



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

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 2, 2014

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House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, WEDNESDAY, APRIL 2, 2014

Sixty-second General Assembly

First Session

2:00 P.M.

SPEAKER

Hon. Kevin Murphy

DEPUTY SPEAKER

Ms. Margaret Miller

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. Before we start the daily routine, there is no late debate tonight.

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Justice.

HON. LENA DIAB: Mr. Speaker, as Chairman of the Committee on Law Amendments, I am directed to report that the committee has met and considered the following bill:

Bill No. 37 - Essential Health and Community Services Act.

and the committee recommends this bill to the favourable consideration of the House, without amendment.

MR. SPEAKER: Ordered that this bill be referred to the Committee of the Whole House on Bills.

TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 39 - Entitled an Act Respecting the Entrenchment of the Goals Set Out in the Report of the Nova Scotia Commission on Building Our New Economy. (Hon. Maureen MacDonald)

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

NOTICES OF MOTION

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

RESOLUTION NO. 821

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

Whereas on May 23, 2013, as a candidate the Liberal member for Halifax Atlantic wrote, saying, "I was a proud member of CEP for 10 years who stopped on a picket line and have been a PROUD, supportive, active member of CUPE Local 227 for the last three years. We protect middle class jobs"; and

Whereas health care workers and many Nova Scotians have made it clear that essential services legislation creates more unstable collective bargaining in jurisdictions where it exists; and

Whereas Liberals typically say one thing to get into power and another while in power;

Therefore be it resolved that since the Liberal member for Halifax Atlantic was a proud member of CEP and CUPE, that he should speak out against essential services legislation, the Premier and the Liberal Cabinet, and stand up for health care workers who live in Halifax Atlantic.

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

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

Is it agreed?

I hear several Noes.

The notice is tabled.

The honourable Leader of the New Democratic Party.

RESOLUTION NO. 822

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

Whereas it is estimated that 1 in 150 people across the country have autism or a related condition, including over 9,000 children and adults in Nova Scotia; and

Whereas many dedicated parents, teachers, and other individuals, including those at Autism Nova Scotia, work tirelessly to make our province more accessible for people with autism and find ways for them to thrive in our communities; and

Whereas today, April 2nd, marks World Autism Awareness Day, when various buildings and landmarks, including the Empire State Building, the Sydney Opera House in Australia, and our very own Halifax-Dartmouth bridges will be awash in blue light to promote autism awareness;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly thank all those who are participating in World Autism Awareness Day, as well as those who work every day to make a difference for Nova Scotians living with autism.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

RESOLUTION NO. 823

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

Whereas today, April 2nd, is the seventh annual World Autism Awareness Day; and

Whereas World Autism Awareness Day is one of only four official health-specific United Nations Days and is intended to bring the world's attention to autism, a pervasive disorder that affects tens of millions of people; and

Whereas on World Autism Awareness Day, we are all encouraged to raise awareness about autism and encourage early diagnosis and early intervention;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House do their part to increase awareness about autism, and help give voice to the millions of people who live with autism and who are undiagnosed and looking for help.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid.

RESOLUTION NO. 824

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

Whereas it's proven that essential services legislation creates more unstable collective bargaining in jurisdictions where it exists; and

Whereas on December 6, 2007, when the Premier was in Opposition, he said, "Making a good-faith collective bargaining process even more difficult by taking away health care workers' right to strike is not going to make Nova Scotia a more attractive option when trying to recruit health care workers to this province"; and

Whereas the Liberal Government has brought forward two pieces of back-to-work legislation in the first seven months of its mandate, which continues their track record of disrespecting health care workers and the collective bargaining process;

Therefore be it resolved that the Liberal member of this House of Assembly for Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage speak out against the essential services legislation, the Premier and the Liberal Cabinet, and stand up for health care workers who live in Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage.

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

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

Is it agreed?

I hear several Noes.

The notice is tabled.

The honourable member for Pictou West.

RESOLUTION NO. 825

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

Whereas April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month in Nova Scotia; and

Whereas sexual violence affects all ages, genders, cultures, and economic backgrounds; and

Whereas we must continue to challenge and change the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours surrounding sexual violence to create a society that celebrates healthy relationships and respectful gender attitudes;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly agree that we must promote education and awareness of the issues surrounding sexual violence in order to prevent it.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Sydney-Whitney Pier.

RESOLUTION NO. 826

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

Whereas Mitchell Balmas, a highly-skilled forward with the Cape Breton Tradesmen, completed a highly-successful 2013-14 season in the Nova Scotia Eastlink Major Midget Hockey League; and

Whereas Mitchell Balmas finished first in rookie scoring with 46 points; and

Whereas Mitchell Balmas capped off his inaugural campaign by receiving the Rookie of the Year Award;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia Legislature congratulate Mitchell Balmas on his outstanding athletic achievement and wish him all the best in his future hockey endeavours.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Inverness.

RESOLUTION NO. 827

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

Whereas Sister Margaret MacKillop will celebrate her 100th Birthday on May 15, 2014; and

Whereas Sister Margaret devoted her life to God and to charity at the age of 16; and

Whereas she has made an impact on the lives of many of her students here in Nova Scotian and in western Canada;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly acknowledge the devotion, love, and longevity Sister Margaret has shown throughout her remarkable life.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Chester-St. Margaret's.

RESOLUTION NO. 828

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

Whereas it is clear that health care workers know that essential services legislation creates more unstable collective bargaining in jurisdictions where it exists; and

Whereas on December 6, 2007, when the Premier was in Opposition, he said, "There isn't a single person who wants a strike, including those very health care workers you're taking away the right from. What they want, though, is to have the right to sit down with the government and bargain in good faith and make sure that they have that tool to be able to not go to work"; and

Whereas health care workers will not forget that it was the Liberal Government that has brought forward two pieces of back to work legislation in the first seven months of its mandate, which continues their track record of disrespecting health care workers and the collective bargaining process;

Therefore be it resolved that the member of the House of Assembly for Halifax Chebucto speak out against essential services legislation, the Premier, and the Liberal Cabinet, and stand up for the health care workers who live in Halifax Chebucto.

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

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

Is it agreed?

I hear several Noes.

The notice is tabled.

The honourable member for Queens-Shelburne.

RESOLUTION NO. 829

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

Whereas it is clear that health care workers know that essential services legislation creates more unstable collective bargaining in jurisdictions where it exists; and

Whereas on December 6, 2007, when the Premier was in Opposition, he said, "Cease [the government's] 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"; and

Whereas health care workers will not forget that it was the Liberal Government that has brought forward two pieces of back to work legislation in the first seven months of its mandate, which continues their track record of disrespecting health care workers and the collective bargaining process;

Therefore be it resolved that the member of the House of Assembly for Dartmouth South speak out against essential service legislation, the Premier, and the Liberal Cabinet, and stand up for the health care workers who live in Dartmouth South.

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

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

Is it agreed?

I hear several Noes.

The notice is tabled.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS

MR. SPEAKER: The time is now 2:20 p.m. We will conclude at 3:50 p.m.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

PREM.: PATIENT CARE - COMPROMISED

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Capital Health, yesterday, issued a media release saying; “We have many more patients currently in the queue than we can safety care for. . .” I will table that for the House.

My question for the Premier, will he now admit that patient care has already been compromised?

HON. STEPHEN MACNEIL (The Premier): Mr. Speaker, I would say to the honourable member that yesterday the wildcat strike that took place obviously caused some major concerns for the delivery of health care. I am pleased to see that those health care workers are back on the job and it is my hope that we will have passage of Bill No. 37 today that will allow the essential services component to be negotiated and then the strike can continue.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, there were 89 surgeries cancelled yesterday, five of which were heart surgeries. Many patients, who made their way to the hospital, only found out when they got there that their surgery was going to be cancelled. That is the case here at Capital Health but surgeries are being cancelled at other health authorities around the province as well, so once again we are faced with that same old story where we have chaos in our health care system and a government that, again, waited until the last minute to deal with it and take action.

