their budget and massive cuts to the education system. They are making teachers work harder with less and students learn more with less. We need to make sure that the reassurances are available to our students, that the vast amount of money could be better spent and after the studying

there is plenty of money available to implement the suggestions. I don't have to outline the details of the NDP and their marketing machine, that was laid out for all of us last week when we found out about Communications Nova Scotia and the amount of money it is spending.

Mr. Speaker, I hope this bill is not more talking and less doing like our present bullying bill, all of the provisions and aspects of the public school system, we hope it doesn't become redundant. The question I have asked is what will Bill No. 17 uncover that the existing Council of Ministers of Education does not already uncover each year when it shares findings and best practices? Our Party wants to make sure that Bill No. 17 is the right move for Nova Scotia, that we're spending the right amount of money and that we're spending money in a direction that will take our students to the highest potential possible, and a bill that will make sure our teachers get the tools they need and deserve to survive and to provide quality education to our students.

We would like to see clear terms of reference that would guarantee a useful outcome. We believe it's important to know if a cross-jurisdictional review, like the one laid out in Bill No. 17, has been helpful in other provinces. It is extremely important that the terms outlined in Bill No. 17 will reveal the results that Nova Scotians and our school kids need to survive. Our children benefit from an education system that is probably one of the best in the world. We want to make sure that continues and studying certain aspects of the education system is a great idea. Do we need to study all aspects? We want to make sure we put the tools in the hands of the teachers, and the educational assistants, and the students so that they can function in a world out there that's changing every day. We have to make sure that we know the upcoming trends in the work world and that we know the upcoming trends in the university system so that we can prepare our students to go out into a world and survive.

Not only survive but thrive, to make sure that we continue to have one of the best provinces in the country and to make sure that the students that we have in this province are able to compete with other students in this country for jobs that we know are short, and we know that people out there in our community are competing for jobs with people from all over this country, and quite frankly now from all over the world. With the IT situation we have, now people can work anywhere in the world.

We have a pile of unemployment in Cape Breton and people have to leave our island in order to find work and find good-paying jobs. We're hearing about all kinds of jobs that are being created in Cape Breton since the government has been in power, but we still have an unemployment rate of 17 per cent. I believe the number that has been tossed around is 6,400 jobs lost in the last year, and that is just jobs lost, that's not the people who are away working, who if they were put in that mix because there were not jobs here that number would be much higher and the unemployment rate would be a lot higher.

Madam Speaker, the constituency I live in has an unemployment rate of over 30 per cent, so we have to ensure that the education our children are receiving is quality education

because it looks like they may have to move and compete - compete for jobs that are short and compete for jobs that thousands of others are competing for. We know to date that that education starts at early years, Primary to Grade 3. We work on our base, we make sure that children get the basis they need in reading and writing and math. We want to make sure that these students have in the system the tools they need to be able to learn - proper environment, proper tools, proper amount of teachers, proper amount of educational assistance.

We want to make sure that this bill allows that to happen, allows us to make sure that the numbers needed in teachers are there, that the students get the assistance they need, that the students who need more help get more help, and that the money is there for that to happen, because if they don't get it in the earlier grades they really have a tendency to struggle in later grades.

Madam Speaker, we want to all benefit from an improved education system, but we want to make sure it's cost-effective. We heard just today about the so-called moratorium being placed on school closures. We have some small schools in rural Nova Scotia that provide excellent education and we want to make sure that that education system remains there for years and years to come, but we want to make sure we don't spent all our money on studying it, make sure that the system, when we need it we can draw on it, that the money would be there to add an extra teacher if necessary, to add an extra book or set of books.

I know in the high school at home, the composite high school we have that has a trades program, one of the budget cuts in the last number of years was a book budget that was cut. Students were expected to share books, not to be able to take them home to continue at home but to share them with other students in other classrooms. Cuts to the education system don't allow us to buy those books to make sure people can survive.

By making sure that the money is there, that the finances are there, that the tools are there, we must ensure the best way to make improvements. We want to make sure the study doesn't cost more than it is going to cost to implement it.

I hope that when the studying is done, there's enough money left in that pocket to make sure that the education our children need is there and we have the money to provide that education because, as we've heard already, we have probably the best educators in the country. We know that because they're working with less, and we know we're producing some of the best students in the country because they are competing with other areas of the province, other areas of the country and, actually, quite frankly, parts of the world.

We look forward to hearing more about this bill and we hope that it will provide what's necessary for our students to achieve in society. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

MR. LEO GLAVINE: Madam Speaker, I just wanted to make a couple of, I guess, remarks - at first I'm sure the member for Kings North will represent himself and the Party well with his comments on education.

I really was hoping that the member for Timberlea-Prospect would get up and speak on education today. I know his time here in the Legislature is probably growing short; it could be as long as a year, but probably shorter. I know the member has a great passion for education. I've met some of his pupils over the years, both when he was a teacher and an administrator, and I know the love that he had for the school community that he served so well. I was hoping today that we'd hear a little more. (Applause)

When we're talking about a comprehensive review for education, there really are points in time - whether it's education, health, our community services, departments of government - there are times for that review and that flushing out of what we're doing well, what we can improve upon, but especially what we're not doing so well with and what needs are perhaps not being met in the public school programs of the province.

Public education is our greatest investment. It is equipping the next generation with the best means for them to become productive citizens in our province. We have to meet the greatest number of those individual needs, and that's truly what a responsive and well-funded and strong administration and teachers have to offer the province. That is building the best education system possible.

