



House of Assembly  
*Nova Scotia*

**DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS**

**Speaker: Honourable Kevin Murphy**

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**First Session**

**FRIDAY, APRIL 4, 2014**

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House of Assembly  
*Nova Scotia*

**HALIFAX, FRIDAY, APRIL 4, 2014**

**Sixty-second General Assembly**

**First Session**

**12:01 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**

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**INTRODUCTION OF BILLS**

**NOTICES OF MOTION**

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

**RESOLUTION NO. 833**

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

Whereas the Disabled Persons Commission was established in 1990, following the creation of the Disabled Persons Commission Act by the Province of Nova Scotia; and

Whereas the mandate of the Act is to promote the concerns of persons with disabilities within the government itself, in particular when a policy affects more than one government department; and

Whereas the commission has 12 steering committee members, five of which represent various government departments that provide programs and services for the disabled; and

Whereas Bill No. 37, introduced by the Liberal Government, includes an attack on health care workers who work with persons with disabilities, without the slightest consultation with workers or patients;

Therefore be it resolved that the House of Assembly recommend that the 12 members of the Disabled Persons Commission committee follow their mandate and immediately educate the Coordinating Committee of Ministers on the negative effects of this heavy-handed bill, without consultations with those who it affects the most.

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

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

Is it agreed?

I hear several Noes.

The notice is tabled.

The honourable member for Cape Breton Centre.

**RESOLUTION NO. 834**

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

Whereas health care workers have made it clear 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 in this House, “Health care workers, like so many other sectors of this province, and across the country, have fought long and hard for the rights and benefits that they now have, thanks to unionization. Unionized health care workers are the backbone of our health care system”; and

Whereas it is obvious that the Premier forgot what he said in Opposition and would do anything and say anything to get into power;

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

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 Sydney-Whitney Pier.

### **RESOLUTION NO. 835**

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

Whereas thousands of students have benefited from the Graduate Retention Rebate program, introduced by the NDP Government; and

Whereas the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board has agreed that more graduates have been accessing this program every year; and

Whereas the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board had no concrete answer to why the dissolution of the Graduate Retention Rebate was necessary in the 2014-15 Liberal budget;

Therefore be it resolved that members of the House of Assembly call upon the Liberal Government to answer to the students and graduates of Nova Scotia as to why they are no longer entitled to receive the Graduate Retention Rebate.

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 Sackville-Cobequid.

### **RESOLUTION NO. 836**

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

Whereas hundreds of nurses marched for hours this week to speak out against this government's anti-worker bill, including time in freezing cold; and

Whereas the value and dedication of nurses and health care workers in this province goes far beyond the call of duty; and

Whereas nurses and health care providers put their own health at risk every day to care for our loved ones in times that we cannot;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly support these health care workers as they fight for fair and safe working conditions that enable them to adequately give care to our loved ones.

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. 837**

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

Whereas the East Coast Organic Milk co-operative, as of April 7<sup>th</sup>, will announce it will cease production; and

Whereas the East Coast Organic Milk co-operative is run by a small group of Nova Scotia family-owned organic dairy farmers committed to providing locally produced and certified organic dairy products to Nova Scotia; and

Whereas the new Liberal Government campaigned on the promise of support for small business and the growth of the agriculture industry in Nova Scotia;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly ask the Liberal Government to bring forward their plan on how they're going to support small, local business and encourage the expansion of agriculture in Nova Scotia.

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

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

Is it agreed?

I hear several Noes.

The notice is tabled.

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

**RESOLUTION NO. 838**

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 Positive Recreation Opportunities for Kids, or PRO Kids, is a program that provides financial assistance to children and youth from the Municipality of Chester, who due to lack of funds are not able to participate in sport, recreation, and cultural activities; and

Whereas PRO Kids gives kids in the Municipality of Chester an opportunity to participate rather than watch, as well as builds confidence, promotes physical activity, and builds leadership skills among many other things; and

Whereas the PRO Kids program relies on community support and financial donations without which the program would not be offered;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia Legislature congratulate the Municipality of Chester on the success of the PRO Kids program, and recognize its importance for the children and youth of the community who use the program.

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 Sydney-Whitney Pier.

### **RESOLUTION NO. 839**

MR. GORDIE GOSSE: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the honourable member for Truro-Bible Hill-Millbrook-Salmon River, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas spearheaded by Jamie and Nicole Bagnall of Truro, the Cougar Dome, a multi-sport facility located next to Cobequid Educational Centre, is a \$2.1 million facility which features six full-size tennis courts, a 15,000-square-foot portable synthetic surface, a 10-bay golf range, long and triple jump pits, and a three-lane synthetic track; and

Whereas the facility offers free admission to students with the Chignecto-Central Regional School Board between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m.; and

Whereas the Cougar Dome's plan is for the facility to be self-sustaining, meaning it will not rely on additional public funding, and it will bring many people to the Town of Truro, which will provide a huge economic boom to the community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this Legislative Assembly congratulate Jamie and Nicole Bagnell and the Town of Truro for their drive and desire in bringing this project to fruition.



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, on an introduction.

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to draw the attention of the members to the west gallery where we have two residents of my constituency with us tonight to observe the proceedings. I would ask them to stand after I have introduced them, and that is John Wimberly and Allison Sparling and I would ask the members of the Legislature to give them a warm welcome. (Applause)

#### **RESOLUTION NO. 840**

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

Whereas on December 6, 2007, the Premier, as Leader of the Liberal Party, said: "I would tell him to send a very clear message to those other provinces and those other countries and those other jurisdictions - look inward to the Province of Nova Scotia, because what we're doing here, when it comes to labour issues in the Province of Nova Scotia, is working. Ninety seven (sic) per cent of our labour issues are settled without a strike, and those are the facts according to his own government and his own department."; and

Whereas the only thing the Premier and the Liberal Government will gain from this wrong-headed, heavy-handed approach is labour unrest; and

Whereas Liberals always say one thing in Opposition and do another while they are in government;

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

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 Sackville-Cobequid.

### **RESOLUTION NO. 841**

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

Whereas Lower Sackville's Tyler Reyno is a 20-year-old mechanical engineering student at Dalhousie University; and

Whereas Tyler created the Send Nova Scotia to Space campaign to raise awareness about his endeavour to be part of the first human civilization on Mars and his effort to prepare is raising awareness, interest, and money for the project; and

Whereas Tyler has been shortlisted from over 200,000 applications around the world to one of 1,058 people vying to be selected to live on Mars as part of the Dutch Mars One project estimated to take place in the year 2025;

Therefore be it resolved that Nova Scotia Legislature recognize Lower Sackville's Tyler Reyno on his endeavour to be one of the first humans to live on Mars as part of the Mars One project, and wish him success as he continues through the selection process for his preparation nearing 2025.

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 Sydney-Whitney Pier.

**RESOLUTION NO. 842**

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

Whereas Dan MacRury was selected second vice-president of the Canadian Bar Association and will assume his role as association president in 2016; and

Whereas Dan MacRury is the first public sector lawyer to hold this office of vice-president and will also be the first to assume the office of president; and

Whereas Dan MacRury, in his 24-year service with the Canadian Bar Association, has earned numerous awards for his work with both the provincial and national bodies;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia Legislature congratulate Dan MacRury on his noteworthy achievement and wish him continued success.

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

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

Is it agreed?

I hear several Noes.

The notice is tabled.

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

**RESOLUTION NO. 843**

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

Whereas the Fo'c'sle, located in Chester, Nova Scotia, is Nova Scotia's oldest rural pub, as well as being a Chester landmark; and

Whereas the Fo'c'sle, also known as "Chester's living room," was once a grocery store, a stable, and an inn, dating back to 1764; and

Whereas the Fo'c'sle is celebrating 250 years in the community;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia Legislature congratulate the Fo'c'sle on its 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and wish them continued success in the years to come.

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 Sackville-Cobequid.

#### **RESOLUTION NO. 844**

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the honourable member for Truro-Bible Hill-Millbrook-Salmon River, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas the Truro francophone community recently celebrated the grand opening of the Centre communautaire francophone de Truro; and

Whereas the centre is attached to École acadienne de Truro, but has its own volunteer board and is a separate organization; and

Whereas the centre includes a theatre which holds 90 people and is also working with a group from Tatamagouche who plan to build an Acadian chaloupe, a boat used to transport sheep and cattle;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia Legislature wish to congratulate the Centre communautaire francophone de Truro and wish them success in their future endeavours.

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

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

Is it agreed?

I hear several Noes.

The notice is tabled.

**ORDERS OF THE DAY****GOVERNMENT BUSINESS**

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

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

**PUBLIC BILLS FOR THIRD READING**

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 37.

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

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

HON. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 37, an Act to Ensure the Provision of Essential Health and Community Services, be now read a third time and do pass.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that most of us would agree that government is responsible for protecting the health and safety of Nova Scotians. I also think we agree that the people who care for us when we are sick or in need are invaluable. They are hard-working and very committed. While we value their critical work, we must also ensure that Nova Scotians receive the care they need. This legislation does that.

This bill balances our responsibility to protect health and safety with employees' right to strike. It ensures Nova Scotians can continue to count on essential care, even during a labour disruption. Government cannot stand by while Nova Scotians' health and safety is threatened. This isn't the first time Nova Scotians have been brought to the brink of a health care strike. In fact, it's the third time in less than a year.

Like all Canadians, Nova Scotians deserve to know they will receive essential care during a labour disruption. The Essential Health and Community Services Bill requires unions and employers to reach agreements on essential services before any job action is taken. If the parties can't agree, an independent third party can help or make the decision for them. After an essential services agreement is in place, a strike or lockout can happen safely.

Nova Scotia is the last province in the country to have some form of essential services legislation. Our citizens deserve the same guarantee, the same peace of mind, and

the same essential care as all other Canadians. Our first priority is to protect the health and safety of Nova Scotians; with this bill, we're doing that while protecting the right to strike. We must put the best interests of Nova Scotians first. This bill is the right thing to do. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to move third reading of Bill No. 37. Thank you.

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

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak here on third and final reading of Bill No. 37. I must say I'm disappointed in the debate that has gone on with this bill. For example, the Premier himself has attempted to frame the debate as - either you are with the government or you are with the nurses. Now what a shame that is.

How did we get to a point with this new government? How did they get to the point so quickly that they would attempt to vilify those who disagree with them, including our nurses? No wonder they are frustrated. They have raised concerns about the safety of their own patients, as they are required to do by their oath that they take when they're admitted to the college of nurses. They have taken those frustrations and concerns to hospital managements, to health authority executives, to the boards of the health authorities, and then finally, when no one listened, to their own government. The answer they got from the leader of the government when they brought those concerns was - either you are with the government or you are with the nurses.

Well Mr. Speaker, let me be clear where we, the Progressive Conservatives, are. We completely reject that awful contrast. That is not the way to frame this debate. From the beginning of this debate, we recognized that far from having to choose between a government and the province's nurses, we are here to represent all those Nova Scotians, whether they work in our health care system or whether they are patients. Real, everyday Nova Scotians who use our health care system and rely on it.

When the Premier forces people to choose sides in such a crass way, let me be clear - we are here to represent those Nova Scotians who are patients who use and rely on our health care system every day. Those patients need that health system to be functioning, to be working and to be there for them every day. That also means that patients need their nurses.

There is much that we don't like about Bill No. 37. I've said from the beginning we would not introduce a bill of this nature. In fact, in the final analysis there is only one thing that we do like and that is that the bill will have the effect of averting a strike in health care or, more particularly tonight, to end one or shorten one since the government wasn't able to get the timing right to avert a strike altogether.

So here we are once again on the eve of a crisis, like so many times before, like so many governments of the past, waiting until it's too late, waiting until there is already a crisis, waiting until real Nova Scotians are going without the surgeries and medical

attention that they need, to act, bringing in legislation at the last minute like has gone on over and over and over again in this province. All Nova Scotians, whether they work in our health care system or whether they rely on it, are tired of that same old approach.

Nevertheless, here we are with Bill No. 37 and this is the tool that the government has chosen to deal with the current situation. We don't want to see a strike in our health care system. We don't want Nova Scotians to be worried that their health care system will be there or not be there for them.

We don't think that only some of our nurses are essential, we think all our nurses are essential. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I will tell you I'll challenge any member of this House to show me one Nova Scotian, lying in a hospital bed tonight, who doesn't think that their nurse is essential to their care. So that is our dilemma. That is our dilemma as a Progressive Conservative caucus here in Official Opposition, our dilemma to fight over our differences with the Liberals, as the NDP are doing, or to put patients first and do what it takes to avert a strike.

As you saw, Mr. Speaker, in debate on this bill, every step of the way we chose to set our differences with the Liberals aside and put patients first. We chose to set our differences with the Liberals aside on this bill, not for the government, not to show our support for what the government was doing, but for patients. As a result the record shows that the PC Party, the PC Opposition, we took no steps to obstruct this bill or to filibuster it. In fact, with a strike deadline looming, we did our part to enable the government to move their bill along quickly, up to and including waving our own Opposition time on Opposition Day on Wednesday.

But to be clear, again I say that should not be seen as a sign of support for the government, it is purely and only a sign of support for patients in our hospitals and the care that they need. I believe that we've done our part. Now as this Bill No. 37 reaches its final stage, I know we have done our part for patient safety because, Mr. Speaker, as you know in Opposition, when you face a majority government, you really only have two tools at your disposal. One is our vote and the other is the power to slow the government down, to frustrate it, and that is the route the NDP has chosen. The NDP should be held accountable on the eve of a strike deadline for their decision to slow things down in this House past the point of a strike, to take their time while hundreds of Nova Scotians went without important surgeries or important medical tests.

But so too, Mr. Speaker, should the Liberals be held accountable for the way they have handled Bill No. 37, for their mismanagement of the timing, their inability to count backwards from the day they needed to have the bill passed and introduce it in time to avoid a strike altogether, for even getting to the point of crisis by taking seven months since coming to office, knowing that this dispute was heading for an impasse, and doing nothing during that time. An entire Fall session of the House, or I should say an 11-day Fall session of the House, with very little meaningful legislation, and they did nothing.

Other than Bill No. 37 there is very little of significance on the order paper in this session, and still they weren't able to get their act together in time to protect patients today. They, too, will be held accountable for their actions and, Mr. Speaker, I would add that we likely would not be here tonight, in the crisis that exists, if the Liberal Government had simply taken the time and shown the respect to listen to what nurses were saying about what is really happening on our floors, wards, and hospitals in the first place.

Mr. Speaker, as I say I believe we have done our part. We have acted responsibly by setting our differences with the Liberal Government aside and doing our part to see that Bill No. 37 gets through the House in time to avert or at least reduce the amount of time that a strike is ongoing and patients go without care.

Now as we reach the final hours of debate in third and final reading of Bill No. 37, it is time to tell the government what we think of their bill. As I said, it is not a bill that we would introduce. Quite simply it does not protect patients or make our health care better; in fact, it makes it worse.

I would like to table in a moment a recent article in The Chronicle Herald by Claire McIlveen, which I think summarized the situation quite well. Ms. McIlveen says, “. . . the bill leaves the legitimate beefs of nurses and health-care workers to fester - and that is never good.”

Mr. Speaker, there is one of the big flaws in the government's approach with Bill No. 37. It is silent on the issue of whether our hospital floors and wards are properly staffed or not. Those who work on those floors every day by the hundreds came to this House at the Law Amendments Committee just two short days ago and gave pretty compelling testimony that there are significant gaps in our hospitals, that there are nurses who have given their careers to serving their fellow Nova Scotians when they're ill, who are trying to get someone to listen to the stories of overwork and short shifts and short staffs and patients who don't get all of the care that they deserve, and Bill No. 37 does not address that - a glaring omission.

Further, Ms. McIlveen writes, “. . . all the issues that have brought nurses to the point of striking in the first place are still there,” even after the bill eventually passes. And that is so true. There is no plan to look into what's really going on in our hospitals or to deal with it. No wonder nurses are so frustrated, having taken all of the normal steps outside of the collective bargaining process, through management, through the hospital executives and boards, and then to the Department of Health and Wellness, to the government itself, and even the Premier, and have been told no.

As a result, Ms. McIlveen writes, “. . . the government has signed us all up for a protracted period of widespread, simmering discontent in the health-care system. That's not good for anyone involved - including patients.” Those words make clear and lay plain the flaw in the government's approach, that far from protecting patient care, by leaving



these festering problems to go on and on after this bill inevitably is put through by the government tonight, patient care is not protected, patient care - which is already under threat - will only deteriorate and get worse, a horrible flaw in the government's bill and their approach.

Ms. McIlveen concludes, “. . . negotiations and arbitration can work for both employers and employees. They force sides to focus on critical issues and come to a reasonable compromise . . .” Mr. Speaker, I couldn't agree more with that conclusion.

It's no secret that we, in the PC Opposition, prefer negotiations all the way and then fair and balanced arbitration when collective bargaining reaches an impasse. Do you know, I believe we have been consistent on that approach, certainly in the three years that I have had the honour to lead this caucus; we've been consistent in our approach before, during, and after elections. That is the way we believe we ought to go. I will say right now that I know there are some who don't agree, and I accept that, but I will say also to consider this: the Premier brings in essential services legislation and says it preserves the right to strike, although nurses and many others say otherwise.

The same Premier tells Nova Scotians that the bill will end strikes and then turns around and tells nurses that it allows them. It's the same Premier who once was against essential services legislation. He spoke against it, he put it in writing, and he published it in *The Chronicle Herald*. I know some don't agree with our Progressive Conservative approach, but I would far rather be credited with consistency even from those who disagree with us than be condemned for saying one thing before the election and doing the opposite after.

On top of all else, nurses feel betrayed by this Premier.

The fact is, Bill No. 37 is worse than negotiation and arbitration. As I pointed out, it leaves the main issues in dispute and unresolved, to fester and become worse - like the staffing of our hospitals, and like the level of care for our patients, whether they are in hospital or waiting for surgery or in need of other medical attention.

That's not the only flaw, as big as it is. Bill No. 37 creates an unworkable mess in our health care system. It leaves it to negotiation to determine what level of care patients will get. Patient care should be non-negotiable.

When those negotiations reach an impasse on which patient gets care and which one doesn't, it leaves it to the Labour Board, of all places, to decide whose care is essential. That expertise doesn't reside at the Labour Board, nor should it. As a result, this system that the Liberals have proposed and will legislate tonight will inevitably lead not to fewer strikes or no strikes, as they have led Nova Scotians to believe. It will lead to more strikes and longer strikes in our health care system. After all, every member should ask themselves, is it acceptable if 30 per cent of our health care system is allowed to walk out

the door, or 40 per cent, or 50 per cent? Mr. Speaker, you show me the 50 per cent of Nova Scotians whose nurse isn't essential to them.

That brings me to our vote on Bill No. 37. Clearly, we have our differences with the Liberal Government. For the good of patient care, we set them aside to get this bill through to this third and final stage tonight. We acted responsibly. Now, in the final hours of debate, with no more risk of delay, we can hold our heads high. We did our job for patients, and so we can now make clear to the government, having done our job, what our verdict on this bill is.

Our final responsibility is to plainly make it clear that this is a bad, unworkable bill. It does none of the things that the government claims it will do. It does not prevent strikes, although it will halt this one. In the long run it creates longer and more numerous strikes.

It does not protect patient care. It will someday lead to situations where the government encourages the negotiation away of 20, 30, 40, or 50 per cent of our health care system. It may serve a short-term need, Mr. Speaker, but in the long run, Bill No. 37 only makes things worse - worse for patients, worse for health care providers, and worse for all Nova Scotians. That's why our job done tonight, of enabling the government to get to a point where they can pass this bill as they inevitably will with their majority, that's why with our job done here tonight, we are now going to do the final responsible thing and vote no on Bill No. 37. Thank you.

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

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to have an opportunity to rise in my place this evening to speak to third and final reading of Bill No. 37, the Essential Health and Community Services Act.

Before I start I have to say I have to tell you that this evening, on my way down here from the north end of Halifax, I drove along Barrington Street and I saw someone out walking on Halifax Harbour. I couldn't quite tell who it was, but after listening to the Leader of the Official Opposition, I realized it was him, out for a little stroll in this season of Lent.

Mr. Speaker, this evening we are in the disappointing position of seeing a very bad piece of legislation nearing closer to becoming the law of our province, a piece of legislation that literally will affect the lives of thousands of working people in our province - members of our families perhaps, our neighbours, our friends, perhaps students we've taught, certainly constituents and residents of our electoral districts whom we are here to represent.

Mr. Speaker, I want to start first by addressing the issue that has been raised repeatedly about the process of getting this legislation to this place and the

misrepresentation of the process of getting this legislation to this place - the very idea that somehow this legislation has gone through some kind of a slowdown process that is not the process of making legislation in this House.

Let's be clear about what the process is and what the Rules of this House are and why we have those rules. Bills are introduced for first reading. Often members have a bill briefing prior to the introduction of those bills - members who are not on the government benches - so they are aware of the legislation that's coming, they have an opportunity to hear the government's explanation, they have an opportunity to seek information from the minister, and they have some time to consider what that legislation is all about.

That did not happen in this case, Mr. Speaker, there was no bill briefing, there was no prior information, there was no consultation; there was zip, nothing. This bill appeared Monday evening in the House of Assembly, when it was tabled by the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education, the first time anyone knew the bill was coming let alone what was in it.

Now, the Rules of our House are rules that do not move a bill from first reading to second reading in one day. The Rules of this House provide for a day for first reading and then the next day you can move to second reading. When this caucus looked at the bill, Bill No. 37, the Essential Health and Community Services Act, we recognized pretty quickly that this bill applied to far more than the 2,300 nurses that were in a contract dispute with their employer at the Capital District Health Authority.

We recognized that this bill was going to apply to every health care worker in the Province of Nova Scotia in an acute care facility, in a health care centre, in a long-term care facility, in home care services, in emergency health services, and beyond that this bill applies to a whole host of workers who work not only in branches of the Department of Community Services, but indeed in organizations that are independent in terms of governance from the Department of Community Services, but who have statutory contractual relations with the Department of Community Services to provide services like child welfare services and residential care.

It was a surprise, a shock, that so many workers would be affected by this piece of legislation and if the Official Opposition or the government or anyone else thinks that members of the New Democratic Party caucus would ever be prepared to fast-track a bill introduced in this way, having the kind of impact that it will have on literally thousands of Nova Scotians providing very important, and yes, in many cases essential services, without so much as the kind of debate and scrutiny that we will give bills in this Chamber of pretty much zero consequence, they are sorely mistaken because if there is any kind of legislation that deserves the full scrutiny and debate of the representative and elected members of this Assembly it is this kind of bill that will irrevocably alter the rights of thousands of people for many, many years, Mr. Speaker.

