



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Kevin Murphy

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/>

First Session

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 2014

TABLE OF CONTENTS	PAGE
INTRODUCTION OF BILLS:	
No. 30, Essential Home-support Services (2014) Act, Hon. K. Regan.....	980
No. 31, Trade Union Act, Hon. J. Baillie	980
NOTICES OF MOTION:	
Res. 686, Health Care: Contract Disputes - Resolution, Hon. J. Baillie	980
Vote - Affirmative.....	980
Res. 687, Saunders, Loretta: Death of - Tribute, Hon. M. MacDonald	981
Vote - Affirmative.....	981

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS:

PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING:

No. 30, Essential Home-support Services (2014) Act

Hon. K. Regan.....	982
Hon. J. Baillie	983
Hon. M. MacDonald	988
Mr. C. Porter	991
Hon. F. Corbett	996
Hon. David Wilson	1007
Hon. S. Belliveau	1014
Ms. L. Zann.....	1019
Hon. D. Peterson-Rafuse.....	1030
Mr. G. Gosse.....	1041
Hon. K. Regan.....	1050
Vote - Affirmative.....	1050
HOUSE RECESSED AT 1:50 P.M.....	1051
HOUSE RECONVENED AT 6:01 P.M.....	1051
ADJOURNMENT, House rose to meet again on Sat., Mar. 1 st at 9:00 a.m.....	1052



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 2014

Sixty-second General Assembly

First Session

9:00 A.M.

SPEAKER

Hon. Kevin Murphy

DEPUTY SPEAKER

Ms. Margaret Miller

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. We'll now proceed with the daily routine.

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 30 - Entitled an Act to Ensure the Provision of Essential Home-support Services. (Hon. Kelly Regan)

Bill No. 31 - Entitled an Act to Protect Patients and Provide for the Fair Resolution of Contract Negotiations in Health Care and Community Services. (Hon. Jamie Baillie)

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

NOTICES OF MOTION

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

RESOLUTION NO. 686

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

Whereas seniors and other vulnerable people rely on home care workers to provide invaluable services that are a vital part of our health care system; and

Whereas home care workers deserve to be treated fairly, paid fairly, and have a fair resolution to contract disputes; and

Whereas the Liberal Government has mismanaged the collective bargaining process with home care workers and left thousands of families frustrated and worried that their loved ones won't get the care they need;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House agree to adopt a method of resolving contract disputes in health care that doesn't cause worry, hardship, and service disruption for vulnerable people.

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. (Applause)

The honourable Leader of the New Democratic Party.

RESOLUTION NO. 687

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I will be asking for a moment of silence at the end of this resolution.

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

Whereas Loretta Saunders was a bright and enthusiastic 26-year-old student attending Saint Mary's University in Halifax; and

Whereas originally from Labrador, Loretta was working towards her Master's Degree in Sociology, writing her thesis on a topic she cared passionately about; and

Whereas Loretta's disappearance on February 13th of this year led to a fusion of support and awareness for missing Aboriginal women in this province and across Canada;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly extend our deepest condolences to the family and friends of Loretta Saunders, and resolve to support all efforts to examine and understand more fully what steps must be taken to end the unacceptable rate of death and disappearance among Aboriginal women in Canada.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

We will now have a moment of silence in honour of Loretta Saunders.

[A moment of silence was observed.]

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

ORDERS OF THE DAY**GOVERNMENT BUSINESS**

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Rule 5C, I move that the maximum number of hours this House may sit today be set at 15, which will allow us to conduct business until 12:00 midnight if necessary.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion under Rule 5C is that the maximum number of hours the House may sit today be set at 15. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, with unanimous consent of the House, I would request that we be able to call Bill No. 30, an Act to Ensure the Provision of Essential Home-support Services for a second time.

MR. SPEAKER: Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: 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. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 30.

Bill No. 30 - Essential Home-support Services (2014) Act.

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

HON. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to move second reading of Bill No. 30, an Act to Ensure the Provision of Essential Home-support Services.

This province's home support workers do extremely vital and valuable work in our communities. Hundreds of vulnerable Nova Scotians and their families depend on these vital workers every single day, as they help them stay in their homes and communities where they want to be. They help with things like feeding, bathing, and mobility support when people are no longer able to do those things for themselves. These sick and vulnerable Nova Scotians could be put in jeopardy if there is a labour dispute with no plan to provide even a minimum level of essential service.

Several parties recently notified the province that they would not be able to reach an agreement through collective bargaining. I am disappointed that an agreement could not be reached at this point. I am even more concerned that the NSGEU refused to provide a minimal level of essential service during a strike. That is why I am introducing legislation that will require NSGEU and CUPE locals and the employers of home support workers - including Northwood Home Care Limited and VON home support - to provide essential services during a work stoppage or lockout.

The bill maintains employees' right to bargain collectively and take strike action while ensuring the most vulnerable are protected in the event of a labour dispute. The bill requires employers and unions in the home support sector to identify and agree to the essential services that must be maintained during a strike. An essential services agreement must be in place before a strike can begin or continue. This legislation protects the health and safety of some of the most vulnerable Nova Scotians.

This is our main objective. The health and safety of Nova Scotians is our number one priority. This bill is about giving Nova Scotians peace of mind and setting out a reasonable and orderly process so that patients and families who need it most know they will get essential support even during a strike. This action was necessary. Government cannot stand by while patients are put at risk.

As I said before, the province recognizes the important contribution and the commitment of home support workers to their patients, and that is why we are taking every possible step to find a solution while protecting Nova Scotians. Thank you. I move that Bill No. 30 now be read a second time.

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

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, it is with a heavy heart that I rise to speak to this bill today.

There are many players in a situation like this. There is the government itself, with its hundreds of lawyers and hundreds of PR people that they have at their disposal, and they'll represent their interests. There is the union itself - the bargaining unit, and the resources they have and their leadership. I know they will do their job to represent the interests of their members, and I have no issue with that. But it is those of us here in this

House who are hired, elected, and paid to be here to represent the people who are actually affected by what's happening today.

I briefly want to talk about the patients - the clients involved - and also the workers themselves, and what's going to happen if this bill goes through. First of all, for the 1,800 families who have loved ones - whether they are seniors, a mother, grandmother, grandfather or other, or a non-senior - who is in receipt of home care, of medical services at home, they have been left frustrated and worried for a number of weeks now about what's going to happen today. In fact, as we speak at this very moment in this Chamber, there are real Nova Scotians in need of medical care at home who go without.

All of us in our respective Parties have encouraged the health care system to look for ways to provide more care at home - not just for seniors, but particularly for seniors - because we all agree that aging in place at home with the appropriate level of support is an important part of our health care system and a growing part of our health care system. It provides both a higher level of care in a more appropriate place and actually at a more reasonable cost than institutional care and we all support that. But that care has been yanked away today, Mr. Speaker, and so I just encourage all members of the House as they consider their actions today to put first and foremost the interest of those Nova Scotians who rely on important medical services at home.

Mr. Speaker, I feel also very strongly for the workers themselves who provide those services. No reasonable person would want them to be on strike because of the important work that they do. But I can also say, having met them over the past number of days - as recently as this morning outside this House - that I believe they don't wish to be on strike either. By virtue of the jobs they've chosen to do, they have shown that they care as much as anybody or more about the level of service provided at home to our vulnerable citizens.

Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that home care workers providing this important service are paid a modest amount and they work hard. They don't work in a hospital setting but they do work at various homes in their area, travelling great distances, walking into homes where they're not always sure of what they are going to find when they get there, not always safe, not always assured of good working conditions, paid to work an eight-hour day, sometimes working 10 or 11 hours, the extra hours without pay; sometimes being called by their supervisor as they're between appointments and told to stop and wait by the side of the road until the next assignment can start in an effort to save money.

Those are legitimate concerns and I know they've been raised through the collective bargaining process and I understand we all support the collective bargaining process. But let's not lose sight of the fact that there needs to be a way to have concerns like that addressed. It's not always just about money but about safe working conditions, about reasonable rules and policies of the employer, about treating people who do dignified work with the dignity that they deserve. I believe all of us in this House have a duty to consider that as well.

Mr. Speaker, here we are today faced with another strike in our health care system. Here we go again. How many times do we have to reach the brink in health care before this House finally comes up with a way of dealing with these situations that does not cause such worry, that does not cause such hardship, that does not cause such distress to Nova Scotians who want to know that their health care system, whether it's at home or at the hospitals, is there for them all the time when they need it.

We had an NDP Government that took a piecemeal approach, that let crisis after crisis develop in our health care system before they would act. Now we have a Liberal Government that today is doing the same thing - in the face of a real disruption in our essential health care services - bringing in a one-time band-aid aimed only at home care workers, Mr. Speaker, when there is a gaping hole in the delivery service. It's time for more than just a band-aid. Nova Scotians are going to rightly ask why we have a government that only waits until a crisis has developed before they act.

Mr. Speaker, that is why we have so many problems with this bill. It deals only with the crisis at hand. It doesn't look at the bigger picture of how we avoid getting here in the first place. I am very proud to point out that the PC Opposition has presented an alternative bill that actually ensures a continuous provision of essential health care services without the need to get to the crisis of a strike in our health care system. I encourage the government members and I encourage all members to take a look at it so we don't have to come to the brink time and time and time again. There is a way to treat workers fairly, to give them a shot at fair working conditions and fair wages and avoid strikes at the same time. It is well past the time that this House considered a measure that avoids these situations in the first place.

Mr. Speaker, we are faced with the bill at hand, the government bill that they have brought in, and I have to tell you we have serious problems with this bill, it raises a number of very troubling questions.

Mr. Speaker, when this bill passes - as I suspect it will with the majority that the government has - the most important question is, how many seniors and other vulnerable Nova Scotians will still go without care once the bill is in effect? The answer is that they don't know, and that's not acceptable. For all those seniors and others who rely on emergency or important home care services, how long will they go without care once the essential services plan is in place? The answer is, they don't know the answer to that important question either.

We know from experience in other provinces where similar types of band-aid bills have been brought in, where a skeleton crew has been provided to provide an important service, a strike can go on for years at a time, as in the case of paramedics in British Columbia - for two years that province suffered through a skeleton crew of paramedics under exactly this kind of framework.

Mr. Speaker, I don't know how the government can stand up in this House and present a bill and not know how many Nova Scotians will go without, and for how long, when it comes to something as important as providing medical care at home.

Mr. Speaker, those aren't even the most troublesome questions of all because there is an even bigger one, and that question really is whose grandmother or grandfather or family member gets care and who doesn't should not be a matter of collective bargaining. But that is exactly what this bill drives our system to do - to set up a process where two sides at a table bargain over whether your family member or mine is worthy of home care in the future. That is a very, very disturbing prospect.

Mr. Speaker, if they can't agree, I don't think very many Nova Scotians are going to be comforted to know that their loved one, their family member who receives home care so they can stay at home - if they can't be bargained away, then the Labour Board will decide who gets care and who doesn't. That is no way to run our health care system, particularly when it comes to something as important as medical care at home.

In a way, Mr. Speaker, this bill is the worst of all worlds. It shows clearly that the government is prepared to allow the possibility of a long-term strike in home care services, to allow many Nova Scotians who need that service to stay at home to be denied that service - and for how long? They don't know. That is part of the worst of all worlds. As we know, many Nova Scotians will go without care, but we also know for the workers involved that they will be denied a fair hearing about their working conditions, about their pay, about the work they do - and maybe for a long time to come.

The government points out that they need to find savings, they need to find ways to reduce costs. Mr. Speaker, the bill is even short-sighted in that area because we've had many health care experts point out that today's non-essential recipients of medical home care services - if there even is such a thing - is tomorrow's essential medical recipient and they will be forced to show up in our emergency rooms, in our hospital beds, getting acute level care which is both inappropriate to force them into that situation and even more expensive than to have dealt with the workers fairly in the first place.

If anyone has any doubt about the accuracy of that prediction, I have with me the memo that the Vice President responsible for People Services, Ms. Kathy MacNeil, sent around to the Capital Health District yesterday about this very situation:

“Some of these patients may require hospital care. Our emergency departments are on alert for any increase in patients. We know that seeing additional numbers of patients puts a strain on our system. An ongoing strike will affect patient flow and may even affect our ability to offer scheduled services.”

I will table that momentarily for the benefit of the government.

The point is, as much as this is an unfair hardship on the patients and the recipients of home care already and an unfair hardship on the workers that provide that service, this bill actually ensures that it will affect all of us as the inevitable happens: people who we want to be at home and get the care they need, they are forced out of their homes and into our emergency rooms and into our hospital beds, which is the inevitable result of the mechanism this bill puts in place. It is very short-sighted.

I will say that I appreciate - in fact, advocate - for a government to live within its means, to balance its books, to find ways to deliver services more efficiently, but for the Liberals to turn to a group of workers making \$16 an hour providing this important work and say that's where we're going to find the savings, well, it is a false savings when there are so many other places to look in the government books, so many other places where many millions of dollars are wasted every day. But this is where they turn first.

I spent some time outside with the workers this morning and have talked to many over the last few weeks. The fact of the matter is they don't want to go on strike, they don't want to withhold their services to the patients, the clients that they've dedicated their careers to serving. They care about them as much as anyone in this House and even more, which is obvious from the career they've picked for themselves.

Yesterday they offered arbitration as a solution. If the government truly wants them to be treated fairly and paid fairly, select an independent arbiter to find a way that's fair to the government, that's fair to the employer, and that is fair to the workers themselves. That was rejected. We could only wonder what the government is so afraid of when it comes to treating people fairly that they would turn down the obvious fairness of an independent arbiter when negotiations in health care are unable to reach a fairly-bargained agreement.

I will say how ironic it is to be here today, across from a Liberal Government taking this approach. It was only a few short months ago when they were over here and ironically the NDP were over there, that we faced a very similar situation with our paramedics. The words of the Liberals then were so different back in July before the election than they are today. Back then they voted to allow paramedics to go on strike. What could be a more essential service than the emergency health care workers that are our paramedics?

Yet they tried to pretend they were the biggest defenders of fairness for those in our health care system that provide important emergency services and they voted no, when even the NDP thought it was time to arbitrate a settlement and avoid a work stoppage in our health care system. Somewhere in the Guinness Book of World Records, there is a page about flip-flops and this has got to be the leading entry. Now that the election is over and they're on that side of the House, they're willing to legislate home care workers back to work when previously they were quite prepared to defend the right to strike and send our paramedics out to the street. But only the Liberals will be able to answer for that amazing change of heart.

I started by saying that I rise to speak on this bill with a heavy heart and that's true and I do. We have introduced our own alternative bill which is the fairest and most compassionate way of dealing with these situations to allow collective bargaining in health care to run its full course but to replace the threat of a strike, which puts real Nova Scotians in harm's way, with the fair and balanced approach of an arbitrated settlement - the same thing that the union is asking for today.

We could have that solution now, and people in receipt of home care and their families wouldn't worry and workers would have a chance to be treated fairly and we wouldn't need to be in this mess that we find ourselves in today, but here we are. So rather than band-aid after band-aid after band-aid, emergency session after emergency session every time we get to this point, I really encourage all members of the House to take a serious look at the bill that we've introduced again today and bring it back so that we can pass it and set aside these crises once and for all.

Mr. Speaker, before I conclude I just want to add that, knowing the odds that the government is going to consider our bill are so small, we do intend to do our best to make this weak bill that is before us today a better bill and introduce amendments in the Law Amendments Committee to make it better for the patients, who we are all elected here to protect, and for the workers themselves. I strongly encourage the members in both Parties who sit on the Law Amendments Committee to consider our amendments and pass them as a constructive attempt to work together to make our system better and to avoid crises like this in the future. Thank you very much for those few minutes.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the New Democratic Party.

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I too take no pleasure in having to enter into the debate today about Bill No. 30. I want to start by saying that, as someone who has sat at the desk of the Health Ministry, I know the great concern that the Minister of Health and Wellness and members of his government certainly would have when it comes to a strike in the health care system.

I know the dilemma that you face when you are looking at patient care, when you are looking at being respectful and fair to your workforce, and I know that you have public expectations. These are hard things to balance, and it is through that lens that we all enter into this debate. We look at the bill in front of us, and we ask ourselves, what is this bill providing in terms of balance? Is it the right approach? Has the government gotten it right, or have they gotten off on the wrong foot?

Mr. Speaker, this is the first real test of our new government with respect to health care and labour relations in our province. It won't be for me to judge how well they've done. It will be for others to do that. It is my responsibility, as well as the responsibility of all members in the Opposition Parties, to ask the tough questions and to really examine what is in this bill, the choices that have been made, and if they are the right choices. Are

they the right choices for patients? Are they the right choices for health care workers? Are they the right choices for the health care system? I think this is the lens we need to look at.

Bill No. 30 applies to home support workers, as we all know. Home support workers are looking for wage parity with workers who do similar or the same work - not in home support but in acute care, in hospitals. Home support workers are the people, the men and women - primarily women - who come into your home and provide in your home what are called "non-medical services." In fact, home support workers are not allowed to perform medical services. They perform non-medical services in the home - very important services, but non-medical. Personal hygiene, bathing, dressing, some meal preparation, changing linens - these kinds of things are what home support workers do in the home, just as continuing care workers do that kind of work in the hospital.

They're not paid the same, even though they do the same work, and as we heard from the Leader of the Official Opposition, these workers make very modest wages now. They make approximately \$16 an hour; they make around \$30,000 to \$32,000 a year - and that's if they're full-time workers getting full-time shifts and don't find themselves in periods where they don't have clients assigned to them. It's difficult work.

If we look at our workers' compensation rates in the province and injury in the workplace, workers who perform this work have among the highest rates of workplace injury that you're going to find for workers in the Province of Nova Scotia. This is not work for the faint of heart. This is difficult work. This is critical work, though, because these are the people who do the work that supports many of our frail and elderly, people with disabilities, citizens in these circumstances - so that they can remain at home, so they don't have to go into a long-term care facility, so they don't have to show up at the emergency department and in acute care facilities. They are fundamentally crucial to keeping our system functioning well in that way.

Mr. Speaker, I want to tell you a story about how the home care system currently works, and something that puzzles me when I look at Bill No. 30 and the attempt to define a portion of home care as an essential service, which will not be an easy task. About a month ago I got a call in my MLA office from a woman I've known for pretty much the 16 years that I've been a member of this Assembly. When I first met her, she and her husband lived in a seniors' manor, and they were sort of the social conveners of everything that went on in that manor. Over the years I observed them getting older, and eventually her husband passed away. She now lives by herself - they had no children - and has many more chronic ailments than she had 16 years ago.

About four weeks ago she called my MLA office because she had very, very serious flu. She was unable to get to the washroom, and she was fearful of falling. She had home care come into her home, a home support worker - perhaps one of the people who are outside our Legislature right now. She had a home care worker who came three times a week for one hour, and she was attempting to contact the care coordinator to ask if there

was any ability to assign that person or some person to come at night to help her get ready for bed and to prevent her falling. She was extraordinarily concerned that this flu was incapacitating her to the point that something terrible could happen.