We haven't had this comprehensive review in a long time here in Nova Scotia. I know we've had royal commissions that have taken a look at public education in the past, and perhaps with the great changes in society, a more globalized world that we live in, we may be very well served by taking a look at very effective schools in other jurisdictions through a comprehensive review.

During the NDP Government's term, they had Ben Levin, from OISE in Ontario, fly in for a day, have a few conversations, and offer Nova Scotians his general education practices and principles. That's not a comprehensive review. I firmly believe that all of the partners - the Department of Education, the Nova Scotia Teachers Union, the Home and School Association - all of these need to be part of looking at a review.

We know that some of the elements that have been talked about so far - curriculum needs to be updated. It needs to be engaging with students and looking at how we can put into place the best curriculum for our students, one that is responsive to the individual needs. We live in a world where our students are impacted immensely by technology. What is the appropriate amount, the appropriate kinds of technologies in our classroom? Perhaps we are at that point where we need to be equipping our students with a personal computer. They are linked to the world at home; why wouldn't they be to a greater extent in our schools?

I think curriculum and technology do go hand in hand, and reviewing what the appropriate practices are at the different levels of elementary, middle, and high school would be part of a comprehensive review.

One of the models or the dictums that we often apply to education has not really changed dramatically over the centuries really - if we go back in fact to the early Greek teachers we know that creating or helping to develop the whole person is really what our education system needs to be doing.

I believe there are a number of areas where we can substantially improve our education system, and that's what a comprehensive review would allow us to. When we take a look at the physical well-being of our children, we know that in our province we have way too many who eat poorly, who have very little physical activity, and they don't necessarily have some of the best socialization and mental health practices that will equip them throughout their adult lives. There is no question that those formative years, before children come to school and while they're in school, will shape the adults that will become our citizens here in the province.

I think taking a look at how a more robust physical education program in our schools and having practices that will transfer to the community - having taught a number of students, especially from the Scandinavian countries in my last years at Kings District High School and we would have a sprinkling of five or six students and we'd always have three or four from Scandinavia, and currently in that school there are about 30 students, 30 international students who are making up a bigger part of our school system, but one of the things that did fascinate me about the Scandinavian students was that they talked about having physical education, some element of physical activity every day, Monday to Friday - I think we would be very, very well served.

Another area that, again, our public education system needs in some cases to get back to is the place of the arts and music and drama in our school. In my very first year of teaching in Labrador City, I often said that I may never teach throughout my career in a school that puts such emphasis on the whole person - where there was daily physical activity because we had two phys ed teachers in the school of Grade 1 to Grade 8, there was an art teacher, there was a music teacher, there was a public health nurse and, again, that whole person was looked at inside of the school and the school activity.

So I think those are areas that a comprehensive review would have us take a look at. There is much research that is going on around physical activity, in fact, as a good part of being a better learner. There's a really interesting pilot project going on at Landmark East that has some of the children with the most severe learning disabilities - these are bright, capable young people, but are at that very high end of, for example, dyslexia or ADD or ADHD, and they are using physical activity on a daily basis as a way of preparing the student for a better learning day. So it will be interesting to see what the outcomes would be, and perhaps adaptations we can make to the public school system.

One of the areas that we're all very, very much aware of is the number of behavioural problems. Some are just that - a behavioural problem - some are related to mental health issues, some relate to the family life, that children are constantly exposed to a lot of turmoil.

It was interesting when the Minister of Education and the member for Kings North and myself recently met with the Annapolis Valley School Board - it's a regular practice that we have, and we have a great exchange on those occasions. It was interesting that about one hour of that meeting was taken up with children who are now major disturbances to the classroom and to the school. The school board and schools are struggling with those students.

Dealing with special needs students has become a much greater issue, perhaps, than what we have ever seen in the past. We now have those children in our schools who in the past would perhaps be in special learning schools, special learning environments. Whether they be physically or mentally challenged, behavioural and disruptive students are ones that the schools have to deal with. I think a comprehensive review would help us with how we're going to deal with these children in our schools. What is the appropriate level of human resources? What is the appropriate level of funding?

More and more, as I talk to some former colleagues, as I talk to new, young teachers - and I do have the opportunity to get out to schools; it's an environment that I enjoy being in - many teachers are now talking about - on a year in, year over basis - one-third of their class having some kind of learning, behavioural, or mental health issues, and very often without the resources that they need. We have to remember that we have to work to meet those children's needs, but also that every child who's in a classroom who isn't getting the help they need is affecting every other child in that classroom. That's what can undermine a lot of the great teaching and a lot of the good things that happen in our public education system.

When I'm talking about having a comprehensive review, I know very well - I know first-hand - that there are many wonderful things happening in public education. All we need to do is go in any day of the week, and we can discover for ourselves some of these things. I think we are at a time in Nova Scotia where having a look at how we're delivering public education and how we can strengthen it is a very timely process.

One of the areas that we all know - and to sum up what I have been talking about, the needs of the classroom - is that the classroom of 2013 is a very different place than a classroom of 30 years ago, when many of the children would not be in school who are there today. We want them there, with the hope that public education is going to address some of their needs and prepare and equip them and make a better future for them, and in turn for our province.

One of the areas that I'd really like to see a look at in terms of that comprehensive review and the role of teacher education is, I'm not a big proponent of the two-year

program at universities. I believe we can very quickly equip a teacher with the theory and with the philosophy of education and with strategies and with ways to have good teaching methods in one year. I feel too often - and I had the opportunity to work with some outstanding educators. Students love to go to their classroom, and that's where great education happens: when you love to go to a teacher's classroom, where you know you're going to be respected, where a teacher, no matter what the child has to say feels a part of that classroom and engages in whatever the lesson may be.