Mr. Speaker, my question for the Premier is, will he explain why he waited until the eve of a strike to decide that nurses are essential to our system, when it was clear for weeks that there was a deadline of April 3rd?

THE PREMIER: It was my hope, Mr. Speaker, that a resolution could have been resolved at the bargaining table. As the member opposite would know, there was a strike notice put in on Monday morning to give 48 hours’ notice. What we have put in place, quite frankly, is the very thing that the Leader of the Official Opposition is now

complaining about - putting in place some certainty for those patients so that they know, if there is going to be a labour disruption in the health care system, what services will be available. They will know well in advance; those won't be negotiated in the final hours.

We are now spending more time arguing about what is an emergency and what isn't. What we are asking for and what this legislation puts in place, Mr. Speaker, is what an essential service is, what will be covered, and then the labour disruption can happen.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, it's actually the Premier who we all wish would be consistent. While in Opposition he said that he believes emergency services should be dealt with in times of labour peace and not in the days before a possible strike. That's a direct quote and I'll table that for the benefit of the House.

Here we are, on the eve of a strike, yesterday 89 surgeries were cancelled at Capital Health, 30 more at Annapolis Health and many more around the province. I'll ask the Premier quite simply, why didn't he take his own advice, which he issued before the election, instead of letting 100 Nova Scotians go without their surgery yesterday?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, as the Leader of the Official Opposition would know and all members of this House would know, this is the third potential health care disruption that we have had in seven months.

The very thing that he referenced that I talked about that this should happen prior to getting into the final days of negotiation, Mr. Speaker, is exactly right. This is exactly what this bill does. It lays out process that would allow us to ensure that we could communicate to Nova Scotians what essential services would be available before the labour disruption.

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

PREM. - CAP. HEALTH/NSGEU: EMERG. SERV. - MOU

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: My question through you, Mr. Speaker, is for the Premier. Nurses' agreements with the Capital Health District contain an MOU that they negotiate emergency services in the event of a strike. I'll table a letter dated March 5th of this year, from the union to the employer at Capital Health. This letter states:

“The Union and the Employer are required by the Collective Agreement to negotiate these services . . . Often the parties come to an agreement on the level of services. In those circumstances where the parties cannot agree, the MOA and our past practice has an arbitrator make a fast, on the spot decision. This has led to a fair and quick resolution of an emergency service agreement.”

Mr. Speaker, after announcing just a few hours ago that an emergency services agreement was in place, we are now hearing that the employer has changed its mind. I want to ask the Premier what, if any, discussions did he or members of his government have with Capital Health that may have caused this reversal?

THE PREMIER: Who was the letter from?

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Premier, I'll get you to direct your questions through the Chair. If we need her to repeat it, I'll ask her to repeat it.

THE PREMIER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I apologize for that.

She is laying out, quite frankly, the very essence of why we need essential services legislation. We have one part of the negotiations saying one thing and the other part saying something very different. What we're saying is instead of negotiating this in the dying days of bargaining, we should do that well in advance so both sides will know what's there.

I want to be very clear - at no time have I spoken to either side involved in this labour dispute.

MS. MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I note for the Premier that the date on that letter is March 5th. The nurses have been attempting to negotiate an essential services agreement with their employer for several weeks now. Almost a full month this has been on the table.

Nurses working for Capital Health came here yesterday and they told us they do not want to go on strike, but they feel they must to fight for improvements in staffing levels to improve patient safety over the long term. Nurses always offer emergency services, but when the employer won't agree with the level, there are arbitrators who step in.

Mr. Speaker, my question for the Premier is, now that the nurses are in a legal strike position for Thursday morning, will the Premier advise the employer to agree to respect their memorandum of understanding, and allow an arbitrator to make a fair and quick resolution to ensure emergency services are in place?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, there's a bill before this House, quite frankly, that would lay out a process for essential services legislation between the employer and the union when it comes to health care delivery in this province. I would encourage the member opposite to allow that bill to be passed so that could be negotiated and then that labour disruption can happen, if they feel so that it needs to happen.

MS. MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, there may be a bill in front of this House, but there is a process and a collective agreement that is being ignored that is much faster than any bill passing through this House. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. I'd just like to remind the members of the gallery that it is unparliamentary to show any pleasure or displeasure with anything that happens on the floor and, if anything continues, I'll ask that the gallery be cleared.

The honourable Leader of the New Democratic Party has the floor.

MS. MACDONALD: The union has filed a policy grievance on Capital Health's failure to negotiate emergency services; imagine, Mr. Speaker. The Premier has pushed labour relations off a cliff in this province and clearly government interference is making things worse, not better.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the Premier, how will the Premier repair labour relations in Nova Scotia when he has effectively taken away the right to strike and the ability to negotiate in good faith?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, what Bill No. 37 does is it lays out an essential services component, so that both the employer and the union will know well in advance of any labour talks what services will be required, and Nova Scotians will know what services to expect and are there.

Mr. Speaker, this bill does not take away the right to strike, unlike, quite frankly, what the New Democratic Party did when they were in power when they took away the right to strike from paramedics in this province. (Applause)

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

PREM.: ESSENTIAL SERVICES - NOTICE

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier. As we now know the Premier once said in writing that essential services plans should only be made well in advance of a potential strike and never on the eve of a strike. He has been in office for almost six months now and during that time we had a brief, 11-day Fall session and there are very few pieces of legislation before this session of the House. There has been lots of notice to get this right. My question to the Premier is, after six months and lots of notice, how does doing nothing for six months protect patient care?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, this bill before the House very clearly lays out process that would allow, quite frankly, for both sides to negotiate an essential services package well in advance of a labour disruption, as well as protecting the right of health care workers to strike, unlike the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party who wants to strip that right away from health care workers.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, when a government waits until the last minute, the heated rhetoric takes over, people take hard sides, and good oversight of our health system

goes out the window - that is the problem. That is why 100 Nova Scotians went without their scheduled surgeries yesterday. That is the greatest argument for doing something when there is labour calm and not waiting for the most recent crisis. Those 100 Nova Scotians went without their health care yesterday. So I will ask the Premier, how can he tell those 100 Nova Scotians that he is protecting their care?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, very simply, in the last seven months we've had three potential labour disruptions in the health care sector in the Province of Nova Scotia with different employers, different unions. What this bill lays out is that we lay out a piece of essential services legislation well in advance of that labour disruption. I would hope the Leader of the Official Opposition will support the passage of this bill so we can see it go forward in this House.

One difference between the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party and this Premier is I believe health care workers should have the right to strike and this bill protects it.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, we just heard from over 100 health care workers in the last two days who have a very different view of what the Premier is doing around their rights and what he just said. Quite frankly, although we have lots of problems with the bill the government has brought forward in this House, we are doing the responsible thing. In fact, I believe we are cleaning up his mess by not getting in the way so that bill can be in place, as it inevitably will because of the Liberal majority, so a strike can be avoided. That is what's going on in the House this week.

It doesn't change the fact that 100 Nova Scotians went without their surgery yesterday and the Premier had six months and, by his own admission, three warnings to get his act together and get something in place long before it reached another crisis. I will ask the Premier to explain to those 100 Nova Scotians, who had their surgeries cancelled yesterday, why they have to pay for his six months of inaction.