The system could not respond to that; the system did not accept that that set of circumstances was an essential service. Mr. Speaker, my point is this - that we have a piece of legislation here that is very, very vague, and it does not define in any way this whole question of "essential." It does not tell us how many workers need to be kept on the job and for what kind of circumstances. It provides a very long period of time to bargain those things, and wouldn't this energy be better spent in just getting back to the table and negotiating a collective agreement rather than spending the next number of weeks or months trying to figure out what essentially in the home support system is essential and what isn't? We have a home care system that doesn't know what is essential now, that has no definition for what is essential now.

This is very troublesome from a very practical point of view. Mr. Speaker, I have to ask myself whether this legislation is really about patient safety or whether it is about money, whether it is really about home support services or if it's about all of those other health care workers, like the nurses who are currently in collective bargaining. I think this government may be using this situation, these workers, to send a message to other health care workers, higher-paid health care workers, more powerful health care workers inside the health care system. I hope that's not the case, but if it is the case then that's just plain wrong. These workers deserve respect and they deserve to be treated fairly, and they deserve to be dealt with on their own merit.

Now I want to just take issue for a moment with something the Leader of the Official Opposition said and I heard his colleague, the Health Critic, say in comparing this situation to the paramedics' situation. Mr. Speaker, I want to be crystal clear, that this is like comparing apples and oranges. Home support workers indeed are health care workers like paramedics are health care workers, but there is no comparison in terms of the emergency services that are provided by the two different groups. Let's be crystal clear also about what the former government did with respect to exploring and exhausting every single solitary option available to get a collective agreement with the paramedics.

I don't think that is the case here. What we see here is a rush to legislation. What we see here is a government that made a decision far, far in advance of being here today and were essentially, and are essentially, unprepared to bargain with this group of workers. I understand that their union made an offer to take this matter to binding arbitration and that was dismissed by the Premier for financial reasons. It was a very reasonable request by the union and certainly would have given us an opportunity to continue the process in a forum that was more appropriate. I think what we will have now with Bill No. 30 is a protracted process that may or may not lead to a settlement. I think this is very, very concerning, it has to be very concerning.

We in the NDP caucus believe in the collective bargaining process for a reason. I was listening this morning to CBC on my way down here and there was a piece on about the stagnation of income of the middle class. We all know that's occurring, it's well documented by non-partisan organizations that have the capacity to look at the data over time.

The collective bargaining process is one of the most fundamental democratic rights that working people have fought for. It gives them the capacity to improve their living conditions and their standard of living and that has been well documented. Health care workers are no different. They need to have the tools to be able to improve their standard of living, their working conditions. We need to talk about whether it's acceptable to have this group of workers on call for several hours for no pay - where else does that happen in the health care system? Where else do we ask people to work for free in the health care system?

The former Tory Minister of Health seems to - well, Liberal now - seems to think that's fine, that's done all the time but it's not. The other health care providers in the system receive remuneration for being on call. So there is a very serious problem here in terms of fairness. Is it fair to ask these workers doing the same work as workers in acute care to do it for less pay? Is it fair to ask these workers to not have anything covered in terms of their on-call hours and is it fair to impose on these workers a process to assign some notion of the essentialness of home support when that isn't a standard that is applied in the system on a day-to-day basis under normal circumstances?

Mr. Speaker, we're very interested in hearing what the public has to say through this process. We will continue to ask questions and try to have a discussion with the government members to encourage them to think differently about the path they are putting this province on with the health care workers, not just these workers but all of the health care workers in our system. With that, I will take my place and I look forward to having an opportunity to speak further, after the Law Amendments Committee process.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants West.

MR. CHUCK PORTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, want to take a few minutes this morning to address this very important issue before us today. It's unfortunate that we're here and certainly, as has been said, that we were not able to complete an agreement through the negotiation process. It is disappointing that the union did come back and the workers with an offer recently to go back to the table and that that couldn't be accepted. We now find ourselves here having to worry about where we go.

It's almost confusing in some ways, this is an interesting piece - as a former health care worker, somebody who has worked with some of these people, who certainly knows them, who has spent a lot of years going into homes on emergency calls and on non-emergency calls, by the way, whether you were transferring someone to an

appointment or actually going to an emergency call at their home and seeing sometimes what that means and the distress that can create on families, and the hardships.

I guess the role of that home care worker is what I want to touch on a little bit in these few minutes and the importance of what they do. If you were to contact any of those families that have the good fortune of having our home care workers come in to do however little or however much - it could be an hour, it could be light duty stuff, it could be very critical stuff when it comes to their opinion. When we talk about what is emergency and what is non-emergency, it's what is necessary that matters here. That's why home care has been set up in this province, to deal with a couple of things and one is to keep people in their homes.

We've all stood in this place over the years, and I've been here quite a few years now, and have heard how important it is that people, whether they be seniors or disabled or whatever the case may be, it doesn't matter - age or gender, none of that matters. The fact that they require home care is what matters. They want to stay at home, they don't want to be in the hospital.

We know there's a huge cost savings; we've been down that road by being able to stay at home and be cared for at home. We still talk about that when we talk about building new home care facilities or long-term care facilities. We've talked many times about how that's not necessarily the right model or the right way. We don't want everybody living in a long-term care facility, especially if they don't need to be there. There's an opportunity to be at home, we've created that with the folks like Northwood home care, the VON and others. The VON has been around a long time, as we all know.

The importance of what they do I can't stress enough, having some first-hand knowledge of being there. As members, if we haven't already, we will run into families who are often looking for home care to be set up. They'll come to our offices and we'll deal with that, we'll direct them to the Department of Health and Wellness and the right channels to, hopefully, get home care set up at some point.

We know that outside of the many hundreds now, or the couple of thousand who are receiving home care, there's probably that many more waiting who wish they were receiving some sort of assistance at home to help them stay in their homes, whether that's one day a week, five days a week, whatever that might be.

When we think about the term, Mr. Speaker, or when I think about the term and I'll just reflect on it myself, when I think about that I go, essential service, what does that really mean? I know the government has tried to outline it in the bill. I don't know that you can put every word necessary in a bill that states the issues and the importance of that home care and the necessities for each individual who is out there. You try to capture it all; I don't think that you can. It's like any bill, I don't think you can put every word into that - and there are a number of ministers and former Ministers of Health in this very Chamber

who I think would probably agree - dealing with the complexity of that large department, how do you fit it all in, how do you take care of every single person's issue? It's very, very difficult.

I have had the pleasure of being in this House now near eight years - came in on the government side, sat in the Third Party, and now in the Official Opposition. I've learned many things and that there are no completely right answers to anything, and that is unfortunate because oftentimes people think that may be a little bit easier because you can swipe with a pen and oh that's good. But it's not always good for everybody and in this circumstance today, I think about that. Every single issue of home care is not the same - there is a wide variety of people with different issues when it comes to home care. There are people who need home care coming in every day to help them get up so that they can go to work, or whatever that might be, or to just have a lifestyle at home where they're not lying in bed all day. That is a huge need; I see that as a very urgent need. What will happen when nobody shows up for two or three days, potentially like now and this weekend?

At the same time having said that, Mr. Speaker, I also know that those people out there working are very passionate about what they do. I have received e-mails just like everyone else in this House has, I'm sure. Most of mine have come from local workers I know. Some of them don't deem themselves as essential service, in all honesty. When I look at them I wonder, how can we do without you? Can you just imagine if you were one of those people receiving the necessary home care that is required and them coming to your home - how can you do without them? You can't do without them. We know that; we appreciate each and every one of those workers.

I heard the member of the Third Party, the interim Leader, speak a few minutes ago about apples and oranges. Well, I want to be very clear as well on this piece - myself nor anyone in this Official Opposition, the Progressive Conservative Party in this province, refers to any person or any worker, especially in health care or any other job, as apples or oranges. It's not that simple. We respect each and every one of them and we treat them all the same because they deserve that; nothing less will do. Hence the reason we're here today trying to work through this process.

It's unfortunate that we're here. The fair treatment would have been to fix this before we got here, same as last July when we were here negotiating the paramedic strike. The jobs may be different, the need may not be quite the same, but I believe the need still exists. As a paramedic, when we were called out it might be to do a transfer for somebody going to dialysis - is that need an urgent need? To some degree yes, because they have to be there three days a week, that need is still an urgent need but it's not like some siren going down the road. It's a scheduled appointment whereby they need to be on time to complete the task, to provide the care, to provide the treatment.

That's what we're talking about here. Nobody would want to see that happen, fortunately it didn't. It did back a number of years ago. I was a paramedic when we were on

strike for a short window of opportunity - and was that pleasant? No. That wasn't pleasant for the people here - I wasn't here at that time, but I was on the street. That wasn't pleasant there either, just like it is not pleasant for those folks out there today, and around the province, going through this or about to go through it. We know that is not where they want to be. I've never ever heard anyone tell me we want to be on strike; they see no benefit to that. Historically we could look back and ask if there have been benefits to anyone going on strike, and there would probably be many argue that there haven't been many benefits, if any at all. There have been tough times for people on strike.

That's one of the issues with this particular bill though, that it's about being able to be out there perhaps after we go through this piece. They're going to go back to work; they've got a few weeks to get to the table to try to come up with an agreement. But what if they don't? You heard our Leader talk about the B.C. piece. That is not a favourable piece, obviously. You are then sort of trying to schedule and pick and choose, and that is going to put some pressure on the rest of the system; it has to.

There are things like respite for patients who are in the situation I referred to a few minutes ago. That gentleman, as an example, is going to desperately need some respite in a facility somewhere. I hope that if we get there, he and others like him will have to be looked after in some way. I know that a letter was tabled about what other options might be in place and they're ramping up with contingencies and so on - that contingency can only last so long, but what it does right off the bat, immediately, this morning, it is going to create a backlog. We know that; it's going to start slowing the rest of the system down.

Some of these people who are at home are quite possibly going to need an ambulance in a day or two, if the workers are still out on strike. Again, the issues are so variable on what home care really means. If they're going in to treat somebody's infected leg or something like that, and you go a few days without that, that can have serious ramifications for that person's health. Then it's on to more serious.

What do families do? What if they have no family? That exists in a number of circumstances as well, where we are absolutely dependent on the health care worker, who are definitely a necessity. I don't know if "essential" is the right word. I think that one group of health care employees is as valuable as the next. I'm not separating them at all. I believe they're all essential; we need them, otherwise we wouldn't have them. It doesn't matter if you're paramedics - your roles might be different, just like the paramedic roles are different.

We have ACPs, BCPs, and there are still a few old P2s around that were there in the early days. We always had different scopes of practice. I'm not sure we've taken a really good look at what that means when it comes to this level, but they are indeed a necessity that we cannot do without. Otherwise I don't think they'd be in place. They would not have created this. The VONs have been around for - I can't tell you how many years, but a long time.

It's unfortunate that we've reached this point. We should have had an agreement long before now. We have put forward a bill today that we've put forward before. We're going to put forward some amendments that we think - at least on this side of the House, or this Party, the PC Party - would help. I hope they do get some consideration. We'd love to have it at least considered, looked at, debated.

There has to be a better way, and we have to find that. We cannot continue to come back to this Legislature every time something happens. It's just not the right thing to do. People have to have a choice. People need to be able to negotiate freely. I believe we agree on that in this House, that we would like to work through that process.

Unfortunately, it fails. It's unfortunate that it's failed this week. It may take a while to get through it - in all honesty, one hour is too long to have somebody off in health care. This morning somebody was depending on some of these very fine people attending their doors to look after their needs. That's not happening right now. How far behind will that put us? It will back us up, there's no question.

I think it's important just to take these few minutes to put a face to the health care side of this and to what this really means. We have to be protecting the people of Nova Scotia first, who are in desperate need of home care. There are people like that out there. Others can argue that this is not one method fits all, not everybody is just going to have light or medium - there are so many variables here. I can't stress that enough, having been there and having seen what these folks do.

The other big piece of this is, if you talk about efficiencies, have we actually calculated the efficiencies of the number of home care workers out there providing a service to keep those clients at home, and the savings that that is creating to the government, to the Department of Health and Wellness, and to the province in general? It's huge. When you look at those efficiencies and they talk about wanting a raise, there should be money there to be found. Maybe you can balance that out. I know and agree that it absolutely has to be a balance. At the same time, more importantly, we have to treat these workers fairly.

In my opinion, they are indeed - again, I'm not very good with - the meaning of "essential" is so big, but I do want to confirm my thoughts on "essential." They are needed. Just call up any one of those people waiting for them today, and they're not there. They won't tell you they didn't need them today or that they don't want them today. When are they coming back, is what they want to know - when are they coming back? That's what's important to each and every one of them, and each and every one of those family members now are making arrangements - where family can - to try to help out. Thank God all who have families have that ability. There are some who don't who will be greatly affected.

I can't stress enough the importance of getting through this process today and hearing what those workers have to say. I look forward to that in the Committee on Law

Amendments. Perhaps they'll change my mind, and they'll say no, we're not essential. I plan to ask those questions. If workers come in, or depending on who might come in, I want to ask, do you not think that you're an essential service out there? I think they're going to say yes.

Again, maybe people are confused as to what that term might mean. Maybe they don't consider it because they're just so passionate about what they do. It's something they do. They probably can't totally describe how they feel about it.

Some of them have tried through e-mails, and have done a pretty good job, and others have been very upset in referencing other things, as we know. That's fine too. That's all about the democracy in this fine province that we go through in the process.

Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure how many speakers are coming through for the Law Amendments Committee - I assume there's probably quite a few, but you never know. I look forward to moving over to that process, as well, and getting through that and doing what we need to do from there and having a look at the amendments that we are going to propose and hoping for some consideration, if it may make things better. So with those few words, I will take my seat.

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

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, I stand in my place to say a few words with respect to Bill No. 30. It is interesting how we got to here, it is interesting because it was highlighted by the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party a few short months ago and at that point how the Premier felt about workers' rights and, indeed, his front benches. My, how times have changed.

You know in Opposition the Liberal Party is often one to talk strongly about workers' rights. It is interesting because the Party to the right - and many times they are to the right - I know where they stand. It's not rope-a-dope with them, as they say in the boxing vernacular, it's very much as we saw by the bill, we saw it by their notice of motion today - I know where they stand. I have every confidence that that's where they stand on issues. While I disagree, I respect their forthrightness.

Mr. Speaker, when you look at Bill No. 30, what you have to do is really look at the Liberal Party, who again, in Opposition, purports to be a friend of the working person. Well, I'd like to give you a very short history of some of the disastrous issues that occurred regarding working women and men on the Liberal watch. I think I'll start with the most horrendous, if you will: that was the death of William Davis. That was in 1925. Now some will say that's a long time ago but we commemorate that day every year on June 11th. That was when clearly a government took the side of an employer over working women and men.

In my hometown, Mr. Speaker, this employer closed the stores, which was hard on the women and children. Then what did the tyrants do? They cut off the electricity and the water. Whose side back then did the Liberals fall on? Was it the working women and men, the hard-working coal miners? No, it was clearly on the side of the employer, totally on the side of the employer, and William Davis is dead because of the provincial police ordered in by a Liberal Government. I don't need a hard-core history lesson to be reminded of what Liberals do.

Let's look at a few other pieces: who was the author of the Michelin bill that split off rights in organizing, Mr. Speaker? A Liberal Government, they treat a group of employees differently than others. That seemed to be in their mind perfectly fine.

In 2014 we're in the 20th Anniversary of the Savage Government, and oh my goodness, what they did - I mean we have this bill here and for those of us who remember, what we have is the Steen bill that clearly pitted worker against worker. But again, Mr. Speaker, the Liberals fell on the side of the employer.

Now I would not be surprised if the Tory Party did that because that's what they're kind of tagged with, but do you know what? They would say here's what I'm doing. Again, I would probably - no, not probably - I know I would disagree with it but again, you respectfully disagree, and I think that's fine in this House.

When this government was elected, one of the first things they did was weaken first contract legislation - went after workers again. Now we find ourselves here with a bill. You know what is even more interesting? Yesterday they announced a former Liberal Cabinet minister - an Education Minister - from Ontario, who is now going to look after our taxation. I think the person's name is Laurel Broten. Here is the same person who froze teachers' wages and imposed collective agreements.

At the end of the day, we know who is behind all of this. It's the Premier. The Premier yesterday sent a letter telling everybody, I'm cutting off negotiations, I don't accept it. Did Northwood say that? Did VON say that? No. The Premier. This is the Premier's strike. However he wants to characterize it, it's the Premier's fault. He was given an option. As I'll paraphrase Brian Mulroney - sir, you were given options. For those of us who have been around, we know what the end of that quote is, Mr. Speaker. (Interruptions) Mark the calendar. Everybody has some goodness about them.

Let's get back a bit here about this bill. You don't even know where to start, because it is so bad. For anybody to think that you see some timelines in there, and they think, whoa, this is going to be done like that - jig time - done, it's finished, and the people will go back. We'll deal with the problems around defining who is essential - if indeed that is definable with this group of workers - but the fact is that this legislation will impact in the vicinity of - I think it is 19 locals.

Each one of those locals has to go out and get an agreement. Each one of them has to go if they can't reach it with their employer, which every rational person would say they probably won't, because they couldn't do it before. So you're probably going to bring in the Chair of the Labour Board to arbitrate it, and now that board is tasked with finding 19 collective agreements. How will this work? Anybody in this province who has anything to do with labour law knows that is going to be an onerous task, and it's going to be a long task. The Premier knows that full well, and that is why he has done this.

What are we going to do? One local will come, they'll negotiate, they'll get in the queue. Another will negotiate, they'll get in the queue. This is going to be literally - if it's less than a year, it would be phenomenal, but for the life of me I can't understand that. I don't know why the Premier thinks that's okay, that all these workers - 19 locals - who assist some of our most vulnerable people will be in chaos for years. Then - if and when they finally do get an agreement with these locals of who is in and who is out, as they say - we don't know how long the strikes will last.

Again, we can look at years. We go back to the British Columbia issue around paramedics - a very serious issue - but if you look at where this is going out, and tentacles in all parts of the province, this is very concerning - not only for our Party, but for the people who rely on that service. Mr. Speaker, may I also say that people who are in the workplace, it sets up a dynamic of worker against worker and worker against supervisor/employer, which does nothing for the workplace atmosphere. These are people, as previous speakers have said, who work long, hard hours at minimum wage, they have split shifts, shifts that are stopped on them, and these are all very serious issues. That's hard enough on morale, but if you don't know if you're going to work for a couple of days and be off a couple of days, you don't know when this darn work stoppage is going to be finished, it has to be hard.

What we want, Mr. Speaker, is a long vision. I would contest that both Northwood and its workers do not want to see what's happening today outside this building or, more importantly, inside this building. I don't think that groups like the VON and Northwood think this is the way to settle this. I believe that those sets of employers believe that the way to settle this is truly at the bargaining table, not with an ultimatum on the table.