I think one of the great missed opportunities that we've had here for a number of years is teachers who are moving along in their career, who could be wonderful mentors for young teachers. This is what I'd like to see, is a year in university training teachers and then a year where they would be mentored by a teacher who we would call a gifted teacher and would have those kinds of skills and attitudes to pass on to a young teacher. That's an area that I feel a comprehensive review, in fact, would do a great deal for.

I know there are a good number of teachers here in the Assembly and one of the things that over the years I'm sure many of them taught and they were part of creating a great school culture and a great school environment. That's one of the things that you can tell very quickly, the elements of an effective school, what is it about the practices and climate of the school and the school culture that again we can look at through a comprehensive review and make sure that the schools of our province are doing the best teaching and the best learning and I think a comprehensive review can help that. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable Opposition House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Madam Speaker, would you please call the order of business, Motions Other Than Government Motions.

### **MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS**

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable Opposition House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Madam Speaker, would you please call Resolution No. 42.

Res. 42, NDP - Prov. Finances: Management - Failure - notice given Mar. 28/13 - (Ms. D. Whalen).

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Clayton Park.

MS. DIANA WHALEN: Madam Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today on the Liberal Opposition Day to talk about Resolution No. 42. I'm going to read it because there are a number of points in it, just as today during Question Period the minister said there were a



number of points, there certainly are in this resolution as well although there is an overriding theme. The resolution 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.”

That is a Liberal resolution that was read here a couple of days ago.

As you can see this is very timely that we discuss this today; this is, as you know, the day before the provincial budget is going to be introduced. We are, of course, looking forward to the details that we’re going to see tomorrow, I want to be careful not to disparage any of that in advance, but the real point of it is there are a lot of reasons for us to be skeptical, perhaps to be mistrustful of what is going to come out tomorrow in the budget.

By way of discussion, if you think back to just a few months ago the Finance Minister, herself, was really speaking in very soft tones about whether or not the budget would be balanced, whether it was going to be possible. She, herself, was expressing concerns and some skepticism or doubt and, in fact, suddenly all of that evaporated and the Premier announced it’s balanced and it’s balanced. Whether you understand how it’s done or whether it’s a sleight of hand, it’s balanced, but I would caution the people on the other side of this House to be a little bit skeptical yourselves, to use your own mind.

In your own ridings schools have been cut, we’ve just had a debate here on education; \$65 million has been taken out of the schools in your riding and a lot of small schools being closed because school board members are in tears about the pressure they are under to save money and to make ends meet. They don’t want to close these schools, but they’re being forced to because their budgets have been squished and that’s happening as a result of some of the cuts and the priorities really of the government across the way, of the NDP Government.

I would hesitate to - you know, when I look at your own priorities, that’s the big question here: what are the priorities of the NDP Government? Frankly, the people of Nova Scotia are utterly confused, because for years in Opposition you had high moral standards, in fact . . .

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please. I just want to remind the member that the use of “you” in talking across the floor is not acceptable. Offer your remarks through the Chair.

MS. WHALEN: Thank you. That’s a very good comment, Madam Speaker. I think I was just responding to the enthusiasm of the members across the way, so I will definitely speak to the government instead.

As I said, there has been a lot of harm in the communities of Nova Scotia because of cuts to education in particular. We know that the cost of living has risen, and that while the government is boasting about many other accomplishments, the people of Nova Scotia are really feeling it. We're feeling it in so many ways, and electricity is a main one that's harming the growth of our businesses, as well as hurting people in their own homes trying to keep warm. It's hurting seniors and others, and I know tomorrow we'll hear - the government, again, has made a pre-announcement around some moves that will be good for seniors for property tax rebates and so on for people who can't afford the property taxes, but they don't come into effect until after we will have had an election, so they really amount to election promises.

Which brings me back to the state of affairs today, Madam Speaker, and why we're calling into question in this resolution whether or not the NDP Government has the ability to manage the finances of this province. We say that you cannot trust the budgetary reporting that we've seen, and my guess is that we'll see a very rosy budget introduced tomorrow, and probably an election before the first quarter results come in, because when you go to those quarterly updates on the budget and how the actuals are coming down and how the year is unfolding in reality, there is often a disconnect. If we wait until September, when the disconnect becomes clear, it will show then that the numbers that we're going to see tomorrow, and the backslapping and the handshaking and all the self-congratulatory moves - that's going to be shown to be very weak and very empty. I hope you all know that, as you participate in the backslapping and the shaking of hands and the joyousness, because we don't believe you, and Nova Scotians don't believe it either.

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please. Again, I would remind the member to direct comments through the Speaker.

MS. WHALEN: I should probably just make sure I put all my remarks through yourself, Madam Speaker.

I wanted to go over a little bit of history. We have three years of history that might have given me pause and reason to say that the track record is not strong for this government. To begin with, there was the university prepayment that was done early in the government's mandate. What's really interesting about the university prepayment is that initially the Progressive Conservative Government was going to do that. The government of the day had proposed to do that, and the Finance Minister - the NDP's first Finance Minister, the member for Halifax Fairview - had actually condemned that, had said that that was a terrible practice. Then when the budget was prepared for the first year of the NDP mandate, the same practice was engaged in.

We actually had the Finance Minister prepaying universities that year by \$341 million, and he put the 2010-11 payments into the year before, 2009-10. By doing that, he had a much, much rosier budget to present, by \$341 million.

