



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Kevin Murphy

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First Session

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 23, 2014

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House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, WEDNESDAY, APRIL 23, 2014

Sixty-second General Assembly

First Session

2:00 P.M.

SPEAKER

Hon. Kevin Murphy

DEPUTY SPEAKER

Ms. Margaret Miller

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. We'll begin the daily routine. There is no late debate tonight.

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Community Services.

HON. JOANNE BERNARD: Mr. Speaker, earlier this month the Premier proclaimed April as Sexual Assault Awareness Month, 2014, in Nova Scotia. On April 1st I read a statement in this House where I challenged all Nova Scotians, and my MLA colleagues, to help raise awareness about sexualized violence and sexual assault, and not to be a bystander.

Today, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that all MLAs are participating in Nova Scotia's first Denim Day by wearing denim ribbons in support of sexual assault and rape survivors. Sexual assault is an affront to human dignity, no matter where it occurs, and it can happen to anyone regardless of their sex, age, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, or where they live.

To continue to raise awareness about this important issue I am pleased that we are supporting Denim Day in this House. Denim Day is an international movement which aims to make a social statement with a fashion statement. This year the Avalon Sexual Assault Centre led the organization of a Denim Day in Halifax, and asked people to wear denim in support of sexual assault survivors.

Mr. Speaker, Denim Day began in Italy in the 1990s when a controversial rape case was being fought in the courts. A rape conviction was overturned because the appeal court judges ruled that since jeans cannot be removed easily, the victim must have consented. Following that decision a group of women lawmakers started a jeans strike, wearing denim in the Italian Parliament in protest of the ruling. That started an international movement fighting victim blaming in sexual assault cases.

Last year in the U.S. alone, 10 million people participated in Denim Day. This year Denim Day comes to Halifax and I am honoured, Mr. Speaker, to designate today, April 23rd, as Denim Day here in the Nova Scotia House of Assembly in support of all Nova Scotians who have been the victim of sexual assault or rape. I hope that each of us, as we wear these ribbons today, will take a moment to reflect on how we can all play a role in ensuring that we not only prevent sexual assault from occurring but do everything we can, as elected officials, to ensure survivors are cared for and have the supports and services they require.

I also want to thank the staff of the Avalon Sexual Assault Centre for their leadership in organizing this important awareness event and show of support for the survivors of sexual assault and rape. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the minister for providing me with a copy of her statement earlier today. When the minister read her original statement about Sexual Assault Awareness Month I said that this is an issue that should be addressed 365 days a year, and I am pleased that all MLAs are wearing denim ribbons in support of sexual assault and rape survivors. Denim Day is an accessible way that everyone can raise awareness about sexual assault and sexual violence - everyone has a pair of jeans; everyone can take a stand against sexual violence.

I want to take a moment to thank the staff and volunteers at the Avalon Sexual Assault Centre for organizing Denim Day in Halifax. They are the people on the front lines

who see the terrible impact sexual assault has on victims; they also provide support and knowledge and get to witness the remarkable strength and resilience of survivors.

The origins of Denim Day remind us that it was not very long ago that the clothes a woman chose to wear could play a large role in a criminal trial; it reminds us that we can never go back to those days; and it reminds us of the importance of supporting all those who have been victims of sexual assault or rape.

I am pleased that today has been designated as Denim Day, and I join the minister in urging all members to take a moment to think about the role we can all play in preventing sexual violence and in providing the support that survivors need and so deserve. Thank you.

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

MS. LENORE ZANN: Mr. Speaker, I too thank the minister for the advance copy of her statement and I too feel this statement - its due has come today. It should have been done many years ago but I am glad to see it coming forward today.

I'm very pleased to be able to stand here and speak about Denim Day 2014. It is important to us, as public figures, to encourage awareness about sexual violence and participate in public events like Denim Day. Doing so is one way for us to do that. I think it's also important for us to take this message back to our constituencies, to our communities, to families. As the minister mentioned, we must do everything we can to not only prevent sexual assault but also to ensure that survivors are believed, listened to, supported, and cared for.

We must also do a better job of educating our children and young people about consent, about sexualized violence, about healthy relationships, and about valuing and respecting each other as human beings. This is a very complex issue and one that requires us all to work together.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank those who support sexual assault survivors and victims of violence in our communities, each and every day. This includes all of the women's centres right across this province. Organizations like Bryony House, Tearmann Society, Adsum for Women & Children, Avalon Sexual Assault Centre, Cape Breton Transition House, and both Third Place Transition House and the Colchester Sexual Assault Centre in Truro are just some of these. The work that these organizations and the women who work for them do, such as front-line health care and social workers, is vitally important and we must continue to find ways to work with all of them and to promote the causes that they so passionately support and help to fund them financially.

As I mentioned earlier I am very pleased to stand in the House today in support of Denim Day and I hope that the ribbons that we are all wearing will continue to spark conversations and bring awareness and, more importantly, to bring an end to sexual assault and sexual violence in Nova Scotia. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Community Services.

RESOLUTION NO. 1280

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

Whereas Mr. Mel Boutilier has announced his resignation from the Parker Street Food and Furniture Bank, an organization he founded more than 30 years ago to provide services to some of our most vulnerable citizens; and

Whereas Mr. Boutilier has dedicated the past 31 years of his life as a volunteer to helping those in need and is an inspiration to us all; and

Whereas Mr. Boutilier, at the age of 86, is now seeking a new opportunity to contribute to society by expressing an interest in helping youth, again inspiring us with his dedication to helping others, his generosity with his time, and his humanity for his fellow citizens;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House offer, on behalf of all Nova Scotians, our heartfelt thanks and congratulations to Mel Boutilier for his 31 years of service as a volunteer helping to make life better for vulnerable citizens, for founding a remarkable and successful organization, the Parker Street Food and Furniture Bank, and may we also wish Mr. Boutilier success in his 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 Minister of Immigration.

RESOLUTION NO. 1281

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

Whereas Immigrant Settlement and Integration Services (ISIS) is a community organization that welcomes immigrants to our province and offers services and creates opportunities to help immigrants to participate fully in Nova Scotian life; and

Whereas each year the Great Place to Work Institute Canada ranks Canadian organizations as great places to work based on a number of dimensions including credibility, respect, fairness, pride, and camaraderie; and

Whereas Immigrant Settlement and Integration Services has been ranked as one of the best workplaces in Canada for 2014 by Great Place to Work Institute Canada;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly celebrate and congratulate ISIS on this prestigious honour and thank them for the very important work they do in helping immigrants become settled and feel at home in Nova Scotia.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

RESOLUTION NO. 1282

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

Whereas April 20-26, 2014 is dedicated in Canada as National Medical Laboratory Week; and

Whereas across the country, medical laboratory professionals work expertly to provide high-quality, accurate diagnostic information to support the appropriate care of patients; and

Whereas National Medical Laboratory Week provides us a wonderful opportunity to acknowledge and recognize the medical laboratory staff throughout Nova Scotia who work as integral members of our health care teams to provide safe, high-quality care to our patients;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House recognize the effort and professionalism of medical laboratory technologists, assistants, and support staff who strive to help maintain the health and well-being of Nova Scotians and all Canadians.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Justice.

RESOLUTION NO. 1283

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

Whereas the Southwest Nova Scotia Correctional Facility, Nova Scotia's newest facility, is celebrating its 10th Anniversary; and

Whereas the staff at the facility would like to thank the Town of Yarmouth for their continued support during the last decade and wish to acknowledge the dedication of the many community volunteers who help with educational, recreational, and spiritual programs for offenders; and

Whereas a plaque was presented to the Town of Yarmouth at a recent council meeting to recognize this important milestone and community partner;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House show their appreciation for this important partnership and encourage continued collaboration to help keep our communities safe.

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. 62 - Entitled An Act Respecting the Halifax Convention Centre. (Hon. Michel Samson)

Bill No. 63 - Entitled An Act to Amend Chapter 1 of the Acts of 1995-96. The Education Act. (Hon. Karen Casey)

Bill No. 64 - Entitled An Act Respecting Certain Financial Measures. (Hon. Diana Whalen)

Bill No. 65 - Entitled An Act to Amend Chapter 69 of the Acts of 1992. The Nova Scotia Provincial Exhibition Commission Act. (Hon. Keith Colwell)

Bill No. 66 - Entitled An Act to Amend Chapter 39 of the Acts of 2008. The Halifax Regional Municipality Charter, and Chapter 18 of the Acts of 1998. The Municipal Government Act. (Hon. Mark Furey)

Bill No. 67 - Entitled An Act to Establish the Invest Nova Scotia Board. (Hon. Michel Samson)

Bill No. 68 - Entitled An Act to Amend Chapter 39 of the Acts of 2010. The Oak Island Treasure Act, and Chapter 438 of the Revised Statutes of 1989. The Special Places Protection Act. (Hon. Denise Peterson-Rafuse)

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

We're going to revert back to the order of business.

TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

HON. KAREN CASEY: Mr. Speaker, I have two reports to table. The first one I'd like to table is a report, *School Review Process Study Report and Recommendations*, February 2014.

MR. SPEAKER: The report is tabled.

The honourable Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

HON. KAREN CASEY: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table the report, *Minister's Response to the School Review Process Study Report and Recommendations*, April 2014.

MR. SPEAKER: The report is tabled.

NOTICES OF MOTION

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

RESOLUTION NO. 1284

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 official celebration to mark the incorporation of the Town of Sydney Mines will take place April 26th to mark the 125th year of its proud history; and

Whereas the past 125 years will be celebrated by community groups throughout the year, focusing on many events that unfolded in the town since 1889; and

Whereas Sydney Mines was one of the top coal-producing communities in North America, had its own steel plant, and a population that peaked at 10,000;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in saluting the Town of Sydney Mines as it celebrates the 125th Anniversary.

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. 1285

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

Whereas *Teens Talk Now* empowers youth to develop a powerful and positive voice to address important cultural issues; and

Whereas *Teens Talk Now* works to connect youth with resources and opportunities to affect community change; and

Whereas *Teens Talk Now* received a 2014 Justice Minister's Award for leadership in crime prevention;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia Legislature congratulate *Teens Talk Now*, its founder and publisher Jessica Bowden, and its staff and contributors, for empowering and inspiring youth, and express its appreciation of the value the magazine provides to our community.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Labour and Advanced Education.

RESOLUTION NO. 1286

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

Whereas the Bedford Lions Club supports many activities in the community of Bedford; and

Whereas these activities include but are not limited to sponsoring the local Air Cadet Wing and the local high school's Speak Out competition; and

Whereas the Bedford Lions Club recently donated an electronic digital scoreboard to the new Charles P. Allen High School;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly congratulate the Bedford Lions Club on its unstinting support of youth in the community of Bedford and wish the club much success in all its 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 Colchester-Musquodoboit Valley

RESOLUTION NO. 1287

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

Whereas today is Administrative Professionals Day; and

Whereas this is an opportunity to recognize and show gratitude for the hard work and attention to detail of administrative staff; and

Whereas administrative professionals are the backbone of every workplace and are essential to every operation;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly acknowledge today as Administrative Professionals Day, and take the time to thank our administrative staff for everything they do and tell them that we couldn't do it without them.

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. 1288

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 statistics tell us that May is the most dangerous month for motorcyclists, and to increase driver attention to motorcycle traffic on Nova Scotia roads and help prevent fatalities May has been named Motorcycle Safety Awareness Month; and

Whereas on Saturday, April 27, 2013, Arnie Salsman, a member of the Valley Shifters, was killed while riding in what was a preventable accident, has become symbolic of the tragedy and personal loss faced by too many families; and

Whereas the Diamond Devilz, a women's biker group who rise to support charities and to fundraise for specific causes, have organized the 1st Annual Arnie "Crow" Salsman Memorial Ride in memory of Arnie Salsman and to heighten awareness, among drivers, of the need to watch for motorcyclists;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House recognize the dangers facing motorcyclists on Nova Scotian roads, and the value of the "Watch for Motorcyclists" campaign and signage to help reduce preventable accidents and eliminate motorcycle deaths on our roads and highways.

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 Dartmouth South.

RESOLUTION NO. 1289

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

Whereas too many of us have experienced the poignant and exceptional pain that is only felt with the tragic loss of a child; and

Whereas the Children's Memorial Dragonfly Park Society has recognized the need for a cherished place where families and community members can share the impact of the loss of a child, reflect together, and honour local children who have died; and

Whereas with the help of the Halifax Regional Municipality a Children's Memorial Dragonfly Park will be built as a garden on the bank of Sullivan's Pond in Dartmouth this Spring, the result of the society's work over the past year;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly sincerely recognize the meaningful and far-reaching efforts of the Children's Memorial Dragonfly Park Society to support families in our community, and congratulate its members on the upcoming opening of this special place.

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 Halifax Atlantic.

RESOLUTION NO. 1290

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

Whereas Chebucto Connections has recognized Marjorie Willison's contribution to the development of the Chebucto Connections organization by creating a literacy award in her name; and

Whereas the winner of this first annual literacy award was announced at the February 26th grand opening of the new Chebucto Connections office; and

Whereas the Halifax Community Learning Network was the first to receive this literacy award for their adult literacy program offered at the Captain William Spry Centre;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate the Halifax Community Learning Network for their outstanding work in literacy, and wish them continued success with their program.

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. 1291

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 Perennia Innovation Centre, located in Bible Hill, is an environmentally friendly 25,000-square-foot facility that acts as an incubation centre for budding agriculture and marine-based commercial initiatives; and

Whereas working closely with the Dalhousie University Agricultural Campus, Perennia offers technical expertise to help young entrepreneurs transform their ideas into marketable, higher-value products; and

Whereas Perennia has a number of ongoing experimental operations including blueberry leaves for the Chinese tea market, a seaweed extract used to treat diabetes, and the use of starfish blood which helps replace lost skin tissue in humans;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this Nova Scotia Legislature wish great success to the Perennia Innovation Centre for its leading-edge developments and value-added businesses in the future economy of Truro and of all Nova Scotia.

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

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

Is it agreed?

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 Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage.

RESOLUTION NO. 1292

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

Whereas the Military Family Resource Centre at Shearwater fully supports the military families, along with community events in Shearwater, Eastern Passage, and Cole Harbour; and

Whereas they hold many functions for the base personnel, such as DND Family Days and holiday celebration parties; and

Whereas they have a huge number of volunteers who assist them in supporting the military families during their numerous deployments;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of the House of Assembly join me in thanking the Military Family Resource Centre for their unwavering support to the community and wish them continued success 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 member for Sackville-Beaver Bank.

RESOLUTION NO. 1293

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

Whereas the students and teacher advisors of Sackville High School had a vision of a fundraising event which would benefit the IWK Children's Hospital and have fun while doing it, and their goal was to have an attendance of 1,000 high school students from HRM and to raise \$10,000; and

Whereas the event included performances by local bands, activities such as Zumba, and inspirational speeches by MiracleKids, including 12-year-old cancer survivor Parker Murchison from Bedford; and

Whereas by the end of the six-hour event the attendance reached 900 students and raised a total of \$21,350.84, exceeding all expectations because it was the first event of its kind in Atlantic Canada;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly recognize the students and teacher advisers of Sackville High for their commitment and hard work in organizing the dance marathon in aid of the IWK and sick children of Atlantic 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.

The honourable member for Kings South.

RESOLUTION NO. 1294

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

Whereas Nova 7 is a critically-acclaimed wine produced by Benjamin Bridge Vineyards in the beautiful Gaspereau Valley of Kings County, Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Nova 7 has been conceived by Canadian winemaking icon Peter J. Gamble, is a proprietary blend of signature aromatic whites, highlighting select 100 per cent Nova Scotia-grown Muscat grapes and is inspired by the European tradition of lightly-sparkling off-dry wines, combining the region's lively acidity with elegant aromatics to produce a wine which is uniquely Nova Scotian; and

Whereas this year the production of the 2013 vintage of Nova 7 will be the largest yet at 11,000 cases, and will be distributed nationally for the first time;

Therefore be it resolved that the House of Assembly congratulate Gerry McConnell and the Benjamin Bridge team on their success and exceptional commitment to producing quality Nova Scotia vintages such as Nova 7.