Mr. Speaker, also it was noticeable yesterday in the scrum - and this is why it's the Premier's strike - he said in the scrum the point that you either accept this or the offer may be worse. Now to me with my limited knowledge, that borders on unfair bargaining; that will be for others to decide. But they are serious comments - you had better do what I tell you or I'm going to get you. That is not the way to conduct labour relations in a business or with the workers in this province. I commend the professional way that the parties to this agreement, the direct parties, the VON and the other groups, Northwood and so on. They have not tried any bully tactics or any of that; they have been very forthright. These are groups, again - truly all they want is parity.

That's not a whole lot to ask in this day and age. They're not asking - Mr. Speaker, if we want to take a view of percentages, as the government is wont to, I know they kind of walked by the idea of essential services and the necessities, but they want to use percentages and we've got to look at the percentages of what - these workers are making in the range of \$16-plus an hour and all this, the raises they're looking for over and above what we would refer to, and all Parties would agree, it's referred to as "pattern bargaining", after the pattern they would need in the third year would like some top-ups so they would be levelled out. They're not looking, as has kind of been hinted by government, that they're trying to break pattern. It's not uncommon in collective bargaining with public groups that you would take that money and smooth it out and allow them to make the same amount of money as the folks in the hospital settings.

I want to talk a bit, I guess, about the work and what these workers face and the respect they have for their clients. Mr. Speaker, there are many times that they have to - or they're even told by the employer, and rightfully so - that if they feel their person could be injured or whatever, they are told like the back way, if the steps aren't shovelled and the walk isn't shovelled and those types of things. But you talk to the workers and they'll say look, I know I can't do this and I shouldn't do this but I've got to get in because I have to do this job. That's the type of people that are employed in this industry.

It's not one that they seek any particular glory in; it's the reality that they do very good work in very trying circumstances. They're in and out of private homes, which can involve a myriad of situations from risk of injury from another person to pets and animals and so on. There are all these issues that these workers have to comply with.

The Premier has decided that they get paid too much. The Premier has decided that they're not worth the same level of money that they would receive in a hospital setting. (Interruption) I hear the Minister of Energy say, that's our offer. There are two things, if I may say, about that - they're the government. They could have made an offer. They didn't. They did not make an offer, and that's why we're here today. That Premier said no, no, no.

The Minister of Energy can say what he wants about whose level it was - he can say all he wants and he can have a smug look on his face, but I'm going to tell you, that Premier could have said no. That Premier could have negotiated. You guys had all the answers when you were over here, so don't tell us.

Mr. Speaker, through you (Interruption)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. I'll just remind the honourable member to direct his comments toward the Chair and to keep this on a high level and not personal, please.

MR. CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, thank you for your wise words. I will do my utmost to uphold that. It's very frustrating when you're blamed for things that are out of your control.

The government and the Premier have this issue where they don't want to level out the wage pattern for these workers. Why is that? Clearly it's setting other health care issues up. We know that the Capital District nurses have soundly rejected their last offer. It scares me, because I've been to this rodeo before, and I'm sorry I can't see anything but that this is the Savage Government repeating itself all over again when it comes to balancing the books on the backs of workers. The shame of it all is, they won't even balance the books. That's really the shame. They'll put workers through misery and they'll still have a deficit.

But the reality here is, what are we going to do when it comes to other health care issues? Are we going to be back here again? One would wonder, if this was so important to government, why are we here on the day of the strike and not last Friday, a week ago? There are about four tables that were served with basically the essential services document, if you will, as the tables broke off. As someone who has been fortunate enough to sit at tables and represent some workers, I recognize that pattern too. It was the heavy hand of government.

I just can't believe that this Liberal Government believes that it's anybody's fault but theirs that we're at this point. Why would they choose the day the workers walked out - not can walk out, but have walked out - or even the day before, where there could have been some resolution? Why have they done this? Again, I think this government - in a misguided way - are trying to pick winners and losers. What they're trying to do is some kind of conflict between the workers and their clients and I think they're wrong - well I know they're wrong on that, Mr. Speaker.

We've got many aspects in the health care industry that the government should be working with these workers. They shouldn't be using them as - as I've often heard - I looked over some old debates about when I sat on that side and I was accused of using workers as pawns. I remember the Leader of the Liberal Party saying that we shouldn't offer groups 1 per cent and 1 per cent, that we had loads of money. That's what the Liberal Leader said then, in Opposition, we had loads of money and we shouldn't be offering 1 and 1, so I don't know what he thought was fair. But do you know what? We got agreements with 1 per cent and 1 per cent.

The Tory Party, he was saying the same thing, that we were using the workers as pawns. Now if they don't believe me they can just look up the debate in Hansard around the members of NSTU who worked at NSCC, in an emergency debate, they can find it there. Those were their words, not mine.

Mr. Speaker, what has changed, except the side of the aisle they sit on? I mean these are people who, as I keep saying, are making a minimum amount, just a bit over minimum wage, doing work out in snowstorms, they have their own vehicles that I don't think they get adequately paid for, you know, with the conditions of the roads today. Why pick a fight with them? Why would you want to pick a fight with these working women and

some men, other than to kind of fire a shot, as I say, across the bow and say that nobody else had better cross me because this is what you're going to get.

As we realize, no matter what happens here today, if it's the government's wish, this bill will pass. If it's the government's wish, it will be enacted and the sorrowful chain of events will occur. They will begin to unravel and we'll have for quite a few years, Mr. Speaker - between the time that everyone can come up with a definition of essential services to the conclusion of getting a collective agreement - it will probably be some other government's mandate or issue. That's the reality of it, they want to tell workers and they want to assure the clients that this is a no-brainer, that as I said earlier, this is going to happen in no time. Well it's not.

They've also picked a piece of legislation and they've cherry-picked it. They've taken the worst legislation they could get to inflict this on workers. One has to wonder, what took them so long to come up with such a bad piece of legislation; I guess that's the question. I don't know where the answer lies. It's not a balanced piece of legislation on its face, it's clearly tilted away from the worker, Mr. Speaker.

We have these workers out on the street, we have them not providing services. We just step away from the Northwood issue for a minute, this legislation almost digs in - is this close to digging in - to ratified agreements. There are issues here, there are locals in Cape Breton that I know were about ready to ratify these agreements, they're ready to go to the table but because of the turmoil the Premier has put these tables in, they don't know. Why would you use the broad brush of government to attack locals that have agreements, that don't need the government's heavy hand all over it?

Yet that's what this government has done, through you, Mr. Speaker. They've put in jeopardy collective agreements that would have been signed and the workers would have enjoyed their raises and they would have moved on. But no, because the government wants to be seen in the light they're being seen in today, they're causing serious disruption in and around the health care of this province. For a long-time, we've had issues about how we treat our most vulnerable in this province. Today we see this happening with the most vulnerable, mostly our seniors that have lost service and our workers who are vulnerable because of the position they were forced into.

Now, Mr. Speaker, one of the issues that was raised yesterday to the Premier was an offer to, in the third year, go to arbitration. In context the Premier kept pounding on that this is too rich, this is too rich, this is too rich. Well, if that is accurate, any reasonable arbiter would agree with him, they would say, no. If what he's saying is factual - that it goes beyond the mandate and this is unheard of - that I would believe any reasonable arbiter would agree with that. Now with that said, if the same people who gave the instructions to Legislative Counsel to write this bill were writing their defence in front of the arbitrator they probably would lose because it's so bad. But I would think that in the

preponderance of evidence around this fact, they would find a reasonableness around this; they would see that it's doable.

We all know in this room that when arbitrators look at an issue as it relates to government, the issue that they will not put in front of them or accept as an argument is ability to pay, not like the private sector where in the private sector an arbitrator would look and say, the "ABC Widget Company" would be put out of business if we were to impose or agree to this type of agreement, then it's ability to pay. I understand that, Mr. Speaker, and I understand how arbiters would look at the issue as it relates to the government and say, well, that isn't one of the cornerstones of how they come up to agreement. But with that said, what the arbiter would look at is the reasonableness of it and the precedent that it sets.

So it doesn't necessarily say, would the government go bankrupt if we allowed this much money percentage, no, but is this reasonable under the circumstances. Are these workers disadvantaged to the point that we should give them a levelling, a topping-up, however you want to call it, Mr. Speaker, that that would be the argument I would believe that would be in front of an arbiter. I would hope that they could put forward a reasonable argument if what they're saying is factual. If they're saying on one side that, as the Premier puts it, that it's about the protection of these people in caregiving and the ability for the workers to get this wage that he believes that it's too much money for these workers, then you can draw on what type of work they do compared to the wage they get and is it reasonable.

I would suspect that there are many, many fine arbitrators, not only in this province but throughout the country, that could look at that and make a reasonable decision on what the agreement should contain. The idea that we don't even want to go there, we want to legislate, we want to tell you who is essential and who is not.

So let's look at some of the possible issues here. Let's say they said 20 per cent could strike, so you have eight people working - and we'll just use round numbers, so 10 - and two out, it's always in chaos. How are we even going to - look, I hate to even mention this, but how are you going to find out who works and who doesn't work? Who picks "the winners and the losers"? Who gets paid a salary this week and who gets strike pay?

The system is in flux. I've mentioned this many times, Mr. Speaker, I don't know what part of that the Premier doesn't get; it's so important that these workers need to know. In a great way, too, I would contend that like so many other issues as it relates to a service-type industry, that many of these people have the same clients, that so-and-so sees Mr. so-and-so on quite a regular basis and they've developed a camaraderie, they've developed the understanding, they know the nuances of the client, they know certain things.

Now if we were to accept the government's position of a merry-go-round of workers, where we don't know who's coming and who's going - like, some worker who

has worked out around Timberlea for years, knows the area and so on, all of a sudden we might get someone from Eastern Passage who doesn't know that area as well, it's those issues. Why don't we think of the turmoil that is caused there? But you know, they've come to enjoy the work that a certain individual does for them.

I know in my own case I often get calls from seniors who are receiving home care. They say look, they appreciate it but they just changed it on me, is there anything you can do? And I say, well, you know, it's the right - but they say, so-and-so has treated me so far.

Mr. Speaker, not to pick on the member for Inverness, but if I can just use his geographic area as an issue because he has one of the larger constituencies in which - and I have to say, without a doubt, one of the greatest counties in this province is Inverness County. I have no problem saying that. (Applause) A little light on the MLA - no, I use that as an example. You know, if you have somebody in Troy who needs a worker and the worker, let's say, has to come from Cheticamp, that's a darn long haul? So these are the issues we have to face but a lot of times the people, if you're there - and I'm not trying to say this is exactly how it's done, but if the person is, say, running it out of the courthouse in Port Hood, they have a better idea, and say look, I'm better off sending a worker from Judique up to Troy than to grab somebody - and I think the world of Cheticamp but the distance is what I'm talking about here - take them over to Troy. That's an issue here.

I say that about knowing your geography because I have to - what really comes out of this part is what's going on here today, Mr. Speaker, is a precursor to what's going to happen to labour when everything is run out of Halifax. When the Minister of Health and Wellness gets his way and everything is run out of Halifax, and by extension the Premier's Office, this is what we're going to have: everything you want will be decided on Granville Street and not on Main Street. That's the issue here today.

If you want to look to see what the Premier is doing with this bill today, it's saying to health care workers that we run this, and we're going to chop and dice what the DHAs look like, but we're going to run it out of Halifax, and that's how it's going to be. Bill No. 30 is the precursor to how they're going to attack working women and men when it comes to the DHAs. This is what this is; this is the first volley in the fight at workers as it relates to health care, because they don't agree with health care being run out of Halifax.

Again, I don't mean to pick too much on my friend, the member for Inverness, but I can understand the issues they have as it relates to having health care in their DHA run largely out of Sydney. So I mean, if that's an issue, compounded when it's just one and it's run out of Granville Street - that's the issue that scares me, and this is where the rubber is going to hit the road. If the government thinks that they'll get this bill passed and there will be labour peace because they jammed a piece of legislation through, they're sadly mistaken. If they have this clumsy, awkward attitude toward collective bargaining at this level, what are they are going to do when unions are forced into runoff elections when it comes to the DHAs?

That's why I say that this bill is only partly about what went on here, because really, the government had an option last Friday, after they laid those offers on the table for everybody and then stealthily walked away and waited for a group to walk out. They could have had a bill in here. They could have called us back early; they could have called us back - I would say it could have been Friday, maybe more easily last Monday, and there would be no work stoppage. They had that right. That's why this is the Premier's strike. This is the Premier's strike, make no bones about it.

He had a decision to make. He had a decision last week to call the House back earlier to stop this; he had a decision as late as yesterday to accept an offer, and he refused it. He clearly put himself in the middle of collective bargaining, because it's his signature that says no, we do not accept your offer of arbitration. It wasn't the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education, it wasn't the Minister of Health and Wellness, and it wasn't the CEO of Northwood or the CEO or whomever of the VON. It was the Premier of the Province of Nova Scotia who said no, you get paid too much. That's what he's saying: you get paid too much.

Now one has to wonder what other little nuggets will come after Bill No. 30. They have absolutely no ideas. I mean, they brought in someone to look after the tax system that's vilified in the Province of Ontario for the heavy-handed, mean-spirited way in which she handled the teachers. Mr. Speaker, how can the people of Nova Scotia have confidence in this person? If anybody had talked to their friends at NSTU and said, what do you think of this person, it would be interesting to get a reaction.

But you know, this is great. It goes back to the fundamentalness of this argument, and that is that a Liberal is a Liberal is a Liberal. They don't care about whatever things you may have done in another life or whatever. You're a Liberal. That's your qualification. We've seen that with other issues in front of this House before, where people were given positions and when you parse it through, the only qualification that person had for a job was that they were a Liberal.

I wonder how many of those health or home care workers consider themselves Liberals today, Mr. Speaker. Not too many, I don't think, that they were probably more hurt . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: Said he worked for the Post Office.

MR. CORBETT: Yes, they may be working at another job, more secure anyway and better hours. Mr. Speaker, these guys are trying to give me all kinds of rabbit tracks so you will get mad at me, but I'll try to stay on point here.

The reality with this though is that I think these workers, like many Nova Scotians, believed this Premier when he said he was going to do things differently - but they didn't know what "differently" meant. How he's intruded on 19 collective agreements with one

bill - 19 collective agreements - why would he do that? This is not hyperbole - why would he throw that in disarray like that? Deal with what's in front of you; deal with what's causing the angst and the concern. But, no, the Premier gave broad definitions to encumber workers and then used a broad brush to bring in all these locals - again, some of them on the verge of settling.

Who is giving this Premier advice? We don't know. I believe that the buck stops over at his office on the 7th floor and that's what it is - this is his strike. He has to tell those people, many of them by virtue if you look over there, probably voted for them and said why have you let me down? In the infamous words in the Black Sox scandal when the little fellow says, "Say it ain't so, Joe." - that's the way the workers feel. Say it ain't so, Premier, say you didn't do this to us. Say you didn't take away our rights; say that you respected us. But you know what? The answer, if it were forthright, wouldn't be a good one for them to hear.

They have in front of them really two issues here. One is the issue of what the Cabinet has to do and then there's the one of what the backbenchers have to do. Later on today, some of the backbenchers will sit on the Committee on Law Amendments and they will hear many stories. I ask you to do a couple of things: listen earnestly to what the workers have to say, ask questions about their work, ask them about the value of their work, and then come back and say I've got to vote my conscience on this. That's what I ask the backbenchers to do.

There used to be a member for Cape Breton South who would come in and point people out and he'd say you're not going to be here, and you're not going to be here. I found that extremely disrespectful, not only to the members, but to the public that elected us. Nobody can stand up on either side of this House and start that stuff, saying you're not going to be here. You know what? As I said earlier about the Progressive Conservatives, they're all honourable members in this House and I respect them - I don't always agree with them, but I respect them. So it's not my place as an MLA to say you're not getting re-elected. It was mean-spirited then and it would be mean-spirited today. All I'm asking in a respectful way, and I mean this sincerely, that they would hear these people. The one truism in that side of the argument is that you're not bound as Executive Council, you can make up your mind on this.

I'm sure that you've heard from your leadership of how this unfolds and what this means and they've probably even said - and one of those guys, probably the member for Cape Breton Centre, will probably stand up and say this very thing. I don't know but what I do wish is that when they do get over to the Committee on Law Amendments, I really want to say this, that nobody from the government encumbers the ability for people to speak at the Law Amendments Committee or inhibits members from asking questions at the Law Amendments Committee because that's really where the rubber hits the road for the people of Nova Scotia, it's over there.

Mr. Speaker, I think I can speak about this with a little bit of authority, some days over there it's not always comfortable to be government over in the Law Amendments Committee, it's not always fun, but do you know what? There wasn't a day over there that we didn't learn something, our backbenchers didn't learn when we were in government, and our ministers didn't learn and because we're being told by our bosses, we're being told by the Nova Scotia collective who we represent and what they expect of us.

This is not a one-off ballot question, what this is is what fundamentally I do as a Nova Scotian and they want to tell you. Mr. Speaker, that's what I would like for our friends from government who sit on the Law Amendments Committee, when we go over there and we'll hear from, I suspect, quite a few workers and their stories and appreciate that many of these people are not of the Joe Howe ilk. They're not going to be able to speak for long measures of time. They are true and honest Nova Scotians who want to come and tell their side of the story; to a government that said I don't want to hear your side of the story, to a front bench that said look, no, no; to a Premier who put his name on a letter and kicked the offer out.

They want to be heard, they want to tell you their story. I ask everybody and the onus is on us, too, as Opposition, to hear those voices and to find out what they do. I would suspect, as many of us suspect, we'll find out the hardships of their job and also the caring and loving manner in which they do their job, that they are not taking strike action as something that is a knee-jerk.

Mr. Speaker, in this province there are many hurdles you have to get over before you are even in a strike position. Again, in my years of being around collective bargaining, with the exception of maybe one or two small instances, I've never seen where the group really wanted to go on strike; you are losing wages, you are in the job you love, in this case here you are looking after people you love, so this is not a moment they've come to lightly, this is not something they think is fun. If someone would just look outside now, the snow is falling. Ordinarily they'd be out driving in this, from client to client.

I don't think if you have that attachment to your work, that you are going to go and all of a sudden say look, I want to go on strike, I don't care if my clients have services or not. I would think that the members who walked out today walked out with very heavy hearts. They walked out with - what has my government done to me? I care for the most vulnerable but I also know that I have a family that I have to support, I know that I have bills to pay. What I want is to live in my Nova Scotia and I want to live here making a wage, I want to raise my family here.

I want to make sure that the person who is looking after my mother, my grandfather, my aunt, my uncle, my cousin, whoever, Mr. Speaker, is cared for properly, that that person who comes in is making a decent wage, that they are participating in our Nova Scotia. Is that too much to ask? Is it right for a Premier to go and take a letter, two

paragraphs or less, and say look, we don't want to talk, we don't want to arbitrate, we don't think enough of you to do that.

