



House of Assembly  
*Nova Scotia*

**DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS**

**Speaker: Honourable Gordie Gosse**

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

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

---

**Fifth Session**

**THURSDAY, APRIL 4, 2013**

<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS</b>	<b>PAGE</b>
<b>GOVERNMENT MOTIONS:</b>	
Res. 39, re Estimates - Comm. of Whole House on Supply, Hon. Maureen MacDonald.....	378
Ms. D. Whalen .....	394
Adjourned debate .....	398
<b>SPEAKER'S RULING:</b>	
Question by Dart. East MLA to Treasury Bd. Min. imputed motives to the minister (Pt. of order by Hon. F. Corbett, [Hansard p.243, 02/04/13]) .....	398
<b>TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS &amp; OTHER PAPERS:</b>	
Add'l. Appropriations - OIC (04/04/13), Hon. Maureen MacDonald.....	401

## GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION:

Res. 115, Wee Care Ctr. - Anniv. (40 <sup>th</sup> ), Hon. D. Peterson-Rafuse.....	401
Vote - Affirmative.....	403
Res. 116, Oral Health Mo. (04/13) - Recognize, Hon. D. Wilson .....	402
Vote - Affirmative.....	402
Res. 117, Dal. Ctr. for Water Resources Studies - Coun. of the Federation Award, Hon. S. Belliveau .....	403
Vote - Affirmative.....	404
Res. 118, Radcliffe, Nancy/Two Houses Theatre Co.: Passion/Creativity - Recognize, Hon. L. Preyra .....	404
Vote - Affirmative.....	405

## INTRODUCTION OF BILLS:

No. 33, Rural Nova Scotia Physicians Act, Hon. S. McNeil .....	405
No. 34, Ratepayer Protection Act, Mr. A. Younger.....	405

## NOTICES OF MOTION:

Res. 119, Foster, Larry: Positive Attitude - Recognize, The Premier.....	405
Vote - Affirmative.....	406
Res. 120, Howell, Jennifer & Michael: Commun. Contributions - Congrats., Ms. K. Regan.....	406
Vote - Affirmative.....	407
Res. 121, Peck, Joe - Minor Hockey: Commitment - Recognize, Mr. E. Orrell.....	407
Vote - Affirmative.....	407
Res. 122, Mill, Pat - Commun./Vocation: Commitment - Congrats., Hon. J. MacDonell .....	408
Vote - Affirmative.....	408
Res. 123, Gushue, Nicole - Boston Marathon: Dedication - Congrats., Mr. Z. Churchill .....	408
Vote - Affirmative.....	409
Res. 124, Hart, Jeanie: Commun. Dedication - Congrats., Mr. J. Boudreau.....	409
Vote - Affirmative.....	410
Res. 125, Williamson, Justine - Much VJ Search: Final Round - Congrats., Mr. G. MacLellan.....	410
Vote - Affirmative.....	410
Res. 126, Norton, Scott - Law/Commun.: Contribution - Congrats., Ms. K. Regan.....	411
Vote - Affirmative.....	411

## ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS:

No. 65, Prem.: Employment/Income Tax Revenues - Correlation, Hon. S. McNeil .....	411
No. 66, Prem. - Balanced Plan: Lack - Confirm, Hon. J. Baillie .....	413
No. 67, Prem. - Universities: Prepayments - Justification, Hon. S. McNeil .....	415
No. 68, Fin. - Income Tax Increases: Collection - Details, Ms. D. Whalen .....	416
No. 69, ERDT: Southwestern N.S. Recession: Gov't. Responsibility, Hon. C. d'Entremont.....	418
No. 70, Educ. - Sch. Closure Review: Suspension - Reason, Hon. K. Casey.....	419
No. 71, ERDT: Economy Management - Gov't. Inability, Mr. C. Porter .....	420
No. 72, Educ.: W. Richmond Educ. Ctr. - Concerns, Hon. M. Samson .....	421
No. 73, ERDT - C.B. Economy: Min. Responsibility - Explain, Mr. E. Orrell.....	423
No. 74, Educ. - Sch. Reviews: Suspension - Timing Explain, Mr. Z. Churchill .....	424
No. 75, Nat. Res. - Clear-Cutting: Policy Explain, Mr. A. Younger.....	425
No. 76, Energy - Donkin Mine: Priority - Confirm, Mr. A. MacLeod .....	427
No. 77, TIR - Hwy No. 101 (Digby-Yar.): Completion - Time Frame, Mr. H. Theriault .....	428

## GOVERNMENT BUSINESS:

## PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING:

No. 32, Solemnization of Marriage Act Hon. J. MacDonell .....	430
Mr. A. MacMaster.....	430
Hon. J. MacDonell .....	431
Vote - Affirmative.....	431

## ADJOURNMENT:

## MOTION UNDER RULE 5(5):

Educ. - Sch. Closures: Suspension - Min. Motive, Ms. K. Regan .....	432
Mr. G. Ramey .....	434
Mr. E. Orrell.....	436

ADJOURNMENT, House rose to meet again on Fri., Apr. 5<sup>th</sup> at 9:00 a.m. .... 439

## NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3):

Res. 127, Hayman, Ross: Dal. Agriculture - Dean's List, Hon. K. Casey .....	440
Res. 128, Harrington, Thomas: Dal. Agriculture - Dean's List, Hon. K. Casey .....	440
Res. 129, McDonald, Ashley: Dal. Agriculture - Dean's List, Hon. K. Casey .....	441
Res. 130, Gratto, Carling: Dal. Agriculture - Dean's List, Hon. K. Casey .....	441
Res. 131, Howse, Christopher: Dal. Agriculture - Dean's List, Hon. K. Casey .....	442
Res. 132, Fullerton, Crystal: Dal. Agriculture - Dean's List, Hon. K. Casey .....	442
Res. 133, Chapman, Joshua: Dal. Agriculture - Dean's List, Hon. K. Casey .....	443
Res. 134, Cox, Nicole: Dal. Agriculture - Dean's List, Hon. K. Casey .....	443
Res. 135, Jamieson, Shelby: Dal. Agriculture - Dean's List, Hon. K. Casey .....	444
Res. 136, Smith, Sherisse: Dal. Agriculture - Dean's List, Hon. K. Casey .....	444
Res. 137, MacKenzie, William: Dal. Agriculture - Dean's List, Hon. K. Casey .....	445
Res. 138, Ross, Elvera/Ebony Hair Salon: Perseverance/Commitment - Congrats., Mr. A. Younger .....	445



House of Assembly  
*Nova Scotia*

**HALIFAX, THURSDAY, APRIL 4, 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: The honourable Government House Leader.

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

**GOVERNMENT MOTIONS**

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Resolution No. 39.

Res. No. 39, Estimates - CWH on Supply - notice given March 28/13 - (Hon. Maureen MacDonald)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Finance.

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to notice of motion given by me on March 28, 2013, and Rule 62 of the Rules and Forms of Procedure of the House of Assembly, I have the honour, by command, to present a message from His Honour the Lieutenant Governor of the Province of Nova Scotia, relating to the Estimates of Sums required for the service of the province for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2014, which is:

“I hereby transmit Estimates of Sums required for the Public Service of the province, for the year ending March 31, 2014, and in accordance with the the Constitution Act, 1867 recommend them, together with the Budget Address of my Minister of Finance, and any resolutions or bills necessary or advisable to approve the Estimates and implement the budget measures to the House of Assembly.

Signed,

**J.J. Grant**  
Lieutenant Governor”

Mr. Speaker, at this time I wish to:

(1) table the message from His Honour the Lieutenant Governor transmitting the Estimates for the consideration of this House;

(2) table the Estimate Books;

(3) table the government business plan;

(4) table the Crown Corporation business plans;

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

(6) deliver my Budget Speech; and

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

MR. SPEAKER: The Estimates are tabled.

I would like to remind our guests in the gallery today that under the Rules of the House, they are not to show either approval or disapproval of anything that happens here on the floor during our proceedings.

The honourable Minister of Finance.

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to rise in this House to deliver this government's 2013-14 budget.

### **Back to Balance**

It is a budget that fulfills the government's commitment to bring Nova Scotia's finances back to balance. Because of that fact, this budget will be scrutinized more closely than others in recent memory. It will be scrutinized closely precisely because it represents a new way of doing things. Too often we have seen governments declare budgets balanced, only to realize, after the voters had their say, that the budget was not really balanced at all. Or that the choices made to show this temporary result were not sustainable or realistic ones.

It is in that context that I am very proud to say the revenue forecasts contained in the 2013-14 budget have received an unqualified opinion from the Office of the Auditor General - something no Nova Scotian government has achieved in more than a decade. (Applause)

Clearly we are on track. But for Nova Scotia to keep living within its means, the province and our government must continue the steps taken over the past four years to reallocate spending to important front-line services and improvements. Government must continue to ensure spending decisions reflect common sense, the will of Nova Scotians, and remain focused on a better future.

Instead of being the province to turn in the worst economic performance in the country over the past 20 years, Nova Scotia's economy is now starting to turn the corner toward a brighter future. Vital public services are secure and improving. Nova Scotians are going forward with greater confidence. We must not turn back.

Nova Scotia's first NDP Government came to office during the worst global recession since the great depression, further constrained by a legacy from those who preceded us in government - a legacy of haphazard financial management and the absence of any well-considered plan to grow the economy.

Almost immediately upon taking office, Premier Dexter asked Deloitte to take a hard look at the province's finances. They found that without significant change, Nova Scotia had a projected deficit of \$1.3 billion annually by 2012-13 and that net debt would rise from \$12.3 billion in 2009-10 to \$16.75 billion in 2012-13.

An independent expert panel of distinguished economists - Elizabeth Beale, Tim O'Neill, Lars Osberg, and Donald Savoie - advised us how to dig out of the financial mess we had inherited. They said:

It is the panel's view that the government of Nova Scotia should pursue both tax increases and spending cuts and promote an economic growth agenda

to deal with the province's deteriorating financial position. The government should not attempt to eliminate the deficit by 2010–2011, but adopt a more gradual fiscal strategy to avoid slowing the economic recovery and destabilizing needed public services.

Economic Advisors' Report November 2009, page 13

They told us that we couldn't get back to balance and turn the corner on 20 years of the slowest economic growth in Canada unless we had a comprehensive approach. They advised adopting an approach with three elements. We needed to increase revenue, reduce government spending, and grow the economy while protecting public services.

Previous governments have placed balanced budgets before this House. None, in recent years, has done so without unacceptable cuts to essential public services, as was the case in the 1990s, or the good fortune of revenue windfalls from the offshore as occurred in the last decade.

While ours is a government that prefers to look forward, the lessons of the recent past are important for Nova Scotians to recall. Many will remember the last Liberal Government - the government that responded to reduced federal transfers by imposing across-the-board cuts to all government departments and entities. They unilaterally broke negotiated contracts, closed hospital beds, laid off nurses, built toll highways, instituted user fees on vital health services, cut our children's provincial dental program, and took away inflation protection for the most vulnerable Nova Scotians. As a province, we continue to live with the outcomes of these hare-brained decisions to this very day.

More people will remember the recent Conservative Government, that undisciplined lot who pretended to be sound financial managers but overspent their budget by nearly \$1 billion during their last 3 years in office. They produced budgets with half a billion dollars of spending increases with little to show for it. Instead of using that revenue to invest in people by helping permanently upgrade their skills, they purchased kiddie ATVs. Rather than supporting the diversification of one-industry towns across rural Nova Scotia, they squandered record offshore revenues in a failed attempt to buy their way back to power.

This government has worked hard not to repeat the mistakes of our predecessors, and they've certainly given us a lot to learn from. With the help of many, our government has brought Nova Scotia back to balance while maintaining and often improving services for families, businesses, and individuals. We balanced the budget while investing in the fundamentals of a modern, resilient, and globally competitive economy. We got back to balance and stayed true to our fundamental values: to respect the province's workers, to care for the most vulnerable, and to make life better and more affordable for today's families. (Applause)

In less than four years, Nova Scotia has changed direction, away from the looming billion dollar deficits and low-paying jobs left by the former government, away from the



wage rollbacks and standing-room-only hospital waiting rooms left by the members of the Opposition.

Mr. Speaker, let's look at where we are today, how we got here, and most importantly where we are going. The budget is back in balance, and Nova Scotians are getting better care sooner; schools are putting kids and learning first; and good, high-paying jobs are coming here with more to follow. Students have access to post-secondary education and training at a predictable price and the support of a student aid program that is second to none in Canada. When they graduate, there are tax incentives to stay in Nova Scotia and take on the challenge of a widening spectrum of opportunity. This budget makes it more affordable for students in need to pursue the education and training they require to build a life in Nova Scotia.

We are back to balance despite three years of modest revenue growth - not through hoping and wishing. We are back to balance because we asked the experts; developed a multi-year plan; and we stuck to that plan. We are back to balance because we recognized the collective wisdom of all Nova Scotians and their desire to get the province back on solid financial footing without compromising vital services.

In presenting the 2013-14 budget I feel a genuine sense of achievement, along with a sense of hope and optimism for our province. We are starting to turn the corner to a more prosperous future.

### **Better Care Sooner**

Mr. Speaker, there is no service, no program, and no support system that Canadians value more than public health care. In the last election, we heard loud and clear from Nova Scotians that they wanted better care, and they wanted it sooner.

My sincere thanks go to Dr. John Ross, a trusted adviser, who believed passionately that our health care system could be dramatically improved by the creation of Collaborative Emergency Centres. He listened to Nova Scotians, and the government listened, too. Today, Collaborative Emergency Centres are open around the clock in seven communities. Same-day or next-day medical appointments are now a phone call away for families who just a few years ago faced long drives and even longer waits. And soon the benefits of CECs will be available to more Nova Scotians in more communities.

Our commitment to providing better care sooner continues. Thanks in large measure to the work of the district health authorities who stood shoulder-to-shoulder with the government as we curbed administration, and to physicians who delayed wage increases and health care workers who settled for a 1 per cent pay increase, Nova Scotia is turning the corner from the time when health care problems were deemed to be unsolvable and health care costs uncontrollable.

These leaders saw our financial pressures as a challenge to innovate and deliver better care; ensuring that patient care is protected while checking the increasing cost of health care is essential to getting health care on sustainable footing.

Funding has been allocated to advance major initiatives, including Together We Can, the Mental Health and Addictions strategy; Thrive!, a wellness strategy with special emphasis on children; and the Physicians Resource Plan.

This year, district health authorities and the IWK have been allocated operating budgets relatively equal to those of 2012-13. The government recognizes that this will present challenges, and the Department of Health and Wellness will work with DHAs and the IWK to finalize plans to manage their operations without an adverse effect on patients.

In the past, health budgets have been allowed to grow at an unsustainable pace. Despite those increases, there was no appreciable improvement in the health or wellness of Nova Scotians. While the cost of medical services continues to grow, the government is confident in the abilities and leadership of DHAs and the IWK to continue to find innovative ways to offer their full range of services.

It is at the core of our values as a government to take every step we can to support our youngest and most vulnerable citizens. In this budget, we are supporting a number of new initiatives that do just that.