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, this piece of legislation clearly lays out a process that would ensure that Nova Scotians would know, well in advance of a labour disruption, what services would be available. They would know well in advance whether or not their surgery would continue or not. Unlike the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party who wants to strip the health care workers' right to strike away from them, this bill does not; it protects both essential services legislation and it protects the right to strike.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

ERDT: GOV'T. (N.S.) - LENDER OF LAST RESORT

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism. The Liberal platform states that we need

to ensure that government becomes the lender of last resort and we need to do it now. I will table that document. The lender of last resort implies that the government would ensure that all other lending options would have been exhausted. Today in allnovascotia.com it references a March 5, 2014, commitment of \$500,000. I will document that as well. My question to the minister is, will the minister explain what sources of funding were exhausted before the government came in as lender of last resort?

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, we've made numerous investments. It may be helpful if the member would advise the House as to which specific investment she is referring to.

MS. MACFARLANE: The Liberal platform also said, "A Liberal Government will end the practice of picking winners and losers and will focus on sector development." In the same allnovascotia.com article dated January 20, 2014, a commitment of \$600,000 is referenced. The commitment was made to a biomass company. My question to the minister is, how does this individual commitment focus on sector development when it is one company that received support, leaving all other companies in the sector behind?

MR. SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, the confusion that comes from the Official Opposition never seems to end because, in one sense, the Leader of the Official Opposition would say that NSBI should be responsible for all economic development. In fact, I think he even suggested that NSBI should run the government and not even have a Cabinet, but in this case this is a recommendation. (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism has the floor.

MR. SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, this was a matter that came from the independent Board of the NSBI, which the Leader of the Official Opposition has said is what should be making these decisions. So if the member has an issue with the recommendations from the Board of NSBI, then once and for all, tell us: do the Official Opposition support Nova Scotia Business Incorporated working with Nova Scotia business or do they not?

MS. MACFARLANE: In the government's own press release just yesterday, they claimed that the new website would summarize approved investments. I'll table that document. According to the same allnovascotia.com article, there are investments that are not on the website. It mentions another confirmed disbursement of funds. The government is backtracking on their plan to be lender of last resort. The government is proving that it supports the failed practice of picking winners and losers, and now it is hiding information from the public. My question to the minister is, what other taxpayer money has been disbursed behind closed doors that doesn't appear on the Economic and Rural Development website?

MR. SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to say that under the leadership of this Premier, we are the first jurisdiction in Canada to post the investments made by Economic and Rural Development on the web. (Applause)

Mr. Speaker, the very fact that the member can stand in this House and ask questions about our investments is proof of the transparency that is taking place . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism has the floor.

MR. SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, the fact that the member can even ask about those investments is proof that the website is working, that Nova Scotians from one end of the province to the other can look at the investments that we are making. The investments that she is referring to are investments that were recommended by Nova Scotia Business Incorporated. If she has questions about the work of NSBI, tell us once and for all: does the Official Opposition support NSBI or don't they?

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

PREM.: ESSENTIAL SERVICES LEGISLATION - CONSULTATION

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier. Yesterday at the Law Amendments Committee the president of the Nova Scotia Nurses' Union came here to speak about Bill No. 37. Now, she and her union have a collective agreement in place for nurses all across the province outside of the Capital District Health Authority, in all of our regional hospitals and small health centres. Ms. Hazelton said she was shocked by the breadth of the bill and the lack of consultation. To quote Ms. Hazelton, she said, "There was no consultation, there was no discussion." Knowing this piece of legislation will have serious implications for health care workers, I want to ask the Premier why he chose not to consult with people like Ms. Hazelton before this legislation was brought forward.

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, as you would know, and all members of this House would know, this is the third potential labour disruption that we've had in this province with different unions, different employers, and each time we've come to the point where we've ended up trying to - we're now discussing what an emergency is and what isn't. This bill clearly lays out steps that will put in place essential services legislation that will move forward.

As the Leader of the New Democratic Party pointed out, the NSNU has, in more recent time, negotiated packages well in advance, which actually lends credence to this bill, which is about negotiating this in advance and ensuring that. But we've had three labour disruptions in the health care sector that have left Nova Scotia patients wondering what services are going to be in place. This process will deal with it.

MS. MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, yesterday Ms. Hazelton reminded the committee - and let me remind the Premier - that the Nova Scotia Nurses' Union hasn't had a legal strike in this province since 1977, something she attributes to the ability to strike. My question to the Premier is, with so little history of health care strikes in Nova Scotia, why did the Premier feel it was necessary to have such a heavy-handed, broadly-based piece of legislation?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, as I've said a number of times already this afternoon, this is the third health care disruption that we've had in the last seven months. This piece of legislation lays out an essential services component that is negotiated well in advance, not in the dying days of the collective bargaining process, so both parties know the requirements to deliver services to the people of this province as well as protecting the right to strike. Unlike the New Democratic Party, who stripped that right away from paramedics, this bill does not.

MS. MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, health care workers are telling the Premier that the right to strike, as we know it today, is a tool that they must have in order to get fair collective agreements. The difference between Bill No. 37, Ms. Hazelton says, ". . . is not collective bargaining, it's collective begging."

Mr. Speaker, my question though you to the Premier is, how will this legislation enhance health care workers' ability to negotiate fair collective agreements, when you've allowed the balance to tip so far toward the employer?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I disagree with the premise of the question. The fact is this piece of legislation lays out an essential services component as well as the protection of the right to strike. I want to remind all members of this House, we are the last province in Canada to bring in essential services legislation.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants West.

HEALTH & WELLNESS: NURSES STRIKE - PROVINCIAL IMPACT

MR. CHUCK PORTER: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Minister of Health and Wellness. Earlier this week I asked the minister what assurances he could provide for the patients and nurses at the Hants Community Hospital that their health care would be there when they needed it. The minister responded, "I think the member opposite will find that, in fact, his hospital will have the nurse complement and the teams in place to deliver services to the people of the Hants West area." Yesterday in the Hants Journal, it was reported that as many as 26 surgeries in the Valley area were to be cancelled. My question to the minister is, why wasn't the minister aware of the full extent of the impact this will have on patients across the province?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, we know that once a strike gets underway, because of the integrated nature of our health care system, then it's going to have impacts certainly on four or five of the surrounding hospitals to Capital Health, and in this case we know that has now taken place. I feel very, very strongly that this is why, because of the nature of the group we're talking about here and the requirements of health care that we need to know well in advance what Nova Scotians in an impacted hospital or community of hospitals would be receiving for care. Patients do need to know well in advance as to what services they can count on if, indeed, there is a strike.

MR. PORTER: Mr. Speaker, 26 cancelled procedures in the Valley District, nearly 100 more cancelled across the province - patients are the ones who are suffering because of this government's issues around collective bargaining or the lack thereof.

Mr. Speaker, my question is, will the minister admit today that patients across the province are not receiving the care they need because of the chaos associated with the impending labour disruption?

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, to the member for Hants West, I have indeed communicated now to a number of families who have reached out to me that long-awaited surgeries, especially orthopaedic procedures, indeed have been impacted already.

You know what this piece of legislation really does is say, we care about the safety of patients in this province.

MR. PORTER: Mr. Speaker, on top of the procedures and the surgeries cancelled yesterday, it was announced that the Digby General Hospital's Emergency Department will be closed due to a physician not being available. In the Liberal Party platform it says, Mr. Speaker: "A Liberal Government will do what it takes so that our health care system puts patients first."

Does the minister believe that Nova Scotians whose procedures have been cancelled, or who do not have access to their local emergency department, believe they are being put first by the current government?

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, in many ways I don't use this as a way of avoiding the question the member has asked here, but it is the very, very early days as we work to put in place a system that is provincially oriented, patient-centered and very responsive to the needs of citizens. I feel that as we move to a very highly integrated system that can indeed be achieved, but in this instance here we are indeed concerned for any and every patient who has been impacted by the current disruption.