Mr. Speaker, that is wrong, it's so wrong. It's time for the Premier to take a leadership role and say do you know what? We should go to arbitration. This is what they've offered, all the other avenues have been exhausted. But no, what we want to do is put 19 locals in peril here so they will be years in flux, that's what I'd rather do.

So if they mismanage this work stoppage in such a haphazard way, Mr. Speaker, what are we going to do when it comes to runoff elections for the DHAs? What are we going to do when we put worker against worker? Where will you end up?

We really need to look at this bill in the spectre of what is going to transpire. We're being told publicly through the Minister of Health and Wellness that we're going to see legislation come this Fall. Well, we also don't know come that time who the minister will consider to be frequent flyers and so on - as he likes to put it and pick and choose winners and losers in the health care system. That argument is for a whole other day, when we find out who he calls abusers. If there are abusers out there, let us know. He appears to know but again what he says is - that's not the view of government, that's my personal view.

That's what we're looking at here in health care. That is the turmoil. We can say what we want about who did what and said what when, but the Premier, this is one fact that cannot be denied, it was the Premier who rejected a final offer. We know it, it's in writing; he knows it, he could have stopped this and he chose not to. He could have brought us back last week, Monday, earlier, but yet here we find ourselves with people on the street, as they say, because he didn't want to.

In closing, I want to say this is a sad day for Nova Scotians because like Spring, new governments bring many expectations with them. You would have hoped for more, but I've never seen a Spring turned into a winter of discontent more quickly than with this government just because of its heavy-handedness. There is a way of treating workers respectfully. I respect their clients, as they do; I respect the workers. This government, this Premier, does not respect these workers. He's doing this in the force of an 11th hour push - he's going to try to make legislators push for things. I'm going to tell you, we will watch how they operate in the Committee on Law Amendments and we will judge ourselves accordingly.

Make no mistake about it, this is the Nova Scotia Premier's strike and it's his fault. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid.

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, often when I stand in this House I say how much of a privilege it is and an honour to stand, but with this issue before us it's

unfortunate that I have to stand up and talk and debate and bring up issues around the legislation that has been brought forward by the Liberal Government.

We all, in this Legislature, on all sides of the House, bring with us reasons why we are in this Legislature. We all bring with us experiences that we have had through our lives, as where we work and where we come from - and I've said this many times on the floor of this Legislature, here close to my 11th year representing the riding of Sackville-Cobequid, why I chose to get involved in politics and why I chose to try to improve the lives of Nova Scotians, especially health care workers.

I've had the privilege and honour to be in all positions of this House. When I first got elected, coming in as an Opposition member, as a young paramedic with no experience in the Legislature but a lot of experience with the health care system, and a lot of that experience was interaction with a number of disciplines within the health care sector, and many of those were with home care workers, often being called to a residence home because a home care worker had picked up an ailment, an illness, an injury, and try to make sure those people that they look after get the best possible care.

I've appreciated all the interactions that I've had over the years as a medic, with mostly women - no offence to some of the men - who work in a field that is extremely important. One of the reasons I got involved was because of how paramedics were treated at the time, Mr. Speaker. One of the things I always looked forward to trying to make sure happened is that they are treated fairly and that fairness, especially when it comes to negotiations and contracts and wages and benefits, is at the forefront of any decision.

As my Leader indicated when she rose to speak on this bill, she understands some of the challenges the current government is going through. For example, the decisions that come across the desk of the Minister of Health and Wellness are not easy decisions to deal with. I had the privilege to sit in that capacity for a number of years and it was a challenge. I'm not going to kid you, every day was a challenge. But when we were looking upon especially the collective bargaining issues that we saw over the last four years - as I've dealt with over almost 11 years - at the forefront of that was making sure that we looked at who was involved in that particular - either if it's a local or a union, but the workers and trying to figure out what they were trying to achieve. The number one concern was to make sure that we treated them fairly, we treated them with respect.

I have to say that with this legislation the way it is written, the way it encompasses I think about 19 collective locals, Mr. Speaker, it doesn't reflect a government's willingness to look at things fairly and provide a piece of legislation that is fair to the workers of Nova Scotia.

I listened intently to the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education when she rose to speak on second reading of this bill, I have a habit of writing down when people stand up and when people sit down so I keep track. Unfortunately the minister spoke for a little less

than three minutes on this issue. I wrote down some of the comments she made; one was “vital and valuable workers”, that home care support workers were vital and valuable. I would agree with the minister on that one, they are vital and they’re valuable and if you listen or talk to people who have been served by the men and women who provide home care support, you’ll hear from them, the amazing services they provide them.

Many of these vulnerable Nova Scotians have limited exchanges and interactions with their neighbours. Sometimes, many of them, the only people they talk to are the home care workers when they come in to support them, to maybe make a meal for them, to get them ready or out of bed. That exchange is so important. I heard it and saw it when I was a paramedic, I heard it and saw it when I was a member of the Opposition, I heard it and saw it when I was the Minister of Health and Wellness. Many of them, and I saw it on the news last night, said they respect them but they realize that they are fighting for something that they believe is fair, that they are treated fairly and that they support them. I think that’s the most important thing.

Throughout this legislative process we’re going to move this piece of legislation. We’re not going to hold it up here on the floor of this Legislature for hours or days. Of course we’re going to do our role, as Opposition, to bring forward some concerns we have with this piece of legislation but we’re going to allow it to get to Law Amendments Committee because I think that’s the most important component of any piece of legislation that comes through this House of Assembly - the ability for Nova Scotians to come forward and put their opinions down in Hansard on what pieces of legislation are going through this historic Chamber.

I hope that as our House Leader indicated to the members of the Law Amendments Committee, to members of government, to all members, that we respect those individuals who are going to present at Law Amendments Committee, we listen to what they say and we engage with them to try and find out exactly what the environment is that these individuals work in. That’s the most important thing.

One of the things when any labour dispute happens in the province, the media is involved. Often you just hear at a very high level that negotiations broke down, there is a strike, and people are on the picket line. But what’s behind those decisions are workers who have made a decision, and it’s not an easy decision, Mr. Speaker. I know there are many of them walking around the Legislature today, many in the Chamber today, who would say that it was not an easy decision to walk away this morning at 8:00 a.m. and not show up to Mrs. So-and-So’s house to provide them care.

I was in that position in the 1990s where as a paramedic we felt we weren’t being treated fairly by the government at the time and we made the decision to take a strike vote and walk off the job. I have to tell you, Mr. Speaker, it was harder to walk away from the ambulance that I worked on in the community that I lived in to come down here to the Legislature and walk around this Legislature. I did it because I thought we weren’t being

treated fairly and I believe that the workers, the home care support workers today who are here, who are at home who might not be able to get down here feel the same way, that they want to be treated fairly.

My House Leader has talked about past collective bargaining and smoothing out the rate of pay so that it's fair for workers. Really that's what we're looking for, treat workers fairly, treat them equally. I know as a paramedic when I worked I wasn't too far from Halifax working in Lower Sackville and got paid less than someone who was working in Halifax, but I worked alongside all of the paramedics that were here in Halifax. I did calls here in Halifax because if I came across an accident or an emergency I wanted to help them. It was unfair at the time and that was really behind the push back in the 1990s to get paramedics to be treated fairly so that if you're a paramedic in Sackville, or a paramedic in Yarmouth, or a paramedic in downtown Halifax, if you're doing the same job you should be treated and paid equally. So I know that this is behind, really, the decision that the workers have made to come here to the Legislature, to mark down that they were willing to go on strike and try to get what's fair for them. We worked for four years trying to bring up those wages that people who did the same job got paid the same.

We heard from the current government that this was a past government's offer to the union and that's fine. The Premier said it was a very generous offer, but what struck me during the debate, even just in the last couple of hours where some of the comments across from the Liberal side that it was your offer. Well, that's good but you've been in government for five months - are you telling me you didn't look at maybe revising the offer or trying to negotiate a better offer so that you can get an agreement so that the workers could support it? I mean if that's what I'm hearing from the government, that's troubling to hear. I think that health care workers should look at this example, especially future negotiations, to see how they're going to be treated and I bet, Mr. Speaker, that I'll be on my feet probably quite a few times over the next four years under this Liberal Government talking about similar issues.

Getting back to the fairness, Mr. Speaker, we look at this piece of legislation, there are 19 locals attached to this piece of legislation. If they want to be fair and do what's right, why are they throwing out a huge net to capture many of those locals that aren't in a position to strike. I heard the Premier last night in one of his interviews, that he respects the collective bargaining process. Well, this piece of legislation doesn't respect the collective bargaining process; it hinders it. Out of those 19 locals, it's my understanding - and the Premier and the Liberal Government can go down to the roads in front of us and talk to some of the workers - two of those locals already have a signed deal. I was told today that even one of these locals that is included in this legislation actually started negotiations today so why do we see it in a piece of legislation that is supposed to deal with a local that is on strike today?

That's the other part of how I believe that this is really just about money, Mr. Speaker. Unfortunately I think this is not just about the home care workers. I think the

government and the Premier chose to send a message to other locals - other sectors within health care, like nurses - that have agreements coming up for negotiation, that don't expect what the pattern has been over the last little while. Instead of negotiating and trying to find a deal for the locals who are on strike right now, who went on strike this morning, I think they're trying to send a message to a much larger audience, and that's unfair.

The Minister of Labour and Advanced Education also mentioned that their objective for this was to ensure that the health and safety of vulnerable Nova Scotians is looked after. I could agree with that statement, but if that was the truth and that was what was behind this piece of legislation, why are we sitting here now in the Legislature, after a strike has happened? Why weren't we called back last week? Why weren't we here talking about this on Monday, so that we could protect those vulnerable Nova Scotians who receive the service from home care? That's what is baffling to me, is that we're sitting here today when those vulnerable people are at home, not getting services from home care workers.

If it was about that, if that was their objective, I have to question the timing of us being here today, Mr. Speaker. Our caucus is willing to ensure that Nova Scotians and the workers and those vulnerable Nova Scotians know that there was another way to come to a solution.

One of the things I've seen while this unfolded is that I don't believe there was an attempt to resolve this. I've been on both sides. I've been in bargaining units that were pushing for a collective agreement, and I've been on the government side trying to encourage groups of bargaining units, either the employees and the employer, to come to an agreement, get back to the table. We've said it over and over again: the best place to get a collective agreement ratified is at the table, not through legislation.

We know - and we've been there, Mr. Speaker - that trying to come to an agreement is difficult, but it has been said, for anybody who has been involved in either a union or collective bargaining, that the best time and the most important and critical time of any negotiation is at the eleventh hour. A large percentage of agreements are agreed to and ratified at the very end of that timeline that is ticking down to the possibility of a strike.

That didn't happen in this case. I have to commend the leadership of the union that even up to yesterday tried to present an olive branch to the government with a change in what they were pushing for, to send the third year of the wages to arbitration so that an independent body could look at what's fair for those workers. I'm baffled about why the Premier and this government didn't choose to do that. In my mind, that just shows that they weren't willing to negotiate to the end.

They knew they were going to do this some time ago. I don't know how far in advance this piece of legislation was prepared. I believe they haven't done any consultation out in the public about it, maybe just around the Cabinet Table. That concerns me, because

as I said, the majority of collective bargaining agreements happen at the tail end of negotiation, and from my understanding, the two sides haven't been at the table for over a week. That shouldn't happen.

As our House Leader said, this isn't just about home support workers. This is about the bigger picture of health care and the health care sector and the health care unions. The term "shooting over the bow" of the unions - that is what this government has done. I would rephrase it and say they've shot right into the bow. I can just imagine what's in front of us in the coming years if the first real test of the new government is that we're here in the Legislature, after five months of them being in government, bringing forward essential services legislation.

We all know essential services legislation happens in other sectors of health care and one of the things that needs to happen is if the government is genuine about trying to make sure that vulnerable people are taken care of or people are supported in the health care sector by essential services legislation, then that needs to be negotiated and you need to discuss with the unions how that can happen. It can't happen after a strike. We need engagement from all the locals, all the unions that provide support to their membership, who work in the health care sector. If this was something the government wanted to really bring forward, they should have engaged. They've had five months now to engage the health care sector about essential services legislation or essential services numbers.

I've talked about this in the past in the Legislature. We know some jurisdictions have essential services legislation - I believe Alberta is one that I read about and talked about in the past. We've seen, time and time again, that essential services legislation isn't the best and doesn't get the results that you would think you would get, because what happens is that you have a certain level of those workers providing services for the residents of Nova Scotia, for example, and then some portion of those workers can go on strike, and what happens in those situations is those strikes last much longer.

And the evidence is there - you don't have to take my word for it - the evidence shows that in jurisdictions with essential services legislation and a strike happens, those strikes last a lot longer than if you didn't have it because I think the elevation to get it resolved is much higher if you know people are going without services. One of the things needs to happen - the discussion needs to happen outside of a strike and, if this is the will of the government, they should have done that.

As we move forward, as we see and hopefully hear from workers who will come to the Law Amendments Committee, I hope, as I said earlier, that members of that committee listen to the experiences, listen to the working environment that home care support workers work in. These women and men don't just go to an office and work nine-to-five and sit in an air-conditioned place. They travel all over the province. They go into homes, residences, apartments, some of them are in difficult environments and there are challenges to

providing care to individuals. Anybody who works in health care would attest that working with individuals, trying to provide care, is a difficult job.

Many of these workers make just over minimum wage. I think the average is \$16 or \$17 - I don't care if it's \$20 per hour. In our view, it's not that easy to raise a family and put food on the table and live your life just making above minimum wage. We've heard that the erosion of the middle class is happening all across Canada, and the only way out of that is ensuring people can continue to move forward. Everybody wants to make more money - every single person. I don't think I've come across anybody who said I don't want to make more money - especially those workers who, in my view, are at the lower end of what health care workers make.

As I said in my opening remarks, we all bring our experiences to the floor of this Legislature. I bring the fact that as a paramedic, I used to work for \$6.50 per hour - I could go to your house when you had a heart attack, and I could put the defibrillator on you and shock you back to life for \$6.50 an hour. That's why I started to get involved in politics; that's why I started to pay attention. It was in a situation similar to this when I made the decision that I wanted to go a little further and get involved in politics and get involved in a political Party. It's evident which political Party I chose to be with, but I know it was because of the working environment that I worked in, the wages that I was making at the time, the hours I was working.

I was amongst some of the fortunate ones, when I first started as a paramedic for \$6.50 an hour, I only had to work 84 hours a week so I worked 168 hours every two weeks for \$28,000, before overtime, as the member for Hants West indicates to me. I loved doing it because I loved the job and I like helping people but I realized it wasn't fair so my involvement was to make sure that paramedics got treated fairly and I know that's what's going on with the home care workers who are here in the gallery today, the home care workers who are outside today and the home care workers who are going to talk in the Committee on Law Amendments.

They're going to paint a picture of what it's like to work in the environment they work in but maybe even paint a picture of what it's like to make the money they make and the challenges that they face trying to raise a family. As our Leader said, the majority of these workers are women, some are single mothers with children, trying to raise a family. I think we need to recognize that and it's not just all about them wanting more money. I think it's about them wanting better for them, their family, and their community. I think they want what's better for the people that they work for and the people that they provide care for. That's why we're speaking today, that's why we're going to listen to the Committee on Law Amendments, that's why I think it's important that we all look deeper at this issue than just what we read in the headlines in the paper that another local goes on strike. There's more about it than just that headline. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Queens-Shelburne.

HON. STERLING BELLIVEAU: Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure and an honour to stand today before the House and speak on Bill No. 30. First of all I want to thank my colleagues for their opening comments. They're very experienced in this Legislature and I really appreciate their overall view. I did some research in the last 48 hours regarding this topic, I know that my colleagues do a very good job of bringing their knowledge to this House in their personal content and I want to give you a heads-up that I intend to put a personal touch on some personal stories.

I want to start off by saying one of the reasons I pursued this particular job. I'll start on a personal story and I want to end on a personal story. Let's see how I do. My first interest in becoming an MLA for Shelburne - now Queens-Shelburne - was dealing with long-term care in a place called Barrington Passage. There was a facility that was promised for a number of years - actually 30 years - I remember my very first speech, I remember actually the chair I was in. I was green at the time and within 10 days of the election in 2006, I stood in my place and never had an opportunity to digest all the rules. I was a confident, young new rookie MLA (Interruption) I was younger, I was more youthful, let's put it that way.

At the time, I remember, everybody remembers their first speech I assume and I also do too. It was because of long-term care and I had a document about Bay Side Home which was promised by the four previous governments over the last 30 years. I stood there with this document and I tabled a 30-something-year-old document, a blueprint of Bay Side Home and it had been promised to be built and it never got there.

The Speaker at the time said you cannot use a prop in this House, I remember that to this day. A valuable lesson but I went on from that and I went on from basically a five- or 10-minute lecture of not understanding the rules and knowing the protocol of the House and not using a prop. I had a fairly lengthy lesson and yes, the camera was on me and it was going to be my turn to stand up. I knew that the eyes of Nova Scotians were on me at that time, and today the eyes of Nova Scotians are on me at this time. At that time I said to the Speaker, I will learn the Rules of this House, but I will speak about the issues in long-term care and caregivers across Nova Scotia, especially in my constituency that I represent. That Bay Side home is built today. That's a personal lesson.

Mr. Speaker, today is about doing the right thing, and in my remarks, I noticed a lot of new - and I underline the word "new" - Liberal MLAs across the aisle, and I encourage them to think carefully about how they will want to be remembered today before they cast their vote. As an MLA it is important to vote your conscience and vote for the constituencies and for what you think is right. For the new MLAs this is an especially important moment, and a very few years from now you will want to look back on this event and hopefully not regret supporting this bill that you do not believe in.

Last night when we were doing some research we stumbled across a video of the member for Yarmouth that had been posted about collective bargaining rights. We decided

that we would watch it, but were surprised to find out that the content was blocked. Now, I didn't get to see the video, so I'm not going to make any assumptions about the content, but I urge the member for Yarmouth to unblock it and allow his constituencies and the people of Nova Scotia to see what it said. MLAs work for the public, and our comments are part of public record. We should never find ourselves in a position where we regret something that we said, so to the member for Yarmouth, I hope you'll return that video so the public can review it at their leisure.

Last summer I recall sitting in this House and hearing the member for Cape Breton-Richmond talk about the importance of the Law Amendments Committee. I just want to take a moment to read the comments from the member for Cape Breton-Richmond, who said, "Mr. Speaker, I'm proud our caucus was able to work to ensure that the Committee on Law Amendments is going to take place today at 1:00 p.m. I should advise anyone who wishes to make a presentation at the Committee on Law Amendments that they are to call the Legislative Counsel Office at 424-8941. Should they wish to make a presentation, they should certainly call beforehand in order to ensure that their name is added to the list. I can advise that we have a few more speakers on this bill, but we will see the Committee on Law Amendments sit at 1:00 p.m. in order to hear from Nova Scotians regarding Bill No. 86, and then have this bill returned to the House for debate once that process is completed."

