



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Kevin Murphy

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First Session

TUESDAY, APRIL 8, 2014

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House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, TUESDAY, APRIL 8, 2014

Sixty-second General Assembly

First Session

2:00 P.M.

SPEAKER

Hon. Kevin Murphy

DEPUTY SPEAKER

Ms. Margaret Miller

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. Before we begin the daily routine, the subject of the late debate today was submitted by the honourable member for Chester-St. Margaret's:

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly remind the Liberal Government that the Graduate Retention Rebate benefits thousands of skilled and educated young people each year and ask them to reconsider their short-sighted decision to eliminate this program.

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants West.

MR. CHUCK PORTER: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to table a petition. The operative clause is "We the owners of the Ellershouse General Store would like to see the NSLC agency store back at Ellershouse." and call on the Government of Nova Scotia to consider reinstating their licence.

MR. SPEAKER: The petition is tabled.

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES**TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS**

MR. SPEAKER: As Speaker, I am pleased to table the 2013 Annual Report of the House of Assembly Management Commission.

The report is tabled.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS**GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION**

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Education.

RESOLUTION NO. 908

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

Whereas Tuesday, April 8th is the 6th Anniversary of National Healthy Schools Day in Canada; and

Whereas the purpose of the day is to foster improvements, celebrate successes, and create projects that make indoor environments of new and existing schools the best they can be; and

Whereas Healthy Schools Day in Canada gives students, teachers, organizations, school boards, and all Nova Scotians a time to focus on school buildings' indoor environmental quality to benefit the health and learning ability of Nova Scotia's school children;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly recognize the outstanding contributions of the many students, teachers, staff, and schools participating in National Healthy Schools Day in Canada, and thank Canadians for a Safe Learning Environment (CASLE) for coordinating Healthy Schools Day in Canada.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 42 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 10 of the Acts of 1994-95. The Workers' Compensation Act. (Hon. Frank Corbett)

Bill No. 43 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 129 of the Revised Statutes of 1989. The Direct Sellers' Regulation Act. (Hon. Mark Furey)

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

NOTICES OF MOTION

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

RESOLUTION NO. 909

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

Whereas Pastor Mark Collins led 23 team members from the Oxford Church of the Nazarene to Manzanillo, Cuba, to take part in a Work and Witness project; and

Whereas the team worked on projects in the community such as ways to produce better crops and dry them for future sale, electrical work, painting, and much more; and

Whereas the team came away having received so much more than they gave, with a joyful heart and a love for the community and the humbleness of its people;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House congratulate the Oxford Church of the Nazarene Missions Team on its successful journey to Manzanillo and wish them all the best in the future.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Leader of the New Democratic Party.

RESOLUTION NO. 910

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 decision to cut the Graduate Retention Rebate by the Liberal Government has taken almost \$50 million from the pockets of new graduates in Nova Scotia; and

Whereas the Ivany commission has identified that our province must do more, not less, to support the success of young people in Nova Scotia; and

Whereas thousands of new graduates have prospered from the assistance received from the Graduate Retention Rebate, enabling them to work and live in Nova Scotia;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia House of Assembly demand that the Liberal Government amend its budget to restore the \$50 million to the Graduate Retention Rebate or, at the very least, reinvest and support the graduates of this province.

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 Northside-Westmount.

RESOLUTION NO. 911

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

Whereas the North Sydney Rotary Club recently donated \$10,000 to the Youth Inclusion Program on the Northside to help the program stay viable; and

Whereas the Youth Inclusion Program tries to change young people's attitudes and educate them on healthy living activities and lifestyles, and it aims to reduce youth crime by creating a safe place where youth can come together to have fun and gain new skills; and

Whereas the Northside has seen about a 60 per cent reduction in youth crime, along with a significant reduction in vandalism, since the program has begun;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly congratulate the North Sydney Rotary Club for their commitment to youth and to the community on the Northside.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

RESOLUTION NO. 912

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

Whereas New Glasgow natives Don Kennedy, president of Legion Branch 34, and Hughie Muir, executive member of Legion Branch 34, in a joint effort, organized a fundraiser to accommodate the Citadel Canine Mission to veterans in our area; and

Whereas this successful program matches veterans suffering with post-traumatic stress disorder with dogs that are in need of homes; and

Whereas these members want the veterans to know that it is the Legion's mandate to help veterans, and they have not forgotten their mission;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Don Kennedy and Hughie Muir for their efforts to bring the Citadel Canine Mission to our veterans in Pictou County.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

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

RESOLUTION NO. 913

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 on December 2, 2013, the Chester Heritage Society was awarded a grant through the Rural Communities Foundation of Nova Scotia; and

Whereas this grant was awarded to work on a project called Musical Friends, which develops rural community leadership skills for young people in music, video production, skills implementation, and community collaboration; and

Whereas Musical Friends is a partnership between the Chester Heritage Society, St. Stephen's Anglican Church parish, and Pink Dog Productions;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia Legislature congratulate the Chester Heritage Society, St. Stephen's parish, and Pink Dog Productions on this important project and wish them much success.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Argyle-Barrington.

RESOLUTION NO. 914

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas volunteers are the cornerstone of Nova Scotia's communities, who generously give their time and talents while expecting nothing in return; and

Whereas on April 7th, more than 70 volunteers were recognized for the valuable contributions they make to their communities and our province at the 40th Annual Provincial Volunteer Awards Ceremony; and

Whereas Virginia Smith of Argyle has been involved in the Tusket River Environmental Protection Association, Southwest Paddlers Association, and Yarmouth County Learning Network, but is far better known for her devotion to swimming in 42 years of coaching the Yarmouth Whitecaps and her extensive involvement in the sport;

Therefore be it resolved that all members in this House of Assembly congratulate Virginia (Ginny) Smith for receiving this award, and thank her for making Nova Scotia stronger.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

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

RESOLUTION NO. 915

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

Whereas The Battle of the Badges, a charity hockey game between the Truro Police Service and the Truro Fire Service was played in Truro recently; and

Whereas \$5,000 was raised for local charities, along with 1,000 pounds of food collected by the Cobequid Education Centre Student Council, and proceeds from the 50/50 draw were donated to the Colchester SPCA; and

Whereas plans are now in the works to make The Battle of the Badges an ongoing event to continue charitable awareness in the community of Truro;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia Legislature congratulate the Truro police and the fire services, and volunteers who helped to make the fundraising initiative a reality, and wish them continued success.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Sydney River-Mira-Louisbourg.

RESOLUTION NO. 916

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

Whereas Jamey Jewells of Donkin will once again represent Canada in wheelchair basketball after being named to the national women's team; and

Whereas Jamey Jewells, who competed at the 2012 Paralympic Games in London, England, was one of nine returning players named to the 12-player roster for the national women's team; and

Whereas the team will host the 2014 World Championships from June 20th to 28th at the Mattamy Athletic Centre in Toronto;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Jamey Jewells on representing our country in wheelchair basketball, and wish her and her teammates all the best for a winning season.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid.

RESOLUTION NO. 917

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

Whereas the Liberal Government axed the Graduate Retention Rebate in its budget introduced on Thursday, April 3, 2014; and

Whereas the Graduate Retention Rebate provided up to \$2,500 in the first year after a student graduates and up to \$15,000 over a six-year period; and

Whereas the Graduate Retention Rebate was an incentive for young people, including international students, to put down roots in Nova Scotia while reducing their student debt;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly condemn the Liberal Government for cutting 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 Colchester-Musquodoboit Valley.

RESOLUTION NO. 918

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

Whereas the Mira Long Term Care Centre in Truro is home to approximately 90 senior citizens; and

Whereas Sandra Walsh was a Continuing Care Assistant at the Mira for more than 10 years until she underwent surgery for cancer in February; and

Whereas in early March, some of the residents and staff at the Mira raised money for Sandra, who will be unable to work for about a year, by having their heads shaved and by planning a benefit concert for Sandra later in March;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly wish Sandra Walsh the best of luck with her recovery and thank the residents and staff at the Mira Long Term Care Centre for their continuing support.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Hants West.

RESOLUTION NO. 919

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

Whereas the Accidental Actors began performing in 2003 when a local volunteer fire department was in need of funding, and the group raised more than \$250,000 for community initiatives - schools, daycare centres and individuals over the past decade; and

Whereas the Accidental Actors recently received the Maritimer of the Week Award from CTV for their community support in a unique and entertaining way - by performing plays written and directed by Carole Peterson; and

Whereas while the volunteer actors may change from time to time, the community spirit and sense of camaraderie are always evident and a good time can be guaranteed for everyone;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate the Accidental Actors on receiving the Maritimer of the Week Award, thank them for their continuing support of their community and wish them continued success.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Inverness.

RESOLUTION NO. 920

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

Whereas Steve Armitage is approaching 50 years as an announcer with the CBC; and

Whereas Armitage has called the action for 15 different Olympics, the CFL, NHL, PGA, plus many international sporting events like speed skating, swimming, and track and field; and

Whereas he has been honoured with the Foster Hewitt Award in 1982 and a Gemini Award in 1988;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House acknowledge Steve Armitage for his 50 years of providing that charge of excitement we experience when he is at the mike.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Leader of the New Democratic Party.

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, on an introduction. I'd like to draw the attention of members of the House to the west gallery where we are joined today by Amanda Parsons, who is a health care provider - a nurse. Ms. Parsons, I believe, was here last week to visit with us. She's back again today to observe the proceedings of the House, and I would invite members to give her a warm welcome. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

RESOLUTION NO. 921

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

Whereas Roy Rushton, a 95-year-old D-Day veteran and a member of the elite group known as paratroopers, received word he is being nominated to receive the prestigious French Crois de Guerre; and

Whereas this medal is presented only to military personnel who have distinguished themselves by acts of heroism involving combat with enemy forces, and the presentation will take place on the 70th Anniversary of the D-Day invasion; and

Whereas Mr. Rushton's company achieved their goal of destroying bridges to halt German reinforcements intent on stopping the Allied forces;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Mr. Rushton on receiving this honour and thank him for the sacrifices he made to protect our freedom.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Kings North.

RESOLUTION NO. 922

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

Whereas volunteers are the cornerstones of Nova Scotia's communities and generously give their time and talents while expecting nothing in return; and

Whereas on April 7th, more than 70 volunteers were recognized for the valuable contributions they made to their communities and our province at the 40th Annual Provincial Volunteer Awards ceremony; and

Whereas the Port Williams Women's Institute has dedicated over 100 years to learning, sharing and improving the quality of life for all and presenting, preserving, and fostering the concerns of urban and rural women "For Home and Country" and worldwide;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate the Port Williams Women's Institute for being recognized as the Provincial Volunteer of the Year for 2014 for the Village of Port Williams and thank its members for making Nova Scotia stronger.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Pictou West.

RESOLUTION NO. 923

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

Whereas concerned parents, teachers and citizens rallied together to prevent the elimination of the French Immersion Program from Pictou West; and

Whereas the CCRSB proposed eliminating the French Immersion Program from Pictou West, necessitating students in the program to travel to the opposite side of Pictou County if they wished to pursue French immersion; and

Whereas many meetings were held and solutions to increase interest in the program were presented to the school board by the parents' group;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate the parents, teachers and concerned citizens who recognize the need to maintain the French Immersion Program in Pictou West, and who then convinced the CCRSB to do the right thing by not only maintaining the program, but better promoting it as well.

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

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

Is it agreed?

I hear several Noes.

The notice is tabled.

The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

RESOLUTION NO. 924

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

Whereas Stellarton native Carolyn Wallace has been instrumental in organizing and preserving local history so it is not lost or forgotten by future generations; and

Whereas her efforts through written accounts, photographs, scrapbooks and newspaper clippings will ensure that this rich history and memories from her lifetime are kept alive; and

Whereas Carolyn's continued efforts and donations of items of interest are made to our Pictou County Roots Society, Museum of Industry, Military Museum and Pictou County Sports Hall of Fame, sharing her family's treasures of the past with our residents;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Carolyn Wallace for her love of history passed on to her by her parents, the late Mildred and Aubrey Dorrington, and for ensuring generations to come may learn and pass on to others the history of Pictou County.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Sydney River-Mira-Louisbourg.