At the time, in September 2009, The ChronicleHerald editorial was very, very to the point, and very accurate. I'm going to read a few points from that editorial in September 2009, the title of which was "Provincial Deficit: From MOU to MOU-too," which means it was just a repeat of what the Progressive Conservative Government had been trying to do, and what the - as I said, at the time, when they were in Opposition, the NDP had taken great exception to. At one point in this article the editor says, "To see the NDP replaying the MOU pre-payment game is deeply disappointing - a bus-sized hit to the new government's credibility. Opposition leader Stephen McNeil calls it 'political cover' and a 'charade.' Sounds about right."

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please. I would ask the member to refrain from using the proper name of a member of the House of Assembly.

MS. WHALEN: That was in my quote, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: It doesn't matter. I would ask you to reword that.

The honourable Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage.

HON. LEONARD PREYRA: Madam Speaker, would she table the document as well?

MADAM SPEAKER: Yes, I'll make sure.

The honourable member for Halifax Clayton Park has the floor. Order.

MS. WHALEN: Thank you. I thought if it was a quote, we were okay. However we were talking about the Opposition Leader, the member for Annapolis, who at that time called it, I'll repeat this, "political cover" and a "charade." The editor said, "Sounds about right." I think that's the most important thing in this article although I may say afterwards - we'll table it again, table it now; I think it has been tabled before.

The MOU prepayment was the start of eroding the confidence that the people of Nova Scotia had in the NDP Government. The NDP Government, in Opposition, had promised to be different, had said they were different, were a first-time government and had begun their term in office by doing the same sort of shenanigans that they had condemned in the past. We've seen it in other ways as well.

The Finance Minister at the time, the member for Halifax Fairview, had soundly condemned the earlier governments for bringing in user fee increases and not explaining or demonstrating how they actually reflected the additional cost to deliver services. A good example was given here the other day in Question Period when the question related to the Minister of Finance, asking how, indeed, it was more expensive now to issue a vehicle renewal permit which we have to do and I believe the cost is now over \$200 for a two-year permit. Anyway, the same cost is involved, you return your envelope with the cheque and

they send you out a sticker and the question is, how has that gone up 6 per cent in just two years? It hasn't.

There has been no more additional work, it's a simple process and it's just a way to download costs of government to the poor people that have to go in and get all of these different licences and permits. It's putting a lot more emphasis on business; I've had a number of e-mails from people who say it's going to cost more to register businesses - lawyers who are representing firms are saying it's going to be more costly to their clients. There are cost increases for everything from getting your GED, which are people trying to improve themselves, to getting maintenance enforcement records, if you need to get that information as a family member who relies on maintenance enforcement.

It's going to hit everybody, we're talking about 1,400 fees. The point is - I know I have just a minute left - the government of the day today said one thing in Opposition and has done an exactly opposite thing when governing. User fees are an exact example of that. Increasing user fees without providing explanations for where the costs have literally gone up is just another tax grab. That is the word that was used by the NDP in Opposition, it's a tax grab. All we were asking for is greater transparency, greater reliability of what we're hearing and better explanation. They're lacking in all of these areas from the prepayment to universities to user fees and so on. I know we'll hear more in the debate that is to follow. Thank you very much.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

MR. JIM MORTON: Before I begin my remarks, it might not have been so apparent as the member for Halifax Clayton Park was speaking earlier, I do want to remind members of this House that tomorrow the Minister of Finance will present a balanced budget. (Applause)

On April 4<sup>th</sup>, Nova Scotia will join only three other provinces with a balanced budget and will be the only province in Atlantic Canada with a balanced budget. We've already seen the predictable efforts to undermine this budget and the Opposition is downplaying the hard work that we've done. When we reined in spending, the Opposition called them cuts. When we invested in areas important to Nova Scotians, the Opposition called us irresponsible.

Regardless of the political rhetoric, everyone knows that getting Nova Scotia back to balance hasn't been an easy task. As the members of this House well know, we inherited a considerable financial challenge, the global economic slowdown was underway, and no one could have predicted that it would have lasted as long as it has.

We didn't slash like other governments, we all know that that kind of approach had very negative impacts in the past. This government made strategic, well-thought-out decisions that had the best interests of Nova Scotians at heart.

When we took office we engaged expert help to tackle what was in front of us. We asked for advice from the best minds in our region, from Elizabeth Beale, from Tim O'Neil, from Lars Osberg, and from Donald Savoie. Do you know what they told us, Madam Speaker? They told us that if we didn't turn the ship around, Nova Scotia was on track for a \$1.4 billion deficit.

That number is unimaginable, but the fact is - and this is an important fact, Madam Speaker - it never came to pass. Today, unlike most provinces in Canada, Nova Scotia is ready to balance its budget.

Madam Speaker, I want to point out that everyone in Nova Scotia has shared in the effort and the responsibility of getting Nova Scotia back to balance. As I think everyone in this House knows, thousands of Nova Scotians had a say in our plan when they participated in the most extensive pre-budget consultation in this province's history - many of us were at parts of those consultations.

Based on what we heard from the experts and from everyday citizens, we put together a three-pronged plan. That plan involved increasing revenue, reducing government spending, and growing the economy. As we'll see tomorrow, our plan was successful. (Applause)

Madam Speaker, we temporarily raised the HST by two points, and we helped to provide revenue at a time when the economic picture was uncertain. This revenue helped protect important government programs Nova Scotians rely on. Of course we introduced offsetting tax rebates aimed at low-income Nova Scotians - the Affordable Living Tax Credit and the Poverty Reduction Tax Credit have helped make life more affordable for tens of thousands of Nova Scotians.

Now, as we embark on a balanced budget, we also look forward to a reduction of the HST. These reductions are built into our fiscal plan and we're on track. In 2014 and then again in 2015, when we can responsibly reduce the HST, that's what we'll do. Just as all Nova Scotians shared in getting our province back to balance, everyone will share in the benefits of the hard work.