The member for Cape Breton-Richmond's comments echoed similar comments made by the Premier earlier this day, talking about the importance of allowing union members to speak to the Legislature. To quote the Premier, "I know it's so important to the union leaders, Mr. Speaker, and I think it's important to the employees, to their membership. I hope we hear their voices in Law Amendments Committee."

I know that the Premier and the Government House Leader are two people who do not hide from previous comments, so I will expect they will stand with their previous comments and allow union members to speak at the Law Amendments Committee and give them enough time to properly address them. It is no secret that I strongly believe in the value of the Law Amendments Committee. In fact, the only time - I repeat, Mr. Speaker, the only time - that the Law Amendments Committee has appeared outside of Halifax was in the constituency of Shelburne over a year ago.

It was the Legislature and I was a member of that, and I was not a member of that committee but I did manage to see the second-day presentations in Shelburne. Unfortunately, I could not ignore what I heard from my constituents in the Law Amendments Committee. I had had, and I had to vote based on what we were told, and what we were told was very clear. In the end I voted my conscience. Today I encourage every single member of this Chamber to listen carefully to what is said in the Law Amendments Committee before deciding how they vote. It's our responsibility as MLAs to do just that.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier is on record as saying that essential services do not work. He was right then; he's wrong now. Each member across the aisle has to decide for themselves what they think, and make an informed decision. Listen to Nova Scotians at the Law Amendments Committee, ask them questions - this is your opportunity to try to protect collective bargaining.

Mr. Speaker, do you want to become known - the backbenchers - as seat fillers? Remember when you decided to take the Question Period time away from the Opposition so that you could ask questions of your own ministers? Well, here's the time for you to stand up today - stand on your feet and tell the home care workers in your gallery. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. I'd just like to remind the guests in the gallery that it's unparliamentary to show favour or disfavour of anything that happens on the floor of the Chamber.

MR. BELLIVEAU: Mr. Speaker, the backbenchers can tell the home care workers, the care workers in the gallery, your thoughts today.

Here is a quote from the member for Richmond, all the way back to 2001, when he was speaking against the Tory bill, Bill No. 68, which took the rights away from health care workers: "You have allowed yourselves to become seat fillers in this province, seat fillers, and that's unfortunate. It really is, because when you look at the size of the backbench there, what a powerful force they could be to enact change and to make sure that they are doing everything they can to represent their constituents. At the end, they can't make Cabinet decisions but, by God, when you've got a backbench with over 20 members, you can certainly put an awful lot of pressure on them. That is if you're allowed to. I think the message is quite clear that you're not allowed to."

Mr. Speaker, I like to remember the member's opposition, to think on the quotes that the Liberal House Leader directed at the Tories then, and you will be directed to them now. I have a list of quotes that are in Hansard, and I encourage the member - there are going to be a number of opportunities here today, but there is a very good list of quotes from the Premier, from the Liberal House Leader and, not to get into the great details here, but to me, and I'll talk a bit later in my speech, a number of people may talk about a flip-flop or a U-turn and I'll get to that later on in my speech here.

Mr. Speaker, my message is going to talk about vote your conscience after all is said and done, regarding your consideration of everything, and then applying your principles to determine your choice - your choice. Voting your conscience without real critical thinking is as careless as you picking the name out of a hat. How can you do that with good conscience?

Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, the eyes of Nova Scotia are on this House, this week, this moment. Nova Scotia has elected provincial representatives, their MLAs, who will vote on whether to pass Bill No. 30, an Act to Ensure the Provision of Essential Home-support Services. I encourage you to vote your conscience.

It's summed up in very few words - to me, it means that your vote is based solely on what you know and believe to be right in this situation no matter what your political affiliation or your political correctness or whatever your Party or affiliation may be. Voting your conscience is a vote strictly based on your values and what you feel is right - the right that you can stand up on.

The backbenchers, as I said earlier, the Liberals, we heard them, they took a new step forward. They were active in Question Period in the last session. They asked questions of their own ministers. This was an interesting scenario and it's going to be more interesting if they stand on their feet today and ask their Premier the questions on this topic. It's going to be very interesting.

I'll just move on here. I have a couple more quotes, by the way. It's interesting to note the occasions of the Liberal Leader and I want to just make reference to Hansard. On December 6, 2007, the Premier stood in this House of Assembly and said, "Health care workers, like so many other sectors of this province, and across the country, have fought long and hard for their rights and benefits that they now have, thanks to unionization. Unionized health care workers are the backbone of our health care system." That was in Hansard on December 6, 2007.

On December 6, 2007, the Premier stood in the House of Assembly and said, "When I asked to be the Leader of the Nova Scotia Liberal Party, I didn't ask to be Leader so we could divide Nova Scotians and take away their rights."

It is obvious today - and I've heard this several times in the last four or five months in the earlier session this Fall - that the present Liberal Government has done a number of flip-flops, that term has been used a number of times to describe this present government. To me, it can be used in those terms. I believe it would summarize to me as a change of heart - they're going in a different direction. I make reference to those two quotes from Hansard. The Hansard is full of quotes from the Liberal Party and their turn of events.

To me, as a fisherman, viewing these flip-flops and change of directions, I always like to - knowing my former occupation - the Premier reminds me of the Bay of Fundy tides. The Bay of Fundy tides change direction four times every day, every day of the year for years to come and years to go on, but I think that's unfair. I think it's unfair to a famous tidal system to make reference to the Premier who changes his mind so frequently.

To me, I kind of wrestled with this last night to come up with a better term and I hope I can do that. We'll see in the next session if some of this will pick up, but no, I don't

want to call the Premier in reference to the Bay of Fundy, which changes its mind four or five times a day - I'm not going to do that.

What I'm going to say is that the Premier, to me, I observe, is more like a weather vane or more like a well-lubricated weather vane - he goes in what direction he sees fit for that particular day.

To me, there have been a lot of changes here in the last four months. Let's just say the Premier has flip-flopped, and to me it's simply becoming obvious that this government probably needs some - they're making a lot of U-turns here on different policies that they should start to install safety warnings, the "beep-beep" when you hear people backing up and going in a reverse direction, I think it's time we may want to install one of those alert systems on this government. They are making some radical changes and going in some different directions.

I want to move into some personal observations and personal stories that I know from talking to some personal care givers when I was first elected to this House. I was involved with the VON and their health care - actually in the July 1st parade in Clark's Harbour. They had a parade there and the VON was very fortunate, they won an award. This was a number of years ago, please don't ask me what the award was titled, but the community recognized them for their support then and I can assure you it was well received not only on July 1st but also throughout the year. I have participated in the VON turkey dinners which are great fundraisers in the community and this is something our community is well aware, they appreciate the home care givers and it is great to have these people in our community.

I just want to conclude in a few more minutes, I want to take five or 10 more minutes here just to talk about a personal story. When I was first elected in 2006, at that time, in April, just before the election in 2006, my father-in-law was in a Halifax hospital undergoing surgery for that dreaded word that we all call cancer. What was scheduled to be a 10-day stay resulted in a three-month ordeal that he returned home terminally ill and just days before our first election and our win in the political election in June 2006.

Mr. Laughlin Cameron was a widower. My wife, Luella, an only child, with her father's health issues, and I was away and trying to adapt to a career change and was absent many times for periods of days, on a weekly basis. With one daughter, one daughter of ours living out of province and the other one living halfway across Nova Scotia, this care became the sole responsibility of my wife. My wife, Luella, took a leave of absence from her work and practically moved in with her dad to take care of him. If you have ever been a caregiver or if you could appreciate the energy or the time or the responsibility caregiving involves, you would learn and we would all learn the medical language very quickly and assume the role of a nurse who has no formal training.

After a standard assessment of my father-in-law, Laughlin, it was concluded that my father-in-law qualified for a daily service of home care providers and his deteriorating conditions required treatment administered by the VON. For the next six months, until he passed away, this life became a new kind of normal for us.

Mr. Speaker, I so appreciated the daily visits from the VON, the caregivers, the health care that they delivered, their expertise, their compassion and I also appreciated the relief that the home care provided, caring in a helpful and sensitive way at different intervals, day and night. The consistent, compassionate care of these individuals, the home care workers give, enabled him to remain in his own home, while maintaining a quality of life and a level of independence which was so important to Laughlin. If you knew him you would certainly appreciate that comment.

Mr. Speaker, it also enabled my wife to remain with him and was a source of great strength when this was much-needed. Without these services, his desire to remain at home and her desire to remain with her dad could not have been met.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, sometimes people ask why it says in the Bible that God helps those who help themselves. Actually, the Bible doesn't say that at all; it tells us just the opposite. God tells us that God helps the helpless. And how, you may ask this? One of their avenues of love and compassion and often healing is through the very hands and the hearts of home care givers.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to the Law Amendments Committee, I look forward to hearing the voices of Nova Scotians. I thank you for the opportunity and I encourage the members opposite, especially the backbenchers, to vote your conscience. Thank you for your time.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Truro-Bible Hill-Millbrook-Salmon River.

MS. LENORE ZANN: Mr. Speaker, firstly I would like to begin by saying that it's good to be back in Province House, on the floor of this beautiful Legislature which is really one of the gems in the crown of Nova Scotia's gorgeous, unique and valuable built heritage. However, I'm very saddened and, in fact, disappointed by the reason that we have been summarily recalled here today, in order for our new Liberal Government to introduce an anti-worker, anti-union bill, Bill No. 30, an Act to Ensure the Provision of Essential Home-support Services.

The reason I feel disappointed, Mr. Speaker, is because I, like the hundreds of women and men who are right now parading around this beautiful Legislature and some who are sitting in the balconies here today, the people who have taken the time to come down here today - I'm disappointed for them because I had hoped that this Premier was going to live up to his promise of being different, of doing things differently, of sticking to

his word. In fact, a message from the Premier to the people of Nova Scotia, which he wrote in May 2013, just before the last election, in fact, just before he was elected Premier, it appeared to be written to appease people's fears of any possible heavy-handed behaviour that he might have if he was elected Premier, when it came to the hard-working people of this province who also happened to be members of Nova Scotia's union and, in fact, NSGEU members specifically.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to share the Premier's own words to remind him and all of us gathered here, exactly what it was he promised. Here's what the Premier wrote on May 27, 2013, on his Facebook page:

"I would like to clarify the misinformation being spread in an e-mail from the NSGEU that went out to their membership today. This email alludes to the Nova Scotia Liberal Party being against the right to strike - this is absolutely false.

My position on the right to strike has been clear. Our party supports the right to strike and will continue to do so.

The Pictou Bee (cited as the source of this rumour in the email from the NSGEU) is a partisan NDP blog, dedicated to discrediting the Liberal party and spreading false information.

This is an attack by Joan Jessome against me and our party. The email the NSGEU sent to their membership uses an anonymous, partisan blog and alludes to a position that our party is unequivocally against."

We will be working to share our TRUE position in SUPPORT of 'the right to strike' over coming days with members of the NSGEU and all Nova Scotians. I ask that you SHARE my post, and this information, with your networks in an effort to stall this baseless attack in its tracks. Thank you."
(Applause)

Thank you very much. As you can see, today I am doing exactly as the Premier requested. I am sharing this post and the information with my networks, all of you who are present here today and those at home watching this on Legislative TV.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. I'd just like to remind the honourable member that she is not allowed to reference the guests in the gallery.

MS. ZANN: One home care worker actually wrote to me about this post on Facebook, which she too had seen. She asked, "Am I missing something here? Isn't this exactly what he is trying to do to us middle-class working poor that he promised to help? I

know that you are very busy but thanks for taking the time to let me share my thoughts on this atrocity with you.”

She says:

The situation is very critical . . . I don't think the Liberals know how many critically ill clients we serve and care for. 'Home First' clients were recently added to VON and the demand for Nursing care by Home Support workers has been upped tremendously . . . for example: My first experience with a 'Home First' client was a man who was just released from Hospital after 'open heart surgery' and on Cathetar [sic] with family members who could not assist in cathetar [sic] care or personal care.”

I have a client who is a double amputee and diabetic with fluctuating blood sugar levels 2-25!

Another 92 year old lady with dementia . . . who receives meals and med reminder. Without her med reminder, she would never take her pills. Please ask the Premier and all the rest of the Liberals and Conservatives what THEY think all these clients would do without the dedicated support of us lowly Home Support Workers.

We are all licenced CCA's with the same 1 yr NSCC program . . . for which we paid ourselves . . . and studied hard. We ALL had to pass the same Provincial Exam . . . needing 72 to pass. I passed at the top of my class with 92. I surprised myself! I love my job . . . it is my passion . . . but I am prepared to give up everything I have and relocate to Halifax to work in Nursing Home or Hospital where CCA's are already paid \$2 more an hour with the same qualifications as myself. Both have their challenges . . . but I pay approx \$900-\$1100 a month to keep and maintain a car plus a back-up car in order to keep my job as that is a stipulation when hired - that we need to maintain a reliable vehicle. Thank you for passing this on so that perhaps it will give the Liberal MLAs a clearer understanding of what we actually do and why we deserve wage parity with others who do exactly the same work as we do!

I also received a letter to the current Premier from one of the workers who will be impacted by the legislation the Premier wants to pass, which seems very much like an about-face from his previous promising Facebook post. Let me share this letter:

My name is Beverly Ettinger Benoit and I am a CCA with the VON. I started my journey to become a CCA 7 years ago as a single mother of 3 children aged 7, 6 and 4.

When I started my CCA course in 2007 at the NSCC Waterfront campus I was working at a pool hall surviving on minimum wage, tips, \$400/month from my ex husband and a student loan. My kids were in swimming lessons and they played soccer. I was travelling almost 100km every day just to get to school and work so that I could secure a better life for my family!! And I mean everyday [sic] . . . 7 days a week . . . Early mornings and late nights . . . Juggling schedules with my parents, sister, friends, co-workers and daycare provider.

They say it takes a community to raise a child . . . Well it's true. I was so tired that year I didn't know if I would survive. My mornings started at 5am sharp when I would get up, shower and dress. Then I would get all 3 kids up, dressed and out the door no later than 5:45 so that they could be dropped off at the daycare where God Bless . . . A good friend was waiting for them every morning with open arms and breakfast.

She would put my 2 oldest on the bus in the morning and would be waiting there to help them with their homework in the afternoon.

I had to make sure that on the afternoons when I had to go from school to work my Dad was going to be available to pick the kids up from daycare on his way home from work which put him 20km out of his way. There was not 1 single weekend in the 6 months that I was going to school that I got to stay home with my children because I was committed [sic] to work every weekend from 9-5 plus my travel time.

And if there were extra evening shifts available, boy, I had dibbs [sic] on them because I needed all the extra money I could get!!!

Our evenings were committed to homework, assignments, studying, getting lunches and clothes ready for the next day, baths, showers and snuggles . . . The nights when we were all home together that is . . . Some nights they had to stay at Nana and Grampies [sic] which they all loved. I even remember sleeping on the coach at the bar a few nights because it didn't make sense for me to drive for an hour home at 1:00 in the morning only to turn around and drive back in a few hours later. Sleep was at a premium!!! But I did it!!! I trudged through . . .

I graduated in one of the first CCA classes to go through the beautiful new Waterfront Campus with HONOURS!!!! Me . . . Beverly Ettinger with Honours!!! And for the cherry on top I pulled off 92% on my provincial exam!! I was so proud of myself!!! I have continued to learn more everyday [sic] since!!! I was so thankful for everyone who helped me along the way!!!

And you know what? It was all worth it!!! Every single bit!!! I truly do love my job!!!

I also know 99% of my fellow co-workers love their jobs too!!! Do you know how great it is to go to work every day and know that you are making a difference in peoples [sic] lives? And not only do we make a difference in their lives . . . they make as strong of an impact on our lives as well!!!

I worked for Northwood Manor for a year after I graduated and I loved it!!! The residents taught me so much about myself and about life and humility, compassion, sadness [sic], happiness, loss, caring, determination . . . The list could go on and on and it continues to grow everyday [sic] I am out in the field!!! These people gave me life lessons that I could never give back. I thank them for that!!!

One thing that will always stand out in my mind though is residents saying things like 'It's still not like home' or 'I used to have a beautiful Christmas tree.' It is very sad to look into someones [sic] eyes and know that their heart is somewhere else!!! The place where their lifetime of memories is kept!! The place where they raised their children!!! The place that holds the sun-faded lines in the wallpaper where your prize pictures hang. You know the ones . . . Little Lukie with his puppy in the mud, or Sally's graduation picture or the strange looking great grandad [sic] you never met . . . The place when you walk through that door and take a deep breath you know that you are home!!! Those notches in wood that mark the growth of your babies . . . And then their babies . . .

Before I continue with my story I have to note that the staff at Northwood Centre also helped me become a skilled, confident CCA - teaching me things that you can't learn in a classroom. Oh you may understand the theory but you never TRULY understand until you actually DO it. You know things like how to clean a residents [sic] stoma . . . and how to clean the feces out of the bag properly so it can be reused and reattached. Or how to bathe and lotion and powder a resident who has just been sent back from the hospital after having a massive stroke and is going to die soon . . . To holding the hand of that Alzheimers [sic] patient that is scared and needs to be comforted. You need to feel and have compassion for that person and for their soul to give them good care, so that they feel comfortable, safe and secure!!!

When you are working with men and women who have dedicated their lives to doing the things that we do on a daily basis it is really hard to measure their worth!!!

At any given institution whether it be a nursing home, a hospital, or private care facility you have multiple staffing support available. There are cleaners, laundry services, food services, nursing staff, security, physical therapists etc. . . .

But Home care . . . Now that is a totally different ballpark!!! You are being thrown into the unknown wilderness everyday [sic] . . . Multiple times every day actually!!!! Right from the very second that you pull out of your driveway . . . And hit that pavement . . . Until the time your tires once again hit the dirt of your own driveway when you're home for the night.

I never know what to expect when I walk through a clients [sic] door with home care. Did the client fall during the night when they were making their way through a dark house to go to the bathroom? Did the client miss or take too much medication that has affected their normal behaviour [sic] making the environment unsafe for myself? Is the client going to collapse while I'm assisting them with a shower? Is an estranged, violent family member suddenly going to be coming through the door drunk and high? Did someone sand the clients [sic] driveway after the freezing rain last night? Is the neighbours [sic] dog out? Is that big truck with the load of wood going to slow down when I go to pull into the clients [sic] driveway? Did the client or the last home support worker remember to take some meat out of the freezer to thaw for supper? These are daily routine questions that I have to worry and think about!!! So next question is what do you do if some of these questions don't have favourable answers? Well I deal with it!!! Me!!! Little 5' 3" me . . . I have to take charge and make quick decisions . . . I might need to stand tall and mighty . . . I might need to dial 911 (if I can get to a phone) I might need to talk to someone through the door because they are laying down and they can't get up to let me in . . . I might need to make a meal out of nothing . . . I might need to make someone feel unashamed because they soiled themselves and they can't physically clean themselves up . . . I might have to grab the plunger and unclog that toilet and clean up the floor because it has already overflowed . . . I might need to get down on my hands and knees to find that tiny little white pill that Granny dropped on the floor . . . And she needs that pill because it keeps her gentle heart ticking . . .