RESOLUTION NO. 925

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

Whereas Sarah MacNeil of Trout Brook Road in Albert Bridge was named to the Canadian Interuniversity Sport Academic All-Canadian Honour Roll at Dalhousie University for 2013-14 for the second time in as many years; and

Whereas Sarah is a third-year forward with the Dalhousie women's hockey team; and

Whereas Academic All-Canadians are student athletes who achieve an academic standing of 80 per cent or better while playing on one of their university's varsity teams;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Sarah MacNeil on being named to the Canadian Interuniversity Sport Academic All-Canadian Honour Roll and wish her well in her 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?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

RESOLUTION NO. 926

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

Whereas five days a week at Harbourview Hospital in Sydney Mines, seniors participate in the hospital's day program that includes games, guest speakers, day trips, and parties; and

Whereas Kathy Jessome, the program director, tries to look after recreational, medical, social, and spiritual needs of the seniors in a family environment; and

Whereas more than 20 seniors take part in this program five days a week receiving their meals, transportation, and health checks, all for one very low fee;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly support the individuals responsible for the day program at Harbourview Hospital, and thank them for filling a very valuable need for our seniors.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Colchester-Musquodoboit Valley.

RESOLUTION NO. 927

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

Whereas on March 6, 2014, the Truro Sport Heritage Society held its 30th Annual Awards Dinner to recognize the accomplishments of outstanding local teams and athletes; and

Whereas for the second year in a row Karlee Burgess, of Hilden, was named the Female 15 and Under Athlete of the Year; and

Whereas Karlee was recognized for her numerous achievements including being a member of the Mary Fay under-21 junior curling rink, who won the provincial championships and placed third at nationals, the league-leading scorer with the CC Riders under-16 soccer team, and being the provincial champions and Atlantic Legion Meet winner of the 400 metre race;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly recognize the outstanding accomplishments of Karlee Burgess and wish her the best of luck with all of her 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?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Inverness.

RESOLUTION NO. 928

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

Whereas the annual BurMac hockey game was played on February 5th, marking the 36th battle between Burke and MacIsaac House at St. F.X. University; and

Whereas Burke prevailed with a 4 - 3 victory in the third period before 1,400 wild fans on both sides of the divide; and

Whereas this game has been regarded as one of the most intense rivalries in the hockey world;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House congratulate the Burke Brawlers, 2014 BurMac Cup champions.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

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

MR. SPEAKER: Question Period will begin at 2:34 p.m. and we'll conclude at 3:34 p.m.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

**PREM. - POWER RATES: ELECTRICITY TAX REMOVAL
- ELECTION PROMISE**

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: In the 2013 television Leaders Debate during the election, the Premier told all Nova Scotians, "I can guarantee that we'll be taking \$46 million off our power rates if elected . . . by removing the NDP electricity tax . . ." Well, Mr. Speaker, we

now know that isn't happening because what the Premier did not tell Nova Scotians is that he is going to allow Nova Scotia Power to put that tax right back on our power bills. This is just a shell game at its worst. I'd like to ask the Premier at what point did he realize he would not be able to keep his signature election promise?

THE PREMIER: Thank you Mr. Speaker, and I want to thank the honourable member for the question and I also want to thank the Minister of Energy for the tremendous job he has done on behalf of the people of Nova Scotia.

Mr. Speaker, not only are we going to keep our election promise by removing the efficiency tax off every power bill, come January 1st of next year - let me say that again, power bills will be going down in this province. Under the great leadership of the Minister of Energy we've taken it one step further, we've created now an efficiency competition for the monopoly in this province, which would continue, quite frankly, to drive power rates down even further.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, in that same election television debate the Premier clearly said that the Efficiency Nova Scotia fee would be "taken off our power bills and be legislated that the utility pays for that efficiency through their profits." Well, they aren't going to be paid through their profits - not at all. Oh no, we're all going to still pay that efficiency fee, it is just in another place on our power bill. After all, it is an elaborate and complicated and farcical shell game.

Mr. Speaker, I'll ask the Premier, what happened to his guarantee that those fees would be paid through their profits?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to remind the honourable member that power bills will be going down, that the efficiency tax will be removed from every power bill in the Province of Nova Scotia. We are doing something that his Party was unable to do, which is actually drive down power rates in the Province of Nova Scotia.

On top of that, Mr. Speaker, we've taken the efficiency programs and created a separate entity that will drive competition with the utility which the URB will continue to monitor, which will drive down rates which, again, will provide relief for Nova Scotia ratepayers.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, the only Party that the Liberals are copying to date is the NDP, who broke their signature promise not to raise our taxes. Now they are breaking their signature promise on the efficiency tax because it's not being charged to the power company, as he guaranteed Nova Scotians. It is being charged right back on our power bills. That is a fact - that is exactly what they are going to do.

The only other thing that makes them different from the NDP is when Nova Scotia Power recovers every dollar of that efficiency fee that they are so proud of today, Mr.

Speaker, they're going to charge a 9 per cent guaranteed profit for them on top of it. At least the NDP didn't do that when they broke their tax promise.

I'll ask the Premier, why are broken NDP promises on taxes any worse than broken Liberal promises on power rates?

THE PREMIER: I'm not sure what the Leader of the Official Opposition doesn't understand. The efficiency tax will be removed from every power bill, Mr. Speaker. Let me tell this again - every power bill in the Province of Nova Scotia will decrease on January 1st. The only way that any efficiency program is going to (Interruptions) it's actually cheaper and saves power customers even more money.

I can't, for the life of me, understand why the Leader of the Official Opposition is opposed to reducing power rates and potentially saving ratepayers even more. Mr. Speaker. Everyone in the province quite frankly has agreed, everyone, with this position but the Opposition Party - so much for co-operation in this House, so much for what's good for Nova Scotia. If he actually believed in that he would stand up and stand with Nova Scotians. (Applause)

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

PREM.: POWER BILLS EFFICIENCY FEE - REMOVAL

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, my question is also to the Premier. Prior to the election the Premier promised repeatedly that he would remove the efficiency fee from power bills and make Nova Scotia Power pay for it. As The Canadian Press stated on September 9, 2013, that the Liberals will shift the \$46 million cost of funding programs run by Efficiency Nova Scotia from customers to the utility, which the now Premier said would be able to pay for programs from its annual profits.

What we learned yesterday, Mr. Speaker, is that the Liberals are doing just the opposite; in fact under this new Liberal energy scheme Nova Scotia Power will be able to charge ratepayers directly for the cost of efficiency programs after 2016 - that's 2016, it will be on the rate.

My question to the Premier is, why did he allow his Energy Minister to break this very vital election promise?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, let me be clear. Not only did the Energy Minister keep our commitment to remove the efficiency tax off every power bill in this province, he went a step further and found a way to provide even more savings to Nova Scotians by providing more competition for Nova Scotia Power. There is one thing that Nova Scotians need to know: under this piece of legislation, power rates are going down on January 1st,

and any way into the future, any efficiency programs, the only way that they'll be paying for them is if it drives more savings into their power bills.

MR. CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, in a previous answer to the Leader of the Progressive Conservatives, the Premier said that everybody in Nova Scotia was on his side and agreed with it, but it's not so. I wonder if he contacted the consumer advocate, John Merrick, because he doesn't agree with his position. In today's allnovascotia.com, he said that for the province to take it off the bill in 2015, all they're doing is changing the way it was recovered. It's still out of the ratepayers.

My question to the Premier is, why does he now think it's okay to ask ratepayers to pay for efficiency programs?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I know this is a difficult concept for the member of the New Democratic Party to understand, but typically, competition in the energy market - or in any market, actually - will drive down costs. It's the fundamental principle of driving competition.

What we did very early on in our mandate was make a commitment to remove the efficiency tax, which will take place on January 1st of next year. We have a standalone entity that is driving competition on the fuel side of Nova Scotia Power, and the only way that any of those programs will be paid for by Nova Scotia Power is if they're actually cheaper, which actually reduces power rates for the people of the province, which actually reduces their fuel costs. Mr. Speaker, it's a win-win for the ratepayers of this province.

MR. CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, during the days and weeks, as we go, and people are exposed to the light that's going to be put on to this scheme, we'll understand. I'll be the first one to admit that I'm not the sharpest knife in the drawer, but I'll take my lead from John Merrick, not the Premier, who I would say understands a bit more about this process. According to him, the power rates can defer \$35 million of cost of Efficiency Nova Scotia and charge ratepayers. They could garner a rate return of 7 per cent to 9 per cent.

I want to ask the Premier, what did Mr. Merrick tell him when he proposed this scheme to Mr. Merrick?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, let me tell the honourable member that I haven't spoken to Mr. Merrick, but I want to tell you that under the leadership of the Minister of Energy there have been many conversations, not only with Mr. Merrick but with Nova Scotians, to ensure that not only did we keep our commitment to removing the efficiency tax and reducing power rates in the Province of Nova Scotia on January 1st but he went a step further and created a separate entity that was going to drive competition, which will, in turn, drive down power rates. Why would anyone be opposed to reducing power rates in the Province of Nova Scotia?

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

PREM.: EFFICIENCY FEE - NSP RESPONSIBILITY

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, what Nova Scotians are opposed to - and they made this point loud and clear in the last election - is a government that promises one thing when they're running and then flip-flops and does the opposite when they get into power. That's the message they sent to the NDP after they broke their promise on their taxes. But the Premier has done them one up. He actually went on TV and guaranteed that the efficiency fee would be paid by Nova Scotia Power through their profits.

People believed him, but that is not what's happening today. That fee is going to end up right back on all of our power bills - a horrible shell game, a cruel shell game for all of those Nova Scotian families who are struggling to pay the bills every month. So I'll ask the Premier - it took the NDP nine months to break their promise on taxes; the Liberals have set a new Guinness World Record by doing it in six months. Why won't the Premier just admit the obvious, that this is not what he promised Nova Scotians? Come clean.

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I don't know what has happened to the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party. Why would he be opposed to reducing power rates in the Province of Nova Scotia?

You know, he's right. Nova Scotians made a decision on October 8th for a new government, and this government is keeping its commitment to the people of the Province of Nova Scotia. The efficiency tax will come off power bills in January of next year.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, here is the simple concept that I would like the other side to understand. What we are opposed to is a candidate for office who goes on TV and guarantees something, and then does the opposite after the election is over. That's what we're opposed to. Of course we would all like to see our power rates go down and we should all work hard to make that happen, but taking the fee off one part of our power bill and then allowing the power company to charge every last dollar of it right back on another part of our power bill is not what the Premier guaranteed. That's the point that he seems to be having trouble getting today. That's the shell game.

Mr. Speaker, the government is touting the Vermont model, which is this great example of how to do this in a transparent manner. Except they didn't do their homework, because you know what they're doing in Vermont? They're actually taking that efficiency fee and putting it on a separate line item on the Vermont power bills, so in a fair and open and transparent manner, everyone can see what they are doing instead of burying it in the general power rates. I'd like to ask the Premier, why are they bragging about the Vermont model, which is going to be more transparent and clearer, and instead engaging in this elaborate shell game and doing the opposite, burying the increase somewhere else in our power bill?

THE PREMIER: Here is a simple concept for the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party to understand: power bills are going down on January 1st. I know he's disappointed about that, Mr. Speaker. I know he is disappointed about the fact that we were able to drive down power rates in the Province of Nova Scotia. And I know he is disappointed, quite frankly, that we've continued to drive competition in the energy market, so power rates will continue to go down under the leadership of the Minister of Energy. And I want to remind the members opposite that Nova Scotia Power is paying \$40 million out of their shareholders directly to low-income Nova Scotians.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, power rates went up by 3 per cent on January 1st under this Premier's watch. There is over \$90 million in future power rate increases. It's a fact - something they opposed in Opposition, something that they said the previous government should roll back, and yet they didn't when they had the chance. And \$90 million in fuel costs being deferred to a future day; now the Premier wants to add \$35 million in efficiency charges deferred to a future day. Power rates are not going down. We just put it off to a future day. That is the point. What we are opposed to is a shell game where you guarantee one thing and you do the opposite. Will the Premier at least admit the truth that this is not what he promised Nova Scotians?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, you want to talk about a deferral. It would have been, quite frankly, if we had adopted the power scheme that was put forward by the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party when he wanted to freeze power rates to a future day. What we did is take the efficiency tax off of power rates and reduce power rates for Nova Scotians.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

**FIN. & TREASURY BD. - GRAD. RETENTION REBATE:
ELIMINATION - EFFECTS**

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board. In six short months this government has become expert at economic sleight of hand and fiscal shell games. When it comes to the Graduation Retention Rebate, Nova Scotia graduates are the big losers. Because of the elimination of the rebate, many young Nova Scotians will see their after-tax income decline this year.