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

**LAW AMENDMENTS COMM. - ACTING CHAIR:
OPPOSITION MEMBERS - QUESTIONS**

MR. GORDIE GOSSE: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Premier. I attended the Law Amendments Committee yesterday morning when it began at 9:00 a.m. I listened intently to the witnesses who shared their experiences and asked them questions and made a note of potential amendments. I was upset when the acting chairman cut me off when I was asking important questions of witnesses. Sadly, this was not the only occasion when the chairman stopped Opposition members from engaging witnesses.

My question for the Premier is, why did the chairman only cut short the questions from Opposition members at the Law Amendments Committee?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that's a question of you - I would also remind the member, does he remember Ross Landry?

MR. GOSSE: Mr. Speaker, the Premier may not have an answer for this question, but I do - not a single Liberal member of the Law Amendments Committee asked a single question of the more than 150 witnesses who presented. It wasn't because the chairman stopped them, which leads me to my next question - through you to the Premier. As the Leader, when did you give the orders to the backbenchers to keep silent, and why?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud of the work the members of our caucus have provided and the professionalism, quite frankly, with which they conducted themselves yesterday. I would remind the member opposite that when he was stripping the right to strike from paramedics, there was a lot of silence coming from the New Democratic caucus.

MR. GOSSE: Mr. Speaker, with this obvious gag order in place, I feel badly for the Liberal MLAs and Cabinet Ministers who are unable to communicate their position on this important issue. I feel even worse for their constituents who aren't having their voices heard in the Legislature.

My last question is one of those that constituents should make note of. Mr. Speaker, my final question is to the Premier: Will he allow his caucus members to truly represent the concerns of their constituents and vote their conscience, even if it means voting against this legislation, or will the gag order continue and all the Liberal MLAs be forced to vote however their boss tells them to?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Caucus has been very clear through this whole process by laying out, ensuring that we protect patients in their province by delivering essential services, as well protecting the right to strike by health care workers, which that Party and that government stripped from paramedics in this province.

MR. SPEAKER: The honorable member for Pictou East.

**HEALTH & WELLNESS: N.S. HEALTH CARE SYSTEM
- CDN. FORCES MEMBERS**

MR. TIM HOUSTON: My question today is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. Yesterday, the Minister of Health and Wellness announced that family members of Canadian Forces members will receive first-day coverage for all insured services. I can only imagine how excited Canadian Forces members will be to learn that their families will have first-day access to a Nova Scotia health system that is in chaos. Will the minister admit that the state of Nova Scotia's health care system this week will only increase the anxiety of Forces members who are moving their families here?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, to the member for Pictou East, having had really the good fortune to travel across Nova Scotia in the last couple of months, I can sincerely say that on every day, every facility, every group of people I met - in fact, I was inspired by their work and their commitment.

I know from my home community of Kingston-Greenwood that when members come in to take up their tour of duty, they've had to get services paid for by the province from which they have come for the first three months. This enables them to quickly make the transfer to our province and, even though on occasion some have had that challenge of getting a family doctor, when they go to the emergency department at Soldiers' Memorial or at Valley Regional, or access any of the other community based programs, they talk about the quality of care and the responsiveness of the service they receive.

MR. HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, I'm sure Nova Scotians appreciate the fact that the minister did travel the province. I sincerely hope that when he travelled the province, he listened to those health care professionals and maybe even engaged them and asked them a question or two, because what we saw yesterday in 19 hours of testimony in the committee room over there was not a lot of interest from the Liberal Caucus. So hopefully when he was on his tour he did a little different.

When you think about all of the things that were happening in this building yesterday, with over 100 nurses telling their stories, the timing of the minister's press release, given the impending strike, is puzzling at best and offensive at worst. Will the minister apologize to military families for his ill-timed, embarrassing press release?

MR. GLAVINE: I thank the member opposite for the question. When I'm contacted by members of the Canadian military that are in my community and quickly engage in all of the activities that go on, they have only positive things to say about their experience with the care locally, and if they have to come here for tertiary level care in this province. Sometimes our perceptions can be skewed by one event.

But the overall picture in our province, and as the member well knows, the member really knows the quality of care that they receive in Pictou and Aberdeen and at that outstanding collaborative care centre and that is typical, in fact, of what we receive across Nova Scotia.

MR. HOUSTON: As a person that grew up in a military family, I can tell you that moving to a new province is one of the biggest challenges that military families face. Unfortunately, families posted to Nova Scotia are coming to a province with the highest taxes, the highest power rates, and now the most chaotic health system in the country.

Will the minister tell this House what other costly surprises are in store for military families, courtesy of the Liberal Welcome Wagon?

MR. GLAVINE: I can speak first and foremost for the community where I live. Thanks to the work of the previous government and the Annapolis Valley District Health Authority, because they have been hearing from their local member that there weren't enough family doctors over the past three years, we now have a community medical centre alongside the military base 14 Wing Greenwood that looks after those military families that have had the most difficult time in the past, and that is spouses. Now the military community in our area can get same-day or next-day care. That is a great advance, and I'm sure we would find that in other military communities across our province.

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

LAW AMENDMENTS COMM.: LIBERAL MLAS - INDIFFERENCE

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Premier. We heard time and time again from people at Law Amendments Committee that they felt they had been misled by their local Liberal candidate. In an election email to a voter from the Minister of Energy - and I will table that - he wrote, ". . . it has always been my belief that honest, open and productive collective bargaining is the way to go. Essential services legislation often just results in wildcat strikes . . ."

My question to the Premier is, what did you say to your Minister of Energy to convince him to change his mind?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, as the honourable member would know, when she was voting to strip away the rights to strike from the paramedics in this province, this is now the third health care labour disruption that we've had in this province.

Our piece of legislation very clearly lays out a process that would ensure that Nova Scotians know exactly what essential services are in place, and then we would allow the strike to continue.

MS. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, at Law Amendments Committee a sentiment was raised a few times about the indifference of Liberal MLAs to the testimony being offered. The Liberals asked for their votes on the doorstep just seven months ago, but wouldn't ask a single question in Law Amendments Committee.

During the election, the MLA for Halifax Atlantic described himself as - and I will table this - a proud supporter and active member of CUPE. Yet upon hearing the testimony from unionized health care workers, the MLA refused to ask questions, even when asked to by the presenters. He refused to even speak in favour of his own motion to take away the people's right to speak at Law Amendments Committee.

My question through you, Mr. Speaker, to the Premier is, how did he convince the member for Halifax Atlantic to betray his principles and remain silent during Law Amendments Committee, not asking a single question?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to tell you and all members of this House how proud I am of the member for Halifax Atlantic. Day in and day out, not only does he represent the people of Halifax Atlantic but he represents Nova Scotians. (Applause)

In this piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker, we put in place essential services legislation that would provide services to health care patients, while at the same time, we are protecting the right to strike. Actions speak louder than words when that member stood up and stripped the right from paramedics to strike in this province.

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, yesterday we even had to go as far as to embarrass the Liberals to bring in an interpreter for an individual who was deaf, who was told that he did not call in enough time. Maybe they should have interpreters for themselves to speak. The member for Halifax Armdale is also the chairman of the Committee on Law Amendments. Yesterday evening, night, and throughout the morning, witnesses were wondering if she would appear, even just pop her head in, to hear from a few of the health care workers.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, to the Premier, why did the Premier not allow the MLA for Halifax Armdale to chair the Committee on Law Amendments during those long hours of testimony, and can he tell us where she was hiding?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, first of all, the Minister of Justice actually was in the Chair for a period of time yesterday. Let me be clear, the Minister of Justice was also doing her job of being a minister to administer to the many challenges that are faced by this province because of four years of neglect by the former government.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

HEALTH & WELLNESS: MENTAL HEALTH UNITS - STAFFING

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Minister of Health and Wellness. Nurses who presented yesterday at the Committee on Law Amendments shared some very sobering stories about patient care in our hospital units. One nurse working in a mental health unit with five patients said that those patients will not have any staff overseeing their care between 5:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m. Can the minister confirm whether he is aware of this situation?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, to the member for Pictou West, yes, these are the types of impacts that a wildcat strike would have. The labour disruption yesterday impacted not just a floor with vulnerable mental health patients, but many other patients across the province. She has just made another wonderful case for essential services legislation.