Beginning this year, the province will offer improved support for children and young adults with Type 1 diabetes. I am very pleased to say, Mr. Speaker, that some of the new funding will be used to provide insulin pumps to individuals 19 years of age and younger, and supplies for insulin pumps to individuals under 25 years of age. The pumps will provide more stable management of the disease and reduce the risk of complications. (Applause)

This year we will also expand dental coverage for children - finally reversing the drastic cuts made to this program by the Liberals when they were in office. Starting in 2013-14, we are increasing the age for children to receive basic dental care for free, from 10 to 13. This is a significant improvement in health care coverage for children, and will make Nova Scotia's Oral Health Program one of the most accessible dental coverage programs in the country.

The budget includes the necessary funds to make a major expansion in newborn screening. The changes will extend screening to include cystic fibrosis, sickle cell anemia, and eight additional conditions, with an investment of \$1.3 million. Early detection can improve treatment and the quality of life for these children and their families.

Last year, the government completed Nova Scotia's first ever Mental Health and Addictions strategy, called Together We Can. In 2013-14, we will allocate an additional \$2.5 million to begin the long-overdue implementation of quality health care for Nova

Scotians suffering from mental health issues and addictions. To help children and adolescents get the services they need, \$1.4 million has been budgeted to provide more mental health clinicians in schools. All Nova Scotians will have 24/7 access to mental health crisis intervention by calling the Mental Health Crisis Line.

The IWK is one of Canada's most respected hospitals for children and women. It is taking a new and better approach to helping children, youth, and their families access mental health care and addictions services. In the last two years, the IWK has been a leader in North America in implementing a new way to get children faster and more appropriate access to the care they need, when they need it.

This budget provides funding to build on this transition, and to help streamline services for families and children in need of mental health care.

Despite the IWK's leadership, there are areas where it has not had the ability to deliver services available in every other children's hospital in Canada, like programming for youth with eating disorders. Too often children and youth with serious eating disorders have had to be sent out of province to receive care. This budget sets that situation right, by providing funding to help the IWK and Capital District Health Authority design a joint Eating Disorders program: the first of its kind in Nova Scotia, and the kind of collaborative innovation that ensures our health care system continues to lead the way in Canada. (Applause)

To provide treatment closer to home for Nova Scotians with addictions, funding has been allocated that will allow 200 clients of the Mud Creek treatment facility in Wolfville to move to district health clinics in the Annapolis Valley, Colchester-East Hants, and the Capital District.

Since its election, this government has focused consistently on improving health care and other services to senior citizens. This year, the government is allocating \$4.5 million to ensure that seniors will continue to pay less for generic drugs and will be protected against increases in Pharmacare premiums and co-payments.

Further investments in home-care program funding will help seniors acquire the community support they need to stay in their home. This includes help with transportation, meal preparation, errands, and yard work. This \$2 million in increased funding will bring the government's two-year investment in home care to \$24 million.

Nova Scotia will partner with other provinces to reduce the price of six common generic drugs used by many Nova Scotians, and will provide wheelchairs to eligible low-income seniors.

**Kids and Learning First**

Mr. Speaker, a solid education gives our children the confidence they need to be ready for the future. Mastering the basics in areas such as reading and math are fundamental skills all students need for the workforce of the future. In Nova Scotia we have an exceptional public education system filled with talented, committed teachers, parents and support staff. But we also have challenges: declining enrolment, costly infrastructure needs, weak test results, and growing costs have plagued the system for years.

Public education expert Dr. Ben Levin advised us how to capitalize on the strengths and opportunities within the system. In response to his report, the province developed a multi-year plan. Now in its second year, Kids and Learning First is improving the future success of our children through a greater focus on the early years, the basics, and safer, better schools. The plan means more teachers, increased support for special education, and smaller class sizes.

This government is also taking steps to ensure that schools maintain their place at the heart of our communities, with the benefit of the best advice Nova Scotians and those involved in community-building across the province have to offer.

This year the province will invest \$10,762 per student - the highest investment in a generation. Class sizes for Primary to Grade 3 will remain capped at 25 students, providing the right learning environment to nurture our youngest students. These investments will mean that about 170 new teachers will be hired.

Adequate special education programming and qualified staff are the only way to ensure that students at risk and those with special needs receive the support they need to thrive. With the funding provided in this budget, 25 new program support staff, psychologists, and speech-language pathologists will be hired, and 15 new teacher assistants added. Additional resources will expand the ability of teachers to assess the developmental health of their students in critical areas like physical well-being, emotional maturity, social skills, and language.

To create a safer environment for students who are victims of bullying, Nova Scotia's first anti-bullying plan, Speak Up, will be put into action, with an initial allocation of \$400,000 this fiscal year.

Mathematics has become a critical competency for many of the good jobs today and more of those that are coming in the future. To help students succeed in math, we are taking common-sense steps to improve the curriculum - like making math a full-year course in High School - and will soon bring forward a further set of changes for our youngest students.

This is not, Mr. Speaker, about a quick fix aimed at ensuring next year's math scores marginally exceed the last set of test scores. It's about setting these students up for life, with the right skills to succeed in the future. And we all recognize that a good grasp of math is essential to the future for every one of our students. That's why we are taking the right steps to change the way our students are taught math, changes that are long overdue, changes that will pay off for them all in the long run.

In the year ahead, the number of schools offering skilled trades will double and a new course, Manufacturing Trades 11, to help prepare students for upcoming shipbuilding jobs will be introduced. The highly successful Options and Opportunities initiative that helps young people consider career options will be available in Grade 9 through Discovering Opportunities. The number of students in rural areas and small communities who can take advantage of courses through the on-line virtual classroom will triple with an additional investment of \$252,000.

Schools play a vital role in their communities, particularly in rural Nova Scotia where the school is often the focal point. To give children and their families more opportunities for after-school recreational, educational, and cultural programs, the Community Use of Schools Grant will again be available.

In addition, the SchoolsPlus program will be expanded to include four more schools, giving more families, students, and seniors the ability to access services and activities at central locations, as funding increases for this program by another \$500,000 this year bringing our total investment to \$2.5 million. (Applause)

New, better, and safer schools will be built in Amherst, New Glasgow, south Dartmouth, Bible Hill, Bedford, and Liverpool. More than \$56 million will be invested in improvements to modernize schools in dozens of communities across the province. In the Halifax Regional School Board, funds will be invested to allow schools to save money and reduce greenhouse gases by 20 per cent.

The early years are critical years in establishing patterns that lead to a happy, healthy, successful life. In the coming year, the government will invest \$1.2 million to establish children's centres so families can access support services for their young children and help them make a successful transition to elementary school.

Mr. Speaker, when this government was elected, Nova Scotia had one of the worst post-secondary student assistance programs in Canada. Today, we have one of the best, if not the best, and it is getting better. This year we are making further improvements in student aid where it is most needed - an improvement in the loan-to-grant ratio to 60/40, and an increase in the maximum weekly student allowance to \$180. (Applause)

In addition to this investment of \$4.6 million, the cost of post-secondary education to Nova Scotian students will be maintained at or below the national average. The government will continue to invest up to \$25 million over three years in a post-secondary

innovation fund. That funding is available to help universities collaborate and create efficiencies.

This year, the province is sponsoring an Innovation Summit, in an effort to commercialize university and college-based research and discoveries more quickly and to do it in Nova Scotia. Nova Scotia needs to capitalize and exploit its best ideas for the benefit of Nova Scotians.

### **Making Life Better for Families**

Mr. Speaker, this government and this Premier have a plan to make life better for families. And I'm sure all members will indulge me as I recall the many years the now-Premier and our caucus spent fighting on behalf of seniors and their families, so that they no longer had to pay the costs of medical expenses in long-term care. This was a long-needed change in how our province respects seniors, and ensures that they are treated with the dignity they so rightly deserve after years of building the society and economy of our province.

In the last four years we have taken even greater steps to help seniors. During the last two years, provincial income tax has been returned to seniors who receive the Guaranteed Income Supplement. In 2010 and 2011, seniors received over \$15 million in refunds. In 2013-14, they will receive another \$8 million. This rebate means that on average, \$450 is put back into the hands of Nova Scotian seniors who need it most.

I am very pleased to say, Mr. Speaker, that this budget builds further on that vital step forward to help seniors. As of January 1, 2014, we will increase the number of our low-income seniors who will no longer pay provincial income taxes; 25,000 Nova Scotia seniors will receive this benefit. (Applause)

In addition, this year the government will increase the maximum property tax rebate available to seniors by \$200. This increase will help approximately 4,000 seniors to remain in their own homes and communities.

Mr. Speaker, Nova Scotia's public housing policy was certainly well-intentioned, but it has unquestionably contributed to unanticipated and unwanted consequences, predominantly stigmatizing and marginalizing residents.

It is time for a fundamental change. In the year ahead, a new housing strategy for Nova Scotia will be launched. This strategy, with an initial investment of \$3 million, will literally open doors for our most vulnerable citizens and make home ownership possible for families of modest income. (Applause) It will integrate low-income Nova Scotians in neighbourhoods and communities where they and their children have a better chance to succeed.

Mr. Speaker, this government has from the beginning tried to find ways to help the most vulnerable members of our society. This year, we will increase the personal allowance rates for income assistance beneficiaries by a further 7 per cent. With this increase, personal use allowances have gone up by \$47 a month - or 22 per cent - over the past four years. (Applause)

In difficult financial and economic times it can be a particular challenge but, Mr. Speaker - and I know you agree - it is incumbent upon us to take whatever steps we can to make life a little more affordable for those who need it most.

Often need is greatest in times of emergency and natural disasters. These situations require better planning than previous governments were willing to support. Beginning this year, the province will provide \$3 million per year to work with vulnerable communities to better understand flooding and reduce the risk of damage.

This represents a new beginning in the partnership between the province, municipalities, first responders, and emergency relief agencies to ensure a greater level of preparation for, and protection from, natural disasters.

### **Secure Public Services**

Mr. Speaker, public services in Nova Scotia must be financially sustainable. Getting them there has required, and will continue to require, firm resolve.

District Health Authorities have demonstrated outstanding leadership in this area by reducing administrative and support services costs. We have already seen financial savings from their efforts and the reduction of administrative positions, including six VP positions. These savings can and will be redirected to front-line patient care.

We will take this approach from the health care sector and expand it across the public sector. Later this session we will bring forward the details of a new approach toward better-coordinated and merged services - an approach that will save Nova Scotians money and ensure continued strong delivery and support of our public services.

To quote my predecessor in this portfolio, the honourable member for Halifax Fairview, who deserves much credit for where we are today, "The decisions we make are rooted in common sense. While some will be tough, they will always be fair." (Applause)

Mr. Speaker, after the most extensive budget consultations in provincial history, the honourable member also said that the government's fiscal plan is built on the collective wisdom of Nova Scotians and reflects their values and priorities. The values and priorities of Nova Scotians continue to guide our every decision.

As the Premier recently said, economic prosperity is vital to Nova Scotia's future. But this government understands that its real value, the reason it really matters, lies in the

fact that it provides the capacity to propel social prosperity and make life better for all Nova Scotians. (Applause)

During these recessionary years, this government has walked a fine line. We had to spend judiciously as well as strategically, and be very mindful of not contributing to a deepening or more prolonged downturn. That's why we invested, along with our federal and municipal partners, in key infrastructure projects like roads and the new Nova Centre, that have kept skilled workers on the job and here at home.

When we began this journey, Mr. Speaker, Nova Scotia was on an unsustainable path to a \$1.3 billion deficit. Over the past four years, government has realigned, reorganized, and modernized.

Departmental spending grew at an average annual rate of 6.6 per cent between fiscal 2000-01 and fiscal 2009-10. Over the last four years the average annual growth in spending has been held to 0.9 per cent and there will be a 1.6 per cent decline in fiscal 2013-14. (Applause)

In spite of very challenging economic circumstances, I'm proud that our government has been able to balance the budget while balancing the needs of families and small businesses, the needs of students and seniors, and the needs of patients and taxpayers.

We have improved access to health care while slowing its increasing cost. Since we took office the health care budget has grown by about 3 per cent annually, compared to an average of 7 per cent a year over the previous decade.

School boards rolled up their sleeves, too, and tackled their own budgets to better reflect the reality of declining enrolment. And universities worked with us to gain control over ballooning costs, with an eye to providing high-quality, first-rate education.

Mr. Speaker, introducing a balanced budget is a turning point for Nova Scotians.

We are on a stronger financial foundation than we were four years ago, and we are balanced earlier than many other jurisdictions in Canada. Our debt-to-GDP ratio - a key measure of economic health - is close to 35 per cent and stable.

Nova Scotia will be one of only four provinces to table balanced budgets for the coming year. (Applause)

### **Turning the Corner to Economic Success**

Mr. Speaker, for two decades, Nova Scotia had the worst economic performance in Canada. Today, we are starting to turn the corner.



After 20 years at the very back of the pack of Canadian provinces, Mr. Speaker, Nova Scotians can feel hopeful and optimistic about their future and that of their province. In just two years, the economic plan jobsHere is taking hold.

In Sydney Harbour, Mr. Speaker, lies the gateway to new economic opportunity for that city and region. The Deputy Premier was a great champion of ensuring that we made an investment that attracted the support of other levels of government to dredge the harbour, and as a result the region stands ready to turn its natural assets to long-term advantage for its citizens. (Applause)

This kind of economic infrastructure is dependent on having solid, reliable government-maintained infrastructure to get the products to market.

Our government is ready to begin discussions with the federal government about the successor to the Build Canada Fund so that, beginning in 2014, communities that have pressing infrastructure needs and a plan to address them, like the one brought forward by the Cape Breton Regional Municipality, can get to work, and put more Nova Scotians to work in the process. (Applause)

The National Shipbuilding Procurement contract is the biggest ever landed by a Nova Scotian company. The benefits will reach every community where workers are ready and able to compete, and it will mean an estimated 11,500 jobs will be created.

Supporting this game-changing opportunity is one of the greatest investments ever made by the Government of Nova Scotia - for every \$6 loaned in support of this contract the province is able to earn \$100. More importantly, Mr. Speaker, families can stay here, more schools across Nova Scotia will have students and teachers, more grocery stores and hairdressers will have increased business - for 30 years.

That is what jobsHere is all about - helping Nova Scotian companies and workers prepare for good jobs with a future. And that future will surely look different than the past in many areas of the province.

As a government we stand ready to support and invest in opportunities to help local economies thrive - whether by committing funds to the right ferry service to serve southwest Nova Scotia from Yarmouth, creating the building blocks to sustain the forestry of the future in communities like Liverpool and Port Hawkesbury, or working with world-leading LED Roadway Lighting to create a home-grown manufacturing success right in Amherst.

Mr. Speaker, more than 400 companies and 10,000 workers have benefited from jobsHere programs. That is what economic growth is all about. That is what makes life better for Nova Scotians. (Applause)

**Tax Measures**

Mr. Speaker, four years ago, the panel of economic experts told us that we also needed to increase revenue. We made the difficult decision to raise the HST two percentage points to 15 per cent and we brought in a fifth tax bracket for high-income Nova Scotians.

Tax increases are neither easy nor popular, but they were necessary. Next year, as promised, Nova Scotians will see the tangible results of our improved finances with a phased-in reduction of the HST. The HST will be rolled back by one percentage point in 2014 and another percentage point in 2015.