My question to the minister is, will the minister please explain how reaching into the wallets of our best and brightest Nova Scotians will entice graduates to stay in Nova Scotia and meet the objectives of the Ivany report?

HON. DIANA WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, I thank the honourable member for the question. The answer to the question is very simple, the evidence was clear, seven years of evidence was clear that the Graduate Retention Rebate wasn't doing what it was intended to do, what its name actually says: to retain young people here in our province. For that

reason we are looking for other ways to ensure that young people get the first job that they need to actually attach to the workforce, because that's what young people are telling us is really the obstacle for them staying in our province. Thank you.

MR. DUNN: Mr. Speaker, that certainly is contrary to what I'm hearing from graduates across this province in the last few days. The Graduate Retention Rebate provided up to \$15,000 in relief to graduates who stayed and put down roots in Nova Scotia. That's the price of a first car or a down payment on a first home.

The elimination of the program is a whopping 275 per cent tax increase for our graduates. The consolation prize for students is the elimination of interest on student loans, a measure that provides about \$800 in benefit.

My question to the minister is, does the minister expect graduates who just got the biggest tax hike of their lives to stay and make a life in Nova Scotia because of an \$800 interest teaser?

MS. WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, again I appreciate the question. It's never easy to make changes but our job, and all of our jobs in this House, is to look at programs that are effective and to support those programs to meet the needs of Nova Scotians. I do understand that some Nova Scotians benefited from this rebate and that they are disappointed. For that, I am sorry, but the fact is seven years of experience shows it wasn't working.

Mr. Speaker, we have evidence not only from our own internal analysis of Statistics Canada and other information about out-migration, but we have information from reports that were done by the Centre for Policy Alternatives, the Canadian Federation of Students, and Students Nova Scotia that say the very same thing. Just for that point I would like to table one of those reports; this is the Centre for Policy Alternatives, I believe, *Fairness, Funding and Our Collective Future*, in which they say tax credits are an ineffective use of public money and of reducing student debt, as many graduates do not pay taxes until years after graduation and cannot access the credit. This was directly written about the Graduate Retention Rebate.

Mr. Speaker, the member opposite knows that this was a tax rebate and has nothing to do with the tax rates in this province, so I'd like to table that. Thank you. (Applause)

MR. DUNN: Mr. Speaker, you cannot paint a broad picture that covers all students in this province and there are certainly a lot of students very disappointed in this province. They have been contacting several MLAs with regard to their disappointment in this recent move by the government.

Mr. Speaker, Jake Rideout is a recent graduate who did everything he thought he was supposed to do. After graduation Jake went home to rural Nova Scotia to start a small

business because he wanted to create value in his community. Part of his decision to stay and build a business in Nova Scotia was the Graduate Retention Rebate, which he planned to use to service his student debt.

Jake doesn't feel entitled but he is disappointed. All he is asking for is some help to get on his feet, in exchange for creating value through a small business, injecting life into the rural economy, and banking his future on a better Nova Scotia.

My question to the minister is, why has the minister chosen to punish ambitious young people like Jake Rideout, who have done all the right things? Why does she want to drive people like Jake away?

MS. WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his third question - I think it was his third. This is a program that some people in Nova Scotia were able to access, but you had to have a higher income in order to access that credit.

What we heard repeatedly from young people across the province, and I heard it again and again during my pre-budget consultations, was that they need the opportunity to get their first job in this province. That's the biggest thing. (Applause) What we are intending to do is to look at evidence and to base our planning and our spending on evidence. It's unfortunate, but after seven years of having various credits and the Graduate Retention Rebate, we have not been able to show any evidence that this is working. That is exactly what Nova Scotian taxpayers have been telling me again and again, that they expect us to do the things that are working and are effective.

For that reason, we feel that it's an obligation of government to look at programs to be evidence-based and to ensure that they are actually attaining their aim before they get continued. I'm afraid in the case of seven years of evidence, and also support from a number of other people who have studied this issue and studied the benefit of the credit, we felt that this was absolutely the right decision to make for Canadian and Nova Scotia taxpayers.

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

PREM. - GRAD. RETENTION REBATE ELIMINATION: NURSES - EFFECTS

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Premier. Last week, nurses who had recently graduated from nursing programs were hit twice by this Liberal Government - once with the essential services legislation that took away their collective bargaining rights, and again when the Liberals cut the Graduate Retention Rebate. I want to ask the Premier, what does he think the effect of the elimination of the Graduate Retention Rebate will be on the morale of young nurses who qualified for this tax credit?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, let me be clear. Unlike the New Democratic Party, we have not taken away the right to strike from any health care workers in this province. We tried to strike a balance, which is ensuring that the essential services Nova Scotians relied on will be in place while we allow workers in this province to have the right, if the collective bargaining process doesn't work, to strike. We struck that balance last week and the majority of Nova Scotians have appreciated that balance.

As was just laid out by the Minister of Finance, we recognize there are some Nova Scotians who were using this rebate as part of being able to avail themselves of this rebate, but the original part of it was the retention component, and all the evidence shows that wasn't actually working to retain students in this province. What we've done is taken it and targeted it towards job creation. You'll see the apprenticeship opportunities, you'll see it in the research opportunities that are provided in Graduate to Opportunities, which was announced in the budget, which will be expanded over the next number of years. The object of this is to try to ensure that more Nova Scotians have an opportunity to stay here in Nova Scotia.

MS. MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, earlier before Question Period, I had an opportunity to introduce a young nurse, Amanda Parsons. Amanda Parsons was here last week, as you know, and spoke out against the essential services legislation. Now Amanda is saying that the elimination of the Graduate Retention Rebate feels like a double whammy. She's now applying for jobs in Newfoundland and Labrador.

My question to the Premier is, now that Amanda Parsons feels betrayed by the Liberal Government, are you prepared to provide her with an answer to why the Graduate Retention Rebate will drive people like her out of the nursing profession in this province?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. I also want to thank Amanda for her commitment to the people of this province in providing health care. It's an essential part of the delivery of the health care model in this province. All of us appreciate the great health care professionals that we have in this province.

The challenge about government is that you have to make decisions based on evidence. The evidence is that, while there were Nova Scotians who were using the rebate program, the idea was to create a job opportunity for new graduates and retaining young people. What we've laid out very clearly is a different direction, one that we are targeting directly on job creation so that we can keep more Nova Scotians here.

MS. MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, the evidence is before us here today. We have a nurse who is looking to leave the province because the Graduate Retention Rebate has now given her no incentive whatsoever to stay in our health care system. I want to ask the Premier why he is so unconcerned that nursing graduates like Amanda Parsons are

applying for jobs elsewhere, due to his government's misdirected decision to eliminate the Graduate Retention Rebate?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, we're always concerned, quite frankly, when we hear Nova Scotians wanting to leave our province for opportunities they believe are elsewhere. It's one of the reasons why we've targeted toward job creation in this province. We are providing apprenticeship opportunities, graduate opportunities in this province. It's striking a balance, one of the things the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board clearly laid out. It is able to provide an opportunity for as many young Nova Scotians to be here.

What is before us, quite frankly, is that as we were trying to put out essential services legislation to make sure that we were protecting the health and welfare of Nova Scotians, the Leader of the New Democratic Party was standing up here protesting, forcing a strike on the people of this province and it wasn't good enough that she forced the strike - she had to drag it out to get into another shift.

MR. SPEAKER: Just before we get to the next question, I want to remind all members on both sides of the House that if you have a question, speak to your House Leaders and get your name on your list and you'll have ample opportunity to pose questions. (Interruptions) I am pleased to say that we're a little bit more awake than we were yesterday here.

The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

**FIN. & TREASURY BD. - GRAD. RETENTION REBATE:
ELIMINATION - REASON**

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board. Nova Scotians, and in particular recent graduates, are perplexed about why this government decided to axe the Graduate Retention Rebate program. With one short-sighted measure, the government will save \$30 million a year on the backs of our students, at a time when the Ivany commission tells us that it is crucial to support the success of young people in Nova Scotia. The elimination of the Graduate Retention Rebate program amounts to the biggest tax increase in Nova Scotia's history for the thousands of young Nova Scotians starting their careers and deciding where they want to live and work.

My question to the minister is why would the minister eliminate a valuable program to make it easier for our province's best and brightest to leave the province to build their futures?

HON. DIANA WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question from the member opposite. As I've been saying in earlier answers to the question, there is no question at all that some people were able to enjoy and benefit from this tax credit, but it was not creating the result that it was intended to do. For that reason we've looked at the evidence, and

we've listened to other people who presented us with evidence, and for that very reason we had said it from evidence-base, from seven years of looking at the stats, the evidence was clear it wasn't working and we need to invest our money strategically in the proper building blocks that will help open the doors for jobs in this province. That is what they need. They need jobs and we are introducing the Graduate to Opportunities program, among a whole raft of other ideas that were presented in the budget, to help support young people in that endeavour.

Mr. Speaker, I hope the member opposite may have seen it, but there was evidence from Stats Canada, it comes from the Canada Revenue Agency tax filer's data that shows information on out-migration for the years 2003, all the way to 2011. It shows clearly there was no improvement in the out-migration during that period of time. I will table that for the House.

MR. ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, we have a demographic problem here in Nova Scotia with more people retiring out of the labour force than young people entering it. I have figures from Statistics Canada that show an average of 500 more people stayed in the province during the years the rebate was available. My question to the minister is, when our province so desperately needs young people to stay and build their lives in Nova Scotia, why is the minister going out of her way to drive them down the road?

MS. WHALEN: Again, to the honourable member, I appreciate the question very much. The evidence was very clear, Mr. Speaker, that the out-migration pattern had continued the same, and the cost of the program increased every year with no measurable impact and no improvement to the outflow of young people from our province.

Members of the House know that I'm a mother and that my children are in that very demographic. I know the issues that are facing young people, and the difficulty of getting that first job is what I hear most from the young people in my neighbourhood, from my children's friends, from the people I met across the province. They need access to the first job, that opportunity to get experience.

Time and time again in Nova Scotia, employers - and I include the provincial government - will ask for two to five years of experience for entry-level jobs. That's the sort of thing that we want to stop. We want to help employers pick up young graduates right away and give them experience and the opportunity to start their careers and stay here in Nova Scotia. Thank you.

MR. ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, the Graduate Retention Rebate was very beneficial to boost post-secondary students in Nova Scotia. It often made the difference about where the graduates could live and pay down their debt, including their student loans. In a recent Chronicle Herald story the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board is quoted as saying, "Are they entitled? Are they telling me they're entitled to that money?" she said of the students. 'Maybe that's what they're saying.'"

So my question to the minister is, is the minister saying that graduates who are lucky enough to find a job in Nova Scotia, who struggle to pay their student debt and want to stay in our province, have an oversized sense of entitlement?

MS. WHALEN: Again, I appreciate the question from the honourable member. Mr. Speaker, just to relate to that tabling of the article, there was certainly never any intention on my part to make that assumption. Going forward, the program simply doesn't work, and the evidence that it doesn't work is enormous. It was also very clear from the pre-budget submissions that I received, and many of them - but I will just quote from one more, if I may, and I'll table this document as well.

This one happens to be from Students Nova Scotia, but I also received the same information from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives and from the Canadian Federation of Students. This is very compelling, when you heard the words of these other researchers speaking on behalf of where they think the funds should go. It says, and again, speaking directly to the Graduate Retention Rebate: "It can only be claimed after graduation and then, only after all other tax credits have been exhausted. As a result, the typical GRR recipient has an income above the provincial median." I might add, Mr. Speaker, that that means 50 per cent of the income earners are below that median, and 50 per cent above. "In addition to the distributional issues, there is no evidence that the GRR has improved the retention and attraction of recent graduates to Nova Scotia."

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table that document as just further evidence, not from myself, but from another party. Thank you. (Applause)

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

**FIN. & TREASURY BD. - GRAD. RETENTION PROG. ELIMINATION:
STUDENT GROUPS - BLAME EXPLAIN**

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board. Last week when the budget was handed down, students were shocked by the elimination of the Graduate Retention Rebate. Student advocates had spoken with the minister previous to the budget being released and talked about new things the government might consider doing to invest in students and graduates, but they never did ask for this funding to be eliminated outright.

My question to the minister is, why is the minister attempting to lay blame for the elimination of this program on student groups, who are actually advocating for more support for students, not less?