This changes the face of labour relations in our province for a very long time and if that is not worthy of the regular process and scrutiny, then I don't know what is, Mr. Speaker. I might as well pack my bag and go back to the north end of Halifax. I do not belong in this place if I am not prepared to have a debate, a true debate, and to allow the people of this province to understand what's in this bill, who is impacted, what the implications are, and, indeed, to allow the people who are most affected by it to come to this place and watch their representatives deal with issues that impact their lives. That's what the members of this caucus did and we make no apology for that, no apology for that.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we have heard many perspectives on the question of patient safety and the care of patients. I want to say something I said the other evening, I have very little time for the idea that there is some group here in this Chamber or out on the street who care more for patients than some other group. We in this caucus care about patients and their safety, but I don't claim that we care more than the Leader of the Official Opposition and members of his caucus, I readily admit they care about patient safety, but I don't think they care more than we do and I don't think the government members care more than we do. We all care about patients and their safety, we just fundamentally disagree about how you treat the people who work with those patients, who give them the care. That's where the disagreement is, it's not about who cares more about patients and safety, it's about how you are going to deal with the people who provide the care. That's where the disagreement is and let's be clear about it.

The Official Opposition believes there should be no right to strike, zero, not for 10 per cent, not for 9 per cent, not for 60 per cent, not for 1 per cent - for no one, that's their position. The Leader of the Official Opposition is absolutely correct, he has been consistent and his Party is pretty consistent, they do not support the right to strike for anyone in the health care sector, period, case closed. They've brought in Private Members' Bills; when they were in government they had bills that the Leader of the government wouldn't support and neither would we, so they went nowhere. That's their position, that's not our position.

We believe in collective bargaining and we believe in the ability of workers and employers to work things out without the interference of government. You know in Nova Scotia that has pretty well worked most of the time - not all of the time but most of the time it has worked.

I remind members that the president of the Nova Scotia Nurses' Union came to the Law Amendments Committee - this is the union that represents nurses in all of our regional health authorities outside of the HRM, from Sydney to Yarmouth - they haven't had a strike since 1977 under a Liberal Government. This legislation applies to them for some reason, which I think that having seen the budget today and heard the Finance Minister, I'm getting a better idea of what that might be but nevertheless, they have not had a strike since 1977.

When the Premier talks about the need for this legislation because there have been three strikes in seven months he is very selectively choosing to kind of create this impression of terrible labour relations in the health care field, which doesn't hold up to scrutiny when you really examine it. That brings me to the need to address the Premier's revisionist use of the paramedic strike and the paramedic legislation as a point of comparison to this legislation.

The Premier likes to say - because he thinks it annoys me, I guess, and he's partly right - that the only government recently that removed the right to strike from any health care workers was the NDP Government. That's true, but let's look at why that was and let's look at the piece of legislation we brought in and compare it to Bill No. 37. There are a lot of new members over there, you've heard the Premier say this, he's a nice guy, you believe what he says so let me tell you a little bit about the reality.

The paramedics in this province are emergency health care providers; they also do non-emergent work. They transfer patients and stuff like that, where somebody isn't going to die, but where they need tests or they need sutures, they need a cast, they need other things. But we have paramedics in Nova Scotia - and I'm very proud of the paramedic service; in fact, the paramedic service expanded significantly when we were in government and I was Health and Wellness Minister.

One of the things that I'm the most proud of during that time was the introduction of I think what we call the RESTORE program. That is a program that if somebody is having a heart attack, if the paramedics can get there within half an hour and they are advanced care paramedics - and we now have this program all over the province. Nova Scotia was the first jurisdiction to have it in North America and we pretty well cover the whole province all the time with this kind of care.

The emergency department comes to your front yard or your living room if you're having a heart attack and they can administer, under the supervision of the emergency room doctors that they are in communication with, they can administer this drug that is kind of a clot-busting drug. We've met so many people, I've met people who had this drug administered by the paramedics and they described being on the stretcher knowing they were dying, thinking they were dying and suddenly - and they were dying, my colleague the paramedic to my left says - they feel like they could get up off that stretcher and just walk anywhere.

Paramedics are critical in our health care system, they perform amazing roles and some of these roles are life-saving and they do all of our emergency care out in communities, out on the highways, out in our areas where there are hurricanes and floods. We have stories of paramedics during some of the floods up in northern Cape Breton, it's just amazing the things that they've done in those communities.

When the paramedics were in negotiations there was no essential services agreement. The employer could not get one paramedic to be left on the job. The LifeFlight service, which is critical to move people who need to get to the trauma centre quickly was not going to be provided - nothing, zero - unlike the nurses, who are out tonight. The nurses were prepared to staff the ERs, prepared to staff the ICUs, prepared to staff cancer care, prepared to staff hemodialysis, prepared to staff the veterans' units. Are you starting to get the picture of the difference between the paramedic situation and this situation?

What's the other difference? The other difference is how bargaining all went. The nurses have been in contract dispute with Capital Health. They're at the bargaining table. They're trying to get some discussion going around patient-staff ratios and patient safety issues and their workload issues, and they're not getting too far. The paramedics are at the table, their issues are money - dealt with. Bargaining team says, yep, we got what we're looking for; they recommend it to the membership, the membership rejects it, and they put new stuff on the table, a defined benefit package. A lot of work is done.

Paramedics are the only health care workers in the health care system without a pension, a defined benefit plan by the way, so you can kind of see the point they had - dealt with. The negotiating team says, okay, we'll recommend that to the membership, and they do. The membership says no, and they up the ante. They want money, more money.

The situation is quite a bit different. There's a third difference between those two points, with the paramedic situation and this one, and the third difference is this: the legislation that was introduced didn't apply to every single solitary health care worker in the province because of what was going on with the paramedics. The legislation that was introduced didn't take away the rights of the paramedics for subsequent rounds of collective bargaining when this contract expires. It was for a set period of time, for the length of this contract. Their rights into the future, their right to bargain collectively and learn from that situation, were left intact. Not this time.

The Premier can stand there - and he does, and he will, and that's okay - but there are a whole lot of people who know that what he's saying is not accurate. I will continue to tell people what the accurate facts are of the situation between the paramedics and the nurses, and so will other members of this caucus and people who know. It does him no service to be trying to rewrite the history of labour relations in the province.

We now have this bill in front of us, Bill No. 37, the Essential Health and Community Services Act. We have a very, very unhappy group of nurses in our Capital District Health Authority, and no doubt we will have unhappy health care workers across the province, who really were quite content where they were, thank you very much, until this government decided to take this approach. For the life of me, I really still don't totally understand what the thinking is in doing this.

I've heard members of the government say some other things that are somewhat misleading, Mr. Speaker, that are not entirely accurate. I'm not a lawyer and I'm certainly not somebody who has much expertise in labour law but I listen to people who do and earlier in the week there was a law professor from, probably Dalhousie - I didn't quite catch where - talking about this piece of legislation, this bill, Bill No. 37. What that person had to say about this bill was, to kind of paraphrase what they had to say, is that this particular piece of legislation is unlike essential services legislation in pretty much every other province. It has its own unique features and characteristics, all of them negative. I'm not going to go through the litany of problems that this person was able to lay out because I could not do it the kind of justice that they did.

We know that this legislation will do a number of things and one of the things that this bill is going to do is it's going to take nurses away from the bedside to the bargaining table more often. Now did you ever hear of anything so ridiculous?

Nurses don't want to be on strike, they don't want to be on the sidewalks, and they sure don't want to have to waste their time, sitting down six months in advance of going to the bargaining table, working out essential services agreements in workplaces where 99 per cent of the time there will never be a strike and there hasn't been a strike. It is a complete waste of their time, it's a complete waste of resources, and it's not how we should be using our health human resources. But in his wisdom the Premier, and his Minister of Labour and Advanced Education, have decided that this would be the approach they would take.

This is very troubling and I'm surprised, Mr. Speaker, that the Minister of Health and Wellness didn't intervene and didn't say to his colleagues, look, nurses are really important human resources in our system. We have enough problems staffing shifts. We have enough problems with scheduling of vacation time and what have you. We can't afford to have our nurses, from one end of the province to the other, in all of our regional hospitals, in our health clinics, in our community health programs, off negotiating essential services agreements for strikes that don't happen. You know maybe we should look at some other models, maybe we should find some other way.

I'd love to know who came up with this particular piece of legislation and I think we used to be a Legislature made up of a lot of lawyers, I don't think there are any lawyers left in the House, maybe one or - well, practising lawyers. We don't have many practising lawyers in our Legislature so I think that the (Interruption) I didn't say good lawyers, I said practising lawyers. I think that chances are this piece of legislation wasn't dreamed up in what John Holm, my colleague who used to be here, from Sackville-Cobequid, used to call "the bunker." I doubt very much that this was dreamed up by the Cabinet in the bunker, it probably came from some legal beagle that the Premier has some access to - and I think this is really concerning as well.

Mr. Speaker, we have been here now for five days, I guess. I've kind of lost track and I'm not really sure if you count this as the fourth day or the fifth day in the debate. I

guess it's the fifth day, but we've been here for a while talking about this bill. I want to briefly touch on what we heard at the Law Amendments Committee. On second reading I made the comment that you know here's what the issues are, as I understand them, nurse-patient ratio is kind of the deal breaker. I don't know about nurse-patient ratio if it's a good thing or not - I'm not a nurse, I don't work in the system.

I have to tell you that I sat in the Law Amendments Committee off and on while the Law Amendments Committee was going on and I became more and more concerned about what I was hearing and more and more convinced that we really do need to address this whole question of workload and ratio. One thing that I do know, because I have been the relative of a family member in intensive care, I understand the need for one-on-one patient care in ICUs. When I hear the intensive care nurses coming and telling story after story as recently as just the night or two before the nurses were in Law Amendments Committee, of not having one-on-one patient care in ICUs, I get very anxious and very worried.

I've listened to the Minister of Health and Wellness. He has essentially made a commitment that he's going to go - after the bill has passed - he's going to go and talk to the nurses about what the problems are. Now get a load of that, Mr. Speaker, wouldn't you like to be in his shoes, going after this bill has passed, after you've taken away the rights of the nurses, you're going to go then and ask them what their problems are and how they might be dealt with? I'll tell you, there are ways to go at a problem and there are ways to go at a problem.

This is the most botched way of going at a problem that I think I've seen for some considerable period of time. I would think you would have those discussions before you brought in this kind of legislation, this sweeping legislation. Imagine now going to see the nurses because in addition to explaining the legislation and the implications of the legislation, the minister will have to talk about why \$1 million is gone out of the nursing strategy. This is something that I think maybe the minister could ask me along and I will take notes and see how it goes. It will be an interesting conversation, I'm sure.

Mr. Speaker, we have heard from nurses. Their presentations at Law Amendments Committee were more than compelling in terms of their dedication to their profession, but I think more so in outlining the problems that they experience in the workplace that need to be dealt with. If anybody thinks these problems are going to be dealt with by this bill and not made worse by this bill, then they're dreaming in Technicolor. The problems that the nurses are describing will not go away because of this legislation and this legislation, in fact, is like pouring salt into a wound, really; it makes it much worse.

Mr. Speaker, we have to ask ourselves, what else could the government have done? You probably know that I wrote the Premier and I requested that he consider appointing an industrial commission of inquiry. This has happened before in situations of labour disputes in the province. It's a tool that government has available to it to actually provide a period of time where both sides agree to allow the situation to cool off, maybe for a 60- or 90-day



period, something like that, and an independent expert in industrial relations, labour relations will be assigned as a Chair and the parties, the union and the employer each appoint a person and then the issues that are in dispute will be examined; they will be analyzed, investigated and a report will be issued.

Often, those kinds of inquiries lead to very good insight into what the problems are and what the resolutions might be. But that request, that suggestion that was made to the Premier was dismissed. He had no interest, from what I can see, in pursuing that particular opportunity to do something other than what he was bent on doing and that's very sad. I think that does not bode well for this government and their openness to really being a different kind of government than the last Liberal Government that we saw in the province that had sort of the same kind of very confrontational, highly authoritarian relations with the workers of this province and that's very well documented in a number of publications on the Savage years. The relationship that that Liberal Government had with nurses was atrocious and nurses were paid to leave the nursing profession. It took many, many years for the health care system to recover from that.

I remember when I was first elected - I was elected after the Savage Government, but during the MacLellan minority government - the relations between health care providers and government at that time were probably at the lowest ebb ever in the province. My fear is that we are starting to slide back now with this legislation into that kind of relationship. I see it, I hear it, it's out on the street; it's here in Bill No. 37.

We have tried to find a solution, to offer the government a solution, a way out of this situation and the Premier was not interested - he has obviously made his mind up and is completely committed to doing what he is doing and putting this legislation through our House. As I said, no one wants to be in this situation - the people who are out on the sidewalk don't want to be in this situation, none of us want to be in this situation, but I remind people this situation is the making of one person. It is the making of the Premier. He is the person who is responsible for this situation and nobody else is responsible for that.

The sad thing about all of this - and I've heard from quite a few nurses and others as well - is how they didn't see this coming and how they feel about that. They didn't see this coming because, I know, I've been in this Chamber for a while, I've been here during different times when Progressive Conservative Governments have attempted to bring in legislation removing the right to strike completely and the Premier, the member for Annapolis, on this side stood up repeatedly and pledged his support for the working people of the province. It was like workers of the world unite practically when he stood in his place on this side of the House. It's a remarkable transformation he has undergone as he has crossed over to the other side - in more ways than one perhaps.

You know, for people who observed the Premier in Opposition they would have seen him on more than one occasion pledge his support for the rights of health care workers

and other workers to bargain collectively. He has written columns, op-ed pieces in his hometown newspaper talking about how much he supports collective bargaining, how unnecessary - it's not just that he supports collective bargaining, he has gone so far as to say it's unnecessary to have essential services legislation in the health care field and that collective bargaining works in Nova Scotia, that there are few strikes.

I think obviously for that reason it comes as a great surprise, a great shock to people who believed that was the position of the Premier, what they could count on if he ever were to become Premier. It's a great shock to them to see that we have now in front of us a bill entitled the Essential Health and Community Services Act. I mean, nobody would ever have imagined that was what the Premier really thought - and how would anybody ever know that's what he really thought? Nobody would have ever known that's what the Premier would do. Nobody would ever know that was his plan all along. But there it is - now we see it. We understand completely that this is someone who has no difficulty saying one thing here, but something quite different over there.

There are other workers in the province, teachers for example, who are very nervous. The president of the Nova Scotia Teachers Union, the past president of the Nova Scotia Teachers Union, they were here at the Committee on Law Amendments, they're very worried. They're very worried, you know, who is next? Are teachers next? Are they going to be the next people subject to essential services legislation? This sends a very great chill through those other professions and those other groups of working people in the province.

There are many, many different aspects to how we got here, and what the facts are of how we got here. They haven't always been presented all that accurately by our Premier. Even the home support workers bill that was here not so long ago was a very different bill than this one in some ways. It had limitations in terms of how long it would apply to a collective agreement, but that legislation is redundant now. That legislation is irrelevant. It's really superseded by this piece of legislation, which also extends to those home support workers.

I think I have had ample opportunity to state the point of view of myself and, in a general way, members of our caucus, the NDP caucus. Members of this caucus have a lot to offer, in terms of their concerns. We weren't all at the Law Amendments Committee at the same time, and just in discussing what people heard at the Law Amendments Committee, I've heard many different stories and perspectives. I will yield the floor now to someone else to provide their point of view on Bill No. 37.

I think it's rather obvious how this caucus will be voting when this bill comes to that point where a vote will be had, but just for the record, so it is recorded in Hansard at this point, we will not be supporting Bill No. 37 when it comes to a vote. I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for your attention and for your patience.

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

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, allow me some time to speak on Bill No. 37. I appreciate the indulgence of the House. It has been quite some time since Nova Scotians have been subjected to such a bill that strips rights away from Nova Scotians. I'm not going to say it strips the rights of union members, which it clearly does, but it takes away the rights from Nova Scotians, those who at some point may want to be unionized, and other people who are in the private sector. I'll explain a bit about that later.

It's the broadness of this bill and the idea that this bill came when it did, and then you repeatedly heard and read in the media the blaming of our Party as the ones that are - air quotes - "slowing this down." I believe that my Leader clearly put forward the reality of how this House operates.

Before going off that subject, Mr. Speaker, let's talk about Bill No. 30, the little brother of this bill because, okay, they came in, a new government botched their time at the table and they needed some help getting the training wheels off. So we sat in largely an unprecedented - I know that there is precedent, but largely an unprecedented weekend session to get that bill through. You would think that at that point they would say whoa, thanks, we worked together, we did it, but yet what seems to be the way this government operates, it's not so much as a thank you, it's almost like an I got you, that we decided to support them, to help them through what one would describe as a bit of a bump in the road. The more diabolical part of that is we were hoodwinked by supporting them because we thought that earnestly we were helping to resolve an issue.

Really, if you listen to the Premier, day in and day out he's using that now as a springboard of saying this is all that's wrong with collective bargaining in this province. He creates an issue and then he blames somebody else. Where is the fairness in that? Why are you blaming health care workers? Are you blaming people from other professions who work in the public sector that give care? You're taking this broad brush and going after everybody.

What's particularly funny about this is when we got this bill on Monday, when it was introduced, what happened was, well, you know, we didn't want to introduce it any earlier because they may or may not have been in - well, they said actually they were in negotiations. Before Friday morning there were no negotiations going on, the mediator called them back on Friday morning and they wanted - previous to that on Thursday they could have easily called that bill because there were no negotiations going on.

Let's talk about, are there negotiations going on with NSNU? No. Are there negotiations going on anywhere else? Are there issues with, say, homes for special care that were in mediation or any of those issues? I would say no. Why would they wait until the eleventh hour and ask to be bailed out again? Mr. Speaker, it's much like this - and I guess it's probably more factual than anything when I heard the budget today - government

is like a bad debtor: it keeps spending, and then when they get the final notice they blame somebody else because they didn't pay their bills - and this is what's going on here. They had a chance to negotiate.

It was interesting today and I respect some of what they did, although it wasn't completely in line with their campaign promise of class sizes and ratios, if you will. They said they would encapsulate more than what they did in it, but they certainly fell short on the grade level and we all know what happens there, you pay over here with smaller class sizes and you get them over there with the larger class sizes - it's mug's game in many ways, especially how they set it up. We had ratios in education which are fine; we had class sizes when we were in government. So why, when it comes to the public health and safety, are ratios irrelevant?

We've heard the Minister of Health and Wellness say nowhere, nowhere, nowhere has this been done. Well, again, bending over backwards to congratulate themselves and to explain a do-nothing budget as doing things differently, well maybe that's because if you did nothing that budget is different. It has done absolutely nothing to help working women and men in this province. But clearly they could have taken a bold step and said we're not going to take a million dollars out of the nursing strategy, what we're going to do is make it more robust, and what we're going to do is allow a real fulsome discussion on ratios.

One of the very simple ways that could have been done is through an industrial inquiry - if they didn't want to do it themselves, then through an industrial inquiry. The bill would have just been stood, you want to call it "stop the clock" - whatever inference you want to use. Both parties would have had to agree to no strike or lockout while the learned commission goes out and finds out the real issues. Now part of the real issues would be are we able to get in and negotiate staffing ratios, particularly for nurses, and it is ground that we could have easily broken.

We don't have to be the last in everything, Mr. Speaker. We could have charged the industrial inquiry with that, it's good to take chances. I remember talking to a businessman one day and he said to me whenever you see a small successful business you see someone who took a bold chance, and that's true. They saw a niche, they saw a need, they grew that business, and they were brave. They took on - they went somewhere many hadn't gone before. I know that sounds like a sci-fi saying but the reality is that's what that is, when you are bold and Nova Scotians have been bold.

We have been the leaders in many ways, but right now with this government we're reverting backwards, we're going in an area - I've said to people, is this the way to go? Is this about helping people with quality of life? I almost feel ashamed to be standing up here and saying I'm tired. When you listen to the testimony in Law Amendments Committee and what they go through on a daily basis, I really have to catch myself when I try to grab a nap and complain about how tired I am.

Mr. Speaker, at some point today this bill will pass. At some point the members on the government side will prevail. I don't know if everyone will vote for it or not just by watching and if previous votes, whether it's the hoist motion or whether it was second reading, or Committee of the Whole House on Bills, that at Law Amendments Committee I am quite sure that there is no desire by any of the backbenchers to say I reject this and say there are better ways to do this, that we have to work collaboratively.

The nurses are in front of us right now because they are on strike but we've got many people out there - you know, Bill No. 30, the ones that we were told that this is a one-off, I guess we have to live with the old adage "Fool me once, shame on you; fool me twice, shame on me" because that's clearly what we're not going to do. We were fooled by the government when we thought that the proper thing to do was to allow them to wrestle this beast to the ground, so to speak, in Bill No. 30. Yet this was just the mere tip of the iceberg. It was their way of putting their toe in the water and saying, now, boys, let's get at her.

One of the first bills they introduced in that long, gruelling Fall session was to really neuter the first contract legislation, but that's the way it goes, that's the Liberal way. I was a little perturbed with my friends from the Progressive Conservative benches this week when they rolled over and gave their debate time on a very important bill - the Ivany bill, I will call it - the Leader rolled over like a pound puppy and the only thing missing was that the Premier didn't scratch him on the belly, Mr. Speaker, the way he rolled over. Anyway, that was his prerogative.

When this bill comes for a vote the Progressive Conservative benches will vote against this bill, but make no mistake - they're not voting for anybody's rights. They're voting to take them away, and if they had their hand on the helm, they'd take more rights away. Let's not be fooled by that. Let's not be fooled by the crocodile tears - we're on the side of the people in long-term care, or people who are in tertiary care or wherever we may find them. That's a lot of hokey, Mr. Speaker. They are what they are, and they've supported the government all the way through on this, and they will be judged accordingly for that.

I'll go back to the nurses, as it relates to Bill No. 37, Mr. Speaker, because they are the immediate issue in front of us. When we heard them come in and talk about it, this is not the first time we've sat in Law Amendments Committee - as least for me it hasn't been the first time - and it relates to health care workers and the reality of what you have to see here is how we've undervalued them. We undervalue them because when we hear their stories - we've heard stories through Bill No. 68; we heard stories around the paramedics when the Hamm Government put the paramedics on the street, and they were told time and time again what their work life was like.

We can't really tell us what life is like as a paramedic, except maybe for two members in the House - my friend from Sackville-Cobequid and my associate from Hants

West can tell you what life as a paramedic is and was, but I would respect them enough to say that they could tell you stories of current-day paramedics and the work they do. I know from time to time we disagree, and in a previous statement just a few short minutes ago, but when I say things like that it's about the entirety of the issue. I respect the members and respect their knowledge around issues, Mr. Speaker.