MS. MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, in order to protect patients and provide the health care they deserve and need, we need proper staffing levels. How many patients and how many units will be unstaffed in the event of a labour disruption? This is set to begin in less than 24 hours.

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, to the member for Pictou West, we've embarked upon a plan, a hope in some respects, that things will unfold differently, that the mediator would be able to bring a resolution to the labour disruption that is before us. Now we're looking at a legal strike, and we won't take away that right to strike. I've never, ever thought, through my years in the Nova Scotia Teachers Union and as a former rep, that the actual numbers that may be out at a given time made a lot of difference. I think if you reach that point, you are indeed making a pretty strong point.

Over the next number of hours, if we get the full co-operation of this House, nurses will be back to work come Thursday morning.

MS. MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, since Capital Health began ramping down services last week, there has been nothing but confusion, anxiety, and much worrying for many patients and families. One nurse told the Committee on Law Amendments yesterday that they are playing musical chairs with beds to try to accommodate patients. What assurances can the minister give Nova Scotians that they will have a hospital bed if they need it once the picket line begins tomorrow?

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I know how strongly our community of regional hospitals and smaller health centres across the province are working to respond. It is unfortunate that we've had the disruption; some surgeries and procedures have been cancelled so far. If a Nova Scotian needs emergency care or acute care, they can be assured that service is available; a bed will be available and the wonderful nurses, who are at bedside, will be there to look after those patients.

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

LAW AMENDMENTS COMM.: PREM. - NURSES' COMMUNICATIONS

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier. Yesterday my colleagues and I heard from dozens of health care workers in the Law Amendments Committee. We asked them many questions and learned a lot from their perspective and their testimony. My question to the Premier is, I'm wondering, what did the Premier hear from the nurses at the Law Amendments Committee?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I have heard from nurses all across this province and health care professionals. What they said to us is that they want to ensure that their right to strike is protected. This bill does that. They also talked to me about the care that they have for their patients, and this bill will actually allow us to lay out a piece of essential services legislation so that patients will understand exactly what services will be available so that we're not doing it in the dying days as we lead into a labour disruption.

MR. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, the Premier didn't answer the question. I asked him what he heard from the nurses, over 100 if not more, who were in our own Chamber over the last day or so. I'll fill the Premier in on one of those testimonies that I heard throughout the testimonies that we heard yesterday.

We heard from a nurse, Trish MacDonald, a nurse here in Halifax, who told us about one of the worst shifts she has worked in over 27 years as a nurse, a shift that happened less than 48 hours ago. Her story was heartbreaking, unbelievable. While working short-staffed, one of her patients died and another patient had to be cardioverted or shocked five times, while awake. Imagine working under those conditions.

I would like to ask the Premier, why does the Premier think it is okay for nurses like Trish MacDonald to be put in situations like the one I just described?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, first of all I want to extend my condolences to the family, but no Nova Scotian would want to see any health care provider put in the circumstances that he's describing. The fact of the matter is what we've clearly laid out has been in a piece of essential services legislation, which provides services to those patients, as well as protecting the right to strike.

As I've said many times in this House, the Minister of Health and Wellness is travelling this province, looking at issues as we merge nine district health authorities into one; looking at the very thing that he is talking about, which would be ensuring that we have the right mix of staff. There is nowhere else in the country where we put in staffing ratios. There are plenty of places where we have essential services. That is what we're focused on today to ensure those services are in place. The minister will embark on ensuring that the staff levels are correct in hospitals all across this province.

MR. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, the situation I just described wouldn't be any better under essential services legislation. This happened while nurses like Trish were at work, working understaffed, shift after shift. Trish told the Law Amendments Committee that her working conditions are unbearable and that she is prepared to sacrifice over \$20,000 in pension just to be able to retire two years early. That is unimaginable. I can't imagine health care workers needing to make that decision. We know how challenging it is when you are retired. I would like to ask the Premier, why does the Premier think it is fair for nurses like Trish, and hundreds of others in this province who have worked almost 30 years as a nursing professional in Nova Scotia to now be making those decisions?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, as I said to the member opposite, the Minister of Health and Wellness is now embarking across the province to deal with the very issue that he is talking about. Nowhere in the country has that ever been enshrined in legislation; nowhere in the country have staffing ratios been enshrined in the legislation.

Mr. Speaker, after four years of neglect, quite frankly, by the NDP Government, finally a Minister of Health and Wellness is going around talking about the very issue that has been raised.

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

PREM.: NURSING STRATEGY - UPDATES

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Premier.

In his election platform the Premier promised to begin updating the nursing strategy in 2013-14 - that's the fiscal year that ended yesterday. Looking at the Department of Health and Wellness website over the past number of months, we see nothing to indicate whether or not this is occurring. Based on what we heard yesterday, Mr. Speaker, it's pretty obvious that nurses in the Capital District Health Authority need support.

My question for the Premier is, if he ever gets around to updating the nursing strategy, as promised, will he address the intensive care unit staffing issues we heard about yesterday - will he provide funding so nurses no longer have to double up on critically ill and injured patients in the ICU?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I can assure all members of this House and all Nova Scotians that the Minister of Health and Wellness, as he is embarking on doing the job of minister, he was going to look at the ratio issues in every health care facility across this province. In less than six months the Minister of Health and Wellness has actually been looking at issues that have been brought to us by health care providers in this province, which were neglected for four years.

MS. MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, also contained in the election promise from the Premier is a promise to “. . . create a plan that will retain nursing graduates as well as experienced nurses.” So my question to the Premier is, how exactly does he think that essential services legislation that will impact nurses is going to help retain nursing graduates and experienced nurses, as he promised in his platform?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I’m very proud of the work being done by the Minister of Health and Wellness. When we introduce our budget tomorrow you’ll see a major investment in the health care sector; we will also be reaching out to ensure we have the proper levels of staffing in every facility across this province.

Mr. Speaker, I want to remind this House that the labour disruption we’re talking about actually has been about two years - the contract will run out in November. We’ve been in power for six months. I wish the vigour we’re seeing from the Opposition Party today we could have seen when they were in power and could have done something.

MS. MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, in the Premier’s platform the section on nurses, three sentences long, is titled “Supporting Our Nurses”. Yet I know from the nurses I spoke with yesterday here and the ones we’re hearing from all around the Capital Region, these nurses are feeling very let down by a Premier who promised to support them prior to the election, but they clearly are getting a very different picture of the Premier that they have.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the Premier is, why do you feel nurses feel so let down by the promises and the commitments that were made to them by you, prior to the election, that are now being broken?

MR. SPEAKER: I’d just like to remind the Leader of the New Democratic Party not to refer to other members directly and keep your questions through the Chair.

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to be very clear about the fact that this part of negotiation now, it is my understanding there is a 5 per cent pay raise over two years as part of this negotiation that has been ongoing, on top of an agreement that had been reached for the previous two years.

I also want to be very clear that the Minister of Health and Wellness is actually out engaged in conversations about the very issues that are being brought to us by nurses about the issues, about staffing on floors not only in the Capital District but across the province. I’m very proud of the work that he’s been doing on behalf of all Nova Scotians.