HON. DIANA WHALEN: I thank the honourable member for her question. Mr. Speaker, there was no intention to link those two things whatsoever. The evidence is clear, and the evidence has been provided by our own research, by Statistics Canada, by the

Canada Revenue Agency's out-migration information that I just tabled a moment ago, by a number of other pre-budget submissions that we received, and studies by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, Students Nova Scotia, and the Canadian Federation of Students.

I am not intending to lay blame at their feet, they've done information and studies, so has the Department of Finance and Treasury Board. And, Mr. Speaker, you don't introduce a program without having a review and an opportunity to see if it's working. Again, Nova Scotian taxpayers expect exactly that and, upon review, this program wasn't hitting the mark, and for that reason it is not in the budget for this year.

MS. MACDONALD: Well, Mr. Speaker, the evidence is far from clear, as the minister says. The evidence tells us what the ongoing problem is and we know we have a problem, but would the problem have been even greater without this program? I suggest that it actually would have been much greater.

Mr. Speaker, Jonathan Williams, who is the executive director of Students Nova Scotia, said "Eliminating the Graduate Retention Rebate without reinvesting in supporting our young people is a betrayal of our students and graduates."

Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the minister why didn't she advocate on behalf of the students and graduates she is responsible for supporting, to ensure that this funding was left alone and they could stay in our province?

MS. WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, again I know there are people in the province who were able to access this credit and that it is disappointing to them - I really do hear that and I understand it - but the fact of the matter is that it didn't change the overall out-migration.

The honourable member herself was a member of the government that introduced this with the intent of upping the numbers and improving the retention of young people. Mr. Speaker, we have definitely read the Ivany report, understanding the importance of young people and their role in our province and we are going to be introducing other programs which were mentioned in the budget as well, which are going to address the key factor - the fact that so many young people said it's fine that there's a credit but I can't access it.

There's a great deal of misunderstanding, Mr. Speaker, that it was not funds available to every Nova Scotian - it was available only to those who earned enough money to pay provincial taxes. So many young Nova Scotians graduate without a good job, and that's a compelling reason why we looked at the evidence and want to address our efforts to the job creation and opening the doors that business can do with some incentives.

MS. MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, over \$40 million was being spent on this program. Now the evidence is that that money was being distributed to someone, it doesn't

strike me as being a reasonable explanation that there are people who couldn't access it. If you consider \$40 million, that's a significant chunk of change and an awful lot of people were getting access to it, many of them young Nova Scotians and international students who were prepared to stay in this province and put roots down in this province over a period of time.

Mr. Speaker, my final question to the minister is, why are students and new grads being asked to pay the price of increased spending in this Liberal Government's budget? Surely the minister doesn't think that they are the ones who can afford this.

MS. WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, they are not being asked that at all.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

ERDT: JOBS FUND - INCREASE EXPLAIN

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism.

We learned last week that the budget for the controversial Cabinet slush fund went up \$5 million. In Opposition, the Liberal Premier said he would get rid of it, but now he is keeping it and he is increasing the budget by more than 18 per cent. It's a complete 180-degree turnaround from his stance before and during the election - so why are the Liberals misleading Nova Scotians and jacking up the budget for the Cabinet-controlled slush fund?

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for the question, and it is a legitimate question because if you look at the budget numbers, the conclusions that have been reached by the member would be the legitimate conclusions you would reach by looking at it.

What I can advise the member is that the reason there is an increase in this year's budget for the Jobs Fund is because of the previous deals that were negotiated and signed by the NDP Government, which were staggered as to what years they would be paid out. Because of the deals they shackled our government and Nova Scotians with, more money had to be put in to meet those liabilities, and I'll be more than happy for the member for Chester-St. Margaret's to go line by line and project by project to show (Interruptions). I will be happy to show that member how her government has saddled our government and Nova Scotians with the millions of dollars of deals that they made through that slush fund.

MS. MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his answer. However, I don't know the Premier's promises and fine print. I don't think all Nova Scotians do either, so there is nothing. I look at this and it's absolutely another Liberal flip-flop, no doubt about it. The Premier has decided it is in his best interest to maintain and control the fund

and keep giving corporate bailouts. The Premier and his government have already given out \$20 million, and I can table that. My question is, when was the decision made to do a flip-flop on their election promise and jack up the budget for the Cabinet-controlled slush fund?

MR. SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, as I indicated in my previous answer, during estimates I'll be more than happy to go through each of the deals that were signed by the previous government. The way they were done was the funding was broken down over several years. So in order for us to meet the liabilities and the obligations that were signed by the previous government, more monies had to be put into the fund. I will be more than happy to show the member each of those deals, where those monies came from and why the money had to be put in the budget.

Let me make it clear again: we will be replacing the Nova Scotia Jobs Fund. There will be a new fund that is brought in that will clearly meet the obligations set out in the Traves Report and the concerns raised by Nova Scotians, and the members will have an opportunity to see that here in this House. But again, actions speak louder than words. Other than the ferry deal, which was signed and negotiated by the previous government, our government has not used the Nova Scotia Jobs Fund.

MS. MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are desperate to make it look like they are keeping at least one election promise. In February, the Auditor General once again recommended moving the fund to the arm's-length Nova Scotia Business Inc. In Opposition, the Liberals agreed to this, but that's another broken Liberal promise. I want to know, how many more promises are the Liberals going to break?

MR. SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, let's look at what the member tabled from her first question. She indicates it was \$20 million from the Nova Scotia Jobs Fund. It was not. Her own documents show one of the deals is from Nova Scotia Business Inc. Strategic Investment Funds. The next one is Nova Scotia Business Inc. - the Nova Scotia Fund, not the Jobs Fund. The other one is Nova Scotia Business Inc., Nova Scotia Fund, Nova Scotia Business Inc., Nova Scotia Fund.

The Leader of the Official Opposition is on record saying he supports Nova Scotia Business Inc. and says they should continue to be doing investments that they've done. What they've tabled here are investments made by Nova Scotia Business Inc. The only investment that our government has had to use the Jobs Fund for is the one previously negotiated by the NDP for the Yarmouth ferry.

Actions speak louder than words. We have not used that fund. That fund will not continue to exist. We will replace it with something that Nova Scotians clearly see as an appropriate means of investing their tax dollars.

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

PREM.: STUDENT RETENTION PROGS. - OPPOSITION EXPLAIN

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, My question through you is to the Premier. On the 12th of February, Ray Ivany and his Commission on Building Nova Scotia's New Economy issued their report. Mr. Ivany was unequivocal when he spoke with members of this Legislature. He said, and I will table it, "There's no way to overstate the seriousness of the current situation." Of course he was speaking about the economy and about the demographic challenges we have in Nova Scotia, due to our aging population and a growing proportion of our population being retired, with young people and skilled workers leaving our province.

Mr. Speaker, in the spirit of this report and given the elimination of the Graduate Retention Rebate, can the Premier please explain why he is opposed to both domestic and international student retention programs for our province?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, the simple answer to that is we're not. If she actually read the report, Mr. Ivany talked about creating job opportunities to keep young people in this province; it is clearly laid out a number of times. The program put in place, while being used by some Nova Scotians, was not a retention tool.

What we have actually done is broadened the apprenticeship opportunities to keep young, skilled workers here in this province, Mr. Speaker, providing funding towards research opportunities. Students graduating from our universities here in this province do research work here in this province.

Under the NDP, Mr. Speaker, they left and went to Ontario and other parts of Canada to do that work. We're going to retain them to do that work here in Nova Scotia. In place, we are working with the private sector to be able to create a job opportunity. The number one thing that young Nova Scotians are telling us will keep them in this province is a job.

MS. MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I suspect that the Premier, like myself and other members of this House, are literally hearing from hundreds of young Nova Scotians who relied on this Graduate Retention Rebate to put down roots in this province and to remain in this province in their first job. It's very inconsistent what the Premier is saying, that this is what their approach is but this is what Nova Scotians are telling us the impact of this change will be on them.

I want to ask the Premier how he can square the circle of taking more than \$40 million away from students with a program that encourages both international and domestic students to remain in Nova Scotia and, at the same time, not reinvesting in programs that would allow the policy objectives that we all agree, coming from the Ivany report, need to be developed, supported and enhanced, Mr. Speaker?

THE PREMIER: As I said earlier, Mr. Speaker, we are investing; we are investing in apprenticeship opportunities in this province for young tradespeople. We are providing research opportunities, which are an investment by the Government of Nova Scotia, to keep university students in this province.

Mr. Speaker, we're working with the private sector to create job opportunities for university and community college graduates to retain those jobs right here in Nova Scotia. Like every program, it continues to ramp up over a period of time but we're very encouraged by the support we have been receiving from the private sector, from the very people who are going to create the jobs and drive the economic growth in this province.

MS. MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, among the people we are hearing from are many young entrepreneurs who actually used this program as part of their plan for the development of their business and the investment in their business in this province. They are telling us that they fear now being able to continue to operate those small businesses that they already have invested in and they are looking for opportunities elsewhere.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the Premier is this, when he reaches in and takes almost \$50 million out of the pockets of the very many international and domestic students who we are trying to retain, does he really expect Nova Scotia to feel like the warm and welcoming place it needs to be for new Nova Scotians?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, what I'm hearing from Nova Scotians who are graduating from our community colleges and our universities is that they are looking for a job. What we're building is a program and programs that provide those economic opportunities in jobs here, broadening the apprenticeship opportunities. We are actually putting in research opportunities to keep university students in this province; we're working with the private sector to grow real job opportunities in this province; and in the coming days we'll make an announcement around economic incentives which will actually be targeted towards small business in this province - the very thing to keep entrepreneurs in this province and give them access to much-needed capital.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

AGRIC. - WINE IND.: DEVELOPMENTS - UPDATE

MR. KEITH IRVING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, my question through you is for the Minister of Agriculture.

Yesterday the Minister of Agriculture answered many good questions at the Subcommittee on Supply. The wine industry has the potential to be a real economic driver in several of the ridings in this province, particularly in Kings South. Will the Minister of Agriculture provide the House with an update on the developments in the wine industry and its potential for our province?

HON. KEITH COLWELL: It's with great pleasure I rise to talk about the wine industry in Nova Scotia. A lot of people in the province probably don't realize our wine industry offers us one huge opportunity for growth. The only problem is it takes a long time to grow the grape plants to a point that they produce grapes. Once they're there it can provide up to a couple of hundred years of growth and very productive growth of those plants, so it's one thing we have to work towards expanding.

The other thing is that the wine industry has really evolved in Nova Scotia, past the point of being a cottage industry to a true industry that now employs hundreds of people throughout the province, makes a huge economic impact to the province, and indeed is one industry we need to grow and grow successfully. It meets all the requirements of environmental consciousness, profitability, and all the things we need to do in the province.

It's an industry that we have to grow and we're committed to growing. We've been meeting with the wine industry on a regular basis now to set up an incentive program to work with them, to make sure that industry can grow and prosper. Not only that, but our industries have won international awards against some of the many very well-known wines from all over Europe. I think we're poised to really set up a new economic development tool in the province that hadn't been there before, and we look forward to doing that. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

FIN. & TREASURY BD. - GRADS: JOB CREATION - PLANS

MR. TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, my question today is for the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board. As we saw record increases to our net debt during the Dexter Government, the Liberals cried foul. Yet this new Liberal Government is committed to continuing this trend - \$1 billion more in debt over the next four years. There is no hope for tax relief in Nova Scotia as long as these misguided priorities and shell games of the Liberals continue.

During an interview last week the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board was quoted as saying "we have to balance, but we can't do anything about the debt until our government is in surplus." And I'll table that for the benefit of the House.

We also heard quite a bit of talk today about how we need to create an environment where new grads have an opportunity to get their first job, and I think that all speaks to the business environment that we live in today. So in that same article the minister was quoted as saying that "the government wants to try and stimulate the business community because government can't create jobs, but government has to create the right environment."

So let's look at the environment we have today, Mr. Speaker. We have the highest personal taxes, we have the highest corporate taxes, we have the highest small business taxes, our HST is the highest in the country and our personal income brackets are not indexed so Nova Scotians are suspect to bracket creep. Now we have our new grads getting the biggest tax increase in their lives, so that doesn't sound like an environment that would allow business to create jobs for new grads.

My question today for the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board is, when we look through the budget documents and see three more years of deficit spending and we see four more years of debt increases, what is this government going to do, and when are they going to do it, to create an environment where businesses will be able to grow, where businesses will be able to thrive, and businesses will be able to hire new grads? That environment is not there today and I don't see it in the budget for the next four years so I'd be interested to hear the minister's comments, how is she going to create the environment?