We've got nurses out there. There's a group out here, there's like front line health care workers. There's a term that's overused - it's "first responders," because we don't know what gets mixed up in there. I had - I don't know if when someone got some sleep overnight and had a chance earlier today just to watch some news, and I was watching a bit of a funeral from the Boston area, the Back Bay area last week, where two firefighters were killed in the line of duty - way more treacherous duty than any of us have in our seats here, Mr. Speaker. It was certainly, to say the least, sobering to watch those services unfold and to hear the outpouring of not only grief in that time, but the reality - I would say, respect - and to join those firefighters' final journey home were many people who serve and protect us, such as EMTs and police officers.

Sometimes we use phrases all too often and they get blunted, and we don't really grasp the enormity of the statement. The statement is that they're running into buildings while we're running out. I can tell you that I'm sure that my two colleagues in the House could tell us all stories of the actual danger they were in when going in and aiding people when the police had a place - an area - in lockdown, and that they would have to go in and provide medical aid to somebody in an active crime scene. I don't think I'm wrong in that. I see the member for Hants West nodding his head - and I don't know if I could do that. If we don't hear those stories, we really can't imagine what their life is like.

I put that out as an example because this is a political bill telling workers what their work life is and how it should be treated. This is not what Nova Scotia should be about. We saw back-to-work legislation for people who go into homes and take care of some of our most vulnerable people, and the government was allowing that to happen over two quarters - less than .50 cents, really. They were willing to allow that, and do you know what? I'm somewhat ashamed this day that I participated in fast-tracking that bill, because it was not an exercise in protecting public safety. It was a façade. It was an attack on workers' rights, to which I will have to come to my own conclusion on. I realize today that I was taken in by it. I thought it was about the elderly who would have been in their homes, who needed service, but no, it was about a Premier who really wants to set his agenda.

We saw in the budget today and heard in the budget today a warning - a warning from the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board about wage restraints. We know all too well that when Liberals talk of wage restraints it's about going after workers.

I harken back to the Premier Savage years, when it got so bad that the Premier himself had to resign before his term was completed. Even Liberals turned on him, Mr. Speaker. I don't know if the same will happen now, but these are troubling times for

working men and women in this province. This government has decided that it's going to take on working women and men. What it does is it's setting up a situation that - again, I'll sort of agree with the member of the Progressive Conservative Party when he says (Interruption) Right, the member for Pictou East says it's okay. I mean, it's fine. Sometimes it's cleansing, isn't it?

These things, they're not what they seem. This will send a message out to workers - I've said this in earlier debates - across all sectors in this province because the government should lead by example and it should lead by example when it comes to treating their workers fairly.

What's going to happen here is they're going to use wage restraint as a way to balance the books. They're not going to use any other clever methods of looking at programs that are ineffective or anything like that; it's kind of straight ahead. We're not going to see anything. It was really bizarre to hear the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board today saying they're taking bold steps. There were no bold steps in that budget today. It was a typical do-nothing Liberal budget. They do little things. As they fooled us with Bill No. 30, they fooled the student groups and the universities and told people that it was them that didn't want the rebate; students didn't want it. That's just not factual. I would say the minister should go and talk to those groups and find out.

That's not, as they would say, not the long suit of this government. Again, the Minister of Health and Wellness says he's going to go meet with them. Well, the time to meet with these groups was before this hideous bill, to explain to them. It's a time in our history to stop using workers as enemies of the state. They are not. They work hard. They do a job. They pay taxes. They move this province forward but every time a Liberal government comes to power, the first group they go out and go after are public sector workers.

We saw the Savage days, remember those, where people were forced to take time off without pay? Were the books balanced because of that? No, no they weren't. When 1,000 nurses were paid to leave the workforce, did that rectify the nursing shortage? No, I would say no and every other right thinking Nova Scotian would say the same thing.

Bill No. 37 does nothing to alleviate that problem. There's nothing in here that would say come to Nova Scotia, work here, it's a good place, you're going to make good wages, you're going to be respected, you'll have time off, you'll have time for family and friends and have a quality of life. I heard very few quality of life stories in my time listening to testimony over at the Committee on Law Amendments.

I heard the contrary. I heard the stories of people who were saying that's enough, I have to go; I can't take it anymore, that their government has let them down, that they trusted, they believed what was in the platform of the Liberal Party and now they realize, like us with Bill No. 30, it was just an entrée into worse things.

But, as I said about consultation, this is not just about consulting the group of nurses that are walking the picket line as we speak. Really, we're talking about people who work in our long-term care homes, people who work with our children who are vulnerable; we're talking about a whole range of services. The bill is so broad in scope that I couldn't list all who this bill has taken in. I know we were taken in by them but I mean the reality of who really is in and who is out because on Page 2 Section 3 it really says that, as I said before, it's almost like an et cetera part of the bill, wherever we deem necessary, we'll have crosswalk guards are necessary. I don't know.

The idea that this will bring focus to a problem and bring labour harmony is just the most bizarre idea. What we're going to do is after we do this, without consultation and it's done, it's a fait accompli, we will meet with you. Well, Mr. Speaker, what's there to meet about? The damage is done, the bank has been robbed and the money is gone and now they want to go and speak to them and say oh, by the way, no hard feelings, we took away your rights.

Do you know what they'll say to them? They'll say you weren't mature enough to deal with labour issues, you're not as mature as our government, we had to take stuff away from you because you couldn't do it. We know way better than you, we know way better than if we had an industrial inquiry, like the Kydd inquiry from the 1980s, Mr. Speaker. That's what they're telling the workers.

It's bad enough that we have nurses outside of this Legislature tonight walking a picket line because of Bill No. 37. Who is going to be next? I really would say that this bill is so draconian it's not going to be next but Bill No. 30 has been challenged and I would suspect the courts will see a challenge on this bill. In particular, the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs should stand in this House and say when were the Mi'kmaq consulted on this bill? The people of the First Nations in this province, when were they consulted on this bill? One of the few explicit things in this bill, it explicitly names Mi'kmaq community services, Mr. Speaker. So why can't someone in the government stand up and say this is who we've talked to, we've talked to whether it's Chief Terry Paul or we've talked to the Grand Chief and people like that or Tuma Young from CBU and people like that, they could tell you that they are learned people when it comes to Aboriginal Affairs, Mr. Speaker, but no.

I stand here and say what's going to happen when First Nations say no, no, you've trampled on possibly our treaty rights. Now I may be wrong on that, Mr. Speaker, but the reason I bring it up is because we don't know, we don't know whether treaty rights have been violated or can be violated by this Act, but it's because it was something that was concocted without any real consultation then this is why I worry about it.

Many of the people who are caught in this net have collective agreements now and historically have not had strikes or any of those issues and I don't know why the government was so broad in its scope of going after all these groups, Mr. Speaker, but it has. It has decided that if you work for us, that we're going to restrict you.



What does that do? One has to wonder, if you want to go to a bad place on this, is there a group of labour advisors to the Premier who also represent many employers across the province, who say look, if you give us this bill, it will really send shivers to the private sector and they won't bother with us, they'll be scared off. We'll just show them Bill No. 37 - you know you're not going to get any favours, don't go to that government, you'll not get any favours there, you'll put a chill through it all. You wonder who consulted the Premier on this bill - as they like to call themselves, they don't call them labour lawyers, they call them employment lawyers. Were there employment lawyers that the Premier would have taken advice from over nurses and other health care people where they have - are they more Nova Scotian than our friends in the health care and community services industry, Mr. Speaker?

During the Budget Speech today, there were some false platitudes given from the government; false platitudes regarding some of our workers and so on. They're not really being thanked by this government, they're being punished. These are hardworking Nova Scotians and that's the part that I really can't get over. The Premier, as my Leader said, is bent on picking winners and losers. Make no mistake, Nova Scotians - whether they are the workers or they're in care - are the losers today, Mr. Speaker.

Health care is under attack. If you work in this industry or even worse, let's say if you're going through university now, if you are graduating in a couple of weeks in this province, in one day we will have seen the Graduate Retention Rebate taken away from them and if you're a nurse you would see the reality of your workplace and your ability to participate in your workplace being eroded. I don't think I would want to work in a province like that and many of these people will start looking south of the border. Obamacare will be the big winner.

AN HON. MEMBER: Like they did in the 1990s.

MR. CORBETT: Yeah, what they did in the 1990s. The Liberals are good at getting people out of this province, Mr. Speaker, and especially as it relates to health care workers. When in government - and I used to get a kick out of the now-Premier in Opposition going on about how many medical seats are at Dalhousie and for some reason he didn't remember who cut those seats. The Progressive Conservative Party didn't cut those seats, it wasn't the New Democratic Party; it was the Liberals. It was the Liberals that cut the seats at the medical school.

AN HON. MEMBER: Selective memory.

MR. CORBETT: Oh yeah. There was a time, you know if you recall back to the last days of the Savage Government, which almost look like those infamous pictures of the last helicopters leaving Hanoi - the Liberals were hanging off the helicopters, almost. That's how bad it was, Mr. Speaker. They didn't know what to do and I will make a prediction today that that what's this is going to end up like.

I heard one of the Liberal staffers spinning outside before I came in saying, they can't last till seven o'clock, and I said to a reporter it's not a matter if we can last till seven, it's can those guys last four years, that's the problem. Mr. Speaker, today will come and go (Interruption) Well you know, here we have the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development wants the floor and I would clearly love to yield it to her if she had something useful to add to the conversation so Mr. Speaker, no. We will see.

Again, my frenemies over here in the Progressive Conservative Party. I want to say they make no bones about arbitration. (Interruption) That's right, Eddie was smart enough to play ball in New Waterford, but I don't think he wore any . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. I just want to bring a little focus back to your comments.

MR. CORBETT: Thank you for trying, Mr. Speaker, and I'll do my best. I apologize to you and the House. Getting back on track, if I can get somewhere near there, the arbitration contemplated in this bill is one that's not in balance. The Progressive Conservatives believe in sending things off to arbitration, and they don't put the limits in their bill that's in here. You handcuff the arbiter in many ways in Bill No. 37. That's, as they say, the devil is in the details. Why would you do that? Why would you tell people that this is a good bill, it's a fair bill, and yet within the body of the arbitration, when the arbiter is appointed, there's a list of criteria they really cannot go beyond? That's really the meat and potatoes here.

If the government allows this to go forward - in arbitration, the arbitrator has this huge wide bill, but a very, very narrow area in which to deliver and render a decision, which would put in jeopardy, in many ways, the ability to even get an arbiter. Arbiters are learned people, such as one we have much experience with from all Parties here, Mr. Outhouse - a very learned, well-respected individual who does many arbitrations not only within this province, but I would say across the country. I've worked on files with Mr. Outhouse and found him to be a very bright man, a very fair and honest man. But the government doesn't seem to think that way, that if Mr. Outhouse was to arbitrate the essential services in this, he would be handcuffed by certain sections in this bill.

So why is that there? Not only are they taking the ability away from the workers but they're taking the ability away from arbiters. That's the type of legislation that's - someone just doesn't come up with that as a "wow, I could have had a V8" moment. This is thought out, and it's diabolical, and it's mean-spirited, and it goes right after the issue here - the issue, of course, being the ability of fairness. The Premier keeps telling people that this is fair. Well, this is anything but fair, Mr. Speaker.

What we want to really talk about is, where will they get these arbiters? Where will this time come when there will be seven, eight, nine, ten agreements open and they're looking for arbiters everywhere? These people just don't fall out of trees. I would suspect

across this whole country there is only a very small handful in each province that you would want to adjudicate or help adjudicate any of these issues. They are very important to the system, especially as it relates to industrial relations. What will we do if we don't have these people?

Now he says, this time we'll use the Capital District Health Authority and their nurses. They got an agreement this time and let's say that works. But when they come back to renegotiate, when it's time for another collective agreement, if either party asks to have the essential services agreement renegotiated, they have to agree. While the bill is in perpetuity, these agreements aren't. These agreements will flow from collective agreement to collective agreement to be changed as the collective agreement is opened.

Every time we have a set of negotiations, whether it's as big as the Capital District Health Authority with thousands of employees and who have a set of industrial relations experts to help them, which is onerous enough, but what about in New Waterford where we have the Maple Hill Manor with around 30, 40, 50 employees, I'm not sure. It's a volunteer board, it's a not-for-profit but that's what we'll have to do. These workers and the managers - and no doubt, because of the complexity of this bill - these managers will have to take precious money out of that and get advice from counsel. There's the rub.

I believe some of the same people that had a hand in writing this legislation may have a hand in making some money off this legislation. Why would you do that? Why would you make the Miners' Memorial Manor in Sydney Mines - a volunteer board, they're people in the community who willingly give up their time to serve on these boards - it's hard enough in long-term care to get people in as it is now and to operate, now what we're going to do is we're going to ask volunteer boards to act as labour relations experts or someone who is an administrator, and a very fine administrator but they really don't have the depth and breadth to deal with such a wide bill but they will be forced by this legislation to probably go to the board and say I need a couple of grand. A couple of grand to a small long-term care home is a lot of money. A couple of grand means that maybe some of the residents won't get out on a field trip, that they won't get other niceties that the hard-working women and men that provided for them, both working and - paid I should say because volunteers really work, I almost made a very large slip-up there - the paid workers and the volunteer workers who are involved with their care are now hamstrung by this piece of legislation before they get to any real numbers at the table they would have to bang out an essential services deal.

I don't know whether the people up at Carefield Manor have that expertise. I don't know. I don't know if they are unionized. I don't know whether, if the Dominion Guest Home had to do that, if they have the expertise. I don't know if Seaview Manor has that expertise but I know there are a bunch of lawyers down at Purdy's Wharf that do and they would be the benefactors of this. Or, could be, I don't want to be too presumptuous.

We've struggled with trying to find out the thought process the Premier has done bringing this in and that's why we're left to speculate, if you will. We've been asking questions now for days, whether it's in this House or over in Law Amendments Committee and we've been stonewalled. There's been nothing forthcoming from the Premier or the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education or the Minister of Health and Wellness to tell us anything new.

The idea of when legislators just unilaterally take away the rights and disrupt the collective bargaining process in this way is virtually unparalleled in this province, except by previous Liberal governments. We had an experience in North America just recently in the State of Wisconsin where they really made no bones about it, we're going after you. They did and it has been destructive to their economy ever since. These are issues that reasonable people talking in a reasonable manner should be able to settle.

This government wanted to use this tool since it got in. It tested the waters when it basically gave up the ghost on first contract, then we were duped into agreeing with them as it related to Bill No. 30, but we're here tonight now in the dying hours of this bill, and somewhat giving up hope on it, but there's still time for the Premier to come to his senses and say that there's a way out; there's a way to just stop the clock, the workers will go back to work, and that's through an industrial inquiry.

What harm can we have if we have an industrial inquiry? There's absolutely no job action going on. People will go back there. They will move along. They may even continue to negotiate, Madam Speaker. Heaven forbid that they would negotiate without this pall over them. One has to ask, why won't the Premier take that olive branch? Why is he so opposed to accepting a way of reconciling the differences here, to allow somebody other than whomever gives him advice on labour relations and how to effect that, how to help people get over this? Instead, the Premier, in what I would call - or one of his agents - tersely sent back and said thanks but no thanks. That's actually being more polite than I should be but we are in this House, after all.

I don't understand why we can't do that, why we can't treat people with the dignity that they deserve. You would think after hearing many stories in Law Amendments Committee that the Premier would understand the dignity issue. That they would understand when you talk about the workers and the stories they told and the passion with which they do their job, that government would say, why are we doing this?

As we speak in this House tonight at about almost 2:25 a.m., Madam Speaker, there's probably a long-term care home where someone is sitting with someone's loved one, holding their hands, maybe as they're going through some tremors due to dementia or something like that. All that these workers want to do is help provide care for our loved ones. They are not uber-radicals. They're not people who want to do this. They're people who want to be treated fairly - exactly what the Premier says, but this bill does not treat people fairly.

Bill No. 37 tilts collective bargaining and industrial relations in such a way that we will never come back from it. People will forever say, I can't do this, I'm stuck here, I'm in ICU, I've got three patients when I should only have one, but I can't look to my government for help, because they don't believe in them, they don't believe that I should have any extra help, that you really need it.

The government would like you to believe that they were worried that the collective bargaining was ongoing and they didn't want to interfere with it. We've tabled document after document here where it clearly shows that the Premier of Nova Scotia, the Liberal Premier, has time and time again interfered to the point of coming out of Cabinet and telling nurses that if you resign we're going to report you to the college. That's the type of Premier we have: instead of finding resolve, he sends threats. That's not conducive. Wherever you're at when it comes to an issue and you're trying to resolve it, it's about getting to yes, not no, that the idea of being able to sit down and find out, well, what is the issue? It's like, don't take a side.

The Premier has flip-flopped on this so much that he doesn't know which side he's on. The reality is that he's being told, I suspect, by a lot of people, that this is the side to take today. Clearly, all the way through on this, the side he has never taken is the side of the caregivers, the ones who come in, whether they come to your house at all hours of the night to do home care. They're under attack. The ones who do home care who have been out in these storms in Cape Breton in the last few days, where schools were shut down for about three days, where they take their own vehicles and get out and care for our loved ones in their homes, who really don't get paid a heck of a lot of money, not near the value of the work that they do. Yet the Premier sees fit to say, you cannot do the collective bargaining process properly, so I'm going to tell you how to do it. I'm going to show you how it's done. I'm going to pass a bill here that effectively doesn't give you any rights, that we'll send you off - he pretends like, but if it gets stuck, if it gets stuck anywhere, you've got arbitration to avail to.

But who is going to do this arbitration? How many arbitrators does this province have? I would say less than a handful in this province, but this is what he wants you to do. He wants you to go out and negotiate - and this is not just an issue about the workers, which is terrible enough, but like I mentioned to you earlier, Madam Speaker, these small, not-for-profit long-term care homes, where are they going to get this legal advice from? They are going to have to deal with this legislation, because it's told that they have to. Before anything can be done, they have to work out an essential services agreement. So what they end up with is, okay, folks, we're sending you out a notice to bargain, but first of all, before we even find out if the union said, look, this is the status quo contract and we'll let you roll it over it for two, three years, however long it is, this bill implies that they have to go out and bang out an essential services agreement. Like, why? Why is the government forcing this out?

This is part of this bill not being thought through. It's bad enough that our health care dollars will be spent in Capital District on labour relation specialists from both sides, particularly we're paying - instead of having money spent on medical care we're spending money on labour relation experts to sit down and bang out essential services legislation, and that's bad enough in our larger health care models and some of the larger institutions that have long-term care, but I really am worried that this will have a chilling effect on these small not-for-profits that are in many of our communities and will not be able to survive because I think you'll have board members saying look I'm going to resign because I can't put my name to this document because this may end up in the courts.

Madam Speaker, I see that my time is just about up, I have probably about a minute, so before I take my seat I move that the previous question now be put.

AN HON. MEMBER: Recorded vote.

MADAM SPEAKER: The motion is that this question now be put.

The debate will continue.

The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid.

HON. DAVID WILSON: Thank you, Madam Speaker, I will say I am glad to be up on my feet again to speak on such an important issue, but I'm not glad to be here.

I may say that this, hopefully, is my last midnight shift for a while but I know the hundreds if not thousands of health care workers and nurses won't be able to say the same because, of course, they do this type of work at this time many, many times throughout their career and work under situations that are extremely difficult.

We all bring forward our experiences and, as I said, I think in a previous debate that I had on this bill, we all have reasons why we're in this Legislature and I'd like to just reflect a little bit on why I'm here and why I feel compelled to stand in my place and talk against Bill No. 37.

Many of the members here know in my former career I was a paramedic and often throughout my career, legislation, public policy was brought forward and paramedics weren't mentioned that often, Madam Speaker. Rarely when health care was discussed on the floor of this Legislature, or out in the general public, was there mention of EMTs and paramedics. I thought, and many of my colleagues at the time thought, that that was not right. We were playing an important role in delivery of health care, especially emergency health care in the province. The conditions we worked under at the time were not the best, Madam Speaker. The Progressive Conservative Government at the time, under Dr. Hamm, thought it was appropriate to bring forward legislation quite similar to Bill No. 37. They were trying to remove the right to strike from the paramedics at the time.

I'll be very upfront and very honest with Nova Scotians, with the members of this House, at the time our major concern was wages. I made \$6.25 an hour, I think, at the time, worked 84 hours a week, 168 hours every two weeks, to make just shy of \$30,000 a year. I must say that I loved every single minute of it. You couldn't take me off the trucks, Madam Speaker, I enjoyed providing a service, I enjoyed working with my colleagues, I enjoyed being able to go to someone's home when they're having a heart attack and try to support them. I did it all for \$6.50 an hour.

At the time we felt that was unfair and we pushed back against government policy, against the government stance on what they felt at the time was a fair wage. We made the very difficult choice, Madam Speaker, to say enough was enough. The offer at the time - I don't know what it was, I think it was maybe a dollar or a two dollar raise and then a bit more over the period of the contract but it wasn't enough. We made the difficult decision to go on strike.

I worked in Sackville, actually about 1,000 metres down the street from my own home. Growing up in the community, a lot of family members still lived there, friends lived in that community and it was extremely hard for me at midnight - we went on strike at midnight - to leave our ambulance, our base, and come down here and walk around this Legislature, Madam Speaker.

I know that the nurses who are outside today, the nurses who might be on shift because even though there's a strike there's still nurses providing care to Nova Scotians, I know they feel the same way. They felt that enough was enough, that they needed to challenge the current government, they needed to challenge the offer that was given to them or in place, to try to improve the conditions they find themselves in and they work in on a daily basis, not only in Capital Health, Madam Speaker, but across the province.

This is my last attempt this morning, to try to get across to the members of the government just what it's like and the concerns that nurses have and the health care workers have. As I sat and took my turn in the Law Amendments Committee, the 18 hours that it sat, the over 150 witnesses who came forward, many of them nurses, many of them other health care workers, many of them just residents of the province, not once, Madam Speaker, in all the submissions did I hear anything about nurses or health care workers wanting to be paid more, that there wasn't enough money in the offer, not once did I hear that. If anything, I heard nurses indicating that they do get paid a good salary, that this movement, this strike - pending strike at the time - had nothing to do with money, had nothing to do with their wages and how much they were offered.

I have to say that after about 11 years as an elected official, that's not the case in almost all of the other negotiations that go on, Madam Speaker. We know that wages are important to people and people want to make a fair wage and they want to get paid

appropriately. That's often the blockage we see in labour relations between either a Crown corporation or the government and the bargaining units that we have across the province.

But in this case, I never heard, and I still haven't heard, anybody tell me that this is about what they get paid or the benefits they receive, the pension they receive, the sick time they receive, the vacation they receive - it was all about patient safety. It was all about the environment that these nurses are working in right now, today. I made mention of one of the nurses when we were talking in second reading, and I might have the years mixed up because it has been a long week, but I think she worked about 27 years as a nurse and she described her worst shift ever.