Madam Speaker, the honourable member who prepared the MOU mentioned in the resolution the MOU and municipalities, but as the honourable member well knows, and as everyone in this House knows, the MOU between the province and the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities was based on the understanding that the province's ability to put in place cost-savings for municipalities was subject to government funding. Due to unforeseen costs and revenue losses, the province simply couldn't afford any additional costs and, as a result, government revised the MOU to minimize its financial impact on municipalities. The MOU had been in effect at the time for three years and it is estimated that the total savings to municipalities was about \$23 million.

Madam Speaker, Nova Scotia has for quite some time tied fee increases to the consumer price index. No one likes the price of something to go up, but the fact is that the cost of delivering services does increase. User fees ensure that those who use a particular service pay the cost associated with it, but if someone doesn't own a car they don't bear the cost of inspections, they don't bear the cost of registrations or the cost of licensing.

Fees are not unique to Nova Scotia, nor are gradual increases. But I think, Madam Speaker, when it comes to fee increases the Opposition is conveniently forgetting its own history. I have in front of me a set of media summaries which read - these are from 1994 - Big Trouble: Nova Scotia Forgetting Classrooms; School System on the Verge of Chaos. So there were things that were happening in the 1990s when the Liberals were in power.

When the Progressive Conservatives were booted out of office in 1993, they left behind a deficit of \$671 million, Madam Speaker. In 2002, the Hamm Government increased fees to the tune of \$26.7 million. Ambulance fees went from \$100 to \$600, and a new, expensive Pharmacare fee structure was put in place.

This has already been mentioned this afternoon, Madam Speaker, but the Liberals, during that time period decided to charge user fees on Pap tests, and if you can believe it, on prostate exams. It was the Liberals who also did give us user fees that they call tolls on Highway No. 104, and they also gave us P3 schools that we will continue to pay for.

As we heard as well, Madam Speaker, this afternoon, the Liberals managed budget problems - and I think this is a telling bit of information - by cancelling dental care services for children. In 1996, seniors actually begged the Liberal Government of the day not to apply what was then being thought of as BST, which later became HST, to heating fuel and electricity.

So that's some of the history that people may have forgotten in this House, Madam Speaker. But this government has taken steps to protect its most vulnerable citizens. We put in place programs that waive ambulance fees for low-income families and seniors, and we also kept fees associated with public housing flat. Such measures are a testament to the values and commitments of this government. I'm proud that our government has been mindful of Nova Scotians who struggle to make ends meet. And we've introduced measures that help those who need it the most. I've mentioned the Poverty Reduction and Affordable Living Tax Credits, and we're able to do that by using some intelligent taxation. And we've been able to use that kind of taxation to relieve those seniors who pay the Guaranteed Income Supplement from paying provincial income tax.

On this side of the House, Madam Speaker, we are working hard to improve the quality of public services, and to find a more effective and efficient way to deliver them. As the Public Accounts Committee heard just last week, Nova Scotia has some of the most transparent budgeting and reporting processes in Canada. Nova Scotia is the only province that requires the Auditor General to review revenue estimates. Last year, for example, the

Auditor General agreed with the reasonableness of our revenue estimates, as did more than a dozen leading economic and financial experts.

The same processes that put together a budget that were used under the previous government, are still in use today, Madam Speaker. The Opposition knows this. So I have to wonder why a decision based on professional judgment and expert advice has been used by the Opposition as an opportunity to undermine the public's trust in their government.

But like I said, our processes are transparent. Budget and Public Accounts updates, as everyone in this House knows, are given regularly in September and December. Financial information is right there in black and white for the public, for the media, and for the Opposition to scrutinize. Madam Speaker, the financial successes of this government are many. We've worked hard to get Nova Scotia back on a sound financial footing, and I would put forward that the proof is there, for everyone who would like to look at it, to see. We've reined in spending, and departmental spending has come in under budget for three years in a row, and is back on track for a fourth year of having the same thing happen. This is an unprecedented level of restraint and responsibility.

We've limited debt growth at a time when other provinces are seeing rapid increases. We've found savings through smarter purchasing, and better prices for contracts and services. We've set budget targets for departments and we've stuck to them, and we've asked the departments to reduce the cost of their administration. I could go on, Madam Speaker.

We've promised to bring sanity back to the province's finances, and we've done just that. Our hard work has paid off. We're supporting job creation, and we've reduced the small business tax to its lowest level in 20 years. Average employment in 2012 was the highest level ever, but we won't rest on our laurels. We'll continue to work harder, and we'll continue to work smarter and more collaboratively for all Nova Scotians. We'll invest in a stronger economy, and we look forward to a brighter future.

If I can say this once more, Madam Speaker, we'll introduce a balanced budget tomorrow, on track and as promised. With that, I will take my seat. Thank you very much.

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

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: I'm pleased to rise and speak on the resolution. It has been very interesting to hear the Liberals and the NDP lecturing anyone, quite frankly, about how to manage the finances of the province. This from a government that just last year presented a budget to the people of Nova Scotia with a \$27 million hole in it. This from a government that just two years ago presented a budget here in this House which had zero dollars in it for health equipment - clearly a nonsensical budget that they presented to the people of Nova Scotia with a straight face, only to have to raid the emergency fund for Health and Wellness when it turned out that, of course, somewhere in the province during

the year we're going to need some new or upgraded health equipment. This from a government that has been in deficit for four years in a row and managed to run a surplus for one exact day before they plunged the province right back into deficit again. That is why, on the eve of tomorrow's budget, so many Nova Scotians are skeptical about what the NDP say now.