In raising taxes, our government was guided by fairness, which demands that those least able to pay are protected. This year our Affordable Living and Poverty Reduction Tax rebates will provide \$74 million in relief to low-income families and individuals. Since July 2010, the Affordable Living Tax Credit has put \$178 million back in the pockets of families, and 14,000 Nova Scotians most in need have received up to \$250 each year through the Poverty Reduction Credit. (Applause)

And fairness must be the hallmark of any progressive taxation system. To that end, Mr. Speaker, we will maintain the fifth tax bracket for the highest-income Nova Scotians - on taxable income of \$150,000 a year or more - recognizing that from those who earn the most, more can reasonably be expected.

Unlike previous governments, which made the decision to impose the HST on families by taxing the essentials of life, this province's first NDP Government stood up for families. For families purchasing children's clothing, children's footwear, and children's diapers, as well as books and home energy, over \$380 million has been rebated since 2009-10. This budget will continue helping families make ends meet by providing almost \$132 million in HST rebates. (Applause)

Mr. Speaker, the budget that honourable members have before them today, the budget that they will examine and debate in the days ahead, furthers this government's commitment to make life better for families, to ensure the health care system offers better care sooner, to create good jobs, and to extend to every Nova Scotian the opportunity to participate fully in the economic and social life of the province.

Tax measures for 2013-14 are designed to grow more competitive small businesses; help low-income Nova Scotians and seniors; keep young people and new graduates in Nova Scotia; help families put down roots with the purchase of their first home; grow job opportunities in film and digital media; and promote better health.

On January 1, 2014, this government will reduce tax rates for small businesses for the fourth year in a row. (Applause)

The rate of corporate income tax for small businesses will be 3 per cent. Since we came to office, we have reduced taxes on small businesses by 40 per cent, returning savings of almost \$78 million for small businesses from Port Mouton to New Minas, from Amherst to Whitney Pier.

Annual savings to small businesses will exceed \$33 million once this fourth consecutive tax reduction is implemented. Eligible small businesses can claim the reduced rate on their first \$350,000 of taxable income.

In this budget, the government is continuing our commitment to support recent graduates, through an additional \$6 million investment in the Graduate Retention Rebate Program. University students who graduated in and after 2009 can reduce their provincial income taxes, starting the year they graduate and in each of the next five years. In the years ahead, we will examine the criteria to qualify for this rebate to ensure that it is reaching first-time graduates and those who need it most.

Mr. Speaker, 28,000 Nova Scotians work in arts and culture industries, contributing almost \$1.2 billion to our economy. The province is working with the industry to help provide the support needed to create more opportunities for these talented Nova Scotians. (Applause)

This budget continues the government's support for the Film Industry Tax Credit. Since enhancements to this credit were announced in 2010, the film industry has received more than \$62 million in tax benefits. It will receive another \$24 million in 2013-14 to foster continued growth and employment opportunities. Producers are encouraged to hire locally because they can claim between 50 per cent and 60 per cent of eligible Nova Scotian labour costs. The Digital Media Tax Credit will continue in 2013. The province will continue to work with creative industry partners on how to best serve their sector.

The 2013-14 budget increases the provincial tax on tobacco. Effective at midnight tonight, the provincial tobacco tax will increase by 2 cents on each cigarette and on each gram of fine-cut tobacco. Increasing the cost of tobacco, Mr. Speaker, is a deterrent for first-time smokers, particularly youth.

### **Small Business Growth**

Mr. Speaker, over time governments have developed and launched new programs to support small business. I have no doubt that these programs were well-intentioned but as these programs proliferated, governments seemed to forget who they were for - small business. Most small businesses have neither the time nor the resources to comb through lists of programs and pages of eligibility criteria to see which ones might be for them. We are changing all that.

Dr. Donald Savoie, in his astute report to this government said, "The Nova Scotia government should set out to become the most business-friendly jurisdiction in Canada in

terms of accessing government programs and services.” We have taken up this challenge, and are turning the corner toward that goal.

In the coming year, we will reduce red tape for small business, ensuring that business owners can find and access the help they need to grow and succeed. Instead of wading through a complex list of nearly 40 programs, owners of small businesses will have five doors as clear entry points to the same range of programs and services. With better one-on-one support, more frequent site visits, and shorter approval times, government will better respond to the needs of small business. (Applause)

Mr. Speaker, in 2009 the economy was suffering and a new Nova Scotia Government recognized how important it was to keep jobs in communities. We developed the best-planned capital program in years and created an estimated 6,300 jobs across the province.

This budget includes \$248.4 million to build and maintain roads and other transportation infrastructure; \$38.4 million to improve information technology in public services like hospitals and schools; and \$156.2 million to invest in new public facilities and land purchases.

Nova Scotia’s traditional industries are vital to our way of life and to the economy of the province. Nova Scotia is the only province in Canada experiencing growth in both the number of farms and in farm gate receipts. We want to keep that going. (Applause)

By relocating offices to Truro-Bible Hill, Cornwallis, and Shelburne, government will better serve farmers and fishermen. In addition, we will invest at least \$250,000 to promote Buy Local food efforts through Select Nova Scotia.

Nova Scotia’s Crown land holdings increased substantially in the past four years, when we acquired 550,000 acres in western Nova Scotia - the Bowater lands. We will be consulting extensively with communities, including the Mi’kmaq people, regarding the uses and preservation of this land. The Department of Natural Resources has budgeted \$750,000 to ensure appropriate stewardship of this land, and an additional \$2.4 million this year to continue implementation of the forestry strategy.

### **Turning the Corner**

Mr. Speaker, Nova Scotians and this government have successfully faced down four difficult, post-recessionary years. There have been some bumps along the way, but collectively we have a lot to show for our efforts.

More Nova Scotian workers than ever are improving their skills, training for and getting better jobs. In fact, in 2012, more Nova Scotians were working than ever before in our history. (Applause)

Each year more emergency rooms are staying open. That trend will increase as the government's physician coverage program matures and our physician resource plan moves forward. This budget includes \$3 million to increase the pool of doctors to fill shifts in rural ERs and to improve emergency care through new emergency department standards, paramedic coverage, and medical oversight in CECs.

Last year, the government engaged with Nova Scotians and front-line care providers to develop the province's first comprehensive plan to improve the lives of those who struggle with mental health issues and addictions. How previous governments could look away while an estimated one in five Nova Scotians suffered is beyond comprehension. Action to put the plan to work has begun, and additional funding is in this budget to help those who were ignored for too long. (Applause)

Seniors have more affordable care options than ever before. Since this government came to office there are almost 1,800 new or renovated long-term care beds. Home care services have significantly expanded and improved. In fact, this government has taken unprecedented steps to help seniors, and is again this year expanding the number that will no longer pay provincial taxes.

These are tangible actions to make life better and a little more affordable for seniors and their families.

This government has a long view, Mr. Speaker. Making life better and more affordable for families is not a quick-fix, stop-gap measure. It's not a one-time cheque for \$155 dropped in your mailbox. It's not borrowing \$600 million and pretending it's not a deficit.

Nowhere is a long-term view more important than in planning for Nova Scotia's energy future. This government's energy plan offers 35 years of secure supply and price stability. It offers clean local power production at competitive rates. It will ensure the lowest, fairest, tax-free electricity rates for Nova Scotians. (Applause)

Some attempt to convince Nova Scotians that there are better options. But none has been offered that comes close to the benefits Nova Scotians will derive from this government's support of the Maritime Link and our Community Feed-in Tariff program promoting home-grown energy.

Mr. Speaker, over four years we've made huge strides as a government and as a province. It's progress we can build on that will make life better for families - the reason I got into this business in the first place.

We have a Premier with experience, a plan, and a vision to lead our province forward. He cares about families, fights for fairness, and believes we can make life here better.

Our back-to-balance plan was rooted in the collective wisdom of Nova Scotians and respected economic experts. We listened to their advice and we stuck to our plan.

That is why this budget is balanced. (Applause)

I want to thank the Premier, all members of this House, and indeed all Nova Scotians for playing a role in getting this great province back to balance and for putting us on the path toward a more prosperous future.

We must continue to look for ways to ensure that our economy turns the corner so our young people can stay and build a life here, Nova Scotians can return home from away, our most vulnerable are protected, and businesses all thrive.

Together, we have climbed a steep hill. Together, we will start seeing the hard work pay off. We are beginning to turn the corner. We cannot turn back. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (Applause)

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

MS. DIANA WHALEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise, as the Finance Critic for the Liberal caucus, and reply to the budget document that we have before us, and the minister's Budget Speech.

Mr. Speaker, it's clear that the numbers in the budget speak for themselves. There are a number of very questionable practices - shall I say? - and approaches that need to be looked at carefully, and I'm sure Nova Scotians will do just that.

The government's credibility stood on trying to show a balanced budget and I believe that there was a determination, perhaps a desperation, to show that balanced budget today. That's exactly what we've just heard.

There were a lot of broken promises, Mr. Speaker, as we know, with this government over the four years. We've had the opportunity to listen to the Finance Minister's storyline about what has happened in the last four years, but there is another level of truth, as well, that goes with that storyline.

One is that the minister's story begins with the Deloitte study that was done saying that they were headed to a \$1.4 billion deficit if nothing was done. Mr. Speaker, it's important for people to know that when you hire a consultant you give them the assumptions - and the assumptions made were false. They said that spending would continue to skyrocket and that revenue would stay flat, there'd be no change in revenue - then if you just plot that out on a chart, you see a rising deficit every year.

As I said in Question Period the other day, Mr. Speaker, to take credit for reversing a \$1.4 billion deficit is ludicrous, because it never materialized. It was based on false

assumptions; it was just a made-up number. And that is the basis of the narrative that we've heard today, that weaves through the story of the four years of NDP financial management.

I think there are two major points that we would like to make sure are clear today. The first is the credibility of these figures, and I want to start, Mr. Speaker, with the practice of prepaying universities. We've had discussions here in the House over the last number of days about where the government was going in terms of prepaying universities, and it was very clear that when this practice was tried by the Progressive Conservative Government in their last budget it was completely condemned by the NDP when they were in Opposition. They said it was wrong. The Premier, at the time called that budget a "fudge-it budget." Those were his words - he didn't believe it; it had no benefit, no substance. Well, that practice has gone on twice in the meantime. That was repeated again in 2009, and the then-Finance Minister did the same thing, but to a larger degree.

At that time he moved, I believe it was over \$200 million, \$278 million I think, or \$256 million, was moved into the year before so that he could pass off the bigger deficit to blame it on the previous government. And when that was done, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to read what the editorial said in the *The ChronicleHerald* at that time - and I'll table this document after I read it. It said, "To see the NDP replaying the MOU pre-payment game is deeply disappointing - a bus-sized hit to the new government's credibility." And that's it.

Mr. Speaker, they were right in saying that - the credibility of the government was shaken greatly in that time by doing that very same thing that they had condemned, that the Premier had condemned, that the Minister of Finance himself had condemned earlier on. And so to do it again today is another hit to the credibility of this government. And people need to know that although they've taken the liberty of mentioning the word "balanced" numerous times, if you consider the prepayment for the university fees, which are \$34 million this year, the university fees for two universities were prepaid in the last fiscal year, when that is considered, this budget is not balanced. It's \$18 million in the hole - and that's the truth. (Applause)

Mr. Speaker there is no doubt about that, that is the truth - the prepayment to two universities makes this a falsely presented budget, a budget that is not balanced, and that is very, very fundamental to the credibility, believability, and reliability of this government - absolutely.

Mr. Speaker, the minister in the very opening of her Budget Speech said that they didn't want to make choices that would be temporary and wouldn't be sustainable or realistic, and I'm saying today that when we see the first-quarter results come in from this budget, we'll see that it is not balanced even without looking at the prepayment for the universities. It's not going to be balanced. And that makes this even more of an election document than it is a budget for this province, because it's painting a rosy picture that is overly inflated on the revenue side, tremendously, in order to present that balanced look today - and that means that the government will have to go to an election before this is proven to be nothing but a stack of cards. And that will actually have to happen.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to just draw the attention of the members to the revenue estimates that are in this budget, because they are so inflated, they are so based on wishful thinking that they do need to be looked at individually.

Mr. Speaker, we know that we've had a very poorly performing economy; we've had a very bad year this year; and we know that the government projections for the year just closing were off by quite a margin on both corporate and personal income taxes. And yet the government has gone forward in this budget and suggested that we will have a huge turnaround and get so much more in HST and in personal and in corporate income taxes; in fact, the budget - and anybody can see it in their budget brief - shows that they've estimated, for the coming year, \$63.5 million up for HST revenue, and they've looked at \$145 million more coming in on personal taxes, and \$37 million more on corporate taxes.

You know, collectively, that's a lot of money - maybe that's where the \$300 million question is that everybody was asking: how could the government bring in a balanced budget, and how could they overcome the \$300 million that they were currently in deficit? And, in fact, they've done it by completely ballooning the expectations on revenue. The economy will not deliver these results. I'd love to think that more people will be working, that they'll be earning more money, that they'll be paying more taxes, buying more homes and cars - it's just not realistic, Mr. Speaker.

And in the government's documents themselves, given to us today, under the financial assumptions we can see that the assumption for 2013 is a 9.1 per cent unemployment rate. That's 0.1 per cent worse than this year - it was 9 per cent already. It's actually worse, 9.1 per cent. We know from Statistics Canada that there are 6,400 fewer people working in this province now than a year ago. Those people aren't paying income tax. (Applause)

In this one it says that in the coming two years Nova Scotia's economic growth is expected to fall below its long-run average. During this time there is little expectation of employment increase or improvements in unemployment rates. Nova Scotia's economic and labour market conditions will face headwinds from global uncertainty and ongoing fiscal consolidation.

Mr. Speaker, this is in one part of the budget documents and yet on the other hand, we're expecting over \$200 million in increased revenue based on a buoyant employment picture. How can that be? We were looking for some magic, some sleight of hand or maybe just plain exaggeration and we've got that exaggeration here today, and that's exactly what we're faced with. In order to present a balanced budget today, the NDP Government had to go back to the same tired practices of Rodney MacDonald, the same practices that they condemned in prepaying universities and it is going to blow up at least by the time we get our first-quarter results.

It's based on inflated, wishful thinking, rose-coloured glasses or whatever you want to call it, it's not going to be sustainable, it's not going to be reliable and I think there's a



high level of skepticism in the province about what exactly is going to be delivered in the months to come. This is not going to work.

There's no mention at all in the entire Budget Speech about debt and the debt of this province. In the four years that the government of the day have been there they have added \$1.3 billion or more to the debt, it might even be higher this year. It's growing every year, the projections are an upward climb year by year and that is completely unsustainable for our province.

No mention of it in there, no special supplements that were given to us or special handouts to deal with the debt, no plan in place. Yet we know the Auditor General has pointed it out on two separate reports, we have to start considering the debt and the burden that it's leaving for the children of Nova Scotia and future generations. It's time to look at that. (Applause)

Mr. Speaker, the Finance Minister left that out because it doesn't fit into her narrative which is based on, as I say, the fabrication of a figure from a consultant report based on false assumptions. We've had no special bulletins on debt for several years from this government and that is definitely a failing. It's an important part of where we need to go in the future that we have to consider more than stacking and inflating figures to get the results that look good and results the government wants to go to an election on, quite frankly. I think that people know that, they know there's hyperbole and exaggeration in the wake of an election.

The hurt to education continues in this budget. There's another \$11 million taken out of public education, just out of the public education program. That \$11 million, added to what we've told you before, \$65 million has already been gutted from education. That's going to create more hardship and it will hurt, it absolutely will hurt parents and students. Again, it's galling to hear the government say there would be no harm to important public services when education has clearly been eroded in the last four years. Our economy will only rebuild when we start to invest in education and help our students.