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 Waverly-Fall River-Beaver Bank.

RESOLUTION NO. 1295

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

Whereas the 40th Annual Provincial Volunteer Awards were held April 7th to recognize volunteers who have made outstanding contributions to their community; and

Whereas Sue Van Oosten of Fall River was recognized for her work with the Canadian Hemophilia Society, the Maritime Adventures Camp, the Girl Guides of Canada, as well as being a Sunday school teacher and coordinator for the church's Sunday school program for five years; and

Whereas she has served the Girl Guides of Canada in both a leadership and an administrative capacity, and has enthusiastically made valuable contributions to board meetings, fundraising activities, and discussions involving issues affecting bleeding disorder patients across the country;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly congratulate and thank Sue Van Oosten for her outstanding contributions to her community.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Municipal Affairs. (Interruptions)

HON. MARK FUREY: I would be so kind, Mr. Speaker, to relinquish my opportunity to my colleague. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: That's very kind of you. I would remind everybody that it is first come, first served in this restaurant.

The honourable member for Fairview-Clayton Park.

RESOLUTION NO. 1296

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

Whereas the Supper Nova Planning Committee has been putting on community potlucks to assist in bringing different cultures together; and

Whereas Supper Nova is a multi-cultural potluck event with over 350 community members who are new immigrants, refugees, Canadian-born residents and established immigrants; and

Whereas the events are designed to showcase a wide variety of different cultures' types of food and to help welcome new immigrants;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly congratulate the Supper Nova Planning Committee for their efforts to include and celebrate new immigrants in our community.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Environment.

RESOLUTION NO. 1297

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

Whereas in early March 2014 the East Antigonish Mustangs finished their basketball season with an impressive 25-8 record; and

Whereas the team won the Nova Scotia School Athletic Federation Division 3 championship held in Port Hawkesbury; and

Whereas this is a great accomplish for the East Antigonish Academy;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly congratulate coach Terry Long and all players of the East Antigonish Mustangs on a great season and for winning provincials.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Municipal Affairs.

RESOLUTION NO. 1298

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

Whereas Hillside Pines held their 15th Annual Festival of Lights on December 1, 2013; and

Whereas the Festival of Lights was well attended and all enjoyed an evening of good company and entertainment; and

Whereas Hillside Pines works hard to ensure that their 50 long-term care clients have special events, such as the Festival of Lights, to enjoy throughout the year;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly congratulate Hillside Pines on another successful Festival of Lights and commend them on their continued effort to ensure their clients have an enjoyable Christmas 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 Clare-Digby.

RESOLUTION NO. 1299

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

Whereas Clare Machine Works is conducting innovative work in Meteghan Centre, Digby County; and

Whereas Vince Stuart, owner and president of Clare Machine Works, spearheaded the advancement of a patent-pending invention of a portable lathe system to help oilfield companies to re-machine drill pipes; and

Whereas Clare Machine Works' invention propels a local enterprise on the international markets;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating Clare Machine Works, and encourage their efforts to further develop products and services on the international markets.

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 Timberlea-Prospect.

RESOLUTION NO. 1300

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

Whereas Steve Williams, owner of Affordable Fuels, has over 20 years' experience in the oil and gas industry, and after starting out as a propane service tech in Newfoundland and Labrador in the late 1980s, came to Nova Scotia and worked with small and large oil companies in many different capacities; and

Whereas Affordable Fuels has been bringing great service to its customers since 2004, when owner Steve Williams had a vision to offer customers an alternative to the old-style big oil customer service, and today Affordable Fuels continues to bring customers the best prices and services in the home-heating industry; and

Whereas Affordable Fuels provides fuel delivery, furnace cleaning, 24-hour burner service, sales, and services for furnaces, oil tanks, and water heaters, and goes out of their way to ensure that residents get great services at great prices;

Therefore be it resolved that this Nova Scotia House of Assembly send congratulations to Steve Williams and the staff of Affordable Fuels for going above and beyond in the area of customer service, and offer them best wishes for their 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.

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

MR. SPEAKER: The time is now 2:47 p.m. and we will conclude at 3:27 p.m.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

PREM.: SLUSH FUNDS - CONTRIBUTIONS (BUS.)

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Today Nova Scotians learned about another broken Liberal promise, Mr. Speaker. It now appears that we will simply be replacing the old NDP chequebook with a new Liberal one that comes with a fancy co-signer. In fact, instead of one Cabinet slush fund, we'll now have two.

I'd like to ask the Premier, why did he decide that two slush funds are better than one?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, now I understand why Nova Scotians didn't hire him as an accountant. (Laughter)

Mr. Speaker, what we finally did in this province is take the political lens off lending in this province and put a business lens on it. We have an independent board that will make decisions by themselves, away from Cabinet.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, I have said it before, and I'll say it again: it doesn't take an accountant to know that when it comes to Liberal promises you have to read the fine print. The current version of the Liberal slush fund is far from what was advertised in the election last Fall, and that's why Nova Scotians are so frustrated to see more of their hard-earned tax dollars being given away to large companies. They've seen bailout after bailout, forgivable loans, and grants to business. Now we have a new government, and we have a whole new category called "contributions to business," so I'd like to ask the Premier, can he explain how his contributions are any different than NDP bailouts?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, one of the things that, through the leadership of the Minister of Community Services and many of her colleagues, we are embarking on is an affordable housing program across this province. One aspect would be that we discovered that we have a tremendous amount of valuable land in this province that could be used to provide affordable housing - some of it can be done by government, some of it can be done by the private sector. If we can reach an arrangement with someone in the private sector to provide affordable housing in the community to keep rents down so that Nova Scotians can actually afford to live in those places, us donating that land would be a contribution.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, giving more of our money away to big business is also a contribution, apparently. Far from being independent of Cabinet, as the Liberals promised, the bill that is before the House clearly shows that the Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism can change any decisions of the new, appointed board of the new slush fund. That means changing the recommendations when they want to give more of our money away, and it means changing the recommendations (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition has the floor.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, I know they don't like it, but the truth does hurt, and this is another example.

It means changing the recommendations when they actually say not to give our money away. It is more of the same. It is another shell game, and it's just like the NDP - in fact, it's worse, because the minister couldn't even confirm outside this House that any changes he makes will ever be made public. That's a step backward in transparency.

I'd like to ask the Premier, why did he change his mind and decide after all to keep control of yet another corporate slush fund?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure where the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party gets his information. As he would know, NSBI decisions end up back at the Cabinet Table. It's not that they get overturned. NSBI - which was a creation of the Progressive Conservative Party - what is the difference? We have said very clearly that we would communicate to Nova Scotians any business deals. As a matter of fact, we are the most open and transparent government in Canada. If Nova Scotians want to know about their investments, they're online.

MR. SPEAKER: Just before we go to the next question I do want to make a correction on the finish time. I incorrectly did my math - clearly I'm not an accountant. We'll finish at 4:17 p.m.

The honourable Leader of the New Democratic Party.

PREM.: INVEST N.S. BD. - GRANTS

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, prior to the election the Premier promised Nova Scotians over and over again that there would be no grants to private companies from his Liberal Government. As the Premier told *The Chronicle Herald* on September 26th, "We've made it clear that there would be no grants from a Liberal government." Yet today, the Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism admitted to reporters that with the new Liberal Invest Nova Scotia Board the government would be able to make contributions to private companies.

My question to the Premier is, could he please explain the difference between a grant of public resources and a contribution of public resources?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I believe I just confirmed that through a question from the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party. Nova Scotians have assets that we need to maximize. We have a tremendous amount of land value that, if we can find a way to provide affordable housing in this province to ensure we keep rents in a way so that Nova Scotians can pay them, this government is going to move forward and make a contribution to ensure that happens.

MS. MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, prior to the election the Premier also promised over and over again that Cabinet would not be making investment decisions regarding private businesses. But we learned today that those decisions will now come from the Treasury Board, not Cabinet.

My question to the Premier is pretty simple, how many and which Cabinet members make up the Treasury Board, and why are they now the ones deciding to approve contributions to private companies?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I thought the honourable member sat around the Cabinet Table for the last four years - she would know full well every deal from NSBI over a certain level went back to the Cabinet Table for their approval. This fund is no different. (Interruptions) It's being made by an independent board, it is being done by an independent board, and at the end of the day the government is paying the bills. The analysis will be done, they'll make the recommendations, and each recommendation needs to have approval.

MS. MACDONALD: Well, finally we get the Premier to admit what's really going on in his government and his office. (Interruptions) Mr. Speaker, just last week we found out that this Liberal Government was breaking its promise to force Nova Scotia Power to pay for efficiency programs out of its own profits. Now, this week, we find out that this Premier is breaking another campaign promise to ensure that public companies do not receive public resources controlled by his government and members of his Cabinet.

My last question for the Premier is, why does he think it is okay to break an election commitment to Nova Scotians on a weekly basis?

THE PREMIER: Let me be clear, I'm very proud of the work that the Minister of Energy has done not only to ensure that shareholders of Nova Scotia Power provide programs so low-income Nova Scotians can invest and ensure that their houses become more efficient; I'm very proud of the fact that we're driving down power rates for the first time in this province. (Applause) Mr. Speaker, not only that, I told Nova Scotians that we would take the political lens off lending in this province and do lending through a business lens, and that's exactly what this piece of legislation is doing.

I want to remind the honourable member, it was that member and that Party that has broken faith with Nova Scotians, not this one. (Applause)

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

HEALTH & WELLNESS: VG PALLIATIVE CARE UNIT - CONDITIONS

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, moving on, I do want to ask the Premier a question on a different topic. Yesterday we learned that there were mice in the Palliative

Care Unit of the Victoria General Hospital, a situation I'm sure all MLAs on all sides of the House are appalled by. Men and women and their families are in palliative care, obviously at their most vulnerable stage, and now there are mice in the Palliative Care Unit of the VG.

I'd like to ask the Premier, when did he first become aware of this situation that Nova Scotians are spending their final days in such decrepit conditions?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I will allow the Minister of Health and Wellness to answer that question.

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Official Opposition for the question because it is obviously not just a concern for families and their loved ones in palliative care, but also all Nova Scotians to realize that it is part of the problem with a decaying infrastructure. The VG is not in great shape and it's unfortunate that another problem has now surfaced. I can assure the Leader of the Official Opposition, and all members of the House, that we've moved very quickly in this case to eradicate the problem.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, I know all MLAs are concerned about this sad situation. Sean Feeney, the manager of Housekeeping at Capital Health told the media that the health authority has been working on this issue for weeks. He said "... we are working as hard as we can with our pest control provider, with the housekeeping department to ensure that we take care of this as fast [sic] we possibly can."

The families involved, they do deserve that and more, so I'll ask the Premier or his designate, has his government put a firm deadline on cleaning up the mice problem at the Victoria General?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I'll ask the Minister of Health and Wellness to respond.

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I want to inform the Leader of the Official Opposition, and all members of the House and Nova Scotians, that pest control has been brought in to deal with this issue, extra cleaning from the housekeeping staff, and obviously vigilance to make sure that this is a problem that is looked after immediately and also completely.

Also, in terms of the whole Palliative Care Unit, I'm meeting with the CEO on Friday, to review the Palliative Care Unit at the VG.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, Nova Scotia health care advocate Jim Mulcahy spoke quite frankly about end-of-life care in the province saying the capacity to cure eventually ends; the capacity to care and honour goes on forever.

Mr. Speaker, I raised that because this is both a short-term - or immediate - and a long-term problem dealing with the old Victoria General facilities, including the palliative care ward. In the immediate time, I believe Nova Scotians need to know that the government is going to take steps to ensure that that Palliative Care Unit is placed in a more appropriate setting while the government sorts out a longer-term plan for those old facilities.

I'd like to ask the Premier or his designate, will he instruct Capital Health to find a more appropriate location for palliative care delivery, until a longer-term solution to the VG site can be found?

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, to the Leader of the Official Opposition and all members of the House, yes, it is an unfortunate situation in any part of the hospital but rightly in the Palliative Care Unit it has been very upsetting and disturbing. I believe the situation is now, at this moment, under control.

I am meeting with the CEO to take a look at the entire Palliative Care Unit after being around the province and seeing some outstanding areas in our regional hospitals and our smaller health care centres where palliative care is provided. We do have, overall, very strong palliative care. We will be, shortly, dealing with further initiatives and I am certainly prepared to report back to the House any further steps that can be taken to make sure that loved ones who are there are getting the best care and in the most appropriate setting.

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

HEALTH & WELLNESS - PALLIATIVE CARE: STANDARDS - POLICY

MR. LARRY HARRISON: Mr. Speaker, my question again is to the Minister of Health and Wellness. Some of the questions have already been asked and some of the answers have already been given.

I have been very fortunate to come out of a context of palliative care at the Colchester Regional. It is second to none in this province for the care and the dedication of the staff, as well as the facility. I am reading that there are a lot of places in the province that don't have that kind of care with people dying.

I am going to ask the minister, is there a strategy already in place, in the next little while, to really improve the palliative care standard right across the province?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, to the member opposite, he asks a very significant question. It is not only in palliative care but as I've discovered in the last number of months, as Minister of Health and Wellness, we can sometimes put forward a provincial plan and it will get divided up nine different ways across the province. That's

why I'm absolutely pleased to say we will have one provincial palliative care program and that quality and standard will be right across Nova Scotia.

MR. HARRISON: I have just one more question, Mr. Speaker. When the minister does go on the strategy approach for palliative care, will the minister go to the folks who are really involved in palliative care to get the information needed to put this in place properly?

MR. GLAVINE: In the not-too-distant future we will be putting out an initiative for Nova Scotians to view and to react to, but more importantly there will be a number of very specific requirements all across the province to make sure that palliative care is available. There will be, in different parts of the province more, perhaps, delivered in the home as opposed to a nursing home setting, as opposed to regional hospital or a small community facility.

One of the wonderful things about how health care is delivered is that you can put in place a standard whatever the setting may be and this is going to be the primary requirement that we have a high quality of palliative care from one part of the province to the other.

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

FIN. & TREASURY BD.: NAT'L. ALCOHOL STRATEGY - U-VINTS

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board. In 2005, in an effort to address over \$14 billion in annual health care and social costs associated with alcohol abuse, Health Canada and the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse commissioned a panel to discuss a national alcohol strategy, and incidentally one of the members of that panel was our own Dr. Robert Strang, the chief medical officer for the province.

The final report was released in 2007 and it made 41 recommendations to curb alcohol abuse across Canada including the following: "Where [u-vint] industries currently exist, make licensing contingent upon matching the socially referenced price for beverage alcohol in that jurisdiction." Mr. Speaker, I'll table that report.

However, on February 14th of this year the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board announced that Nova Scotia, unlike P.E.I., would not be requiring u-vint to match that socially referenced price for alcohol, so my question for the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board is, why has she chosen to turn a blind eye to well-documented and legitimate health and human safety concerns by not following the recommendations of the National Alcohol Strategy in the creation of provincial u-vint laws?

HON. DIANA WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, in reference to the u-vint operations that are just now becoming legalized in the province, our government has been looking very much at the benefit to economies and to business growth in different parts of the province and we've already seen an increase in employment and in spending for renovations and expansion of existing businesses. Overall the advancement of this industry is a good one and I think that the rationale and the cost associated with it are reasonable.