So what happens when I and my co-workers are not in that home? Once daily? Twice maybe? Perhaps 3 times? Oh wait make that 4 because THAT client needs help to get tucked into bed.

Is this other client going to be able to make their own meals? Will they even remember that they need to eat? Maybe they don't feel like washing today . . . or the NEXT day . . . Who is going to change that catheter bag from the night bag to the lag bag and make sure that it gets disinfected properly?

Does blind Uncle Tom see that spilt water on the floor? I certainly hope so or it could mean another broken hip for him!!!

Who is going to suffer most if NSGE Local 35 goes on strike? Is it going to be the workers? No . . . Is it going to be the VON? No . . . Is it going to be Continuing Care or the Department of Health? No . . . It is going to be someone's loved one . . . maybe YOURS . . . maybe MINE, who is going to suffer the most and who is going to be put in the most danger.

Are we not worth Parity? And if you think not then I need you to explain it to me!!! I don't want any fluff about how hard-up our health care system is . . . I don't care that the funds are stretched . . . We do equal if not more work than the CCAs do in the hospitals . . .

We undeniably put ourselves into more danger on a daily basis. The simple fact is CCAs working out in the field are the whole package . . . plumber, chef, care provider, and sometimes the clients [sic] only support!!!!

Now who is the blame going to fall on when something tragic and avoidable happens? It is certainly not going to be placed on me or any of my fellow co-workers!!! All we want is Parity. We do not want to go on strike!!! There is a very strong feeling that we are worth equal pay for equal work!!! And if you think that we are essential care workers then pay us what we're worth.

Do not tell me that I went to school and have the same if not more skills than the CCAs that are working in the hospitals. Or that my co-worker who has been in the field for the last 23 years and has looked after and cared for a countless number of people is not worth more!!! Please do not insult us!!!

I am having a very hard time wrapping my head around the fact that the very government that I voted for not too many months ago is now fighting against me!!! I voted with confidence that the Government of Nova Scotia was going to move forward as they promised and improve our health care system.

Please do not take actions that would set the system back even further!!! ALL WE WANT IS PARITY. We deserve that!!! Your mother or father or handicapped brother or grandparents or maybe even your spouse or you yourself someday deserve the best there is to offer.

They need to know that they are receiving care from the best that there is!!! They need to know that the person who is walking into their house is going to provide them with qualified, skilled workers!!!

The simple fact of the matter is that one side of this debate is going to have to back down!! We know we are in the right and deserve parity so it is not going to be Local 35!!!

As a government I am holding you responsible for the outcome of this situation. As a voter and a tax payer [sic] I expect you to make the right decisions for the future of our health care system!! As a care provider, I am pleading for our clients [sic] safety. As a potential future client of the home care system, I am hoping for it's [sic] future.

If it takes a village to raise a child then it certainly makes sense that it will take a village to care for our elderly and our sick!! Thank you for your time!!!

Another friend wrote to me today:

Thanks for the support Lenore . . . we're going to need it! . . . I am home with a broken wrist which happened when I was crawling around on the ice trying to get into a clients [sic] home one cold icy night. I've had 4 injuries (two broken bones . . . back and wrist) in the last 4 years at work . . . as a home care giver. It is definitely a challenge to work in home support . . . but I do luv it! . . . Donna Bagnell.

This letter is from the husband of a home support worker:

Hey there! Started my day as usual reading the ChronicleHerald, first up: the Liberals [sic] view on the "About to STRIKE home care workers" and how they, the workers, should feel guilty about using their clients as "pawns" in the middle of negotiations for wages and better working conditions.

Well let it be said by me, I live with and see how hard these girls/guys work, and what they do and put up with from getting out in the dark hours of the morning to maneuver sometimes life threatening roads, only to get to an unplowed driveway and have to trudge through the snow and ice to make someones [sic] day, get them up, dressed, maybe wipe a bum and get fed. That is the start of a Good Day . . . it can go down hill [sic] at any time, working unsupervised, with sometimes mentally challenged clients, substance abuse clients and/or palliative care invalids - until bedtime hours for tuck-ins.

These workers beat their vehicles over the roads for a rate that barely pays for fuel, much less the car and costs of running it or pay for repairs should they get in an accident (not to mention get injured). Only to get home and deal with scheduling issues, pay-disruptions and other on-going

sub-standard administrations [sic] issues which are not conducive to encouraging a positive employee/employer relationship and tenure.

That my Friends is a snapshot - still not the FULL MEAL DEAL of what these workers do. Yes, you nay Sayers [sic] can reply 'Well they chose this career'.

Sure they did - and the majority of these workers are giving, caring individuals . . . a special type of personality, much like nurses and other healthcare professionals (who are paid in accordance with their co-workers) and for this choice of career, they should be ALSO be [sic] paid and protected and treated as the VALUABLE EMPLOYEES they are.

Many of us are highly insulted and saddened to see the relation between the personal care workers and their clients used as leverage by the Premier's office and 'The Herald' as well as Mr. Bailey's [sic] office to use the word 'PAWN'.

Shame on ALL of you!

These Home Care Workers deserve to get paid just like any other professional and it was the Liberal and Conservative Governments of years past that closed nursing homes and turned beds to the private sector . . . These workers save this province millions by helping the elderly stay in their homes and maintain comfort and dignity.

If you stopped paying the carpenter building your house . . . Would you GUILT him into working for less by saying your family will be cold if the house isn't finished . . . I THINK NOT.

Now here we have what the Liberals are about to call 'essential service workers' making the same wage they were 5 or 6 yrs ago . . . COME ON DIG YOUR HEAD OUTTA THE SAND . . . BRING THE WORKERS UP TO WAGE PARITY. These people are valuable and they need to get paid just like the MLA's - after all you all get paid the same as your fellow MLA for doing the same job. Percentages are great if you can get them every year . . . BUT this is not about percentages, its [sic] about people. It's about the people who need care . . . and it's about the PEOPLE WHO CARE."

So as you can see from these letters and e-mails that I've been receiving, people are concerned and I don't blame them. I think they are doing equal work and I think they deserve equal pay and that's all they're asking. I find it very hard to believe that this new Liberal Government wants to stand in their way. In fact we received a CCPA - Canadian

Centre for Policy Alternatives - release just yesterday in which they agree with our NDP position which they say is:

“When the Nova Scotia legislature reconvenes on Friday the government will introduce legislation to deal with the home support workers’ strike that is set to begin on Friday. While we don’t have the details of the legislation, we want to caution against interfering in the collective bargaining process in this way.

The legislation will impose a so-called ‘essential services’ provision that, to all intents and purposes, amounts to removing these workers’ right to strike. If enough employees are forced to work, then a strike is rendered meaningless.

The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives-NS has published several reports about the importance of free and fair collective bargaining that must include the right to strike. These are written by Judy and Larry Haiven, recognized experts in this area. Judy Haiven Associate Professor at Saint Mary’s University warns: ‘Collective bargaining is the most effective way of bringing crucial issues of patient care to the public’s attention. Crippling the right to strike just shoves them back underground.’

Further, as Professor of Management at Saint Mary’s University, Larry Haiven cautions: ‘If there were a different way than free collective bargaining to achieve workplace justice, then we would have discovered it by now. By removing the strike threat, the government is saying to health care workers, we’re not interested in your issues. Just put your heads down and don’t complain.’

For many people, home support workers are what allow Nova Scotians to remain in their homes and out of expensive nursing homes or hospitals. The province can’t afford to lose these workers. Indeed, it is critical that these workers are better supported in the work that they do and that others are encouraged to do this work. This is difficult work with high injury rates, and long hours. These workers might be entering eight different worksites in one day. Too many of these workers are without guaranteed hours and without full benefits. Home support workers are a critical part of the health care landscape in Nova Scotia and they deserve better at the bargaining table and beyond.”

Mr. Speaker, I think it’s fitting to introduce to some of our newcomers who are on the Liberal back bench, to the person who is making this decision, their Leader, the current Premier. On December 6, 2007 the Premier actually stood right here in the House of Assembly and he argued that the Progressive Conservative Government of the day was

“playing politics with the careers and rights of thousands of health care workers in this province” by bringing in essential services legislation. The Premier pleaded with the Progressive Conservative Government to “cease their needless battle with Nova Scotia health care workers and focus on the real problems facing our health care system such as doctor and nurse shortages, wait times and ER closures.

I’d like to suggest that the Premier needs to take his own advice and perhaps his backbenchers can begin asking their Leader why he has had such an about-face. Believe me, as a backbencher myself for the first four years as MLA I never flinched once from asking my own Premier questions in caucus. That is why our constituents voted for us and sent us here in the first place, to represent their interests. It is not only our right as MLAs to ask questions, but I would argue it is our duty to ask questions, and difficult questions, especially if we disagree with something that our Leader is suggesting. Otherwise, what are we? If we’re just yes-men or yes-women then we are not, I suggest, doing our jobs - seals, trained seals.

I’ve also discovered some more very interesting information in a couple of newspaper articles. One was written just four years ago on January 14, 2010 in The ChronicleHerald. The reporter, David Jackson, wrote, “Liberal Leader said Nova Scotia effectively has essential services legislation already because collective agreements require emergency services staffing plans.” He also “thinks those plans should be hammered out in times of labour peace, not days before a possible strike.”

I would argue he has known about the situation for what, over a week now? Why did he wait until today? Why did he wait until the workers had already gone on strike at 8:00 a.m. this morning? Why isn’t he listening to his own advice? That was just four years ago.

He says, “(The government) should have been doing this in advance while there was labour stability. The legislation in other provinces has not stopped labour unrest and strikes.” Again, why does he not listen to his own advice? Flip-flop, did I hear flip-flop? Yes, or the tide, the Bay of Fundy coming in and out a few times differently every day.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. I just want to remind the member for Truro-Bible Hill-Millbrook-Salmon River that earlier, a couple of sentences ago, a reference to other members of this Assembly as trained seals. I just want to remind you that’s an unparliamentary term for the Chamber. I’ll get you to retract that if you could, please.

MS. ZANN: Thank you, yes. Trained seals - we’ll retract that, Mr. Speaker.

Anyway, in the same article, the member for Colchester North - who was then the Interim Tory Leader - said she also didn’t think that legislation was necessary, which was a change from the position that she had as part of the minority Tory Government that brought forward a law in 2007 that would have taken away the right to strike from health care

workers and replaced it with arbitration. "That was what was deemed to be necessary at the time, but I would not suggest that we bring back that legislation." The member said that at this time in 2010.

One other article, Mr. Speaker - as far back as 2007, the current Premier was opposed to a no-strike proposal. This was on September 13, 2007, reported by David Jackson, a provincial reporter, and in that article the reporter said, "The MacDonald government's plan to take the right to strike away from health-care workers seems to have failed after the Liberals announced Wednesday they won't support it." In fact, David Jackson reported that the Liberals not only opposed it but that the Liberal leader "said his caucus has heard from people on all sides of the issue and that removing the right to strike isn't the solution to problems in the health system. 'We do not believe such legislation will provide stability within the health-care system, as the government is suggesting'" - this is what the Liberal Leader said during a news conference at Province House - "In fact, we believe that the proposed cure is worse than the disease."

In closing, I would like to suggest that I would reflect this back, because I also believe that the proposed cure here is worse than the disease. Please reconsider and give these wonderful workers, these hard-working people, this middle class that Liberals keep saying that they care so much about - but many of these middle-class people are slipping into the working poor. They need our help, and I would suggest that all of us in this House - that's why we were voted in, to try to help these people. So, Mr. Speaker, on that note I would like to close. I wish all the workers best of luck in these negotiations, and I hope that they get the parity that they deserve. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Chester-St. Margaret's.

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: I want to relate a story that actually just took place last weekend when I called a constituent whose mom has severe dementia. The family is in turmoil, and they've been worrying about their mom because she lives on her own, and family members work, because people have to work for a living. They are very concerned and they did not know which way to go, so they wanted to talk to me to see if there were any options. One thing I did find out that is keeping them moving forward is the fact that they did receive home care services recently, and what a difference - that has helped them in terms of some hope, because they know that somebody is dropping in on Mom and taking care of her.

Mr. Speaker, what would have been the result if they couldn't receive that home care service? The result would have been for them to make their mom go to the hospital, through emergency, to try to get her into the hospital. That is so unfair, for a family to have to deal with that stress. We all know that having Mom in the hospital costs us more money in terms of the support and care. That's why it is so critical that we have home care workers, because the home care workers are the ones who are going to break the old way of doing business that took place for decades in this province - until the NDP came in and

knew that we had to be visionary and look toward the future, and that we had to have discussions with communities and with people about the fact that it's vitally important that people have the opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to live in their home as long as possible, if that's their choice. I've even heard it already in a couple of interviews from the new Minister of Health and Wellness, so it's not about words, it's about action. That's what we did when we were in government - we started looking at what programs can we increase the financial supports to enable people to stay at home longer.

We all know that does take time and it takes a plan, but it seems like the Liberals now are destroying that plan because of the fact that they're looking in the short term and they're not looking at the long-term results of this legislation.

We also have to remember that those who are employed in home care also look after people with disabilities. That is one area that is dear to my heart, and I was very proud to be the Minister of Community Services and lead in the transformation for people with disabilities, the road plan. Part of that road plan was to enable people with disabilities to have more choices, more options to live in their community.

We cannot provide those choices and those options if we do not have home care workers, so they are critical to the strategy that we work together with advocacy groups, with people with disabilities, and with community members. This government and the Minister of Community Services have publicly stated that they support this road plan. Well, support does not just come in words, support must come in a financial strategy. We know that it will take 10-plus years, but what people are waiting to see is how we move that forward. You have to attach dollar figures to that, and you also have to look at who the service providers are and what they do. That is, the home care workers and the need to make sure that we have a consistency throughout this province with respect to wage parity.

There's not one person sitting in this Legislature who would not believe in wage parity. As my colleague beside me brought up the fact that any one of us doing our jobs and we saw somebody else throughout the province doing the same thing and not getting the same pay level, boy, I'll bet you it would change; it would certainly change in this political arena. Well what is the difference between those here who have the ability to make those decisions and make those decisions for themselves, but yet are not making decisions for the Nova Scotians and the home care workers. That's why people voted us here. They didn't vote us here to make sure that our car allowances go up and there are car allowances and there are extra expenses or whatever, they voted for us to be looking at what's happening in this province, and that there is fairness - and I think that's a word that, unfortunately, the Liberal Party does not seem to understand.

I've met many people since I've been an MLA, and I had the fortune of being voted in in 2009, and I met many people who utilized the services of a home care worker and I've met many family members. I am sure that - I mean it was less than five months ago that all those in this House were out knocking on doors, talking with Nova Scotians, and sitting in

their living rooms and hearing about their problems and the many issues that you need to deal with as a government. There are many, and there are many financial pressures but it is about your word, your trust, and also, as a government, what you see as a priority.

I would think that any government should be seeing wage parity as a priority. We are not going to change anything in this province if we have all these inconsistencies. I know as Minister of Community Services, I saw it all over the place. You could go to Yarmouth and receive different services than if you went to Cape Breton or if you came to Halifax. Well that was years and years of not being strategic or visionary when making decisions and this is what this is all about. This is not about just today. This is about tomorrow, our future, and that the home care workers know that they are getting paid the same as somebody who works maybe 40 kilometres down the road. We are not going to change the unfairness in this province or build upon the services that we need unless we address that. By not addressing this issue, we are going to be going back - not going forward.

One thing I know, as my colleagues in the government know, there is no question - we all want to be government, we work very hard to get elected. One of the slogans that the Liberal Party was promoting for the election was Nova Scotia First. They said, Nova Scotia First. Well where is Nova Scotia first in this piece of legislation? What I see is the Liberal Government first. I mean, when you talk about - and let's just look over - it has only been, like I said, five months so people should take the opportunity to go back and do some googling and see what was said during the election about Nova Scotia First. Well I didn't see in Nova Scotia First any talk about patronage and giving your very close friend a job. I didn't see that in the election materials - a job that is normally a competitive job. I didn't see - Nova Scotia First, we're going to break the monopoly of energy and power. Well, I got my Liberal power bill. It did not go down, I can tell you. Where is that?

All you have to do is take the time to look at - what is the meaning of Nova Scotia First? As I said, it's obviously not about the people because if it was about the people, we wouldn't be here today; there still would be collective bargaining going on. I would like for the members and the government to go back out and knock on those very doors that they sat in people's living rooms and tried to show them being empathetic to their needs. I would like them to go back and explain - what did Nova Scotia First mean? I have not seen Nova Scotians coming first with this government.

That is the question that people have to be asking and I think when it comes around the next election, Nova Scotians will be asking that question and we'll be reminding them to ask that question. Like we said, Nova Scotia First? It's Liberal first - let's get elected, let's come in, let's fire people - not just at the deputy minister level, let's fire people who work at different levels. Let's look at the fact that that Party over there touted that there was \$65 million out of the education system, which they know was not factual, but Nova Scotia First, we're going to put that money right back in when we get into government, one of the

first things we do. Well there's your first, but it hasn't happened. They're buying time - we'll do a review.

We did a review ourselves as the NDP Government, but we're going to do a review and that money is slowly going to be trickling back. Well let's see with Nova Scotians when it comes time for the election how much of that money is going to go back in and how many excuses are going to be used why they're not going to put it back in.

I want to tell people here today, what they have to understand is to make no mistake - this Premier is the chief negotiator here. He is the one who is making the decisions and by refusing an independent arbitration, the Premier made it clear it is all about the money - it's not about Nova Scotia first. It's not anything to do with the patient care. That is exactly the opposite of what he had said in Opposition.

When I become a member of this Legislature in 2009 for the first time, I had no desire years before that to get involved in politics because I felt like everybody - politicians say one thing and do another thing. Getting into government, I can see the challenges because there are so many needs in this province, so many people that come to you and if you isolate those cases it all makes sense that they need support. But what you have to work towards when you are given that responsibility is fairness and a balanced approach and working with people and talking with people and giving them the opportunity to present their case.

There was no opportunity given here. There was the option but the Premier chose not to take that option. That's not Nova Scotia first, that's the Premier first. There's a long list in the last five months that really proves that. No wonder that people feel so jaded about politicians and paint each and every one of us with the same brush. I know that isn't true because I know there are colleagues on all sides, in all Parties that work very hard for the people they represent.

That's where the backbenchers have to make sure their voices are being heard because it is not your minister's door you're knocking on next time, it is not the Premier's door you're knocking on - you're knocking on doors of people in your community, people who are home care workers, people who have home care workers looking after them. I have met many seniors - and each and every one of you know somebody, even in your own personal life or a family friend's life, who utilize home care worker service. You know how critical that is for their lives. You know when you talk to those people or if you had a parent or a grandparent.

With your busy schedules, if you have a parent or grandparent that took ill and couldn't get into a senior citizens home and is waiting, how would you feel? What would you feel about our system? We were trying to untangle that system and it's unfortunate we didn't get the opportunity of having another mandate to continue that untangling of that

system. Unfortunately you're rolling it up in a ball and tangling it all up again because you're not thinking about human beings.