Maybe I'll indulge the members by telling of one of my worst shifts in a little bit, but her worst shift ever wasn't at the start of her career when she was a rookie, when she didn't know a whole lot, didn't have that hands-on experience. When you come through schooling for four years as nurses, many of them do other degrees, they're very intelligent individuals, men and women, very smart, but it's a much different world once you get out, get your degree, get your licence and then you find yourself on a floor in a unit in a long-term care facility providing that care. Her worst shift ever was within the last 48 hours.

What members of the Legislature need to remind themselves of and need to do is to listen to those people involved who will be affected by this piece of legislation. If you don't or if the member doesn't have a background in health care, then they need to educate themselves. I don't believe in the Legislature today we have any nurses who are elected and I make a prediction; it's my hope in the next election that we'll see some nurses in this Legislature because it's important for this House to have diversity, not only if it's gender or ethnic but people who have different backgrounds bring different assets to the floor of this Legislature.

We have an amazing group of men and women from all Parties who bring their background, their work life to the floor of this Legislature. I make a prediction, I hope that the next time we have a general election that we have some of the health care workers, especially the nurses, put their name forward and bring a voice to the floor of this Legislature. That was my commitment and that's why I decided to get involved in politics, to make sure paramedics, my colleagues, and health care workers have a voice.

I've interacted a lot with nurses throughout my career, over the last almost 11 years. I've often mentioned some of the interactions I've had and some of the heartbreaking stories and situations that I've been in with nurses and the compassion that nurses have in this province. Through the 18 hours of the Committee on Law Amendments, we heard about those situations. We heard about the services and the environment that nurses work in and what nurses provide.



It was an eye opener for me. As I said, I've worked a lot with nurses in the past but my eyes were opened on Monday evening, to hear what the current situation is. One of the things I did mention to the government is no matter what happens with this piece of legislation, the one thing government can't do is ignore what we heard just a few days ago. The government cannot ignore it. They need to address it. There were nurses who broke down, who only had a couple of years in as nurses, saying they're burnt out. We had nurses who worked 33 years, who said that they've been so proud to be a nurse, to promote the nursing profession in our province, and have come to the decision of not recommending that other people get into nursing, which is something we cannot have happen.

We've seen in the past when governments have reduced - for example, I know our House Leader mentioned back in the 1990s, when there were a lot of cuts to health care. Nurses were paid to leave Nova Scotia; hospital beds were closed; medical seats at Dalhousie were eliminated. That left a decade or more of nursing shortages, doctor shortages, and it increased wait times for almost everything - every service in health care, Madam Chairman. I'm sorry - I keep calling you Madam Chairman, but it was Committee of the Whole House we were just at, Madam Speaker.

That was all under a Liberal Government that made those cuts, and we continued to feel the effects of that for decades. We know there was a nursing shortage for many years. I predict that we're going to see the same thing happen again in the decades ahead, and we can't have that happen. We heard testimony in the Law Amendments Committee - the gap between the new nurses and those who are more seasoned. There are not a lot of nurses who have been there for, say, 10 or 15 years. We have nurses who are five years and under, and we have nurses who are 25 years and over, and that percentage of nurses who are about to retire is going to leave our province in a dire situation in a number of years.

What we can't have happen is our new young students in high school today deciding not to get into health care. I know that when I was growing up, when I graduated high school, every second - and I don't mean this in any way to marginalize the profession, but many of my friends who were women were deciding to be nurses. There were a few guys who decided, but it was mostly women. Every second person who graduated said in the yearbook, I'm going into nursing. Well, I've attended the last 10 high school graduations at Sackville High School, and I have to say, I rarely saw in the last five or six years anybody saying they're going to enter the nursing profession. So I have to believe what the nurses are saying in the Law Amendments Committee.

We can't have that happen. We need to respect the profession. The government needs to respect the profession. They need to work even harder today to ensure that new people are deciding to get into health care as a whole - not just nursing - so that we can continue to provide services for Nova Scotians. That's what government policy is supposed to be. That's what government legislation is supposed to be - to ensure that services are there for our citizens. We're all sent here by our citizens. Public policy is

formed and laws are created here on this floor of the Legislature, and it's supposed to be, I think, to improve conditions in our province. Bill No. 37 doesn't do that.

We heard from labour lawyers - or as my House Leader said, employment lawyers, but labour lawyers who have spent their whole careers in dealing with labour law - presented the facts, and that's really what we need to go on, are the facts. In jurisdictions across Canada - and I would say around the world - that have essential services legislation like Bill No. 37 in place, it doesn't work. We heard about Alberta, for example. When a recent study was done comparing Alberta and Nova Scotia, and the labour relations and the number of strikes in both our jurisdictions, Alberta, where health care workers can't strike, had 15 times more strikes than in Nova Scotia. Well that's not me as an NDP MLA stating something - that's well known, it's a fact. Why would the current government, why would the Premier believe that in 2014, a piece of legislation like Bill No. 37 will be any different?

The other thing that we heard is that when there are strikes in jurisdictions that have something like Bill No. 37 in place that those strikes are much longer. There are wildcat strikes so it doesn't matter what the legislation says, if there's a wildcat strike they're on strike. But the reason why they have longer strikes and they last longer is because there's a certain level of workers who continue to work; a percentage of them are allowed to go on strike, but there's no real reason for the employer to get back to the table and negotiate with the union because they're meeting the needs.

There is a high percentage of workers who have to remain on the job and they rotate out. If it's your turn to work today you work and when you're off you're on strike, I guess that's how it works. You go to a picket line on your three days off or your four days off, but when you're scheduled to work you come back to work.

When we look at legislation as brought forward to this House, you need to make sure that it's a good piece of legislation, that it's going to work, that it's going to improve the situation. History dictates that essential services legislation does not improve the services; it does not improve the environment that we will have. We heard from nurse, after nurse, after nurse about working short-handed. I think three or four of the final presenters were young nurses who all worked on the burn unit and they described the environment that they work in. I have to tell you, as a paramedic I've seen a lot. I've dealt with a lot and can handle quite a bit, but I have to tell you in my experience in the calls that I've had, when I've treated burn patients - very difficult.

Here we had nurses who had four months experience, I think, one of them who spoke, to five years and they stayed, it was almost 4:00 a.m. They stayed for 10, 12 hours, just so they could have a chance to ensure that members of the Law Amendment Committee and members of this House heard of what the environment they work in is like and how often now, because of changes in the scheduling process and the new - I think it's

electronic now and I can't remember the name of the program that they have - they don't have the flexibility that was once there, that nurses can't switch shifts off with each other.

We used to do that as paramedics. If I knew I had something I wanted to go to on a shift I would ask a paramedic on an opposite shift if they wanted to switch and it was no big deal. As long as you were the same trained, you provided the same care it was okay. We're hearing that is very difficult to happen with this new program and that often they're shorthanded and dealing with very sick individuals and they're stressed at four months, at five years. We should be hearing those stories from nurses who have spent a career in the profession, 25, 30, 35 years. They're the ones who should be burned out, not nurses who have only been working five years. That is alarming and it should be alarming to the government.

That is why throughout this process we have tried our hardest as a caucus to bring forward options for the government, to save face, if you want to say it, Madam Speaker. First was, of course, the hoist motion we made on second reading. That was to suspend debate on the bill, to allow both sides to kind of cool off, bring the bill back six months forward and see what we can do and hopefully really get an agreement that is satisfactory to both sides, either through mediation, arbitration, at the bargaining table. That's where a decision needs to happen, at the bargaining table - not through legislation, not imposed on them.

What this piece of legislation will do once passed is really, I think, put back labour relations for decades. We're all going to be held accountable for our actions and I want to make sure that the new members of the government across the way understand, no matter if it's your first election, your second election, your third election or your fourth election, like I've just gone through, you are always held accountable, Madam Speaker. The voters who put us here expect you to ensure that you bring their concerns to the floor of this Legislature, that you fight for things that will improve their lives. What you say on all sides of this floor is important and you will be held accountable.

I'd like to just quote a comment that was said here on the floor of this Legislature, Madam Speaker, and then I'll table it in a couple of minutes. It goes like this; "Mr. Speaker, there are not enough hours in a day to try to convince this stubborn government how wrong they are. There are not enough hours to share with this government the compassion health care workers take to their workplace every day, not enough hours to relay the displeasure the people of Nova Scotia have for this bill.", Madam Speaker." That was from the former member for Clare, Wayne Gaudet, on June 27, 2001. Wayne was a Liberal member of this House for a long time, well-respected by all Parties. Those are his comments, they are not mine. They are in Hansard, you can't run away from those comments. They are there, they will be there in another 50 years. I wonder what Wayne is saying today, I wonder if that comment stands true today.

Another thing, Madam Speaker, that I came across in Hansard, and I quote, “This government has lost control over the health care system in Nova Scotia. There is chaos in the system today, it will be there tomorrow and it will be there for a long time until this government shows respect to health care workers.” That was taken from Hansard on June 27, 2001. That was from the member for Cape Breton-Richmond, the Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism. Those were his comments, they weren’t mine. I agree with them but those were his comments when he was on this side of the House. I wonder if he still believes in that.

From the noise outside there is some chaos going on in the health care system still today, Madam Speaker. It is because of bills like Bill No. 37, which does not show the respect towards unionized workers, towards health care workers. That quote was talking about health care workers.

Health care workers want to be treated fairly, they want to be treated with respect. They want to know that they have a government that is listening to them, that is addressing their needs, that responds to their needs.

Another quote I came across, Madam Speaker: “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 from September 6, 2007, in Hansard, by the member for Annapolis. The Premier stated this on the floor of this Legislature. It’s in Hansard. I didn’t say it. I completely agree with him.

How far we’ve come with what I’ve heard over the last couple of weeks around health care workers, around collective bargaining, around unionized workers, around labour disputes. Last week we heard the Premier threaten nurses, threaten that they were going to - that the government or Capital Health would take them to their college, their registering body, if they chose to defy or had a work stoppage.

That didn’t sound like the quote I just read, or from the same person that I read the quote from. But he didn’t stop there. The Premier went on to say, what more do nurses want? That’s a comment I think would lend to maybe if the nurses were banging their drums and blowing their whistles that they wanted a \$20,000 raise or a \$10,000 raise or improved pension benefits or increase in vacation. That type of comment, that’s what I think of initially, first-hand.

But that’s not the case in this situation. I mentioned they’re not talking about money, and they’re not talking about the benefits they receive. They’re talking about patient safety, and they’re talking about the environment they find themselves working in. I’ve heard a lot of the media, read the media, seen it on TV, I’ve listened to the comments on the radio from people on all sides of the argument. The one thing that frustrates me the

most is some of the comments of people who I think are just not educating themselves on this situation, when they say, oh, it's just a union, they just want more, they just want more.

This situation that we find ourselves in today, and the government finds themselves in today, is different than what I've witnessed over the 10, 11 years I've been here. The environment that they describe, that they're working in over the last little while, is something we need to address, and that Nova Scotians need to pay attention to. That's why we brought forward the hoist on the bill, to see if we could just have some cooling off period. Government didn't want to support that. That's fine, that's their prerogative, but we also brought forward another option.

Our Leader sent a letter to the Premier yesterday, asking if he'd be willing to look at, under the Trade Union Act, that the Minister of Labour and Workforce Development could call an industrial inquiry commission - not to look at wages, not to look at pension benefits, not to look at vacation pay or vacation time, but to look at patient safety and the environment that nurses are working in. The reason we brought that forward is because we're concerned with what we heard in the Committee on Law Amendments.

The government decided not to take that route. An industrial inquiry would have put the brakes on this piece of legislation. There could have been an independent body look into some of the concerns we heard in the Red Room across the hall here about the conditions and the short-staff environment that nurses work in. They're scared for their patients. We heard that. That's what this commission could have looked at. Government could have saved face, and the union - I'm not going to speak on behalf of the union - could have looked at the industrial inquiry and decided for themselves if they supported it or not.

I would think that they may have, because throughout this impasse that we've had over the last number of weeks or months, we heard time and time again from them that they were concerned with patient safety, about the environment that nurses work in. A lot of talk and discussion has been around patient ratios, staff to patient ratios, and it's something I think that government needs to look into. We've been the first on many things here in this province, Madam Speaker, and there is no reason why we should be scared off at potentially looking at what patient-staff ratios look like in the province just because no other jurisdiction in Canada is doing it.

Our Leader mentioned in her remarks on third reading about a first in Nova Scotia, in North America, and it was dealing with the paramedics. There was a study a number of years ago in Cape Breton, and it was with paramedics and the study introduced the possibility of paramedics delivering clot-busting drugs. I believe, if I'm not mistaken, it's a T&K I think is the name, there is a long name for it and I've been out of the profession for too long - I would mess it up.

So they did the study in Sydney where it was a controlled environment, advanced care paramedics were educated and were supported through physicians to see if Nova

Scotians who find themselves having a cardiac arrest or an MI, would benefit from receiving this drug that was only given in hospital settings prior to that, and would it be good for patients, for citizens. The study happened, the results and everything that went along with that was evaluated and it was pretty clear pretty quickly that there was a huge benefit for residents, for Nova Scotians, for Nova Scotians who were having a cardiac arrest or who were having chest pain to receive this drug in their home, and it was approved pretty quickly.

I was very glad to be part of a government that decided to bring that program forward. Our Leader was the Minister of Health and Wellness at the time and this drug is available on ambulances across the province now, Madam Speaker, and it saves lives. I talked to an individual who told me he wouldn't be here today if it wasn't for that drug. We truly bring the emergency department to someone's home. That was a first in North America, and we have eyes looking at us from across the world to see if they can take our program here in Nova Scotia and introduce it in their jurisdiction. We're the first in Canada, the first in North America. So why would we just shut the door on the possibility of looking at and studying and trying to figure out if staff and patient ratios is somewhere where we need to go?

I'm not going to stand here and say, yes we should be doing it immediately, because I don't have the knowledge, I don't have the education behind trying to figure those best practices when it comes to the nurse and patient ratio, but there are a lot of people out there that do have the knowledge. I find, and I know the nurses and the unions find that the government is just dismissing that. They are saying, no, it's done in Canada we're not even going to entertain that. On the flip side we hear the Premier, we hear the Minister of Health and Wellness, as soon as nurses or the union mentioned patient ratio the first stat comments out of the mouth of both the Minister of Health and Wellness, and the Premier were that we're above the national average when it comes to nurses to residents, I think the number is around 900,000 to 100,000, and the national average is 700,000. That led to the comment from the Premier: What more do nurses want?

What they want is to make sure that government recognizes that, yes, that figure might be true, just like we have one of the highest ratios of doctors per residents in the province, in Canada. I've got to tell you and the Minister of Health and Wellness has questioned me a number of times when I was minister, he questioned our Leader about the lack of doctors in certain communities across this province. Digby comes to mind for me. It has been an extremely difficult time trying to attract physicians to that part of the province. I think there's some light at the end of the tunnel by some of the work we did when we were in government. I hope the government continues to support that because that community has been struggling for many, many years.

When you go into Digby, for example, over the last number of years and if you were to say to the residents there, oh, well, we have one of the highest doctor-resident ratios in the country, we don't have a problem here in Nova Scotia; they would run you out

of town, Madam Speaker. It's not just in Digby; it's throughout many of the rural communities across Nova Scotia. That's why, as a government, we knew we needed to look at how we ensure that people have access to primary health care, how do they make sure they have access to emergency care, and that's why.

I know our Leader spoke about Dr. Ross yesterday, I believe. We asked Dr. Ross to be our emergency room advisor for the province, a well-respected physician. I've interacted with him as a paramedic; I've interacted with him as a MLA, as the Minister of Health and Wellness - very knowledgeable and well-respected. He went around the province to try to figure out what was going on in some of the rural communities, some of the challenges, hence, the birth of our Collaborative Emergency Centres.

CECs were a game-changer, Madam Speaker. From our knowledge, no other jurisdiction in Canada had moved in a direction to change the model of care when it comes to emergency rooms. We knew that because we couldn't attract some physicians, especially to rural communities, they were getting burnt out, they were on call 24/7, we needed to utilize them better; we needed to utilize the health care professionals in those communities better.

It was a first for the country, Madam Speaker. We didn't run away and say, oh well, we can't do that, we can't be the first. We can't be looked at as leaders in the health care sector; we didn't say that. We said we wanted to be leaders; we wanted to ensure that Nova Scotia could be very proud of the health care workers we have in the province, that they will step up to the plate and be leaders. That's what the union was asking for; that's what nurses are asking for now.

Let's look at potentially leading the country and really talk about what would nurse-patient ratios look like. Would they address some of the shortfalls we see, some of the situations, the environment that nurses are working in now? I think there's merit there, Madam Speaker, and it's important that government recognize that.

What we have, though, is a government that really is burying their heads in the sand when it comes to this. They need to realize that we can be leaders in Nova Scotia. I think the Ivany report mentioned something around that attitude that Nova Scotia's businesses need, Nova Scotians need, that we can turn the economy around here in the province. That goes right to health care. We have jurisdictions from across the country coming here to Nova Scotia to look at the Collaborative Emergency Centre model.

The Liberal Government in P.E.I., I've had many discussions with the minister, with the Premier, the Finance Minister, they were all here in Nova Scotia in Pugwash, Tatamagouche, Springhill, looking at that model. They've adopted it. They brought it back to P.E.I. I think Alberton was the first Collaborative Emergency Centre in Prince Edward Island because they recognized that Nova Scotia, even though they were the first to do it,

had something that really can change and improve health care and health care delivery in the provinces and territories.

We have the Premier of Saskatchewan, Premier Wall, who during his visit here for the First Ministers' meeting - the Premiers of all the provinces and territories were here in Halifax - took the time to educate himself on this model of care, and stood in front of the media here in Nova Scotia and said, thank you, Nova Scotia, we're going to steal your idea, and they brought it back to Saskatchewan.

This isn't a political thing. You have a Liberal Government in Prince Edward Island that utilized an NDP program. We have a Party in Saskatchewan - which are really Liberals and Conservatives - using an NDP idea, and there are many, many other jurisdictions. Fred Horne from Alberta, the Health Minister of Alberta, indicated to me the last time I spoke to him that they were looking at this. Manitoba and a number of the other provinces and territories all recognize that Nova Scotia was the first to bring this type of change and model of care forward, and they're going to look at it.

I hope that the current Liberal Government continues to support that model of care, that they continue to ensure that they look at this model in those areas across the province that find themselves challenged with providing primary care and emergency room care. We didn't mind sharing it with the Liberal Government in P.E.I. and we won't mind sharing with the Liberal Government of Nova Scotia. I hope that they continue.

With Bill No. 37, we need to ensure that Nova Scotians continue to look at how do we improve the situation, how do we improve services, especially in health care. If you ask every Nova Scotian out there what their number one concern is, it's health care. Yes, at times it can be power rates, at times it can be fracking, the environment, at times it can be economic development, jobs, and the economy - we all know that. We all know that at certain periods of time in the calendar year there are certain issues that are very high at the forefront of discussions in the media, but in every poll that is done, health care is the number one concern for Nova Scotians.

When we have 2,300 nurses willing to go on strike because of the environment they work in, the government needs to pay attention. I've said this before, and I know our Leader mentioned it earlier, about negotiations here in the Province of Nova Scotia. We've been relatively calm on labour disputes over the last decade or two. I think we've had three hospital strikes in almost 20 years. The NSNU mentioned that they haven't been on strike, none of their units have been on strike since 1977. Not to say that there haven't been tough negotiations along the road. There have been. As a former government, we know that - we were there, there were tough negotiations - but over 97 per cent of those negotiations end in a collective agreement, and it happens at the bargaining table. Not through legislation, at the bargaining table.



To watch this process unfold over the last two weeks, it's no wonder why we're on strike. The only one to be blamed for this is the Liberal Government. Here we had both sides, the mediator calling them back to the table, they were actually sitting down at the table when the government chose to bring legislation forward. Is that bargaining in good faith? I tend to think no.

We know in Bill No. 30 that was just passed a month ago, or more than a month ago, that there's a challenge in the court on that. I've asked, actually it was one of the presenters or witnesses, could this bill, Bill No. 37, be challenged and there was no hesitation, it's similar to Bill No. 30 but just a lot broader when you look at who's involved in this legislation, so I don't doubt we'll hear once - unless the government members change their minds and a couple of them vote against it, that's the only way the bill's going to not pass is if some of the members across the way decide to change their intentions and not vote for it.

I've heard from the Leader of the Progressive Conservatives that they are not going to vote for the bill, I think I heard that, but we still don't have enough numbers, Madam Speaker. So a couple of the members over there need to reflect, need to make sure they understand the ramifications of a piece of legislation like this passing, the accountability that comes with standing behind Bill No. 37, and I've got to say, many of the witnesses that came forward during the Law Amendments Committee, one of the first things out of their mouth was I'm so ashamed that I voted Liberal.

A lot of people voted for the Liberal Party in the last election. A lot of people in my community voted Liberal also, but I have to say, Madam Speaker, and I know I'm not picking up my BlackBerry, but I'm pointing to it, I have a number of emails now over the last number of days of people in my community who have thanked me for trying to get the point across to government on some of the concerns nurses have, and they have apologized for not supporting me or not giving me a second chance. So if Bill No. 37 passes you need to be accountable each and every member who votes in favour of this need to be able to look in the face of another health care worker, a nurse, and say, yeah I supported it 100 per cent, it was the only thing we could do.

What's concerning to me is that we were faced with a possible labour disruption. We know now there is a labour disruption and it involved 2,300 nurses. So instead of trying to figure out how does a government deal with those workers, the bargaining unit here at Capital Health, with NSGEU, they introduced Bill No. 37 that cast a huge net on over 40,000, I think is the number, 30,000 or 40,000 health care workers, many, many, many of them who are nowhere near the position that the 2,300 nurses find themselves in without an agreement and a possible strike. Many of them have negotiated settlements that will be a couple more years before they mature so why would the government decide that, well, we're not just going to deal with the 2,300 nurses we're going to deal with 40,000 workers. I'll tell you that's a lot of workers, Madam Speaker, it's a lot of people that the government needs to be accountable for when they support this piece of legislation.

We know that there is a trend and I have to say I tried my hardest leading up to the last election to remind people of what it was like back in the 1990s under the last Liberal Government. I know many of them over on the government seats weren't there, some of them were, and I tried to remind Nova Scotians exactly what happened in the 1990s. The rollbacks, the cuts, the closures of hospital beds, the cutting of medical seats at Dal Medical, and how that threw the health care system into chaos for many years.

I graduated, went to paramedic school in 1995 and they were recruiting paramedics at that time to leave the province and they were paying a heck of a lot more than what we were getting paid here. Many of us chose to stay here because this is our home; this is where we grew up. But many of my classmates left and went to Alberta, went to Ontario, went to places like Timmins where they were offered, some of them, 10 times as much money to work in the health care sector and the health care services up there.