MS. MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, yesterday when asked why the Liberal Government wasn't going to allow alcohol to be sold in corner stores, the Acting Minister of Finance and Treasury Board said it was because of a letter sent by the Nova Scotia president of MADD Canada. But in its mission statement last revised in 2013, MADD Canada formally endorses the National Alcohol Strategy and it specifically highlights three key recommendations including ensuring u-vint licensing is, “. . . contingent upon matching the socially referenced price for beverage alcohol in that jurisdiction.” I'll table the MADD Canada mission statement and policy document.

So my question for the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board is, why isn't she following the advice of MADD Canada in the creation of Nova Scotia's new u-vint laws?

MS. WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, I think it is important to note that making alcohol available in corner stores is a very different issue than allowing people who have a hobby, who enjoy making wine and beer for their own consumption, I think they're very different and the access to alcohol, in fact that too great an access to alcohol, which would be part of extending the network to community corner stores and so on would, in fact, be very much against the advice of the social reference price and the alcohol strategies that the former member is making reference to. Thank you.

MS. MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board continues to dismiss concerns from top health officials and top public safety advocates, like MADD Canada, and has refused to place minimum pricing controls on u-vint operators, telling the CBC on April 22, 2014, “I don't think that this hobby is going to be abused in any way.” That's a pretty definitive statement, when public health professionals and public safety advocates are concerned.

My question for the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board is, why has she not incorporated the advice of Canada's top health officials in the creation of her Liberal Government u-vint policy?

MS. WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, I think it's important for all members of the House to know that without question, the government is concerned about social responsibility in terms of alcohol consumption, about good messaging, about education of our youth and all members of the public around the safety of alcohol consumption and that it should be done responsibly.

To that end, I have frequent discussions with the Minister of Health and Wellness and also with the Minister of Service Nova Scotia that looks after the Alcohol and Gaming Division. We're in close co-operation on that and very concerned about the overall impact of irresponsible drinking, which we, in every way, discourage. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

EECD - BOUNDARIES REVIEW COMM.: PROCESS - STOP

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development. Park West School in Clayton Park is a success. It's a P to 9 model that has demonstrated great social and academic outcomes. Despite the nearly universal satisfaction with the school, the boundary review committee voted earlier this month to send Grades 7, 8 and 9 students to another community. The terms of reference for boundary review committees pertain to school geographical catchment areas. The terms of reference don't provide authority to make changes of school configuration. I'll table those terms of reference.

Will the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development assure parents that she'll stop the flawed process that exceeds the authority of the boundary review committee?

HON. KAREN CASEY: Mr. Speaker, thank you to the member for the question. As the member would know from his time in public schools, there are certain responsibilities that are those of a board and others that are those of the department, and boundary review is one of those responsibilities of a board. The Halifax Regional School Board, along with the Annapolis Valley Regional School Board, are currently going through a boundary review process as per their own policy.

MR. DUNN: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board has expressed her concerns about the boundary review process. In a letter to the Park West School community, the minister said, "I am worried, however, that the school's great social and academic outcomes are not being considered. Park West has a wonderful track record, and that should not be ignored when a change of this magnitude is proposed." I'll table that letter.

My question to the minister is, will the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development confer with the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board and also commit to reviewing the boundary review process, just as the school closure review process is being reviewed?

MS. CASEY: Mr. Speaker, to the member and to all members of the House, I would expect that every member in this Legislature will advocate for their own schools and for their own community and I will not interfere with the process, that is not the

responsibility of the department. It is the responsibility of the board. I've made that clear to this member and to any member. That is where the responsibility lies and the board will follow through on the process.

MR. DUNN: Mr. Speaker, school board members are democratically elected to represent the views of their constituents. When it comes to Park West, the community has spoken loudly and clearly. Unfortunately, the school board member for the Park West parents is afraid to be their voice at the school board table. In an email to a constituent the school board member said: If I tell the community how to do anything other than say have your voices heard loudly and strongly, the rest of the board could and most likely would try and have my voice and one vote removed. I'll table that, Mr. Speaker.

My question to the minister is, will the minister immediately send a message to the Halifax Regional School Board that the kind of intimidation felt by this school board member will not be tolerated in a democratically elected board?

MS. CASEY: Mr. Speaker, I have been monitoring what is going on with the Halifax board, I have met with both the board chairman and the superintendent. I'm well aware of the work that the boundary review committee is doing. I'm well aware of the fact that the minutes of all of their meetings are posted online, and every community member and every parent has access to those.

I would take exception to something that the member said - no vote has been taken at the board to do anything with Park West.

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

HEALTH & WELLNESS: VG PALLIATIVE CARE UNIT - MOVE

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Minister of Health and Wellness. According to the media the patients at the Palliative Care Unit of the Victoria General Hospital have seen mice lurking on the floors, as we've heard in an earlier question. I know the minister was asked this question a few minutes ago, but the minister didn't answer it, so I'll ask it again - will the minister instruct Capital Health to look at moving the Palliative Care Unit immediately?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Sackville-Cobequid for the question. At the present time the issue of mice is being addressed as pest control has been called in to deal with it, along with I know a stubborn issue that housekeeping has also been working to address. At the present time I want a full review of the Palliative Care Unit and that meeting is scheduled for early Friday morning, and at that time we'll be able to discuss and look at the current situation and what may be possible for the future.

MR. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, he was close to answering it, but he still hasn't answered it. I hope Friday morning he does instruct Capital Health to start working on moving those patients out of that unit.

In the same news story Capital Health says this is "part of a larger issue." There are complaints about the drinking water in the building, water pipes leaking and more. Heather Farthing, a patient at the hospital, says the conditions at the hospital are simply unacceptable and a fix should come sooner, rather than later. I would like to ask the Minister of Health and Wellness, can the minister tell Nova Scotians when they can expect to hear when work will begin on the new facility to replace the aging buildings at the Victoria General Hospital site?

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for that question. Not just people here in HRM, in the Halifax area, but all Nova Scotians have access to the QEII and in particular the Centennial Building, which is now by the day and by the months growing a list of deficiencies. We're pretty busy here in the House for another few weeks, but if the good member can hang on he could be part of some enlightenment of the future of the Centennial Building.

MR. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, I'd rather be enlightened today, but I guess we'll have to wait a couple of weeks.

We know the last time the Liberals were in power their approach to building new facilities was to build P3 projects. According to the Canadian Council for Private/Public Partnership, Liberal Governments across Canada, in Ontario, for example, built 53 P3 hospitals and in British Columbia they built 12 P3 hospitals. Through you, Mr. Speaker, to the minister, how many P3 hospitals will the Liberal Government build in Nova Scotia?

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, it is a monumental task in front of the QEII Foundation to raise the 25 per cent requirement, along with the 75 per cent funding of the province. This formula has been working very well. It has obviously been challenged on a few occasions when we have a major build of a regional hospital. I think that formula will work for us this time around as we look at the future of the QEII. I believe it's a case of all Nova Scotians will respond to the fundraising efforts, as well as other Atlantic Canadians who have benefited from the tertiary care and the outstanding level of care provided at the QEII.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

ERDT - NEWPAGE PENSIONERS: MIN. - PLANS

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism. On the eve of the last election, this minister wrote a letter to *The Reporter* explaining to NewPage pensioners that he would

put together a group to look at their situation. We know they've lost upward of 40 per cent on their pensions. Can the minister explain to us what he was actually intending to do for those pensioners?

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, I can advise the member that we have been in discussions with Labour and Advanced Education in order to identify what would be the best process to undertake such a review to address the concerns of the pensioners. I've worked closely with the minister, and I would suspect there will be more information coming very shortly.

MR. MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, I know the pensioners have been trying to reach the minister no less than six times, and each time there was no reply given to them. On October 23rd the minister was contacted, with no reply; November 15th, no reply to a phone message; November 25th, an assistant called back; December 10th, the Halifax office was called and there was an indication there would be some response, but there was none; January 6th, called again; and January 16th the minister did call back and said there was something in the works, but that's three months ago.

These people are facing a very emotional situation with their pensions. They were approached on the eve of an election just before they were to cast their vote for an issue that's obviously very important to them. Can the minister explain why he has not been answering their phone calls?

MR. SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, first of all, for any member of this House to accuse another member of not returning phone calls, I have to tell you, that's about as low as you can get here in the House of Assembly. I would certainly encourage the member to share the name of who he's referring to.

There are two separate issues. I have met with pensioners. Some have specific questions about their pension calculation, dating back years ago; others are concerned about what happened with the plan overall, and whether everything was appropriate and what took place and whether a review can take care of that. I have been dealing with individuals with specific questions about their own personal situation, and as well, I have been talking to pensioners who are concerned about the global plan and what happened to cause such a fall in the assets of that plan.

I'm proud of the fact that I have represented the people of Cape Breton-Richmond for the past 16 years, and I think they spoke very clearly on the question of whether I return phone calls on October 8th.

MR. MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, they will have a chance to speak again on the matter, I'm sure. The pensioners wanted the question asked, and I think it's a fair question and the minister shouldn't be upset at me. It's not me who made the commitment; it was he himself who made the commitment.

I will ask the minister finally, will he meet with the pensioners, and if not, will he write a public letter of apology to *The Reporter* apologizing to them for making the commitment and backing away from it?

MR. SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, we have kept our commitment. We are reviewing the situation right now to see what is the best means to undertake a review. Needless to say, we have various opinions, even amongst the pensioners themselves, of what is the most appropriate means of doing so. I know that the representatives of the pension agency have been in contact directly with individuals who have contacted my office, who had specific questions regarding their own individual circumstance, but we are committed to looking at the plan overall. That is in the works now in discussions with the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education.

Again, Mr. Speaker, actions speak louder than words. I will ask the honourable member to wait to see exactly how our actions back up exactly what was committed during the campaign.

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

**HEALTH & WELLNESS - GRAD. ATTRACTION/RETENTION:
MIN. - ATTITUDE**

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Minister of Health and Wellness. Yesterday, during a question about incentives to retain new graduates in the province, the Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism said that when it comes to attracting graduates to Nova Scotia, they'll all just stay because Nova Scotia is such a beautiful place to live.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health and Wellness has a briefing note, I would bet, sitting in front of him, telling him that he is about to have a severe nursing shortage of at least 800 nurses over the next five years.

Mr. Speaker, my question is, is the Minister of Health and Wellness also nonchalant about the issue of graduate attraction and retention, when he has the Department of Health and Wellness telling him that he has to attract 800 new hires in five years?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question. Recruitment and retention in health care is always an ongoing issue. As we take a look at the aging cohort of nurses, that does raise some concerns.

It is interesting though, the number of nurses across the province who are working into their 60s and providing the great quality care that our nurses do provide each and every day. It is a very positive point in time for our nursing graduates, where in the past year we

retained 90 per cent of all graduates from our three universities, our schools of nursing. The present pattern is much improved over the decade, where in the year 2000 we were just retaining about 50 per cent of all of our graduate nurses.

MS. MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, in a January article the minister also talked about that in addition to increasing the nurses' seats at the various nursing schools, the government would be looking at adding incentive programs to attract nursing graduates.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board just cut an incentive program that was helping graduates from our nursing programs so I want to ask the Minister of Health and Wellness, how will his incentive programs differ from the Graduate Retention Rebate?

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I think if the member opposite looks really closely at the comments, she will see that I referenced a few hospitals in Nova Scotia that have used the incentives as part of making sure that they have an annual number of replacement nurses. Amherst regional is one of those facilities. These incentives are provided by foundations, to make sure they always have the correct complement of nurses.

MS. MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, in other words, the province has no incentive programs and the minister has no plan to have an incentive program, when we are facing a nursing shortage of 800 over the next five years. We'll let foundations fundraise and maybe they'll be able to provide some additional support. I doubt that will be adequate.

Mr. Speaker, the president of the Nova Scotia Nurses' Union, Janet Hazelton, has stated that nursing shortages could drive Nova Scotia into a competitive - what she calls - war, to retain graduates and full-trained nurses. We've been there before and we've been there because of the last Liberal Government that we had in this province that drove nurses out of this province. So instead of working on winning the competition for nurses, I want to ask the minister, why is his government fighting against them by allowing nurses to face disciplinary action and taking away their Graduate Retention Rebate?

MR. GLAVINE: What I can assure the member opposite and all nurses in Nova Scotia is that we won't take half a million dollars from a nursing strategy.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Fairview-Clayton Park.

HEALTH & WELLNESS: MENTAL HEALTH STRATEGIES - INVESTING

MS. PATRICIA ARAB: My question today is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. Mr. Speaker, I spent the majority of my professional career working within the mental health profession, dealing primarily with young children and adolescents, and more specifically in the preventive mental health field. Now as MLA for Fairview-Clayton Park I hear, on a regular basis, from constituents who are dealing with mental health issues

either themselves, specifically, or family members, loved ones who are looking for some resources and help in dealing with loved ones who are suffering from mental illness. My question through you to the minister is what plans does the government have in terms of mental issues, helping alleviate the stress, and more specifically are there any plans in investing in preventive mental health strategies?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: I want to thank the member, my colleague, for perhaps one of the most important questions that I've been asked over the last several weeks and that is about mental health and in particular youth mental health. I'm pleased to say that the previous government provided and developed a strategy, Together We Can strategy, which is pointing in many, many positive directions.

Just in the past year there was the launch of the first province-wide peer support program in Canada, so that is the kind of initiative now that is moving forward. The funding of 25 community grants, putting \$1 million into support services across the province. We are now getting our community health boards engaged in a youth mental health tool kit. These are the kind of on-the-ground initiatives that are taking place. Schools Plus, again, is another way in which we are doing that front-line health care again this budget year and the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development is expanding that program.

We now have an outstanding set of 14 recommendations from Dr. Jana Davidson, and many again pointing in the direction of preventive mental health areas. I also will use the capability of my honourable member to look at youth, mental health prevention, and strengthening our resolve for our youth in the province.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney River-Mira-Louisbourg.

NAT. RES.: MINING FEES - INCREASES

MR. ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Minister of Natural Resources. The mining fee increase is adding approximately \$75 million to \$85 million to the government coffers. This is a small amount for government but devastating to the mining and prospecting industries. Miners and prospectors go through years and years of losses before they may have a claim that turns a profit. My question to the minister is, when the minister came into office and saw the changes that the NDP made on their way out the door, did the minister consult the industry for feedback or did he accept it as the status quo?

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: As the Minister of Natural Resources I've been in continual consultation with stakeholders in the mining sector along with any other sector that my department is involved in. Specifically with this issue, Mr. Speaker, Nova Scotia was the last jurisdiction in the country to move off a paper-based application and licensing system. That previous system was causing major frustrations for the industry because the

licensing process was being clogged up and it was costing prospectors additional funds to travel to this city to physically hand deliver their application to the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal. I am proud to say that this government supports the initiative to modernize that application of licensing process and I will add that we've done that while ensuring that our fees and the cost of being a prospector in the Province of Nova Scotia are at the national average.

MR. MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, the Ivany report says from 2001 to 2011, Nova Scotia's mining and quarry industry shrank from a value of \$285 million to \$247 million, while the industry grew dramatically in almost every other province. Nova Scotia lost some 800 jobs in this sector over the five years prior to 2012 - and I will table that document. The fee increases will continue to hurt our mining and prospecting industries, so will the minister commit to abandon his attack on the mining industry and take note what the Ivany report says, that the mining industry "is essential if we are to build a stronger trade economy for the province as a whole?"

MR. CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, as the member knows the Ivany commission report is a document that this government takes very seriously and that report is helping us guide our directions in terms of what we do as a government. That is why we're doing business differently when it comes to the mining sector in this province. We moved from a paper system to one that's online - that's more responsive to the needs of that industry, and that makes it more efficient to do business here in the Province of Nova Scotia.

For clarity in the House it's important to note that the dollar amount of the 75 per cent increase that the member has referenced is \$4.30 per claim. In return for that additional fee that we need to provide this service, prospectors get a modernized, online system that is responsive to them and is more effective.