I didn't want to take too long today in my opening remarks. I think the important thing to point out today is that the revenue estimates in this budget we've seen today are completely unrealistic. I would love to say that they were right because I'd like to see more people working in every corner of Nova Scotia but we have more people working part time. The boast that comes from the government about having the most people working that we've ever had reflects part-time workers. A lot of them are juggling more than one job in order to make ends meet because of the difficulty in affording to live in Nova Scotia. That's a reality that we can't escape.

We're losing personal income tax revenue this year, we have a projected 9.1 per cent unemployment rate for the coming year, it is completely unrealistic to think that we would suddenly be able to materialize \$200 million and more in HST and corporate and personal income tax.

Mr. Speaker, this budget is really built on a stack of cards, and I think it will be shown in the future to be exactly that. We see it as an electioneering document and very little more. It doesn't have the substance and the reliability that we would expect in a provincial budget, and we look forward to having an opportunity to speak about it further when I continue my reply.

In the meantime, I'd like to adjourn debate on this. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. There has been a motion to adjourn debate on the Budget Address. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

We will now return to the daily routine. Before I go to the daily routine, the topic for late debate, as submitted earlier, reads:

Therefore be it resolved that the Minister of Education's request to halt school closures, after months of tumultuous school reviews in communities across the province, and \$65 million in funding cuts, is an empty political move that shows no respect for public education or communities.

It was submitted by the honourable member for Bedford-Birch Cove.

Before we start the daily routine, I have a Speaker's Ruling.

**SPEAKER'S RULING:** Question by Dart. East MLA to Treasury Bd. Min. imputed motives to the minister (Pt. of order by Hon. F. Corbett, [Hansard p.243, 02/04/13]) Member found to have imputed motive and that the member "should retract any such suggestion".

On Tuesday, the honourable Government House Leader raised a point of order with respect to a question posed to him by the honourable member for Dartmouth East during Question Period. The Government House Leader said that the member had imputed motives to him in that question, and asked me to review Hansard as to what was said.

I reviewed Hansard from Tuesday and have seen in the question that I believe is at issue that the member for Dartmouth East raised a point that the Treasury Board, of which the Government House Leader, as Deputy Premier, is Chair, had not approved an increase to the Auditor General's budget that had been recommended by the Special Committee to Review the Estimates of the Auditor General and the Chief Electoral Officer.

The member had said, "Mr. Speaker, is the Deputy Premier just trying to get back at the Auditor General for embarrassing him?" Imputing that the honourable Government House Leader took revenge upon the Auditor General for carrying out his duties by using

the budget process to reduce the Auditor General's budget is a very serious allegation. It is unparliamentary and contrary to convention and usage for any member to impute to another member bad motives or motives different from those acknowledged by that other member with respect to anything said or done by that other member.

Beauchesne on Page 141 states that “. . . a member, while speaking, must not impute bad motives or motives different from those acknowledged by a member.” Beauchesne goes on to say on Page 142 that “. . . a member will not be permitted by the Speaker to . . . impute to any members or members unworthy motives for their actions in a particular case.”

The meaning of the phrase “impute bad motives,” as used in the parliamentary context, is sometimes questioned. Often it is not clear that the imputation being complained of is one of bad motives when a complaint is raised that another member is “imputing motives.” It is assumed when that phrase is used that the motives are bad or different from any motives that may have been acknowledged.

The Parliament of Canada publishes a *Glossary of Parliamentary Procedures*, which defines “to impute motives” as to “. . . ascribe objectionable motives or motives to a member different from those acknowledged by the member.” Their underlying principle is that one member should not allege that another member has said or done something for an unworthy or hidden purpose.

It is well-established in this House that it is not acceptable to impute improper motives to another member. I draw members' attention to a ruling by former Speaker Russell on May 20, 1999, in which he stated that alleging a member is saying something because he has a vendetta against someone for something they have done is imputing motive.

On Tuesday the honourable Opposition House Leader countered the point of privilege by saying that the member for Dartmouth East was not making a direct allegation imputing motives but had been asking a question that the Government House Leader, in his capacity as Deputy Premier, could answer.

It is clear from Beauchesne that questions that impute motives to a member are out of order in the same manner as a direct allegation imputing motives. At Page 121 it states, “. . . a question must adhere to the proprieties of the House, in terms of inferences, imputing motives, or casting aspersions upon persons within the House or out of it.”

For examples in this House, members can see the ruling of Speaker Russell on April 16, 1999, ruling a question out of order because it imputed motives, or the ruling of Speaker Scott on April 20, 2004, to the same effect.

Accordingly, I find the suggestion made in Question Period on Tuesday by the member for Dartmouth East, that the Deputy Premier had abused his position as Chair of

the Treasury Board to exact revenue on the Auditor General, to have imputed motives, and that the honourable member should retract any suggestion.

The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

MR. ANDREW YOUNGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I will happily retract that question.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The honourable Opposition House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, in your capacity as the Chair of the Management Commission, we'd ask if you could advise the members of the House as to what did take place in this matter in the fact that the Management Commission was asked to review a number of proposals for funding of the Auditor General's Office. A motion was agreed upon by the commission, but then was reversed by the Treasury Board.

Therefore, as members of the commission and as members of the Legislature, we are left to ask, why was the commission even asked to make such a recommendation or a decision when it was reversed by the Treasury Board? If this should have gone to the Treasury Board all along, why was it even in front of the Management Commission to start off with?

So in light of your capacity of Chair of the Management Commission, maybe you could advise us at a later date of exactly whether there are going to be changes in the future, that a decision of the Management Commission will be honoured by the government. Why is this even being considered by the Management Commission if government can turn around and do as they please in this? Hopefully you can take the opportunity to review that and advise on what will happen in the future for the Management Commission on such issues as the Auditor General's budget, and Election Nova Scotia's budget as well.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, for the purpose of the record, it was not the Management Commission itself but a special committee of the Management Commission of the House. It's there in the record, and then it's done in the deliberations of the Treasury Board. It's as simple as that.

MR. SPEAKER: I will take it under advisement and have my overworked staff look into it and report back to the House at my earliest opportunity.

We will begin the daily routine.

**PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS****PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES**

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Finance.

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I'm sorry for the confusion and I thank the members of the House for their indulgence.

Mr. Speaker, can we have a two-minute recess?

MR. SPEAKER: We will have a short recess and we'll be right back.

[3:46 p.m. The House recessed.]

[3:50 p.m. The House reconvened.]

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. We're ready to roll.

**TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS**

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Finance.

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't know if "ready to roll" is parliamentary but anyway, I beg leave to table a certified copy of an Order in Council dated April 4, 2013, with respect to additional appropriations.

MR. SPEAKER: The report is tabled.

**STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS****GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION**

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Community Services.

**RESOLUTION NO. 115**

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

Whereas the Wee Care Centre was the first daycare in eastern Canada established to meet the needs of children with physical and developmental delays; and

Whereas the dedicated staff of this non-profit, Metro United Way agency have provided high-quality care and education to children of all abilities in Halifax Regional

Municipality for 40 years, while overcoming many challenges, including a fire in 1991; and

Whereas every day the Wee Care Centre continues to maximize the abilities of the children under their care, while providing support to their families;

Therefore be it resolved that members of the House offer congratulations to Wee Care on its 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and extend a heartfelt thank you to the staff, students, volunteers, sponsors, and the Cerebral Palsy Association of Nova Scotia who have all made the Wee Care Centre the success it is today.

MR. SPEAKER: The notice is tabled.

The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

### **RESOLUTION NO. 116**

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

Whereas maintaining good oral health includes keeping teeth free from cavities and keeping your gums free from disease; and

Whereas the month of April is Oral Health Month and an opportunity to increase awareness of how oral health contributes to overall health; and

Whereas keeping teeth and gums healthy contributes to the prevention of serious, long-term health issues, such as oral cancer, which claims the lives of more than 1,000 Canadians each year;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House recognize April as Oral Health Month and encourage all Nova Scotians to make the health of their teeth and gums a priority.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

We're going to revert to a resolution, with the unanimous consent of the House. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Community Services.

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, I guess I'm excited about the budget too. I forgot to read the last part, so thank you for your patience.

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. 117**

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

Whereas this year the first-ever Council of the Federation Excellence in Water Stewardship awards were presented in each province and territory, to recognize leadership in protecting and conserving our water resources; and

Whereas Dalhousie's Centre for Water Resources Studies was presented the award by Nunavut for its work in developing a wastewater research project in six Nunavut communities; and

Whereas the research project, in its third year, will benefit residents of Nunavut through improved wastewater treatment and access to safe drinking water;

Therefore be it resolved that the House of Assembly congratulate the Dalhousie Centre for Water Resource Studies and its director, Dr. Graham Gagnon, for receiving the recognition from Nunavut, and wish them every success in their important research for protecting and conserving water resources for the people of this territory.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage.

### **RESOLUTION NO. 118**

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

Whereas the Two Houses Theatre Company is an intergenerational theatre group that was conceptualized by Nancy Radcliffe, executive director of Spencer House Community Centre, formerly known as Spencer House Seniors' Centre; and

Whereas the Two Houses Theatre Company brings together members of Laing House, a peer support organization for youth living with mental illness, and Spencer House, a community centre whose membership consists largely of active seniors; and

Whereas on March 21, 2013, the Two Houses Theatre Company made a stellar debut with two sold-out shows of *A Good Church*, a play by Mark DeWolf and Ray Whitley, which also served as a fundraiser for Laing House and Spencer House;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly recognize Nancy Radcliffe, and the youth and seniors and crew who comprise the Two Houses Theatre Company, for reminding us, through their passion and creativity, that there is no age limit to artistic expression.

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. 33 - Entitled an Act to Ensure a Supply of Physicians in Rural Nova Scotia. (Hon. Stephen McNeil)**

**Bill No. 34 - Entitled an Act to Protect Nova Scotia Electricity Ratepayers and Reduce Charges Passed on to Customers in Electricity Bills. (Mr. Andrew Younger)**

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

The honourable Premier.

HON. DARRELL DEXTER (The Premier): Mr. Speaker, I would like to make an introduction.

MR. SPEAKER: Most certainly.

THE PREMIER: With us today in your gallery, the Speaker's Gallery, is one of my constituents, Larry Foster. Larry, welcome to the House of Assembly. Along with him is his good friend, Darren Hill - and I understand this is their first time ever to the House of Assembly, so I would ask the members to extend them a warm welcome. (Applause)

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

### **NOTICES OF MOTION**

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Premier.

### **RESOLUTION NO. 119**

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

Whereas Clarence "Larry" Foster of Dartmouth was orphaned as a child and had to move several times between foster homes before being sent to live at the Youth Training Centre in Truro, all the while struggling with a severe form of dyslexia; and

Whereas Larry overcame his extremely difficult and emotional upbringing, married his wife Trish, and pursued his passion for art through a private tutor, took painting lessons, and night classes at the Nova Scotia College of Art & Design; and

Whereas Larry got his big break in 2012 when he was invited to paint a large mural on the main wall of the Salvation Army Open Arms Centre on Uniacke Street in Halifax, which has led to other exciting art projects, including a colouring book for the IWK Health Centre, a mural for the daycare centre at Veith House, and drawings for the children's book *The Dream* for the Veith Gallery;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House recognize Larry Foster's strength, dedication, and positive attitude to overcome the challenges in his life and show others that it's absolutely possible to enjoy great success and happiness while living with a disability.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Bedford-Birch Cove.

### **RESOLUTION NO. 120**

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

Whereas Jennifer and Michael Howell have made many important contributions to their home province of Nova Scotia, working in radio and the Canadian Armed Forces, respectively, for many years; and

Whereas Jennifer Howell has worked with News 95.7 since 2009 and has been producer on the Rick Howe Show since its inception in 2010, and Michael Howell has been with the Canadian Armed Forces since 2005, with tours in Afghanistan, Operation Unified Protector, and Operation Active Endeavour; and

Whereas on April 7<sup>th</sup>, Jennifer and Michael will move to Ontario for a posting at CFB Trenton;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly thank Jennifer and Michael Howell for their contributions to the community over the years, and congratulate them and wish them well on their future endeavours in Ontario.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Cape Breton North.

### **RESOLUTION NO. 121**

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

Whereas the Kraft Hockey Goes On promotion awards \$1 million to Hockey Canada-affiliated minor hockey associations by recognizing local volunteers who make minor hockey happen in their communities; and

Whereas nearly 800,000 votes were cast in support of 20 volunteers in Atlantic Canada, and 100 across Canada; and

Whereas Joe Peck, a volunteer with the Northside District Minor Hockey Association, was awarded one of 20 second-place prizes of \$20,000 for the association;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Joe Peck and recognize his commitment to minor hockey and to the young players who have benefited from his love of the sport.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations.

**RESOLUTION NO. 122**

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

Whereas National Gypsum has been an important employer in the Hants East and Halifax County area for over 50 years; and

Whereas Mr. Patrick Mills is retiring as the general manager after more than 30 years of employment with National Gypsum; and

Whereas on April 6, 2013, Pat Mills will be honoured by National Gypsum for his years of service, and by the local community for his volunteer work;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulate Pat Mills for his commitment to his vocation and community, and wish him well on his retirement.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Yarmouth.

**RESOLUTION NO. 123**

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

Whereas Yarmouth resident Nicole Gushue will be running in the Boston Marathon on April 15<sup>th</sup>; and

Whereas the goal and inspiration for Ms. Gushue's marathon run will be to help raise funds for the children's cancer unit at the Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston; and

Whereas Ms. Gushue is running the marathon in memory of her cousin's 9-year-old son, Nick Defelice, who lost his battle to cancer in June 2012;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly recognize and congratulate Yarmouth's Nicole Gushue for the dedication and perseverance required to run the Boston Marathon, and for her devotion to the memory of her cousin Nick, a life that was taken much too soon.

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. 124**

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

Whereas in December 2012, the Royal Bank in Guysborough honoured their volunteers and their contributions through the Employee Volunteer Grants program; and

Whereas the program has provided over \$11,000 in Employee Volunteer Grants to the Guysborough Memorial Hospital Auxiliary since 2000; and

Whereas Jeanie Hart from the RBC branch in Guysborough has taken part in the Employee Volunteer Grants Program for the local hospital;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly congratulate Jeanie Hart from the Royal Bank of Guysborough for her generosity, kindness, and ongoing dedication to her community.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Glace Bay.

### **RESOLUTION NO. 125**

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

Whereas the proudly-Canadian music channel MUCH has conducted the MUCH VJ Search, and has spanned our great nation looking to find the next MuchMusic VJ; and

Whereas Glace Bay's own Justine Williamson is now among the final 18 MUCH VJ hopefuls whose personalities are highlighted on the VJ search reality show, currently airing on MUCH, where Justine and her competitors are travelling across Canada to participate in various elimination challenges; and

Whereas Justine has performed extremely well, and her selection as one of the top participants from a national group of aspiring VJs is a testament to her natural skills, charisma, work ethic, and drive to fulfill her dream of becoming a broadcaster;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating Justine Williamson on making the final round of the MUCH VJ Search, and we encourage all Nova Scotians to support Justine by voting on-line at [muchmusic.com](http://muchmusic.com) and sharing their support on Twitter using the #MuchVJSearch or #Justine4VJ hashtags.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Bedford-Birch Cove.