Mr. Speaker, one of the reasons I believe nurses are feeling the way they are is because for four years they had a government that wouldn’t listen and neglected. If they wanted to fix the problem, they could have fixed it before October.

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

**HEALTH & WELLNESS - NURSES STRIKE:
CAP. HEALTH ADDICTION SERV. - IMPACT**

MR. LARRY HARRISON: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. Yesterday there was a CBC news article in which Chris Power, the CEO of the Capital District Health Authority, said that Capital Health addictions have been really affected by what has gone on in the last few days. I'm asking the minister, could he give some detail as to what the potential impact is going to be for services to these folk?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: I know there have been a couple of situations to date where patients, who were in an unstabilized manner, did get removed from Capital Health and out to other centres where comparable services are available. But the member opposite is speaking to a problem that exists right across Nova Scotia, one that some gains have been made. There are many other areas of support for our addicted community and those with addictions and mental health requirements, not just during the current labour disruption but areas that will need ongoing support, more clinicians to make sure that they are looked after.

MR. HARRISON: Mr. Speaker, I do really appreciate the complexity of this particular situation. There are a lot of programs for folks with addictions, such as counselling, in-patient treatments, day treatment programs, recovery groups, and support for family members and others that might be affected. My question to the minister is, do you have any suggestions as to where these people might go so that they can be supported when these issues come up?

MR. GLAVINE: It almost sounds like we're into estimates already, and I need to give that whole panoramic picture of what happens across the province. But I know in terms of, yes, this was one of the areas, and in fact I know, having put a lot of time, a lot of energy, done a considerable amount of research in this area over the last couple of years because of the impacts of many deaths in a short time in the Annapolis Valley. I know that having the crisis line and crisis team available is one of those areas that is maintained. However, there are some services that are not at the strength that they normally would be if we didn't have this labour disruption. But I'm hearing so far, and it just involves a matter of hours so far, and I know patients that were in trouble did get moved to centres where professionals could assist them.

MR. HARRISON: I appreciate that, minister. It not only helps the folks seeking information on how to treat their addictions, but also provides support for the recovery period afterwards. I'm going to ask the minister, are these services going to be in place once the people leave the particular centres or whatever, because the recovery period is extremely important for people with addictions?

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, to the member - who asks a very important question - we know this is one of the reasons why we have changed the model of care in terms of

mental health. Psychiatric patients, after getting the help - whether at the IWK or in one of our other hospitals across the province - when they go back to their communities, making sure that they have a number of supports in place is really at the heart of this model. At the present time we don't have enough providers right across our province. It's an area where I know we will be providing some additional supports. Dr. Jana Davidson gave not just the IWK but our province one of the best reports, with 14 very specific, concrete recommendations that we have started on. That report will be supported by our budget.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

JUSTICE - EAST COAST FORENSIC HOSP.: WORK STOPPAGE - STAFFING

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice. When a judge orders an individual to be placed in the care of the East Coast Forensic Hospital, there are certain expectations regarding treatment. Because this hospital does not have the ability to turn away patients, Capital Health has reported that staffing levels for the hospital are unsafe in the event of a work stoppage. While this situation is due to a labour dispute in health care, it is well within the purview of the Minister of Justice.

So my question for that minister is, has the Minister of Health and Wellness assured the Minister of Justice that the standard of care the public and the justice system expect is being met by the East Coast Forensic Hospital?

HON. LENA DIAB: Mr. Speaker, to the member for Inverness, while the justice system certainly has a role in this issue - and I have spoken to my colleague, the Minister of Health and Wellness - I do believe the question is best directed to my colleague who is very well informed of this situation and is ready to answer all of the member's questions.

MR. MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Justice has a responsibility here. I understand that the hospital and the forensic facilities are actually independently operated and managed such that the correctional inmates and forensic clients are separate at all times. Has the minister assured judges and other members of the justice system that people sent to the forensic hospital will receive the care they expect?

MS. DIAB: Mr. Speaker, to the member opposite, I can assure you I had in the past visited the East Coast Forensic Hospital. It is a hospital, and the patients there are extremely cared for. When it comes to the specifics of the care, that is a question best directed to my colleague, the Minister of Health and Wellness.

MR. MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, if an individual is determined by a court to not be criminally responsible, the court expects that person will be placed in a secure environment and receive appropriate medical care. In that case, my question to the Minister of Health and Wellness is, what action has that minister taken to ensure that individuals at

the forensic hospital are receiving appropriate medical treatment throughout any work stoppage?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, to the member for Inverness, when it comes to planning and preparation, as much as humanly possible Capital Health has taken steps to make sure that the current treatments, including medications and so forth, are administered during the time when we do have a labour disruption. Is the staff at the same complement and level as during normal and ordinary times? No, but the very highly qualified staff that have enormous challenges day in and day out in their work are prepared and will meet the requirements of clientele.

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

**HEALTH & WELLNESS: LAW AMENDMENTS COMM. PRESENTATIONS
- MIN. AWARENESS**

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Minister of Health and Wellness. Yesterday and today, my colleagues and I heard from dozens and dozens of health care workers at the Law Amendments Committee. And it wasn't just health care workers; it was citizens who support health care, who support nurses. Their stories were eye-opening. Some were just plain shocking as I sat there and listened to their testimony to the Law Amendments Committee. I'd like to ask the minister, I'm wondering, did the minister make a point to hear any of those stories at the Law Amendments Committee and, if not, why not?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, over the past couple of weeks, really over the past couple of months now I, in fact, have been hearing from nurses and many health care providers. In the last couple of weeks prior to arriving at the disruption that we currently have, I started hearing from others. I am becoming acquainted with their stories, with the challenges that they do face. I know as we got unfortunately close to yesterday and the disruption, back toward the end of last week, I was planning a full day at the QEII, starting with doctor rounds in the morning, meeting a number of nurses. Most felt that perhaps in the current climate that it may not be best executed.

But certainly I will give all nurses at the QEII my time, not in the current environment, but an opportunity to sit down and have them give me in fine detail what their staffing issues are. All across North America there is, in fact, one primary model where staffing committees meet to deal with ordinary staffing challenges, also critical staffing challenges. If there are interventions and corrections that need to take place, I will certainly be there, not just to hear them, but to make sure that there are improvements as we move forward.

MR. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, I think it's important that the Minister of Health and Wellness travelled the province. We heard it time and time again from the

Premier and the minister. But the minister just had to walk about 50 feet across the floor of this Legislature over the last two days to hear from front-line health care workers, from nurses, and hear exactly what it's like to work on the burn unit that's understaffed, to work in the ICU that's understaffed, and it's a challenge. (Interruptions)

I hear some comments from across the way. I didn't hear any comments in the Law Amendments Committee. They never asked one question. One story that we heard yesterday was from Jean MacDonald - and I hope the member for Cape Breton-Richmond listens - who is a nurse with 35 years' experience. Jean told the Law Amendments Committee she preferred to work evenings, but felt morally obligated to speak up on behalf of her patients and the young nurses who are coming into the profession.

I would like to ask the minister, does the minister think it's fair for nurses like Jean to be forced to leave their bedsides with the threat of being disciplined, just to try to get a message through to the government here at Province House about the alarming conditions she and many of her colleagues are working under?

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, over the past 30 years I've heard stories first-hand at the kitchen table from my wife, who is a nurse. There are many, many stories on a daily basis where nurses, in fact, are challenged in terms of the immediacy of what does take place, the level of training, competencies, ongoing professional development, working as a team and working to get the best results. I'm very familiar on that first-hand basis.

You know the stories of yesterday have been conveyed to me through a number of nurses, in fact as late as the past weekend. I know that one of the things they're very, very quick to tell me, in terms of kind of a concluding statement, is that the conditions, the circumstances they face, didn't all of a sudden happen on October 8th.