I will add that not all prospectors share the opinion that is being shared from the member opposite. I'll quote an email here that we received from Mr. Will Federhoff, who is a veteran in the mining industry and a well-known figure who speaks with great clarity on this issue. "This was long overdue," - relating to this specific issue - "claims were being tied up for too long and these fee increases, along with increased assessment requirements, will facilitate a higher turnover of claims, resulting in a much healthier exploration industry in the Province of Nova Scotia." I stand behind Mr. Federhoff and all of those who want us to have progressive solutions to this industry to help them move forward.

MR. MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, the DNR released a document which the minister has quoted and I will table - DNR Stake Fees Analysis - and this document points to parity among provinces over a 10-year period, but the document includes not only the licence and the annual renewal fees, but also the annual required exploration work. Adding that to the annual required exploration expenses throws off this whole comparison. If we remove this added fee, the new fees are, on average, 53 per cent higher than in New Brunswick and a

whopping 621 per cent higher than in Newfoundland and Labrador, where the claims are renewed every five years.

My question for the minister is, why did the minister muddy the water and present oranges to our apples comparison - why won't the minister answer the fee hike question directly?

MR. CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, the fee increase which the member is referring to is specific to the additional services that our government is now providing to the mining sector, services that have been needed for a generation. If you look at the administrative fees in their entirety, not specifically just this fee, our cost of doing business for the prospectors in the mining industry in this province is on par with the rest of the country and is competitive with our neighbours.

If the member opposite actually thinks that the mining industry is being hurt by this government, then perhaps he can answer the question why we have the first gold mine in the last 15 years coming up in the area of Guysborough County (Interruptions) and we just heard that Morien Resources is looking at an aggregate mine in Guysborough County as well, and from what we're hearing from the industry there is more to come.

Even the member opposite can appreciate the "prospect" of that. (Applause)

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

CCH - OAK ISLAND: ARTIFACTS - PROTECTION

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage. People in my community are proud of a very unique story involving the Holy Grail, a band of pirates, William Shakespeare, FDR, and Edgar Allen Poe. It is the story of Oak Island.

My question through you to the minister is, can the minister tell residents of the South Shore how the government plans to protect artifacts that may be found on Oak Island?

HON. TONY INCE: Thank you for the question, to the member across the floor. I'd like to let you know that our department and the museums have been working with the parties that are looking at exploring Oak Island. We are not opposed to working with anyone.

We do have a policy in place that protects any treasures that are pulled up from any underground water source in the province. It has to come back to the province. Any of those artifacts are protected, and they are protected under the Special Places Protection Act. Thank you.

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, I need to make a very important point to the minister. Oak Island is the only place in North America that does not have protection. Please look into that. That's why I'm bringing this issue forward. It is exempt from being protected, from any type of artifacts that are found that may be of significant historical value.

For more than 200 years, Oak Island has been a beacon for treasure hunters. The mystery at Oak Island is a rich part of South Shore heritage. Can the minister explain what would happen if significant artifacts were found on Oak Island?

MR. INCE: Mr. Speaker, I will say to my colleague across the floor that I will give her concrete proof that Oak Island is under the Special Places Protection Act. There is part of that Act that she might be addressing or talking about, but to say that it is not and it's the only place, that's not entirely true.

I would also like to say to you, Mr. Speaker, that any artifact, anything that is pulled up from the ground that is an artifact that is relevant to Nova Scotia's history, all has to be reported to the department, and it is protected under the Special Places Protection Act - any item.

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, I do hope the minister can provide me that information and that proof. We had today a gentleman speaking from Norway who is part of the renewed interest in exploration. There's exploration taking place right now at Oak Island, and there is no protection for archaeological artifacts that are found. There is absolutely no monitoring.

Mr. Speaker, this represents an enormous opportunity for tourism and economic stimulus in the community, the constituency, and all of Nova Scotia. I do not want to see a decision not being made to protect this island if the minister has his information wrong. We have international media watching us today, I assure you.

Can the minister tell us when he will introduce a plan to preserve and protect the mystery and heritage at Oak Island?

MR. INCE: Thank you again for that statement and question. I would say to you, as I've continued to say already, I will provide you proof, Mr. Speaker, that Oak Island is protected under the Special Places Protection Act. It may not be in its entirety; there may be a section of it. As I said earlier, I will provide that information to my colleague across the floor.

In terms of talking to people outside of Canada and talking about our heritage and our special places, I would urge my colleague across the floor to talk to me directly, who is from Canada, not Sweden or Norway.

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

ENVIRON. - WASTEWATER FRACKING: LAFARGE/AIS - EVIDENCE

MS. LENORE ZANN: Mr. Speaker, my question through you today is to the Minister of Environment. We're good friends now. The minister has just given approval for what he has called a pilot project involving radioactive fracking waste water from holding ponds at AIS - which is Atlantic Industrial Services in Debert - to be used in the production of cement in Lafarge's kiln in Brookfield. At a public meeting in Truro last week, residents expressed concern over the independence of the scientific evidence reviewed by the minister and his department.

My question to the Minister of Environment is, who provided the evidence that the minister used to make his decision, and were they actually independent from both Lafarge and AIS?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, that's right, I was in the member's area in Truro. I did notice, unfortunately, that she wasn't at that meeting to hear first-hand the information that she's looking for. Essentially, the reports are all publicly available and on the Department of Environment's website for anyone to review that these are accredited labs that completed the tests and provided the results that we have used as the scientific evidence that backs the decisions being made by the department. Thank you.

MS. ZANN: Mr. Speaker, I thought we were getting along so well. I'd like to remind the member that I actually have four portfolios to look after, not just one, so I was attending an event in Halifax regarding my other portfolio.

After the two million-litre pilot project is complete, the minister has said that Lafarge's will examine any kiln residue in their clinkers before he issues a letter of authority to allow the plant to continue. He has told me there are another eight million cubic litres of fracking waste water that would be then used toward making bricks. Local citizens are extremely concerned that no one will be examining this residue, and that in fact no one will be examining the effluent that will be coming out of the smokestacks at this aging facility.

My question to the minister is, will the Minister of Environment commit to ordering an independent test of the air emissions coming out of the stacks before beginning the actual pilot project, and also agree to meet with concerned citizens to inform them about the findings?

MR. DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, a couple of things. Yes, there is a process to use this water, which has been twice-treated. It has been carbon filtered to remove any radioactive materials from the waste water, as well as going through reverse osmosis. These test

results, compared to the current freshwater going into the kiln, actually provide fewer items of concern. For example, the heavy metals, the items, parameters, that are assessed in these test results are actually less in the twice-treated water that has been approved through this pilot process. All indications from the science, the support, and the background that we have, as well as the notice that when the water goes through the kiln at 700 degrees all organic materials get combusted and any inorganic materials will fall to the clinker, as opposed to going out through the smokestacks. It will be the clinker residual that is tested and assessed before any final approval is given. (Applause)

MS. ZANN: Mr. Speaker, it's nice to see the minister needs a cheering section over there. Many residents of Colchester County, including county councillors, have expressed concern that there was not sufficient notice of this recent meeting and those who did happen to hear about it and attend have attested that they were upset that the minister answered their questions with prepared talking points, instead of what they felt was genuine concern for their concerns, repeatedly falling back on the automatic response that his department is simply a regulatory body.

Mr. Speaker, residents who live there are actually extremely concerned that the process of reverse osmosis, they fear, will not take out all of the heavy metals or the harmful residuals and that they will not all fall into the clinker, but instead go up the smokestacks and fall over Shortts Lake into their drinking waters and over their homes. Since the public feels that there was not enough advance notice of this last meeting that was held in order for the minister to make his announcement, can the minister now commit to consulting further with the public before allowing AIS and Lafarge to go ahead with this supposedly "pilot project"?

MR. DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge the member opposite's acknowledgement of the concerns of the people of the region. That, in fact, is the reason why, shortly after taking responsibility for the Nova Scotia environment in this important portfolio that I do manage on behalf of Nova Scotians, prior to Christmas, that I made a public commitment when I introduced legislation to prevent and ban the importation of fracked waste water to the Province of Nova Scotia.

I also committed at that time to engage the community with updates with regard to this particular issue, this issue that has been long-standing in the community of not just Debert, but also Kennetcook and Noel, and that I would engage the communities directly, based on test results, to provide them the information in a transparent manner. I provided access to information that has never before been made available, in a transparent manner, through our department's website.

I attended a public meeting on January 30th in the member's riding of Truro to provide a first update. I met with county councillors for both Colchester and East Hants regions. I also met the community members in the Kennetcook region to address their concerns, and again I went back to Truro to meet with them with the most recent update.

This is the first I have heard from the member opposite that any members expressed any concern with the lack of notice. Unfortunately for this particular meeting it did have to be rescheduled because of House commitments to be here in the Legislature, fulfilling my duties here, but we provided notice through social media, through the newspapers in the region to make sure that we could get as many people. In fact, we had more people - I think about 75 people from that community attended that meeting, which is more than the number of people who attended the Wheeler review meeting the night before.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

PSC - REVENUES: INCREASE - EXPLAIN

MR. TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of the Public Service Commission. Prior to his election, the minister was asked about Liberal priorities in an August 8th CBC news television interview. When asked how the Liberals would fix the economic problems Nova Scotia is facing, he responded by saying, "We need more revenues for the province, and this will allow us to lower taxes and lower fees across the board." However, now that the minister has been elected, he seems to be singing from a different song sheet. Could the minister please explain to the House how asking Nova Scotians to foot the bill for 550 new civil servants moves us anywhere toward a place where we will possibly be able to lower taxes and fees across the board?

HON. LABI KOUSOULIS: Mr. Speaker, this is a pretty comical question, actually, when you think about it because the member's information is wrong. We do not have 500 more FTEs and if the members across the floor could actually read financial statements, they'd know this. Although One Nova Scotia is referenced in this House on many occasions, maybe the members opposite do not want to follow the advice of One Nova Scotia with co-operation.

So if they were reading the financial statements correctly, in fact, they would actually see that there were approximately 100 FTEs added to the Public Service Commission. In those 100 FTEs they would also realize that 80 of those FTEs, 80 per cent of all positions created were because of a jail that they passed while they were in power a long time ago. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, I am happy to see that the minister is getting lots of advice from his colleagues over there. Sadly, despite all of the advice, I still don't see how the minister thinks that 10,402 Public Service employees, minus 9,958 which they had last year, the difference is 550. You can try to spin that however you want but it's not fair to Nova Scotians. The truth of the matter is, you added 950 public servants. If you don't want to admit to that, then we have a serious problem here.

In that same CBC interview the minister made it clear to his constituents - the very people who voted for him - that cutting taxes and making life more affordable was a

priority for him. But in the Liberal budget the minister has made it clear to Nova Scotians that increasing the size of the Public Service by 550 employees and then trying to pretend that he didn't, is his real priority.

My question today is, why has the minister abandoned his commitment to lower taxes and fees, in favour of a bigger bureaucracy with more than 550 new employees?

MR. KOUSOULIS: Mr. Speaker, if the member across could actually refer to a budget and look at estimate versus estimate, instead of estimate versus actual, he'd have the proper figure in front of him. Let's explain it to him because he seems to not quite grasp this concept.

Estimate is what we anticipate the FTE count will be; actual is what it actually turns out to be. There are always vacancies in government. When you have 10,000 employees in government, we can't have every single position filled at one time.

Mr. Speaker, what he is referring to in the 500-person gap is what we have and what we estimate is our max. I hope that is a clear understanding for him. If it is not, I can try to explain it in even simpler terms. Thank you.

MR. HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, my concern is that the minister believes that comparing estimates to estimates is a good thing. Show me an estimate for a budget that came in at actual. What I'm talking about is the actual number of employees in the Public Service versus how many you estimate you need. You estimate that you need more, that's a simple fact and it's a shame that we can't just admit simple facts in this House and we have to hide behind different language and try to trick Nova Scotians. (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable member for Pictou East has the floor.

MR. HOUSTON: I think the voters will understand very loud and clear that there are more people in the Public Service under the Liberals than there were in the prior government. It's a simple fact.

In that same CBC interview, the minister said people have seen their expenses rise significantly but the paycheques have not kept up. The minister also said it was time for an honest conversation with Nova Scotians, and we can't be honest about the simplest facts. So if the minister was serious about having that conversation, why did he wait until after the election campaign to tell them that the Liberal plan was to keep taxes high, keep power bills high, and add new bureaucrats to a taxpayer-funded payroll, while making expenses rise even more and paycheques fall even further?

MR. KOUSOULIS: Mr. Speaker, if we want to compare actual to actual, the member will have to wait until the end of this fiscal year to actually see what the actuals are

for this coming year. I will explain once again. We have vacant FTEs so if you are going to compare estimates you need to compare them to estimates. You never compare budgets to actuals; you compare budget to budget, actuals to actuals.

If we're going to have an honest conversation with Nova Scotians, let's talk about what this government has been saddled with: over \$3 billion of debt that the Progressive Conservatives and the NDP have saddled this province with in the last five years. In the last year alone, when the Progressive Conservatives were in power, they added \$1.3 billion of debt to this province and we're paying the interest on that. The debt that was added to this province in the last five years, if we had the interest back on it, we would not have a deficit right now.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

CCH - *BLUENOSE II*: MIN./LUN. MLA - DISCUSSIONS

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage. Many taxpayers and tourism operators on the South Shore and throughout all of Nova Scotia have been asking serious questions about the future of the *Bluenose II* under the Liberal Government. As the Official Opposition, our caucus has been very vocal about our concerns regarding this iconic vessel. However, the government benches have been oddly quiet. In fact, we haven't heard from the Liberal member for Lunenburg, where the vessel is currently at dockside.

Will the minister update this House as to how many times his Liberal colleague, the member for Lunenburg, has spoken to him about the *Bluenose II* project, and inform us of the nature of those discussions?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to assure all members of this House that the member for Lunenburg has been on top of this file. Not only has she been talking to the Premier, she's been talking directly to her constituents on facts. They know that the issue that has arisen when it comes to the *Bluenose II* was started under the Progressive Conservative Party, and was made twice as bad under the New Democratic Party. They know that under her leadership we'll get that vessel sailing.

MS. MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, the minister has been exceptionally slow, as well as the Premier, to answer the questions posed to them by our caucus, but we can hardly believe that the minister would be slow to respond to his Liberal colleague who sits in the riding where the *Bluenose II* is. Surely we can assume the member for Lunenburg would be diligently doing her job as an MLA and seeking the answers taxpayers and tourism operators deserve.

Will the minister today table all his correspondence with the member for Lunenburg and his schedule highlighting meetings with the member as they pertain to the *Bluenose II*?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to assure all members of this House that the member for Lunenburg County has been doing her job and ensuring that her residents are being heard - unlike the member for Pictou West, who on the one hand says she wants Boat Harbour cleaned up and on the other hand wants the jobs protected at the mill. She needs to figure out which of her constituents she's going to stand up for. The member for Lunenburg is very clear on her responsibilities. (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. Order.

MS. MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, I didn't really believe that the Premier could lose focus that quickly from one subject to another. The real issue is Nova Scotians (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please.

MS. MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, the real issue is that Nova Scotians have been left in the dark throughout all this controversy surrounding the *Bluenose II* restoration project. Will the minister agree to publicly disclose all the information on the *Bluenose II* restoration project immediately so Nova Scotians can judge for themselves?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, this government has called in the Auditor General, and the Auditor General will make it very clear why the *Bluenose II* restoration project that was started by the Progressive Conservative Party and made twice as bad by the New Democratic Party has gone on. What he will also tell Nova Scotians is that it was the Liberal Party who actually fixed the mess.

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

Folks, we just have a few minutes left; let's just try and keep it together, all right?

The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid.