We are all honoured to be on this earth and we are all given the opportunity to do something with the lives we have. It's all about our attitude and how we approach. The political part, yes, it's been around for hundreds of years but instead of going backwards we need to be working together - you said those very things. I found it absolutely strange for me because this is all new having just a one-term mandate and not being a real political animal before that and then being given the honour of being a minister of three different portfolios. It was really quite an experience for me to sit on the government side and hear the Liberals - now in government - in Opposition, talking about the fact that we have to be working together and saying things over here that would support home care workers, but now you're on the other side and you don't do it.

That hasn't changed with the NDP, just the same as my colleague earlier said about the Progressive Conservative Party. There are things we do not agree with in terms of our philosophy and how you would govern a province, but I can tell you one thing, I have a great deal of respect for the Progressive Conservative Party and their Leader because he stays on point and he says what he said (Interruptions) When I sat on that side, what that gentleman said on this side is still the same.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, order please. The honourable member for Chester-St. Margaret's has the floor.

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: Thank you. The point I'm trying to make is the consistency of the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party and the consistency of the NDP. We have never wavered from the fact of supporting workers and their needs. We haven't wavered from the need to ensure that there's fairness and that there's parity in wages. We haven't wavered from that. Unfortunately, it is those who are now sitting on the government side from the Liberal Party who are what we've heard before - flip-flopping. I find that very unfortunate.

It must be very difficult, especially for those who sit on the back benches. They're sitting and they're watching all this take place, and they're seeing and they know because they made a reason to run for that Party. I think they're going to be disappointed over the next number of years because of the fact that their decision was based on the information that they were hearing the Party say when they were in Opposition. It sounded sweet, it sounded good, that they will be a Party of the people, but it has not proven out in five short months, so you had better hang on for a very bumpy ride.

As we talked about, it's not only about the home support workers. It's every health care worker that we're talking about today, so don't fool yourself into thinking that this is just an isolated case. This is not. This is on a broader basis, and it's all about all of our health care workers.

I must warn every worker in this province that, just like in the 1990s, this Premier and the Liberals are coming to get you. This is just the start. We just had the Olympics, and the starter gun just went off and the race begins. Unfortunately for the home care workers, nobody is there to support them from the Liberal side.

I want to be able to personally thank the home care workers, because I have seen the job they have done and I know where their heart is. I have talked to elderly people and I have talked to people who have received the care, and believe me, it means a lot. You wait until you are in that situation, any one of you. I think we all want to grow old, because the alternative is not too good. I want to be able to live in a province, as I grow older, where I know I have options as a senior, and that I can stay in my home. I presently live with my husband and my one son in my grandmother's home. I want to be able to be like Nan and live there as long as possible.

I would think that each and every one of you - take a really good look at yourself and your own life situation. I would think that you would want that too, and for your parents and for those who are younger, for your grandparents and for generations to come, so it is very important for all of us to make the right decisions.

This isn't really about patients' safety. We know it is about control, and it's about setting that bar at the start of the race, to be able to say that this is the way it's going to be from now on, as we govern. Just like the Harper Government, the Liberals are bringing down this legislation with no public discussion.

Ironically, less than five months ago, when we were all knocking on doors, we all talked about public discussion and the importance of input and listening to the public. How quickly that changes once somebody becomes government.

We all know that nurses and other health care workers truly care about their patients. I don't know how many stories I've heard, and I've experienced myself when I needed the support of a health care worker just how far they go. They really, truly care, and they absolutely make a difference for any one of us that have to access that care.

The health care workers have always cared so much that they know the importance of working together with their employer to ensure that there is an emergency plan in place. They know their units and their patients need better than what's being offered to them today, better than any third-party adjudicator.

When we talk about the opportunity for collective bargaining you only have to look at history, Mr. Speaker, to see that that process works over and over again and even this government has acknowledged that 97 per cent of cases are resolved without a strike. So I have to ask what's the motivation behind this - why are they doing this? Like some of my colleagues said today, what is the difference, why are we waiting until now, why were we not discussing this last week or the week before? It's not like they didn't know. Is this

being reactive rather than proactive, well I'm sorry, I don't want a reactive government, I want a proactive government and I think all Nova Scotians want that.

Why would we put people in this position? Why would we put the home care workers in the position of going home in the evening or during the wee hours of the morning after they're doing their work to say to their family member I don't know how we're going to do it, we may be going on strike. Or, you know, I have to take a second job, I don't know how we're going to do it but I have to take a second job because we don't have wage parity, but of course we could decide to move to another part of the province and leave my hometown where I live in my grandmother's house and leave our family behind because we have a government that will not consider the fact that wage parity and fairness is more important than control and trying to get a message out for future negotiations.

We know that this legislation is just a quick fix, it's all about the perception. That's what it has been about from day one, even before the election, it's all about this perception. I have to give the Liberal Party credit, they are masters of perception. That's one thing that they do very well, the master of perception, misperceptions that they say one thing which they don't even mean or they point a finger at somebody else - not our responsibility, somebody else did that, you know.

AN HON. MEMBER: Master of flip-flop.

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: Yes, as my colleague said, a master of flip-flopping. Allowing only a small percentage of workers in a bargaining unit to go on strike means that there is little incentive to reach a deal. This is what they have to be considering as government. Long, drawn-out strikes aren't good for health care workers or patients. My husband, before I got into politics, worked in a place that had gone on strike. I know what it's like to not know where the next dollar is going to come from to put food on the table or to heat your home, and it's not easy. Why would we put people in that position if we didn't have to? Aren't you supposed to, like the Olympics, give it all? Give your all, give it your all, do the most that you can before you give up. Don't give up early. Any one of us knows that or we wouldn't be in this House. We go out there and give it our all to be able to be honoured to represent people and represent home care workers. Why would we give up so early?

I don't have an answer to that but I would like to get an answer to that from each and every one of the members that are sitting across from me. We know that because this is not looking into the future and what will happen, we're just looking at how we can resolve this immediately and the perception that it looks good, that we've done something, you know we don't want seniors and we do not want people with disabilities to be concerned so we're going to fix it right away. Well it's not a fix. It's not a fix. It's not even like using duct tape, it's using one of those old fashioned bandages that didn't stay on and, believe me, this band-aid is not going to stay on.

What will happen, all the issues that my colleagues have brought forth, you will discover that what will happen will be worse. Take your medicine now and do the right thing.

And there's a domino effect. The domino effect here will mean that if we have longer strikes it will affect surgery delays and appointments and people will be rescheduled. It's bad enough now. We were working really hard to make a change in that but we're going to go backwards, not forward. These types of decisions, when you go backwards, you just don't turn around quickly and go forward, you have to redo all the steps. That's unfortunate - and do you know who it's unfortunate for? For Nova Scotians - the very people that we knocked on their doors and looked in their faces and said we'll do the best we can for you. Those are the ones; those are the people who are going to lose. Those are the ones who put trust in us to come here, and you think that we cannot get together on something as important as this for Nova Scotians and say let's give them more time to talk it out? Once again, Mr. Speaker, the question is why.

We know how nurses fight for their patients and for safe health care. This silences their voice and reduces the power for them to fight back against government. So that compromises patient care, just to cut costs. Like I said, I know being former Minister of Community Services, a department that has enormous needs, how many times a day requests come across your desk that take financial support. I know that, but it is about the priorities and it's all about discussions.

When you bring people together in a restorative approach and you give people an opportunity to talk it out - people are human beings, they will respect each other, and they will say okay, I'll give a little bit here if you give a little bit there; I'll take this away and I'll give this. Why aren't we doing that? Why are we putting Nova Scotians in such a compromising position? Once again, I don't know why, nobody's telling me that, and I hope that after today that's the question from Nova Scotians - why? Why couldn't you give a little bit more time to talk and negotiate and collaborate?

So unfortunately you know what is going to happen, Mr. Speaker? We're creating a poisoned system - an environment of poison. We're setting people against each other. Would any one of us want to be in the position we're going to put home care workers and nurses and the health care system, and seniors, seniors who love their home care workers. They're a breath of life for some seniors.

I recently had to deal with a case of a senior lady who lived in quite a rundown home, the last house on a dirt road. I visited her and she was crying - and do you know why she was crying? Her home care worker was moving on to another job. She trusted her home care worker; she was one of the few she would let in the house. Her family was not around in this province and they were trying to look after Mom from a distance. It wasn't working and to that lady her life was basically over because she lost her home care worker. She did not want to leave her homestead. She and her family worked very hard to create that little

home - even though it was falling apart, that was home. Those were the arms of love around her, being in that home. She did not want to go to a strange place.

It was her home care worker who really made it like a home, because her other family members weren't able to be around her. I tried to console her and I knew when I was visiting her that this lady really shouldn't be in her home on her own, alone. She needed even more home care. Well, you know where she is now? She's in the hospital. She's in the hospital, and she probably will never come home. Is this what we're going to do? This is one story, but believe me, there will be many, many more. When we go back knocking on doors we'll hear it, and on this side we'll understand it.

The other important factor when you're making decisions like this is you have to look at what has happened in the past, what has happened in the history of this province and other provinces, and instead of saying, well, we're not going to pay attention, we are going to do what we want - well, look at other provinces. They have tried different versions of this particular law, and it actually led to worse conditions and worse labour relations. And what does that do? That takes you back years. You have to start that long, winding road toward building relationships again and building trust.

We have a simple solution. That simple solution is to continue the discussions and let the collective bargaining process work out, like it has 97 per cent of the time.

Mr. Speaker, I'm not a gambler, but if somebody said to me, okay, I'll give you a few chips to go down to the casino, because 97 per cent of the time you're going to win, I think I might take those odds. I don't understand why this government is not taking those odds.

We know, too, that it's part of their philosophy, in the sense that the Liberals have hinted in the past about banning the right to strike. Is this their first step? Is this the motivation behind this, when we very simply know that all we have to do is give more time for collective bargaining? That's another question I have. I'd like to know why they're doing this when there is an option there. We haven't gotten to the eleventh hour. There is time. There is time for them to change their mind. There is nothing wrong with that - being in government, and just saying we're learning and we're listening to the people that our decisions are affecting.

You have a lot of people to listen to today, so don't sit there not hearing what they're saying. Really listen to what they say, and come back and make a decision of yes, we will give more time. We will give more time, and we'll allow the real process of collective bargaining to go forward. That is what is critical in all this.

I want to remind people that in 2010, while the now-Premier was in Opposition, he said that emergency service plans "should be hammered out in times of labour peace, not days before a possible strike," and that essential services legislation in other provinces

hasn't stopped labour unrest and strikes. Another question: how can you say that only in 2010, and now that you're on the other side, it is completely different? I don't understand that, Mr. Speaker. You're saying that you need to take the time when there is peace to hammer these issues out. I know that when you get into your government seat things do look different, and some of the things that you might have said on this side may not be as realistic, but this is realistic. This is not confusing. This is very simple. There is a collective bargaining process. Allow that to happen.

We know this proposed legislation is unworkable, because there is such a broad definition of essential home support services. That's going to complicate the process, because what is being expected is for people to go away after this and work it all out. Well, with such a broad definition, it's going to be very difficult for that to be worked out, and it's going to take time. Who is going to suffer during that time? Home care workers, our seniors, people with disabilities, family members.

We live in a province that every month over 1,000 people turn 65. It's time for us to wake up and acknowledge that. It is time to wake up and not just be talking about it but showing action. Part of that action is showing home care workers the respect and dignity for what they do. The wage parity to me, Mr. Speaker, is not that big an issue. Some of the issues I saw coming across my desk as Minister of Community Services - to me this is not a huge issue to resolve. It is the right thing to do and it creates a togetherness in our province, from Yarmouth to Cape Breton, it creates a consistency. It allows the person who works in the home care services to know that they are valued.

The Minister of Labour and Advanced Education stood in this House and said home care workers are valued, they are important, and I totally agree. Change those words into action, that's what needs to be done. Show people the respect and show the home care workers and the nurses that we're not just going to say words to say words. We're going to say words so we can take those words and lead them into a strategy of action.

We know that they're looking at control; they're looking at the dollar figure. But that's being very reactive rather than proactive. We know that it is much more cost effective to have all sides negotiating and working out a deal than going through what we're going through. Then we'll have an issue resolved and it will be resolved going forward. We will have the home care workers who deserve the wage parity, feeling good about their job, feeling good about what they do. You will have the people who they provide the service to feeling good about their home care worker doing their job.

It's the right thing to do, Mr. Speaker, so if they're worried about the cost factor, they have to closely analyze it and see that it's not about the quick fix that looks like you're going to save dollars, it's the long term. That is one thing that I know that Nova Scotians want, they want a government that stops this political foolishness of planning for a four-year election cycle. They want a government that is visionary and looks beyond that.

I know it's hard. That was one thing I can say very proudly that the NDP did. The message might not have always gotten out and we struggled with that but I can tell you that when people look back at what we did as a government, there were many visionary projects we initiated that were never initiated in this province.

That is what people want and they deserve it and they need that. It's just like to me we're a province of being a hamster in a wheel - we keep going around and around. But we need to jump off that wheel; we need to be going straightforward. We need a government that allows that and this government is not allowing it with the actions of this legislation.

This creates an undue balance in favour of the employers to try to resolve collective bargaining. I know the employers' role is vitally important but also the home care, the NSGEU - they're all very important contributors to making life better for Nova Scotia. For the government to stick a wedge in that is very, very unfair. We know what we're seeing here with this legislation is that unfortunately this Premier and this government do not understand the definition of fairness.

Unlike Bill No. 68 which expressly gave power to the Cabinet to dictate the terms of the collective agreements, this bill produces the same results by weakening the bargaining position of the union so much that the Premier thinks he can dictate the monetary settlement. That's not right. That's not what it's about. We know that in anything we do in life it's about negotiating - negotiating the terms that are good for us and good for the other people you're negotiating with. This bill is aimed at limiting the wage demands of home support workers.

If it works as planned, it will leave the big issue of fair pay for those workers unresolved. This is not even a resolution; this is not even resolving the issue. It's going to be a continuation, it's going to come back to haunt this government. It could possibly haunt other governments in the future. It will certainly haunt those home care workers that give so much to their job and it certainly will haunt those people who receive the care from those home care workers. There will be so much conflict going forward.

It's interesting how you can relate things that have been done and you can even take the Ivany report that talks about the attitudes of Nova Scotians. We have to stop the negativity of the attitudes of Nova Scotians and encourage them to be positive. How can you be positive when you have a government that will not allow you to negotiate or talk or put your voice forward? You're voiceless. So you have a report coming in that the Premier stands tall and says this is right and I know there's another member, a minister, who wrote about that very thing recently in the paper saying how important it is to change the attitude - Nova Scotians have to change their attitudes. I think it's the government that needs to change their attitude. They're supposed to lead, so show some leadership.

In closing I would like to say it is time for this Premier to act like a Premier - show leadership, show compassion, show fairness, show trust and respect in the people of Nova Scotia and our home care workers. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney-Whitney Pier.

MR. GORDIE GOSSE: Mr. Speaker, it's always an honour and a privilege. They saved the best for last.

I will now get into a long history of labour disputes in Cape Breton around the coal mines and Sydney Steel. As a former United Steelworker of America, Local 1064 and a third generation of that union, I've been on strike. I've been on strike when they shut the coke ovens down and I know what it's like that you don't have a job to go back to because they shut the operation down where you were working.

I know what it's like to receive strike pay; one-third of your salary with a wife and a family. This bill today, Bill No. 30, an Act to Ensure the Provision of Essential Home-support Services, I feel it's eroding the right to strike. I do feel that the right to strike is a fundamental right for all workers, an integral element of free collective bargaining. Without the possibility of a strike, employees have little or no incentive to seriously negotiate wages, benefits, working conditions with the employees union.

All the earlier strikes back in the 1920s at Sydney Steel, there was an article in there it was called Bloody Sunday. The Government of Nova Scotia at that time sent the army into Cape Breton. You can go to the Historical Society in Whitney Pier and see the Gatling guns. Imagine having Gatling guns set up at the general office of Sydney Steel, an army camped out on the grounds of Sydney Steel. All that the workers were fighting for at that time was the same thing the workers that we see here today outside and in this gallery are looking for, a fair wage. Imagine back in the day to go from working 12 hours a day seven days a week to negotiate so they could work 40 hours a week and to get that benefit, to get the benefits if somebody was hurt on the steel plant, to have the benefits of workers' compensation.

Mr. Speaker, back in June 8, 2007, there was a Supreme Court of Canada ruling that confirmed that the collective bargaining is protected by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Chief Justice Beverley McLachlin and Mr. Justice Louis LeBel stated in their ruling, and I will read the ruling:

“The right to bargain collectively with an employer enhances human dignity, liberty and autonomy of workers by giving them the opportunity to influence the establishment of workplace rules and thereby gain some control over a major aspect of their lives, namely their work ...”

According to some legal analysis the Supreme Court decision sends an important signal to governments that they must consider the collective bargaining rights of workers before they enact legislation that negatively impact on their rights. That's what we have here today, the negative impact on the rights of workers here today. Bill No. 30 is exactly what that is - it is a negative impact on the workers. And I know the consequences of a strike; I know what it's like to have people suffer during strikes.

I remember back in the strike in the 1980s when the Progressive Conservative Government was in power and the Honourable Mr. John Buchanan was the Premier, and he came down to open the extension on the city hospital in Sydney. When he did that there was a bunch of steelworkers there and Mr. Buchanan had to cut the ribbon for the opening of the extension on the emergency department at the old city hospital. I remember the union getting a bill for his car. Somehow or another his car got damaged in that strike and I remember the guys jumping on the engine hood and I don't know if that's what did it, but I remember them getting a bill for about \$400 for the repairs for his car during that strike.

So I've been through the ups and downs of a strike. I've been on a picket line with a 45-gallon drum burning hardwood pallet, chopping them up and burning them to keep warm when it is -21 degrees. I've been there; I know what it's like to be on a strike, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, as we go forward with this legislation today I want to make it perfectly clear that after the legislation passes, which it will - there is a majority government here in the Province of Nova Scotia - after the legislation passes, the right to strike will be removed until a level of essential services can be negotiated between the employer and the union. This legislation will apply to these groups henceforth and also sets precedent in Nova Scotia should the government wish to consider similar legislation for other health care workers, like nurses, in the future.

Madam Speaker, it will take a long time to negotiate who are essential services.

My mother lives in a seniors complex, and gets home care. A very stubborn lady, I think she only gets home care once - she has no eyesight, she's blind, she's had cancer, lives on her own, and I think she gets them in one hour a week or so to look after her cleaning, her dusting, and cleaning maybe a little bit. She's a very independent lady, a very strong-willed Scotswoman who will not come to live with any of her sons and wants to live on her own. But you know the camaraderie that comes with the health care and the home care worker shows up there and they have a cup a tea. Even just that one day a week my mother feels very happy about them coming in.