But just to be fair to all sides, it is awfully interesting to watch, of all Parties, the Liberals preach to the NDP about financial management when their own record is so sorry, not just in the past, but in the present. The Liberals are criticizing the NDP for not counting \$27 million in revenue overstatement. It was the Liberal Party itself, the last time that they were in, that actually took \$600 million - 20 times what the NDP have done - and didn't count it when they tried to tell the people of Nova Scotia that they had a balanced budget. They didn't count \$600 million. That's a sorry record. It makes it awfully hard to watch the Liberals lecture the NDP today on being truthful about balanced budgets.

Now, I know some will say, well, that was a while ago, but that is the exact last example we have of the Liberals being in, not counting a \$600 million debt. That is the record that they neglected to mention in the resolution here today.

Madam Speaker, when it comes to Liberals and deficits, we don't even have to look just to when they were in government and how they tried to pull the wool over Nova Scotians' eyes then. Just this year, at their own Party's convention, they reported to their own Party members that in a non-election year, when we're all supposed to be out fundraising and saving money up for an election, they couldn't even balance their own Party's books in such an easy year as the past year was - a \$93,000 deficit. Nova Scotians will rightly ask, if you can't manage your own Party, how can we ever trust you to manage the finances of the Province of Nova Scotia? That is the lesson of the Liberal Party annual meeting.

Now, I don't know whether the NDP manage their own Party differently than they manage the government. I don't know if they have a surplus in their own Party or not, because just like with the government when they didn't count \$27 million, who knows what they don't count when they report their own Party's finances? I hope that they are better at managing their own Party, first of all, than they are at managing the Government of Nova Scotia accounts. But I also hope for their own sake that they're better at managing their own Party than the Liberals are better at managing their Party, because if they cannot manage to balance their own books, not even in a year where there is no election expense, then how can Nova Scotians ever count on them to manage something much bigger and more complicated, like the whole government? That is not ancient history, Madam Speaker, that is present day, that is the present leadership of the Liberal Party that can't manage the books of one small, little Party, trying to lecture the NDP or anyone else on how to run a government.

Madam Speaker, what's even more interesting is that like all three Parties, the Liberals are entrusted with some taxpayer money to run a caucus office. They run a caucus



office on the NDP side, we run a caucus office within budget, in fact below budget on the PC side, and the Liberals have a tiny, little budget to try and get right in their tiny, little - less than 20 people - caucus office.

But does the current leadership of the Liberal Party even know how to do that, Madam Speaker? The very people who are trying to tell all Nova Scotians they can run the entire government? No, they can't because do you know what they had to do, Madam Speaker? They had to go outside and hire a consultant, a fancy-pants consultant to help them run an office of less than 20 people. Now how can we trust them to . . .

MS. DIANA WHALEN: Madam Speaker, I'm rising on a point of order that the member opposite is not speaking to the resolution at all and, in fact, is way off topic and there's very little time for us to get to the nub of this resolution. I'm wondering if the member who is speaking has the information so that he could speak to the veracity of the NDP's budgetary techniques.

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

MR. BAILLIE: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I do believe that if we are going to have a Party in this House that attacks the veracity of the accounting and financial ability of another Party, that their own sorry record is very relevant to that resolution.

The truth may hurt, Madam Speaker, but it is still the truth. Who else needs a consultant to run such a small, little office. When you talk about veracity, we might as well admit that after that consultant helped them run their tiny, little budget, that that consultant is now running for the Liberal Party. That's pretty cozy. Maybe it's because they know that if they're ever entrusted with any more money or any more management responsibility, they're going to need an awful lot of consultants because they can't get it done themselves. That's why that consultant is running for the Liberal Party today.

Madam Speaker, I do want to speak directly to the resolution because it talks about the need for veracity in record-keeping, for veracity in financial management, coming from a Party that still hasn't told Nova Scotians exactly where all that trust fund money went, that still hasn't told Nova Scotians whose hands it's in now, whose hands is that money in now, a Party that ran fancy TV ads with no ability to manage their own Party, running a deficit at the same time but a mysterious pot of money over here that they needed to dip into and they had a choice.

If you want to talk about veracity, they had a choice about whether to dip into that cookie jar or not, before the lid was closed. Instead of saying, no, that's wrong, we won't do it - which I actually believe the member for Halifax Clayton Park would have said no to that, knowing her well enough, she would have said no - but the leadership of the Liberal Party dipped into the cookie jar anyway and we're still all waiting for a report, an honest, veracity-based report that shows where that money went, Madam Speaker. Until that day

comes, until the Liberal Party can run their own affairs in surplus, they should not be lecturing others. Until they come clean about that trust fund money, they should not be lecturing others, until they can manage a 20-person office without fancy consultants, they should not be lecturing others.

Madam Speaker, that is the record of the sponsors of this resolution, and tomorrow, before the NDP get all excited, they are not off the hook because tomorrow Nova Scotians will get to judge for themselves the veracity of the spin coming from the NDP side of the House, the veracity of a government that raised their taxes to the highest in the country, that raised their user fees beyond their ability to pay, that has more money coming in today than any government in the history of the province and they still can't honestly, decently balance the budget.

They cannot hold a candle to the Liberal Party, but they can't hold up a truly balanced budget to the people of Nova Scotia either, and that is a record that they will have to defend when the time comes, because when it comes to running deficits and trying to paper over their own weaknesses, there is no difference between the NDP and the Liberals. They are both the same and Nova Scotians deserve a lot better than either the NDP or the Liberals. They are crying out for a budget that not only looks balanced on paper, they are crying out for a budget that actually, truly, really is balanced.