HEALTH & WELLNESS: CAP. HEALTH - CONTRACTING OUT

HON. DAVID WILSON: I don't know if there is a full moon out tonight or not but anyway, my question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. Mr. Speaker, we know that as early as last December the minister was meeting with groups at Capital Health who might be affected by the Liberal overhaul of the district health authorities, so I'd like ask the minister, can the minister remind the House what his stated position was in December

on the issue of contracted-out restaurant and laundry service workers employed by Capital Health?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: The question before the House is contracting out. We know that since the Ernst & Young report came out that in the whole area of shared services, merged services, it is in fact over the next decade where we'll see the big impact on workers across Nova Scotia. It really is not a factor as to what government may be in office, shared services are moving forward. Our plan is to use the workers who are currently in our system across Nova Scotia to continue to carry out their daily functions.

MR. DAVID WILSON: Today there are roughly 40 laundry employees and 120 people who work in the restaurant services at Capital Health. Can the minister tell these workers how his position has evolved over the past four months, regarding their employment situation with Capital Health?

MR. GLAVINE: There is currently no change in their status in terms of their contractual arrangement that they have with Capital Health, nor are there any current plans to change that in the coming months.

MR. DAVID WILSON: I hope that the minister is transparent, is up front with the workers. As I said before in the House, these are some of the lowest paid workers in Capital Health and it is important that if the government is to continue on with their amalgamation of the district health authorities that they go after what their intentions were and that's the VPs and the CEOs of the district health authorities. I'd like to ask one more time to the minister to make it very clear that - I know he said there is no change in his statements that he made to that group in December and there is no current appetite for outsourcing the cafeteria and laundry service but . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. I'd just like to remind the honourable member for Cape Breton Centre not to cross the floor while his honourable colleague is speaking.

The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid please continue.

MR. DAVID WILSON: It's just one of those days, Mr. Speaker. Can the minister ensure and guarantee that these workers will not be outsourced in the coming months, when the transition team around the amalgamation of the superboard finalizes the makeup of the boards?

MR. GLAVINE: I'd like to preface my remark that Question Period for an hour and a half is becoming very evident that it may be just too long for us to continue to handle. I can assure the member, and importantly, the workers at Capital Health who do housekeeping, laundry, and food service, that their current status will remain their future status. I was very fortunate when I went around the province to have an opportunity to meet staff throughout

the hospital who provide that full array of services day in, day out. They are indeed to be highly regarded for what they do for our patients.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

AGRIC.: DYKE MAINTENANCE - PRIORITY CONFIRM

MR. JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Agriculture. There are many indications that due to global warming, sea levels are rising. Nova Scotia has thousands of kilometres of dykes and these dykes are the responsibility of the Department of Agriculture. Will the minister tell this House if the repaired maintenance of our dykes is a priority for his department?

HON. KEITH COLWELL: Mr. Speaker, yes, it most definitely is a priority for our department. It's not only just the farmland that is protected, but there are many towns and areas that have substantial assets at risk if these dykes are not maintained properly.

MR. LOHR: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the minister for that answer and I would agree with him, that it is not only farmland, but thousands of Nova Scotian homes and communities that are protected. Many of these dykes are currently less than 50 centimetres above a very high tide and I would say this is inadequate. If ever there was a storm surge coinciding with a high tide, there would be considerable damage to many coastal communities. Will the minister inform this House of his department's activities to improve the quality of these dykes?

MR. COLWELL: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for the question, it's a very important question. We are presently in the process of raising the dykes to a new height under a federal-provincial program.

MR. LOHR: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for that answer. I realize that this is a huge issue and I'm wondering, will the minister commit to beginning the engineering studies needed to determine which areas are most vulnerable and need fixing first?

MR. COLWELL: There has been an evaluation of all the dykes in the province and they are indeed going on a priority basis to raise the ones that need to be raised the most. There are some issues around some of the towns and areas where they're responsible for it. I'm not sure that they are raising the dykes as quickly as they should, but I can guarantee you my staff is working very diligently on this and will continue to work on it to ensure these viable assets are protected.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle-Barrington.

NAT. RES. - NATL. WILD TURKEY FED.: MIN. - MEETING CONFIRM

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Natural Resources. The National Wild Turkey Federation continues their quest in the introduction - and ultimately the hunt - of wild turkeys in Nova Scotia. My question is a simple one to the minister - whether the minister has met with representatives of the National Wild Turkey Federation?

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question. I have met with representatives of the Nova Scotia Federation of Anglers and Hunters, and this was an issue that was brought forward by them as well.

Currently our government is not inclined to change our policies related to the introduction of foreign species into our ecological systems here. There have been a number of concerns raised by the agriculture sector specifically about the introduction of wild turkeys for game purposes. I will tell the member that I'm very happy to review all the data and the arguments around this particular issue and evaluate our current position.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for his answer. We have had the opportunity to meet with the Wild Turkey Federation. These men and women are asking for the opportunity to sit down and respectfully discuss the science of introducing turkeys into Nova Scotia.

My question to the minister is, will he commit to meeting with the representatives of the provincial chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation and also will he commit to meeting with the Minister of Agriculture to discuss the possible introduction?

MR. CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, I am happy to meet with the stakeholder that the member opposite mentioned and any stakeholder who has an interest in matters related to our Department of Natural Resources. The Minister of Agriculture and I have had a chance to discuss this particular matter in conversation and there are potential risks associated with this sort of introduction for the purpose of game. We definitely do not want to do anything as a government that will jeopardize that critical agriculture sector that is so important to our rural economy.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, according to the Wild Turkey Federation, an annual wild turkey hunt could be very beneficial to our provincial economy. No one is suggesting that we risk devastating our agricultural industry. We're just suggesting we make science-based, fact-based decisions and I know the minister has committed to that today. Will he arrange for a fact-finding meeting between the members of the Wild Turkey Federation and other relevant federations in the agriculture industry?

MR. CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, I'm very happy to meet with the stakeholders involved on all sides of this particular issue, review the scientific data that we

do have around this issue, and ensure that our policies are best reflective of the interests of all Nova Scotians. Thank you very much.

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

PREM. - DITCH FEE: BARRETT LUMBER - CONTACT CONFIRM

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, over the course of the last few weeks, residents of Halifax have been voicing their concerns about a new fee they're being asked to pay. A new ditch fee has been added to some Halifax residents' water bill, and also those businesses. People are very concerned and are now contacting or looking toward the Premier for assistance.

I know that companies like Barrett Lumber have recently written the Premier about this ditch fee. I'm wondering if the Premier could indicate if he has had any discussions with either Mr. Barrett or companies or residents who are affected by this new fee that the Halifax Water Commission is imposing on residents?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I have not received the correspondence that the member is referring to. When I do, I'll be more than happy to look at it. I want to remind the member that that fee was brought into effect by HRM, the municipality. I believe it would probably serve them well to contact the mayor and the council to find a resolution to the challenges being faced by them. Of course, I'll be more than happy to review the letter that comes to me, and I'll respond to them.

I've actually had an opportunity to meet with Mr. Barrett on another issue, at a different time. I enjoyed it very much, so if that's the case, I'd be more than happy to sit down and continue that conversation with him.

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

The honourable House Leader for the New Democratic Party.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, before I call business, I want to apologize to you and to the House for that illegal move I made before. I apologize to you, in particular, and I will do my best that it doesn't happen again.

MR. SPEAKER: Apology accepted, thank you.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS' BUSINESS

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

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

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING

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

MR. CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 26.

Bill No. 26 - Affordable Hearing Aids for Seniors Act.

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

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to stand on this piece of legislation, Bill No. 26. This legislation is about standing up for seniors. As MLAs, we all know and hear and engage with seniors in our communities throughout Nova Scotia who often call our offices because of a financial situation they may be in. For myself, often it is to seek help with accessing services, especially in health care.

I see access to hearing aids as an important part of an individual. It's an important part of them leading a healthy life. I think we all at times may take for granted our hearing, our sight, our oral health care. We take those for granted because often they're not looked upon as high on the priority list when it comes to health services that are provided not only to Nova Scotians but to Canadians.

We know through the Charter that we all follow on health services that many things are covered in jurisdictions across the country, but things like dental care, things like eyeglasses, and just as importantly, things like hearing aids, are not usually covered. We need to look at that as a jurisdiction, as a province, to try to see what we could do to assist our seniors when it comes to devices like hearing aids, for example.

We know recently there have been some media reports on the cost of hearing aids, and I don't know if you, Mr. Speaker, or anybody in the Legislature have a family member or a friend or a constituent who have talked to them in recent times around the cost of hearing aids, but they are expensive. I have to say, I know in my own community there are many seniors who are going without having proper hearing aids, simply because they cannot afford them.

This piece of legislation is to provide a program and service to better meet the needs of seniors. We know that it needs to be a priority and our Party has often made sure that the priorities we set in place for our policy, our issues that we support and that we brought forward over the last number of years, were geared towards our aging population, geared towards our seniors because we know how important it is for seniors to be independent. We

know how important it is for seniors to live a life that they feel is in their own homes, and that they're productive in the community.

Often when we hear about seniors who have loss of hearing they actually do the opposite - they're not productive, they tend to stay in their homes much longer, they don't interact with their friends or their community or the groups that are in their community because often they just can't hear, and I believe this type of program would be such a benefit to seniors.

I know one of the things we tried to do over the last four years is bring programs like this forward when you could afford them. That's why in this legislation what it's asking for is an investment of about \$4 million, but not to be invested until 2016. I recognize, we recognize as a Party that there are financial challenges in front of us, in front of the province, so we know that it can't happen overnight.

I was very proud to be part of a government that brought forward an insulin pump program for children and young adults for example. As a former paramedic I know how important it is to have individuals regulate their diabetes in a manner that hopefully keeps them out of the hospital and keeps them from having the complication flare-ups that diabetics have.

The unfortunate thing is, and I'll say this, I didn't have the opportunity to continue on with trying to either ask the Treasury Board for more money, but moving on initiatives like this I would hope sincerely that the Minister of Health and Wellness looks at this piece of legislation. If he agrees with it and passes it - but I'm more than happy for the government to bring in their own legislation or not even bring in legislation. Just bring in a program that helps seniors gain access to hearing aids. That's the thing, that's the end result I would like to see. It isn't that my piece of legislation that we tabled, or our caucus tabled, gets passed on the floor of this Legislature, that's not what I want to see. I want to see our seniors gain access to services and instruments like hearing aids so they can be more productive and they can stay in their home longer.

I hope the minister and the government looks at this piece of legislation, looks at the potential benefits this type of program could provide Nova Scotians and potentially implement something similar in the years ahead. I think it would go a long way for those seniors, especially those low-income seniors. We know there is a portion of the senior population that have third-party coverage, for example; this initiative isn't geared towards them, it's geared towards those low-income seniors who are struggling, they're struggling to pay their co-pay for example for the Seniors' Pharmacare, and if they're struggling to pay for their medication I know for a fact that they're not paying for a hearing aid. They're going without. I think we owe it to our seniors to do whatever we can to improve their lives here in Nova Scotia.

I think in the overall picture, for example, the health budget is \$4.1 billion now - a \$4 million program like this is very minimal, but I can guarantee you the impact that a program like this will have on a senior outweighs the \$4 million. We know, and I hope, that there is some work going on. I know when I was in the office of the Minister of Health and Wellness that I heard there was such a dramatic increase in the cost of hearing aids compared to what they actually cost to make. I know I asked some questions within the department of what we could do about that. Is there anything government can do to try to maybe even regulate? I know we want to limit increasing regulations on businesses in the province but when we are talking about hearing aids, I think most Nova Scotians would say, do you know what? We could use some regulations on the cost of those.

We are hearing costs of a few dollars to manufacture them but yet a \$2,500 cost to sell them to that senior. I think - I hope - that the minister will carry on and ask the department what the government can do. What can the Department of Health and Wellness do to try to look at how we address, in my mind, the severe markup of hearing aids? Really, people are left to either pay or go without their hearing, and that's kind of a shame.

I've given a couple of things here in this piece of legislation and in my debate to the Minister of Health and Wellness that I hope he looks at. As I said, I think this is something that adds to the quality of life for seniors. I believe if we assist them, even in a small way, these seniors will stay in their homes longer. We know, I know, I know the minister knows, and the government should know, that the goal of the government should be to keep seniors in their homes longer. We all know the cost of long-term care and home care to the province. We have seen dramatic increases over the last number of years. We still have wait-lists that the government needs to address. This is a small portion of the health care budget that I think would go a long way in supporting seniors in communities throughout Nova Scotia.

The thing with this program, Mr. Speaker, some of the data that we found is that this program, if it was implemented, potentially could help over 6,000 low-income Nova Scotians. So we're not talking about a few hundred Nova Scotians - 6,000. Imagine the impact that we could have on the lives of 6,000 seniors in Nova Scotia if we had a program like this that they could gain access to. Over the last number of years there have been a number of initiatives to try helping low income seniors and low income Nova Scotians.

Another one through the Department of Health and Wellness, Mr. Speaker, is the ability for Nova Scotians to look and request that their ambulance fee be waived or reduced. Those types of programs don't cost a whole a lot of money in the overall picture of the health budget but it has a great impact on those residents that those programs service and I believe the seniors' hearing aid program could do that, similar to the other programs that we see in government and in health, especially right now.

So an investment of about \$4 million, which doesn't need to start until about 2016, and we could address the needs of almost 6,000 Nova Scotians. Mr. Speaker, this would, I

think, continue on with the work that has been done by a number of governments to try to address supporting our seniors. We need to stand up for our seniors. We all know the demographic shift that is happening in our province, and I think we owe it to those who have built our province and have given us the opportunity to do what we do here, the ability to, in their more senior years, live a better quality of life and I think hearing aids would do just that.

I hope the minister looks at this and potentially sees if the department can do this over the next couple of years and I look forward to comments from not only the government but other members.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

HON. LEO GLAVINE: I thank the honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid for bringing this issue to the floor of the Legislature through the format of a bill. Yes, he is absolutely right in terms of many seniors not having access, through one plan or another, to be able to access hearing aids.

We know as well that the cost of hearing aids has a tremendous range. In fact, *Marketplace* did a study on hearing aids. They looked at the actual cost of manufacturing a hearing aid, even from a lower quality to a high quality, the price was astoundingly low to actually manufacture a very good hearing aid.

However, the reality is for our seniors to purchase a hearing aid, they pay a tremendous price for them. This is another whole area of the business of providing hearing aids, that even the same make can have a very wide discrepancy in the price.

We all know that with Nova Scotia's aging population - the oldest average-age population in the country - hearing aids will become necessary for more and more of our seniors. I know pretty well all of us can relate to, if not a family member, they can relate to a senior who has been able to get hearing aids and what a difference it makes in their whole perception of all the sounds around them, but in particular conversation, to be able to lose what is being said and not to be able to carry on a conversation is indeed a real loss for our seniors.

Nova Scotia does cover the cost of hearing tests and assessment in provincial clinics. You know there is the recognition by the province that knowing if a hearing aid is necessary or if there is something medically wrong that could be impacting on hearing, that is an area that the province does cover.

If a senior cannot afford a hearing aid, Nova Scotia Hearing and Speech audiologists work hard to find access through their community or other sources. I know the member opposite is talking about a very defined provincial program that would assist seniors. Fortunately in some of our communities we do have service clubs, organizations

that provide so many seniors a year with either full coverage or partial coverage of hearing aids. So that is certainly one good thing that many seniors have been able to benefit from.

The other area is that seniors do not have to pay tax on hearing aids, batteries, and ear molds. So there have been some small, I guess, improvements for our seniors in terms of their hearing and that whole requirement of at least giving some assistance on a regular basis because we know that hearing aids, you know, the batteries go or the hearing aids need repairs from time to time. All of these areas we can get some assistance on.