I went to school at the School of Allied Health which had the X-ray technicians, the ultrasounds, cytology, those allied professions. It used to have the nursing diploma program instead of the degree program. Many of them were being recruited and many of them left the province because of the cuts seen in the 1990s at that time and it took decades to get to a point where there was some stability when it came to nurses, for example. Many of the nurses I knew left and went to the U.S., to California, Bakersfield, Florida, Texas, because the environment down there was better; they were payed more. Many of them said they felt more respected than they did here in Nova Scotia. At the time all that was really available was part-time employment with no benefits and it took a good decade or more to get to the point where we're at today.

We do have a good number of nurses but do we have the best number of nurses? You know what I'm trying to say, it's late. Is the number that we have currently ensuring that Nova Scotians get the proper service? As I said earlier, you could throw the figure out that we have an above-average percentage of nurses in this province per capita but there are areas that they're struggling to find nurses to work in. Units are struggling to find people to work there because they're overworked. It's stressful. They're working in conditions and with patients that most people would not for one moment want to deal with, people who are burned, for example. I don't know if you've ever come across a burn victim but it's not a pleasant sight. We heard the nurses talking about removing the fingernails of patients as they're screaming in pain. They're giving them morphine but often the morphine doesn't do anything to the pain. We've all read and I've heard that burns are one of the most painful things you can go through.

Unless you have a good working environment, how are you going to attract a new nurse or nurses to work there or to stay there? With the numbers that I heard recently, I think there was a study done on the percentage of nurses that can retire in the next number of years - it's huge. What we're going to need are these more seasoned nurses to stay a few extra years so that we can maintain providing coverage. I heard in the Committee on Law Amendments that they are not willing to do that. One nurse is willing to give up part of her

pension to retire early because she's stressed out. It's too much and Bill No. 37 does nothing to address those issues.

Yes, it's going to get the nurses who might be pounding the drum outside right now back to their unit but what is that going to do to morale of those nurses? They're going to feel defeated. I think it's going to heighten many of them to make that decision to leave this province, to retire from nursing and where will we be then? Where are the patients going to be then? They will be left ringing their call bell with nobody coming. We heard that, how often that happens.

I'm asking the government to reconsider this piece of legislation. I'm asking those not in Cabinet to reconsider their decision that is going to be made in a few hours so that they put the patients of this province first; that they show the nurses and the health care providers who have spilled what it's like to be a nurse in this province to the Law Amendments Committee. Those stories - and I hate calling them stories because they're not stories - the testimonies, they were moving when I heard them; they were heartbreaking when I heard them. I think it's important that government acts on that.

With those few words, I know my colleague will want to make a few comments, but as our Leader said, we will not be supporting Bill No. 37.

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

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: Madam Speaker, this is quite an experience to be able to speak on Bill No. 37. You can hear in the stamina that those individuals and nurses have - that they're letting their voices be heard. Believe me, this is only the beginning.

Every time we begin our daily routine in this House of Assembly, we pray. In our prayer we pray for our legislative members to bring in fair and equitable legislation. I don't know if people even hear that, but that's what we do every time we start our daily routine. We pray. There is a statement in there that says about fair and equitable legislation - well, Bill No. 37 is certainly not fair and equitable legislation, on the contrary.

From this day forward, every time when we pray before our daily routine and the words are said, "fair and equitable legislation", I hope Bill No. 37 will always cross their minds and how they misled the people of this province and brought in the most unfair and inequitable legislation in the history of Nova Scotia. I do really hope that crosses the minds of the members of this government each and every time. It will be a reminder because those key words "fair and equitable legislation" will be said every day we start our daily routine. I do hope Bill No. 37 pops in the minds of those on the government side, and they understand what that means for this province, and for those individuals who have the courage to be out here to let you hear their voices.

This morning, I would like to also address the public relations game that the Premier of this province has been playing with the lives of Nova Scotians and trying to sell the concept of Bill No. 37 through that public relations game. I guess it can be called the fear factor by the Premier trying to make it sound like he is the only one who cares about patient safety. Does he not think that this is what it is all about for these nurses and health care professionals? Their whole message is about patient safety. That's the exact point that the nurses are making, Madam Speaker. It's patient safety, and they need the support and they need better working conditions in order to make sure that their patients are safe. That's not in Bill No. 37, and for the Premier to act as if he is the only one and his members of government are the only ones concerned about patient safety, it's plain and simply disrespecting the nurses and the health care professionals of the Province of Nova Scotia. They are experiencing unsafe working conditions each and every day. That also translates into unsafe conditions for their patients. That is what they're trying to tell us.

As my colleague has said, it's not about money. Often we get into these collective bargaining negotiations, and we hear about increased wages and salaries. That's not what it's all about. It's about the same thing that the Premier is trying to say that he is supporting: patient safety. So why are we disregarding what these nurses and health care professionals are telling us?

What we have to really look at is the fact that Bill No. 37 is not addressing the core issue. It is just masking over the issue, and the problem is that the core issue is going to continually be there, and those unsafe working conditions and unhappy working environment are going to remain. We all know just how important it is to have a happy, safe working environment. It's not something that we don't know. It's common sense. It is absolutely common sense to know that we are going to be more productive, we are going to be safer, and we are going to be able to provide a better service if we are working in a good, respectful environment.

You know, Madam Speaker, I do not believe that our members from the government, and even our minister who represents Labour and Advanced Education, know that there is a Workplace Safety Strategy in this province. We have one. So I guess my question is, does it not apply to them? Does it not apply to nurses, health care workers, and people now working in Community Services? Are we discriminating against nurses and health care workers and Community Services workers because we're not applying the Workplace Safety Strategy that is endorsed by this very government and the Province of Nova Scotia?

I'm wondering if the minister even read it, or if the Premier even read it, because if they read it, there is no way that they would even think of Bill No. 37. It would not even have been created, and I will table this, for example, Madam Speaker. This is being read directly from the strategy that we have in this province and it's very ironic that on this there is a picture of a nurse and a patient:

“Safety leadership - from the top and from every rung on the organizational ladder in every workplace - is key. The Provincial government’s role is as the policy-maker, regulator and enforcer, but it must also lead by employer example across the provincial public sector. It recognizes its responsibility as a leader, to model safety in action, policy and example.”

Well, Bill No. 37 is certainly not showing any leadership from this government and it’s right here. I’ll continue on Page 2 of the Workplace Safety Strategy, “The success of this strategy depends on workers, employers, industry and labour leaders, government . . .” It says government, Madam Speaker. The last time I checked, and maybe it’s unfortunate and I believe those people outside think it’s unfortunate, the government is the Liberal Party. We have a government. It says right in this document that government is supposed to be a leader - a leader in safety initiatives.

The Occupational Health and Safety Advisory Council and all partners in safety, coming together to strengthen the culture of safety in Nova Scotia and in Nova Scotian workplaces; no person or organization can do it alone but collective effort and strong - and let me repeat, and strong, and I will repeat it again, and strong leadership can and will. Well obviously we don’t have strong leadership in this province or we wouldn’t even be standing here this evening talking about Bill No. 37.

I would suggest once again that I do not believe that anyone on the government side has ever even taken the opportunity to read this strategy or probably didn’t even know it existed.

There’s another part of this strategy, and I will also table this, Madam Speaker. This is on Page 3, for the reference of the government members - Page 3, I will repeat - “All workplaces will have access to and use the services and resources” - and let me stress this - “they need to assist them in achieving competency in workplace safety and improving their safety performance.”

I’m going to read that again because this is what the nurses are talking about and the health care workers. You can maybe giggle over it but I don’t think those people outside are giggling. I don’t think the rest of Nova Scotia is giggling. Sometimes, as you have to do with a child, you have to repeat it more than once, so let’s do that. “All workplaces will have access to and use the services and resources they need to assist them in achieving competency in workplace safety and improving their safety performance.”

Madam Speaker, that’s exactly what the nurses, the people who came to Law Amendments Committee, are trying to stress to this government. They’re trying to stress that this is about safety and it’s about safety for patients and safety for themselves and the ability to do their job in a safe environment. Now what does it take to make this government understand it?

Bill No. 37 does absolutely nothing to change that. We know Bill No. 37 will be voted in by this majority government, unfortunately, because I know what's happening over on that side. I know that the new people, who have been recently elected, less than seven months ago, are being told that this is the way it works. You're going to have more protests around this Legislature as we go forward. What we do when we first come into government, we try to get all the dirty work put aside because we believe that people forget about it in four years. That is what it's all about. It's the strategy of, oh well, we have four more years.

I think this is going to create problems. I know it will because I've spoken to the people who are outside, unlike many on the government side. What I've heard over and over again is they are not going to forget. I believe, with respect to Bill No. 37, what is being thought by the members of the government is that this is just one group and that with this bill they're going to forget it. Well they've told me they're not going to forget this at all - and we're not talking about one group, what we're talking about is over 32,000 individuals in this province, and it's only beginning. As we all know, it does take a while for information to flow throughout our province because people have busy lives. It always works that when it hits personally what happens is then the decision is I have to take action.

So people are going to be learning about it and I know that part of the plan was to try to push this legislation through thinking that it will be forgotten and people won't understand it, but believe me, Madam Speaker, those individuals who are outside this evening, who are here all night long, they left their families to be outside and we've heard they haven't let down one minute since they've been here, they're not going to forget and this is going to continue for this government, there's no question.

I'm just wondering, and I have a question and it is, how can the Liberal Government promote workplace safety in all good conscience? That's a question for the minister, too. How will she be able to stand up and speak at events and talk about the importance of workplace safety when they're not addressing the workplace safety needs of nurses who look after our loved ones, and including ourselves at times? How is the minister going to do that? I'd really like to know, because there will be many eyes on her the next time she has to do that and I would feel it would be very uncomfortable.

There is one other piece in this workplace strategy that I'd like to bring forward and I will table this, this is on Page 5. "Turning a 'blind eye' to risk still happens in too many workplaces, hoping that nothing will go wrong, when what is needed is action to prevent rather than to react to injuries. The attitude that injuries go with the job must end. Safety systems that identify and eliminate risks and hazards should be incorporated into strategic organizational plans. Strong partnerships across labour, industry and government will carry a message about the benefits and the necessity of safety."

I have to wonder going forward, even after Bill No. 37 is passed, how this government can go forward and discuss the issue of workplace safety with anybody,

whether it's in the nursing profession, whether it's in the health profession - how do you promote it to the private sector when you're not even following your own strategy that's endorsed by the Government of Nova Scotia? That's a question that I have and I'm sure there's no answer on the other side because I don't think that it has been thought of. I do not believe that there's one member on the government side who has read this, and if they've read the strategy they obviously do not endorse it because we wouldn't have Bill No. 37.

The other misleading information that we continually hear, publicly and in this House by the Premier, is when he says that the right to strike has not been taken away in Bill No. 37 - well, either our Premier is totally misinformed or he is just continuing his public relations game because I asked, Madam Speaker, in this House the other day if I could receive a list of those individuals in the health care system that would be able, at the end of the day, to have the right to strike.

I did not receive any list and I don't expect I will ever receive a list and I will tell people why. It's because when you read Bill No. 37 and you read it over and over, what you find in there is the fact that essential services will have to be defined. Who gets to define it? There are many questions. Well the employer has all the strength now because this bill is giving them the upper hand in this situation.

So what's going to happen, as I explained the other day, is it's logical to think that what's going to happen is that mostly every service that is provided by health care workers in this province will be deemed essential services. The argument will be made and what leverage do the nurses and the health care workers and the community services workers have left to be able to argue that point? They have none. Therefore everything is going to be considered essential services. There will not be anybody left for the right to strike.

I find it extremely bothersome that the Premier of this province will stand in this House and say he's not taking away the right to strike but he can't provide me with a list of those individuals who will be given that right and the reason why is because he knows very well that there is nobody left that is going to have that ability to strike with Bill No. 37 going through.

Does the Premier think that it's helping his situation in this public relations game to be telling the public? I think that in a short period of less than seven months the number of commitments that were made, and the number of comments made by the Premier on this side when he was in Opposition and now it's totally the opposite on the other side, I do not think there is one person that believes this, and we're only seven months in. I think that people should be worried and it's not the fact that just the government members should be worried; all of Nova Scotia should be worried.

The other thing, Madam Speaker, I'd like to address and my colleagues have talked about it several times here is another piece of public relations misinformation that the Premier continually throws out and that is with respect to the paramedics. My colleague,

the Leader of our Party, explained elegantly today the reason why that is so different and we have said it over and over and over again but members of the government will yell out well you guys took away the right to strike from paramedics, even though we explained the reason. Well let me say, let's for one instance say it's exactly the same. Well can you tell me how ridiculous and childish it is for grownups to be able to say well you did it, so we should be able to do it. Well that's like telling a child that's being bullied by somebody, well you go right ahead and you bully back, they bullied you, you bully back. So I think some people should start thinking about that and how ridiculous that actually sounds.

The other piece of information that's thrown out by the Premier, which makes no sense is when - and the minister also said this of labour, is that well we're the last province in Canada that to have this type of legislation.

My question is - you would think that your government would be leaders not followers, so you follow other provinces that have done this and have done it a number of years ago, so it has given plenty of time for research so people know many studies, I didn't make the studies up. We had a professor at the Law Amendments Committee talking about and providing the study information. You can go on and Google it if you don't believe that professor. You can Google it and you can see the studies that were done and those studies have proven that this type of legislation has not worked. So does that tell Nova Scotians that what we have is a government who are followers and not leaders? I guess it does. So you follow something that doesn't work. Well, good for Nova Scotia; we're going to be followers and that's what Bill No. 37 is all about, us being followers, not leaders and that's pretty sad.

We just recently had the Ivany report and it talks about attitudinal change and that we have to pull up our socks and we have to be leaders. We have absolutely no leadership from that side of the House, no leadership. That's pretty obvious by bringing a bill forward when, in fact, we had a collective bargaining process; we have research that proves that works, 97 per cent, 98 per cent works, but no, no, we're going to take that 2 per cent. We're going to invest. We're going to create havoc in the health care system, we're going to create chaos in it; we're going to create stress on those individuals who are saving lives for that 2 per cent or 3 per cent, even though we know that 97 per cent of the time the collective bargaining process works. Where is that leadership? Absolutely no leadership.

So let's follow provinces that have done it before. It doesn't work, but we're going to follow that, that makes sense. We're going to not allow for collective bargaining process that studies and research have shown works. If I was a gambling person I think I'd go for the 97 per cent or 98 per cent, not the 2 per cent, but this government is gambling with people's lives based on 2 per cent odds. Boy, that's interesting.

When you look at all of the evidence and all the information, it is extremely baffling why we have a piece of legislation called Bill No. 37. As I mentioned, it doesn't even cover what the problem is. When you look at the bill what you see is nothing but



ambiguity. When you look at that bill it's like one paragraph says, well this is covered and the next paragraph says well that's not covered, so I don't know what lawyer wrote that up, but I'm sure whoever it was did not know which door to go out of and whether to back out of it or go in frontward because it doesn't make sense.

The other part of Bill No. 37 is if you look at it, Madam Speaker, it talks about Community Services employees. I find that very, very sad. In the years we were in government we worked so hard to bring in a restorative approach and I believe - and I will give the Minister of Community Services a lot of credit for this - is that she has continued that process, I understand. She continuing the process of restorative approaches so obviously she understands the importance of when you're resolving an issue that the key element of resolving issues is bringing everybody to the table. It kind of sounds like collective bargaining to me, but like I said, I don't mind giving credit when credit is due, and I have heard that the Minister of Community Services has been supporting that restorative approach.

We went a long ways with that restorative approach, and that's why we were able to create some strategies out of that department that never existed in this province, is by bringing people together. I do not understand why the Premier of this province would not see that happening in the minister's department and that she endorsed it to keep it going.

That's really what the collective bargaining approach is: it's bringing people together. It's logical, when you're in a collective bargaining process, that at the beginning of it you're not going to have the issues resolved. It's human nature to go down to the last bit of time to resolve it, but once again, remember the research shows that 97 per cent of the time it's resolved. So for the Premier to stop that process to hurry up a bill - because that's what this bill looks like, but it did take some time.

Bill No. 37 wasn't created in a night. There had to be some thought put into it - very little thought, but there was some thought. It's amazing that this bill was brought in to cut off the collective bargaining process at its knees. There's obviously something else going on that maybe we all don't understand, but certainly those people outside that are voicing their concern don't understand. They've been very diligent in trying to get the attention of the government.

When the bill is reviewed, you see in it that there are Community Services employees now. I don't get that, I really don't get that. We're looking at employees who are working in community group homes supporting people with disabilities, and they give it their all. It can be a very unsafe workplace when you have people who have intellectual disabilities, and sometimes, because of their condition, they can lash out. So if you are a person who has given your life to help another person with an intellectual disability and your rights are basically taken away, you have no leverage to negotiate - if you happen to have an employer. With group homes, lots of times their service providers are independent,

and Community Services will pay for their service. You could have an employer who is not supportive in the way they should be to create a safe environment.

Why would you put any human being in that place under those kinds of conditions? The ramifications of that not only affect that employee but the person that they're looking after who has an intellectual disability. This government says it supports a disability strategy to work toward individualized supports of those with disabilities, but you're not going to provide support for the employee who is a big part of the life of that person with a disability and what they do every day? Sometimes there are violent outbursts, but they often make such a huge difference in the life of that person. They become not only a worker's relationship but almost part of the family. Some of these individuals do not have anybody. Some of these people in those group homes do not have family, or they were given up as a child because their family did not see them in a position to be able to bring up a child with such an intellectual disability, so there are many situations.

As a former Minister of Community Services, I travelled around the province. I went to group homes. I spoke to the employers. I spoke to the employees and I spoke to those individuals with intellectual disabilities and know how important that employee is to them. And we are going to take away every bit of right they have in a bill in this legislation? I find that extremely shameful and sad.

As my colleagues have brought up, you see in the bill there's a mention of the Mi'kmaq, our Aboriginal community. As far as I understand - and I haven't had anyone on the government side tell me any differently - it is like all the others who are affected by this Bill No. 37, they have not been consulted. Well there may be a lot of issues coming forward with the Aboriginal community and their rights because there are some different rights for those who are in the Aboriginal community that are at a federal level.

I hope that as the Leader of the Official Opposition often said, these fancy-pants lawyers, I hope they understand that and I wonder if these fancy-pants lawyers have gone to community group homes and have visited and talked to these employees who are working with people with intellectual disabilities. I wonder if these fancy-pants lawyers went to the hospital, went into the intensive care unit and saw the nurses working without having enough support, not being able to take a bathroom break.

Some of the stories, Madam Speaker, that we heard at Law Amendments Committee you would never dream that we live in Nova Scotia, the stories we heard about nurses going into washrooms and breaking down and crying, the stories we heard about the fact that they weren't there when somebody passed away because they had to go to another floor, the stories of coming in in a snowstorm, freezing rain, not only putting their life at risk but if they had died in a car accident, their whole family's life would be changed forever. We expect that in Nova Scotia, Canada? This government that has only been in for less than seven months is endorsing that with Bill No. 37?

In these last few days I know that all of us have had very little sleep but there's no complaining because I know how hard the health care workers and the nurses work. They're not having sleep is on a regular basis because we're ignoring their needs. This is in Nova Scotia, in 2014? Is there something wrong with this picture?

I find it absolutely mind-boggling. I find it absolutely sad that we are doing this to another human being. They're not asking for money. I mean even if the government made the argument that this is about cost factors, Madam Speaker, maybe people could balance that a bit, but all they're asking for is to have more staff.

I know there's cost factors to that but we're looking at a budget presentation today that increased in the area of job funds, increased in the number of employees, especially in the Premier's Office. How, when all this is going on can a budget be presented showing an increase in costs in the Premier's Office for staff? We're looking at the nurses and we're not supporting them. It's mind-boggling.

When you go down through the list that's in Bill No. 37, the people of Nova Scotia have to also realize we're talking about nursing homes; we're talking about senior citizens homes and those workers.

My sister-in-law works at a senior citizens home and she works in the Alzheimer wing. Well, I'd like to tell this House some stories about working in an Alzheimer wing, and the heartbreaking situations. You're dealing with individuals who unfortunately have a disease that takes their mind away, and very often they're violent and their frustration is lashing out at those nurses. They're part of this. My sister-in-law now is a part of this. Her employer can treat her like dirt and she has nothing she can do; she has no leverage; her union has no leverage. Is that the Nova Scotia that we want to live in?

I didn't know that when the Liberals were campaigning that One Nova Scotia meant no, Nova Scotians, we're not supporting you - the only one who's number one is the Liberals because obviously that's who you're caring about because we wouldn't have had a slew of patronage appointments within seven months. We wouldn't have had deputy ministers fired and people fired because they might not be of the same political persuasion, but here we have Bill No. 37 that takes the rights away in Nova Scotia, Canada.

The other part is if you read this bill, you can even make the argument it may include doctors because it's not very clear. Doctors have a lot to say in this province, but I'm wondering if they know that they could very well be part of this because it's not very clear.

We have legislation in this Bill No. 37 that goes right across this province from one end to the other, affecting many people. As I said in this House before, all the words that I've said in the last number of days, it's not going to make one bit of difference to the government. We know their minds are made up, but I do hope that the government knows

what's going to be coming in the future. I'm not even talking about any fear of not being re-elected, I'm talking about the fear in people's lives that this creates. Whether members have the opportunity to get re-elected or not is not my choice; it's the decision of Nova Scotians, but what I'm concerned as a member of this Legislative Assembly is what Bill No. 37 does not do and it doesn't get to the core of the problem. It's not going to create a safe environment tomorrow or the next day or the next day after.

The Premier can say as many times over as he wants that the Minister of Health and Wellness is going to be travelling the province, and as he travels the province he's going to be talking to the nurses and health care workers. Well, I would believe the relationship is not going to be very good at the start, it's going to be quite tense. It's still not going to change. The whole situation of the unsafe conditions because they don't have enough support. They're still going to be working in the ICU where you may only have two nurses - or you may have one nurse to six patients. That's my concern.

I've had the privilege to be voted into this House in order to represent not only my constituents, but all of Nova Scotia, and to me that's what it's all about. Nova Scotians came out in some amazing numbers to the Law Amendments Committee to speak about Bill No. 37 and they came out in a freezing rainstorm. It would have been easy for them to stay at home, but they know the ramifications of Bill No. 37 and what it means. They marched outside in that terrible weather. I don't think one of us would have had the courage to even do that, but they marched around and around this House, trying to make their voices heard by this government.

I remember the now-Premier of our province talking about we have to collaborate, the different Parties. People know he said that. Government members know he said that. The Ivany report encourages us to do that, so the NDP offered several solutions to look at. We brought forward the hoist of the bill, just asking for six months. Why such a hurry to get this bill through when it so negatively affects peoples' lives and, even if you don't believe it affects peoples' lives, why would we rush this through? Does anybody here feel that it has to be that rushed through? Many big decisions in anyone's life, we've all experienced that, we take time, we check out the facts, we look at what happened in history with respect to any major decisions in our lives. Why would we expect any different for our health care workers, our nurses, our community services employees? Why would we expect them to be provided with any different services from this government? I don't understand that.