No one deserves to see a stop in the sea of red ink that has come from the Liberals, even though they're managing a tiny little office, and comes from the NDP, who truly were entrusted with the Government of Nova Scotia, no one deserves to see a truly balanced budget more than the next generation of Nova Scotians, the ones who have to pay the bills, the ones who are looking up to their elected officials watching the flim-flammy that goes around between the Liberals and the NDP here, watching all the spin, measuring them on their ability to manage whatever small amount or large amount that has been entrusted to them, and hoping that some day the people who are entrusted with the public purse stop the games, stop the hiding of things and truly, honestly balance the budget, and stop passing the bills on to the next generation and get on with the job of creating a modern, dynamic, growing economy with all of the jobs and opportunities that could come with it, if we could just get past the record of the Liberals and the NDP.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

MR. ZACH CHURCHILL: Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to stand and partake in this debate. I hope the Leader of the Third Party stays because I'm going to have some things I would like to say, and I'd like for him to stick around and listen to it.

I think at the heart of this resolution is a question around credibility and integrity - I think that's what's at the heart of this. It has been clear by looking at the government record that Nova Scotians are starting to question their credibility and integrity when it comes to

honesty and presenting the facts. It was interesting to listen to the Leader of the Third Party ramble on and focus his guns during the conversation about a resolution about the NDP Government toward the Liberal Party - that's curious indeed. I think it exposes the difference between this caucus and the Progressive Conservative caucus, because while the Third Party is shooting for second place to replace the Opposition, this Party is shooting to replace that government.

What we have seen over the course of the last year is that Nova Scotians are actually looking toward this Party as an alternative - and there is a reason for that. One of them is because of the NDP's dismal record when it comes to keeping its promises, when it comes to its integrity and when it comes to its credibility with the public, but also because the Leader of the Third Party does not present a progressive vision of the province to Nova Scotians. This is a Leader who, when he published his advertisement campaign, the first thing he did was apologize to Nova Scotians for not getting to know them over the course of the last number of years - that's his fault, no one else's. He apologized - I'm sorry you don't know me that well, I'm the Leader of the Third Party. That is an admission of guilt.

The other reason I don't think Nova Scotians are looking toward the Third Party or the Leader of the Third Party to lead this province is because, what is he going to do? There are two things that this Leader of the Third Party has been pushing - one, that he's an accountant. That's excellent, you know, we have a lot of great accountants. But you know, I'm scared to see what's going to happen to maneuvering of budgets if so-called "The Accountant" of the Third Party is going to get in; we'll see what kind of damage he can do there, what kind of games he can play. But also because the greatest idea that he has come up with, as Leader of the Third Party, is to stop our pursuit of renewable energy sources. Let's put a halt to that. We have high energy rates here, so let's not look at renewable energy sources. That's what the Leader of the Third Party is presenting Nova Scotians, Madam Speaker, and that's why people aren't looking toward him.

Well, let's look at what happened when the federal Conservatives started changing our Employment Insurance program to the damage of Nova Scotia and Atlantic Canada; when the federal government's moving forward to changing fisheries legislation that's going to negatively impact independent fisheries in this part of the world. Where was the Leader of the Third Party when Nova Scotians needed him to stand up to the Prime Minister? In his seat, quiet. He was in his seat, quiet, Madam Speaker.

Why, at a time, when the public was so against these federal changes, these federal Conservative changes, wasn't the Leader of the Third Party standing up for Nova Scotians, to the Prime Minister? Well, Madam Speaker, it's probably because he received \$300,000 in appointments from Prime Minister Harper. Little Harper over here cares more about his relationship with the Prime Minister's Office than standing up for Nova Scotians when Nova Scotians need him most. And that is why Nova Scotians are not looking toward that Leader to represent their interests as we move forward in the next election.

So I want to assure the Leader of the Third Party, and the Third Party, while they train their guns on the Opposition and try to shoot for second place, we'll do what they should be doing, focusing our sights on the government and replacing them in government, Madam Speaker.

Now, back to the resolution at hand. I think that there are a lot of reasons why Nova Scotians should question the credibility of this government. This is a government led by a Premier who stands up in this House and says, we have kept every promise - virtually every promise. Let's look at those promises: not raise taxes - first year in, raised taxes. Promise broken. We will balance the books in the first year of our mandate - another promise broken. We will create 2,000 jobs a year, because we have a plan to keep jobs here; in the last year alone, this province lost 6,400 full-time jobs, and this government still has the nerve to stand up and say that we're creating jobs for Nova Scotians, important, meaningful, full-time jobs. It's not true.

Let's look at their approach to power. We are ensuring - according to the Premier, this is what the Premier says - that Nova Scotians have the fairest power rates that they can possibly have. What has happened over the course of the last three years? Power rates have increased by 30 per cent. And not only does the government ignore what's actually happened in the pocketbooks of Nova Scotians, they choose to misrepresent what the Opposition Party is saying when it comes to power. What this Party has said, Madam Speaker, when it comes to energy - and I'm saying this because I'm being asked by members opposite - that we will go at the heart of the problem when it comes to the energy market in this province, and that's tackling Nova Scotia Power itself. Breaking their monopoly, bringing competition into this energy marketplace. And what do they say? They say whatever Nova Scotia Power wants them to say.

That's why they're pushing forward blindly on this Muskrat Falls plan - they can't even answer the questions about how much it costs, how much it's going to save - but no, no, we have to go forward. We need to do this. Why? Because they don't know how to lead this province, Madam Speaker. And they're looking for Emera and Nova Scotia Power to lead them. That's what's wrong here.