Those who are under 65 and if you are on income assistance, then they may be eligible for support for hearing aids and supplies. Again, each case is looked at individually and we know that, again, a doctor's recommendation would be going a long way to support the eligibility and meeting the criteria. Those Nova Scotians who are not in receipt of income assistance can also actually make an application to DCS, regardless of age and depending on their individual financial circumstances. The operative word is "may" qualify for some partial funding.

As the member opposite pointed out, when hearing is lost, even a degree of hearing, it is way more than an inconvenience; it is a life-impacting and affecting disability that a person has, either from the development of a medical condition or we all know the aging process can certainly impact as well.

When someone turns 65 they can also access federal support through the Canada Pension Plan disability coverage. It's amazing the array and the number of possibilities that are still there for a number of Nova Scotians, when it comes to some degree of coverage. Some seniors also, of course, have private health coverage and they can access support through those plans.

We continue to support Nova Scotia Hearing and Speech and we will continue to work closely with that organization as it identifies issues. One of the benefits, I'm sure, that the member for Sackville-Cobequid apprised himself of as minister, is getting that kind of information from Nova Scotia Hearing and Speech, which helps to identify those one, two, or three issues that Nova Scotians are facing.

In many ways I think the issue here is very significant. It does not require legislation for a program of this type and the member did acknowledge that. It's important to note the previous government did have four years to take a look at this particular program, and perhaps they were gathering data and information to take a look at the provision of hearing aids for our seniors. They did say that we are always open to reviewing the needs of seniors and how they access services.

Well, one of the areas that has come to my attention, in the six months as Minister of Health and Wellness and Seniors, is the number, now, of needs that our seniors have. We've had to prioritize, in the early days, and we know that the Continuing Care Strategy

did need a refresh and a refocus to make sure we have a strong plan, to make sure that senior care, either in the home or in nursing homes, is available to the highest degree possible for Nova Scotians.

In the last two years of budgets the previous government, the NDP, had put \$22 million into home care. We've added an additional \$18 million this year and it's really an acknowledgement of one of the biggest concerns that our seniors have and that is staying in their home safely, supported there, and that will need trained home support workers and it will require a huge demand in terms of how we organize, how we give timely care, how we work to have fewer providers go in a home, making sure that schedules are met in as timely a fashion as possible. We've put a real emphasis on keeping seniors safely in their home and that's a very costly endeavour.

A second area, as we know, is the growing number of seniors who are experiencing degrees of dementia or perhaps a specific form, and that being Alzheimer's. We have more and more that are being diagnosed, and again, developing a dementia strategy in Nova Scotia is a second priority of our government. I don't want to wander too far from the bill at hand, but I did want to acknowledge that seniors and their needs are very much top of mind for our government. Those would be one of our priorities too, and also, making sure that the Department of Seniors remains a strong, stand-alone voice for our seniors, continues to respond to their needs. I will certainly be interested in getting feedback from the Department of Seniors, and also the Group of IX, in terms of where they place hearing aids in terms of their needs.

When we take a look at a third area that may need some review, that is Seniors' Pharmacare, which meets one of the biggest needs of our seniors, and that is prescription medications. I know that over the last few years the co-pay - or the pay for the premium for Seniors' Pharmacare has edged up a little bit over the 25 per cent mark, which was a legislated agreement, that seniors would not have to pay more than that.

Our senior safety grants help seniors from one end of the province to the other to live independently in their homes. Many of us are familiar with the safety grants that help community groups. Many of our communities have very, very active groups that help them to live safely, and also prevent crime. They encourage health and safety, and another positive initiative along with grants and age-friendly communities help to encourage seniors to live active, healthy lives in their own communities.

There are awards for seniors who are leaders in their communities, through the Remarkable Senior Awards. It's one of the real almost phenomena, or in many ways, perhaps, a return to very tight-knit communities that had a real strong culture of caring, where we're now seeing seniors looking after seniors to a greater extent, as we know the numbers, the burden on the home support workers and health care workers, is becoming extreme in our province. Many seniors are turning to provide help and support to one another.

In my community, for example, we have several seniors who are well into their 80s and even a few into their early 90s who are delivering Meals on Wheels. So there are a lot of programs where seniors truly are looking after one another.

In terms of identifying priorities, along with the Continuing Care Strategy around home support, nursing homes, getting some of the beds replaced in our older nursing homes, the dementia strategy, I'm pleased that we added additional money for Lucentis and Avastin. Along with hearing, for seniors to keep their eyesight or help restore it, with one of the diseases like macular degeneration, is a very important seniors' program that I'm certainly pleased to support. At the present time, we're now around \$230 million that goes each year to making sure that our seniors' care in the home is of a high quality and responsive to their needs.

I know my colleague in Community Services has increased the budget for seniors' assistance programs and that in particular is providing grants to repair homes. At Health and Wellness we've increased the income threshold of the BTO - Boarding, Transportation, and Ostomy Program - so that more individuals, in particular seniors, this was a program that a couple receiving OAS and the supplement were simply not able to qualify for it.

There is an array of programs, and I do want to finish off by saying to members opposite and to Nova Scotians that hearing aids is certainly one of those areas that is extremely important, and needs to be considered at a time perhaps when our financial position is a little better - and I hope to keep that dialogue open with seniors across the province as they identify what their one, two, three requirements are.

I know we're moving ahead on a number of fronts, and we'll also keep this in view as we move forward.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle-Barrington.

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to rise and speak to Bill No. 26 today. Many times we stand in this House and talk about the things that we hear in our constituency offices and the visits we get from our constituents. I can say on many occasions I've had the opportunity to meet with constituents looking for some help with hearing aids.

Hearing aids is one of those problems I think that is really hard to figure because it is an issue that is far beyond our borders to help. How can a product, especially in the technological world we're in today, how can a product so small cost so much? I know my colleague for Sackville-Cobequid also mentioned that they put these things together for pennies, if not maybe \$10 or \$15 and sell them for \$2,000 or \$3,000 - it boggles the mind why you would target a segment of our population that way when it's something they need.

For those of us who have been impacted by hearing loss, those who have not been able to participate fully in conversations, in group conversations, going out to a movie, going out to a play, or just having an opportunity to go and listen to your pastor at church, all of these things impact our quality of life. The way we interact with one another, the way we interact with our friends and family, and I can tell you there's nothing more aggravating. I don't have hearing loss - at least my wife would suggest that I do, but I don't have hearing loss (Interruption) we learn selective hearing I think over the years.

If you have interacted with somebody with hearing loss, you know how frustrating it is, not only for the individual but for those loved ones around them. You have to say things three or four times and the individual doesn't understand what you were saying or how you were saying it - it does create a lot of frustration around it.

It is an issue that does go far beyond our borders, but may be one we can find some mechanisms which will make it at least a little bit easier for those seniors who are having this problem - and not only seniors, I've seen friends of mine who have ended up with cochlear implants and the like in their 20s and 30s, who have had severe hearing loss younger in life.

The bill today talks about low-income seniors and I can tell you that nothing is more important than our seniors and how they have contributed to the quality of life of our province, of our country. Anything we can do to make their lives easier, I think, is important.

Now that being said, many government policies have negative impacts on our seniors. Life has become unaffordable for far too many. I can tell you again probably the number-two issue that comes to our constituency - if not the number-one issue - are seniors coming in for grant applications to do work around their house because they cannot afford to make their homes more energy efficient, to stop the drafts, the leaks, the electricity, to stop a whole bunch of problems that they're having with their homes. They just cannot afford them on the pensions that they are receiving from the government.

While providing seniors with proper health and access to the things that they need should be a priority for any government, we cannot forget that they have felt the pressure of bad economic policies in this province. Seniors are forced to spend more and more time on high taxes, high power rates, and ever-increasing costs of living.

Just last month, more than 2,000 pensioners relied on a food bank. Basic necessities have become so unaffordable for many that there is no other option than to go to the food bank. This is a problem that I know this government is working on, but it is a challenge for any government, to truly address the issue of poverty in our province.

We should finally address the issues that would help seniors overall and I know the minister spoke of many programs that they do have access to. Again, some of them can be

complicated and you don't know exactly where to go for some of these programs, but they are there for them. We need to make sure that not only can seniors afford hearing aids, but they aren't making seniors choose between hearing aids and putting food on the table or paying their bills. We need to better our economy so that we're not forcing those who have already retired back into the workplace because they cannot afford to live. We need to make sure our power rates don't climb so high that seniors are having their power cut off in the winter because they cannot afford their power bills.

While there is no question that funding hearing aids for low-income seniors is a worthy initiative, and one that in better economic circumstances would benefit many of our most vulnerable citizens, we should first take care of all seniors by looking at what factors have made life so unaffordable for them to begin with.

When we address these flawed and expensive government policies that are putting seniors in vulnerable financial situations, we can better help all seniors. After all, these individuals have worked and contributed to make the province what it is today and it's our job to do our best on their behalf.

Again, hearing aids tend to be really far out of reach. Friends of mine, not so long ago, found an inexpensive way to do it. It was a little cheap thing they got from Costco. It wasn't a fancy wire that went in or one of those hiding things that you can do, but I know he hears a heck of a lot better after being a carpenter for all of his life. If you look at the hearing aid, of course, among men who have worked in our neck of the woods anyway, who worked on their boats all their lives, listening to the diesel engines drone on, those who have worked in mines and worked with heavy machinery, many of those people have very severe hearing loss.

Many of them, after working so hard and long, really don't have a lot of money left in the bank. Some of them still own their homes and if they're lucky enough, they have a little bit of a nest egg to work on, but if you see a product that's going to cost \$5,000 to \$6,000 in some cases - I'm not saying all of them are that way, some of them are probably in the couple of thousand dollar range, but a couple of thousand dollars for someone who is counting every penny, that is something that is completely unreachable. We need to have a better program.

I don't know if it's really the Department of Health and Wellness' responsibility. Maybe in some cases it is because they do have some of those professionals working very hard on our behalf to find those opportunities - whether it's the audiologist or the hearing and speech folks of our province, but it is also the responsibility, I think, of the Department of Community Services to be finding opportunities for those who are under our help.

The Department of Seniors and the Group of IX, I know the minister referenced as well - it is to understand whether this is the number-one issue on their list. I know it's been up there over the last number of years. Again, it is not the top even on their list, I think it is

the issue of trying to make things more affordable, trying to cut costs here and there so that you can afford the things when they come up.

Mr. Speaker, it wasn't so long ago in this House of Assembly that - I can't remember which member it was but it was a member of the Liberal Party that had the insulin pump bill - I'm pretty sure it was the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board who had put that in the House, but I'm not positive on that. I think we had put one in as well and we had the government of the day, the NDP that said don't worry about it, we don't need a bill for something like this. We don't need a bill, we are going to be able to do these things as they come along, as we're able to afford them.

Well I'm thinking that the message that we had from the minister today is pretty much the same as what these guys said a year, maybe two years ago, on the insulin pump. As we can afford things, as we research them, as we understand the true problem, then we can truly address them.

I know the minister also spoke about the Continuing Care Strategy. I hope that he is updating that as we go along. I know he is talking about making life affordable for those seniors, of trying to find a way for them to stay in their home as they become frailer and unable to take care of themselves. I think all Parties in this House can agree with him on that, yet I still have a need to underline a number of issues with that. We have an expansive province and it's very difficult to get to all the seniors whether you are travelling in my constituency of Argyle-Barrington, running from Wedgeport down to Cape Sable Island and The Hawk - I see some individuals putting thousands of miles on their cars in a week to take care of those vulnerable citizens.

It's a very expensive proposition, just as expensive is the construction of long-term care facilities and having available beds for those people as they can no longer stay in their homes. These are all issues that do need to be addressed by government and I'm hoping that the minister is seriously looking at them as he's touring the province. I know his focus at this point has been about the district health authorities and trying to find the savings there, but I know there other issues that are also as important - maybe some more important in some areas of the province. I do hope he addresses them as time goes on because I feel that they weren't addressed by the previous government.

We had a Continuing Care Strategy that was very specific on what year things were supposed to be coming down. There were a number of beds required in this province and there were a number of services that were required to keep people at home. That was flipped around by the previous government, and I hope it gets flipped back and the priority is put where, of course, it belongs, and that is to making sure that people who are seniors are most comfortable in the best place for them as they are being identified for service.

Mr. Speaker, if I may, for just a couple of moments, also speak to the issue of the continuing care system, the way that it is managed right now by the district health

authorities. If we remember, a number of years ago - and I'll take a little bit of the blame sometimes for it for the times that it didn't work and maybe for some of the things that did work - there was a devolution from the government, from the Department of Health and Wellness to the districts. When you called the 1-800 number for the continuing care assistance or the assessments, all that was given to the district health authorities, so maybe for another day is a discussion to have with the minister in how that stuff is going to be addressed.

I know we hear a lot from the NDP on exactly how we're going to deal with the severance packages and getting rid of the district health authorities and all that. There are some real issues in how all those districts are sharing services today, how they are going to be either uploaded or changed into a new service, which I think would be very important because that 1-800 number is a lifeline in some cases for families. Your loved one becomes infirm and, as we know, and I know that in Clare-Digby it's the same thing, whether it's in Kings West, whether it's in Lunenburg, people get to a point where they are proud and want to take care of their loved ones but there comes a point, I guess we'd call it the breaking point, when that individual becomes very sick, ends up in the hospital, and everybody is scrambling to find a home for that person, to try to find the services they need.

I hope that with the district health authorities being merged into one, that is going to be addressed quickly and there's going to be a smooth transition to whatever the new model is going to be because that 1-800 number is a lifeline for many families and many seniors in the province.

So to finish off on the bill that is before us, Bill No. 26, which is Affordable Hearing Aids for Seniors Act, I do agree that there needs to be a plan for seniors. I hope that the minister takes on this task as a while ago another government took on the task of looking at insulin pumps and turned it into a program that is being used today. Maybe they can take that same kind of model, look at it seriously, look to see what the cost is going to be and as soon as we can afford it, and hopefully it can be afforded within that department, that we do take it on.

With those few words I want to thank you for the opportunity to speak today. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, I must say that my colleague next to me is excellent; he went right to 5:02 p.m. when he sat down. I do know he has a lot of expertise and experience so he knows how to do it.

Mr. Speaker, I know just how important hearing aids are to seniors. In fact, my father deals with a hearing deficiency. I know how devastating it can be to the individual who is experiencing that. What we have to remember is the fact that we are not getting

younger. We have an aging population, which I know the minister spoke about, and I know that he also knows the fact that over 1,000 people a month turn 65 in our province and we need to be prepared. We've really been behind the eight ball because of the fact that sometimes it seems to be human nature, unless it hits right in front of us and knocks us over, we don't seem to pay attention to it. Unfortunately that has happened over the years.

When we became government in 2009, the NDP really focused on the needs of seniors. We know there are many needs. There are financial needs and there are health needs. I know the minister talked about the many programs that are available and those were not created overnight. It takes time in order to develop programs but we also have to look at what the priorities are. That's the role of those who are in a leadership position and the decisions they need to make.

When it comes to hearing aids, it is something that is so important to the individual and their family that are experiencing that hearing loss. I guess it's somewhat like when we take an opportunity to go swimming and we're under water and we hear all that gurgling type of noise. Can you imagine if you cannot hear properly, how it can affect your daily routine, your life, your family trying to communicate and speak with you?

I came across an elderly husband and wife during the recent election and they were facing this issue with the wife. She wasn't able to even communicate appropriately to her husband on a daily basis for the simplest things that we take for granted, because of the fact she couldn't hear what her husband was saying. I worked very hard to try to see if I could get some type of support for them, and being the former Minister of Community Services, I knew of the special needs program that the minister mentioned here. However, they were not eligible.

I think what's important for people to understand is, we can stand here and say there's this program and that program, but there are a great deal of criteria that come with many of these programs that we offer. Many of them are income tested at a very low income level, and I do know those individuals who require a hearing aid, if they're on income assistance, that is provided for them as a medical device.