MR. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, what we heard time and time again from many of the presenters at Law Amendments Committee is that over the last couple of weeks and month, a new scheduling component was introduced to many of the units. That's where some of the issues is, or are - it's been a long two days. I'm working on five hours of sleep in two days. I apologize if my English isn't correct, and I don't ask for any sympathy, not any at all.

Mr. Speaker, Jean also told Law Amendments Committee that she is a proud nurse, but it pains her to say that she will no longer recommend the profession, even to a family member. So no matter what the implications are between the government and the union, what we can't do is ignore what we heard over the last two days. The bargaining units and the unions will continue to do what they need to do, so does the government.

Mr. Speaker, I'm asking the Minister of Health and Wellness, with what we've heard over the last two days, will the minister accept Jean's testimony, and will he act

immediately to try to address some of the serious concerns that we all heard over the last two days that some of our nurses are working under?

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, to the member opposite, it is unfortunate that we are having to deliberate and deal with one of the most serious issues and one of the most required services that our province needs to have delivered every day, 365 days a year, in the context of a wildcat strike, in the context of all of the testimonials given here at Province House, in Law Amendments Committee. I think there are better tables, better opportunities, for the kind of dialogue that needs to occur.

I am certainly willing. Whether it's one nurse or 400 nurses, I am prepared to meet with them when this issue finally meets a resolve, and that what nurses will tell me, they can be assured I will act upon it. This is one of the areas that, as I get to know the system and those who make it happen every day, it gives me a greater opportunity to be responsive and to make sure that quality patient care remains front and centre in all they do and what we do, as a government.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

FISH. & AQUACULTURE: LOBSTER LEVY - REGULATIONS

MR. JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture. Last week, the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture told this House, "We will not be presenting legislation . . ." around the collection of a lobster levy. I'd like to table that. He said also, "Fortunately, we do not have to do that. We can do it by regulation."

Mr. Speaker, my question for the minister is, when does the minister expect to have those regulations in place?

HON. KEITH COLWELL: Mr. Speaker, we are indeed going to move forward with those. We're going to hold a consultation with the industry before we put those in place.

MR. LOHR: Mr. Speaker, the next day, March 28th, the Manager of Fisheries Renewal with the department was quoted as telling the lobster conference that currently there is no authority to collect that levy. I'll table that document. He told the fishermen that the department is prepared to make the necessary legislative changes during this session of the Legislature. My question for the minister is, who got it wrong, the minister or his manager of Fisheries Renewal?

MR. COLWELL: Actually we're both right. We actually have the authority to put it in place but we have to put the legislation in place in order to collect it.

MR. LOHR: Mr. Speaker, the lobster fishermen need clear leadership from this government and not conflicting statements on the same day to different audiences. When will the minister give the lobster fishermen an accurate and clear indication of how he intends to act with regard to the levy?

MR. COLWELL: It is a very important question to the economy of Nova Scotia. The lobster fishing represents one of the biggest, if not the biggest employer in the whole province and we have to do it right. We have to do it in a timely manner. We have to have consultation with the industry before we put it in place and that is critical. If we're going to move the industry forward on quality, which we have to put in place - and there has not been a lot of discussion around quality, and marketing that we have to do both nationally and internationally - we have to have a quality product first. Of all the reports - a small section of the report talked about quality.

Everybody wants to put this product on the market and market it right away but if you don't have quality - and repeat business because you have quality - it won't work. So we are going to review that whole situation and move forward on it in a solid way and we are going to grow Nova Scotia's economy in the fishery as we have done in the past and previously the value of exports in Nova Scotia had dropped.

When I was minister 15 years ago, we were the biggest exporter of fish in the country and, actually, when you put all the other provinces together, we still had more exports than anyone else or all of them combined. We have now gone neck and neck with New Brunswick and I give them a lot of credit for what they have done as the chief exporters of fish products in the province. The fishing industry is the biggest employer in the province and we have to really make sure, when we move forward, we do it properly with the economy of Nova Scotia in mind.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

**FIN. & TREASURY BD. - STUDENT LOANS:
INTEREST ELIMINATION - EFFECTS**

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board. Last week the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education announced the elimination of interest for a portion of people who have student loans. My question to the minister is, will the Graduate Retention Rebate be compromised while the government decides to eliminate the interest on student loans?

HON. DIANA WHALEN: In answer to the member's question, I think that it's important that we not pre-empt or discuss items that will be in tomorrow's budget so we will leave that for later, thank you.

MR. DUNN: Mr. Speaker, I'm looking forward to the budget. The Graduate Retention Rebate provides up to \$15,000 in relief to graduates, if they stay in our province. This policy change regarding interest only provides about \$800 over its lifetime. My question to the minister is, will the minister make it clear to the Nova Scotia graduates that they will not be trading in a \$15,000 benefit for an \$800 benefit?

MS. WHALEN: One point was just mentioned that we, perhaps, had pre-empted the interest payment portion. That announcement had to be made before April 1st, as I understand it, because there is a prior year's cost so we had to do that for that reason and that's why you would have seen that on Friday, just to make that point. Mr. Speaker, there is no relation between the two taxes and the two benefits that we are discussing.

MR. DUNN: The numbers put forward by government last week indicated a total of \$1.6 million to be divided among 18,000 students. That's an average savings of about \$89 per student per year. The Graduate Retention program commits \$2,500 per student per year. My question for the minister is, will the minister commit today that the students and graduates in Nova Scotia will not be misled by the Liberal Government?

MS. WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, absolutely the budget that will be brought in tomorrow will be a budget about our commitments and people can reply upon those. Thank you.

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

LAE - HEALTH CARE WORKERS: COMMENTS - REACTIONS

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education. Very early yesterday morning, I stood in this House and asked that very minister if she would commit to sit in on Law Amendments Committee to hear what health care workers had to say about her bill that she introduced the previous day.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education is, could she please tell me and tell this House which testimony was she most struck by when she sat in that committee?

HON. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I would say the testimony that struck me most directly was the young nurse who came to my office recently who sobbed about how working conditions have deteriorated over the last number of years. I can assure the former minister and the current member that, in fact, I took that very seriously. Thank you.

MR. CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, well she should have taken it seriously enough to just walk across the hall. You know to be truthful, not myself, nor any of the members, could recall seeing her there. For a government that campaigned on the promise of

transparency, we've seen bills introduced without notice or consultation, and now the minister doesn't want to listen to the very people who are affected by this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I want to ask that minister, when will she actually sit down and meet the representatives of the 30,000-plus workers who her legislation impacts?

MS. REGAN: Mr. Speaker, our first priority is to protect the safety and the health of Nova Scotians without jeopardizing the right to strike. We have, again, introduced legislation that ensures patients and their families can continue to count on health care essential services during a strike. Thank you.

MR. CORBETT: You know, Mr. Speaker, during the 2013 election, the member running for the seat in Bedford, now the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education, told The Chronicle Herald the number-one issue in her re-election that she hears is health care. That seems to have gone by the wayside.

I guess I want to ask the minister, which did she do - how much time did she spend in Law Amendments Committee and how much time did she spend hobnobbing with Liberal Senators at their AGM?

MS. REGAN: Mr. Speaker, in fact that's exactly why we introduced this legislation, because health care is such an important issue. I would note that Nova Scotia is the only province in the country without essential services legislation, and we believe it's high time we had it. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants West.

MUN. AFFS. - HANTSPORT DISSOLUTION: CONTACT - CONFIRM

MR. CHUCK PORTER: Mr. Speaker, my question through you today is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. As I am sure he is aware, we have got a second town now in Nova Scotia - Bridgetown - that filed for dissolution. There's another town in my constituency. Another town, like many I am sure are considering the same thing and they are wondering where they are going. It certainly has been difficult times in the last recent years.