**RESOLUTION NO. 126**

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

Whereas Bedford resident Scott Norton, Q.C., has more than 28 years of legal experience as a civil trial lawyer, counselling commercial and insurance clients across Canada; was named by the National Post as one of the best lawyers in his field; and manages the advocacy group for the firm Stewart McKelvey; and

Whereas Mr. Norton volunteers his time as a member of the board of governors of Saint Mary's University, a trustee of the IWK Health Centre Foundation, chair of the board of Autism Nova Scotia, and a trustee of the Sidney Crosby Foundation; and

Whereas Scott Norton has been awarded the Saint Mary's University Alumni Association Distinguished Community Service Award;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly congratulate Scott Norton for his contribution to the field of commercial and insurance law and to his community.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

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

MR. SPEAKER: The time is now 4:09 p.m. We will finish at 5:09 p.m.

The honourable Leader of the Opposition.

**PREM.: EMPLOYMENT/INCOME TAX REVENUES - CORRELATION**

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, 6,400 fewer Nova Scotians are working full-time this year than last, and today we learned government is predicting unemployment

will increase in the coming year. They also predict that personal income tax revenues will increase by \$145 million. I know the NDP struggle with math by dealing with their \$27 million they forgot to tell us about last year, but I don't think any Nova Scotians are going to believe that math equation.

So my question to the Premier is, how can this Premier tell us with a straight face that he is going to collect more income tax with fewer and fewer Nova Scotians working?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I think the question really speaks for itself. It's representative of the fact that the Leader of the Opposition doesn't understand labour force statistics and wants to deliberately mislead Nova Scotians.

The fact of the matter is, more Nova Scotians will be working. Even if unemployment should increase, more Nova Scotians will be working. They will be working at higher levels of income, Mr. Speaker, which means that the level of income will grow and, therefore, personal income tax will grow.

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, I think we heard that from the Premier last year and you know where that got us. One thing we know for sure is this government has failed miserably at growing the economy and they can't dispute it, even though government will try, yet this government's rosy revenue projections say that they will collect \$75 million more in HST in that same year as this government is predicting fewer Nova Scotians will be working.

My question is, how can the Premier tell us with a straight face that he is going to collect \$75 million more in HST, with fewer people working and rural Nova Scotia bleeding jobs?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, as I pointed out, in fact more people will be working this year. These are not our revenue projections; they were tested by the Conference Board of Canada, by APEC, by independent academic economists in our universities and further to that, by the Auditor General who agrees with these revenue projections.

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, I think the Premier ought to read what the Auditor General said when it came to his revenue projections. He did not give an unqualified endorsement of the revenue projections, he said he couldn't say. He should read the document.

Mr. Speaker, this is a government that has created a fictional \$1.4 billion deficit that never existed. This is a government that has manipulated its first budget by prepaying universities. This is a government that in its second budget was off by \$0.75 billion and that is billion dollars with a "b". This is a government that lost \$87 million in Public Accounts documents. This is a government that failed to disclose a \$27 million overstatement in revenues last year.



Mr. Speaker, given this government's track record with fiction and failure, how can Nova Scotians trust the government now?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, it is always amazing. I think that bitterness and sour grapes is not a very appealing quality, even for the Leader of the Opposition. I've noticed that his idea of truth has many, many iterations so we never know which one we're going to get.

What I do know is this, what I know is that many, many Nova Scotians, from the southern part of the province right through to the north, made sacrifices in order to ensure that this province got back to balance. They consulted with us, they said that these are the things you have to do in order to make sure that we have a firm foundation for the public services that we need in order to be able to have the kind of health care, education, the kind of supports we want for our children. It was those people, Mr. Speaker, over the past four years who made the sacrifices that got us back to balance. We're proud of them and I know they're proud of this.

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

#### **PREM. - BALANCED PLAN: LACK - CONFIRM**

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, despite what the government claims, of all those people they claimed to have consulted on this budget, 6,700 of them lost their full-time job in the last 12 months. Unlike the two previous gentlemen, I actually have the Statistics Canada report, seasonally adjusted, which I will table so the Premier knows: 6,700 full-time jobs lost in the last 12 months. Nova Scotians know that you cannot say that Nova Scotia is in balance when so many people lose their jobs. In this budget they project more job losses, not less in the months and years ahead.

I will ask the Premier, will he acknowledge what all Nova Scotians know, that there is no balanced plan when so many people are out of work?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party now invents a new test every time the old ones don't work. This is a person who stood in front of a sign at his convention that said "Stop more jobs." The reality is that more people will work this year in this province; they are going to work at higher rates of pay.

We're working hard by making good investments in things like the shipyard contract to bring 11,500 more jobs to our province. PROJEX, an investment that is going to bring 440 more . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. Sergeant-at-Arms, would you remove the BlackBerry from the member for Yarmouth, please? (Interruption)

No, you'll hand it over to the Sergeant-at-Arms and you'll pick it up after Question Period. I've warned the members of this Assembly for over a year now.

The honourable Premier, finish your answer.

THE PREMIER: Thank you. PROJEX, another 440 jobs and another 500 with the IBM Global Delivery Centre; these aren't low-paying, low-wage jobs, these are good-paying, high-quality jobs for Nova Scotians. That is what a recipe for success looks like. I know that the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party, they don't recognize that.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, sadly not only is the Premier having trouble with math but apparently he's having trouble reading, as well, because what that sign says is "Lower Taxes, Stop Wasteful Spending, More Jobs" that is a real plan to grow the economy, not a false plan like the one that we saw today.

Mr. Speaker, since the government came to office, electricity prices are up 40 per cent. The cost of everyday items has gone up more than everywhere else in the country but Nova Scotia has the seventh-lowest rate of wage growth in all of Canada. People are not making any more money but the cost of living has gone up. Will the Premier admit to them the obvious, that a province where incomes are not going up but the cost of everything is, is not in balance, and I'll table that, someday.

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, that's not true, he knows that's not true. He knows that wage income is growing in Nova Scotia; he knows that the quality of jobs that are coming here are growing. What you are getting is job losses on the lower end but what you're seeing is new, high-quality jobs which means that people are making a better wage and they are better able to afford the kind of life that I think especially young families in this province would want.

We are seeing the kinds of investments that I understand the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party says that he would make, and I understand that he would be satisfied with having another 1,500 people unemployed in Port Hawkesbury or another 1,000 people unemployed in Liverpool but that is not the job of this government. The job of this government is to make sure that we put people to work and that's what we're doing.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, the only plan we saw for jobs today from the Premier and his government was to reach into the pockets of every single Nova Scotian for another \$300 each; that is not a plan that's in balance when you have to grab another \$300 out of the pockets of everyday Nova Scotians. Will the Premier admit that a plan that takes \$3 from them for every \$1 he hopes to save himself is not a plan that's in balance?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, some days you wonder if he's reading the same documents as everyone else; \$450 more dollars into the pockets of low-income seniors. Do you know that now in Nova Scotia everyone who receives the Affordable Living Tax

Credit now has more money in their pocket than they did before 2009? This has been a government that has ensured that those people who can least afford it have more money in their pockets, are able to live a life with a little more dignity than they did under past governments.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

**PREM. - UNIVERSITIES: PREPAYMENTS - JUSTIFICATION**

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, in the 2009 Deloitte report this government was warned not to continue the practice of prepaying sums to universities. This government didn't listen and has prepaid to universities not only once but twice. So my question to the Premier is, why does the Premier think it is okay to prepay universities?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, in fact the practice of prepaying was one that was really an invention of the former government and we have reduced the amount of prepays considerably and we've got down to the point now where only two universities require prepays, and if they were not prepaid they would not be able to meet their payroll obligations.

Mr. Speaker, we're working with them, we intend to move them off that so that further prepays are not necessary. They are for this year, we don't believe they will be for next year but we're working with the universities to make sure that their needs are met.

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, when asked about the practice of prepaying universities of the previous Tory Government, our now Premier called it "a fudge-it budget." My, how things have changed.

The last time this Premier prepaid universities in his fiscal shell game The ChronicleHerald called it "deeply disappointing" and it hits at the NDP's credibility. Mr. Speaker, how does the Premier believe that his government's practice of prepaying universities is any different than the former Progressive Conservative Government's?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, the reality is that some of the universities do not have a period that is co-extensive with the budget period, so they need revenue in advance in order to be able to meet their obligations; in fact, they request of the government to receive this money. We met the requests they made in order to allow them to be able to fulfill their obligations.

In return, because they are prepaid, they receive a reduced amount equal to the interest that they would earn on the money for receiving it early, because we seek to be fair with them - the same way we are fair with all of the universities.

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, the reality is that if the Premier had done the right thing and paid universities in this fiscal year he would be in deficit again this year. This is

nothing more than a shell game for the Premier to be able to try to pretend that he has presented a balanced budget to the people of this province.

My question to the Premier is, why was he holding the former Premier, the former Progressive Conservative Premier, to one standard when he is prepared to do the exact same thing?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, what we have done with this budget is the highest standard of accounting principles ever in the history of this province. (Interruptions)

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

### **FIN. - INCOME TAX INCREASES: COLLECTION - DETAILS**

MS. DIANA WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Finance. The Finance Minister presented a document today which really should be filed in the library under "Fiction". What we have is an overly-optimistic revenue estimate which goes far beyond the (Interruptions) What we have is an overly-optimistic revenue estimate that goes far beyond what economists would recommend.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the minister is, will the Finance Minister explain to Nova Scotians how she plans to collect \$145 million more in taxes from fewer working Nova Scotians?

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, what the honourable member says about fewer working Nova Scotians is, in fact, the fiction here. There are more Nova Scotians working in the province today than at any other point in our history - that is a fact.

The other thing that is factual is that incomes, in fact, of Nova Scotians are increasing, including incomes of people who are retired. So they may not necessarily be in the workforce, but they certainly have higher taxable incomes.

MS. WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, I think the minister is really splitting hairs around the Statistics Canada information - 6,400 fewer people have fewer full-time jobs in this province, 6,400. That's an important thing. We're splitting hairs if we argue about that. Nova Scotians aren't interested, they know who has money in their pocket and who doesn't.

Mr. Speaker, the revenue projections remain overly optimistic, to turn around to the extent that the minister has suggested. The provincial unemployment rate today stands at 9.3 per cent and is estimated to continue in that range at 9.1 or 9.2 per cent. This hides serious challenges, too, that are outside of HRM - Cape Breton, 17 per cent unemployment; Annapolis Valley is 10.4 per cent; 12.2 per cent in southern Nova Scotia; and 12.5 per cent along the North Shore. The Premier and members know that. Serious employment

challenges are going to affect the budget outcome and yet the minister continues to say there will be \$145 million more in revenue.

My question is, how can the minister truly believe that she will collect \$145 million more in personal tax revenue next year?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I was very pleased that the Department of Finance, in preparing the budget for this coming year, tested the economic assumptions with all of the major financial institutions in the country, their senior economists, the senior economists with the Conference Board of Canada, the economists here with the Atlantic Provinces Economic Council, as well as many in the academic community and our economics department.

I participated in those consultation processes and indeed heard the economists from these various institutions indicate that the assumptions being put forward by the economists in the Department of Finance were reasonable, they met the forecast that they themselves had for the Province of Nova Scotia. Following that process, we submit this to the Auditor General for his opportunity to look at that and consult as well, independently. The budget has been put together by professionals, they test the assumptions and they reflect an accurate representation of what we heard and a consensus among the economic community.

MS. WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, the inflated revenue figures fly in the face of common sense; I don't care what the minister says, it's not common sense. It will tell you that if you have fewer people working, if you have an aging population, if you have lower incomes than the rest of Canada, your revenues are not going to suddenly just shoot up \$145 million in one year, it's not happening.

The NDP have created a fiction in the past of a \$1.4 billion deficit, they've misrepresented a \$27 million amount last year; there has been a series of things that have shaken the confidence of Nova Scotians. My question to the minister is, given the track record of fiction and failure, how can Nova Scotians trust any numbers that come from the NDP now?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, we were able to table a balanced budget today because when we came to government we consulted with experts, we talked to Nova Scotians, we developed a multi-year plan and we stuck to that plan. The results of that plan are here today; Nova Scotia is on the brink of greater prosperity, we are turning the corner. I know, looking at the faces of the members of the Official Opposition, they have a very hard time accepting that prosperity is in front of Nova Scotians. Something that is very sad.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle.

**ERDT: SHOUTHWESTERN N.S. RECESSION - GOV'T RESPONSIBILITY**

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism. The economy of Nova Scotia is out of balance. While the NDP pat themselves on the back - as we just saw them as they were turning the corner - the people of southwestern Nova Scotia have nothing to celebrate from this budget. Over the last four years, they've lost a devastating 5,400 jobs, and caused an exodus of 3,500 people, leaving families and businesses with fewer opportunities to grow.

So, Mr. Speaker, my question to the minister is - it's clear that the government has no idea how to manage a modern economy - will this government take responsibility that their actions have launched southwestern Nova Scotia into a devastating recession?

HON. PERCY PARIS: After 20 years of the worst economic growth in Canada, we finally came into power at a time of the worst recession since the Great Depression, and we've made a difference. We've impacted 400 jobs in Nova Scotia, and 10,000 Nova Scotians are better educated and better trained today than they were four years ago. Mr. Speaker, that's progress.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, the government's short-sighted plan to cancel the Yarmouth ferry has thrown the region off kilter. When the NDP abandoned this vital tourism link, they didn't balance the loss with support. There is no balance with this government. Will the minister admit that his policies have put the economy of southwest Nova Scotia out of balance and plunged the region into a homegrown NDP recession?

MR. PARIS: Mr. Speaker, it's widely known the investment that this government in the last four years has made in the southwestern region. We've formed committees down there; we've invested in the World Junior Hockey Championships, we invested not only once, but twice; and we've invested in the Rodd Grand because we understand that some of those other things would not occur if the Rodd Grand did not exist. We have, and will continue to invest in southwestern Nova Scotia, make good, strategic investments for the good of southwestern Nova Scotia which, indeed, will benefit all of Nova Scotia.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, when the people of southwestern Nova Scotia are struggling and being forced to leave their communities and families behind to work - something isn't right. Things are out of balance. The unemployment rate in the region stands at a shameful 11.1 per cent. Once again, the NDP have let down the residents of southwestern Nova Scotia. Will the minister admit that there is nothing balanced about a region with an unemployment rate of over 11 per cent, thousands of disappearing jobs, and a population that is shrinking and losing hope?

MR. PARIS: Mr. Speaker, maybe the member opposite isn't aware of the investment that we made in Tri-Star, Tri-Star Ambulance Service in Yarmouth that serves the global community; maybe the member is not aware of the investment that we made in

the Shelburne Shipyard, because we had a vision - we had a vision and we had a plan that's coming true today; maybe the member opposite is not aware of the investments that we made in White Point which, by the way, is up and operating now; maybe the member opposite is not aware of the investments that we made in Theriault & Son, a shipyard in Meteghan. Obviously there are a lot of things that the member opposite is not aware of.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester North.

### **EDUC. - SCH. CLOSURE REVIEW: SUSPENSION - REASON**

HON. KAREN CASEY: Mr. Speaker, one more time this Minister of Education has waded into an issue that has caused aggravation, anxiety, anger and disappointment in public schools across the province. She's been very successful in dividing communities, disrespecting elected school board members, school board staff, teachers, parents, and other community leaders. Yesterday, in a letter to school boards the minister asked them to halt the school review process. This letter was received from the minister and the reaction was that it was "unexpected and unsettling."