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Finance and Treasury Board - I think we have time for one answer.

HON. DIANA WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, I think there is time maybe even for two. The budget that I presented last week is a fair and honest representation of where we are and that's something that was sorely needed in this province. We are not going to be able to move forward with the confidence level of the business community unless they understood that we were being frank, transparent, and honest about where we are.

I'm sure the member would know that I visited his community; I've been around the province and in many, many communities. I've had round tables with business groups, with students, with young people in the high schools, with non-profit groups, and people who work in social enterprise. I've extended the number of people who have had a chance to have input and I've heard time and again that they felt a greater sense of confidence since the change in government. With that we'll be building the building blocks of trust and working together to actually provide the foundation for growth in our economy because even businesses that might want to expand won't do it if they don't have a sense of confidence in the environment in which they're operating.

MR. HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, travelling around the province and talking to new grads, there is probably cold comfort for them today to know that they've been hit with this massive tax increase. Every Nova Scotian will be hit with bracket creep. The promised HST decrease has been rescinded by this government. The minister said last week, and the minister has been very clear that even with the tax review they're not looking at reducing our revenue. So if the government is not looking at reducing its revenue with this tax review that our Liberal friend from Ontario was going to conduct, I wonder what they are planning to do. (Interruptions) They should do as I say they should do. (Laughter)

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

HON. STERLING BELLIVEAU: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Today in Question Period the backbenchers asked questions, again, of their own Cabinet Ministers. On April 1-2, 2014 - this year - in the Law Amendments Committee, over 150 presenters, members of the public, brought their concerns to this House. Not one question was asked by the Liberal members. Today, those same Liberal backbenchers asked questions in Question Period, taking time from Opposition Parties.

Liberal members have taken time away in Question Period for these Opposition Parties. It appears the Liberal Government has no time for the concerns of the public. I ask for your ruling on that, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: I'll take that under advisement and report back to the House.

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

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

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, I move that you do now leave the Chair and the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole House on Supply unto Her Majesty.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak as we enter into debate on Supply. I'll try to keep it to about the standard 15 minutes.

Mr. Speaker, today in Question Period we talked quite a bit about the Efficiency Nova Scotia charge and that was a significant piece in this government's budget for the year. I know the Premier had mentioned that they are going to be charging this back to Nova Scotia Power only if it saves money.

I guess my concern is that the net benefit for the consumer may be eliminated for two reasons. One, while the cost for the consumer may go down due to greater energy efficiency, power rates could go up for that same consumer because Nova Scotia Power is

going to be paying for those changes, to make it more efficient for that consumer, and will charge it back to the ratepayer - the consumer - as part of their cost of goods sold. Plus, as we heard from our official Leader here, the Leader of the Official Opposition, Nova Scotia Power will be allowed to charge a rate of profit on any cost of goods sold that they have, including costs they have to make things more efficient for the consumer. We know that's part of their guaranteed profit margin. Mr. Speaker, there is quite likely going to be an increase in the actual power rate for the user because of that.

Secondly, I will say that reducing demand is a good thing. It's one of the best things we can do. I know I've done it in my own home by taking advantage of Efficiency Nova Scotia programs and reducing my power bill, primarily through just changing light bulbs. It's amazing. You're using one-fifth of the energy with the new energy-efficient bulbs over the old bulbs. Those are good things.

But one thing I want to point out as a consequence of that, as we see the demand for power drop, the cost per unit goes up. We saw this with the paper mill in Point Tupper; when it came off-line, there was a tremendous decrease in the power demand for the province. As a result, the cost per unit of electricity goes up because you don't have to generate as much power, because there's not as much demand.

It's something we have to be careful of so there's no unintended consequences. Because, Mr. Speaker, if we are driving up the cost per unit, that's not a good thing for consumers, because they're going to pay more per kilowatt hour. Right now, if consumers look on their bill, they're paying about 14 cents per kilowatt hour.

Mr. Speaker, I make this point because it's important for the government, while making these changes, to recognize that, and to come up with a plan to ensure that things like the coal plants that are still generating the majority of our electricity are doing it in an efficient manner, because if they are not generating at full capacity, if they are not running at full efficiency, they are not providing us with power as cheap as it can be.

Also, for those in the Chamber here, Mr. Speaker, who are environmentally conscious, we must look at the emissions. When power plants like coal plants, which generate approximately 60 per cent of the electricity in this province, are not running at full efficiency, and if they are being used to offset declines in, say, wind power and they're being ramped up quickly to make up for that loss of wind power because the wind is not blowing, which often happens during daytime more so than at night, when it is the exact time that we need that power - unless we want to have a blackout, those coal plants have to be fired up. That inefficient burn of the coal is leading to a higher intensity of emissions.

Mr. Speaker, I know it's very easy for members in the Chamber here to say, well, we want to be environmentally conscious, let's just stop burning coal. I know it's easy for them to say, let's embrace all these forms of renewable energy. But I will challenge the members here, why don't we do a review of the measures that have been put into place the

last number of years, to see how well they're actually accomplishing a reduction in emissions? Until we put that information, until it's tabled here in the Legislature, I think we should be very careful of making assumptions that we're being green and that we're helping the environment.

Another point I want to make, if we look at what's driving the rates of power, the cost of power for people in the province, which we know is very significant because we hear people talking about it all the time. We hear people talking about the price of gasoline, as well, and it's really no different. I know people who will drive 10 miles to save a cent on their gas. They're probably not saving anything, but the psychology is there that people are conscious of the cost of gas. The same is true with power rates, although they don't get to choose whether they're going to buy supreme gas or whether they're going to buy regular gas. There's only one rate. They can't choose which station they buy it from either.

The point I'm trying to make, if you go back to 2006 - I looked up the numbers on this - if you look at the energy mix of Nova Scotia Power back in 2006, and if you move that forward in today's dollars with those same energy mixes of coal and natural gas and oil and wind power and our best source of renewable energy at Wreck Cove, a \$3,000 power bill today, using that same energy mix in today's prices for those energy inputs, would be about \$2,000.

If any of the members in this Chamber could go on the doorstep and tell their constituents they could drop their power bill by \$1,000 each year, I'm sure their constituents' ears would perk up and they would take notice. I'd be happy to share that information with the members any time they want to see it. The point I'm making is, I know that removing the Efficiency Nova Scotia charge from power bills was a big part of this budget. It was something that the government wanted to highlight. And that's why I'm tying these other items into it, because at the end of the day, I think what the government wants to do is make power more affordable for people.

To build on my points that I'm making: if we were to reduce the cost of power for people, and if we were to start measuring to see how well we're actually doing with reducing emissions, if we're saving our economy money, if we're saving Nova Scotians \$1,000 a year on their power bills, that's more money that's going into the economy. That's more money that's going to come back to the government in sales tax for instance.

If that money is coming in, then why don't we use some of that instead to invest in renewable energy that is affordable for Nova Scotians? One of the challenges we have, unless we're talking about Wreck Cove, is that a lot of the renewable energy is three or four times the price of coal and natural gas.

We don't make a great deal of difference in this province. While I do respect on principle it's important for us to do our part to help the world in terms of being

environmentally conscious and making the world a better place in the future, we don't really make a lot of impact here because we are a small-populated province.

What I believe we could really do to make an impact is to invest the savings we would have by way of increased tax revenue from increased expenditure from saved money that Nova Scotians would save on their power bills. Invest that money into technology development that would create affordable renewable energy that we could then export around the world to really make a difference in countries such as China, which is the heaviest polluter in the world, and they're not going to make decisions unless they make economic sense for them.

What a case we would be able to build if we had technology that would provide them energy that's efficient and safer for the environment that they could use that's cost competitive. Then we would be making a real difference, not only for the environment, but we would be making a difference in terms of our own economy. Because if we had companies here that were exporting that technology, we'd be bringing some of those dollars into our own economy.

Those are things that seem to make sense to me. I really don't know why - in my mind, it's very simple, and that's the way I've just explained it. It's very simple in my mind what the answer is to our energy problems. If you look at any province in this country that has more affordable power, they are taking advantage of their natural resources, and that's what we should be doing too, Mr. Speaker.

I know there are members in here who represent areas in the CBRM that would benefit significantly from the use of Donkin coal in this province. I know some of them belong to the former NDP Government, and I know that they were very much against that, but I think that would be good for their local economy. If we're looking for ways to make a difference in the future, I think we need to tie our economy and our need to make the province more environmentally friendly together and not be afraid to make decisions that make sense instead of clinging to philosophies that are increasing our power rates, and quite frankly aren't making a real difference in terms of our environment.

What are the benefits, Mr. Speaker? Well, one, we make life more affordable for people; two, we export technology that would make a real difference for the environment in places like China; and three, look at our manufacturing industries. I think of our paper plant in Point Tupper, which is just outside of my constituency, but where many of my constituents work. At the paper mill they were paying \$109 per megawatt hour for power in the month of December, and their competitors in Quebec and Ontario are paying \$30 to \$40 per megawatt hour, largely because of natural gas. They have a safer, more secure supply of natural gas in central Canada.

How can that paper mill in Point Tupper compete with that? Quite frankly, in the long term, I don't believe they can, and that's why I'm raising this today. If we don't act

today on some of these things, we know what our future is going to hold. I know that right now the paper mill is exploring diversification away from paper, and some of the products they are looking at are non-food sugars that they are able to derive from wood. Those are new products that that paper mill could move into production on, but are they going to move into production in this province with power rates that are so much higher than other parts of the country?

The answer is no. I hope it's yes, because it's good for my area, but in reality, I would not expect them to make a decision where they would do that when they can move. They might do their experimentation here, but if they're going to get into a manufacturing operation for that work they're going to go where they can have a solid business case, and unfortunately, if we keep on the same path, they're not going to choose Nova Scotia.

Mr. Speaker, I know there are other places in the province. I know we often hear about fossil fuels, that the price is always going up. We used to hear it from the former government, but they used to do their pricing in American dollars. If they'd just converted it to Canadian dollars, they would have realized that the price of coal is the same today as it was back in 2001. We look at firms like Michelin in this province. A wonderful employer - not in my constituency, but in other parts of the province - that provides great, meaningful employment. They have bought into the idea of using natural gas. Why? Well, obviously because it is cheaper than drawing power down from Nova Scotia Power.

Oxford Frozen Foods is another example, another successful Nova Scotian business. I know from a former MLA from my area who is a good friend of mine, Danny Graham - used to be good friends with a member who is from the Oxford family - from the Bragg family, who owns Oxford Frozen Foods. I know I have to finish up here, but they are buying natural gas, so I think that is proof that the government should be looking more into this. I wish I had more time, because time goes so quickly, but I will stop with that and allow the budget estimates to continue.

MR. SPEAKER: With no other speakers, the House will now recess for one minute while we realign ourselves for the estimates.

The motion is carried.

[3:54 p.m. The House resolved itself into a CWH on Supply with Deputy Speaker Ms. Margaret Miller in the Chair.]

[5:59 p.m. CWH on Supply rose and the House reconvened. Mr. Speaker, Hon. Kevin Murphy, resumed the Chair.]

MR. SPEAKER: The Chairman of the Committee of the Whole House on Supply reports:

THE CLERK: That the committee has met and made considerable progress and begs leave to sit again.

MR. SPEAKER: Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

We have reached the moment of interruption. The topic for tonight's late debate was submitted by the honourable member for Chester-St. Margaret's:

"Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly remind the Liberal Government that the Graduate Retention Rebate benefits thousands of skilled and educated young people each year and ask them to reconsider their short-sighted decision to eliminate this program."

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION UNDER RULE 5(5)

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

GRAD. RETENTION REBATE: DECISION - RECONSIDER

MS. LENORE ZANN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad to be able to get up on my feet and speak to this bill today. I care a lot about the youth in our province, and in Truro we have the Nova Scotia Community College. We also have what is now Dalhousie University Agricultural Campus, so we are a university town - yay, Truro-Bible Hill-Millbrook-Salmon River!

Many people are very worried, concerned, and upset about the changes to the Graduate Retention Rebate. I've been receiving emails, phone calls, and Facebook messages from many parents and students, all concerned about kids who are studying right now who had thought they were going to be able to take advantage of this program, and who are now not going to be able to take advantage of it. They are disappointed, they are shocked, they are dismayed, and they are very angry.

Approximately five years ago, Nova Scotia had the very worst student aid program in the country. The report by Dr. Tim O'Neill that was commissioned by our previous NDP Government outlined the problems and the need to address those problems in our student aid program in order to make post-secondary education more affordable, accessible, and attainable for young people in our province.