Hantsport has given notice publicly now that they will also be meeting, on April 9th I believe, to discuss this very topic. I'm wondering if the Minister of Municipal Affairs has been contacted and invited to take part in that?

HON. MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, as I've travelled the province over the last three months, I have had discussions with numerous municipalities, and to their credit, municipal leaders are taking a lead role in open-minded discussions on other forms of government that they believe are best suited for their communities.

MR. PORTER: Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister once again, as he, I'm sure, is aware, we have had the Town of Windsor, which is also represented in my constituency, as well as the Municipality of the District of West Hants - I want to make sure I get those all right - and Hantsport of course. I have the honour of representing all three of those areas. I believe correspondence has been sent, and I don't have it today or I would table it, but I believe it has been sent to the minister with regard to amalgamation. The 'a' word continues to come up, which is not as bad a word as some people might think it is, at least on the discussion - I believe the town had sent the letter, or the mayor on behalf of the Town of Windsor and council, and I wonder, are you taking part in any of those discussions or have you responded to that letter you received?

MR. FUREY: Mr. Speaker, yes, in fact I've had discussions with the Town of Windsor. We were scheduled to meet last Wednesday evening. That was pre-empted by the storm and we're proposing meeting dates for next week. I look forward to those discussions with the leadership in the Town of Windsor.

MR. PORTER: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for his answer. I would ask this question, given where everything is, I think there are probably some areas or municipal units that are in favour and are working together and talking, and there are others that are not that maybe wish they were, or wonder and desire how that could all take place. Is the minister and/or the government, your department, initiating from within this opportunity to go out and speak and review the number of municipalities in the Province of Nova Scotia?

MR. FUREY: Mr. Speaker, as of today, officially, the Department of Municipal Affairs. I just want to follow up on the question of my colleague in Opposition. Over the last three months, we've had extensive discussions, and there is a combination of factors. But it's safe to say that the leadership in our municipal governments are openly discussing amalgamation and it's not the dirty word that it used to be only a few short years ago.

Of the 36 discussions I have had, 34 of the municipalities have put amalgamation on the table as a point of discussion. Our government is there to support them in whatever capacity we can to ensure they find the model of government that they believe is in the best interests of their communities.

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

TIR: COBEQUID PASS ACCIDENT - REVIEW CONFIRM

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal. As all members of the House know there was a tragic accident on the Cobequid Pass this past storm that resulted in a young fatality. I know all members of the House would wish to extend their condolences to the family involved. I'd like to ask the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal, has his department undertaken a review of the amount of snow-clearing equipment and the

snow-clearing practices on the Cobequid Pass to determine that they are sufficient when we have storms like we had earlier this week?

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the Leader of the Official Opposition for the question, and I share with him in the thought that we send condolences to the family of the incident victim. It's very sad, and obviously when those things happen, our hearts are heavy indeed.

To answer the question specifically, we have undertaken, and we are undertaking, a complete review of all equipment in the province. We hope to have that ready and in place for the next year's winter season. It's a very important question that we had, and I know that we've received it through the department from all members in the House here and from many Nova Scotians. They want to know that we have adequate equipment in place, and that's something that's the least we can do for Nova Scotians so we'll endeavour to do that.

To the member on that specific incident, the RCMP is investigating. We did have a full complement of salt equipment and plowing equipment and patrols out during that day and we did the best we could, but, again, a very tragic incident indeed. Thank you.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, I do appreciate the minister's answer. There are many hard-working Nova Scotians who go out on our roads in all conditions day and night, minus 40, heavy rain, snow, sleet and they do a great job.

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

The honourable House Leader of the Official Opposition.

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, I believe with the importance of Bill No. 37 that is before us and the discussions we're having about this, I would say we'll put aside our debate this evening and pass the hours back to the government for discussion on that bill. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, we certainly appreciate the offer from the House Leader of the Official Opposition. Since Bill No. 37 is now on the order paper for Committee of the Whole House discussion, in order to have that bill considered for debate today it would require the unanimous consent of the House.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, notice has been given that there will be a legal strike action as of 7:01 a.m. tomorrow morning, putting the health and safety of Nova Scotians at risk. You will recall that on Bill No. 30 we were able to receive the unanimous consent of the House to not only do Committee of the Whole House, but third reading, but as well we

were able to sit on a Saturday for the first time in 28 years due to the importance of this matter.

Mr. Speaker, the hours for today are until 11:59 p.m. We look forward to the opportunity to be able to have a fulsome discussion on this bill, but in order to do so we would require the consent of the House in order to be able to do that. With that, I would move that the House give its consent that Bill No. 37 be now considered for debate in the Committee of the Whole House process.

MR. SPEAKER: Is it agreed?

I hear several Noes.

The notice is tabled.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, since the NDP caucus has refused to give consent to allow the Committee of the Whole House process to proceed today, the government has no legislative abilities left in order to continue Bill No. 37 to proceed, until we would start again tomorrow. Unfortunately, this does end the government's business as of today, due to the Rules and Procedures of this House.

Mr. Speaker, as a result of that, for tomorrow we will sit from the hours of 12:01 a.m. to 11:59 p.m. We will start with the daily routine, followed by Oral Questions Put By Members, and then we will go into Committee of the Whole House on Bill No. 37.

Mr. Speaker, I have already spoken with the House Leaders for both Opposition Parties. I wish to advise the House that the traditional lock-up for the budget will take place at 9:30 a.m., and if the House is still debating in Committee of the Whole House it will continue to do so during that process. If debate is ongoing, later in the day we will revert to Government Business and do Resolution No. 800 at 2:15 p.m., so basically we will suspend Committee of the Whole House in order to do that. At that point the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board will table her budget.

Following her Budget Address and the beginning of the reply from the Leader of the Official Opposition to the budget, following his remarks we will return to debate in Committee of the Whole House on Bill No. 37. Again, the House would be sitting tomorrow, Thursday, April 3rd, from 12:01 a.m. to 11:59 p.m. I would so move that, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is that the House rise to meet again on Thursday, April 3rd, between the hours of 12:01 a.m. and . . . (Interruption)

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, if I could amend that motion - in fact having given those hours for tomorrow, may I suggest that the House for today recess until 11:30 p.m., at which time we will meet again. This will at least give everyone notice of the hours for tomorrow.

I would move that the House, rather than adjourning at this point, that it recess until 11:30 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is that we recess until 11:30 p.m. this evening. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

We are now recessed until 11:30 p.m.

[3:55 p.m. The House recessed.]

[11:30 p.m. The House reconvened.]

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, earlier today I gave the House hours for tomorrow; we'll continue with the agenda as set out earlier in the day.

I move that the House do now adjourn to meet tomorrow from the hours of 12:01 a.m. to 11:59 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is that the House rise to meet again tomorrow, Thursday, April 3rd, from the hours of 12:01 a.m. to 11:59 p.m.

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

The motion is carried.

[The House rose at 11:30 p.m.]

NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3)**RESOLUTION NO. 830**

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

Whereas every good cause needs a leader, and Kingston's Kraft Hockeyville bid had energy, commitment, and "get it done" Wayne Fowler; and

Whereas Wayne's enthusiasm, planning, and connections across the country led our village to the Eastern Canada title and \$100,000 toward our arena refurbishment project involving floor boards glass replacement; and

Whereas Wayne Fowler has worked every angle to champion the Credit Union Centre and the Kingston-Greenwood area to Canada-wide recognition and a journey of community support and spirit;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the Nova Scotia Legislature congratulate and commend Wayne Fowler on his well-deserved title of Mr. Kraft Hockeyville 2014.