What is equally disturbing is that the minister is telling the public that this is just a short-term delay, but communities are smarter than that. They know that the delay is directly related to the next provincial election.

Will the minister admit that this decision had nothing to do with the school review process and had everything to do with electioneering?

HON. RAMONA JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, I've asked the school boards to suspend school reviews because it's all about community and our students. The process was adversarial. We want to move forward in providing a better way for our communities and our students. Thank you.

MS. CASEY: Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that maybe the minister might want to get the reaction from those people. I think it might be a little different.

Yesterday in Question Period the minister talked about inheriting a flawed process, and I want to remind the members of the public that it was this NDP Government in 2009 that held some public focus groups on the closure process. In 2010 the minister of the day amended the school review process. The intent of that legislation was, "... providing more input at crucial stages of the process."

My question to the minister is, what actions have taken place since the amendments of 2010 to provide "more input at crucial stages"?

MS. JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite knows that we put a new review process in place. We are working with the existing process to provide more opportunity at

two points in the process, and we clarified the dates so that the impact statements could be read/received.

This process, which we did amend, went through two cycles. This cycle was extremely adversarial. Communities are telling me and our government, and I'm sure the member opposite, that it was not working. This government listened, and because we listened, we want to move forward with our community to design a better process for our children and our communities.

MS. CASEY: Again, Mr. Speaker, I think it might be important for the minister to talk to the board chairs, because their definition of what has happened as a result of the May 2010 amendment is "absolutely nothing." The amendment was passed in 2010. Despite that legislation, nothing was changed in the process, and now, all of a sudden, the minister decides that she should do something.

Over the last three years she stood idly by and watched communities suffer through the stresses, pitting one community against another, and now she expects them to be excited. This shows a total disrespect for the parents and others in those communities who, over those last three years, were working in the best interests of kids.

My question to the minister is, will the minister apologize to those communities for her lack of action over the last three years and for forcing them through a flawed process?

MS. JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, I look forward to being able to work with communities across Nova Scotia to make sure we have a better process, which will concentrate on what is best for our children and our communities. Thank you very much.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants West.

### **ERDT: ECONOMY MANAGEMENT - GOV'T. INABILITY**

MR. CHUCK PORTER: Mr. Speaker, my question will be for the Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism. Under the NDP the economy in the Valley has been thrown off balance. Full-time employment has actually dropped by 800 and more under this government.

My question is, when will the government finally recognize that their policies of the highest taxes, the highest power rates, and runaway giveaways have created a serious imbalance and show that they don't know how to manage a modern economy?

HON. PERCY PARIS: Mr. Speaker, the government recognizes, as I'm sure all members of the House, that layoffs and closures are very difficult on everyone. I think that when you take into consideration, after 20 years of the worst economic growth in Canada, that we finally - we implemented a plan four years ago - and finally we see the corner up ahead which we are turning. We are creating good employment opportunities right across



this province and for the first time in 20 years Nova Scotians are optimistic about their future.

MR. PORTER: I want to remind the minister that 10.3 per cent unemployment rate in the Valley area is nothing to be too optimistic about. Real balance needs to be restored in the Valley and under this government, as I already said - and you know what, Mr. Speaker, 700 and more have given up and they have left the region. They've gone elsewhere to live, and to work, and to raise their families. Until we get the fundamentals back in balance rural Nova Scotians cannot expect a turnaround. Having good fundamentals allows for job creation. Those fundamentals are simple, they include abandoning the highest taxes in the country, the highest power rates, and stop the wasteful spending that we've seen under this government.

My question to the minister is, will he finally acknowledge that the NDP spin, the talking points, are ludicrous in light of job losses and policies that scare away job creation in this province?

MR. PARIS: I recognize that the member is from the Valley and I have to remind the member about our investments in Michelin. Michelin has expanded and I would like to think that the member would recognize that sort of investment, and Michelin is not the only investment that we made in the Valley. Mr. Speaker, we make investments that are going to create good opportunities for Nova Scotians, whether it be in the Valley, whether it be in southwest Nova Scotia, whether it be in Cape Breton, or whether it be in central Nova Scotia.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Richmond.

#### **EDUC.: W. RICHMOND EDUC. CTR. - CONCERNS**

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Education's announcement yesterday with regard to school reviews and closures came as a surprise to many communities. As part of the review process for West Richmond Education Centre, parents, educators, and students wrote to the Minister of Education asking for her intervention in a process they deemed was unfair. The Minister of Education refused to meet with them and only responded once a decision was made to close the school. Yesterday, however, the minister said she is now listening to parents and communities affected by school closures. So my question is, why did the Minister of Education not address the concerns raised by parents and students of the West Richmond Education Centre before the Strait Regional School Board voted to close it under her flawed review process?

HON. RAMONA JENNEX: As the honourable member knows, the Minister of Education cannot get involved in the review process, it is under the school board. What I have done is I have asked the school board to suspend the school review process for this year. I have asked them and I will hear back from school boards by April 30<sup>th</sup>.

MR. SAMSON: After communities, parents, and teachers have been put through the wringer by this NDP Government, grappling with \$65 million in funding cuts to public education, and hundreds of hours of stressful school reviews the minister swept in doing an about-face and telling communities their work and stress was all for naught. When I asked during Question Period, almost a complete year ago, April 11, 2012, about intervening in the review process for West Richmond Education Centre the minister replied, “. . . under the legislative process the school review is very clearly mandated and it is not to be interfered with by the minister. The school review process is a very clearly articulated process where parents and community have the opportunity on two separate occasions to offer their input to the process and to the board.”

Mr. Speaker, this is a pretty glowing review of a process that the minister said was flawed just yesterday, so my question to the minister is, West Richmond Education Centre is slated for closure this June, will the minister tell us what will be the future of this school in light of her announcement yesterday?

MS. JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, I have asked the school boards to suspend the process for this year and I'm expecting to hear an answer back by April 30<sup>th</sup>.

I want to be very clear that I have listened to communities; I've listened to students; I've listened to parents; I've listened to schools; and I've listened to school board members. That is why I have asked the school boards to suspend any future school reviews so we can work on a better process that clearly is not as adversarial as the one that we inherited.

MR. SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, it's pretty cute to hear the minister today talking about her concern about an adversarial system when you had parents, educators and students of the West Richmond Education School write to the minister, express their concerns, express their frustrations, only to be ignored - absolutely ignored until the Strait Regional School Board had made their decision.

What's even more cute about the minister's statement is while she's asking for a halt to the school review process going forward, she has as well asked for a halt to any school closures that were done last year. The decision to start doing the review of the closure of West Richmond was done in 2011, that is when it started, the vote was last year.

The community, which was ignored previously by the minister, is asking today, will the Minister of Education indicate whether West Richmond Education Centre will close in June or will it not, as a result of her directive given to school boards yesterday?

MS. JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, that is still under the board's mandate - and I find it extremely disappointing to hear a member opposite who does not agree to move forward to find a better way for our communities and our students.

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

**ERDT - C.B. ECONOMY: MIN. RESPONSIBILITY - EXPLAIN**

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, Cape Breton has been hit hard by a homegrown NDP recession. Unemployment rates have skyrocketed to 17.5 per cent. There are more than 10,000 people out of work in Cape Breton - for every job that opens up there are 16 unemployed. The Cape Breton economy is out of whack.

My question to the minister of ERDT is, what excuse does the minister have for forcing Cape Breton's economy off-kilter?

HON. PERCY PARIS: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite knows the answer to that question - while we are creating jobs in Nova Scotia, his cousins in Ottawa are killing jobs.

MR. ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, in Cape Breton we've lost 1,000 full-time jobs and 1,600 part-time jobs in the last four years. Nearly 3,000 people in Cape Breton now have to rely on food banks - that's an increase of more than 400 in the past years. If those figures don't show that government has thrown Cape Breton's economy out of balance, I don't know what will.

My question to the minister is, when will this government take responsibility that their actions have launched Cape Breton into a devastating recession?

MR. PARIS: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite, his time would be better served if he got in touch with his contacts in Ottawa and asked them about Veterans Affairs; ask them about Revenue Canada; ask them about the federal contact centres in Cape Breton. It's obvious, we are working hard for Cape Breton, as we do for all Nova Scotians. We are creating employment in Cape Breton, we will continue to work hard and I hope he will do something with his cousins in Ottawa about terminating jobs in Cape Breton.

MR. ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, 2 per cent HST increase; power rates at nearly 30 per cent, higher than they were when these guys took power; businesses in Cape Breton are struggling - they are struggling to keep their heads above water, never mind keep employees. The economic environment in Cape Breton is out of whack. People are struggling with higher power rates, higher taxes, higher unemployment, and a scarcity of jobs. More than 4,000 people have left Cape Breton in the past four years, in search of a better deal. With job vacancies at an all-time low, who can blame them?

Will the minister admit there's nothing balanced about a region with unemployment of over 17 per cent, thousands of jobs disappearing and a population that is shrinking and losing hope?

MR. PARIS: Mr. Speaker, we've made investments in Cape Breton, we will continue to make those investments. Northside Processing, Billdidit, Copol, we've made numerous investments in Cape Breton. What we've got to do is we've got to do something about the negativity.

Mr. Speaker, if the Progressive Conservatives would stop their negativity, which we've witnessed in this House when we had companies coming to Nova Scotia up in the gallery.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

### **EDUC. - SCH. REVIEWS: SUSPENSION - TIMING EXPLAIN**

MR. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, parents, teachers and students have been telling the Minister of Education for the past three years that her cuts have been having a detrimental effect on the public education system, resulting in teacher cuts, program cuts and school closures. The minister says that she has asked school boards to halt review processes because of what she was hearing from parents and communities. But this minister has been hearing from parents and communities for the past three years about the damage that her deep cuts are causing in our classrooms.

My question to the minister is, why now, at the eleventh hour, on the eve of an election, has she finally started to listen?

HON. RAMONA JENNEX: Before I begin my answer I just want to say that I did visit Yarmouth school, their beautiful new school in Yarmouth, not too long ago and I visited some classes of students who were working with their teachers. I have to say that they're doing a fine job. Some of the classes I visited had three students per teacher, so they're getting a fine education in Yarmouth.

At the end of the review process - it was March 31<sup>st</sup> - we let the process go through to that end before I asked the school boards to suspend. I must say that I'm looking forward to our coming year in education because we have the lowest student-teacher ratio under this budget that this province has ever seen. Thank you very much.

MR. CHURCHILL: First of all, that brand new high school that the minister is boasting about made people sick for the first number of months that people were in it. Secondly, this minister boasts about the support that she has given the education system - we have the second lowest per-student funding in the country and this minister champions that as if is something to brag about, and I'll table that.

We currently have three community schools slated for closure in Yarmouth - Arcadia, South Centennial, and Central. This minister has delayed those closures but my question is on behalf of parents, once this delay is over, will those schools be open or closed in Yarmouth County?

MS. JENNEX: I want to clarify that the school did not make people sick (Interruption) Excuse me, Mr. Speaker, I would like to clarify, that was an unsubstantiated comment from the member opposite. It is very clear that there were issues in terms of the humidification at the school, which were clarified very early on. Thank you very much.

MR. CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, it's interesting to hear how this minister talks about school boards; she takes their money away, interferes in their work, and then says, oh, but when it comes to school closures, program cuts, teacher cuts, those are their decisions, not mine.

Mr. Speaker, those decisions are based on the financial situation this government puts those school boards in. In this budget we have this government cutting another \$11 million out of our education system.

My question to the minister is, when this delay of school closures reaches its inevitable end, what does she expect - school closures or cuts to teacher positions and school programs?

MS. JENNEX: Under this budget you heard today that we will have the ability to be hiring more teachers, new teachers in our province for the next school year.

This budget also talked about our investment in SchoolsPlus expanding in our province. We are also expanding our skills trades in this province and our Community Use of Schools grant in our province. We are investing in our youngest with Succeeding in Reading. We've incorporated class caps in this budget. We are increasing our seats with our virtual school. We have the lowest student-teacher ratio ever in this province. Thank you very much.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

#### **NAT. RES. - CLEAR-CUTTING: POLICY - EXPLAIN**

MR. ANDREW YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. The minister's predecessor stood out in front of quite a lot of people outside the Legislature and said that this government would reduce clear-cutting by 50 per cent. When he became minister, he said the same thing, and then he brought forward a definition of "clear-cutting" that is so ridiculous that it basically allows anything.

If the minister truly meant to reduce clear-cutting by 50 per cent, why did he introduce such a weak definition?

HON. CHARLIE PARKER: Mr. Speaker, for too long in this province we had governments that just let clear-cutting go on. In fact, when we came to power, I think somewhere around 96 per cent of Nova Scotia harvest was by the clear-cut method.

Since then we've introduced our Natural Resources Strategy. We are now basing it on an ecosystem-based management system, and we are clearly committed to reducing clear-cutting to 50 per cent during the five-year period of our Natural Resources Strategy.

MR. YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, I'm sure the minister is committed to something, but it's certainly not reducing clear-cutting. I think he's just committed to defining it out of existence. There are hardwood harvesters who are very excited about this possibility and the opportunity to get in there. There were many, many people in Nova Scotia excited about this, but instead the NDP definition that he introduced basically means it isn't a clear-cut as long as there is one four-foot-tall tree every eight feet. I don't think that qualifies as not being a clear-cut in anybody's definition.

In fact, let me quote the Ecology Action Centre's comments on it. "A weak definition: The once promising policy has been sidelined by a weak definition of what *doesn't* constitute a clearcut that essentially boils our forests down to the pulp industry's lowest common denominator."

Once again, they've thrown the hardwood producers and foresters under the bus. Why has the minister failed to deliver on the reforms as he articulated them to the public?

MR. PARKER: Mr. Speaker, I didn't see during the Liberal Administration in the 1990s any definition of "clear-cut." I didn't see during the Progressive Conservative time in office up until 2009 any definition of a "clear-cut." In fact, they just let it go on and on - 96 per cent of our lands were clear-cut. Where was the Liberal or Progressive Conservative solution?

The truth is, we have the most aggressive clear-cut reduction strategy in all of North America. We're going to reduce it to 50 per cent. Our definition is based on science. It's based on consultation. It's based with working with the industry, working with woodlot owners, and working with environmental groups, and it will reduce our clear-cutting to no more than 50 per cent.

MR. YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, using as an excuse that somebody 20 years ago didn't do something is not good enough for Nova Scotians. The member behind me was in the first couple of years of elementary school during the time that this minister is complaining about. If that's the best answer that this minister has, maybe he shouldn't be a minister anymore.

Any plan, including the Natural Resources Strategy, specifically was the idea to move toward uneven-aged management of the forest, which would have meant success in our hardwoods, success in our pulp industry, and success in many forest industries. The definition that this minister has allowed to go forward will mean the end of the forest industry in Nova Scotia - the end of a diversified forest industry.

Mr. Speaker, we know the last minister was shuffled out of his position because he was in favour of doing something, so why hasn't the minister fully endorsed this forest management model so that standing forest ecosystems remain in place following harvesting?