We all know that people who have access to post-secondary education, either in our community college system or in our university system, stand a far greater chance in life to be gainfully employed at better levels of income. Statistics also show that they live longer and healthier lives when they have a better education, so I believe it's our responsibility, Mr. Speaker, as politicians and as community leaders, to find ways to make education more affordable, accessible, and attainable for as many Nova Scotians as possible.

I have to make note here that there are many countries in the world much poorer than Canada that have free post-secondary education. In Uruguay, for instance, they have free post-secondary education. In Cuba, which is considered a Third World country, they have 45 universities in their states - one in each state - and they have three major universities, and all of them are free. What the students in those places do to pay back the loan that the government has given them to get free education is give two years of their lives to volunteer in another country, usually a Third World country that is worse off than them. They work in that country for two years at a very low-paying scale before they come back and join the civil force in Cuba.

Mr. Speaker, I have to say that if a small country like Cuba can do that, why can't we work toward something like that in Canada? I would love to be able to speak with the federal government at some point in time about an initiative that would help education right across this country and have more money coming in from the federal government to help our provinces be able to afford something like this.

Now, many people point to Newfoundland and Labrador and say, well, it's only \$5,000 to go to university, so many of our students go over there to Memorial University. The problem, though, is that in Newfoundland and Labrador they have only one university. We have 12 or 13 institutions here in Nova Scotia, so it is very expensive for us here. However, this government, and all governments, I believe, should keep lifelong education as number one and foremost in their efforts to improve our province, to improve the prospects of our people so that going forward into the 21st Century world of knowledge, it's going to play a more and more important part, I believe, in how our students can be placed in the work system of today and tomorrow.

The initiative recently announced by the Liberals to remove the interest on provincial student loans is a piece in the puzzle and it will help in a small way to relieve a small part of the burden that students face, with respect to accessibility and affordability. However, as Opposition critics the New Democratic Party did suspect, and in fact now know for certain, that support has come at the cost of the Graduate Retention Rebate, which the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board, just prior to delivering her budget, said was valued at about \$50 million, with that number increasing every year.

Students and graduates are continuing to express disappointment, shock, dismay, and disgust with this decision, this latest decision to cut the rebate program because not only was the program eliminated by the new Liberal Government, but no program was

introduced to replace it. The Finance and Treasury Board Minister and the Premier, himself, have said, over and over again, the fact that their government has taken the interest off student loans is such a great boom to students; however, it works out to be about \$800 per student and our program was worth \$7,500 to Nova Scotia Community College students, and up to \$15,000 to university students.

The Liberal Government has also said that it was necessary to eliminate the Graduate Retention Rebate program. First of all they blamed the students themselves, saying it was the student organizations that had asked for the program to be cut. Well, that is simply not true and, in fact, I would have to say that it is yet another Liberal untruth because we've already heard from Jonathan Williams, who is the executive director of Students Nova Scotia, who has said publicly that eliminating this program without reinvesting the funding is actually not what students were requesting. He said, "Eliminating the Graduate Retention Rebate without reinvesting in supporting our young people is a betrayal of our students and graduates." Mr. Speaker, I would like to add my voice to that chorus; I feel betrayed, that this is a betrayal to the students and young people of this province.

The other excuse for axing the program that we keep hearing from the Liberals is that it just doesn't work, that it is not keeping graduates here in Nova Scotia. But, Mr. Speaker, they keep saying that it has been seven years now, while in fact the NDP Government only came in 2009 and we added in the Graduate Retention Rebate program in about - either the end of 2009 or beginning of 2010. So it was only in for the last three to four years and I would say, how can you tell if it's working? These kinds of things are investments in the future. Most of the people, the students that I'm hearing from, are in their first, second, and third years of university or college right now so how do we even know if they've had a chance yet to see whether it works?

These are students who are saying, I wanted to stay in Nova Scotia; I was going to be able to get back a rebate, a portion of what I've been paying into this, and I intend to get work and I intend to set up a business, and I want to stay here in Nova Scotia. This is now going to force me out of Nova Scotia, to try to find work elsewhere; there is no incentive for me to stay here.

Again, I would argue that we haven't given it enough time yet to see if it works. I would say, Mr. Speaker, that the fact that we continue to struggle with the out-migration of our best and our brightest minds is no excuse to cut this program, and in fact I would argue it is an excellent reason to keep the program and invest more in our graduates, not less.

There is no single objective of the Graduate Retention Rebate. Like most government programs there are many objectives of the Graduate Retention Rebate - for example, the rebate helps grads manage their debt loads, providing them with cash to put the money where their budgets are bleeding the most. Again I'd like to point out that in

North America students here, when they graduate, are faced with a huge debt and they usually spend most of their lives trying to dig themselves out.

In other countries, like Australia for instance, where I originally came from, they've had programs there whereby the students get their post-graduate education paid for . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The time allotted for the member's comments has expired.

The honourable Minister of Finance and Treasury Board.

HON. DIANA WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, I'm delighted to be able to rise today. I'm really glad this is the subject before us today because there is a lot of misunderstanding around what a Graduate Retention Rebate is and who qualifies for it and even what the history is of it.

The former member was questioning why I used seven years as the measure and that's because the Tories in 2006 introduced - I have some of the debate here today - they introduced in July 6, 2006, Bill No. 31, the Financial Measures (2006) Act which included a graduate tax credit, and when the NDP in 2009 in their first budget introduced this Graduate Retention Rebate with a similar aim, to try and encourage people to stay, at that very time they replaced the graduate tax credit with a new Graduate Retention Rebate is what they said. To quote what Graham Steele, the minister at the time said, "That's why this government is increasing and extending the incentive for new graduates to live and work in Nova Scotia by replacing the Graduate Tax Credit with a new Graduate Retention Rebate."

So it was an extension, a change, a similar program, so we can measure the period before we had any such measures in place, the period from 2006 to 2009 when the Progressive Conservatives introduced a measure like this and then from 2009 to today. We can look at the out-migration, we can look at our population numbers and ask, is it having any effect? I'd like to point out that the previous speaker was wrong in thinking it had not been in existence previously and had even been defined as one of their programs extending what was in place.

I said a number of times today in Question Period that this program doesn't work. I want to be clear that nobody is trying to blame anybody for that or suggest that anybody is responsible for the tax being removed. This was a tax rebate that's available only for people who earn a decent income in order to claim it. I actually asked the people in our department who would be eligible to get the full amount of this rebate - I guess I'll take you through what happens with a new graduate.

When you first come out of university, you don't work the full year. If you're lucky you have a job that you're coming right out and going into - if you're lucky. Most young

graduates of course have been in school from at least January to April of that year, then they go out to try and find a job and attach themselves to the workforce. In the first year they have lower income and they also, by this rule, have to take the education credits and their tuition credits that they have built up from paying for tuition over the years, they have to take that before they're eligible for the Graduate Retention Rebate.

The evidence was clear in the first year and sometimes in the first couple of years of being out of university, very few students were able to take the full amount of the credit. It really was a benefit if they found a good job and if they were able to do that here in Nova Scotia - although there were quite a number of people who ultimately were getting it as each year another cohort would come out of university. There's a real problem around whether it hit the mark on people who were actually going to leave the province or who were staying as a result of this credit.

We know for a fact that many people were getting post-secondary degrees who were not leaving, who had employers here - they were probably doing their degree part time and just continuing to work for the same employer with a new degree and suddenly they were entitled to a tax rebate because their income was high. So we do know that of all the recipients, 35 per cent are over the age of 30 and they get 77 per cent of the amount - so 77 per cent of the amount that was paid out from Nova Scotia taxpayers as a rebate for remaining in the province. It was a disproportionate amount.

Mr. Speaker, I'd read a number of reports by others, and the fact is these are reports that were done with a bent to really review and analyze the credit. We have seven years of experience, as I've already said, seven years of analyzing it. The Clerk has told me that I don't need to table the chart again, but we have a chart that I hope all members have seen, which shows that the retention over the first three years when there was no credit whatsoever or rebate, after three years was 79.2 per cent of that cohort. After the next three years it fell to 77 per cent, and after the current three-year period, it was down to 70.5 per cent. So it was less in each case, if we look at these as three different scenarios. I tabled that earlier. I hope the members have had a chance to look at it. It comes from information from tax filers in Nova Scotia.

The key thing here, Mr. Speaker, is that government has to look at programs. You can't put programs into place and not assess them later. We heard today, on "Information Morning" actually, the former Finance Minister Graham Steele was speaking about the introduction of this credit four years ago or five years ago, and said that there was really no evidence at the time; they just hoped that it would work. What we heard from, and I'll name the three reports I used today - reports from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, the Canadian Federation of Students and Students Nova Scotia all earmarked or targeted this program saying it didn't work, it didn't hit the mark. One of them - it was the Canadian Federation of Students - used the term that it was well-meaning but it didn't hit the mark. That was one way it was described, Mr. Speaker. Again, this was said time and time again.

Mr. Speaker, in the campaign of 2009, this was a campaign commitment of the NDP. That's why they brought it in after the election. But during that time, a report from the Metro which I'll table, actually said that former Premier Darrell Dexter had said the program would cost the province an additional \$6.5 million. That was very much off the mark for a program that again hasn't proven to work. They were very, very far off the mark in what they thought it might have cost. Even in the first year, it was more than double that. I think I'll table that for the House. It was more than double that in the first year that it was offered.

Mr. Speaker, when I spoke about people seeking higher education, post-graduate education, people doing masters' and above, two members of our own caucus here would be eligible for that in a very short time because two of them are doing higher degrees. The Minister of Environment and the Minister of Internal Services and of the Public Service Commission would both be eligible for that in just one year's time. They said that they had been recognizing that was something they would get, should they continue and complete their degree. I just use that as an example of the fact that any degree made you eligible to receive this rebate, provided you were earning a good amount of money.

Again I say, those first years out of university, most of the young people - especially when we look at the cohort 20 to 30 years - they weren't really able to avail themselves of this program because they didn't have the earning power, they weren't earning enough. I can say that for my own children - they didn't claim much of this because they didn't have incomes that were large enough to get it.

Mr. Speaker, I've heard from some people who said they are unemployed and they are upset because they wanted to receive this. They don't understand and I would hope that the other members - especially those who do some tax accounting and know what taxes are about - understand that the average person doesn't understand how their taxes are calculated. You have to earn roughly \$45,000 a year or more to get the full benefit. It varies for each person, depending on the credits they are able to take.

That is more than what most Nova Scotians earn. A sad fact we should all remember is that 54 per cent of our tax filers have taxable income under \$30,000. Mr. Speaker, I'll say that again because some members may not have got it, but 50 per cent of our tax filers are in the lowest tax bracket, and we're charging them and collecting money from them for all of the important services that they know they must pay for. But when we identify a program that doesn't meet its mark, isn't doing what we need it to do, then we have to readjust. Instead, we are putting money into programs like the Graduate to Opportunities program, which will open the door to that all-important first job, which is what young Nova Scotians have told me time and time again.

Mr. Speaker, that one will grow over time, so will the graduate scholarships to help young people go on to post-secondary and higher learning for research and innovation and countless other programs. It is very narrow-minded to only look at one and only to compare

one program to another. We are going to do the kind of program and investments that will actually help young people get that first job and that is what they have all said is the all-important key to staying in this province. Thank you very much.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, Nova Scotians, young graduates are certainly the biggest losers in this first Liberal budget. The sudden cancellation of this Graduate Retention Rebate program is easily the biggest tax increase in our province's history. In fact, it's a 275 per cent increase in the provincial income tax for graduates.

Mr. Speaker, despite what the minister was saying, many graduates in Nova Scotia did benefit from this particular program. I have several children who have benefited from this program and others who had hoped to that will not be able to have that opportunity.

The tax credit, Mr. Speaker, gave graduates who were just starting their career a chance to land on their feet. It provided a little bit of relief to pay down debt or to start a savings account. Thursday's announcement came with no warning and it came without reasonable facts to back up the decision. Perhaps it wasn't working for everyone.

There are many other reasons why our youth are leaving Nova Scotia, Mr. Speaker, one of them is lack of jobs. When it comes to the Graduate Retention Rebate, Nova Scotia graduates are the big losers. Where are the savings going to be spent? Is all of this spending that was taken back from students going to the direction of students? Because of the elimination of the rebate, many young Nova Scotians will see their after-tax income decline this year.