I've had different issues around health care with home care workers going into environments where the people they are working with are drunk, and watching out for their health and safety - going in where people have live ammunition and guns improperly stored. I've dealt with that in the past with home care workers going in there - what about

their health and safety? But make no mistake here today, Madam Speaker, with this strike, the Premier is strictly the chief negotiator here today. Nobody but the Premier.

Madam Speaker, by refusing an independent arbitration the Premier made it clear it's all about the money. It has nothing to do with patients' care - it's all about the money. That's exactly the opposite of what he said in Opposition. He said, time and time again, on this side of the House that government should not interfere in bargaining and government should pay fair wages. I've heard that; I've heard that in here on numerous occasions. But it isn't just about home support - this is about every health care worker, about every public servant in this province. Let me warn every worker in the province: just like in the 1990s, the Premier and the Liberals are coming to get you.

Home support workers deserve our thanks for the work they do, but they also deserve a fair wage. They are asking only for what people doing the same jobs in the hospital already receive, so why wouldn't it be fair if somebody was doing the same job and washing and cleaning and doing somebody's a.m. care in the hospital, why would those people who are going into somebody's home not receive the same wages and the same benefits as the person in the hospital? It only makes sense that we be on parity with all the workers.

Does the teacher who teaches in Halifax and the teacher who teaches in Sydney make the same wages? Most certainly they do. That's why these workers are here today, to realize that they need wage parity with the workers who are doing the same job that is being done in the health care system in the hospitals as is being done in private homes.

You could not put a cost value on these home care workers going into the homes and how many seniors are actually staying in their own home because of the valuable services provided by these home care workers in this Province of Nova Scotia. We are in a crisis in long-term care facilities in the Province of Nova Scotia, but by the duties and the jobs that these health care workers do and that these home support workers do, these seniors are staying in their homes, they are able to stay around and live in comfort in their own home, in comfort provided by the home care personnel of this province, Madam Speaker.

This really isn't about patient safety, it's about control. It's about control of fair bargaining, it's about control of workers' rights. Just like the Harper Government, the Liberals are bringing down this legislation with no public discussion.

I'm glad that when we're finished here today, when I sit down, Madam Speaker, that we will be going to the Law Amendments Committee, the only province in Canada that has a Law Amendments Committee that allows for the public to come in and have their say on important pieces of legislation. I hope the committee realizes there are many things to be said by the workers here today and just the general public that have a view on coming in here.

These people who are here today care about the people they visit in homes, they care about their jobs. They are underpaid and they are undervalued by this government, Madam Speaker. Nurses and other health care workers care about their patients. That's why they've always worked with the employer to put an emergency services plan in place. They know their units, they know their patients need better than a third-party adjudicator and a back-to-work Act to Ensure the Provision of Essential Home-support Services.

Even the government acknowledges - and I've heard this in speeches here earlier today - 90 per cent of the cases were resolved without a strike. So why are we here doing this today when 90 per cent of the cases were resolved without a strike?

Allowing only a small percentage of workers in the bargaining unit to go on strike means there's an incentive to reach a deal. Long, drawn-out strikes aren't good for health care workers or the patients in this province, Madam Speaker. Longer strikes in this sector would mean longer delays in appointments for surgeries that can be rescheduled for months and months.

We're in a crisis in health care with long-term care. The important and valued work of these home support workers, Madam Speaker, is not lost on myself and my caucus and people on this side of the House. I feel this legislation today creates a poison environment for health care workers in the Province of Nova Scotia, a poison environment. I hate the thought of saying something negative like that. I know it's not unparliamentary, but a poison environment for health care workers. This will drive health care workers out of Nova Scotia at the time when we're facing alarming shortages of such highly skilled workers.

Other provinces have tried versions of this kind of law and it has led to the worsening of labour relations in other provinces in Canada. The Liberals have hinted that bargaining the right to strike in the past is their first step. In 2010, while in Opposition, the Premier said emergency service “. . . plans should be hammered out in the times of labour peace, not days before a possible strike. . .”and essential service legislation in other provinces hasn't stopped labour unrest and strikes.

Madam Speaker, this proposed legislation is unworkable, considering the very broad definition of essential home support services and a complicated process to follow to reach an essential services agreement. It would be much more cost effective to have the parties negotiate to reach a fair and reasonable collective agreement. I've been a part of those fair and reasonable collective agreements as a member of the United Steel Workers of America. You don't always get everything you're looking for, but there is always a happy medium in the ground in there where both sides can come together and work it out and get down and get their names on and get back to doing the things that they like to do. The most important thing is providing care to the people of this province - our most vulnerable citizens, our seniors, our elderly who are living at home. Without these services

being provided to them, how many of these people would be in long-term care, Madam Speaker?

This legislation, Bill No. 30, creates an undue balance in the favour of the employees in resolving collective bargaining disputes. This is well illustrated by the Premier's letter to the NSGEU and his public comments to the effect that their salary offer is the only reasonable basis for an agreement. I remember watching that interview yesterday on television, of the Premier saying, you'd better take this offer - this offer from the former government is a good offer, and you'd better take this, because if you go back it's going to be less. I saw that on the news you'd better take this offer, because if not it's going to be less - is that not putting the gun to the head of the bargaining units for this union and the NSGEU?

Unlike Bill No. 68, which expressly gave power to the Cabinet to dictate the terms of collective agreements, this bill produces the same result by weakening the bargaining position of the union so much that the Premier thinks he can dictate the monetary settlement of this union. Also it's not just - and I thought about, when I heard the speaker earlier, one of the speakers mentioned that it's not just the NSGEU, it's CUPE. I think my colleague sitting next to me here had mentioned that some of these unions have already settled, yet they're in the bill. If the union has settled, I don't understand why they are in this bill. I don't know some of the unions, but some of the CUPE unions that are in here have already settled, and some are under negotiations as we speak here today. I just wonder about the Sydney Homemakers Service Society in my riding - how they feel in Sydney today about this piece of legislation that's been brought forward.

This bill is aimed at limiting the wage demands of home support workers. If it works as planned, it will leave the big issue of fair pay for those workers unresolved and create a dissatisfaction and resentment among these members during the life of this agreement, which will necessarily remain in the next round of bargaining and cause conflict again. Essential services legislation generally has the effect of prolonging strikes because there is little pressure on both parties to come to a speedy resolution. This bill will prolong the period leading up to a strike and make it inevitable that if pay levels are not resolved and a strike occurs, that a strike will be lengthy and result in long periods in which the non-essential services to clients will be denied and the employers' operations disrupted.

The definition of essential home services is the most far-reaching definition in every province. It expressly includes tasks such as light housekeeping, laundry services, respite services, and meal preparation, with the services protected. These tasks are tied to the Saskatchewan definition of essential services, which is considerably broader in scope than other jurisdictions like B.C. and the Canada Labour Code. The combination of a broad definition as its application to services which would not ordinarily be linked to the risk of death or serious harm or damage to health makes its application unprecedented in Canada. Imagine unprecedented legislation here in the Province of Nova Scotia in Canada.

Madam Speaker, the process for negotiation of the essential services agreement in the bill will be lengthy and absorb considerable resources of both the employees and unions, because of the complexity in Section 5, where agreement is required to identify the work functions that are essential, the classification of employees, and the number of employees that are required at any one time. The method of assigning employees to perform these services, the method of dealing with unanticipated increases in the need for staff, and the method of responding to emergencies.

This bill does not require the consideration of available, qualified employees who are not in the bargaining unit to perform work during a strike. For home care support this means the presence of RNs and LPNs to safeguard the life and safety of clients must be ignored as much as the availability of paramedics in hospital emergency rooms and in-patient services. I just think the absurd, broad definition of essential services in this bill cannot be ignored and the employees who do light housekeeping and meal preparation, as well as personal care, will be considered essential and denied their right to strike, all in aid of the Premier's belief that they want too much of a wage - it's all about a wage increase, Madam Speaker, all over a wage increase.

Employees under essential services legislation typically over-designate their services and employees as essential so essential service agreements are very difficult to reach. The bill includes a process of referring settlement of the agreement to the Labour Board. In other jurisdictions this has resulted in very lengthy litigation on the issues which are included in the agreement. This is often very costly in time and money and will strain the ability of the Labour Board to adjudicate these issues as it deals with the rest of its responsibilities.

Instead of devoting time to resolving the collective agreement, a great deal of time and expense will be required to comply with this Act. Again, we will see a delay to try to comply with the Act and get this agreement done.

The bill applies only to the current round of bargaining. A huge effort will be required even though the NSGEU has offered not to go on strike and to submit the wage increases to the arbitrator. Of course arbitration does not guarantee that the Premier gets his way because an arbitrator considers both the employer's and the employee's interest and will not accept a dictation from this Premier.

The bill does allow the board to order arbitration if the number of employees required to work during a strike renders the right to strike ineffective. However, in Section 2(3) it is unclear whether any arbitrator can order retroactive wages. Presumably this reflects the Premier's statement that the current wage offer may not be available if the employees do not accept this offer that's on the table now.

The penalties for not complying with the Act or an essential service agreement are very severe. Individual employees can be fined up to \$1,000, plus \$200 for each day after

the first day - quite a hefty fine. Unions can be fined up to \$5,000, up to \$1,000 a day after the first day.

Madam Speaker, these home care workers are among the lowest paid in the Public Service. They face these big fines if they step out of line with this bill and those are humongous fines. For many people, home support workers are what allowed them to remain in their homes and out of expensive nursing homes, which I've said before.

As I'm on my feet today, I thought that I've been in every seat in this Legislature, Madam Speaker, and I've been in the Opposition, I've been in government, I've been in every chair in this facility. I thought that I would like to allow the people who are at home watching Legislative TV, I would like to allow the people who are outside, the people here in the gallery today, to write to their MLA, to write to all the MLAs, to write them and tell them how they actually feel about Bill No. 30, an Act to Ensure the Provision of Essential Home-support Services. Feel free to write every member of the Assembly. That's why we're elected, we're public figures; we're elected here.

I know, Madam Speaker, that some people are still in negotiations to having their office up and running. Now I would like to offer the people watching on television, the people in the gallery and the people outside, the opportunity to write to backbenchers of the Liberal Party.

First of all I'd like to say that if you want to contact the honourable member for Fairview-Clayton Park, the constituency office is 3845 Joseph Howe Drive, Suite 203, Halifax, Nova Scotia, B3I 4H9 and the telephone number to contact that member would be 1-902-329-8683. The fax number to contact that member would be 902-444-7530. The e-mail address for the member for Fairview-Clayton Park is info@patriciaarab.ca. So please feel free to contact that member and all members of the Assembly.

Madam Speaker, I would like to go on to the next member, the backbencher for Victoria-The Lakes and remind that the constituency office for Victoria-The Lakes is located at Suite 7, 15 Alder Point Road, Bras d'Or, Nova Scotia; postal code is B1Y 2K2. The phone number to contact the honourable member is 902-736-7263. The fax number if you would like to fax that honourable member is 902-736-1930. The e-mail contact information for that member is eykingpz@gov.ns.ca. I encourage everybody to contact every member on this side of the House and those members on that side of the House.

The honourable member for Cumberland North: his constituency office is 10B Havelock Street, Amherst, Nova Scotia with the postal code being B4H 3J7. The phone number for contact is 902-660-3144. If you'd like to contact that member by fax you can contact at 902-660-3149. The e-mail address for that member is terry.farrell@live.com, and again I encourage anybody to contact every member of the Legislative Assembly.

MADAM SPEAKER: Excuse me, I would like to ask the honourable member to please direct his direction towards the Chair and not to direct it to people in general.

MR. GOSSE: I have been directing it towards the Chair.

MADAM SPEAKER: No, you've been saying (Interruptions)

Order, please. The member for Sydney-Whitney Pier has the floor.

MR. GOSSE: Did I do the honourable member for Sackville-Beaver Bank yet?

AN HON. MEMBER: No.

MR. GOSSE: Not yet, okay. Through you, Madam Speaker, the honourable member for Sackville-Beaver Bank, the address for the constituency office is 1000 Sackville Drive, Sackville, Nova Scotia, with the postal code B4E 0C2 for written correspondence. The phone number is 902-252-9900, and for fax to the honourable member would be 902-252-9257. E-mail correspondence would be goughsz@gov.ns.ca.

Madam Speaker, through you, the honourable member for Guysborough-Eastern Shore-Tracadie constituency office: Chedabucto Centre, 9996 Highway 16, Unit P-1, P.O. Box 259, Guysborough, Nova Scotia, with the postal code being B0H 1N0. The phone number for contact is 902-533-2280, the fax number is 902-533-3039, and e-mail is lphines@ns.sympatico.ca.

Madam Speaker, through you, the constituency office of the honourable member for Kings South: 3-24 Harbourside Drive, P.O. Box 2455, Wolfville, Nova Scotia, with postal code B4P 2C1. Madam Speaker, through you, the phone number is 902-542-0050, the fax number is 902-542-3423, and the e-mail address is keith@irvingmla.ca.

Madam Speaker, through you, the honourable member for Hammonds Plains-Lucasville for contact information, 2120 Hammonds Plains Road, Unit 3, Hammonds Plains, Nova Scotia, B4B 1P3, contact by phone, 902-404-9900, fax number 902-404-8415, e-mail for the honourable member is jessomeben@gmail.com.

Madam Speaker, through you, the contact information for the honourable member for Lunenburg: constituency office, P.O. Box 136, 125A Cornwall Road, Blockhouse, Nova Scotia, B0J 1E0, phone number is 902-531-3095, fax number is 902-531-3094, e-mail contact is lunenburgmla@eastlink.ca.

Madam Speaker, the contact information for the honourable member for Halifax Atlantic, the Liberal constituency office, phone 902-440-147, for e-mail contact, brendan@brendanmaguire.ca.

Madam Speaker, the contact information for the constituency office of the honourable member for Hants East: 693 Highway 2, Unit 1, Elmsdale, Nova Scotia, B2S 1A8, phone number to contact the member about this piece of legislation is 1-902-883-3465, toll free at -1-855-383-3465, fax at 902-883-3293, e-mail is margaretmillermla@bellaliant.net.

The contact information for the honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect on Bill No. 30, an Act to Ensure the Provision of Essential Home-support Services (2014), the contact information: constituency office, 1268 St. Margarets Bay Road, Beechville, Nova Scotia, B3T 1A7, phone 902-404-7036, fax 902-404-7056, e-mail info@ianrankin.ca.

Madam Speaker, the contact information if you'd like to contact the honourable member for Dartmouth South over Bill No. 30 is: constituency office located at 211 Pleasant Street, Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, B2Y 3R5, phone number is 902-429-7693, fax number is 902-461-4027, and e-mail is info@allanrowe.com.

The contact information for the honourable member for Halifax Chebucto is: phone number 405-7802, constituency office is in Halifax, Nova Scotia, e-mail him about Bill No. 30 at info@joachimstroink.ca.

The contact information for the honourable member for Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage if you'd like to contact her over Bill No. 30, the constituency office is at 1515 Main Road, P.O. Box 371, Eastern Passage, Nova Scotia, B3G 1M7. The phone number for contact is 902-465-1888; fax number, 902-465-1890. If you'd like to contact the honourable member over Bill No. 30, you can please do that at joycetreen@bellaliant.com.

Through you, Madam Speaker, the contact information for the honourable member for Clare-Digby. His mailing address for those who would like to contact him over the bill is: Little Brook Office, 1287 Highway No. 1, Little Brook, Nova Scotia. For contact by phone, it is 1-902-769-6683, and by fax it is 902-769-2576; for the Conway office, 138 Highway No. 303, Conway, Nova Scotia. If you'd like to contact the honourable member for Bill No. 30, please do so by phone at 902-245-5300. The fax number is 902-245-4596. Contact for Bill No. 30 by e-mail, info@claredigby.ca.

Mr. Speaker, that is all the contact information, but you know, you can actually go on-line on the Nova Scotia Government Web site, and on the left-hand side you can click on MLAs, and it lists every MLA alphabetically. Most of the e-mail addresses are there for their government e-mail. Over the years during educationcuts.ca I remember receiving lots of e-mails from all over the province.

Those who think that Bill No. 30, essential services legislation, is good or not good, please contact every member of the Legislative Assembly. All 51 members of the House of Assembly will be glad to listen to what you have to say about this important piece of legislation. But realize we are taking the right to strike away by introducing this essential

services legislation, by not going to a fair bargaining process. This is only the beginning with this new government, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

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

The honourable Minister of Labour and Advanced Education.

HON. KELLY REGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank our members for their comments, especially those who showed exactly why we need essential services legislation. I now move second reading of Bill No. 30.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 30. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In light of the amount of presentations that are scheduled for the Law Amendments Committee, the committee will continue to meet beyond midnight, if necessary, in order to have the presentations heard. I am proposing right now that the House recess until six o'clock, at which time we can provide an update to all members of the House as to the status of the presentations.

As well, Mr. Speaker, since our traditional Rules of this House do not allow the House to sit on Saturday and Sunday, and in light of the emergency nature of the situation - that we do have a legal strike underway, and people not receiving essential services - may I seek the unanimous consent of the House to allow the Legislature to sit both Saturday and Sunday, if necessary, for the passage of Bill No. 30?

MR. SPEAKER: Is it agreed?

I hear several Noes.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, since the NDP has chosen not to give consent to sitting on Saturday and Sunday, I would move again, as I said earlier, that the House recess until 6:00 p.m. this evening. We will be able to provide an update at that time as to how the Law Amendments Committee is proceeding.

So, with that, I move that we recess until 6:00 p.m. this evening.

MR. SPEAKER: The House will recess until 6:00 p.m. this evening.

[1:50 p.m. The House recessed.]

[6:01 p.m. The House reconvened.]

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As we indicated earlier, we would provide an update at 6:00 p.m., I am pleased to report that the Law Amendments Committee continues to meet and hear presentations. In light of the amount of requests for presentations, it seems unlikely that the committee will conclude before midnight this evening. The committee will continue to meet past midnight, until such time as necessary, in order for all presentations to be heard.

Mr. Speaker, I would now like to ask for the unanimous consent of the House so that hours can be set for the House to meet tomorrow. I would request that unanimous consent.

MR. SPEAKER: Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, just a few orders of business: the Orders of the Day for tomorrow will be the same as the Orders of the Day that we had today, so for members who were wondering, the Orders of the Day that are on their desks right now are the same Orders of the Day that will be there tomorrow morning. (Interruption) There will be a new order paper, by all means; they will look very familiar, but it will be a new order paper. Thank you to our Clerks for clarifying that for me.

As well, Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Rule 5C of the Rules of the House, the House of Assembly will meet tomorrow morning from the hours of 9:00 a.m. until 11:59 p.m., or whenever we will conclude our business regarding Bill No. 30.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I would move that the House do now rise to meet again from the hours of 9:00 a.m. until 11:59 p.m., tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is that the House rise to meet again on Saturday, March 1st, between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 11:59 p.m.

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

The motion is carried.

We stand adjourned until 9:00 tomorrow morning.

[The House rose at 6:03 p.m.]