MR. PARKER: Mr. Speaker, I think the honourable member just makes up things here as he goes along. The truth is that our Natural Resources Strategy is based on science, it's based on an ecosystem-based forest management. We're diversifying our forest industry for the first time in this province in decades, and it's going to create thousands of good jobs, it's going to protect the environment, and it's going to be a sustainable forestry of the future.

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

### **ENERGY - DONKIN MINE: PRIORITY - CONFIRM**

MR. ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, my question through you will be to the Minister of Energy.

In the 2012 Speech from the Throne, on Page 14, it said "... continuing plans for the opening of the Donkin mine while creating more Cape Breton jobs will move Nova Scotia closer to the secure energy future we need and deserve." I will table that, Mr. Speaker.

In the 2013 Speech from the Throne there was no mention of the Donkin mine. Will the minister confirm that Donkin is still a priority for this government, or have they broken yet another promise and let the people of Cape Breton down once again?

HON. CHARLIE PARKER: Mr. Speaker, certainly creating good jobs in rural Nova Scotia and in Cape Breton is an important goal and objective of this government, and certainly the Donkin mine has real potential to create more than 300 good-paying jobs in Cape Breton, as the honourable member would know.

The sale process is underway with Xstrata and they've been seriously trying to find a buyer. I know they've been working with Morien Resources as well, so we're optimistic that there will be a workable coal mine in Cape Breton in the not-too-distant future.

MR. MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, Nova Scotia Power has forecast that coal will remain necessary for power generation until at least 2040. Nova Scotians are fed up with paying for more expensive foreign coal, as the minister is so fond of saying, being brought into the Province of Nova Scotia to generate power, and Cape Breton workers are fed up with having to leave families and loved ones behind to head west to find work.

Will the minister detail what conversations his government has had with Nova Scotia Power regarding using the Donkin mine to supply coal for power generation?

MR. PARKER: Mr. Speaker, I do know that the process is ongoing. The environmental assessment is well underway and will be completed early next year. The process of discussion between the partners, between Xstrata and Morien Resources,

continues. I know there has certainly been discussion with Nova Scotia Power on clean technology, on how best that coal can be used.

This government is working hard to get off fossil fuel resources. Renewable energy is an important part of our future, but we also know that coal is still the major source of energy in this province, and while we're working towards renewables it will continue to be an important energy source into the future.

MR. MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, the minister just mentioned that they're working hard to get off fossil fuel for an energy source in Cape Breton, yet in his own Throne Speech he said we need to move forward with the Donkin mines to secure an energy future that we need and we deserve in the Province of Nova Scotia - so what way is it? We have one of the highest unemployment rates in Canada - it's 17 per cent in Cape Breton. We've lost 1,000 full-time jobs, more than 4,400 people who have left and decreased the population of Cape Breton in the last three years. Will the minister finally admit that this government has failed the people of Cape Breton and has done nothing to help this region?

MR. PARKER: Mr. Speaker, it must be getting late in the day, I guess. I've said all along that diversification of our energy portfolio is important, and that includes wind energy, and tidal, and sustainable biomass, and hydroelectricity, and certainly natural gas, and coal. We need a variety of sources; we can't be like past governments who relied solely on one source, one time it was oil then it became coal, but coal is still an important part of the mix for the energy needs of this province.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Digby-Annapolis.

#### **TIR - HWY NO. 101 (DIGBY-YAR.): COMPLETION - TIME FRAME**

MR. HAROLD THERIAULT: Mr. Speaker, for the last 10 years I've been standing in this House every session asking a question about the area of Digby-Annapolis and I cannot get an answer into the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal about this question because I believe we're turning a corner here, we're saying, so I would like to see this corner turned for Digby-Annapolis. I want to speak about Highway No.101 that hasn't been finished. Like I said, I've brought it up every session for the past 10 years and I can't miss this turn of doing it again, and it was brought up many, many years before that, before I came here. I just want to know, I want to ask the minister, when can the people of this area expect Highway No. 101 to be finished between Weymouth and Digby and get the traffic off of those doorsteps of those homes - that's Highway No.101 highway traffic travelling on a No. 1 highway. The people want to know that.

HON. MAURICE SMITH: I thank the honourable member for the question. I know that this is an important undertaking for his area and for that highway, and I know that it is being looked at in terms of our future plans. I can't give you an exact date; I can't give you an exact date on any particular highway. What we do is through our five-year plan we look ahead and we assess what needs are to be met and we've done that. All I can suggest to the



member is that he continues in the way he has been doing, to press for the needs of his community. I know that he has a strong voice and that his voice will be listened to in my department, so I encourage him to continue with that. We will do as much as we can for the people of that area as soon as we can.

MR. THERIAULT: I just want to give the minister warning there is going to be a committee coming, of mayors and wardens from that area soon and they'll be coming to your department to push the federal and provincial governments to do this. I guess if I could ask - you have a five-year plan there ahead of you, supposedly, from now on out is there any way this road could be put into the five-year plan because that's going to be asked from the mayors and the wardens of that area?

MR. SMITH: I will encourage the mayors and the wardens to get in touch with us. Again, that's part of the process. We ask people to bring their concerns forward because we need to know from them, the people on the ground, exactly what they are looking for. So I look forward to that meeting and I encourage it. As we look forward to the next five-year plan, again, that road, like any other in the province, will be assessed to determine need and as much as we can we will address those needs.

MR. THERIAULT: I want to thank the minister for answering this question. He answered it pretty good, but this is something that has been going on for a long while in that area and I'll never quit hearing this question . . .

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

### **GOVERNMENT BUSINESS**

MR. SPEAKER: The honorable Government House Leader.

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

### **PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING**

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 32.

### **Bill No. 32 - Solemnization of Marriage Act.**

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations.

HON. JOHN MACDONELL: I move that Bill No. 32 be now read a second time. Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to begin debate on amendments to Bill No. 32, the Solemnization of Marriage Act.

Mr. Speaker, weddings are as unique as the happy couple and those who celebrate with them, but they all have one thing in common, they aren't official without a marriage licence. Unfortunately, the process to get one in Nova Scotia is more complicated than it needs to be and that's why we've introduced amendments to the bill, the Solemnization of Marriage Act, to make the process easier for Nova Scotians who are planning to marry. Right now, our legislation requires couples applying for a marriage licence to make two separate trips to the licence issuer, once to apply, and five days later, to pay and pick up the licence. This can be inconvenient, especially for people in rural areas, who may have farther to travel to apply for and pick up a licence.

Since 1931, we've required Nova Scotians planning to marry to request a licence in person, wait five days, and then return to pick up the licence. We believe that this wait period was intended to force sober second thought. Mr. Speaker, while this requirement may have served a useful purpose at one time, Nova Scotians no longer need government to play this monitoring role. We are responding to the need for Nova Scotians to have efficient and convenient access to government services, while respecting that adults do not need a government-forced period to think about their marriage. Nova Scotia is the last province in Canada to still have the wait period, and this change brings us in line with other jurisdictions.

So, Mr. Speaker, eliminating the five-day wait and a second visit to a marriage licence issuer will also be more efficient for government. With the new process, applications that now sit on someone's desk for five days or more can be closed in 15 minutes, and that kind of efficiency is good for everyone. By bringing forward changes, government is making life better for thousands of Nova Scotia couples who marry each year, by reducing the administrative burden at a time when their focus should be on the joy of starting their married lives together in this great province.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'll take my place, and I look forward to further debate on the bill.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Thank you, Madam Speaker. As you know, I'm not married yet, but I've actually been waiting for this legislation, because when I do ask "The One", and if she says yes, I don't want to give her too much time to think about it. But in all seriousness, we do (Interruption) Yes, we do - this legislation, we'll be supporting it, and in all seriousness, we hope that marriages are long and happy. Thank you.

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

The honourable Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations.

HON. JOHN MACDONELL: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I think while I was doing my speech, I seemed to have ignored the fact that you were Madam Speaker, so I apologize for that, and you think on a debate around marriage I could at least recognize a woman in the Speaker's seat.

I thank the member for Inverness for his intervention, and obviously the intent and the need for this bill is obviously so evident to the House that more members did feel the need, and if the member for Inverness took that as an opportunity to show the world his availability, I think that's good on him. (Laughter) We'd like to think that for all Nova Scotians and for all members that if they make the decision to marry, we can speed it up by five days.

So, with that, I close debate on Bill No. 32, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 32. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. CLARRIE MACKINNON: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. That concludes the government's business for today. I move that the House do now rise to meet again tomorrow, with the hours being from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon, at which time we will involve the daily routine and Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne - and we may even have an early departure.

MADAM SPEAKER: The motion is that the House do now rise to meet again tomorrow between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 12:00 noon.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

We have now reached the moment of interruption. The Adjournment motion topic was presented earlier by the honourable member for Bedford-Birch Cove, which reads:

"Therefore be it resolved that the Minister of Education's request to halt school closures, after months of tumultuous school reviews in communities across the province,

and \$65 million in funding cuts, is an empty political move that shows no respect for public education or communities.”

### **ADJOURNMENT**

### **MOTION UNDER RULE 5(5)**

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

### **EDUC. - SCH. CLOSURES: SUSPENSION - MIN. MOTIVE**

MS. KELLY REGAN: Madam Speaker, the Education Minister’s request comes a day late and a dollar short - actually, it is \$76 million short.

I see the minister over there laughing and I’ll tell you, for people who have been through the school review process, it’s not a funny matter, it’s not a laughing matter. Madam Speaker, it’s excruciating for these families, for these students, for the parents. If they were planning to do this, it should have been done well before now.

Parents whose schools have been saved are happy, but then they ask what’s going to happen next, for how long has our school been saved? They have been put through the wringer by this process - and it’s a process, I might add, that the Minister of Education for this government created. It is not somebody else’s, it is their one. They made changes to it, they designed a new process and, yes, it was excruciating.

When you talk to board members, when you talk to parents, when you talk to students, they use words like “gut-wrenching” and “distressing” about this process. It’s devastating for the families involved.

Talk to members of this House and if they have a school in their riding that has been through this process, it tears communities apart. I can tell you, Madam Speaker, we had a less divisive and yet incredibly divisive process for a boundary review in my riding that went on over two years, and the net result was that it has torn the community apart and there are people who aren’t talking to each other because of a school boundary review - imagine what it’s like when they start closing schools.

Yesterday the minister claimed this needed to be done because this was a flawed process, and yet it is that ministry’s process, it’s nobody else’s. Now clearly on April 11, 2012, in response to a question from Michel Samson, the minister said we . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: The member for Richmond.

MS. REGAN: Oh, sorry, the member for Richmond - the Minister of Education said under the legislative process the school review is very clearly mandated and it is not to be interfered with by the minister. The school review process is a very clearly articulated

process where parents and community have the opportunity on two separate occasions to offer their input to the process and to the board, but over the span of a year the minister changed her tune.

The fact is that move should have happened long before now. It would happen under a Liberal Government as part of a review of public education. But now the minister tells us she doesn't have the power, so she has asked the boards. First of all, she couldn't interfere ever; now she has asked them.

Yet, in 2006, the Progressive Conservative Government was able to step in and stop the process. So you have to ask, what happened between then and now? She made her ask two days after the deadline for school boards to make those decisions, and that's why I said it's a day late and a dollar short. Two days later - and you have to ask, why then? Why put all those communities through that angst?

This government has cut \$65 million from education over three years. It will cut another \$11 million with the budget that was tabled today. We warned the government what would happen if they cut this kind of money from public education. We warned that schools would close. They chose not to listen. So you have to ask, what are those cash-strapped boards - which initially cut money from administration, and then cut teachers - supposed to cut now?

The minister says there's no more money, and in fact, there's \$11 million less. On CBC today, one board said, well, there's one school that we're supposed to close, but to keep it open for another year, we have to put a new roof on. That roof will cost \$100,000. What gets cut? Sounds like a teacher to me.

The fact is, this is a politically-motivated move that was made to save the bacon of the Premier, who was starting to take flack from parents and from boards for these cuts to education. That's where the blame lies. The cuts to education have devastated small communities. All you have to do is talk to people around the province, where they see their small schools go. I was talking to one just the other day, and what really galled him was that his school went through the process a year ago, so he's not covered under this. Or maybe he is. He doesn't really know right now.

It has been extremely adversarial when you pit different communities against each other, and that has to be laid at the government's feet. They chose to do this. They chose to cut money from education. They chose this particular process. They didn't stop it until the deadline had already passed. It's disrespectful to parents, who have been put through the wringer; it's disrespectful to students; it's disrespectful to boards; and it's disrespectful to all Nova Scotians to tell boards to stop this process now, and not give them any more money - in fact, to cut more money from education. It's a move that's born of desperation by a government that finds itself long in the tooth and short in the polls. And once again, this minister is trying to shift the blame to the boards, but the buck stops there.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg West.

MR. GARY RAMEY: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise for a few minutes and speak about the school review process and about school reviews in general.

School reviews are at the very heart of our communities, and community schools have been an important focus for this government. Strengthening the links between parents, schools, and the community is one of the pillars of our Kids and Learning First plan. We've provided school boards with dedicated funding to support small, isolated rural schools, and through initiatives like SchoolsPlus and the Community Use of Schools grants, we have encouraged communities to make greater use of schools outside of regular classroom hours.

Over the past few weeks, in particular - and I guess I would even say over the past few months, Madam Speaker - we've watched and listened as school boards and communities have struggled with the school review process, and I mean struggled and I would agree with the member who just spoke that they did that, they did exactly that.

In my own area I attended these sessions and spoke at three of them - there were three schools under review in my area - and I've listened to the excellent reports. I've read those reports and I've listened to them being presented by the SACs, by the presidents of those SACs. People like Sherry Doucet in Pentz, Dee Conrad in Petit Riviere, and Sheldon MacLeod in Hebbville. I told them, Madam Speaker, this is what I told those people when I was at those meetings, I told them that I would pay attention to them, that I wasn't there to participate in some kind of window-dressing exercise, which politicians, I think, of some stripes have done over the years, and that I would take their views forward. I am very proud to say that the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, the Premier, and all the members of my caucus actually paid attention to me. That's what they did, that's why I was elected here, that's what they did and the member for Bedford-Birch Cove can sit over there and chirp about this but the fact is I represent my constituents, this government represents our constituents and we don't need any lesson from her or that crowd over there who can bleed on about it all they want.

We have heard clearly from everyone involved in the process that the process wasn't working. That's what they told us, that's what the member for Bedford-Birch Cove said, she said the process wasn't working. We want to fix the process, now the member bleats on about that. Anyway, school reviews are not a new process. When this government took office in 2009, Madam Speaker, Education Department staff met with school boards and community members to refine the process, we were reminded of that in Question Period this afternoon. On their recommendations we added more opportunity for public input and more time for school boards and community members to complete their reports and their responses. But, and this is the important point - if the member over there wants to chirp he can chirp later, okay - but we are hearing that those changes didn't go far enough and the government agrees with that, the changes did not go far enough and so we are committing to go back and address the process which is exactly what we should be doing.

Madam Speaker, the Minister of Education spoke with school board chairs and superintendents to let them know that we plan to work with them, and with community members and other interested partners like municipalities, to develop a better process for reviewing schools, exactly what people in Question Period have been asking us to do, exactly what our constituents have been asking us to do. I can't for the life of me understand why the Opposition don't agree with that but that's okay.