Mr. Speaker, the Graduate Retention Rebate provided up to \$15,000 in relief to graduates who stayed and put down roots in Nova Scotia. That's the price of a first car or a down payment on a first home. The elimination of the program, again, is approximately a 275 per cent tax increase for our graduates. The consolation prize for students is the elimination of interest on student loans, a measure that provides about \$800 in benefit.

Mr. Speaker, we have a demographic problem in Nova Scotia, with more people retiring out of the labour force than young people entering it. It's no secret that our population is aging, that young people are moving away, but it begs the question of who will be left to pay the bills. It will be people like Jake Rideout, a recent graduate who did everything he thought he was supposed to do. After graduation Jake went home to rural Nova Scotia to start a small business because he wanted to create value in his community. Part of his decision to stay and build a business in Nova Scotia was definitely the Graduate Retention Rebate, which he planned to use to service his student debt. Jake doesn't feel entitled but he is disappointed. All he was asking for was some help to get on his feet in exchange for creating value through a small business, injecting life into the rural economy and banking his future on a better Nova Scotia.

Mr. Speaker, unfortunately the future looks pretty bleak for Jake and other young people who choose to stick it out here in the Province of Nova Scotia. By the end of this fiscal year the provincial debt will be over \$15 billion, a new record. Over the next four years the Liberals plan to add another \$1.1 billion to the debt. It will be the same young people who would have benefited from the Graduate Retention Rebate program who will be left wondering what to do, that's if they don't move away first.

Mr. Speaker, this budget has no plan for job creation, no plan for tax relief, no plan for debt relief, and no plan for struggling families. Instead of leading by example, the Liberals are spending more than ever, but not on services. Some of the biggest increases are in administration. They plan to add 551 people to the government payroll this year. They are asking every Nova Scotian to dig a little deeper, but they are failing to realize families are maxed out. Families and small businesses have hit the pay wall. There is no extra room at the end of the month. The government should be setting an example by holding a line and living within its means. Instead, they are going on a costly spending spree.

Mr. Speaker, this is a surprising budget considering it's on the heels of the recently-released Ivany commission report. That report title, *Now or Never*, speaks to the urgency that is needed to change the way we do things in this province. This truly is a tipping point in our province's history.

The Ivany commission tells us we must support our graduates. This government chose to pull the rug out from underneath them instead, and the minister accused young people of being entitled. That doesn't make young people feel valued or supported, nor does it do anything to keep them in Nova Scotia. If anything, the actions of this government continue to find ways to push our best and brightest out of our province. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: That concludes the late debate tonight. We'll now take a short recess while we prepare to resume deliberations of the Committee of the Whole House on Supply.

[6:27 p.m. The House resolved itself into a CWH on Supply with Deputy Speaker Ms. Margaret Miller in the Chair.]

[8:30 p.m. CWH on Supply rose and the House reconvened with Deputy Speaker Ms. Margaret Miller in the Chair.]

MADAM SPEAKER: The Chairman of the Committee of the Whole House on Supply reports:

THE CLERK: That the committee has met, made progress, and begs leave to sit again.

MADAM SPEAKER: Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

[GOVERNMENT BUSINESS]

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

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

PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Madam Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 41.

Bill No. 41 - Electricity Efficiency and Conservation Restructuring (2014) Act.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Energy.

HON. ANDREW YOUNGER: I rise to move that Bill No. 41, the Electricity Efficiency and Conservation Restructuring (2014) Act, be now read a second time.

Madam Speaker, just to make a few comments about this bill, over the past few months we've had a number of meetings and conversations with stakeholders to discuss - and this was something we committed to during the campaign - that we would discuss with people the mechanism in which the Efficiency Nova Scotia charge would be removed from bills.

There were a number of things we said. We said it would not come under the control of Nova Scotia Power. We said Efficiency Nova Scotia would also remain independent. It was nice to see that the member for Argyle-Barrington, on January 22nd, actually encouraged the government to do just that. In fact, he encouraged us to go out and look at the mechanism; we do that in a Chronicle Herald article. They went one step further, of course, the member suggested that the tax should be added not only to electricity bills, but increase it and add it to oil and propane bills. I will table that from The Chronicle Herald on January 22nd.

Madam Speaker, today in the media scrums I understand that the member for Cape Breton Centre suggested that Efficiency Nova Scotia was working just fine and should be left as it is; yet the Utility and Review Board said, in fact, it was not. So there were changes that needed to be made. We committed the tax would come off the bills. We also found out, upon becoming government, the previous government had chosen not to address the HST

issue, which was costing ratepayers \$4.7 million a year, needlessly. We have addressed that.

We also committed to addressing a number of other issues. I was pleased to see that a couple of weeks ago we received a letter from a number of organizations, including the Environmental Defence Fund, the David Suzuki Foundation, Greenpeace Canada, the Sierra Club Canada, and the Pembina Institute - asking us to go with a model that would involve competition. I'll table that.

Yesterday the Ecology Action Centre put out a release congratulating us for going with a model that involved competition, so I'll table that as well. Madam Speaker, just about an hour and a half ago, I was pleased to hear the Affordable Energy Coalition of Nova Scotia say that they not only felt that this would improve the lives of Nova Scotians, in fact, they were very happy to see what is being proposed.

Madam Speaker, there are a number of changes that will be coming. Efficiency Nova Scotia will become, effectively, a utility - an independent utility under the Public Utilities Act. On January 1, 2015, every ratepayer, whether business or residential, will save between 4 per cent and 5 per cent on their bills and that will be a permanent savings.

Let's just take a look at what that means. A residential customer heating with electricity and using electric hot water will save, on average, \$11 to \$15 a month as a result of that. A small automotive garage will save, on average, according to the numbers we've been given, \$406 a year, just on that. A daycare will be saving money, a couple hundred dollars a year, as a result of that. Every single category - and I will table this, which is information actually tabled with the Utility and Review Board from Nova Scotia Power. It outlines the average cost savings for different categories of businesses as a result of this change, just from the fee coming off, and I'll get to the other savings in just a minute - that's just the savings on the tax alone.

There are other changes. Madam Speaker, at the moment ratepayers in this province are paying for low-income programs. As of January 1, 2015, Nova Scotia Power will not only be paying, through shareholder dollars, the full cost of low-income electricity programs but they will be paying it at an increased rate from what it is today, which means an increased investment in low-income funding for efficiency programs, which means that every single low-income home in this province will be upgraded, free of charge, as a result of the action that this government has taken. (Applause)

Madam Speaker, that means real savings in the pockets of not only low-income families but other families in this province, because that is a charge that currently ratepayers are paying which may not be claimed back against ratepayers in any way possible - that is entirely out of shareholder dollars.

Ratepayers will also save the \$4.7 million a year on the HST. Again, those are dollars in the pockets of every single ratepayer in this province.

We have worked with Efficiency Nova Scotia and they've committed that they will not only be delivering the same program level but they will be delivering it with a lower administrative and overhead burden, which is an additional saving of roughly \$1.5 million a year - that's over \$10 million a year in direct savings to ratepayers that the previous government was unwilling to move forward with.

Madam Speaker, there has been a lot of talk about what happens to the rest of the programs. Well, the only charge that ratepayers will ever pay as part of the fuel process is when it displaces the fuel they otherwise were going to pay for. So on January 1st, on February 1st of next year, on March 1st, in the future - it doesn't matter whether it's 2016, 2017, 2018 - they will only be paying when it displaces a higher cost fuel that they otherwise would have paid, and that amount of money will be auditable by international standards and it will be reportable to ratepayers, and they will know exactly how much money they paid because it will offset a fuel that they otherwise would have paid.

Let me be very clear - the items that are not being offset are being paid 100 per cent by Nova Scotia Power shareholders. The rest is offset fuel costs that they otherwise would have paid. Madam Speaker, that is a permanent and increasing savings to ratepayers in every single year; in fact, the report just came out today from the U.S. that showed exactly what that could mean to ratepayers and compared those savings. Those savings showed that at the moment our lowest-priced per kilowatt hour fuel prices can be anywhere from - on just the fuel basis alone - can be anywhere from 4 cents, 5 cents, 6 cents, depending on what the fuel is on the lowest end of that scale. That is the highest end of the scale that is likely to be there for the efficiency side.

You know what, Madam Speaker? I was asked today what happens if the efficiency costs per megawatt are higher. Well, then ratepayers won't pay for it. They will only ever pay for it when it is cheaper and they will know the cost-saving difference and that cost saving will be on their bill and that cost saving will save them money on every single power bill that they pay in this province as long as this is in place. (Applause)

Madam Speaker, I can understand that parts of this may be complicated. The Leader of the New Democratic Party, back in December, criticized me for suggesting that before bringing the bill in we wanted to avoid unintended consequences - well, that's why we waited until now, to make sure we had those pieces in place, to make sure that we met with and worked with the stakeholders to achieve getting bills down and making sure it was real savings and making sure we didn't end up with unintended consequences, like an HST charge that ratepayers have paid ever since the previous government introduced that bill, that they shouldn't have paid and they didn't need to be paying and was only going to fund the coffers of government.

Madam Speaker, this is a real saving for ratepayers and I am pleased we have been able to get here. I'm looking forward to the stakeholders who have indicated an interest in speaking on this bill and have already spoken publicly. I'm looking forward and I'm interested in hearing the comments from the Opposition.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle-Barrington.

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Madam Speaker, it's my pleasure to stand this evening and maybe speak for a few moments to Bill No. 41. I thank the minister for that explanation. Hopefully, after a while, we'll get an explanation that actually makes a little bit of sense of what's going to work and what's not going to work for Nova Scotians, because it tends to change as this bill's been introduced, as other people have been talking about it and as we read newspaper articles about what it's supposed to do, what it's not supposed to do. My goodness, my goodness, my goodness.

Just as he said, it might be a little complicated. But my grandmother always said one thing: if it's complicated, it's probably not going to work. And that's probably what's going to happen here too.

The Premier was talking earlier today about this deal and it not going on the rate base. This is the contention that we'll continue to talk about throughout here. He was saying it will not end up in the general rate for Nova Scotia Power, it will not end up there. What we see happening here is a bit of a shell game. So you take it off of this bill as a correct charge, as a charge that's showing here, and it's just going to be racked up next time the opportunity rolls around for Nova Scotia Power to ask for an increase at the URB. It's nothing more than a shell game.

Maybe we're good for this year because they haven't asked for a rate increase. I see the minister over there, shaking his head, and I hope he's right. But even he said - but really what I want to (Interruptions) I don't know who's heckling whom, but I think honestly your folks here are heckling you somehow.

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: Madam Speaker, what bugs me the most about this is that when we saw a minister and a Premier thinking they knew better than Nova Scotia Power, we ended up with the Muskrat Falls 35-year deal that's going to cost Nova Scotians more and more throughout its life. I hope that we've learned from some bad decisions and some bad dealing that we won't end up in the same place that we ended up with the last guys and gals. (Interruptions) See what happens? You can't win around here.

Let's go to the shell game that it actually is. (Interruptions) Yeah, I know, it goes around. It's actually kind of funny, because we do talk about Efficiency Nova Scotia. It seems like four years ago we were talking about Conserve Nova Scotia, and in four years'

time we'll be talking - or actually nine years' time - we might be talking about something completely different, because it seems every government has a better idea. I can say that we in this caucus, and I'm sure everybody in this House does want to see energy efficiency and wants to see lower power rates, and all of us have different ideas on how to get there.

I don't think this is the way to get there. This is not going to create the savings that the minister has talked about. It is a bit of smoke and mirrors we believe, a little bit lacking in transparency in how it's going - and a common theme for this government over the last bit. What's important here is that during the campaign - that's the one that gets us as well - the Liberals said it would make Nova Scotia Power pay the \$46 million for Efficiency Nova Scotia.

We really didn't get that in this one. The Liberals gave Nova Scotians the impression that they could have their cake and eat it too. They realized that they made that irresponsible promise. Instead of Nova Scotia Power paying for Efficiency Nova Scotia out of its profits, the cost will instead be passed on to Nova Scotians. The \$35 million for Efficiency Nova Scotia will be recovered from Nova Scotia's power bills despite what they said before the election.

Nova Scotians should question whether this means the fee is already gone. They should question the government because the fee has just been pushed out one year ahead. Not one dollar will be taken from Nova Scotia Power's profits, I can pretty much assure you of that. They'll find a way around that one, because there's nothing in this bill that will stop them from doing that. Nova Scotia Power will be able to recoup it over a number of years, whether this year, next year or over eight years - I think that is what the bill is prescribing. Nova Scotians don't buy this. It is a broken promise.