Let's look at what this government has said around education. We're putting kids and learning first. Meanwhile, we're cutting \$65 million out of the education system, putting additional stress and pressure onto teachers, putting them into the position where they don't have the resources to do their job to the level that we want them to, and saying we're putting kids and learning first. These are the things that this government said, and they continue to say to Nova Scotians, which makes Nova Scotians look at them and question their credibility in government.

Let's look at their management of finances, since this is now the final promise that they haven't kept, that they're going to try and keep, and probably run on: balancing the budget. All of the mistakes that we've made in the past three years, all those wrong

decisions, all those cuts to education, we did that to balance the books. This will justify everything.

But what does that actually mean, Madam Speaker, when you look at it? What they're doing is presenting a budget that reflects prepayment - and I assume this is going to happen, because the Minister of Finance hasn't denied this. She had a chance to, and she didn't. We're going to present a budget that does not reflect payments to universities, because we're going to put that in the budget of this year. Prepayments to universities - that's something that the NDP railed against while they were in Opposition. Every year that the Tories did that, they railed against it. Now we see them employing the same accounting manoeuvre to balance these books.

Let's look at what happened in last year's budget. In last year's budget, the Finance Minister failed to disclose a \$27 million overstatement in revenue estimates, something that the Auditor General noted and informed the public - \$27 million overstated. Now, when that little secret came out in public, what did the then-Minister of Finance say? I don't really think people were paying much attention to that; I don't think people think it was a high enough number; it's so marginal, this \$27 million.

What he failed to say was that it represents 10 per cent of the deficit - \$27 million, that is not a small number. With \$27 million you could mitigate at least half of the damage that this government has incurred on the education system, or you could get a ferry back in Yarmouth. You could do a whole bunch of things with \$27 million. But this government, instead of just saying, oh, we made a mistake, sorry we were dishonest about it, let's move forward - they said, this doesn't make a difference, \$27 million doesn't matter to our books, it doesn't matter to Nova Scotians. But the fact is that it does.

It does matter to Nova Scotians, and I think it's because of these things that this government has done that when they now get up and say, we're going to balance our books, Nova Scotians, just like the Opposition Parties, are going to question the validity of that statement. The political capital that this government had coming into office as a new government who governed for the first time ever in the province - and I will congratulate the New Democrats on that achievement. It is an incredible achievement.

This government had an opportunity to do things differently and represent the base that put them there, but they haven't done that. This has been a government that has rehased the same Progressive Conservative accounting manoeuvres to make the books look better than they were, and it's the same Party that is going to use those accounting manoeuvres again to give them at least one victory that they can go back to the public with. This has been a government that has not come through on its promises to Nova Scotians, that has not kept its word to Nova Scotians, and that has misrepresented the facts and reality that exist out there in the economy, in the education system, and in the health care system.

That is doing the same thing that I'm sure every other Party has ever done, but the difference is that this Party said that they were going to do it differently. Sorry, Madam Speaker, but doing it the same as everybody else, and doing it worse, isn't doing it differently, and that's what this Party has done. They came in - we're different, we're different, we're the New Democrats, we are the Party of the people and righteousness, and every other Party that has ever governed this province has never cared about people like we do.

AN HON. MEMBER: And that's true.

MR. CHURCHILL: And they're still saying it. What a ridiculous statement. These folks over here wonder why their credibility has been jeopardized? It's because they say absurd statements like that on record in this House and to the public. That is why, Madam Speaker: because this is a Party that came in on the high hopes of Nova Scotians that government would be done differently, and that has just done the same thing as every other Party, and done it worse.

How much time do I have, Madam Speaker?

MADAM SPEAKER: Twenty seconds.

MR. CHURCHILL: Twenty seconds. Well, you can say a lot in 20 seconds, but the fact is that this government has jeopardized their own credibility and their own integrity. In the words of the now-Minister of Finance when she was in Opposition, how can we trust you now? Thank you very much.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable Opposition House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Madam Speaker, that concludes the Opposition business for today. I certainly want to thank all members and was quite pleased to see a full two hours of debate available to the Official Opposition today.

I would now call upon the Deputy Government House Leader to give us business and hours for tomorrow. Merci.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. CLARRIE MACKINNON: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. We've had a whole new meaning to Opposition Day today - it was very interesting, I must say.

The House hours tomorrow, Madam Speaker, will be from 2:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m., a very exciting day in the House it will be because it is Budget Day in Nova Scotia - that will be Resolution No. 39, the Estimates.

That will be the primary point of business tomorrow, but there will be of course the daily routine and Bill No. 32 will be called. I'll also throw in Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne, but probably not necessary.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: The motion is that the House now rise to meet again tomorrow, Thursday, April 5<sup>th</sup>, between the hours of 2:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

There will be no late debate this evening, so we stand adjourned.

[The House rose at 5:57 p.m.]

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**NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3)****RESOLUTION NO. 114**

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

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

Whereas Nova Scotia's Under 18 Curling champions, both the male and female division teams, swept the Under 18 Atlantic Curling Competition in Stephenville, Newfoundland this past weekend; and

Whereas Halifax's Mayflower Curling Team of Matthew Manuel, Ryan Abraham, Nick Zachernuk, and Alec Cameron are the 2013 Boys Under 18 Atlantic champs; and

Whereas Chester's Curling Team of Mary Fay, Jennifer Smith, Karlee Burgess, and Janique LeBlanc now hold the Girls Atlantic Under 18 title for 2012;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate these talented youth for their great showing for their clubs and province, thank coaches Stuart Cameron and Andrew Atherton for their leadership, and commend the enthusiastic support of the Nova Scotia fans who attended the competition to cheer our teams onto victory.