We give ourselves time when we make major decisions, so what is wrong with taking six months? And then that was rejected - that's great collaboration if I've ever seen collaboration. Secondly, we offered the concept of the industrial commission. Another opportunity for the government to say we've heard the people. I think that's one of the most damaging things that will take place for this government because I remember the election slogans and they certainly do not correlate with Bill No. 37. I remember the word "trust", I remember the word "transparency", and I remember the word "collaboration."

Not one bit of that is in this bill. They were expecting people to endorse a bill like this and we're offering some solutions.

It's a little ironic that since the Liberal Government came in, every day I look at the paper and find out that they are saying we need to do a review, we need to do a review on this, we need to do a review on education. There's nothing wrong with doing reviews because that's where you take the time and you bring people together and you gather information and you take that information and at that time you make the best decision with the information that you're presented with. Why is that not the same with Bill No. 37? Why isn't it? That's a question that I haven't had answered in the last number of days here.

I believe also that how many times over did I hear from the Premier that consultation was so important - consult with Nova Scotians? Well, there were a lot of consultations leading up to the election. Bang, the election takes place, and no consultation. We have a bill that affects thousands of people. I would think that the government would give the time of day and the courtesy to those individuals. No wonder they feel their rights have been taken away from them. If I had somebody come in to me and tell me, this is the way it's going to be from now on - and here we talk about bullying.

I remember all the issues about school bullying, Madam Speaker, and the Liberal Party on this side were ranting and raving about all the stuff that needs to be done about bullying in this province, and yet they're bullies themselves. They have bullied the nurses, they have bullied the health care workers . . .

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please. Unparliamentary language. Would you please withdraw it.

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: I'm sorry, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Chester-St. Margaret's has the floor.

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: I guess I hit a nerve. Sometimes when you hit a nerve it's because it's the reality.

So Madam Speaker, as I said before, it's mind-boggling that this government would want to support legislation that - we've all spoken about it. There have been many words said. We can't say much more, because as everyone knows, we're running out of time, but unfortunately, I think time will be running out on this Liberal Government. I know that whatever the Liberal Government members want to think, they have the right to think that, just the same as the nurses and the health care workers have the right to their thoughts, but the difference is that they're not being heard.

They're not being heard, because if they were being heard, Madam Speaker, they would have been at least given the consideration of time, the consideration to be able to sit down and talk with this government and bring in professionals who can work together in a restorative manner to be able to say, well, we need to work this out, what's a better situation? Don't we all want patient safety?

As I said with Bill No. 37, you're taking rights away, and in fact - as was mentioned several times at Law Amendments Committee, and I don't understand why it's being ignored - we'd rather spend the money on the fancy-pants lawyers. We'd rather follow what other provinces have done, and they've done it wrong. We'd rather bring in legislation that we've got legal precedence in this nation, where a province has lost in terms of bringing in essential services legislation in B.C., and there is a Supreme Court ruling.

I'm speechless, because the fact is that what's going to happen is we're going to have a legal battle on our hands, so rather than look at the future and take the finances to put in to help our nurses, we'd rather give them to fancy-pants lawyers to pay for years and years of court cases - because believe me, that's going to happen. We see one on the home care legislation has already been started.

Somebody had better be doing the math, because I'm telling you, the math's going to equal out. The cost of Bill No. 37 is going to be much, much more than the cost of supporting our nurses, who are giving of their lives every day in an unsafe work environment, yet at the same time we are endorsing a Workplace Safety Strategy which should be totally embarrassing for anybody on the government side to even speak about - how can you speak about something and you are not even taking action on it?

I know they didn't speak on it but there will be some time, I would think, in the next four years that the minister is going to be out at some event, speaking about a workplace safety strategy - it says right on the strategy, 2013 to 2017. How are you going to speak about that? Who is going to believe what the minister is saying? There are many, many questions.

As I've said before, any changes in Bill No. 37 that will be brought forth are not going to happen because we know there's resistance to that, but there's going to be a lot to deal with for this government. I would hope that there would be one thread of a social conscience there to get rid of this bill but obviously when the vote comes and we hear the passing of this bill, people of this province will know that Party has not one thread of social conscience. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Queens-Shelburne.

HON. STERLING BELLIVEAU: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's certainly a pleasure to rise here tonight and speak on Bill No. 37. I know we're in our final

hours of this particular procedure and I certainly feel privileged to have the opportunity to speak here tonight.

First of all, I want to say how proud I am of our Party, of the Party that I belong to, how proud I am of our staff and the work they've done in the last week or two. It really touches you and I certainly want to relay that I'm proud of the conception of our Party, with Tommy Douglas and health care. I know that it's important to me, it's important to many Nova Scotians, and I just want to plant the seeds of how I was attracted to this Party and the importance of that and why I'm standing today and having this opportunity to speak. It's actually an honour, Madam Speaker, to have this privilege to stand here today.

I also want to point out, and we had our experienced Leader speak and lead off our Party, and I'm not going to try to compete with the knowledge and expertise of our Leader and our House Leader and the members who went before me. I feel they are very knowledgeable about this file and I recognize that. I just wanted to note, for your interests, that the two bookends, if you want to call it, from the South Shore of Nova Scotia are going to be the last two speakers. If you want to say that probably they're saving the best for the last, that would be our member for Sydney-Whitney Pier.

I feel we have covered the complete stories of this particular bill and we're going to be followed by the last two speakers right across Nova Scotia, representing a fisherman's son and a coal miner's son. To me, that probably captures what Nova Scotia is about. I just wanted to point that out because I feel that's certainly important and the values that I have and to stand here today and I hope I do a fair/average job, Madam Speaker, of capturing the concerns and the issues of my community and right across Nova Scotia. I'm sure that my colleague, my good friend the member for Sydney-Whitney Pier, will bring that home.

Just a quick reminder, Madam Speaker, that as we stand here today we're talking about collective bargaining, the rights of close to 40,000 Nova Scotians. And I don't stop there, it affects their family members, so that's a large number. This Party will certainly not support Liberal legislation that gives away the collective bargaining rights to, again, close to 40,000 Nova Scotians. I know that has a rippling effect on their family members and their loved ones. We've heard that somewhat in the last several days, especially in Law Amendments Committee.

I have noted this in my speech tonight, there is going to be a bit of a review of what I've heard as a fisherman's son, what I've heard over the last several days and I've noticed one particular point has come clear and that is this Premier, this new Premier, has simply botched these negotiations of the nurses since the very beginning on this file. Just last week we saw through our media events that our new government, the Liberals, held their annual general meeting. It was interesting to note through the media events and statements in there I paid particular note to, is that there was one individual, and I had the privilege of meeting this individual during the Committee on Law Amendments that made an attempt to bring

her concerns of the nurse's issues to the Premier during this annual event. She was politely - I put the word "politely" in there - snubbed. That's my understanding of this event.

To me that is certainly insulting and to me for anybody to do that to a member of the public, this is not the country, not the democracy that I want to belong in. Everybody has a right to be heard. To me that is a simple opportunity and I'm pleased, privileged and proud to know that with the work of our Party and the hard work of my colleagues, the members I just talked to earlier, give that individual and Nova Scotians an opportunity not only to hear their voice but to have it heard during the Committee on Law Amendments. Nova Scotians' voices will be heard and the Premier heard, probably indirectly, what that individual wanted to hear along with close to 200 people in Law Amendments Committee.

Again, as a fisherman's son, I'm not going to compete with the educational level around here and I know that people will say you are a fisherman's son and what do you bring to this House? I remember my first election in 2006 and when I was successful I had a phone call and the phone call was from my former school teacher and he congratulated me and he went into great lengths and I went on to say all the great things about - such an honour and we got into what are you actually going to bring to this House Sterling? I said I'm going to bring common sense. I was so enthused about bringing that and not to get into it but Mr. Atkinson, Sylvester Atkinson - I think a lot of people here know him; he was a very disciplined teacher. He stopped me right in mid-sentence and he said Sterling, there is no common sense, there is rare sense.

He lectured me for about five minutes and I haven't forgotten it, but it was a valuable lesson because it told me a story. The story that some seniors in my community told me it's a valuable lesson and I want to point this towards the back benches because I know you have a conscience. That senior in my community said, Sterling, be careful how you use people on your way up because you're going to meet the same people on the way down. Those people, especially the members of the Opposition can pay attention too and also the backbenchers but you have to step up and you have to look that individual in the mirror each day.

When you get up in the morning, whenever you get up the next time, you're going to have to look at individual in the mirror and say, did I vote my conscience on this particular bill and you will have to face those people. You're going to have to face those people when you went on the doorsteps this Fall, October 8<sup>th</sup>, I know, I am confident that you did not enter the discussion saying I will be silent. I will stand on Bill No. 37 and I know that the conversation never went this way. I will be silent on this bill. I will sit in my seat, I will not open my mouth, I will not raise a question in the Law Amendments Committee. I know that none of you had that discussion on the doorsteps of Nova Scotia. Here is the common sense that's bringing forward and bringing to this particular seat here tonight.



You can say, there are many people here who have higher education and have diplomas, but are they going to bring that common sense component to this table tonight and present that to you? That is your choice to decipher, but as a valuable lesson you will look that person in the mirror very shortly, the next time you get up and you're going to have to face your conscience and make sure that you are voting the right way.

Madam Chairman - Madam Speaker, I can tell you a quick lesson about why I called you chairman and I don't do that deliberately, it's because I spent nine years at the municipal level and we always referred to the head of the table as chairperson, so I apologize in advance and if I slip up in this late hour, I apologize in advance.

What was interesting for me was that during the Law Amendments Committee process which we fought to make sure that part of our process that Nova Scotians would be heard, I took several notes and, again, it's a habit of mine and it's good to review and refresh your memory on what people said during that process. I think it's important that the people outside can be confident that their voices are heard on this floor. As you know, in the last four or five hours, that voice out there hasn't diminished, so they are depending on us, on a fisherman's son from southwestern Nova Scotia and a coal miner's son from Cape Breton to make sure that message will be relayed on this floor and I'm confident it will be.

One of the memories that I have of the Law Amendments Committee was Amanda Thornton. She talked about how disappointed she was in this process and how years of experience, nurse after nurse came in there with 25 or 30 years of experience and I'll get into that here. She was disappointed that people did not and could not have the opportunity to be consulted on such an important topic as Bill No. 37 and to me it was very clear.

Suzanne MacIntyre, she requested, again, I refer to my notes and that's why I led off, she wanted to know that the members of the sitting government would vote their conscience. That was her question, that's what she asked and she wanted to understand the process.

Kim Slack, No. 23, "Shame on you to this new government." Twenty-nine years and she requested the freedom of speech and where was that with her backbenchers and the members of that Law Amendments Committee. It was a direct theme that came the whole way across. I know there were members of the Official Opposition there and I'm going to get into it later on here, I'm going to save that for some of my lighter notes, but the Official Opposition asked a number of questions, and I'm going to get into it later, but I haven't seen them on the floor, other than one or two speakers, I haven't seen the Official Opposition stand up in their place and they're going to have to answer to the members of the public when they're on the doorstep the next time around. I'll get into that later because I know I don't want to get people too sensitive and I want them to pay attention as I speak here, so I'll save that for a little later.

There were a number of concerned citizens. Ian Johnston talked about bringing the consultation process and how disappointed he was about the rights of freedom of speech.

What was interesting when Mr. Johnston was speaking at the Law Amendments Committee, is what irritated me and we had the opportunity to bring these concerns forward and that's why I'm standing here tonight.

One of the things that I was really upset with was the abruptness of the Chairperson of Law Amendments of the Liberal Government side, who abruptly told people, you have five minutes, and if you go the duration of five minutes, there will be no questions from either of the Opposition Parties. Zero, no questions. Mr. Johnston in his presentation was warned, you have 20 seconds - 20 seconds, and to me we're in such an important topic that we're talking about Bill No. 37, and people to travel, and there were people there that were travelling for four or five hours, waited, were on the waiting list.

If you waited four or five hours in the rain and the freezing sleet, and you see all the power shortages that we've had across the province on those given days, that was not a very good situation. To see the expression - and this is one thing that I look at, at an individual during the presentation, is the expression on their face, and when that individual was told, or warned, you have 20 seconds to fill your presentation - totally different person. To me, there was a sight of rejection. People were disappointed in knowing that this is an opportunity to have their voices heard, and the government talked about being open and transparent in their campaign literature, but a 20-second warning.

No. It didn't sell. It didn't sell that evening, and I can tell you that theme was clearly that these rights of individuals across Nova Scotia were trampled on. I'm not a lawyer, and I don't want to be a lawyer, but I understand when people feel offended, and I can assure you I sensed that people felt extremely disappointed in that whole process. Again, that's something that the people on the doorsteps will question you. They'll question the backbenchers, the members of Cabinet, and there is no avoiding that situation.

When you wake up in the mirror you're going to have to deal with that person in the reflection, and deal with those questions: do Nova Scotians have the opportunity to have their voice heard? To me it was obvious that they didn't, and the part that was so painful - the part that was so painful, Mr. Speaker - is that there was not one question from the members of the Liberal Government in Law Amendments. I've observed - I can go in my briefcase since I've been here in 2006, and whether you think this is trivial or not, I have recorded every Question Period. Whether I was in Opposition or whether I was in government, I've recorded every question. I can tell you the time when the Question Period started, who asked the question, what the question was about, and basically a summary of the response.

During this first session and leading up to this Bill No. 37, for the first time since I've been here I've observed sitting backbenchers - and I understand that it's a legal process - actually ask questions of their front bench or Cabinet Ministers. To me, that is - I'm offended by that, because it takes time. I understand that there have been rulings on that, and I accept that, but to me there is a fundamental flaw with that, because when the

backbenchers ask the questions during Question Period, it's been documented, they are taking time from the Official Opposition's time in Question Period. They are robbing them of that opportunity to bring that question forward.

Mr. Speaker, the point that I want to make is that I understand that this is acceptable and official and can be done, but the point that I want my colleagues in this House to understand is that when those same backbenchers had the opportunity to ask the members of the public questions in Law Amendments, they remained silent. When, during these last three or four days, when they had the opportunity to ask questions in this House about an important topic - that's probably the most important topic in this mandate, that's where I feel this is at. They remained silent again, they did not ask for an update from their Cabinet Ministers on this topic. Again, they exploited or manipulated the rules to their advantage.

Now I'm not a lawyer and I don't want to be a lawyer but to me - I'm very satisfied with my background, but it's a fair question to the Parliamentary Rules. I would love for some legal mind to tell me what it's all about because I know in my mind, in my heart, that the present government has manipulated the rules so they've taken time away from the Official Opposition during Question Period and they are exploiting that to their advantage, but when they get the opportunity in Law Amendments Committee to ask the public a question, they remained silent. When they have an important topic on the floor and they have an opportunity to question their ministers, they remain silent. So it is obvious that they have manipulated a parliamentary system to their advantage.

Now I think I've got some of their legal minds' attention and maybe you are Googling and trying to find some answers but I'm going to continue and I hope I have a legal response to that because I know in my heart that you cannot manipulate Nova Scotians. They understand what's going on in this House and they will correct that in the near future. It may take four years but I assure you that will be corrected.

Mr. Speaker, there were a number of points brought up in Law Amendments Committee and to me there were individuals like Nicole Murphy. She worked 76 hours and I tell you, I feel I have been around the block. I know I've got the colour of hair to prove that. I felt I knew somewhat about life in Nova Scotia and what exists. I think I was actually startled was a good word to describe some of these working conditions by some of these nurses. I was simply startled by what I heard in there about their concerns about medication errors and making sure they got the right amount to the staff. I was concerned at what I was hearing and how they pointed out that their staffing issues was certainly a crisis. I heard that word, I asked for them to repeat it. For that individual knowing that they were working 76 hours a week was certainly a concern and they brought that forward.

Again, the members who were sitting there on the committee, especially from the Liberal side, I thought should have raised some questions about that and had the opportunity would raise some questions here on the floor. No, it's not going to happen.

Again, Suzanne MacNeil, Cape Breton Labour Council, was concerned about what I mentioned earlier, about the silence. It was so telling that she was visibly upset about what she saw in that Law Amendments Committee. These are some of the lessons that the public is going to purge from these four or five days that we are dealing with particular bill. Some of these points are going to come out and the media is going to pick them and they're going to put them out there.

Again, my focus tonight is going to be on the conscience of our backbenchers and an opportunity to have a second opportunity to reflect on your vote in the very near - perhaps hours or minutes away from doing that. That is what this is about, that opportunity to reflect on your conscience and on making the right decisions. The people who came to Law Amendments Committee - there were close to 200 who were actually registered and I think we saw somewhere around 175. They were, to me, extremely upset that they did not see this opportunity for people to vote their conscience.

There was a gentleman, number 39, Tony Bremner - I hope I'm pronouncing that correct - he was a worker with the Workers' Compensation Board. Excuse me, Mr. Speaker, it's getting a little late and my notes are not that clear, but he actually accused the government of a lie, misrepresenting what he felt was their position on this particular bill. It's not the campaign literature that he suggested he received during the October campaign. He went into great lengths about this particular Party misrepresenting the facts, it's not what he believed in and he actually had a sign on his lawn for the government that won, and I acknowledge that.

I wanted to acknowledge that he supported you during that October election but that's not the feeling that he has today and I'm trying to bring this, through you, Mr. Speaker, to the sitting government, they have an opportunity here in the next few hours to make a correction, to go in a different direction because what Mr. Bremner was talking about is that he was not satisfied with what he thought he got on October the 8<sup>th</sup> in that general election. So he was a very dissatisfied voter, a dissatisfied Nova Scotian, and he's simply going in a different direction and I want to have the opportunity to bring that to you in order to correct it.

It's your choice to have that opportunity to listen to Nova Scotians and if you had the courage to ask them the questions they would put that right back to you. That's our job here tonight, to make sure we bring those scenarios to you, and it was very clear that this individual was not satisfied with the way this new government is going.

I said earlier, Mr. Speaker, that the backbenchers want to realize and be careful how they treat the people on their way up, and I acknowledge that you are in government and you are on your way up and I wish you success in your political career, but you also have to pay attention to what that gentlemen told me in my community, pay attention because you're going to meet the same people on your way down. Like that individual said, I want

you to reflect. You have an opportunity to reflect on that because you just may meet that same individual very quickly on your way down.

Mr. Speaker, I want to just emphasize again that the note that I had here was that when your members of the Liberal Party put their name on their ballot for the general election on October 8<sup>th</sup> I can assure you that they were committed that they would not be silent on any topic. I'm assured that that discussion never came up on the doorstep or any debate, I'd be surprised if it did and I'd be surprised at the answer if you said I'm going to remain silent on certain topics that I don't feel confident talking about. No. No, that's not what the public elected.

It's interesting that the Liberals MLAs, I believe, are confused because they refused to comment or provide an answer when questioned. I've asked that several times here about asking questions in this House and they failed to respond during Question Period. This is usually for a legal procedure when they're approached to certainly avoid discrimination or incrimination. When you don't want to talk on a topic you just close your mouth and hopefully it will go away. That's not what the people of Nova Scotia asked.

It's interesting and I really truly believe in trying to find an answer or solution to some of these problems and I'll be the first one to offer an olive branch to my people here, the Official Opposition, to any members here. I think I would be in the top three or four in this particular House on any given time to offer an olive branch and we did. That's why I opened, in my remarks, saying we would have the opportunity to find a solution to this. Our Leader sent a letter and we asked for a commercial inquiry into this issue and the Premier rejected that approach. That's a simple solution. Let's find an answer. Let's have individual, independent commercial inquiry to find a solution to this and we can all take a step back, take a sigh of relief and address this issue and some back with all Parties set down and try to find a solution for this.

I noticed that the noise is not dying down. It's not going to go away. To me, that's a fair request and when you go back to the barbecue circuits and the doorsteps you're going to have to address that response. This is simply an olive branch saying here is an option that our Party wants you to endorse and we can probably put this to rest and let some independent body find a solution to this and get people a breath and just back away from it. That was only one of the offers we suggested as a Party. We also offered amendments, called a hoist motion, to set aside this whole particular bill for six months. Again, this was rejected.

I would hazard a guess that I would ask anybody here, anybody surrounding who is outside this Legislature tonight, anyone across this beautiful Province of Nova Scotia from the bookends of Nova Scotia - from the Cape Breton coal miner's son to the fisherman's son. I asked them a fair question: would you take six months and just simply set this case aside and let the government and the stakeholders sit down and resolve this? That's a fair option. That is something that I think we could all respect and probably put forward.

Again, it was rejected. That's two opportunities for people to work together and to find a solution to such a difficult issue. I mean, I read the literature, the campaign literature that comes forward and some of the words that echo from this new government are the words open and transparent. To me those two opportunities capture what we're trying to accomplish - to be open and transparent. Why not take that opportunity and set that aside? It is not too late. It is not too late for people on that side of the House to reconsider and to put Nova Scotians first, put nurses first and to make the right correction and get this back on the right course.

You're not going to feel any less of a parliamentarian. You're not going to feel any less of being an MLA. You're not going to feel any less about representing your constituencies and I hope that all Nova Scotians are listening to this point because I think this is a fair opportunity forward. Two options - choose either one. We can find a solution and we can back away from the brink.

There are a lot of times, there are a lot of cases, you can go through history where people have faced and gone to brink of the edge of a crisis and it takes quite a big person to back away. There's the opportunity we have tonight. We have an opportunity to back away and to put people first. That's what they elected you for; they elected you to bring their concerns forward. We've heard that a number of times here tonight - bringing their concerns forward and making the right decisions for Nova Scotians. So there's an opportunity to reflect on the choices you have. To me, it's a great privilege.

Again, we have a small province, less than a million people, but to know that we have 51 sitting MLAs, to me that's simply an honour that I don't think we understand and a lot of us take it for granted. I don't, I feel how fortunate I am to be here with my background and I'm proud of it. I'm proud of the culture I came from because we started work at a very early age; our families were depending on us but they also are depending on us when I go to the grocery store this weekend or to the church service, I know I can step up and people can thank you for bringing my concerns to the floor of the Assembly. I don't have to have no Harvard degree to bring their concerns to this floor. It can be in a simplistic tone, it can be two or three sentences but I know that health care is important to my community.

The very first speech was from this row back here, was on health care. I remember it very clearly, it was in 2006 and I'll quickly tell you but it's interesting. What I'm trying to make important, Mr. Speaker, is that health care is important to me.