Madam Speaker, we've asked school boards to suspend the school review process for the 2013-14 year and to delay closing any schools identified for closure in 2012-13 while we work together, something the Opposition apparently doesn't know how to do, on developing this new process. That's what we have decided to do. We understand, totally understand, how difficult the school review process has been for everyone involved. It has been unpleasant, it has been adversarial, and in that regard I agree with the member who spoke earlier. We've listened to the parents, we listened to the school boards, and I can tell you the people in my area are very pleased that we did, and we've listened to the municipalities and we've listened to the communities who have told us that the process needs a major overhaul.

Madam Speaker, this was not an easy decision to make, it's one a lot of, I think, political Parties wouldn't have made because they would have thought if we do this people would accuse us exactly of what the Opposition has accused us of but we're not concerned about that, we're concerned about doing the right thing and that's what we're going to do. (Applause)

So much of the discussion over the past few months has been focused on budgets - budgets and bricks and mortar, and I heard it again today from over there talking about money again. Madam Speaker, that's what was being discussed in this school review process, bricks and mortar and money. The decisions in the education system shouldn't relate just to those factors and as a matter of fact they should be, I think, more minor than the real issue, which is talking about the students. We must focus on making sure that all our students are receiving the education they need to succeed, and we also need to do what's best for our communities.

In the review process we heard, loud and clear, at least I did, from many community members who have good ideas on how to turn their schools into community hubs. We've heard from local businesses and we've heard from municipalities that are keen to make this work and, I might add, some very wonderful presentations from some very smart people. Madam Speaker, it's a great idea, it's one we want to give communities and school boards time to explore, and that's what we should be doing, and that's what we are doing.

There was simply no question that we faced some challenges with declining enrolment, we know that, and aging facilities in many parts of the province. We need to work together on the solutions. Unfortunately we hear too often from community members and school boards that the current process seems adversarial - we've heard that a million times. I agree with my colleagues that they've heard that too, that's not what anyone wants

- it's not what parents want, it's not what school boards want, and it's not what this government wants.

We will work together on a better way forward. If the Opposition doesn't want us to do that, too bad - we're going to do it. We're going to work together on a better way forward, we will seek input from the Nova Scotia Commission on Building Our New Economy which will bring forward an interim report in the Fall and together we will work to support our students in a sustainable, community-based and focused way.

In closing, I want to thank everyone who has taken the time and effort to contribute to this process, and that's all those SAC presidents, that's the school board in my area and particularly Mrs. Naugler and the people that were on that board - they did a wonderful job, they did a tough job, and I'd say they did a very unpleasant job but in a very dignified and respectful way.

And I must say, the people who came out and spoke at those meetings were very dignified and respectful too, and they are very pleased that this government - the minister, the Premier, and all the rest of us, at least on this side - we are paying attention to them. I want to thank every parent and community member who voiced their thoughts and every school board member who has wrestled with these difficult decisions, and I know that all have done the best they can under the current review process which, I would be the first to admit, is a flawed process, but it's going to get changed.

The government appreciates how challenging it has been. We've heard from the public, we are listening to the public, and we are taking action to make things better.

With those few words, Madam Speaker, I'll take my place. Thank you very much.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cape Breton North.

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Madam Speaker, I stand in my place today on this very important issue in debate this evening - and I listened to the member opposite talking about how they're listening to the community.

We're getting closer to an election year, or we're in an election year, and that government is finally starting to listen. Last year, during first contract arbitration, we had the biggest employers in the province, we had everyday working people, we had Opposition people, we had all kinds of people in here talking about first contract arbitration and how it would affect people in the Province of Nova Scotia and how the people in Pictou County, the Sobeys and a few others in that area, the Michelines, came to the Committee on Law Amendments and spoke to their MLAs - but it's funny, they didn't listen then.

We heard all kinds of things that were going to happen that were going to hurt those businesses, and we were told by these businesses that they came to their local MLAs but it



wasn't brought back to the table here. So they're listening now, when we're in an election year - they weren't listening then on different kinds of topics.

Madam Speaker, we're dealing with an awful situation here. Families, teachers, school boards, entire communities have been put through the wringer during this process. Difficult decisions have been made by good, honest, hard-working people - they've had to make gut-wrenching decisions, communities have been torn apart, and we know that these schools are a huge part of our rural communities.

The question I have to ask is what happens later. The school review process is delayed now, what happens later? What's going to be the overall plan? Are we going to redevelop the school review process, and how long is it going to take? What are we going to put people through the next time?

The minister's decision yesterday to ask the school boards to halt the review process seems to be nothing more than political posturing at the present time. We're doing it on the backs of the rural communities, we're doing it on the backs of school boards, and we're doing it on the backs of citizens. It puts these citizens in an awful position. Communities have been pitted against each other from the start, and this has dragged on for months now.

They say they're listening to all the boards - why not listen last year, when they were cutting the budgets, and the school boards were telling them what valuable programs and positions were going to be cut because of the budget cuts? What was their answer then? Send a consultant into places like the Chignecto-Central Regional School Board, let them help with how to do the cuts to their boards. So they listen now, but they were not listening then. The minister made it clear she has no legislative ability to halt the process, but she had the legislative ability to send in a consultant to help out at that time. Why not send a consultant in to help now?

We know that the boards and the communities cannot win in this situation. Whether they agree with the minister or they disagree with the minister, they're going to be the bad guys. The minister knows how cash-strapped our schools boards are from her \$65 million cuts to the education system. The boards are struggling to keep rural schools open with limited funds.

So if this process is halted, power rates will keep going up, wages keep going up, cost of books, equipment repairs, et cetera. How do the boards deal with these inflammatory measures? If they keep the schools open, will the minister increase the funding to keep these schools open? Will they add more teachers to the system to keep the schools open? The minister has already admitted she has no authority. Her request was nothing more than a move in an election year.

Madam Speaker, people of the Province of Nova Scotia don't like to see these election-year politics. Budgets, prepayments to universities that we said were immoral and

wrong, happened in this budget today, we hear. There were cuts to education, and that's what put the school boards in the position they're in today. Now they're in an even more difficult situation, having to either stretch their budgets even further to keep the schools open or become a villain and say no to the request. That's not a position we like to put school boards or communities in.

The chair of the South Shore Regional School Board told reporters yesterday that the minister's request not to include school closures in the budget . . .

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please. Could the two members who are yelling across the Chamber perhaps take that conversation outside, so I can hear the member speaking? Thank you.

The honourable member for Cape Breton North has the floor.

MR. ORRELL: Thank you, Madam Speaker. This was announced yesterday, but it was included in today's budget. We heard around the \$27 million that there was no time to put it in the budget, in the forecast, the last time, but this was put in in a day. So this must have been going on for a lot longer than we know, and it's just a little more time to put the school boards through that process. The board chair on the South Shore Regional School Board went on to say that excluding school closures from the budget would be wonderful if they have the funding. I have a document to support that, and I'll table that.

We know funding hasn't increased. We know it's going to decrease. The Cape Breton Regional Municipality has to add about a million dollars to the Education budget, just out of their budget, because of the decreases. That's exactly the issue here. Boards are going to be forced to make cuts elsewhere. They fear they will have to make direct cuts to student programming.

Yesterday's request by the minister was nothing more than to boost the public image. They want to put the onus back on the school boards again. They have until April 30<sup>th</sup> to make this decision. What happens if they don't comply? Where do we go from there?

Madam Speaker, Nova Scotians deserve the truth. Nova Scotians impacted by this stunt can see right through this PR stunt.

This is not the first time the minister has reversed other decisions. For months, members of our caucus pointed out the need to lower the cap on classrooms. The minister fought our request for teacher-student ratios, she insisted that things were fine and the students were receiving all the help they needed, and we know what happened then.

Members of the caucus knew that wasn't true. Lo and behold, the minister was proven wrong and had to hire 73 more full-time teachers to address the needs of the overcrowded classrooms. It's doing things after the fact - classrooms were crowded.

We congratulate the minister for doing that, but there's no sense in putting people through that when you can do it beforehand, before the education year starts, so people who get used to being in classrooms don't have to go through the whole change again, especially younger children.

It's unfair that this request wasn't made before the school closure process, before these communities were ripped apart doing it. It's irresponsible of the minister to force cuts to have even more direct impact on students. It's unfair for the NDP to try to score political points by shifting the blame of school closures on cash-strapped school boards.

Madam Speaker, it seems to us, it looks to us, and it looks to the people of Nova Scotia like this decision has to do more with politics than it does with educating our youngest Nova Scotians. With that, I'll take my seat.

MADAM SPEAKER: I want to thank all members for an engaging debate this evening.

We stand adjourned until 9:00 a.m. tomorrow.

[The House rose at 5:42 p.m.]

**NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3)****RESOLUTION NO. 127**

By: Hon. Karen Casey (Colchester North)

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

Whereas Dalhousie's Faculty of Agriculture honoured its best students and added 131 names to the Dean's List; and

Whereas the annual event recognizes students for their outstanding academic achievements from the winter and Fall semesters of 2012; and

Whereas to be named to the Dean's List, students must be within the top 10 per cent of their program of study, have a term average of 80 per cent or higher, and be enrolled in four or more courses per semester;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Ross Hayman from Tatamagouche, Colchester North, for meeting all the requirements and thus being added to the Dean's List.

**RESOLUTION NO. 128**

By: Hon. Karen Casey (Colchester North)

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

Whereas Dalhousie's Faculty of Agriculture honoured its best students and added 131 names to the Dean's List; and

Whereas the annual event recognizes students for their outstanding academic achievements from the winter and Fall semesters of 2012; and

Whereas to be named to the Dean's List, students must be in the top 10 per cent of their program of study, have a term average of 80 per cent or higher, and be enrolled in four or more courses per semester;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Thomas Harrington from Debert, Colchester North, for meeting all the requirements and thus being added to the Dean's List.

**RESOLUTION NO. 129**

By: Hon. Karen Casey (Colchester North)

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

Whereas Dalhousie's Faculty of Agriculture honoured its best students and added 131 names to the Dean's List; and

Whereas the annual event recognizes students for their outstanding academic achievements from the winter and Fall semesters of 2012; and

Whereas to be named to the Dean's List, students must be within the top 10 per cent of their program of study, have a term average of 80 per cent or higher, and be enrolled in four or more courses per semester;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Ashley McDonald from East Mountain, Colchester North, for meeting all the requirements and thus being added to the Dean's List.

**RESOLUTION NO. 130**

By: Hon. Karen Casey (Colchester North)

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

Whereas Dalhousie's Faculty of Agriculture honoured its best students and added 131 names to the Dean's List; and

Whereas the annual event recognizes students for their outstanding academic achievements from the winter and Fall semesters of 2012; and

Whereas to be named to the Dean's List, students must be within the top 10 per cent of their program of study, have a term average of 80 per cent or higher, and be enrolled in four or more courses per semester;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Carling Gratto from Debert, Colchester North, for meeting all the requirements and thus being added to the Dean's List.

**RESOLUTION NO. 131**

By: Hon. Karen Casey (Colchester North)

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

Whereas Dalhousie's Faculty of Agriculture honoured its best students and added 131 names to the Dean's List; and

Whereas the annual event recognizes students for their outstanding academic achievements from the winter and Fall semesters of 2012; and

Whereas to be named to the Dean's List, students must be within the top 10 per cent of their program of study, have a term average of 80 per cent or higher, and be enrolled in four or more courses per semester;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Christopher Howse from Tatamagouche, Colchester North, for meeting all the requirements and thus being added to the Dean's List.

**RESOLUTION NO. 132**

By: Hon. Karen Casey (Colchester North)

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

Whereas Dalhousie's Faculty of Agriculture honoured its best students and added 131 names to the Dean's List; and

Whereas the annual event recognizes students for their outstanding academic achievements from the winter and Fall semesters of 2012; and

Whereas to be named to the Dean's List, students must be within the top 10 per cent of their program of study, have a term average of 80 per cent or higher, and be enrolled in four or more courses per semester;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Crystal Fullerton from Belmont, Colchester North, for meeting all the requirements and thus being added to the Dean's List.

**RESOLUTION NO. 133**

By: Hon. Karen Casey (Colchester North)

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

Whereas Dalhousie's Faculty of Agriculture honoured its best students and added 131 names to the Dean's List; and

Whereas the annual event recognizes students for their outstanding academic achievements from the winter and Fall semesters of 2012; and

Whereas to be named to the Dean's List, students must be within the top 10 per cent of their program of study, have a term average of 80 per cent or higher, and be enrolled in four or more courses per semester;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Joshua Chapman from North River, Colchester North, for meeting all the requirements and thus being added to the Dean's List.

**RESOLUTION NO. 134**

By: Hon. Karen Casey (Colchester North)

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

Whereas Dalhousie's Faculty of Agriculture honoured its best students and added 131 names to the Dean's List; and

Whereas the annual event recognizes students for their outstanding academic achievements from the winter and Fall semesters of 2012; and

Whereas to be named to the Dean's List, students must be within the top 10 per cent of their program of study, have a term average of 80 per cent or higher, and be enrolled in four or more courses per semester;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Nicole Cox from Onslow Mountain, Colchester North, for meeting all the requirements and thus being added to the Dean's List.

**RESOLUTION NO. 135**

By: Hon. Karen Casey (Colchester North)

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

Whereas Dalhousie's Faculty of Agriculture honoured its best students and added 131 names to the Dean's List; and

Whereas the annual event recognizes students for their outstanding academic achievements from the winter and Fall semesters of 2012; and

Whereas to be named to the Dean's List, students must be within the top 10 per cent of their program of study, have a term average of 80 per cent or higher, and be enrolled in four or more courses per semester;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Shelby Jamieson from Tatamagouche, Colchester North, for meeting all the requirements and thus being added to the Dean's List.

**RESOLUTION NO. 136**

By: Hon. Karen Casey (Colchester North)

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

Whereas Dalhousie's Faculty of Agriculture honoured its best students and added 131 names to the Dean's List; and

Whereas the annual event recognizes students for their outstanding academic achievements from the winter and Fall semesters of 2012; and

Whereas to be named to the Dean's List, students must be within the top 10 per cent of their program of study, have a term average of 80 per cent or higher, and be enrolled in four or more courses per semester;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Sherisse Smith from North River, Colchester North, for meeting all the requirements and thus being added to the Dean's List.



**RESOLUTION NO. 137**

By: Hon. Karen Casey (Colchester North)

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

Whereas Dalhousie's Faculty of Agriculture honoured its best students and added 131 names to the Dean's List; and

Whereas the annual event recognizes students for their outstanding academic achievements from the winter and Fall semesters of 2012; and

Whereas to be named to the Dean's List, students must be within the top 10 per cent of their program of study, have a term average of 80 per cent or higher, and be enrolled in four or more courses per semester;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate William MacKenzie from Debert, Colchester North, for meeting all the requirements and thus being added to the Dean's List.

**RESOLUTION NO. 138**

By: Mr. Andrew Younger (Dartmouth East)

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

Whereas the Ebony Hair Salon of 126 Main Street in Dartmouth East celebrated 10 years in business on April 1, 2013; and

Whereas Ebony Hair Salon has weathered the ups and downs of the economy by providing friendly, top-notch service; and

Whereas manager Elvera Ross and her team gathered with well-wishers and clients alike to celebrate this important milestone this past month;

Therefore be it resolved that members of the House of Assembly congratulate Ms. Elvera Ross and her staff at the Ebony Hair Salon on their perseverance and commitment, and wish them continued success.