We have many others, though, who do not qualify in what is available today. We can talk about all the programs that we have and that we're expanding on, and that's very good, because we have to do that. But there's a sense of urgency here, and we talk about the fact that we want people to have the opportunity to live independently and live in their homes as long as they choose. Each and every one of us here today are going to face that someday - if not with our parents, with ourselves. That's when reality is really going to hit, in terms of what did we do, when we had an opportunity and the privilege to be in this House, in order to put forward support programs for seniors? We will experience it at that time.

The bill that we are presenting through the NDP would open the door for 6,000 more senior Nova Scotians to be able to have the ability to hear and to support them in that. What a difference that makes to those family members. I think you can even draw the correlation between the pressures on the health care system and the situation where people have lost their hearing or have a deficiency in their hearing that when you look up what their needs can be medically and the situation that they are living in, those cost factors add up. When you're not able to hear your wife or your husband - well, there are sometimes that I know that - my colleague next to me is saying that is a bonus on some days, and I'm sure every one of us will agree to that too.

I think that it's a privilege that we're able to - we are very fortunate for those that do not experience deafness. We really do not know what it's like. I think that when we have any opportunity to make life better for those who have a disability, we need to do what we can. I know that finances can be very difficult for a government and choices need to be made but it's all about priorities.

I do remember when the minister was on the other side and sitting in Opposition and I remember the list of items that the minister, as Health Critic, would bring forward and say, you need to be able to support this, you need to be able to provide funding for this particular program or this particular medical device. Well, things have changed since the minister has gone to the government side. Those needs are still there. The difference now is he is actually feeling the pressures in terms of how do you put them in a priority list, how do you strategize, and how do you make those decisions?

I think that the seniors' hearing aid program is not a costly program, and that will enable 6,000 more seniors to have quite a different life. It will enable a senior, a grandpop, to hear his granddaughter or grandson say I love you, and be able to hear that. It will enable a husband and wife to have a regular conversation. I know that the couple that I had referenced in my constituency that I tried to assist that that would have made a huge difference for them because I spent some time in their living room trying to communicate with his wife and not knowing or understanding sign language, and her trying to communicate back to me and to her husband was quite an experience and it really brought to my mind how difficult the situation is if you can't hear.

This is also a situation where we have an easy resolve. We have the technology in today's world. I know that the hearing aids have certainly come a long way with all the other technology that we have. Some of the hearing aids that we see are very tiny and they're quite adaptable and that really makes a difference so we are not standing here today and saying well we have to do leg work in order to support this bill. All of it has been done. We have the technology. We have the ability, and so I do hope that the government of the day understands just how important this is.

It really helps seniors in their lives, their family. It enables them to stay home longer because if you have a couple and one of them is deaf or has a hearing problem and

the other one passes on, well what's the solution? It makes it much more difficult for that person to live at home. It must be really frustrating, especially for those who once were able to hear very clearly and then as we age that is taken away.

As I said, we have in our province over 58,000 individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing. I think it is important for us, in our roles, that we bring something like this forward that we know is not a lot of cost in terms of the overall budget. I know there are a lot of requests of the government but I think it's really important to look an investment that will help people be able to stay in their home longer, be more active in the community, be an integral part of their community, be involved in their community, and to be able to do that is by supporting this type of bill.

I know the government talks about how important the senior population is to our province and so I think this would be a great gesture to show those seniors, before the closing of the Spring Legislature, that they really do mean business when it comes to supporting seniors and their needs, and that they know that it's not about words it's truly action, and that action would be to support this bill and not look at it in a political way to say, okay, we're not going to support a bill that's brought forth by another political Party because at the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, those people whose doors we knocked on, they don't care about that.

How many people are actually watching Legislative TV every day? People have very difficult lives; there is a lot of stress out there. There is stress on families because their parents are aging. There is stress on the senior population in terms of finances and their ability. I know that the minister mentioned the Canada Pension Plan and that's an avenue through disability. Well I also know that the minister knows, as a long-time MLA, just how difficult it is to get support through the Canada Pension Plan Disability. It's not easy.

When we look at it and we talk about other avenues, those avenues are very limited to a lot of Nova Scotians, and we know in our research that we're looking at 6,000 seniors in our province who this bill supports in getting a hearing aid. That's a large number in terms of seniors. I'm sure that if we broke down those numbers, everyone in this House who represents a constituency, there would be a number of individuals that would fit into that category.

I wouldn't be surprised if some of those people, their doors were knocked on back in October, in terms of the election. I'm sure you can relate to conversations that you had with individuals, especially the senior population, explaining how difficult they are finding it in today's world. You can just imagine how fast our technology has changed. Everything has changed in their life, and then to get to a point that they have difficulty in communicating because they cannot hear?

I think that this is a very good gesture for the government to step up to the plate and support those who need to have a hearing aid, so they can hear from their loved ones that I

love you, Mom and Dad, and be able to hear that loud and clear. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Acting Deputy House Leader for the New Democratic Party.

HON. STERLING BELLIVEAU: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 47.

Bill No. 47 - Wills Act.

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

HON. STERLING BELLIVEAU: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Certainly tonight is of great importance, as I stand and rise and speak on Private Member's Bill No. 47, the Wills Act.

I just want to make a few of my own personal notes. If I can make a reference to the Bible here, the Bible teaches us that we're all appointed once to live, and basically we'll all die someday. So to me, this is certainly something that's fitting and something that we need to take seriously. I hope I have the attention of the members of the House in the next few minutes.

This legislation creates a will registry for Nova Scotians, and is the right thing to do. It makes it more affordable for people to keep their wills safe and secure. Right now in Nova Scotia if someone's will goes missing or is lost, it can cause a great deal of stress for family members, and certainly their friends.

A will registry will allow Nova Scotians to have peace of mind, knowing that their will is kept in a safe place. That is why the NDP caucus is introducing this bill. For a reasonable cost, Nova Scotians would be able to register their will with a provincial registrar who would hold the will for safekeeping. I want to point out, Mr. Speaker, that similar legislation exists in other provinces, including British Columbia and Ontario.

Now, making a will certainly is an important step to establish estate planning. However, the most important step is to have that will registered in order for your loved ones to be able to locate the will when that time comes. This service, for you and for others, will have peace of mind, knowing that your will can never be lost, misplaced, or tampered with, and your loved ones can always find it via the registry.

Your last will and testament is a legal document that dictates what happens to your estate once you pass away. I know my colleagues in this House come up with many phrases of characterizing what we are, as humans on this planet. To me, I put it down into one word - or as a multi-word, or a combination of two words - but we are simply caregivers, and

we're only here on this earth for a very temporary time. We take this space in time for a very short time on this earth.

To me it is interesting that before us today we have a Private Member's Bill of a Wills Registry and to me, I look around this particular House and I noticed in some of the speeches they talked about government co-operation. I noticed there were a number of Private Members' Bills that were introduced in this session. I also know the reality of a Private Member's Bill being successful and actually getting passed and getting that accomplishment done in this House is quite an accomplishment in itself to have that succeed.

In the last few weeks I evaluated all the Private Members' Bills, and I ask for each and every one of you to do the same thing, because I think that is why we are sent here to this House. We are sent here to serve the wishes of our constituents, that's what we are ultimately sent here for: to make sure that we serve the wishes of the people who elect us. But their last wish on this earth is to make sure that we carry out and make sure their wishes are fulfilled.

If we are here to make sure we succeed in serving the people who elect us, I think we should take very seriously the bill that's before us, and that is simply to have a registry where people can make sure that their wishes are fulfilled and are registered so when that time comes in that person's life, their family or loved ones can go to that registry and there it is. I know we've all had these instances that when somebody reaches this stage in life they ask you to fulfill that wish, I know I take it very seriously and I'm going to make sure I fulfill that.

I think this is a very crucial time in doing what is best for Nova Scotians and to me I can think of no other commitment that we have as elected officials. We are here to carry out the wishes of our constituents and this is one of the wishes they want fulfilled: to make sure there is a registry and that document is kept in a safe place, and I think it's the right thing to do.

I just want to point out that Private Members' Bills are not very successful, but I can assure you that this one here meets all the criteria. You do the valuation checks over the next few hours and the next few days and you go out to the barbecue circuits, you go out to the socials, you go out to the church services and you ask the questions to your constituents, I can assure you the best Private Member's Bill will have the support of the communities. Don't start waving your little political flags on this one because it's not going to carry the day, because you are going to have to respond to the people when you go to the church services, to the socials in your communities, and to the barbecue circuits. This Private Member's Bill meets all the criteria.

I would be more than willing to hear from my colleagues tonight, I encourage them in this debate on this particular bill and look forward to your continuing support. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Justice.

HON. LENA DIAB: Mr. Speaker, I rise this afternoon to speak on the amendments brought forth by my honourable colleague across the way from me there. I very much take this bill very seriously, I also take very seriously the fact that I was elected to represent my constituents, and I also take very seriously my ministry portfolios.

I rise to inform the members that I am unable to support this bill, regardless of whether it's a Private Member's Bill or if it's a government bill, and I'm going to give you a few reasons as to why.

I have practised law for more than 20 years, and I'm proud to say that I had a general law practice and I practised in the area of wills, estates, and probate law. I was also the chair of the Canadian Bar Association, General Practice, Solo and Small Firm practice, and in that capacity and various other capacities I attended and did many professional development sessions in the area of wills and estates and trusts law, so I speak to you this afternoon with a lot of experience and expertise in this area.

The Wills Act establishes the legislative authority for the right to dispose of property at the time of death. The Act also provides legislative direction as to form, mode of execution of wills, revocation, alteration, operation, and construction. The proposed amendment to the Wills Act creates a registry into which may be deposited for safekeeping the wills of living testators.

A will is not valid *per se*, i.e. the document does not come into effect until someone dies. It's someone's legal wishes, but these wishes change on a daily, weekly, monthly, yearly basis. I, just like most lawyers, have clients that have changed their wills many, many times in the course of a decade. I tell you that many of these people would never want anyone to know the contents of their will or even that they even have a will. To most, if not all of these people, a will is the most confidential document that they will ever have. They keep it close to their hearts, so what we normally do in our practices is we advise clients to take the original, store it in a safety deposit box in their banks. We make a copy for them and they put it in their drawers in their bedrooms or in their pillowcase so they can look at it in case they had a change of heart in terms of how they want to change it if they decide to, or if there's a life event that changes for them.

Most times they come back and want to do a codicil; a codicil is an amendment to the will or, quite frankly, frequently what we do is tear it up and do one all over again because it's more efficient and cheaper to do one from scratch than to add to it. I can also tell you that most lawyers, particularly in small firms, would never want to keep those

original wills, it's a big responsibility. Unless you have a fire-rated safe, imagine if you had a fire.

There are some private will registry companies that do provide this service to living testators. As I said, many testators will store them in their safety deposit boxes in financial institutions. They are very comfortable with this method, from my experience, because they like to go and see their bankers, if not weekly at least monthly. It's easy for them to take it out of their box and look at it if they decide to or if they want to tear it up they can tear it up.

The private registry companies do charge a fee, as I'm sure with this bill that my colleague in the House is suggesting that we would also charge a fee, but they are equipped to safely store these wills. If the bill were to proceed, it would be an expansion of government services into an area currently serviced by the private sector. Not only that, but we also would be expanding government services into an area where we're really not equipped to handle it.

I'm surprised, even though I've been here a few months, that my colleague on the opposite side would present such an amendment to such important legislation without contacting me or my department, because we would have loved to have given some advice on that or worked together on it. I guess that's the system.

Neither I, as the minister, nor my department is aware of any pressing need for the government to be providing this service. In fact, I asked my department if anyone had looked into this in the past and was told that in March 1999, the Nova Scotia Law Reform Commission considered the issue of government establishing and maintaining a public wills depository, and in its report entitled Probate Reform in Nova Scotia, the commission recommended against establishing a depository.

We all know that we have a land titles registry system, so this is a system where we register our deeds, our mortgages, those types of documentation, but as I explained earlier these documents are valued once registered and they stay on the system, whereas a will cannot be registered and is not valid until the testator dies, and of course we have our probate system and when that happens a will is registered and it becomes public record.

If this proposed bill was to - if we were to look at it, there are many costs besides everything else I just spoke about. There are many costs we would need to be looking at such as additional staff and training costs, storage and space requirements, development and maintaining a database. And, for example, if you live in Sydney or Yarmouth, or some other area of Nova Scotia, what are you supposed to do? - drive down to Halifax every time you want to take your will out of storage?

Finally, and very importantly, when you want to make this change in the Wills Act you can't consider the Wills Act in isolation. You always have to look at other Acts - how

it would affect legislation and probably need to make amendments to the Probate Act and who knows what other Acts.

I thank the honourable member for bringing this forth and, again, those are my comments on these amendments.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the honourable member for bringing forward the bill. I think the Opposition members having an opportunity to bring forward bills is an important way to put ideas, share ideas in the Legislature, and I do think the government should be paying attention to them in general terms. We do have ideas over here; we're not always aiming to be critical of the government members, although I know it seems like that especially during Question Period - but there are ideas out there and this is a great forum to put them forth.

I can say that wills are very important. I know when I worked previous to this stage in my life one of the things, we counselled people and when I was working in financial services it was on the importance of having a will, because not only is it important for the person who is making the will, but even more important for their family. Dealing with the emotional stress and strain of losing a family member, the last thing people need is to be trying to decide what the person wanted to do with their assets and how they wanted them divided up. I know we all probably have stories we've heard about, or incidences in our own extended families, where families have broken apart because they're trying to decide how to best separate assets - sadly those things can happen, and wills help to clarify that and resolve that.

Mr. Speaker, I can appreciate what the member is putting forward here and I know he has raised good points, that with a registry there is no question about where that will is located when at the time of death and the executor needs to find the will it is easy to be found. I can think of my own executor and she probably doesn't know where my will is and I should tell her - I'm going to tell her today because when you think about it it's very important for them to know that.

Also the member had mentioned about prohibiting a will from being tampered with and I know sometimes family members can be pressured to change wills, especially in a state of terminal illness and the pressure could be put on them to make a decision that they might not have made when they were feeling healthier. So that is an issue as well, and I certainly respect that for being brought forward.

Mr. Speaker, the issue of affordability, this is something that I would like to see a little more on because I know while fees could be charged for this service, I know by regulation is what is proposed in the legislation, I would be concerned that the fees would not necessarily cover the cost of the service. Now they may, but that is something I would

like to see some more information on because if it was going to cost more than the fees would provide for, then of course we're saddling the taxpayers with those additional costs. That's something I would have difficulty with.

I appreciated the minister's comments as well. Certainly it is something that she knows something about from her previous career. I respect the point she brought forward as well. I think that where there is service being currently offered in the private sector, I'm not sure if the member would agree that it's the same kind of service, and I do see him shaking his head "no", so that may be a point for further debate, Mr. Speaker.

A will can provide clarity and peace of mind for a family during the time of death. The passing of a loved one, as we know, is a stressful time. We know that people have to be dealing with funeral arrangements as well, in amongst all the other things that have to happen, so I can appreciate the member wanting to help make it easier for them.

Mr. Speaker, what I would say - and I'm not comfortable with supporting the bill at this time - but what I would say is I would like to talk a little bit about the importance of wills, that they do certainly help to make sure that the wishes of the deceased are carried out in a timely and efficient manner. As we've all heard stories, there are many cases where someone passes away without a will or the existing will cannot be found. Unfortunately many people fail to recognize the importance of having a will and a power of attorney, until it's too late.

It's hard to put that together at the last minute and certainly if it becomes too late, Mr. Speaker, then of course the strain is on the family to make those decisions. Many of us know the most important thing you can do to avoid these issues is to have a well-defined and up-to-date will and to make sure it's put in a safe place where the executor can easily locate it. As simple as it may sound, it is a real issue when wills cannot be located when they are needed.