I was going to tell you quickly that my mother passed and one of her dying wishes was for Bayside to be built in Barrington. What I was saying earlier - my very first speech was on Bayside Home. I stood there in the back row, as a rookie, within 10 days of the 2006 election, I was on my feet on the floor, giving a speech for the very first time, usually in the public setting. That's a bit of a different atmosphere than coming from the deck of a Cape Sable Island boat that fishes offshore, it was a very different feeling.

I remember going in there very well prepared, and I remember our caucus saying, Sterling, you're up first. Well, I didn't know it at the time but I can see it now, Mr. Speaker, let's get the rookies up first and get them some experience before they realize what they are actually doing. They are on the floor, they got the experience. I understand that now.

I went there and I stood on health care, which was very important to me, about a home that hadn't been completed and had been promised by a number of Premiers in our constituency for 30-odd years. I remember bringing in a document that was very thick, it was the blueprint of a 30-year-old building that was going to be built in Barrington Passage but never completed.

I stood up, proud, and said I want to talk about Bayside. I held the blueprint up to be tabled. I calmly sat down and I was lectured by the Speaker at the time. Well, I think he was in the House now but I won't go there, I was given a 10-minute lecture about not using a prop in the House of Assembly. I remember where the present PC Leader is sitting now, my Leader at the time sat there and I was looking at him. I knew he was waiting for me to respond after the lecture was over and I stood up and I knew that our Leader was waiting for me to respond to that because basically I was kind of painted into somewhat of a sticky wicket, as the Europeans may say. I stood up and I simply said, I will learn the rules as quickly as possible and I apologize if I have failed to meet the Rules of the House and I won't do that again and I will not use a prop. I remember that lesson very well.

What I went on to say and I realized that our Leader was paying attention to me, I said I'll learn the rules but I will not stop talking about health care or Bayside home until it's completed. I can assure you that that building is completed now, and that's just the background of how important health care is to myself and to my community. I'm very satisfied that is not a cardboard cut-out or some plywood sign - and I'm taking it easy on the Official Opposition now, because that was promised a number of times by both Parties, and that's completed. We completed that, and that's there now, so I would say that health care strikes a chord with me. I know the importance of it.

Mr. Speaker, there was an interesting point yesterday that my colleague for Sydney-Whitney Pier raised on this floor regarding Bill No. 37. To me there was a lack of consultation, not only for Nova Scotians but also for the Mi'kmaq community. Again, I can tell you that in 1999, I was involved in the Marshall decision. I understand the importance of consultation with the Mi'kmaq community.

I think I can say proudly on the floor of this Assembly that I have an attachment and an understanding and appreciation of the Mi'kmaq community. I understand when they sat down and consulted with individuals including, at that time, it was the fishing industry. I distinctly remember that there were the Mi'kmaq chiefs and the ceremony of passing an eagle feather around, and the importance - and I want to repeat the valuable lessons that I have learned in my life, the valuable lessons of the Mi'kmaq community. When you held that feather in your hands, the floor was yours. There was no challenging or heckling. The

floor was yours, and the importance in the Mi'kmaq community of being engaged and being involved and being consulted on issues that are important to you - it is a lesson I have learned, and I appreciated it a number of times. Looking back over that, it's a great lesson. Now I can bring that experience to this floor.

My friend for Sydney-Whitney Pier pointed out that with Bill No. 37 there was no consultation with the Mi'kmaq community. I'm no legal lawyer, but I understand that they have certain rights, and those rights have been trampled on. I'm sure you're going to hear from the Mi'kmaq community about the lack of consultation on Bill No. 37.

This is an interesting note I have, Mr. Speaker. You may want to take a breath on this one, but there's something interesting I know that all Parties may pay attention to this. It's called a Whip vote. This is the one - my understanding again is the parliamentary system, and again, I request that it should be a vote of your conscience. A Whip vote, you're not allowed to vote your conscience. It's simply a legalized bullying system. Get the legal lawyers out and let's get the wording on that one. To me, that is a form of bullying. We talk about bullying in our schoolyards, but to me, this is a system that we have endorsed as political Parties. I have an opportunity to bring my feelings to this floor and this is simply what I'm doing.

I can tell you that I'm one of the few people who voted with my conscience in this House - one of the few. (Interruption) I am the Whip, that's correct. (Laughter) I'm bringing an important lesson. What I've said is that the Law Amendments Committee, for the first time in history, came to Shelburne County because people were not consulted or heard. What I'm telling you is that those people had an opportunity to be heard, and the Law Amendments Committee went to Shelburne County.

What I'm going to finish on is that the Law Amendments Committee was just here a few days ago, and our backbenchers participated in that and did not ask one question. Now, I know that people will reflect on saying okay what is he talking about - the Whip to me is simply a form of bullying, and when you cannot put your conscience in first place and ask the one question: did I have an opportunity to bring the concerns of my citizens to this floor and was that trampled on in Bill No. 37, and to me that is a very interesting question and I think our parliamentary review will look at that and they'll be interested to reflect on just how that whole system works because I can assure you what I heard over here in Law Amendments Committee, and what I heard in Shelburne people's rights were trampled on and I can stand here proudly and say I voted my conscience.

There are some lessons there and you can take the lessons wherever you want. I'm proud and I'll defend them anytime but I think it takes a strong individual to bring the concerns of the members of the public to this floor and do the right thing. So we'll see how this all unfolds in our political careers, and again you're not going to walk away from this in the barbeque circuit or when you're at the social in the next three or four months or whatever out in the community, people are going to ask you did you participate in this



debate, were you on the floor, did you bring our issues there as constituents, did you respond or did you participate in Law Amendments Committee for me, did you ask questions in Question Period to the members opposite, to the ministers and when you say no to all the above how dare you, how dare you even think about going and trying to reoffer and suggest that I'm going to come to this House and represent you and I'm going to remain silent.

I haven't seen it in all of my life on any campaign literature that I have stumbled across and if there is one out there please give it to me because I'd love to see the messaging on that. I'd love to see it because I know that it's going to be a hard sell. It's going to be a hard sell in any of your campaign slogans and I can assure you that every political Party have their spin doctors and I believe you anything that turns people off as quickly as you let the spin doctors wordsmith that and you gobbledegook, that's a word from the South Shore, gobbledegook, and you put that out there and try to sell that to the individual and they are going to push that back quickly. People will understand that you're trying to pull the wool over their eyes and you're not going to get away from it. So there are some important lessons here.

I'm just looking where the time is, Mr. Speaker, could you give me an update on how much time I have left.

MR. SPEAKER: About 10 minutes.

MR. BELLIVEAU: About 10 minutes oh I've got to get some of the important stuff.

MR. SPEAKER: You have 13 minutes, take 10.

MR. BELLIVEAU: Well I'm just getting into the good parts and we don't want to leave any of this out. Again, I want to point out that I take notes, it is certainly a habit of mine whether it's a - I think it's important. But I timed the Liberal Minister tonight on this important topic and I know that I can go back in my notes and time her, and it was to the minute of this important topic, her opening speech tonight was little over two minutes. A little over two minutes on this important bill. The PC Leader, I actually noted you were something like 20 minutes, and I agreed with a lot of what you said.

AN HON. MEMBER: It's quality.

MR. BELLIVEAU: There was quality, you can call it quality but I call it 20 minutes. What was said in the summary of the PC Leader in his 20 minutes the summary was that his Party took no steps to slow down this bill, no steps. None whatsoever. They had an opportunity that they waive the right on Opposition Day and he was very clear that by waiving his right on Opposition Day, this is not to be a sign of support.

I just think there's to me that they could do much more. The Official Opposition, I timed them, I timed the number of times they got up and spoke, which was only several, to me I questioned whether they had brought forcefully the voices and concerns of the people across Nova Scotia who voted for them, have they forcefully brought their concerns to this floor?

I have a concern with that because I think they could have done better in more than 20 minutes. No offence to the Leader, but overall, to the Party as a whole, they could have put more time on this particular topic overall.

I think I am a fair person and I want to recognize the PC Finance Critic today. The Finance Critic today in his remarks on the budget, I think he had one of the better lines (Interruption) No, it was not the title. He said - to me I thought this was - and I give him full marks on this, he said if the present new government would have taken the time, instead of hiring the 500 bureaucrats for doing all the reviews, if they would have spent and hired 500 new nurses, we wouldn't have the problem and the noise that we're hearing today. I really acknowledge that and I think that was a pivotal moment.

I'm making a sandwich, Mr. Speaker, because I want to make sure that we have a little bit of good and we have a little bit of - well, we're making a sandwich, but to me simply the Official Opposition gave a token of support on this bill. I think this is important; I think this is very valuable. I took my time and criticized the lack of response by the backbenchers and their participation in Question Period. I think it's important, but I also want to take the time here now and say that the Official Opposition to me it was a token gesture of support, the lack of the debate on this floor, the Hansard, you can go and review Hansard and don't take my word for it, you can compare our remarks.

I've done this deliberately, to bring this forward because this Official Opposition has an opportunity to correct that. I'm going to give them the opportunity to correct it because they're going to have an opportunity to say well that member for Queens-Shelburne may be right and we can correct this and we can get up on our feet and make sure that we have some time to spend on this bill.

So the people can judge, they can go out and do the evaluation, do the math themselves, but to me it's a fair choice. To me this is simply - I compared it to the token - this is simply a token of support and I compare it with your federal cousins, their token of support, as they do towards our veterans. To me here's an opportunity to stand on your feet and to correct that. I'll leave it to the wisdom of the Official Opposition and we'll move on, Mr. Speaker.

I just want to finish in the next few minutes, Mr. Speaker, on a couple of personal stories that have certainly touched me. I know the importance of health care and what people in our community rely on that service. I'm not going to say names here, but when I first took this job on I actually knew a fisherman, a friend in my community, he was a

senior man and he had a challenged child. He was actually dying. I remember him calling me up, and we had been friends all of our lives and he taught me all about the fishing grounds and I cherished the discussion that we had. I was great friends with him, he understood where my position was in the community and I got a quick sense of why I was being called to his home that evening.

Naturally, his concern was the well-being of his family, and certainly of his child. He understood where he was in life, and he was dealing with that. He asked me one question: he asked me to make sure that when he's gone I will look after his son, who is in a group home now. I understood the importance of that commitment that night.

To me, when I go visit the Law Amendments Committee, and I talk to nurses, and I've been involved in group homes and Bayside Home in my community, I know how important that is to that individual in my community who is passed now. That burden is not only on me but also members of our community, and they want to make sure that their loved ones are looked after. I can assure you that by being a member of the Bayside Home, I know the love and compassion that members of our community have for those individuals, and it's certainly something that I cherish.

When I listen to the people at the Law Amendments Committee, I get it. I get it that they want to know that you're making the right decisions and that you respect health care givers and that you will listen to them. I can tell you I have listened to the people at the Law Amendments Committee. I have listened to the nurses. I have debated. I have stood here and represented the residents of Queens and Shelburne, and I'm proud of this Party. As I mentioned earlier, one of the connections I have is to Tommy Douglas and how important health care is to Canadians.

Again, I point out that I'm no world traveller, but I have been fortunate enough to have travelled to a number of locations throughout the world. When I have that little maple leaf there, people will literally come up and shake your hand and understand and appreciate and actually are envious of the system that we have. We are very proud of our Medicare system in our home that we call Canada, and we know that we're going to do the right thing when it comes to protecting our seniors.

To me, that's something that I cherish, and I'm going to assure the people - as I did the residents of the story I told about the guy who was mentally challenged and he wanted to make sure his life was protected, in knowing that he's not going to be there to look after that individual. It's in the hands of people that's out of his control. It's in the hands of people like us, elected officials. It's in your hands - it's your chance now to make sure that those people are protected and looked after. To me, that is a great privilege. It's certainly something that I cherish.

I know that I look down at some of the days of the last three or four days, and I looked across our particular caucus and I know that it has been long hours. I know that we

have staff who are dedicated to make sure that we do the right thing, that we are going to do the right thing. I know that the history and the reason why I was put here, and to bring this message to you because I know the history, the importance of the job that I have. I know when I walk into the grocery store or go to the church socials, whether it's talking about the hospital in Shelburne, Roseway Hospital, or the hospital in Liverpool, when I go to the Lions Club and they ask about the staffing issues in the Liverpool Hospital or the Shelburne, is that going to be staying open? People are concerned, especially the seniors, about long-term care, and they want to be assured that their concerns are brought forward.

I am proud to stand here today as a fisherman's son, and to know that my colleague in a very few minutes is going to stand up, and he is a coal miner's son. To me, whether that was arranged or not, that is interesting to know, that we've got one end of the province to the other and we're going to be on the same page, because we care about our community, we care about people's lives, we care about Medicare, and we care about doing the right things. I can assure you, I can assure you of all the topics, of all the things that I have to deal with that I can wake up in the morning and I can look directly in the face of that person in the mirror and say that I did the right thing for Nova Scotians. I did the right thing for the nurses in Nova Scotia and I, as an individual from Queens-Shelburne, have not remained silent, thank you very much.

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

MR. GORDIE GOSSE: Thank you Mr. Speaker, and thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak. The first thing before I get to speak on Bill No. 37, the Essential Health and Community Services Act, I'd like to correct the honourable member for Queens-Shelburne, I'm the son of a steel worker. I'm a third generation steel worker not the son of a coal miner. The son of the coal miner would be my colleague, the member for Cape Breton Centre. Thank you very much, it's almost close to the same industry.

Let's get on to the important thing before us here tonight - Bill No. 37, the Essential Health and Community Services Act. It's a very broad act covering very many people, 32,000 people. When you look at the bill itself it encompasses palliative care, nursing services, Mi'kmaq family and children services, group home employees. If this bill goes forward, which it naturally is going to do tonight and become law tomorrow morning, we'll have a great scope when it does and what this entails and what it covers, and what it looks after.

What we heard in Law Amendments Committee was we heard from the Nova Scotia Government Employee's Union. We heard from President Joan Jessome. We heard from the Nova Scotia Nurses' Union. We heard from the Canadian Union of Public Employees, Mr. Wayne Thomas. We also heard from Kyle Buott, the president of the Halifax/Dartmouth District Labour Council. We heard from Tony Tracy, Atlantic regional representative with the Canadian Labour Congress. We heard from Suzanne MacNeil,

President of Cape Breton District Labour Council - thanks, Suzanne, for coming such a long way for many days from Cape Breton.

It was surprizing, I heard from a lot of people who were at Law Amendments Committee that some were not nurses; some were college students, Mr. Speaker. They were there to voice their concerns around Bill No. 37 and surprisingly enough it was the past president of the Nova Scotia Teachers Union, Alexis Allen, who was there. She made some comments about this bill and gave her personal view on what she thought about this bill. Also the new president of the Nova Scotia Teachers Union, Shelley Morris, gave her opinion on what she thought about the bill.

You had about six or seven of the largest unions in Nova Scotia before the Law Amendments Committee talking about what they feel about this bill and the theme around what they all talked about - and the nurses, we had nurses who were there for six months, we had nurses who were there for 35 years. One of the presentations that I listened to and I thought was an excellent presentation - and there were lots of excellent presentations - was a gentleman by the name of Robert Chisholm. He was 22 years a nurse, and he had such a good view of the understanding of workplace safety, the health and the environment. I enjoyed listening to his comments.

There was Janet Nicholson who was an advocate for patients. She was there and I think that the nurses are out there tonight and they've been out there for the last day or so and they're not out there for monetary reasons; they're out there for patient safety. I think that's what we have to realize here that this is not about monetary issues. This is about patient safety. I think they did compromise to the Capital District Health Authority and tell them that yes we will look after the cancer care patients; yes we look after the veterans. They looked after - I think today I heard somewhere around 40 per cent of the Capital District Health Authority the employees were there today. They'll look after our most vulnerable. I think that they made that agreement.

There were people there like - when I thought about it besides there was another lady, one of the most compelling stories that I heard there when I was at Law Amendments Committee was from a Diane Wilson, no relation to the honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid. Her story was about the burn unit; it was a very emotional story about working in that unit. The ladies who presented before her, both were in the burn unit, talking about helping patients who were on morphine, and changing their band-aids and removing fingernails and listening to their cries of agony and pain. The compassion that was shown by these nurses, for those of us who were in Law Amendments Committee and listened - and we actually listened and paid attention to what they were saying.

Aaron Beale was there. He was a student union representative. He thought that he would probably have a little bit more to say after the budget today around the graduate retention tax being taken away, but he was there talking about this Bill No. 37, essential services legislation. I don't think he was there to support it.

I think there were other locals there. Local 19, Raymond Theriault talked about what he thought about it. There were people there who were - there was a guy there who was a photographer. I remember that his name was Trevor. He talked about the bill. He didn't work in the health care field, but he was a photographer. He showed up there. He didn't show up to support that bill either.

We had so many. I think there were 213 on the list, and we had well over 150-something participate. The Law Amendments Committee is probably in the New Westminster system here in Nova Scotia, and is the only province where the public can come in and speak on a bill in the Legislature. Can you imagine where you can call up, get your name on the list, and say, look, I want to get into Law Amendments Committee and speak about Bill No. 37. I've been here, and I sit on the Law Amendments Committee, but also know how important it is for an everyday citizen to say, I can go in there and voice my opinion. That's democracy. That is democracy, when an everyday citizen can walk into the Legislature and say, look, Mr. Gosse and your colleagues or whoever, I don't agree with what you're doing. I don't agree. I've heard that in government. I've heard that all along. But you know, that's what democracy is all about, where we allow the citizens to come in and debate Bill No. 37.

Mr. Speaker, through you I'm going to read a small portion of an article. This was given in the Law Amendments Committee by a Dr. Lois Berry, an RN and a Ph.D., and Paul Curry, a Ph.D(c). What it talks about in here is workload - I'll table this. I'm not going to read the whole document; there's over 100-something pages. What I will do is I will just look at - well, I can read it, I still have lots of energy left. The back shift on the steel plant over the years, you know.

I'm just going to say Chapter 5 and that the workload is the top issue for Canadian nurses today. "Canadian nurses tell us that excessive workload not only occurs in times of periodic surge capacity. It is now viewed by many frontline nurses as the norm. For example, the Newfoundland and Labrador Nurses' Union, in partnership with the Association of Registered Nurses of Newfoundland and Labrador, have felt compelled to develop a strategy document entitled *Excessive Hours of Work: Professional and Union Considerations*."

When I read this document and I read Law Amendments Committee, one term that I heard - I don't know if anybody has heard that in here. It's called "hallway medicine" are we familiar? I see the Minister of Health and Wellness is shaking his head, and realized what hallway medicine was. That was an eye-opening thing to listen to the nurses talking about when they come into the hospital. Patients go through a triage unit and then the hospital is so busy that they are on gurneys in the hallway. Could you imagine?

I just recently had a trip to the Cape Breton Regional Hospital, probably two Wednesdays ago, and I've never seen such competent people in such an area, trying to do

the best they can to make people feel better. I think a nurse goes into the field to make people feel better.

Two weeks ago last Wednesday, I was receiving antibiotics and they were that busy in the regional hospital that they had no poles left. That's how busy the hospital was. They never had an IV pole left to hang the IV on, so they had to tape it to the wall and stick it in my arm. Well, I'll tell you, it ran in pretty quick that way. It was good to get out of there in a hurry, but to realize that's where I first heard the term "hallway medicine," as I was leaving and going outside and seeing the gurneys all through the hallway, and nurses running and waiting on these people and people in pain and kidney stones and there were all kinds of - you name it. There was some kind of gastric infection going on so I was glad to get out of there that night. I'll tell you after I got out of there I went home and told my wife how appreciative I was of the health care system in there. I had to go back to ambulatory care the next day and the nurses were there, and I thanked them because it seemed like nursing overload. Why does it happen?

Nursing overload arises from a variety of sources according to this article; overcapacity of patients in relation to available bed space is a common cause. I just talked about hallway medicine. Inadequate staff availability is commonly reported because of the inadequate baseline staffing or failure to replace staff that are away ill or on vacation. We heard that on numerous occasions in the Committee on Law Amendments: if someone was off sick that they weren't replaced. One nurse, I think it was in the mental health ward, there were only three nurses that night from 11:00 p.m. until 7:00 a.m., and if there was an incident on the second floor that nurse would have to leave and go down from the third floor to the second floor, which left no nurses available for the third floor, and that's the rehab centre.

Talking about that, that was pretty interesting and eye-opening. If somebody reported off there may only be two nurses in the rehab centre for the whole shift on the night shift. Failure to replace staff may be due to the lack of available replacement or it may be cost-cutting measures. When I think about that, I think making up shortfall and staffing through the use of overtime is common. Canadian public sector nurses worked over 20 million hours of overtime in 2010 - an amazing stat. Requiring nurses to work beyond their scheduled hours has a significant impact on their quality of life and can result in fatigue, nurses giving unsafe care.

That's well documented in this issue. We had nurses that were in the Committee on Law Amendments that said, sometimes you're so tired that you may not be able to remember if you gave somebody something or you did this and whether it's minor. One of the themes in there, too, was that the nurses were so overworked on that ward that at the end of the shift they would have to report that but they were so busy sitting down doing their charting at the end of it. The only time they could do that was after working a 12-hour shift. Hearing from them working two 12-hour days and then switching over to two 12-hour nights, and again, it goes back to inadequate staffing. It also results in a lack of

availability of the right kind of staff, including lack of appropriate designation of nursing staff - RN, LPN - required to care for the complexity of patients.

Required advanced training critical care nursing, for example, or appropriate supply of support staff whose absence requires nurses, that was another theme over there. If there was a clerk that was off on the ward, if there was somebody that was off, the cleaning staff on that ward, sometimes the nurse had to not just do her duties but do duties of other staff. Those are some of the things that we have to look at. That was brought up in the Committee on Law Amendments, saying sometimes with my nursing obligations I had to be able to become a cleaner. I had to be able to sterilize something or do something that was not part of their job description as a nurse. They were multi-tasking and that does wear people out, multi-tasking in the workplace. I guess such things as making beds, passing trays and searching for supplies - that was brought up in the Law Amendments Committee, saying these are some of the things that are happening.

I'm just trying to point out that - and what do Canadian nurses say about the workload? In surveys of nursing union members in 2011-12, provincial unions heard a consistent message regarding unmanageable, unsafe workloads. While in the past wages and pensions were typically the top concerns, again I said earlier this is not about wages, this is not monetary, this is not about pensions - this is about patient safety. They're outside there tonight, as far as I'm concerned, for patient safety and patient safety only.

As an example, of the 5,600 members of the British Columbia Nurses' Union surveyed, 81 per cent indicated that workloads were a problem; 39 per cent indicated it was a major problem. So will Bill No. 37 address this issue? I think not. (Interruption) I'm going to tell my colleague, the member for Sackville-Cobequid that I'm going to read the Nova Scotia stats eventually when I get there and let him know that those stats are somewhat similar. I can read the stats from Ontario, British Columbia, and Newfoundland and Labrador. But I will now give you your wish and read the Nova Scotian stats.