Not only will this not come out of Nova Scotia Power's profits but it will also contribute further to Nova Scotia Power's profits due to its guaranteed rate of return. I don't know how both of those things mash together, but if you are asking for 9 per cent on one side and you are asking your province to pay for a program out of the other side. The math doesn't add up.

Funding for the 2015 year will be capped at \$35 million, down from the \$46 million that they were getting in 2014 - a nearly \$10 million gap from the previous year. This begs the question as to whether or not there will be an impact on services - \$10 million less means there's going to be a break in it somewhere. There's going to be less of something, so let's see where that less of something is. You operate on less money, you are going to offer less service. It is as simple as that.

Of course, the decision that Efficiency Nova Scotia has made before the Integrated Resource Plan is released, as well as the electricity review - two important documents that I'm sure would help direct the minister in his decision-making. Both of these are underway and could result in changes to the amount of energy efficiency Nova Scotia Power will

purchase. We may very well see further changes to Efficiency Nova Scotia in the near future - another point not addressed by the government in their announcement.

It's interesting that the government talks about modelling Efficiency Nova Scotia after the Vermont model. It's worth noting that Vermont moved away from blending the efficiency rate into the general electricity rate, unlike this government. Instead, Vermont clearly marks the efficiency fee on power bills for the sake of transparency, so again, we're moving toward another batch of smoke and mirrors on electricity rates, on electricity prices.

Nova Scotians are tired of the uncertainty in their power rates. They don't know what Muskrat Falls will do to their power bills, as I mentioned a little bit earlier. They are sick of that price uncertainty, and they will grow just as tired of the lack of transparency when it comes to Efficiency Nova Scotia. So again, here we have an example of this government's lack of transparency. You move forward, not entirely sure what the impact on ratepayers will be or what electricity rates will look like in the near future.

The government has opted to build a house of cards to look like they are keeping up on their promise. Nova Scotians are wondering - if this is so hard to explain, there must be something hidden. The minister just said it's very complicated, and I can tell you that we've had three or four different explanations along the way here. I can say that during his press briefing he got a little aggravated with the press corps at that time because they weren't understanding what he was trying to explain. If it's that hard to explain, there must be a problem with it.

Madam Speaker, we look forward to hearing from the stakeholders, just like the minister, and citizens and Law Amendments to provide further feedback on the potential impact that these changes to Efficiency Nova Scotia will have. Madam Speaker, this isn't a great bill, this isn't a great forward, and it is a broken promise on behalf of the Liberal Government.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cape Breton Centre.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Madam Speaker, I will not speak long on this bill. There's certain times that we chide the government about breaking promises and not delivering, and there's times we wish they would just not deliver at all.

If I were to think that all the things that the minister has said were accurate, I'd be applauding like his benches were, too, but I don't think this bill is as advertised, Madam Speaker. It does not do the things that the minister implies it will do. Today in Question Period I quoted John Merrick, who I suspect used words strongly against this bill. (Interruption)

You know, the minister says no, so let me just do a couple of quotes from him, and I'll table them after that, Mr. Speaker: "In order for the government to be able to say they're not increasing anybody's rates, for that year . . ." meaning 2016, ". . . they're going to defer those costs," Merrick said in an interview after the government announcement." Well has he been misquoted? That's what we're talking about.

AN HON. MEMBER: Who's on first?

MR. CORBETT: I saw the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal play ball, certainly not him.

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable member for Cape Breton Centre has the floor.

MR. CORBETT: Madam Speaker, I will keep my comments directly towards you and I apologize for deviating from that but this bill does not do near what the minister has said. They have neglected this, they got caught out on it in the Fall when they were going to all these marvellous things, and quite honestly, I think by bringing this bill in the House they should have kept the brakes on it. As the minister talked about unintended consequences, then he should have listened to his own conscience and not brought this forward at this time. There will be issues around rate increases and if he doesn't believe that, he's dreaming in Technicolor because that's exactly what is going to happen. This bill does not bring to Nova Scotians any certainty and indeed any efficiency.

With those few words I will take my place and say our Party will not be supporting this bill.

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

The honourable Minister of Energy.

HON. ANDREW YOUNGER: Thank you, Madam Speaker, I just want to clarify a couple of points and then we'll move it on to Law Amendments Committee. The member for Argyle-Barrington in particular said well, how can it go down by \$10 million? It's unfortunate that he knows a lot about the press briefing and wasn't there where Efficiency Nova Scotia explained they will be delivering the (Interruption) where Efficiency Nova Scotia actually stated that they will be delivering the same amount of programs. The member obviously didn't hear in my initial remarks where that \$10 million reduction comes from so I will just reiterate it since I guess he missed that.

First of all, it is \$4.7 million in savings from the HST alone; second of all, Nova Scotia Power shareholders will be picking up \$3.7 million annually to retrofit every low-income home in this province. I know that is difficult for the member for Cape Breton Centre since they added the tax on low-income power bills across this province and we're

not only taking the tax off but we're actually retrofitting every one of those homes in the province for free. Of course, we also worked with Efficiency Nova Scotia (Interruptions)

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Energy has the floor.

MR. YOUNGER: The third one which brings that to \$10 million, of course they reduced their administrative costs but they were very clear the program levels will be the same.

The last thing that I just want to address, the member for Argyle-Barrington is absolutely correct that the IRP process will direct part of this, he is absolutely correct that has been underway, and as a matter of fact, in terms of setting that program level for this year that's where that number comes from is from the initial work on the IRP. The member is absolutely correct and one of the reasons that it is set for one year only is because for future years it will of course be set through the IRP process.

We'd obviously be happy to walk the member through any of the details on these numbers any time he wants and for the comfort of the member for Cape Breton Centre, the Consumer Advocate had his briefing after he did that interview. We've talked since and he actually says he's very comfortable with the bill and actually recognizes especially the savings to ratepayers I just outlined. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 41. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Since tomorrow is Opposition Day I would now ask the House Leader for the New Democratic Party to give us the business for tomorrow.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable House Leader for the New Democratic Party.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Thank you, Madam Speaker. After the daily routine and Question Period, we will be calling Bill Nos. 16 and 39. Now I will turn it over to the Government House Leader to call the hours.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Madam Speaker, tomorrow the House will sit on Wednesday, April 9th, from 2:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. I move that the House do now rise to meet again tomorrow.

MADAM SPEAKER: The motion is that the House rise to meet again on Wednesday, April 9th, between the hours of 2:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

We stand adjourned until 2:00 p.m. tomorrow.

[The House rose at 8:56 p.m.]

NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3)**RESOLUTION NO. 929**

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 volunteers are the cornerstone of Nova Scotia's communities who generously give their time and talents while expecting nothing in return; and

Whereas on April 7th more than 70 volunteers were recognized for the valuable contributions they make to their communities and our province at the 40th Annual Provincial Volunteer Awards Ceremony; and

Whereas Albert Houghton has spent 17 years volunteering time and energy for his community to organizations such as the Lions Club of Kentville, the Kentville Blood Donor Clinic, the Independent Order of Oddfellows, the Kentville New Horizons Club, the Cancer Society, the Salvation Army, the Canadian Red Cross, the Hall's Harbour Fire Department, the Bethany Memorial Baptist Church, the Apple Blossom Festival, Valley Health Services, the Canadian Mental Health Association, the Hall's Harbour Community Club, the SPCA, the Kings Historical Heritage Museum, the Charles MacDonald House Society and the Evergreen Home for Special Care;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Albert Houghton of Kentville for his exemplary commitment and service to his community, for receiving the Volunteer of the Year for 2014 for the Town of Kentville and thank him for making Nova Scotia stronger.

RESOLUTION NO. 930

By: Hon. David Wilson (Sackville-Cobequid)

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

Whereas Christa Anderson and Derek Cole are residents of Lower Sackville, where they live with their young son, Anderson; and

Whereas Christa used her breastfeeding experience to develop a wearable bottle system that can be used by a mother, father or other caregiver to simulate the breastfeeding position; and

Whereas Nurse Me Tender was featured on CBC television's *Dragons' Den* in February, where they negotiated a \$50,000 investment for a 50 per cent partnership in their business;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia Legislature recognizes Lower Sackville's Christa Anderson and Derek Cole for the creation of the Nurse Me Tender wearable baby bottle, providing caregivers who might not otherwise have the opportunity to have the breastfeeding experience, and congratulates them on their successful partnership with members of CBC's *Dragons' Den* and extend wishes for continued success.

RESOLUTION NO. 931

By: Ms. Karla MacFarlane (Pictou West)

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

Whereas volunteers are the cornerstone of Nova Scotia's communities who generously give their time and talents, while expecting nothing in return; and

Whereas on April 7th more than 70 volunteers were recognized for the valuable contributions they make to their communities and our province at the 40th Annual Provincial Volunteer Awards Ceremony; and

Whereas Fred Dobson was named the 2014 Volunteer of the Year for the Town of Pictou in recognition of his years as a minor hockey coach, 46 year involvement with all levels of soccer from minor to college, his membership in the Knights of Columbus, and his volunteer efforts in many hours to community projects particularly over 1,000 hours on renovations to the Stella Maris Church Hall;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Mr. Fred Dobson on his award, and thank him for willingly assisting his community wherever he can and making Nova Scotia stronger.

RESOLUTION NO. 932

By: Mr. Tim Houston (Pictou East)

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

Whereas for over 90 years a soldier has stood next to a cross in Westville, his bronze frame turned green with age and his task to serve as a gathering point to remember those who made the ultimate sacrifice; and

Whereas this cenotaph is in grave need of major repair, the town, the legion, the military museum and the public have come together to return the Westville Memorial Cenotaph to its former glory; and

Whereas this effort will turn back the hands of time for the soldier and will return the Cenotaph to better than original condition, make it more accessible, and extend its life for another century;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate the partners who have come together in this project to honour those who did not return.

RESOLUTION NO. 933

By: Mr. Chuck Porter (Hants West)

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

Whereas the Avonview Avalanche Boys High School hockey team just completed a tremendous season of high school hockey by finishing in third place in the Valley High School Hockey League and after starting the season 3 to 3 before finishing on an incredible 10-0-1 run; and

Whereas the Avalanche placed second in the NSSAF Western Zone Division 1 High School Regional Playoffs and made it to a sudden death semi-final playoff game in the Valley League playoffs; and

Whereas the Avalanche were led this season by a group of seven graduating players in League-Leading Scorers Brett Wallace and Trevor House, who both finished with 45 points, Alex Williams, Matt Brison, Jake Lloy, Tristan Horner, and Cory Whitney, who all will be sorely missed when the 2014-15 team hits the ice;

Therefore be it resolved that all MLAs applaud the tremendous job done as well by the Avonview coaching staff in Mark Tye, Glenn Earley, and manager Scott Lloy while wishing both coaching staff and players a great summer.

RESOLUTION NO. 934

By: Mr. Chuck Porter (Hants West)

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

Whereas Avon Emporium owner Doris Hagmann retired at the end of February after a number of great years of providing an exceptional service to customers and tourists along the Hants Shore; and

Whereas the Emporium is not staying empty for long, as Chris and Melissa Velden, owners of The Flying Apron Cookery Ltd., are relocating from Tantallon to Summerville and hope to be open by the middle of April; and

Whereas Velden said in a recent newspaper interview that “she sees great potential with the building and that our focus will be locally sourced and sustainable food”;

Therefore be it resolved MLAs applaud the tremendous entrepreneurial spirit of Doris Hagmann over the past several years while wishing continued success to new owners Chris and Melissa Velden.

RESOLUTION NO. 935

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 volunteers are the cornerstone of Nova Scotia’s communities, who generously give their time and talents while expecting nothing in return; and

Whereas on April 7th more than 70 volunteers were recognized for the valuable contributions they make to their communities and our province at the 40th Annual Provincial Volunteer Awards Ceremony; and

Whereas Crystal, Lorne, Christopher, and Abigail Peach have collectively volunteered 870 hours as a family in numerous capacities to such organizations as the Kings County Academy Winter Wear Recycle Program, Scouts Canada, Co-Ed Volleyball NS, Girl Guides of Canada, and organized large-scale trail and playground clean-up programs, coached mini volleyball, organized charity tournaments, acted as church choir director or Youth Sunday School teacher, and sang for local seniors;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate the Peach family of Kentville for their outstanding efforts and for being recognized as the Provincial Volunteer Family of the Year for 2014 by the Town of Kentville and thank them for making Nova Scotia stronger