Without more information on what this bill is trying to achieve, it's not clear to me, Mr. Speaker, whether the registration process is the best way to solve the problem. An effective registry could potentially provide for greater ease of locating a will but questions remain, as I've stated earlier, on the cost. How much would the registry cost and how many people would be required to administer the registry and, if the most recent will did not get updated in the registry, what would happen in that case?

We do know that this is proposed as a voluntary - in the legislation it's voluntary for people to use the service so it's not a requirement. That's certainly positive. I think the important thing, Mr. Speaker, that I will say in concluding is that it certainly is a personal responsibility to have a will and while a registry may help to focus people's attention on the need to have a will and to have it registered, people now who are not thinking about putting wills together, I guess the question I would ask, would they think any more to put a will together if there's a registry in place?

Maybe there are efforts we could be doing in marketing, in terms of getting people to be more prepared with a will. Again, I don't want to be advocating another cost to government in that regard. It is something of personal responsibility. I think there's a role for the private sector to play here. I know people in the financial planning industry certainly make efforts to educate people on the importance of wills and how they impact people's finances at that time of death. I think there's a role that's being fulfilled, from what I can see, in the private sector, Mr. Speaker, and I think that's positive.

I think as members here, we can encourage our constituents to have wills. With that, Mr. Speaker, while I wouldn't feel comfortable supporting the legislation put forward at this time, I do appreciate the intent that it's being put forward with and I thank the member for doing so. Thank you.

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

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to have an opportunity to rise in my place and speak to Bill No. 47, which previous speakers have indicated is a bill that would establish a registry for wills in the Province of Nova Scotia.

I have a short story to tell people, and before I do that I just want to thank my colleague the member for Queens-Shelburne for bringing this bill forward. He brought it forward after he was approached by someone in his constituency who works with a congregation, and knows well the challenges for people in communities around the province at a very difficult time when there has been a loss of a family member or a close personal friend.

I had this experience as an MLA a number of years ago - when he talked to me about this idea for this bill, it reminded me of a gentleman who lived in my constituency, whose mother had passed away. One day I was here in this Legislature, and my assistant called me and asked me if I could find some time in my schedule on a more urgent basis, because one of my constituents had come into the office and my assistant really didn't know what to do. His situation was quite complex.

This man's mother had just died. He was an older adult. He had lived with his mother for a number of years, and he had been injured in an automobile accident a number of years earlier and had become blind. He had no sight. He had lived with his mother, he was in receipt of income assistance, and they lived together for probably 20 or 25 years, and then she died. She was well into her 80s, and on her death she had had a will, but neither he nor anyone else could locate the will.

I cannot begin to tell you the journey that sent me on as I became his advocate. The social assistance office cut him off, because in their minds he had been a boarder in his mother's home and was receiving assistance as a boarder. Then all of a sudden in their minds he owned an asset, the home. They discontinued his assistance. It was really a very

difficult journey. He knew who the lawyer who had done his mother's will was, but that lawyer had died. That lawyer was a sole practitioner, and when he passed away, his widow cleaned out all of the files in the office and destroyed them.

There was no will we could find from a barrister or an attorney who had prepared it, and it was quite a process. I have to say that we located a lawyer who worked with this gentleman and myself in my office. He kind of took over, and was really quite amazing. In the course of the next few months we did actually find the will, but when my colleague brought this idea to me that had been presented to him, and we did research to establish that a registry for wills existed in other provinces, I completely understood where that gentleman was coming from, having had this experience.

I know that one experience is not a good reason to have a Statute. However, I can only imagine how common this is, and I want to say to the Minister of Justice - I listened to her very carefully and I respect her experience and her expertise in this area. But you know it is the case, and certainly in the community I represent and in the community a lot of us represent - we have many, many constituents who don't necessarily put their belongings in a safety deposit box in a bank or a credit union. Having served as an MLA and having worked as a social worker, I know people don't feel comfortable doing that either.

What this bill attempts to do - particularly, I would say, for the more vulnerable people in our society - is to find a way to have a secure place to store their wishes that will be there and they can feel secure that it will be there in the long term.

It is true that there are generally costs to any new kind of system that is established, but this isn't establishing something from scratch. We have a very well-developed registry for our Prothonotary's Office and for the probate system now. I can hardly imagine that this would be something that would be a big-cost item. Moreover, the idea that somebody would have to drive from Antigonish or Yarmouth to get a will in Halifax is just nonsense. I mean people don't have to do that now to access the court system. We have a very decentralized system across the province.

I think that, with all due respect to the minister, we need to - I mean this isn't even creative thinking that's required. I would say just some basic thinking about how you could facilitate a registry such as this.

The final point is the question of privacy, which I think is extraordinarily important. We would all think that it is of paramount importance, but really, if you think about the information that already exists in the Department of Health and Wellness, and the MSI system, in your doctors' offices, I mean we have a relatively new piece of legislation in this province to deal with the privacy of health information and health records. It's really not rocket science, in terms of maintaining the privacy of people and developing a system to promote privacy.

I'm disappointed that the government doesn't have a more open mind, in terms of looking at this piece of legislation and understanding what motivates it, and understanding that the motivation is really on behalf of the most ordinary person. People without means quite often, to have access to more elaborate, maybe private options and this would be a system.

There are two other provinces that have this. This is not like we're doing something that hasn't been done or tried elsewhere. I would imagine there are very experienced members of the Bar in both British Columbia and Ontario who have lots of experience with wills and estates and what have you. I can't imagine if this was such a horrendous deviation from standard practice, that those provinces would have adopted and established will registries.

With those remarks, Mr. Speaker, I will take my seat, but I would encourage members to reflect maybe a little more deeply about the usefulness of a bill such as this and who in fact could most benefit from it.

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

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, that concludes our business for the day. I'll turn it over to the Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. TERRY FARRELL: Mr. Speaker, with the unanimous consent of the House, would you please revert to the order of business, Presenting Reports of Committees.

MR. SPEAKER: Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Justice.

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

Bill No. 44 - Public Trustee Act.

Bill No. 49 - Motor Vehicle Act.

Bill No. 51 - Municipal Government Act.

Bill No. 52 - Liquor Control Act.

Bill No. 53 - Police Act.

Bill No. 55 - Halifax Regional Municipality Charter.

Bill No. 57 - Cemetery and Funeral Services Act and the Embalmers and Funeral Directors Act.

Bill No. 58 - Oil Refineries and L.N.G. Plants Municipal Taxation Act.

and the committee recommends these bills to the favourable consideration of the House, each without amendment.

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

The honourable Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. TERRY FARRELL: Mr. Speaker, that concludes the business of the House for the day. The House will sit from 12:00 noon tomorrow until 10:00 p.m. Following the daily routine we will move into consideration of estimates. Following this if time permits we will do second reading of Bill Nos. 56, 60, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, and 67. If time permits we will also do third reading of bills. I move that the House do now rise.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is that the House rise to meet again on Thursday, April 24th between 12:00 noon and 10:00 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 12:00 noon tomorrow.

[The House rose at 5:53 p.m.]

NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3)**RESOLUTION NO. 1301**

By: Hon. Karen Casey (Education and Early Childhood Development)

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

Whereas the ongoing crisis and conflicts around the world show that the work to prevent crimes against humanity is not finished; and

Whereas in 2006 Parliamentarians from all parties created the All-Party Parliamentary Group for the Prevention of Genocide and Other Crimes Against Humanity; and

Whereas the education of our Canadian students who will be tomorrow's leaders is the best way to help them know what is happening around the world, and to help them become conscientious citizens who will work for a better world;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly recognize April 23 as the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Mass Atrocities, and remember the thousands of innocent men, women, and children who have lost their lives because of the horrendous crimes committed against them.

RESOLUTION NO. 1302

By: Ms. Margaret Miller (Hants East)

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

Whereas Mr. Jack and Ms. Elsie Wallace of Enfield celebrated 61 years of marriage on March 21, 2014; and

Whereas 61 years of marriage has undoubtedly seen Jack and Elsie grow together through all of the trials and victories of life; and

Whereas Mr. and Ms. Wallace's marriage serves as a shining example to married couples, both old and new alike;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly congratulate the Wallace's on 61 years of marriage and wish them continued love and happiness in all of the years ahead.

RESOLUTION NO. 1303

By: Hon. Zach Churchill (Natural Resources)

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

Whereas 11-year-old Amaris DeViller, daughter of Keith and Daphne DeViller of Yarmouth, is a member of the Mackenzie School of Dance who has at her young age participated in four highland dance competitions, including a major competition in Moncton, and has won all four of them; and

Whereas her teacher, Michelle Mackenzie, is sure that Amaris will continue to grow as a first-class highland dancer; and

Whereas her hard work and dedication to this demanding art form make her a role model for her peers and an ambassador for her community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly congratulate Amaris DeViller on her successes and offer her all good wishes for her future.

RESOLUTION NO. 1304

By: Hon. Stephen McNeil (The Premier)

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

Whereas most of us will fortunately never know what it is like to sift through a mass grave of hundreds of people, however Annapolis Royal resident Deborah Komar knows all too well the horrors of war and the valuable information exhumed bodies can yield; and

Whereas this retired forensic anthropologist/medical examiner, turned author, has just published the second in a four-part series of books aimed at re-examining historical crimes; and

Whereas her latest novel reopens a violent 1896 murder trial of Bear River native Peter Wheeler, where evidenced-based fact is favoured over hunches;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly join me in congratulating Deborah Komar on her recent book launch and wish her continued success as she continues work to uncover clues from the past.

RESOLUTION NO. 1305

By: Hon. Stephen McNeil (The Premier)

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

Whereas the Annapolis Royal Regional Academy's Royal Robots from Annapolis Royal recently took top spot in the annual Robofest High School Robotics Competition held at Acadia University; and

Whereas this annual event encourages middle-level students to use science and innovation in a fun way and to develop project management skills through the use of robots and unique hands-on learning; and

Whereas members of the team received a \$500 bursary to attend Acadia University, as well as a \$1,000 bursary to attend the international championship in Michigan, and the team also received a \$1,000 grant from the Michelin Education Fund towards the cost of attending either the FLL Canadian National Championships in Toronto or the North American Championships in California;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating team member Maddy Conyers on winning the Provincial Robotic Competition and wish the team well at the upcoming Canadian Championships in Toronto.

RESOLUTION NO. 1306

By: Hon. Stephen McNeil (The Premier)

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

Whereas the Annapolis Royal Regional Academy's Royal Robots from Annapolis Royal recently took top spot in the annual Robofest High School Robotics Competition held at Acadia University; and

Whereas this annual event encourages middle-level students to use science and innovation in a fun way and to develop project management skills through the use of robots and unique hands-on learning; and

Whereas members of the team received a \$500 bursary to attend Acadia University, as well as a \$1,000 bursary to attend the international championship in Michigan, and the team also received a \$1,000 grant from the Michelin Education Fund towards the cost of

attending either the FLL Canadian National Championships in Toronto or the North American Championships in California;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating team member Sarah Abel on winning the Provincial Robotic Competition and wish the team well at the upcoming Canadian Championships in Toronto.

RESOLUTION NO. 1307

By: Hon. Stephen McNeil (The Premier)

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

Whereas the Annapolis Royal Regional Academy's Royal Robots from Annapolis Royal recently took top spot in the annual Robofest High School Robotics Competition held at Acadia University; and

Whereas this annual event encourages middle-level students to use science and innovation in a fun way and to develop project management skills through the use of robots and unique hands-on learning; and

Whereas members of the team received a \$500 bursary to attend Acadia University, as well as a \$1,000 bursary to attend the international championship in Michigan, and the team also received a \$1,000 grant from the Michelin Education Fund towards the cost of attending either the FLL Canadian National Championships in Toronto or the North American Championships in California;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating team member Finn Hafting on winning the Provincial Robotic Competition and wish the team well at the upcoming Canadian Championships in Toronto.

RESOLUTION NO. 1308

By: Hon. Stephen McNeil (The Premier)

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

Whereas the Annapolis Royal Regional Academy's Royal Robots from Annapolis Royal recently took top spot in the annual Robofest High School Robotics Competition held at Acadia University; and

Whereas this annual event encourages middle-level students to use science and innovation in a fun way and to develop project management skills through the use of robots and unique hands-on learning; and

Whereas members of the team received a \$500 bursary to attend Acadia University, as well as a \$1,000 bursary to attend the international championship in Michigan, and the team also received a \$1,000 grant from the Michelin Education Fund towards the cost of attending either the FLL Canadian National Championships in Toronto or the North American Championships in California;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating team member Griffin Batt on winning the Provincial Robotic Competition and wish the team well at the upcoming Canadian Championships in Toronto.

RESOLUTION NO. 1309

By: Hon. Stephen McNeil (The Premier)

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

Whereas the Annapolis Royal Regional Academy's Royal Robots from Annapolis Royal recently took top spot in the annual Robofest High School Robotics Competition held at Acadia University; and

Whereas this annual event encourages middle-level students to use science and innovation in a fun way and to develop project management skills through the use of robots and unique hands-on learning; and

Whereas members of the team received a \$500 bursary to attend Acadia University, as well as a \$1,000 bursary to attend the international championship in Michigan, and the team also received a \$1,000 grant from the Michelin Education Fund towards the cost of attending either the FLL Canadian National Championships in Toronto or the North American Championships in California;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating team coach Jeff Hafting on winning the Provincial Robotic Competition and wish the team well at the upcoming Canadian Championships in Toronto.

RESOLUTION NO. 1310

By: Hon. Stephen McNeil (The Premier)

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

Whereas the Annapolis Royal Regional Academy's Royal Robots from Annapolis Royal recently took top spot in the annual Robofest High School Robotics Competition held at Acadia University; and

Whereas this annual event encourages middle-level students to use science and innovation in a fun way and to develop project management skills through the use of robots and unique hands-on learning; and

Whereas members of the team received a \$500 bursary to attend Acadia University, as well as a \$1,000 bursary to attend the international championship in Michigan, and the team also received a \$1,000 grant from the Michelin Education Fund towards the cost of attending either the FLL Canadian National Championships in Toronto or the North American Championships in California;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating team member Alex Hancock on winning the Provincial Robotic Competition and wish the team well at the upcoming Canadian Championships in Toronto.

RESOLUTION NO. 1311

By: Hon. Stephen McNeil (The Premier)

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

Whereas the Annapolis Royal Regional Academy's Royal Robots from Annapolis Royal recently took top spot in the annual Robofest High School Robotics Competition held at Acadia University; and

Whereas this annual event encourages middle-level students to use science and innovation in a fun way and to develop project management skills through the use of robots and unique hands-on learning; and

Whereas members of the team received a \$500 bursary to attend Acadia University, as well as a \$1,000 bursary to attend the international championship in Michigan, and the team also received a \$1,000 grant from the Michelin Education Fund towards the cost of

attending either the FLL Canadian National Championships in Toronto or the North American Championships in California;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating team coach Andy Sharpe on winning the Provincial Robotic Competition and wish the team well at the upcoming Canadian Championships in Toronto.

RESOLUTION NO. 1312

By: Hon. Stephen McNeil (The Premier)

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

Whereas the Annapolis Royal Regional Academy's Royal Robots from Annapolis Royal recently took top spot in the annual Robofest High School Robotics Competition held at Acadia University; and

Whereas this annual event encourages middle-level students to use science and innovation in a fun way and to develop project management skills through the use of robots and unique hands-on learning; and

Whereas members of the team received a \$500 bursary to attend Acadia University, as well as a \$1,000 bursary to attend the international championship in Michigan, and the team also received a \$1,000 grant from the Michelin Education Fund towards the cost of attending either the FLL Canadian National Championships in Toronto or the North American Championships in California;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating team member Elsa Hafting on winning the Provincial Robotic Competition and wish the team well at the upcoming Canadian Championships in Toronto.