Of the 600 members of the Nova Scotia Nurses' Union surveyed, 43 per cent claimed their workplace usually or always worked below core staffing. That's almost 50 per cent, 43 per cent that work below their core staffing. Can you imagine going to work on any job and working below your core staffing? If you were a mechanic and you're changing tires and there are three guys off in the bay and you have 50 customers waiting for snow tires in November when the first snowstorm is going, you can understand how that aspect of automotive industry would be about always working below core staffing.

Another 36 per cent indicated that there was sometimes work below core staffing and when asked why, 36 per cent - this is interesting - claimed the employer did not fill vacancies. Imagine, they did not fill vacancies. While 64 per cent claimed the employer was unable to fill vacancies, so there wasn't a lift in the call-in staff to call the nurses in because they didn't have enough on the staff to do that. So you imagine where you have 36 per cent and they could not fill the vacancies because there weren't enough. Fifty-two per



cent believe that core staffing was inadequate at their workplace. If we look at that the surveys prove to be a snapshot. That's just a snapshot of current reviews with respect to workloads, data that was not readily available from other sources; the message from this data is constantly published research findings.

This is interesting - nurses are working short and increasingly unable to meet the intensifying needs of their patients. That's a large station. When a nurse signs up at the Registry of Nurses and they become a nurse it's almost like they take an oath. They want to be able to meet the needs of their patients when they go to work at night. Will Bill No. 37 enable them to meet the needs of their patients? I think not, I really think not.

What we have to do is take small steps forward with new nurses graduating and get nurses into the system so that we can retain them here and keep them in our health care system, whether it's Capital Health, whether it's the Cape Breton District Health Authority. They are doing their work and the work of others who are no longer in the system - that's a nice statement.

They are working paid and unpaid overtime in increasing amounts. They often do not plan to take holidays - imagine. We sit here as MLAs, 51 of us and we plan our holidays; you plan your days off with your family. Here we have in our possession saying they often do not take holidays. Do you know why? Knowing that their colleagues and their patients would likely be left without nursing support if they do so, isn't that a caring statement by nurses and their members to say, I can't take my vacation because my colleague will be messed up or my colleague wanted to take vacation? We heard about that in there.

We had a lady in the Law Amendments Committee who said she had one week vacation, although she was entitled to four she had one week vacation, but she couldn't take it because she had nobody to fill in for her. Those are things that have to be fixed within the system. We all like to take vacation. We all like to be with our family, we as MLAs and other professions, they get their vacation, July and August.

There was a nurse who was at the Law Amendments Committee and I forget her name. It was interesting because she said it was her first year into the profession and April 1<sup>st</sup> was her first full year, but because she was junior in seniority she had to take her vacation right away on April 1<sup>st</sup> because the year was up and that was the only time available to her. She was a very dedicated young nurse from New Brunswick, who moved here to Nova Scotia and said, she worked up in northern New Brunswick; I think it was Campbellton on the other side of Bathurst, up through Highway No. 11, that's where she came from to come to this province.

I'll read again a little piece: as staffing patterns changed, they are unclear of their roles in relation to other providers in the system. As they come closer to retirement - this is

interesting - the physical, mental, and emotional demands of the stretched workplace play a significant role in their decisions regarding leaving the workplace and the profession.

I'd like to repeat that because I heard that over there in Law Amendments Committee. That's exactly what this study has said here, the study that was done in nursing workload and patient care. If you look at Bill No. 37, Essential Health and Community Services Act, this piece of paper is actually pretty well right on, talking about the emotional demands of the stretched workplace play a significant role in their decision regarding leaving the workplace and profession.

There was a nurse who was over there in Law Amendments Committee who said she was in the system for close to 30 years. She had two years left and I don't know if she had two children who were in their early 20s, if I remember correctly, and she wanted to buy back two years of her pension so that she would be able to retire early because this is exactly what was going on; the stressed workplace was playing a significant role in her decision regarding leaving the workplace.

We heard that from other nurses because they can make a choice. I mean the nurses want to live in this province of ours. I mean without a good-paying job - I mean we've heard enough about the economy of Nova Scotia. We all know how beautiful it is but when you don't have any money in the bank, no matter the Fall colours and the Keltic colours and the Cabot Trail, you can't live here. You can't live on the South Shore; you can't live in Clark's Harbour unless you have a decent-paying job to stay here.

Will Bill No. 37 help keep young nurses in the Province of Nova Scotia? I don't think so. After what I heard in Law Amendments Committee, I really don't think so. When you're working 14, 16 hours a day, do a 12-hour shift and maybe do an hour of charting afterwards and by the time you drive home, if you live an hour away and then you're back again, you don't even get home. One nurse said you have maybe six hours because I do a 12-hour shift; it takes me an hour to drive home after I do my charting, so that's like 14 hours. By the time I get home and unwind, I get six hours' sleep and I'm back on the job again. That's what they are trying to say to us here; that's what the NSGEU and the nurses are trying to say to us here about this Bill No. 37, the Essential Health and Community Services Act.

That bill is going to come into effect in a few hours but is that going to help change what is happening in the health care system to deal with patient safety? I don't think this bill is going to have anything to do with patient safety.

I know the minister, and I congratulate the minister for travelling all over the province and to see every little bit of health care in this province, that takes a lot of time. In the first seven months I don't imagine you can cover the whole province and deal with all the issues in health care, but I give him credit for doing that.

I think we all had a good lesson this week in Law Amendments Committee, the floor of the Legislature, as we listened to everybody speak here about the concerns of the safety of the patients, the workloads being too much for the nurses. I said last night and I repeated myself last night and I said to myself, you know the nurses are the people who look after the people who we love. Who takes care of your loved one when they are sick? The nurses, the doctors - but the doctors ordered the nurses: give Gordie an antibiotic - my son, Gordie I guess, not myself.

If you think about that, they are actually the ones who are on the front lines. They are the ones to know what patients' needs are but realize that they look after your loved ones. When your loved one is sick and goes into a hospital and you visit that person, if you are there from six o'clock to eight o'clock at night, who is in and out of the room from six o'clock to eight o'clock at night? Is it the doctor? Not likely. Who is in there? The nurse is the one coming in and out, making sure your meds are there, checking the drip, making sure you have everything and those things.

If somebody reports off and they've got to make a bed or they've got to get a bedpan or they have to change somebody, there was an accident, when there is somebody off they have to do that, which is not in their job description. This is the stress that we heard in Law Amendments Committee, 213 people at Law Amendments Committee who are on the list, but we heard that over and over. The recurring theme in this whole thing that we heard, you know here we are at 5:50 a.m., what's the theme over and over on this floor of the Legislature? It is patient safety, that's the concern, patient safety.

I think about the "People who oppose mandated nurse-patient ratios . . ." and this is a really good statement ". . . have to realize that they are using mandated ratios to make decisions now. Only the ratios they use now are mandated by budget, not what's best for the patient." Can you imagine? And this is all about budget. It's not what's best for the patients. It's all about the budget. So it's all about the budget of the Province of Nova Scotia.

Why aren't nursing workload measurements or some kind of data or scale that we can put in place to realize, to understand, is there a lack of consensus among everybody to decide what is best for patient safety in the Province of Nova Scotia? Who better to tell us what is best than the nurses, whether it's the NSGEU or the NSNU? They did show up at Law Amendments Committee to tell us what they think is best - and they know. They're on the front lines.

Are they collecting data? Are we looking at data now to say, okay, we're going to collect data? In two years' time we'll have a better stand on this; in six months' time will we have a better issue to know what the patient's safety is? In a year's time, in 18 months' time, as we go forward, will we take baby steps? Will we take steps to correct the situation that we find ourselves in? We heard from many, many nurses and many, many caregivers. Are we going to take the possible and correct the steps that we need?

I understand the economic problems of the Province of Nova Scotia - I do understand that, but are we going to make sure that we take steps in the right direction to provide the best care that we can for our loved ones and for the people who are sick in the Province of Nova Scotia? I think that there is another paper there, and I will table this also, Joint Position Statement on Patient Safety. There is an interesting quote in that, too, and when I read all this stuff - I think it was Janet Richardson that had given me all this stuff, and I haven't had much to do that last few days but read, not being at home, so I kind of read stuff and it was interesting. "Responsibilities and accountabilities for patient safety should be clearly delineated in the governance, management, and clinical processes of an organization." In other words, what they are saying is, how do we chart this, how do we look at - what can give us as legislators the data that we need to be able to provide the patient safety?

If the road is bad and the Sydney-Glace Bay Highway or the road is bad on Highway No. 125, you ever see those strips across the highway? It gives you the number of cars that roll across and it gives you the daily input on the traffic going across the highway. So what can we use to collect data? Whether we use to collect data - will we use "how many mistakes were made by the overworked nurses in the province"? How do we collect the data to prove to ourselves as legislators on all sides of the House that this is what we need to do here in the Province of Nova Scotia for us to be able to take a step in the right direction?

I know the Minister of Health and Wellness. I got elected with the minister in 2003, and that's a long time ago. I've travelled all over this country and outside this country with the minister, and I know that he genuinely cares. I know that for a fact. I do know that, and I have faith that eventually, someday - you know, I've known the previous Health Minister and I know this Health and Wellness Minister. Their hearts are in the right place. Someday we'll get to the right direction to make sure that patient safety in the Province of Nova Scotia is the utmost importance to us as legislators, and I do know that. I've known that. I've travelled all over the country; I've co-chaired events with the honourable member; we've been to the United States and co-chaired events on cross-border issues, whether it's coming into the United States or going out.

Health care - we had a great debate when we had issues, when we had Americans up here in August 2012 and they talked about their health care and they were getting ready for Obamacare, and we listened to that intensely. The honourable minister is right - we listened to that for hours. I think on the panel we had the Nova Scotia Department of - the Minister of Health at that time.

We had another guy, he's a great guy, he was a real nice gentleman, and I'll say his name, because he's not a member here. His name is Bill Fraser. He represents Miramichi-Bay du Vin - actually, he's my summertime MLA, where my cottage is, and so I know Bill. Bill recently had a heart attack in the Legislature a while back. He took a heart attack in the debate in the Legislature. I called Bill, and I stuck a little note in his mailbox

there in August when I was there and said, Bill, take care, and he called me at home. Bill was there and he was on the panel, and we had an American on the panel in the health care system.

The debate for that day was all about Obamacare health care in Nova Scotia versus the Americans paying for their health care versus us receiving health care. It was a great debate, I was honoured to sit through that debate and my colleague who is now the Leader of the New Democratic Party was also on that panel. The place was packed, there were 400 people talking about our health care and talking about their health care and how they would love to have our health care. That we can walk into a hospital and you know - Bill No. 37, this is a part of essential health and community services - to get back on the bill, I don't know how this improves our health care but that'll be told eventually down the road. (Interruption)

Yes, the minister is absolutely correcting me on that issue. The culture of safety should include teamwork involving the patients and an ongoing commitment to review, investigate and analyze adverse events to determine improvement in systems and process and products. What I just said there - I will let you take this now and I would give it to the deputy clerk and she can table that, thank you.

I know I heard a name, I don't know the lady, I didn't even know it was a lady until I heard her speaking on the radio and it was Chris Power, I think she's the CEO of the Capital District Health Authority and I have a clear message for her - these nurses are going back to work tomorrow, let's not have any animosity because of what happened here in the last three days. Let's go back to work, let's have dialogue, let's have talk, let's move forward. We all go back to work tomorrow, everybody goes back to work. When we leave here tomorrow we're going back to our constituency office. They will probably be lined up outside the door waiting for us all to get home and say where have you guys been? I've been in Halifax, they don't understand what you do in Halifax. Where have you been for three days? I've been in the Legislature. Who cares, I have an issue to do with that pothole over there, you have to get that done. That's what happens.

We'll all be facing that tomorrow. When you go to bed in the morning and wake up at dinnertime you're going to have your constituency there, whether it's this issue or other issues. The honourable member for Sydney River-Mira-Louisbourg, he's got a nice drive home tomorrow up in Gabarus, I wish you all the best on that. But your constituents will be waiting for you and they'll say to the member, where have you been? I've been in Halifax working on your behalf. Really? How about staying home and work on my behalf?

I said to somebody one time, not joking, I said what are you doing and how many people sit down and watch Legislative TV? How many people watch Legislative TV, is it like thousands? Is it like the Oprah show or something? Do we have those TV ratings that have gone up to here because of what's going on? People don't understand even at times the municipal, provincial, and federal issues. They have an issue, they don't understand at

times what issue falls under municipal, provincial, or federal but they knock on your door and they come in your office and they want you to solve that issue. That's what you do, you're an advocate so you try to tell them you're at home.

I had jokingly said to somebody at one time, when I go to Halifax I could run naked down Hollis Street and they wouldn't care at home because they want to see you at home. It's a strange thing but that's just the way it is and they want to see you at home. They want you to be here so my message to Chris Power is, here's my message to the CEO at the district health authority, (Interruptions) My colleague here is heckling me, he reminds me of Jerry Pye, the former member for Dartmouth North. The only guy I ever knew in the Legislature that would heckle his own members. That was Jerry Pye, another one in the ballot box, Bill, that was in my ear for three years sitting next to him. Mr. Speaker, that was a horrid time from 2003-06, the guy heckled his own members. God.

Here's the message for the CEO of the district health authority, clear, respectful communication and effective teamwork and collaboration among health care professionals are needed to remove the barriers of safe care. Isn't that what they're doing tomorrow? Isn't that what we all want them to do? We want them to go back and get along. I don't want to see anybody going back to work tomorrow with the animosity because of what happened here. Go back, put your differences aside. It's like a good fight in a hockey game and after the two guys pucked the head out of each other, they tap each other on the helmet and go to the penalty box. That's what you want. (Interruption) Or they go for a beer as my colleague from Shelburne County had said. No, I want you to go back to work tomorrow and realize you know the nurses did what they had to do. They feel they had to do - this wasn't about money, this was strictly about patient safety. That's what it was all about.

You can imagine why we're here today. We're here because of the mounting frustration among our front line workers in health care, the nurses. We heard about the mounting frustration from over 150-some people over there and listened. All members of the Legislative Assembly listened intently about what's going on. Is it important that we listen? What the thing is that's important is that we have action.

The decision-makers at the district health authority and up the hill and the decision-makers within government need to be able to challenge each other to know what we have to do to correct this problem. What do we have to do to correct this problem that over-burdened nurses are providing the best case they can to the people they look after on a daily basis? Remember, they look after your loved ones; that's what they do. They get paid for looking after your loved ones, to make sure that when your loved ones are sick that they are in the hospital looking after your loved ones.

Anybody who has gone to a hospital to visit those people will understand the importance of this issue. Bill No. 37, the Essential Health and Community Services Act is such a broad-based bill, it covers many different aspects of the bill - Mi'kmaq and family services, I know I brought it to attention, I was hoping to bring it to the attention of the

Minister of Labour and Advanced Education that maybe sometime this week, coming in after the budget or Budget Estimates that she can table the documents of how many times she consulted with the Mi'kmaq community about this, how many times she met with the chiefs and the elders in the community to say, we consulted with them to say now this Bill No. 37 is good for the Mi'kmaq community. That's why they're included in the bill.

I said that. I mean the other people but it affects 32,000 to 42,000 people. The other thing I must say is to involve nurses at all levels in the health care solution, please. I implore all of us, as Legislative Assembly members, to involve the nurses, involve them to give us the solutions we need to solve this problem of safety for our loved ones who go to the hospital. Please involve them in the solutions. Who better than the ones who work in there to give you the solutions to what the problems are?

You know the old Newfoundland saying, there are three sides to every story; your side, my side and the truth. I mean take a little bit of that in the middle and try to figure out what is the best avenue for us to solve and come up with solutions for us to say okay, we're working on this - whether it's the new government that is going to say yeah, do you know what? We have to do something for patient safety, here's our first step. I look forward to the minister standing up some day and saying this is the step we're taking in that direction for patient safety. I know he will do that someday. I understand him and I've known him personally for a long time. I know he's a good member and I know he will look for the solutions to solve this for us, as legislators.

You know you've got emotions draining us as we're here for such a long time, it's 6:05 a.m., I have to have a sip of water, my voice is getting a little cranky - I'm not cranky, just my voice is. That's good Halifax city water, it's just absolutely great.

I think the other thing, too, that we have to work at is address governance issues and health care, starting at the front line and moving upwards. As I just said and I repeat myself again, to find the solutions we start at the front line, we move upwards. By moving upwards as we move to the CEO, we move within there and we get the managers, we get the health care, we get what I call the shop stewards who are on the floor for the union, we get the shop stewards, we get the union, we get the nurses together and we say okay, how do we solve this issue around patient safety?

We're all of different walks of life as we sit in here. We come from many different walks of life but we all come here with one thing in common, the health and safety of the people who we represent in this province. That's something you should remember, as a MLA - they elect you for their health and safety. That's why you come to the Legislature, for the health and safety of your constituents.

If there's an issue that's out there and your constituents are not healthy and safe, that's why you've come to this Legislature, that's why we come here.

I've got about 50 pieces of documents - I'm not going to read from them, I think I've made my point. Do I know what the solutions are? No. There are people out there who may be able to help us find the solutions to this problem. It's not about bargaining, not about money, it's about patient safety. It's about the health and safety of the people who deliver that to our loved ones, the overworked, the stressed, and the anxious.

There was one other comment at the Law Amendments Committee from a young nurse who said, after eight hours and going everywhere, that she had to go in the bathroom and have a good cry and get herself together and go back out to attend to a patient. When you listen to stuff like that it's pretty emotional. That is what they're trying to tell us here, let us as legislators focus on what the solution is, let us focus on is Bill No. 37 going to be the answer to this - an Act to Ensure the Provision of Essential Health and Community Services? No.

What we need to do - and I'll wind down soon enough - is have to make sure that we help the solution for patient safety, for nurse burnout, that we get young nurses coming into the field who want to stay here in Nova Scotia, that we attract them here and say we're going to provide a safe, supervised environment for you to work in and provide your care, to bring them in here and those who are graduating at St. Francis Xavier University, the nurses who are graduating at CBU to say, look, we're going to provide a safe, supervised environment, what I mean is safe for your health and safety, but also the health and safety of the patients you look after. It's important that we do that.

So I say to the people who are going back to work tomorrow, go back in peace, go back and work like you always do to provide the great health care that you do to the people you look after on a daily basis, but remember you have to go to work tomorrow. So I said leave all the animosity and all of the things that happened in the last three days, leave it on Granville Street, park it down in the harbour, but go to work tomorrow, provide what you're getting paid to provide - that's quality health care to the people that we love in the Province of Nova Scotia. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education, I so move Third Reading of Bill No. 37.

MR. SPEAKER: There will be two votes here - the first vote on the previous question.

There has been a request for a recorded vote.

Ring the bells. Call in the members.

[6:09 a.m.]



[The Division bells were rung.]

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. Are the Whips satisfied?

[The Clerk calls the roll.]

[7:09 a.m.]

**YEAS**

**NAYS**

Mr. Churchill  
Ms. Bernard  
Ms. Regan  
Mr. Samson  
Mr. McNeil  
Ms. Whalen  
Mr. Glavine  
Ms. Casey  
Mr. MacLellan  
Ms. Diab  
Mr. Younger  
Mr. Horne  
Mr. Hines  
Mr. Stroink  
Ms. Arab  
Mr. Delorey  
Mr. Ince  
Mr. Kousoulis  
Mr. Furey  
Mr. Farrell  
Mr. Gordon Wilson  
Mr. Rankin  
Ms. Miller  
Mr. Rowe  
Mr. Maguire  
Ms. Eyking  
Ms. Lohnes-Croft  
Ms. Treen  
Mr. Gough  
Mr. Jessome  
Mr. Irving  
Mr. MacMaster  
Mr. Porter  
Mr. Dunn

Mr. Baillie  
 Mr. d'Entremont  
 Mr. Corbett  
 Ms. MacDonald  
 Mr. Wilson  
 Mr. Gosse  
 Ms. Peterson-Rafuse  
 Mr. Belliveau  
 Mr. Orrell  
 Ms. MacFarlane  
 Mr. Houston  
 Mr. MacLeod  
 Mr. Harrison  
 Mr. Lohr

THE CLERK: Those in favour of the motion, 48; those against, 0.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is carried.

The motion is now for third reading of Bill No. 37, an Act to Ensure the Provision of Essential Health and Community Services.

There has been a request for a recorded vote.

Do we need the bells or are we satisfied to go? Okay.

[The Clerk calls the roll]

**YEAS**

Mr. Churchill  
 Ms. Bernard  
 Ms. Regan  
 Mr. Samson  
 Mr. MacNeil  
 Ms. Whalen  
 Mr. Glavine  
 Ms. Casey  
 Mr. MacLellan  
 Ms. Diab  
 Mr. Younger  
 Mr. Horne  
 Mr. Hines  
 Mr. Stroink

**NAYS**

Mr. MacMaster  
 Mr. Porter  
 Mr. Dunn  
 Mr. Baillie  
 Mr. d'Entremont  
 Mr. Corbett  
 Ms. MacDonald  
 Mr. David Wilson  
 Mr. Gosse  
 Ms. Peterson-Rafuse  
 Mr. Belliveau  
 Mr. Orrell  
 Ms. MacFarlane  
 Mr. Houston

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Ms. Arab	Mr. MacLeod
Mr. Delorey	Mr. Harrison
Mr. Ince	Mr. Lohr
Mr. Kousoulis	
Mr. Furey	
Mr. Farrell	
Mr. Gordon Wilson	
Mr. Rankin	
Ms. Miller	
Mr. Rowe	
Mr. Maguire	
Ms. Eyking	
Ms. Lohnes-Croft	
Ms. Treen	
Mr. Gough	
Mr. Jessome	
Mr. Irving	

THE CLERK: Those in favour of the motion, 31; those against, 17.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is carried.

Ordered that this bill do pass. Ordered that the title be as read by the Clerk. Ordered that the bill be engrossed.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, that concludes the government's business for today. The House will sit again on Monday, April 7, from the hours of 4:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. Following the daily routine, the government business will be Committee of the Whole House on Supply and, if time permits, we will go into second reading of government bills, with Bill No. 35, the Property Valuation Services Corporation Act.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now rise, to meet again on Monday, April 7<sup>th</sup>, from the hours of 4:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is to adjourn.

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 now stand adjourned until Monday, April 7<sup>th</sup> at 4:00 p.m.

[The House rose at 7:15 a.m.]

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**NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3)**

**RESOLUTION NO. 845**

By: Mr. John Lohr (Kings North)

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

Whereas for years the community post office has been a meeting place for friends and neighbours; and

Whereas the Port Williams Post Office has had a long serving postal employee of 35 years who encouraged the sense of community in the village; and

Whereas Jerry Wood after his long service has retired as postmaster at the local post office;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Jerry Wood for his many years of service to the Village of Port Williams and wish him a healthy retirement.